

Public Relations Plan for  
First National Bank of Altavista



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# Introduction

First National Bank Altavista, referred to as FNBA, operates in the relatively-focused region of Central Virginia. The bank was founded in 1908 in the town of Altavista, Virginia. While the bank has grown to encompass branches throughout the Central-Virginia area including Lynchburg, Bedford, and Smith Mountain Lake, it has maintained the feel of a small-town banking institution. FNBA prides itself on its employees and the fact that its employees know customers on a first name basis. Because of this, the bank is able to provide a level of personalization and customer service that is not often found in a typical banking institution such as Wachovia or Bank of America. Additionally, FNBA prides itself in considering loan applicants on an individual basis, rather than using pre-defined, computerized algorithms to make this decision. This unique loan-decision feature is another factor that has given the bank a more personalized, customer-oriented image.

As 2008 approaches, FNBA is preparing to celebrate 100 years of providing its services throughout Central Virginia. The bank has expressed desire to capitalize on its centennial through a public relations and marketing strategy. The bank has several distinct publics, all of which can and will be affected by the centennial events. Examples of publics are as follows:

- Customers

- The bank's 85 – 95 employees
- The communities in which the bank operates
- Pinnacle Bank Shares shareholders
- Government regulators on all levels (local, federal, etc.)
- Local and regional news media

All Eyes Public Relations' plan is focused on one of these key publics, that being the bank's employees. Based on extensive survey research of employees, we have recommended a series of objectives, strategies, and tactics that FNBA will implement in order to brand itself internally and capitalize on this milestone in its history.

Employees are a key part of any organization, and in the case of this plan, ensuring that employees are prepared for the centennial will ultimately create positive results that will filter down to other publics as well. Our research has determined levels of employee awareness, acceptance, and readiness for action in regard to the bank's centennial. The rest of this public relations plan stems from the results of the primary research we conducted.

As a closing facet to our plan, making use of the bank's established logo of three mountains is also included within the tactics. This establishes "visual continuity" for the overall plan and it gives the bank a solid tactic in which to begin its centennial public relations initiatives.

# Situation Analysis

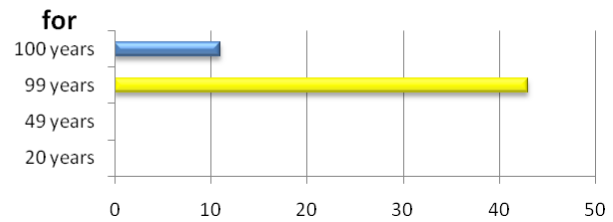
## Primary Research:

All Eyes conducted a survey of 54 of FNBA's employees to see what they know about the bank's heritage and its business plans for the future. An email was sent out to 91 of FNBA's employees and 54 of them followed through to the link and completed the survey. Employees had the time period from Monday, April 16, 2007 through the close of business on Friday, April 20, 2007 to complete the survey. The survey was provided through a web-based software suite called Survey Monkey. It served to test employee's top-of-mind awareness about their employer without talking to other employees or consulting anyone else or any other source.

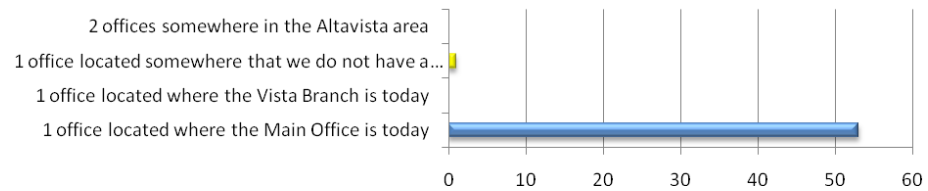
What FNBA can take from this survey information is the fact that while well informed, especially in the history/heritage aspects of their company, employee's knowledge is more scattered regarding the technicalities and fiscal aspects of their employer.

Following is a comprehensive analysis, including visuals, of survey data and the results.

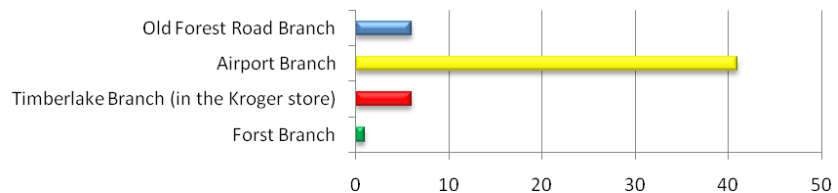
### 1. In 2007, First National Bank of Altavista has been in Business



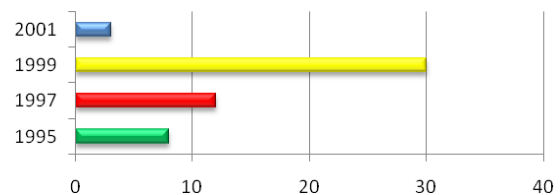
### 2. When First National Bank of Altavista opened they had



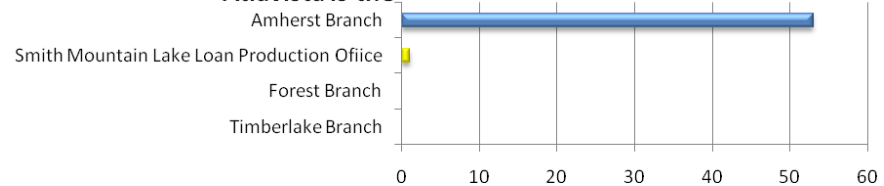
### 3. The First National Bank of Altavista opened in Lynchburg was



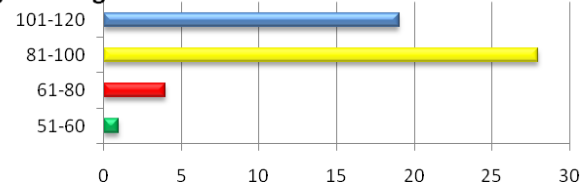
### 4. The First office Lynchburg opened in



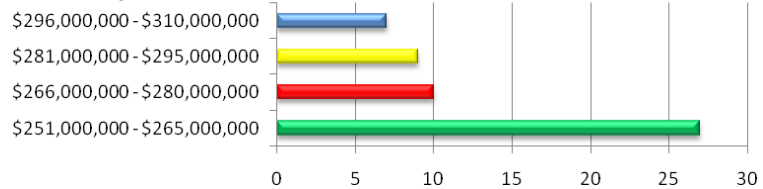
### 5. The most recent office opened by First National Bank of Altavista is the



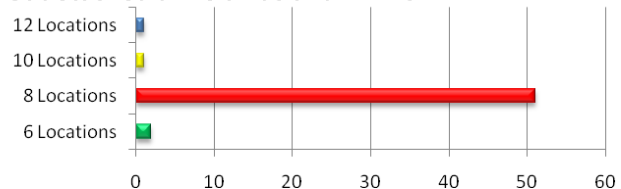
**6. First National Bank of Altavista's number of employees falls within the range of**



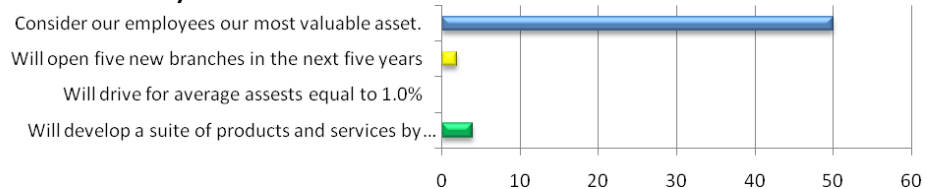
**7. First National Bank of Altavista's total average assests currently falls between**



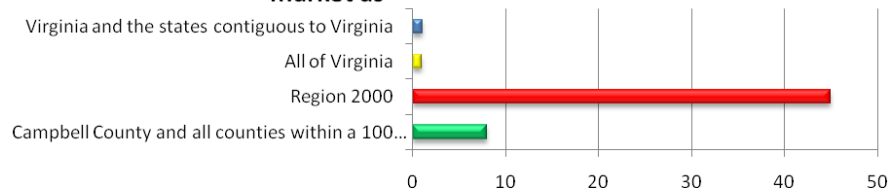
**8. First National Bank of Altavista does business at \_\_ locations (counting all offices but not detached drive thrus and ATM's)**



**9. The first course of action in the Strategic plan for 2007-2011 says First National Bank of Altavista**



**10. First National Bank of Altavista's strategic plan defines it's market as**



## Secondary Research:

In an article entitled “Taking Back the Bottom Line” by James K. Harter, he states, “The correlation was positive and substantially meaningful to success across different businesses: Highly engaged individuals were most often found in the high-performance units.<sup>1</sup>”

Beyond just engaging employees, an article in the Manchester Evening News cites a study demonstrating that, “....85 per cent of bosses felt using employee knowledge helped avoid costly mistakes and developed better customer service. But only 13 per cent [*sic*] of organizations had a nominated person responsible for knowledge management and 51 per cent did not measure it at all.<sup>2</sup>” These statistics are several years old, and as such, have certainly changed since they were published. The need for employee knowledge has only continued to grow, hence why it is the focus of this public relations plan.

The value of employee knowledge should never be underestimated. Knowledge can also lead to engaged employees that feel they are part of an organizational effort beyond themselves. Just as the Manchester Evening News article stated, better employee knowledge equals better customer service (paraphrased).

FNBA has clearly stated that it considers its employees to be asset number one. The bank prides itself on the fact that it is still seen as a “hometown” bank where employees know frequent customers by name. This demonstrates that FNBA has a well-engaged, knowledgeable work

force in place. A work force that is actively engaged in their job and not simply performing rote “busywork” tends to impact the bottom line of the organization for better. Consider this fact: “A new employee engagement study by ISR has found a gap of almost 52 per cent in the one-year performance improvement in operating income between companies with highly engaged employees versus companies whose employees have low engagement scores<sup>3</sup>.”

As FNBA prepares to use its centennial in marketing and branding purposes, it is essential that employees are given astute consideration within the overall marketing mix. Key to the success of the bank’s centennial will be how well-informed and engaged this public is within their corporation and its events. What employees need is to continually be informed about their bank. An element of employee-information that is often over-looked is that of organizational history and heritage. Communication tactics that highlight FNBA’s rich history and heritage throughout the central-Virginia region can instill a sense of pride and localism within employees, all while building their level of organizational awareness. It is key that employees have a strong sense of correct and unified information about their employer, as this trickles down into the general-public sector, and determines how cohesive of an image consumers, employee family members, and employee acquaintances see within the organization.

Beyond just solid information-building tactics, FNBA also needs to consider building a sense to team pride among employees. Employees need



to feel that they are a part of a team; a part that ultimately helps to achieve some larger corporate goal. This gives employees a sense of importance, pride, and belonging, and will stimulate them to be an even better asset to the organization.

By utilizing communication tactics that increase employee knowledge of the various aspects of their company, along with a strong sense of teamwork and pride, FNBA will ensure that its number-one asset will be instrumental in achieving the bank's marketing objectives.

### References

1. "Taking Feedback to the Bottom Line." James K. Harter. March 2001.  
<<http://gmj.gallup.com/content/814/Taking-Feedback-to-the-Bottom-Line.aspx>>
2. "EMPLOYEE knowledge is a vital source of company success, say bosses." Author not given. Manchester Evening News. February 6, 1998. Accessed through Factiva database.
3. "Employee Engagement Gives Big Boost to the Bottom Line." July 27, 2006.  
<<http://www.management-issues.com/2006/8/24/research/employee-engagement-gives-big-boost-to-the-bottom-line.asp>>

## Opportunities:

**Opportunity Number One:** Expand FNBA's employee knowledge of their company's history and heritage.

- o Primary survey data showed that the majority of the bank's employees know the basics about their organization such as its founding, history, heritage and number of operating locations. The opportunity here lies within building upon this employee knowledge.

- Primary research also showed more mixed results of employee knowledge regarding the technical corporate data such as strategic market and total average assets.
- In regard to knowing the age of the bank, nearly 80% of employees stated the correct answer, which is 99 years as of 2007. However, approximately 20% of employees think that the bank is in its 100<sup>th</sup> year *this year*. The bank's founding date (1908) needs to be made clear across the board to all employees.

**Opportunity Number Two:** Instill a sense of loyalty and teamwork among employees.

- The bank has taken an excellent first step in establishing an employee committee to help draft ideas for the centennial celebration. The bank should continue to uphold and build upon this concept of employee inclusion. By making *all* employees an active part in planning this milestone in the bank's history, they will feel a sense of pride and importance within the bigger picture of their employer. Refer to the secondary research section of this plan which cites several studies detailing the profound impact that engaged, educated employees can have on an organization. Employees that feel engaged by their work and that their opinions matter will convey a positive, enthusiastic attitude toward customers. Ultimately, this will lend to better promotion of FNBA's centennial.

# Goals

The overall goal of this plan is to strengthen the sense of pride, community, and belonging among employees. By making employees feel engaged and part of a team, they will ultimately perform their work better, and present a better image of the bank in general. This employee-relations goal will foster an environment wherein employees will work to attain maximum benefits for FNBA regarding the bank's centennial branding efforts.

# Objectives

The first objective is **to demonstrate to each employee their value to the team and specifically their contribution to FNBA reaching their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with success.** In our primary research, we found that almost 90% of the employees know that the first course of action in FNBA's Strategic Plan for 2007-2011 is to consider their employees their most valuable asset. Fulfillment of that course of action is crucial to reaching the overall goal of this plan.

The second objective is **to establish strong knowledge among employees regarding the history, heritage, and technical aspects of FNBA.** Our primary research survey has shown that while informed, there is room for improvement in employee knowledge. Secondary research has

shown us that well-informed, involved employees tend to perform better at work, and ultimately, this impacts the bottom line of the organization's balance sheet.

The third objective is **to form an emblem in the mind of employees of FNBA's founding year through the phrase, "since 1908."** Approximately twenty-percent of the employees who participated in the survey did not know the founding year of the bank. An example of the significance of taking advantage of an organization's founding year is Liberty University. Liberty uses its birth year of 1971 significantly through many forms of communication and identification of the university. FNBA has a greater opportunity as its founding year of 1908 represents age, foundation, and longevity.

## Strategies

We have developed the following proactive strategies, on behalf of FNBA, in order to see the following objectives come to fruition:

- Initiate communication from the president of FNBA to the employees that affirms team value and appreciation. This will aid in establishing in the mind of the employees their value to the company from *top* downward.
- Employing an avenue for giving and receiving input and evaluation from the leaders and employees within each branch. From

anonymous suggestions to group interaction, two-way communication can contribute to each specific branch's solidarity and instilling a sense of value and loyalty to their branch that will strengthen the entire company as a whole.

- Involve employees in the execution and implementation of the greater centennial celebration plan. Employees are the face of the bank. They personally communicate with consumers and will most effectively raise awareness of the centennial.
- Stimulate interest in the heritage of the bank among employees by implementing an internal communications plan. If effectively and relevantly executed, it will provide a way to build 100% understanding of the bank's history.
- Create connection from bank identity with the coinage of "since 1908" through promotional devices. The employee will correlate the age of the bank with the bank's identity cultivating a sense of foundation.

# Tactics and Implementation

The next step in FNBA's employee relations is to actually put the plan into action. The following tactics may be used to complete the overall objectives of this plan.

- **A special employee newsletter.** A quarterly employee newsletter specifically highlighting the bank's centennial is an excellent, cost-effective tactic that can have multiple benefits. The newsletter is a controlled source of information, and as such, the top-level management at the bank can be sure that content they feel is important and relevant to the employees is published within the newsletter. Content for the news letter should include an update as to where the bank is heading with its centennial branding initiatives, as well as recognizing all employee input and contributions toward the centennial marketing efforts. Other features may include bank heritage and history facts. Testimonies from satisfied customers can also be a feature in the newsletter, being sure that the employee(s) that made the difference for the customer are fully recognized. A column or note from the manager(s) and/or top-tier executive(s) of the bank is a must, as this adds credibility to the communication and allows employees to see a spokesperson for this employee relations campaign. Finally, the newsletter should include all information for individual employee's submission of "brainstorming" efforts

regarding the centennial planning. All of these elements will work in synergy to develop employee's knowledge of their bank and to foster a sense of pride, teamwork, and belonging among them.

- **Continued employee planning sessions.** Some employees may be involved in the planning phases of the centennial to a higher degree than just simply receiving inspiration from the special newsletter. FNBA has already begun an employee planning committee, and this needs to be continued. It is important that all employees are aware that they are welcome at these meetings and their feedback is desired and appreciated. Communication about times, places, etc. regarding these meetings can be disseminated through email, immediate supervisors, and the newsletter.
- **A unique logo.** The 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary is a unique event, and as such, is deserving of a unique, eye-catching graphical element to support it. All Eyes Public Relations has developed a logo that is based upon the bank's existing tri-mountain logo but that commemorates FNBA's centennial.



- **Using the logo.** An apparel line of polo shirts may be developed for employees to wear in the months preceding, and during, the bank's

centennial. The key focal point of these shirts would be the centennial logo and would serve as a way to intrigue customers about the bank's centennial, as they would take note of the logo. Well-informed employees would be able to discuss in detail all elements (to date) of the centennial planning effort with customers.

- **A New Years Eve Gala.** To reinforce that 2008 is the year of FNBA's centennial, a party on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007 to kick-off 2008 would make an excellent tactic. A catered dinner, along with a speech from the president / CEO would be a part of the evening's festivities. This would significantly build employee interaction and unity because it would allow for all employees to gather at a centralized location and mingle with top level management as well as with employees from other branches of the bank. Singularity of information disseminated at the event would help lead to cohesive knowledge among employees and would allow FNBA's president / CEO to control message content. To limit costs, the catered dinner would be restricted to just employees. This also would keep the focus on this being a fun, but still work-related function. The dinner party could meet early in the evening, giving enough time for a meal and socializing, and also allowing employees enough time to get home to officially ring in the New Year with family and friends at less formal social gatherings.



- **Once-per-month social.** Once every month a specific branch of the bank could be the spotlight for a social gathering for employees and the president / CEO of FNBA. Progress on the centennial marketing efforts would be a highlight of the evening, and employees would be welcomed to voice their input / suggestions. This would demonstrate how valuable employees are to the bank, give them a chance to socialize outside of work, and most importantly, give them face-to-face interaction with the president / CEO.

## Tactical Timeline

- **Newsletter.** The newsletter, as a quarterly production, should begin in July of 2007 and publish every three months, terminating in July of 2008. This ensures employees are kept informed and up to date of all the centennial planning efforts.
- **Employee planning sessions.** The bank has already determined when these sessions are necessary. Regarding frequency, the bank should continue these planning sessions as management deems necessary throughout July of 2008 (possibly beyond, if deemed appropriate).
- **Logo.** Logo development has been done by All Eyes Public Relations. Changes, redevelopment, etc. should be handled as soon as possible in order to ensure optimal time for revisions, etc. and also to allow time for at least a prototype of the logo to appear on the first

employee newsletter in July. Having this logo done ahead of time ensures a unified approach to branding all communication efforts generated regarding the bank's centennial.

- **Apparel.** Upon completion on the final draft of the logo, then the apparel line can begin to be developed. This tactic should be done as soon as the logo is "set in stone," so to speak, in order to ensure time for ordering of correct sizes, screen printing, etc.
- **New Years Gala.** The New Years Gala will be held on December 31, 2007. The time should be early evening, roughly 5:00 pm until 7:30 pm.
- **Monthly Socials.** Since socials are planned monthly, they could begin perhaps in late January, after the New Years Gala is a distant memory. Near the end of each month, a different branch could be highlighted for a centennial social.

## Tactical Budget

In developing budget considerations, All Eyes Public Relations realizes that FNBA already contracts an outside marketing firm, and as such, probably has rates for many of these tactics set at the marketing firm's prices. The following are some general cost estimates of what FNBA may spend on this employee relations initiative.

- **Newsletters.** Approximately 110 newsletters (this ensures that each employee receives one, and that there are some extras to serve as a "cushion") printed four times yearly at a rate of \$200 per set equals

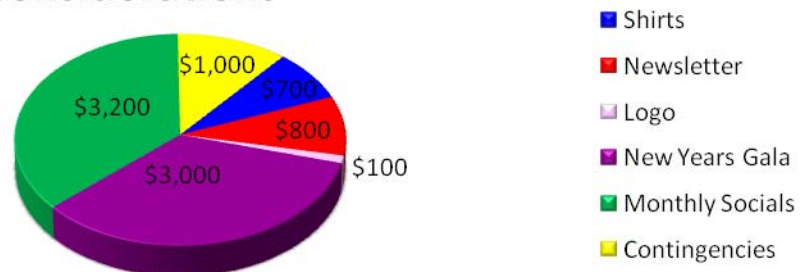
\$800 for newsletters. This is a high estimate. The cost will vary based on level of finish, gloss, paper quality, etc. that management at the bank chooses to use. Significant savings may be had on this tactic by using consumer-grade desktop publishing software (such as Adobe Creative Suite), a PC, and a desktop printer. This will achieve acceptable results at a materials cost of approximately \$70 per quarter. Staff time to produce the newsletters is not included in this figure, as we do not have access to staff salary information. If more money must be saved, email distribution is also an option, and will only incur staff-time development costs.

- **Logo development.** A simple logo can be developed for as little as \$100, including one revision. FNBA may use the logo All Eyes Public Relations has supplied, or the bank may coordinate with its marketing firm on this tactic.
- **Apparel.** Polo shirts, with screen printing can be estimated at about \$7 per shirt. If the bank prints 100 shirts, to ensure enough for all employees to have one shirt, then approximately \$700 may be budgeted toward this tactic. The cost will increase if the bank desires more appealing embroidery on shirts. Multiply this number accordingly if employees desire / require more than one shirt each.
- **New Years Gala.** Catering hosted by Charleys Restaurant in Lynchburg is \$11.95 per meal. For 100 employees this comes out to \$1195 before gratuities, taxes, party favors, etc. To save money, the

bank could use its newer, attractive Lynchburg Wards Road branch as a banquet hall, as the facility is substantially large. A budget of no less than \$3000 should be considered for this event in order to make sure there are suitable funds to cover the entire event.

- **Monthly Socials.** Light hors d' Oeuvres could be served to all employees at one branch for approximately \$400 maximum. Prices are also based on catering rates from Charleys Restaurant in Lynchburg.
- **Staff time and contingencies.** Public relations planning for the employee initiative of the centennial has been a free service provided by All Eyes Public Relations. Rates for marketing, and additional developments will be determined by the bank's marketing contractor. Time used by employees to develop the newsletter may also be factored in along with "petty cash" for any unplanned contingencies that may be faced in the development of this plan.

## Budget Considerations



• Shirts	100 shirts at \$7 each	\$ 700
• Newsletter	4 sets at a rate of \$200 per set	\$ 800
• Logo	One-time fee of \$100	\$ 100
• New Years Gala	Catering + additional costs	\$ 3,000
• Monthly Socials	\$400 per social times 8 branches	\$ 3,200
• Contingencies	Staff time, unexpected items, etc.	\$ 1,000

# Evaluation

We will evaluate our tactics and our plans by having secret shoppers stopping in at the bank and asking different questions about the centennial and the history of the bank. Secret shoppers give the organization a lot of information about the attitudes and atmosphere the employees are giving off about the bank. We will take the experiences of the secret shoppers and compile the data and compare the results every so often to see how the employees are doing.

We will also employ a second survey for employees that will include any questions that had a high inaccuracy rate in the prior survey. It will also include employee satisfaction questions which will gauge the effectiveness of affirming each employee of their value to the company.