Small Business Readiness Checklist for Training

Here's a diagnostic tool you can use to assess opportunities to boost training's impact on small business results in five high-impact categories. If you would like more information, there's an article that corresponds to each checklist on the tool.

On a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always), how does Training partner with Line Managers to:

NEVER ... ALWAYS

■ Define Training Implementation Strategy

	1	2	3	4	5
Define specific business outcomes beyond sales results for the training initiative					
Translate business outcomes into specific expectations for branch managers and staff					
Define measures of success and create tracking framework for business outcomes					
Create reporting mechanisms so branch managers know how they're performing compared with expectations					

Mostly 1s: High Risk Line managers probably look at training as a way the training dept. can "fix" their people. Low engagement. Low accountability. Start by asking, "How will you know training has made a difference?"

Somewhere in the Middle: Medium Risk Chances are good that line managers have specific outcomes in mind. Check to make sure that these include leading indicators (e.g. retention, coverage of a particular target segment, customer satisfaction ratings). However you can, encourage conversation between managers and direct reports before and after training to set expectations and post-training action plans.

Mostly 5s: Low Risk Great! You're taking advantage of what we know about increasing impact from training: defining outcomes, setting expectations, communicating clearly to performers, and giving feedback about performance.

■ Design Business Training with Industry Focus

	1	2	3	4	5
Focus training on the bank's targeted business types and their respective business issues					
Ensure staff understand how the bank's offerings help small business owners run their companies better					
Train staff in target business's operational and financial language					
Train staff on targeted business types' cash flow challenges and management					
Provide First Research or equivalent information to boost staff's industry knowledge					

Mostly 1s: **High Risk** Line managers probably think training in products and sales knowledge is enough to call on small businesses … not so! Make training about the clients the bank wants to call on and how you can solve their business challenges.

Somewhere in the Middle: Medium Risk Industry focus is extremely critical.

Mostly 5s: Low Risk Great! Use tests and quizzes periodically to keep branch staff sharp about business issues and on top of financial acumen used by the bank's targeted business types.

■ Design Training Focused on Customer Challenges

	1	2	3	4	5
Focus training on targeted business owners' challenges					
Train staff to know which bank products solve which challenges and why					
Train staff to understand the value created by bank products and their implementation processes					
Provide staff with example implementations/stories about how the bank solved a client challenge with a product					

Mostly 1s: High Risk Branch staff miss the boat when training doesn't connect the dots between clients' business issues and the bank's products. Help them understand what the targeted business owners' challenges are and how and when the bank's products solve them.

Somewhere in the Middle: Medium Risk Hone in more closely on the targeted business owners' challenges and how your bank's products solve them; tailor training accordingly.

Mostly 5s: Low Risk Great! Ensure product training continues to focus on small business owners' needs first and how the bank's products can be solutions second.

	NEVER 1	2	3	4	ALWAYS 5
Design Training That Adds Value to Business Relationships	1	2	3	4	5
Focus training on small business conversations driven by the business's challenges					
Design general conversation models that give small business owners a reason to talk to your bank					
Strengthen staff's skills and boost confidence through practice conversations					
Provide real-world training in the form of simulations/visits with small business owners					
Train staff to draw on their own real-life experiences when calling on small businesses					

Mostly 1s: High Risk To see any lift, you need to be explicit and prescriptive about the kinds of conversations you want branch staff to have with small business owners; most bankers won't have the mindshare to make it up on their own.

Somewhere in the Middle: Medium Risk Reinforce the conversation models you've developed and ensure staff have sufficient opportunities to practice using them. Consider inviting real business owners to the bank and using simulations for a more realistic experience.

Mostly 5s: Low Risk Congratulations! Keep offering ample practice opportunities for branch staff to continue improving upon their conversations.

Train Managers to be Good Coaches and Drive Your Small Business Effort	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrate coaching's value to senior leaders, supported by bank or industry statistics					
Train managers in the same small business skills and knowledge as staff					
Train managers to recognize what "good" looks like, demonstrate "good", and teach skills to close gaps					
Define coaching routines to reinforce new skills and behaviors and improve sales process					
Develop managers' coaching skills around conversations with staff that lead to behavior changes and results					

Mostly 1s: High Risk Senior leaders probably think they can't afford to take managers out of the field for a few days to get them trained so they can be good coaches; the reality is that they can't afford not to.

Somewhere in the Middle: Medium Risk Be specific—clearly define your bank's coaching routines and develop managers' skills around those routines so they can be role models for branch staff.

Mostly 5s: Low Risk Great! Be vigilant to ensure managers are coaching regularly to sustain small business results.