

RURAL ^{T H E} BANKER

ISSUE 1

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Kojo Mattah,
MD, ARB Apex Bank

Stephen Sarfo Kantanka,
CEO Atwima Kwanwoma Rural Bank

Events:

6th Rural Banking Week
16th Managers' Conference

Gh-Link EMV Standard Technology: ARB Apex Bank Leads the Way

Articles:

25% Corporate Tax Suffocating RCBs

New Product Development Committee
Inaugurated

7 Things RCBs Need to Do to Survive the
Next Decade



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One-on-one With MD of ARB Apex Bank Limited

The Rural Banker engaged with the MD of ARB Apex Bank to get to know him more and to understand his vision for the company.

Up-close Interview With CEO of Atwima Kwanwoma Rural Bank

This issue sheds the spotlight on the CEO of Atwima Kwanwoma Rural Bank, who has helped raise the profile of the bank since joining in 2010.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

REVISIT THIS CRIPPLING TAX LEAP

Rural and Community Banks (RCBs) are very significant players in Ghana's banking industry, focusing particularly on very low-income earners such as petty traders, farmers, and small-scale entrepreneurs who are encouraged to cultivate the habit of savings and buying shares as shareholders to earn dividends.

RCBs, with 141 registered banks and over 700 branches across the nation, employ a good number of Ghanaians, particularly in the rural communities who pay taxes to government for the development of the Ghanaian economy.

One special and admirable thing about RCBs is the fact that they operate at designated operational areas where universal banks fear to tread and, where they do, are limited in the choice of customers they deal with. This implies that

RCBs are compelled to penetrate deeper into the trenches, thereby incurring more expenses to reach their clients or customers who constitute the unbanked segments of the society.

Additionally, they invest part of their limited earnings on meeting their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes and activities in their catchment areas, mostly in the form of scholarships, cash donations and infrastructure development and supply of medical equipment to enhance the livelihood of their rural dwellers. While the RCBs were struggling to accommodate the previous tax of 8%, the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) suddenly announced on September 1, 2015 a new Income- tax Act, 2015 (Act 896) mandating all universal banks as well as all Rural and Community Banks to pay 25 % corporate tax.

The new directive came as a great shock to RCBs which are already reeling under weak financial muscles. Consequently, quite a number of rural banks have recorded significant drops in their profits, compared with what they earned the previous years. The National Council of the Association of Rural Banks, with

support from the ARB Apex Bank, has appealed to the government to drastically reduce the tax but to no avail. In fact, the Association and all industry players have protested against this quantum leap in tax with the view to bring it down to an appreciable level, considering the difficult terrain in which the RCBs operate.

We, therefore, strongly appeal to the Ministry of Finance and the GRA to, as a matter of urgency, bring the corporate tax for RCBs down from 25% to 10%. The Rural Banker is of the considered opinion that without this, RCBs could suffocate under the new tax regime and defeat the purpose for which they were established.

The Rural Banker's apprehension is fueled further by the fact that the tax increment has compelled most RCBs to withdraw their community support. It is our expectation that a reduction of the tax rate will better position the RCBs to continue to honour their social responsibilities and meet the payment of dividends to attract more shareholders.

Eunice Osei Bonsu



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Kojo Mattah
Managing Director,
ARB Apex Bank Limited

A MESSAGE FROM THE MD

Image building and enhancement in every business is very essential to the development of that business and my advice to all rural and community banks is to concentrate on building a good image and make their services more appealing to the public.

Rural and Community Banks in the country since their inception over 40 years ago have made a very significant socio economic impact and I think it is about time the shareholders as well as the public began to appreciate our efforts to make our services more relevant.

We have a lot of good stories to tell as an industry, which range from corporate social responsibility and community support, employment creation and the contribution to the development of the economy through meeting our tax obligation as well as financial inclusion to our customers.

WHY THIS JOURNAL?

The introduction of this journal “**The Rural Banker**” has the propensity to erase any stigma that may be associated with holding an account with any rural bank in the country. This is because all the good and image enhancing stories about our industry will be told and the public whom we serve diligently will have confidence in the industry.

As the Managing Director of ARB Apex Bank Limited, I want to leave a legacy where RCB customers will be very proud to hold a rural bank account with confidence, use an Apex Card with pride and access the services wherever it is rendered without any hesitation. I will therefore entreat all and sundry to eschew any kind of mistrust and antagonism and welcome the new breeze of leadership since unity can always give us much better results in all our endeavours.

In conclusion, I would like to register my deepest appreciation to other members of the Editorial Board of the “The Rural Banker” magazine for making this dream a reality. It is my hope that we all keep up the good spirit and change the status quo as we work harder to improve our cherished industry.

Long Live Rural & Community Banks!
Long Live ARB Apex Bank Limited!!
Long Live Association of Rural Banks – Ghana!!!
Long Live Ghana!!!!



GH-Link EMV Standard Technology: ARB Apex Bank Leads The Way

The technology will align RCBs with present and future trends to enable them continue to remain as competitive business entities.

The ARB Apex Bank Limited, a mini central bank with the primary responsibility to administer and promote the operational activities of all Rural and Community Banks (RCBs) has unveiled electronic banking products for the rural and community banks.

The changing demands of customers for a more flexible, transparent and easy banking experience, which is changing the landscape for financial institutions, is compelling many to evolve and develop digital banking technologies. ARB Apex Bank has an administrative responsibility to ensure that the RCBs are not

left out in the integration with the payment systems in Ghana. ARB Apex Bank has also completed works on the mobile banking platform and ATMs which have been named U-Connect and U-Cash respectively.

The electronic platform that has been rolled out seeks to enable rural and community banks take their businesses to the next level with the use of cards and other payment technologies. It will also enable secure and reliable interoperability between the rural banks, ARB Apex Bank, and the universal banks



*The U-Connect app can be downloaded from the market place with activation short code *976# that can run on any basic phone.*

which will eventually expand the clientele base of rural banks through e-payments interoperability.

The product will give a customer-centric image to the RCBs, help improve the income and deposit generation potentials of the RCBs as well as aligning RCBs with the present and future trends to enable them continue to remain as competitive business entities. On the U-Connect platform, subscribers will be able to transfer funds to customer accounts across the rural banks as well as to the accounts of customers of other commercial banks.

A wallet which is based on the subscriber's mobile number, is also available for the unbanked for cash transfers and cash out at all rural and community banks along with purchasing mobile phone credit from the various telecommunication networks. The U-Connect app can be downloaded from the market place with activation short code *976# that can run on any basic phone.

The ARB Apex Bank is the first local bank to issue a domestic card which employs Europay MasterCard Visa (EMV)

standards with CHIP and PIN for transactions. So far, twenty-five (25) ATMs have been installed across the country by 13 rural banks, and there are plans to roll out 100 ATMs in 2018.

Apex Bank has deployed a system where the ATM Cards are issued to customers instantly. A customer who walks to any banking hall of a rural bank to request a card is expected to receive same within 10 minutes. The customer is also given the opportunity of selecting the PIN for the card during the process of registration and acquisition. The platform is connected to the gh-link network and holders of gh-link cards from other commercial banks can perform transactions on the ATMs. Similarly, RCBs card holders can perform transactions on ATMs of other commercial banks which accept e-Zwich cards (Flexi ATM). As the ATMs become fully functional, the platform will be upgraded to acquire international cards and Point-of-Sale (POS) transactions to expand the reach of the card usage.

It is believed that these projects would offer rural banks' customers the convenience

of multiple channels in performing banking business on Dispensers and Point of Sale Terminals 24/7 across the length and breadth of Ghana. The Managing Director of ARB Apex Bank, Mr Kojo Mattah, has assured all rural and community banks that the ARB Apex Bank would not require a deposit margin account as cover for liquidity needs of customers as pertains in arrangements with some other banks.

With the RCB ATM platform, since the ATM dispensers are connected to the T24 core banking software, the transactions are processed in real time and effected on the customer's account instantly. There is no need to maintain a fully-funded account with any third party as a requirement before ATM transactions can go through.

Apart from that, there would be no challenges with reconciliation of customer accounts as the RCBs ATM transaction settlements would be done by the ARB Apex Bank through the RCBs clearing accounts daily.

Mr Mattah, concluding his address at the launching ceremony, urged all stakeholders of this laudable initiative to take pride in having accounts with RCBs because “from now on, this should

go with some pride as ARB Apex Bank and the RCBs are poised to give our customers the quality of service that they would get elsewhere”. Mr Mattah further reiterated that “we all come from one village

or another and when we travel to our villages and towns to distress from the hustle and bustle of city life, the RCBs are there to provide us with convenient banking needs”.

The launch in pictures



SOCIAL MEDIA: Opportunities & Threats

- Eric Kojo Affanu

Have you ever wished you could remove some indexed items about you from the internet? Maybe it's an inaccurate or inflammatory post / comment or an unflattering photo (in this era of leaked photos and videos) on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram put up by you or a friend. Conversely, could it be that you've been so quiet or cautious that now there's little, if any, online evidence of a solid track record or thought leadership for a prospective employer to help determine if you're the best candidate for a job?

It's increasingly difficult for most of us to best manage the realm between our public (online) and private selves and the relationships we acquire in the process. Like it or not, the internet has come to stay and you are now your own best publicist and must decide what image to project in various forums, both online and offline. The internet and social media, therefore, could be a threat or an opportunity depending on how you act online. I want to share with you some few thoughts on how to manage your online reputation to take advantage of social media for your own benefit:

Think Before You Post

Before you upload that picture on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or "like" a friend's post or picture, STOP! Have you considered how those messages might reflect on your online reputation or that of your employer? Will it advance or destroy your career? Will it enhance your company's or your reputation? You may want to avoid hate speech, controversial and insensitive posts. The rule of the thumb is – **Do Not Post anything on social media you wouldn't want linked to you.**

Social Media Attacks

Your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media accounts are susceptible to cyber attacks!

Remember, if your account is compromised; posts and tweets could be made in your name; on your behalf!! Take necessary security precautions to protect your accounts, by using strong passwords, not clicking on enticing links and not falling prey to social engineering attacks.



Nude Pictures

I am betting that majority of mobile phone users will have pictures or videos on their devices they wouldn't want posted on the social media. We are in a selfie crazy era, and we all need to take heed! Remove all nude pictures or videos you don't want online from your computers connected to the internet, skydrive or other online cloud services. There are thousands of leaked pictures, videos and online chat messages on social media that victims will want taken down. I hope this doesn't happen to you. If it's really necessary to keep these pictures encrypt them, for example using simple apps such as "vault" on your mobile phone.

Google yourself

This is by far the easiest thing anyone can do! If you find something you wouldn't want your family, employer, church or others to see, you need to make changes. Whilst some changes are possible, others are not!! They are stuck with you for life!. Again be mindful what you post on the internet.

In conclusion, it's safe to say that social engineering has its positives! Let's exploit that to advance our careers and project the growth of our employers' businesses. The negatives are real and avoidable. Take the necessary steps to stay safe online.

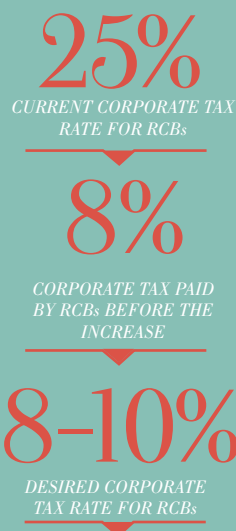


25% Corporate Tax is Suffocating Rural Banks

ARB Apex Bank MD Appeals to Government for Drastic Reduction

Until September 1, 2015, when the Commissioner-General of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) announced the new Income Tax Act 2015 (Act 896), which was passed by Parliament and signed into law by the President, the Rural and Community Banks were paying 8 percent tax on their annual income. This has seen a colossal increase from the 8 percent to 25 percent.

This, the Managing Director of ARB



Apex Bank Limited, Mr. Kojo Mattah, said could 'suffocate' most of the rural and community banks and affect their core financial responsibilities as well as the very purpose for which they were established. This could subsequently weaken their contributions to socio-economic development, especially in the rural areas.

Mr. Mattah has therefore appealed to the government, through the Ministry



If government wants Rural and Community Banks to play the role they were set up to do, then government must reverse it to the eight percent or at most peg it at ten percent and must be done as soon as possible because it is really, suffocating them.

of Finance and Ghana Revenue Authority, to as a matter of urgency take a second look at the 25 percent corporate tax currently being paid by Rural and Community Banks in Ghana and peg it at 10 percent. Mr. Mattah made the appeal in an exclusive interview with The Rural Banker recently.

According to him the RCBs spend so much money to operate in their catchment areas and this is where the universal banks do not want to go and even if they do, they are only interested in doing business with certain calibre of customers. He has further stressed that the RCBs go deep into the trenches through very difficult means which is more expensive to bring in the unbanked as well as petty traders and the poor farmers into their banking operation net and so

government should consider these and reduce the tax as an incentive to them. The Rural Banker can confirm that these developments are compelling most of them to withdraw their community support and increasing their interest rate just to meet their operational cost and be able to pay good dividend to shareholders.

Rural and community banks in the country as per their mandate are supposed to alleviate poverty and build up the economic livelihoods of the rural and peri-urban communities.

By this description, they target very low income earners, petty traders as well as farmers in the deep rooted rural communities. Indigenes of the community buy shares to become owners of the bank to earn dividend on annual basis. Rural and Community Banks have been investing part of their earnings in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes and activities in their catchment areas, which are predominantly rural. These contributions, which mostly come in the form of scholarships, infrastructural development, cash donations, supply and replacement of medical equipment, among others, in many ways help to enhance the livelihoods of rural dwellers and these come from the profit they make.

The industry currently has 141 registered banks with over 700 branches across the nation. The industry has provided employment opportunities to a large number of Ghanaians, particularly in the rural communities, who pay taxes to government for the development of the Ghanaian economy.



Odotobri is 2016 CIMG Rural Bank of the Year

This is the second time the Bank has been recognized by CIMG. Odotobri Rural Bank won the maiden edition of the same award in 2012

Odotobri Rural Bank Limited at Jacobu in the Ashanti Region has been adjudged the rural bank of the year 2016 by the Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana (CIMG).

This is the second time the Bank has been recognized by CIMG. Odotobri Rural Bank won the maiden edition of the same award when the rural banking category was included in the award scheme in 2012.

The award was conferred on the Bank last year at the 28th National Marketing Performance Awards ceremony held at the Banquet Hall, State House in Accra. The award ceremony was on the theme “Cause Related Marketing; a Panacea for National Behavioral Change”.

Objectives for Selection

The objectives which the CIMG set out to appraise the Bank’s nomination were to create awareness of the marketing concept and its importance for the success of businesses in terms of sustained and steady top-line as well as profit growth and to promote high professional standards to encourage excellence among marketing practitioners.

Other objectives were to stimulate healthy competition among organizations as well as to ensure and improve quality of products and services being offered by businesses.



mission to provide efficient financial services through customized products, good corporate governance, well-motivated human resource, maximization of shareholders' wealth, consistent application of improved technology and being socially responsible.”

He was grateful to the management team and the entire staff as he recognized their unique individual roles which saw the Bank win this prestigious award. He finally dedicated the award to the bank's cherished customers as well as all relevant stakeholders, saying their loyalty with the bank had made them what they are today.

Citation

In a citation presented to the bank, it determined to be an accomplished giant in unit banking and its evaluators could attest that Odotobri Rural Bank sets itself in the right direction towards that and more during the year under review.

These, the citation further stated, the bank did by the provision of efficient financial services, good corporate governance, a well-motivated work force and being socially responsible and hence catching the eye of their clientele and assessors.

“Your CSR drive in the areas of education, community development and life support continue to impact on your publics who ranked you above your peers,” the citation finally stated.

Criteria for Selection

The Governing Council of the CIMG, in collaboration with

stakeholders such as Association of Rural Banks – Ghana, AGI, GNCCI, MOTI, National Insurance Commission, Ghana Association of Bankers and research institutions, among others, play an active role in the selection process.

Consequently, the Awards Selection Committee of the CIMG, in consultation with other stakeholders, nominated Odotobri Rural Bank and other rural banks in that category and out of about 140 rural banks in the country, Odotobri Rural Bank emerged Rural Bank of the Year, 2016.

Remarks from the CEO

The Chief Executive Officer of the Bank, Mr Siaka Baba Ahmed, spoke to the Rural Banker in an interview.

“ We achieved this feat through well thought-out corporate vision to be an accomplished giant in unit banking; with the Bank's

Other Awards

Odotobri Rural Bank has received a number of awards, both locally and internationally. The awards include the 51st position in the Ghana Club 100 rankings, Outstanding Rural Bank of the year, received at the West African Regional Magazine Achievers Awards (2016) and Gold Award in Advisory Services and Silver Award in Deposit Mobilization at the 13th Ashanti Financial Services Excellence Awards (2016).

The work of the Chief Executive Officer, Mr Siaka Baaba Ahmed, has also been recognised by various institutions. Notable among them was Companionship Award from the Civilian Institute of Democratic Administration as a Fellow.

CIMG RURAL BANK OF THE YEAR 2016



***We dedicate this prestigious award
to our numerous customers &
relevant stakeholders.
We thank you for making us what
we are today !!!***



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WHERE BUSINESS GROWS



How mindful are you of your domestic security?

How safe are you with that nanny, maid, steward, cook, security guards, driver, lesson teacher, etc, whether at home or in the office? We are all shouting "Security! Security!! Security!!!" but are we not all guilty?

All the above mentioned people working with us, do we have their guarantors? Do you ever visit their referees even after a year or two of their engagement? Do we ever revisit their home address provided or call to see if there has been a change in address or phone numbers? Did you register the maid, drivers, nannies, etc, you keep in your homes with the relevant agencies such as the Police, Safety Commission or Neighbourhood Vigilante groups? Do you have their photographs? Do you attend

your Estate/Street meetings or are you so reserved that you have no relationship with your neighbors and too busy to attend meetings? Do you belong to a WhatsApp group for residents which helps to relay emergency messages such as when a neighbour is being attacked or robbed, a fire incident, a neighbour is critically ill and needs urgent help and other emergencies? Do you know that your cook, nanny, driver, steward, maid, day care centre handlers or lesson teacher, etc, could be HIV positive. He/she could be infected with Hepatitis B or even tuberculosis? What will it cost you to do a medical test for them before you employ them?

It is your life that is in danger if you engage a prospective employee without knowing

their medical history. That househelp you get yearly from an agent. Have you ever bothered to check where the agent lives or whatever job he does.

Do you know the househelp he gives could be a thief, hired killer or kidnapper. The housegirls/ nannies you allow to sleep in your childrens room could be agents of the devil. They could be criminals. Do you know that your driver could be on the police wanted list for a crime? Have you done a check on him with the Police and do you have a full-length photograph of him?

Never allow your daughters get too familiar with drivers. Especially when they are below 16 years. They can be raped by these drivers. Drivers must

never be allowed to take children to school alone. There must always be a female adult in the car. Do you know that your driver could be hypertensive, have High Blood Pressure, poor eye sight or could have an enlarged heart and not fit to drive?

Is your security guard a citizen or a foreigner from Niger, Chad and Benin Republic? How did/ can you confirm that? If he is a foreigner, is he registered by the requisite organisation and eligible to work in Ghana?

Never talk about money transactions or cost of your jewelleryes or valuables in the presence of your domestic staff. Never allow househelp tidy your room when you are not around. It is a time they search your room to know

where valuable things are kept and waiting for the right time to steal them and run away. Most thefts usually have in-house informants. Please note that the longer your domestic staff work with you, the more dangerous they can be. Are you aware that your domestic staff monitor your movement? Do you also do same? It is good to monitor them. Go home or office when they least expect you. The head of the family must always ensure that all gates leading into your house are checked and locked by him every night.

Criminals are deadly. They wait for a time to strike when you least expect and they are hardly ever thought to be the suspect. Don't be a victim. Do all the necessary checks immediately. NEVER EVER GET DOMESTIC



STAFF AND DRIVERS FROM THE SAME SOURCE. IT IS DEADLY. Get a CCTV installed in your house and monitor from your phones. Save your life and that of your loved ones. Crime rate is on the increase daily. Security and safety is everyone's business including you. REMEMBER, YOU ARE NUMBER ONE SECURITY TO YOURSELF!!!

If you find this relevant and useful, get about 100 copies of this newsletter and give out to your friends, family and loved ones.

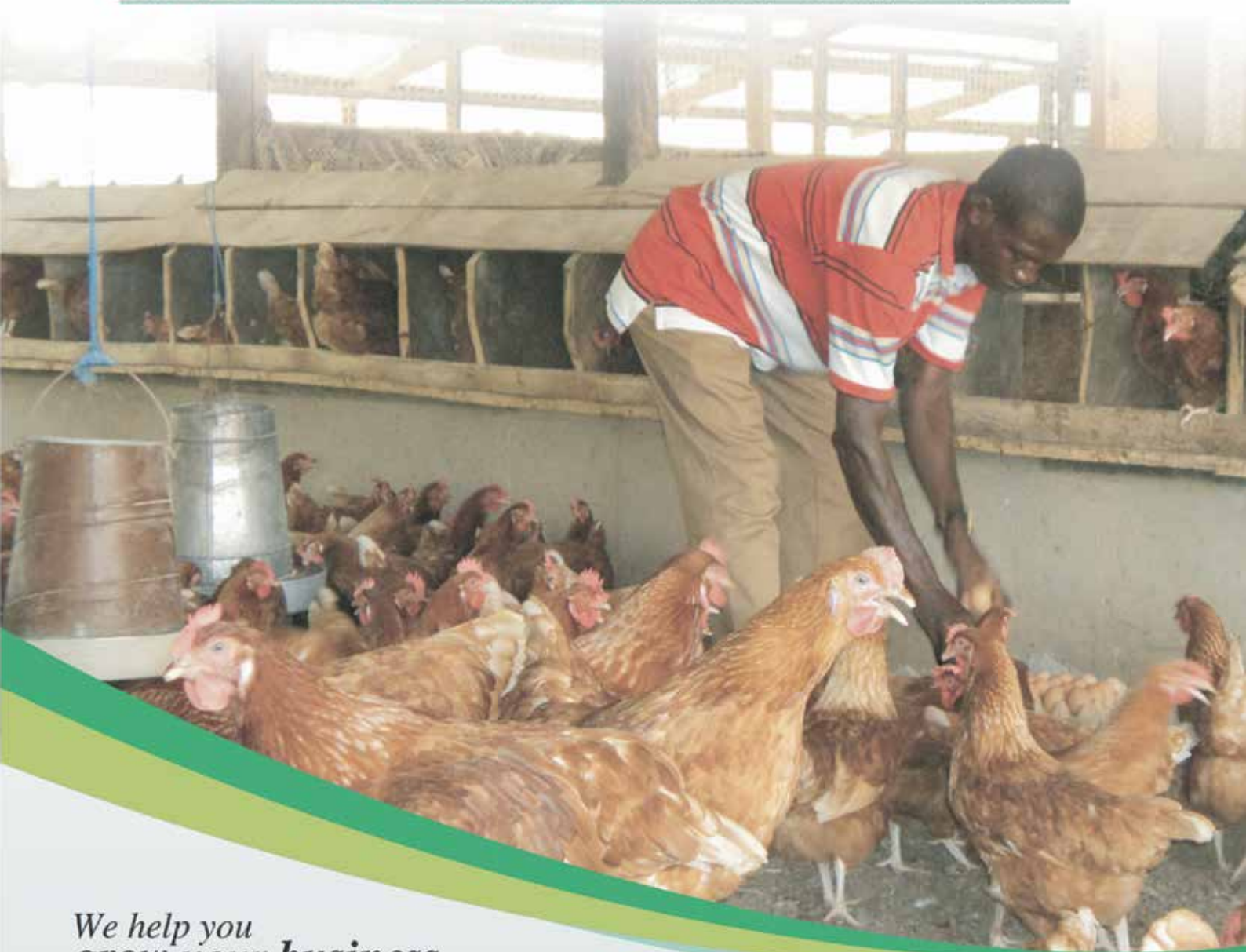
BRAIN TEASER



- 1 *A man and his son were in an automobile accident. The man died on the way to the hospital, but the boy was rushed into surgery. The emergency room surgeon said "I can't operate, that's my son!" How is this possible?*
- 2 *Can you name three consecutive days without using the words Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, or Sunday?*
- 3 *What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?*
- 4 *A doctor and a bus driver are both in love with the same woman, an attractive girl named Sarah. The bus driver had to go on a long bus trip that would last a week. Before he left, he gave Sarah seven apples. Why?*
- 5 *What is black when you buy it, red when you use it, and gray when you throw it away?*



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- * Church Development Loans

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U-Cash: A Gh-Link Card for Rural & Community Banks

U-Cash is a proprietary card product for the Rural and Community Banks facilitated by ARB Apex Bank that is meant to give customers the convenience to access their funds from electronic channels anywhere in Ghana.

ARB Apex Bank Limited has taken the lead to implement the new Ghana Interbank Payment & Settlement System (GHIPSS) EMV standard technology to facilitate payments on the Gh-Link platform. This process to be adopted by all commercial banks beginning 2018 is to move Ghana into a universally EMV compliant environment.

GHIPSS started the process to migrate all domestic cards from magnetic stripe to Chip & PIN in 2016. This became necessary because of the frequency of fraudulent activities on

ATMs that have heightened, and the need and urgency for card security measures to be implemented to eliminate such fraudulent activities. The EMV payment technology is the proven solution against counterfeit card fraud, which is prevalent in a majority of these fraudulent transactions. Chip-based payment cards contain embedded microprocessors that provide strong transaction security features and other application capabilities not possible with traditional magnetic stripe cards.

ARB Apex Bank Limited is facilitating this project to enable the Rural and Community banks become competitive in the digital banking space. The first phase of the project has seen deployment of ATMs for some Rural and Community Banks nationwide and the ARB Apex Bank. In addition, a platform for INSTANT Gh-Link card issuance for RCB customers has also been deployed to some RCBs. This card being issued by the RCBs complies with GEMALTO PURE technology which guarantees greater security and more inter-operability and the first to be issued in Ghana by a local bank. This initiative provides the RCBs with a unique opportunity to provide their customers with 24-hour access to their accounts through alternative channels.

Apex Bank has named this card product U-CASH. U-CASH is a proprietary card product for the Rural and Community Banks facilitated by ARB Apex Bank that is meant to give customers the convenience to access their funds from electronic channels anywhere in Ghana.

The card is the first to take full advantage of the newly introduced EVM Gh-Link technology and creates further convenience and channel options for customers on ATMs countrywide and Point-Of-Sales devices (POSS).

Objectives

1. To provide a proprietary card for customers of the RCBs to enable more convenient

- access through the Gh-link switching service provided by GhIPSS.
2. To provide customers with a cost effective access to their funds.
3. To position the Rural Banks to be competitive in the drive towards achieving a cash-light economy.
4. To increase the Rural and Community Banks' income streams and float.

Benefits to the Rural Banks

1. Increase float for the bank as customers leave funds in their accounts with the comfort that funds can be accessed at their convenience
2. Increase in bank's customer base as an incentive for CASA drive
3. Place the bank strategically for the cashlite society agenda
4. Reduce the cues at the banking halls
5. Opportunity for loyalty schemes which will enable bank create valuable relationships with other parties.

Benefits To the Customer

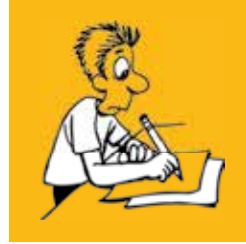
1. Cost effective access to their account
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BRAIN TEASER

6. I am the beginning of sorrow and the end of sickness. You cannot express happiness without me yet I am in the midst of crosses. I am always in risk yet never in danger. You may find me in the sun, but I am never out of darkness.

COLUMNIST



Joseph Akossey

Takeover of UT & Capital Banks: Lessons for RCBs



UT Bank and Capital Banks was the fact that, they were deeply insolvent. This implies that their liabilities exceed their assets and this puts them in a position where they will not be able to meet their obligation when they fall due.

It is worth mentioning that the Bank of Ghana decision to revoke the licences of the two banks was based on section 123 of Banks and Specialized Deposit Taking Institutions Act 2016 (Act 930). According to section 123 of the Act, “where the Bank of Ghana determines that the bank or Specialized Deposit Taking Institution is insolvent or is likely to become insolvent within the next sixty days, the Bank of Ghana shall revoke the licence of the Bank or Specialized Deposit Taking Institution”.

On the 14th of August 2017, the Bank of Ghana announced a Purchase and Assumption transaction which allowed GCB Bank to take over UT Bank and Capital Bank. The announcement further stated that, the licences of UT Bank

and Capital Bank had been revoked. Per the transaction, all deposits and selected assets of the two banks have been transferred to GCB Bank. According to the Bank of Ghana, the primary reason for the revocation of licences of

The Bank of Ghana further said that the decision of adopting the purchase and assumption transaction which allowed GCB to take over the two banks was triggered by the need



to protect depositors' funds and ensure stability in the banking industry. It is worth noting that, many financial analysts and stakeholders have raised several factors which accounted for the failure of UT Bank and Capital Bank.

However, this article will look at the various lessons that Rural Banks should learn from the decision taken by the Bank of Ghana to revoke the licences of the two banks as well as the seeming causes that led to their failure.

Lessons to learn

The need to be compliant

The decision taken by the Bank of Ghana to revoke the licences of UT Bank and Capital Bank means that the regulator is now proactive and tough to enforce the banking regulations. Hence, rural banks should do their utmost to comply with the requirements spelt out in the

Banks and Deposit Taking Institutions Act 2016 as well as other prudential requirements.

According to section 16 of Bank and Deposit Taking Institutions Act 2016 (Act 930), Bank of Ghana may revoke the licence of a bank or specialized deposit taking institution which persistently contravenes the Act, the regulations, directives or orders.

It is worthy to mention once again that, RCBs should comply with prudential requirements such as capital adequacy ratio, primary and secondary reserve among others. This will shield them from experiencing sanctions from the regulator (Bank of Ghana).

Improving the quality of loan portfolio

It has been revealed that high non-performing loans were one of the causes of the demise of UT Bank. The non-performing

loans impacted adversely on the banks' capital and profit. Therefore, rural banks should work hard to improve the quality of their loan portfolio to enhance liquidity and profitability. Rural Banks should therefore be careful about rapid and uncontrolled credit expansion (over lending) which does not take into account loan to deposit ratio, capacity of the borrower and loan recovery ability.

They should also be careful about connected lending which might result in loan impairment. Furthermore, RCBs should adopt innovative and effective loan recovery strategies to recover their non-performing loans.

In summary, they should adopt good credit administration. According to the Efficiency Monitoring Unit of ARB Apex Bank report for the first quarter of 2017, the non-performing

loan ratio of the rural banking industry stood at 14.20% at the end of March 2017. It was however, below the major banks industry ratio of 20.20%. Nevertheless, some individual RCBs still have non-performing loan ratio higher than the industry average which can erode their profit and also affect liquidity. Therefore these Rural Banks should improve their asset quality by giving good loans.

Remain well-capitalized

According to the Bank of Ghana, the two banks which failed had a severe impairment of their capital (deficient in capital). This means that they were not adequately capitalized to conduct their banking business. Rural banks should work hard to ensure that they are adequately capitalized. They should realize that being undercapitalized or significantly undercapitalized has serious repercussions under the BSDI Act 2016 (Act 930).

RCBs should do their utmost to meet the minimum paid-up capital of one million Ghana Cedis and even exceed it. According to the efficiency Monitoring Unit of ARB Apex Bank Report for the first quarter of 2017, 36 rural banks did not comply with the minimum paid-up capital requirement. However, research has revealed that scores of RCBs are working hard to meet the paid-up capital requirement. It is heartwarming to say that some rural banks have already exceeded the one million Ghana Cedis paid-up capital

requirement. To be adequately capitalized, RCBs should deploy innovative strategies to attract fresh capital injection from potential shareholders. Currently, a lot of RCBs are issuing bonus shares which are likely to dilute their shares which will negatively affect dividend per share and also make their shares unattractive to prospective shareholders.

RCBs should also adopt innovative strategies which will help them to maximize profit so as to enhance their capital base. Related to the above mentioned points is that RCBs should go the extra mile to improve their capital adequacy ratio so that they will be able to absorb shocks.

Giving consideration to merger and acquisition

Ailing rural banks which are heading towards insolvency such that it is becoming impossible to turn around, should consider merging with or take over by strong rural banks.

This is a more prudent decision than waiting to be pressured by the regulator to either merge or be taken over by another rural bank. Also, some RCBs might be reluctant to consider the concept of merger or acquisition because of the tendency to lose their sense of identity as well as other challenges. However, rural banks should look at the bigger picture by focusing on the benefits such as growth in capital base, being competitive and other synergies.



Founded: 2009

Key People:

*William Ato Essien
Dr. Mensa Otabil
Rev. Fitzgerald Odonkor*

Awards & Honours

*CIMG Non-Bank
Financial Institution of the
Year 2012*

*Ghana Club 100; 10th
Best Performing Company
for the year 2012*

*In August, 2016 Best
Growing Bank, Best Bank
in Household/Retail
Banking*

Adherence to good corporate governance

Poor corporate governance has been identified as one of the key factors that led to the failure of UT Bank and Capital Bank. Hence, RCBs should work hard to promote and adhere to good corporate governance practices. They should allow corporate governance structures and principles to work. In line with good corporate governance practice, board of directors of rural banks should not interfere unnecessarily in the day to day operations. The day to day management is in the ambit of management staff.

There should be clear distinction of roles between the board and management of rural banks. Board should focus on giving policy direction, monitoring and evaluating performance of key management staff, giving approval to certain decisions among others.

Directors who have high stake in the bank by virtue of holding significant shares should not manipulate the affairs of the bank as if it is a sole proprietorship business. They should allow the system, procedures, policies and structure to work. Research has revealed that some RCBs are not doing well because of poor corporate governance. Rural Banks should have robust internal control systems in place and also ensure that they are working. It is one thing

having internal control systems in place and also another thing ensuring that they are working. Therefore, RCBs should go beyond just formulating policies and establishing systems and procedures. It is imperative for the board, top management and the entire staff to comply with policies, procedures among others. For example, when a policy allows a branch manager a limit to approve and disburse a loan, he should comply. There should also be monitoring systems to ensure compliance.

Conclusion

So far, we have discussed the fact that RCBs can learn several lessons from the collapse of UT and Capital Banks. Among the lessons are; the need to be compliant, improving the quality of loan portfolio, remain well-capitalized, giving consideration to merger and acquisition and adherence to good corporate governance. Management of rural banks should do their best to apply the lessons discussed.



Founded: 2009

Key People:

*Joseph Nsonamoah
Prince Kofi Amoabeng
Stephen Antwi-Asimeng*

Awards & Honours

Bank of the Year 2011 (Ghana Banking Awards, 2011)

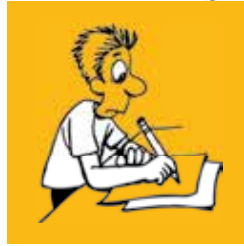
Most Respected Company (Price WaterhouseCoopers and B&FT newspaper, 2012)

Best Bank, IT/Electronic Banking (Ghana Banking Awards, 2011)

1st Runner up- Customer Care, Retail Banking, Socially Responsible Bank, Medium Term Loan Finance and Advisory Service (Ghana Banking Awards 2011)

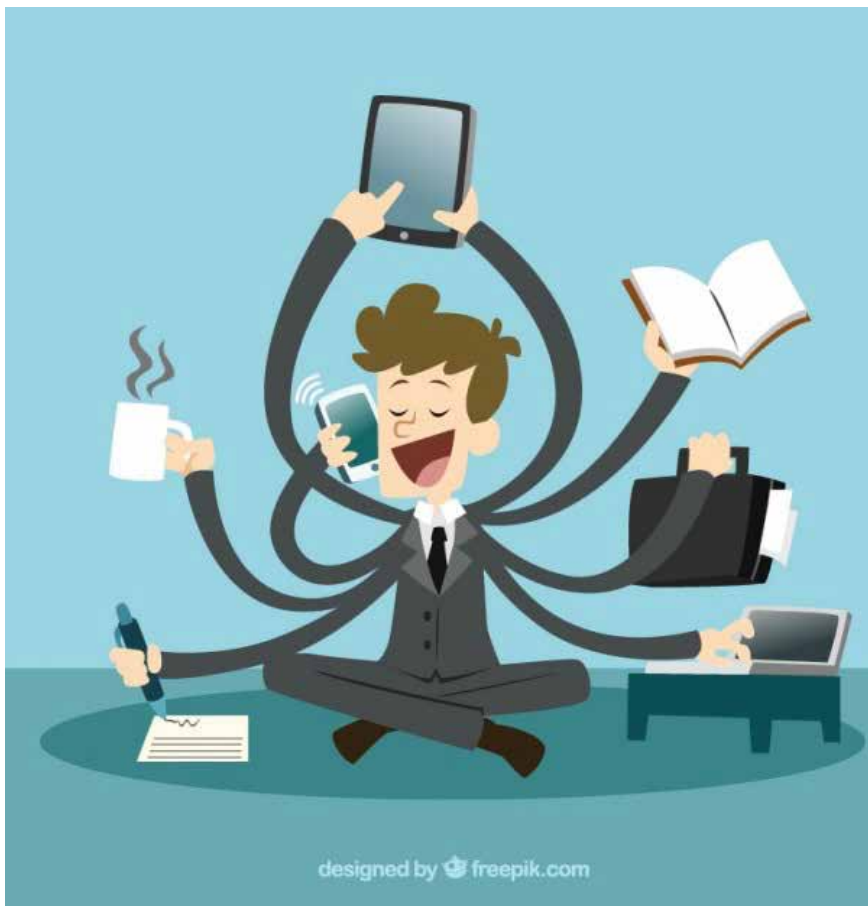
2nd Runner up Corporate Banking (Ghana Banking Awards 2011)

COLUMNIST



Richard A. Acheampong

Are you a workaholic?



Of course there are things you can do to scale back and build healthier work habits as well as treatment options if you find that you have gone overboard. But the first and most important yet sometimes most difficult step is determining whether you have the problem. Could you or someone you know be a workaholic? Let's do a quick test here. Do you work through lunch? Check email while on vacation? How about cancelling on social plans so you can catch up on work? If you answered "yes" to these questions, then you might be in the workaholic zone. But don't conclude yet, read on to see if you have a confluence of these symptoms?

Work longer than your colleagues

Workaholics are typically the first to arrive in the office and the last to leave, or they log in after working hours and work into the night. Do extra hours equal productive hours? Not often, studies say. Instead, experts say that breaks, time off and self-care enable more productivity in fewer hours.

There's never enough time to get jobs done these days, and technology has made sure that our work follows us everywhere we go. Some people manage to make things work; they carve out time for their personal lives, they find ways to work more efficiently and know when to let go. But for many others, it can be a slippery slope from

a busy work month to an endlessly busy work life. Though work addiction may be acceptable in certain work cultures, experts agree that such a lifestyle can lead to detrimental long-term consequences. The trick therefore is to work hard while still maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Trouble delegating work

This doesn't come as a surprise. Workaholics want to get themselves involved even with the micro details of a project. Sometimes they feel no one can do it better than they can. Delegation thus becomes a major challenge for them. Where they muster the courage to delegate, they still tend to micro manage the project.

Can't turn off

Can't shake off thoughts of work? You may be in the zone. Workaholism isn't just working long hours. Experts say true workaholism is the inability to turn off thoughts of work. Workaholics hate to take leave and even when they are out of office their thoughts are almost always preoccupied with work.

Neglect of Health

Workaholics often focus so much on their work that their health even suffers. They pick up a lot of bad habits that can hamper health. Constrained for time, some turn to junk food, some gulp down lunch at their desks and others skip meals altogether. Exercise is often abandoned and sleep habits get thrown off schedule. Specialists who treat work addicts consistently see the same ailments among the overworked: gastrointestinal problems, headaches and migraines, weight gain or loss due to poor diets, increased irritability and tiredness, and even heavier drinking as a form of stress relief.

Strained relationships

When people who love you tell you, 'I never see you' or 'you're never around,' it may be time to reevaluate your work-life balance. Workaholics tend to miss important life milestones like anniversaries and birthdays because of work. They have a hard time saying "no" to the boss and an even harder time saying "yes" to the family.

Self-worth is tied to work success

How do you measure your value? Most workaholics define their value and self-worth in terms of work achievements. Outstanding results make them feel important, anything less and they feel unimportant and destroyed.

JUST FOR LAUGHS



A father passing by his son's bedroom was was astonished to see the bed was nicely made and everything was picked up. Then, he saw an envelope, propped up prominently on the pillow. It was addressed, 'Dad'. With the worst premonition, he opened the envelope and read the letter, with trembling hands: "Dear, Dad. It is with great regret and sorrow that I'm writing you. I had to elope with my new girlfriend, because I wanted to avoid a scene with Mum and you. I've been finding real passion with Stacy. She is so nice, but I knew you would not approve of her because of all her piercings, tattoos, her tight motorcycle clothes, and because she is so much older than I am. But it's not only the passion, Dad. She's pregnant. Stacy said that we will be very happy. She owns a trailer in the woods, and has a stack of firewood for the whole winter. We share a dream of having many more children. Stacy has opened by eyes to the fact that marijuana doesn't really hurt anyone. We'll be growing it for ourselves and trading it with the other people in the commune for all the cocaine and ecstasy we want. In the meantime, we'll pray that science will find a cure for AIDS so that Stacy can get better. She sure deserves it! Dont worry Dad, I'm 15, and I know how to take care of myself. Someday, I'm sure we'll be back to visit so you can get to know your many grandchildren. Love your son, Joshua. P.S. Dad, none of the above is true. I'm over at Jason's house. I just wanted to remind you that there are worse things in life than the school report that's on the kitchen table. Call when it is safe for me to come home!

16th National Managers' Conference

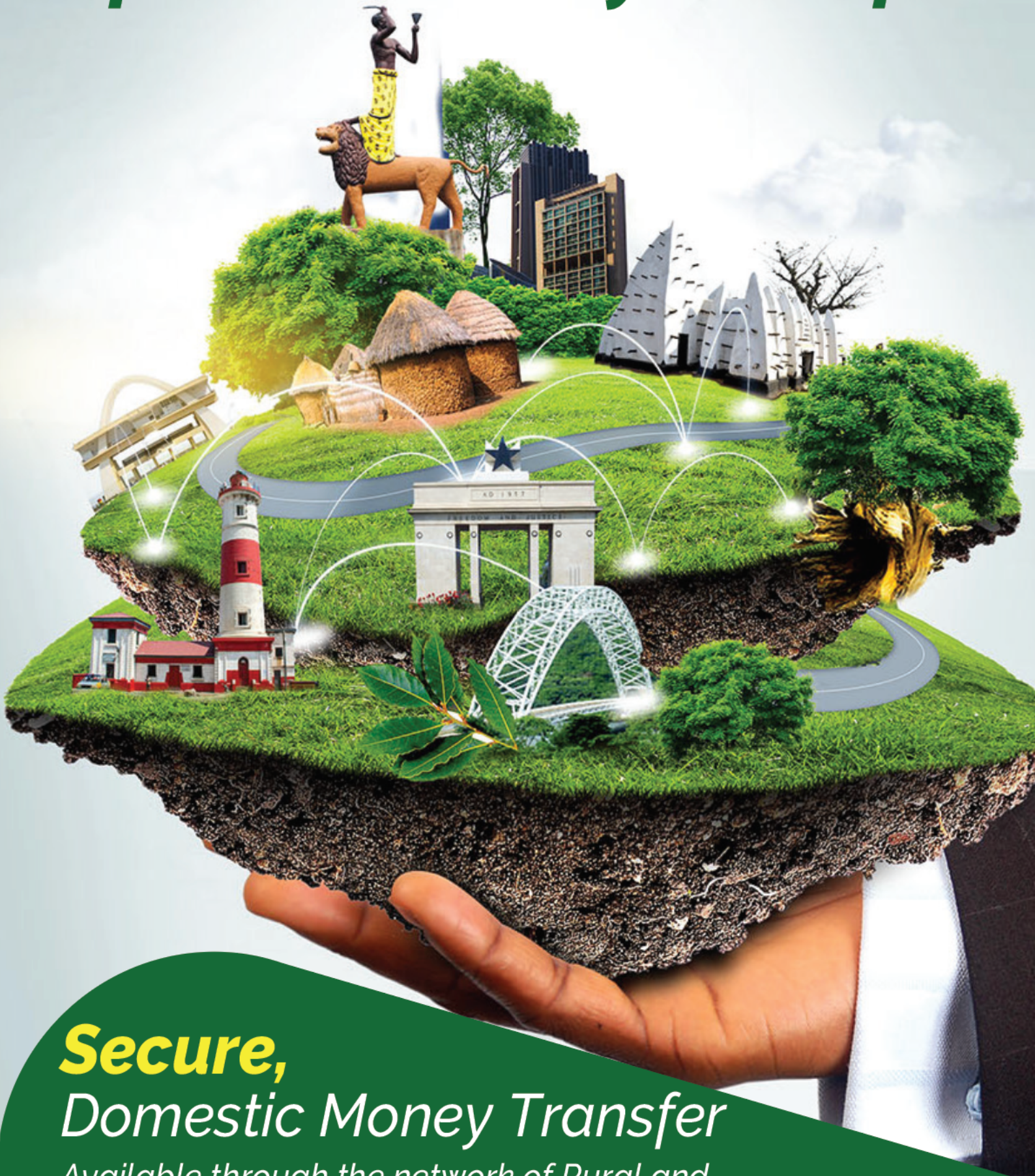
The ARB Apex Bank together with the over one hundred and forty rural and community banks across the country held its annual two-day managers' conference in Ho, the capital of the Volta Region.



The conference was held on the 12th to the 15th of October, 2017 at the Volta Serene Hotel on the theme “Making Greater Impact in the Rural Banking Industry through Innovation and Collaboration for Sustainable Growth”.



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Industry Position	Bank	National Position	Change
1	Amenfiman Rural Bank	24	↓
2	Sefwiman Rural Bank	28	↓
3	Fiaseman Rural Bank	29	↑
4	Atwima Kwanwoma Rural Bank	32	→
5	Otuasekan Rural Bank	35	↑
6	South Akim Rural Bank	37	↓
7	Ahantaman Rural Bank	49	↑
8	Akim Bosome Rural Bank	50	*
9	Akwapim Rural Bank	51	↑
10	Odotobri Rural Bank	58	↓
11	Bosomtwe Rural Bank	59	↑
12	Nwabiagya Rural Bank	60	↑
13	Adansi Rural Bank	61	*
14	Amansie West Rural Bank	63	*
15	Bia-Torya Community Bank	64	↑
16	Dumpong Rural Bank	65	↓
17	Kintampo Rural Bank	66	↑
18	Bawjiase Area Rural Bank	67	*
19	Asokore Rural Bank	68	*
20	Atwima Mponua Rural Bank	69	↑
21	Kaaseman Rural Bank	70	*
22	Juaben Rural Bank	71	↑
23	Nsoatreman Rural Bank	73	↑
24	Lower Pra Rural Bank	85	↓
25	Amanano Rural Bank	86	↓
26	Suma Rural Bank	87	*
27	Asante Akyem Rural Bank	88	*

↑ Moved up ↓ Moved down → Same as previous year * New Entrant

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Susu Savings Accounts	Foreign Transfers	Overdrafts (Working Capital)
Me Daakye Savings	Loans (Agriculture, Commerce and Personal)	Commercial Loans
Overdraft Facilities	Salaried Workers' Loan Package	Advisory Service (Trust, Investment, Money Management, Safe Custody, Education, etc)
Corporate Loans		

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KRONOM.	TEL. 0202028263	AFRANCHO.	TEL. 0202028291
DR.MENSAH	TEL. 0202028295/020202898		



KOJO MATTAH

MD, ARB Apex Bank Limited

The Managing Director of ARB Apex Bank Limited, Mr. Kojo Mattah, has been in office for approximately nine months. His enthusiasm and preparedness to turn the fortunes of the ARB Apex Bank around and work to enhance the image of Rural and Community Banks has been widely acknowledged.

The Rural Banker caught up with the Managing Director at his office and engaged him in the following conversation.

TRB: Good evening Sir!

KM: Good evening, how are you doing?

TRB: Very well. First of all let me find out: more often, people get to occupy the topmost position of an organization when they rise through the ranks. The assumption is that they are familiar with the system and so can deliver to expectation of the employer. In your case, the story is different. Do you see yourself as an outsider?

KM: I find myself to be an insider because my first place of work is a Rural Bank. I started with Dzelukope Rural Bank in 1982, which later became Anlo Rural Bank. After I left, the bank had problems and went under. I did two (2) years there, I left in 1984 for Accra to start training as an accountant. While I was undergoing training as an accountant, I did a lot of restructuring work for Rural Banks. Some are still standing strong; some even after the restructuring could not survive. I can cite Bogoso Area Rural Bank, which is one of the best banks that we have; I can also cite Kwahu Rural Bank which is also doing well

Bank; I believe the likes of Asiedu Mante will be very happy. Having said that, I can say I'm an outsider to ARB Apex Bank. But even that is debatable. I have done some consultancy work for ARB Apex Bank; I have done some works for the Association of Rural Banks. So I don't find myself to be an outsider, but in the strict sense of it, I am not an insider of ARB Apex Bank as far as staff, payroll, and structure is concerned. So if you look at it that way, may be I'm an outsider. In spite of all that I pray that I don't disappoint the people, and for me; by the grace of God, failure is not an option.

TRB: You worked at all these places?

KM: No I only did restructuring for them. I spent almost three (3) months at Bogoso, and three (3) months at Kwahu Pepeace to do restructuring exercise. Not to talk of the Audits. So for me, I think my natural habitation has been rural banking even though I later spent seven (7) years at Barclays. I've seen the high and the low side of Universal Banking. I find this as a natural flow for me and I'm ready to give off my best and to leave a legacy for the rural and community banks. I want to wake up one day, especially the day I will pick my bag and leave, and be proud that I left a good legacy. I believe that will be the joy of the people who came up with the idea of setting up Apex

TRB: Do you actually feel welcome at Apex Bank?

KM: Overwhelmingly welcomed. The first day I met the staff, yes! What I cannot say for a fact is whether they were pretending. If they were, it wouldn't have lasted this long. So I feel welcome. I don't also want to be naïve to think that it is not everybody who likes that 'the man' called Kojo Mattah is running the affairs. So if I think that, I may be naïve. I don't also want to be paranoid to think it is not everybody who wants me here" so these are two things I pray against. So I think I have the overwhelming support of the staff and I interact with them a lot, and from the feedback I get, I think they are not pretending.



be offering, they will reconsider coming back. I want to leave it to the judgement of the banks some three to six months down the road whether they can say it is still business as usual. Some of them tell me; “yeah, we can see a new breeze of life, a new wave”. If you ask me what I have done, I can’t point out anything I am just doing what I think I should do. I can categorize the problems or challenges of ARB Apex Bank into two areas: Leadership and Execution. Once we get a handle on these two things, the rest should be easy. That’s why I’m prepared to provide the leadership and that is what I told the staff on my first day. I know it’s not going to be easy. If it were easy, anybody could do it. It will take a lot of determination, a lot of commitment. And this, I am prepared to offer. I think they want somebody whom they can relate with. And so far I think I’m relating with them to the best of my abilities. We can chat, you don’t need to book appointment to come to my office; at least that’s the message I sent out. As to whether they believe it, some may still be skeptical.

I can sum the problems or challenges of ARB Apex Bank into two words, Leadership and Execution. And these are the two things I believe once we get a handle on them; the rest should be easy going. I know it’s not going to be easy. It will take a lot of determination, a lot of commitment.

TRB: You assumed office as the Managing Director, barely nine months ago, but with my own observation you’ve visited almost all the rural banks across the nation. What signs are you picking and what has been your general observation?

KM: I have visited all the regions. I have not visited all the rural banks. I have visited all our offices.

TRB: You mean Apex Bank offices?

KM: Yes as well as having chapter meetings with all of them. I will tell you there is a huge dissatisfaction and mistrust between the chapters or the Association and ARB Apex Bank. One is as a result of the

undue delays in the implementation of projects, which could also be as a result of carrying out too many projects at the same time. The General Managers in the Ashanti Region were visibly ‘charged’ when I held a meeting with them. One of them came to me and said “Sir, we can feel you have a good heart, but it’s too late. You’ve come late”. In my recent tour of ten (10) banks in Ashanti and three (3) in Eastern Region, I went to his bank and he told me at that meeting that “if you have to do something, you have to run”. So when I was leaving their office the last time, I asked him “You say I should run.” He said “No! Now you are flying”. From that chapter meeting I visited

some of the Directors of the banks, and we went to Brong-Ahafo. They were equally dissatisfied. So I can tell the things I picked on the ground and across board, the image was not the best.

TRB: Are you talking about Apex Bank image?

KM: Yes Apex Bank image vis-a-vis the rural and community banks. And that has resulted in some of them exiting our core banking software. Well, I keep telling them that we cannot force them to remain on the banking platform. Our new approach should be to render the best of services. If they realize that it is more expensive for them to be outside the core banking platform because of the benefits that the platform will

TRB: Coming from a marketing background, I think image in every corporate organization such as Apex Bank should be very paramount or one of your priorities. What are your immediate plans to raise the image of ARB Apex Bank as well as the rural and community banks?

KM: I would say service. Service to the rural and community banks because they are the

I'm looking forward to the day that the so-called stigma that is attached to being a rural and community bank will be totally erased; when people will be proud when they associate with an RCB, and feel left out when they don't have an account with an RCB.

only customers we have. The convoluted structure of giving birth to ARB Apex Bank and the RCBs giving birth to Apex Bank and Apex being their mini-regulator, they are the only customers Apex Bank has. We should be able to give them the best of services and that is what can translate into service to their customers. That is the reason why they felt some of our projects; especially the leading edge technology products that we wanted to roll out were delaying, some of them became angry and eventually exited the system. So for me it's service. I think there must be a lot of collaborations between RCBs and Apex Bank and among RCBs. So these are two things we should do. It is not just a matter of going on radio and talking about it. The best advert we can give ourselves is quality service because if you promise customers "when you come to me I will do ABC for you" that will be their expectation. You should even exceed the ABC, and give them XYZ. So for me I think we have to give them the best of services. I don't blame the ones that exited, and I keep telling my colleagues that when customers complain, you should be grateful. Because the day they stop complaining; trust me, they are getting ready to vote with their feet. So a customer who complains is gold to you because if they don't, you

wouldn't know what is in their minds. The next moment, they have voted with their feet and that is what is happening to us. Now I have to be going round, assuring them. The only savior now is them seeing the things we said we were going to do. I don't want to take credit for what we are doing because I didn't come to start them. But I can assure you that it took a lot of pushing and motivating leadership to get some of the things the way they are going. The second thing is that, you need to have timelines. You can miss the deadline. I'm glad we have the ATMs, at least those that we had on the drawing board for the two and half years. For now we are happy that at least the rural banks can heave a sigh of relief that we are doing the right thing. Their customers will feel that being customers of rural and community banks will from now on, go with some pride. So that it is not only the big universal banks that can give them technology driven items or services. I'm looking to the day that the so-called stigma that is attached to being a rural and community bank will be totally erased; when people will be proud, when people will feel like if you don't have an account with a rural and community bank, you are losing out.

TRB: The so-called stigma attached with

having an account with rural banks. Does that worry you?

KM: Yes and no. It worries me because it will be a barrier for winning new customers. People even tell me they want the name 'rural' to be dropped from the names of rural and community banks. I have a different view. I want the name to be there. And let's rebrand, let's reposition rural and community banks such that if you don't have a rural and community bank account, you are losing out. You see, the rural areas, they are the drivers of the economy. So if we want to reduce the rural-urban migration, we have to strengthen the economy of the rural areas and the rural banks are the key drivers. So they should feel proud that they are doing something good. On my rounds I have realized that most of the RCBs have very good, qualified staff. Some of them have chartered accountants; not one, not two. Some of them have qualified lawyers; others have qualified marketers. Today you can have a lot of professionals working in rural banks. Some of our CEOs hold PhDs. So you shouldn't say "I hold a PhD so I am overqualified to work in a rural bank". Rural Bank is a good place.

TRB: Generally, as far as I know, product innovation and development seem to be a very challenging task. I don't know what you want to do particularly in the area of rural banking.

KM: Product innovation is necessitated primarily by two things; changes in consumer taste and preference as well as changes in technology. So I keep telling my colleagues that technology is changing so fast that you must be running to be at the same place. So if you don't innovate, you will be lagging behind and so we have to innovate or we 'die'. Banking services or service delivery in general is an intangible thing. The difficulty is having it uniformed across board but we have to work at it and make sure that the service delivery across all rural banks is of appreciable quality and can only appeal to our co-workers that we are not doing our customers a favour. We are in business because of our customers. If we lose them we will end up closing our doors so we have to serve them to the best of our abilities. Back to the question; product innovation shouldn't be a challenge. We have the know-how within the rural banking community. So we will tap it together,

that is why I talk about collaboration. We will be able to come up with quality products and services for our customers and with that we will be able to say that having an account with a rural bank should not be a stigma.

TRB: The 25% corporate tax is really suffocating some of the rural banks, what do you have to say?

KM: 25% corporate tax is a huge headache for the banks, especially looking at where most of them operate from. They are very expensive areas. Some of these areas the universal banks shy away from. Rural

and community banks are serving a certain niche market for which government must be appreciative of and be considerate. Because some of the places, the RCBs are the only financial institutions there. So this financial inclusion thing we are all talking about, if we do not hold or create the right environment for rural banks to thrive, it will be a difficult thing. So I think government should take a second look at the corporate tax the RCBs are paying and give it a drastic reduction. Even if it will not go back to the 8%, may be 10 or 12.5% should be a

more reasonable figure. Some of the banks are doing a lot of corporate social responsibilities. Government can also say that, “if I reduce it for you, the savings you are making on the corporate tax should be redirected to this sector” unless there is a specific thing that government wants to bargain that if I reduce it for you, redirect the difference to this sector. It could be education, health, and rural banks are in education, and they are in health, security etc... so I think we can appeal for reduction in the corporate tax.

TRB: The Bank of Ghana is asking RCBs to raise one (1) million Ghana Cedis minimum paid-up capital and the deadline was December 31, 2017. As at December last year not even 50% of the number had been able to meet this regulatory directive. Are you a worried person?

KM: I’m not, not at all. The shareholders know that they need liquidity to operate. Much as you may think that one (1) million is a huge number, in the face of competition I will encourage the shareholders to raise the one (1) million Ghana Cedis. Bank of Ghana didn’t say that that is the capital you should raise; you see, that is the minimum. So I will encourage them to raise the minimum capital. It puts the banks in a stronger position to operate. The only thing is the deadline and even that, Bank of Ghana did

not just wake up to say that “31st December raise the capital”. It was a plan. It is good the governor said that they would be flexible. However, he didn’t define the flexibility. I can again appeal to the shareholders that, despite the flexibility, it is in their own interest to raise the capital because the competition is not waiting for us. The increase in the capital requirement for the universal banks, the RCBs should look at it as a threat; Because even if twenty(20) universal banks have to raise fresh half of that amount to be able to cross their requirement, that is about four(4) billion Ghana Cedis. And they may not also have all the businesses in the big areas or the big towns to absorb that. So they will be going to the rural areas. And that is the more reason why we should also strive to increase our capital base. I’m not worried because I believe the shareholders will be able to raise the capital.

TRB: We are winding up, but let’s get a bit personal. How did it all start? Here I will be interested in your educational background and how you began your working career.

KM: Ok I started by telling you my first workplace but I went to a village school. Do you know what we call ‘Bafuto’? It means “bare-footed”. That’s how I went to school. We were all bare-footed.



“Much as one (1) million Cedis as the minimum capital for RCBs is a huge amount, in the face of competition, I will encourage shareholders to raise the amount as it puts the banks in a stronger position to operate. Thankfully, the Governor has decided to be flexible with the timeline to meet this requirement.”

Those days we used to go to school morning and afternoon. And we had to carry our tables and chairs from the house to the school, and when we vacate we have to carry it back home. There were times that rainstorms would even lift the roof. I believe it still happens, that we had to get rainy season vacation. So I grew up in a small town. I went to school at Vui Zion in the Keta Municipality then to Keta Secondary School. From there I went to sixth form at New Juaben Secondary Commercial in Koforidua. There is one thing I want you to know: I don't have a first degree. When I finished Six Form, I started work. I was determined to be an accountant, so after two years at Dzelukope Rural Bank, I relocated to Accra to continue with my education. I enrolled at Accra Polytechnic to pursue the Institute of Chartered Accountants course. That explains why I don't have a first degree, because I went the professional route. I combined schooling and working in Accounting firms. I chartered in 1990, and in 1992, I left Accounting Firm for Barclays Bank as a Deputy Chief Accountant and later Finance Manager. At one point I was the only chartered accountant in Barclays. I left Barclays in 1999 to Cardiff University for a General MBA programme. I also decided to do Marketing with the Chartered Institute of Marketing (UK) and I'm proud I did. After Barclays and Cardiff University,

I had a brief stint with Metropolitan & Allied Bank and left to become the National Director for SOS Children Villages. The key thing that I'm very proud of during my stay at SOS Children Villages in Ghana, was how we built the Kumasi and Tamale villages. It is something I look back at with a lot of pride and satisfaction. That is the sort of legacy I want to leave for ARB Apex Bank. Not necessarily in buildings; I believe we will do so some of that, but in rebranding the image of ARB Apex Bank and the rural and community banks in general. On the family front, I am married to Beatrice, a businesswoman. I have four children; a boy and three girls: Makafui, Lebene, Klenam and Norkplim. They are young adults now.

TRB: You are the president of CIMG Ghana. How did that happen?

KM: I did not intend to work as a marketing person, but to use it to affect the organisations I work with in a positive way. I also wanted to contribute my quota to the Marketing Institute in Ghana, so I got myself involved in the activities of the Institute here. I think they saw my potential very early and elected me onto the Governing Council since 2004. I have been a council member for two years, Treasurer for four years and Vice President for four years. So becoming President was a

matter of course. I have given my best, my all to the marketing profession. I can say I have given more to the marketing profession than accountancy.

TRB: Thank you very much, Sir, for your time, and this is all time will allow us. I think it's been very delightful having you in this conversation. On behalf of the Editorial Board of "The Rural Banker" I would like to thank you once again and it is hoped that your vision to turn the fortunes of ARB Apex Bank and especially rural and community banks around will certainly come into reality.

KM: My pleasure (Handshakes amidst informal pleasantries)

This interview was conducted by Seth Krampah, Editorial Board Member.



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BRAIN TEASERS

7. How can a man go eight days without sleep?
8. Before Mount Everest was discovered, what was the highest mountain in the world?
9. If a plane crashes on the border between the US and Mexico, where do they bury the survivors?
10. A rooster laid an egg on top of the barn roof. Which way did it roll?
11. A truck driver is going down a one-way street the wrong way, and passes at least ten cops. Why is he not caught?
12. what has 4 wheels and flies?
13. What two words, when combined hold the most letters?

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT...

Apps are changing the way we live and work in so many different ways. From note-taking to research, there are apps out there today to make everything easier and better. Really? Yes! In fact, here are just a few...

Task & Project Management Nightmares... Over - With Trello



Trello helps you stay organized and to get things done. The app lets you create boards for all the projects you're working on. It is a highly customizable digital bulletin board that you can use to set up anything from to do lists, tasks, notes and more. You can work on these individually

or add colleagues so they're kept up-to-date with the tasks they're undertaking. As well as this, you're able to add to-do lists on boards, assign tasks, comment on items, upload files and videos, and attach files. It's free to use, although you have the option to upgrade for added functionality.

Task & Project Management Nightmares... Over - With Trello

Evernote is one of the premier cross-platform note-taking services, allowing users to take and upload notes, pictures, audio and video snippets and organize them into cloud notebooks that can be synced across different devices. Once you add things to your notebook they're completely searchable and can be accessed on your desktop, the Web, or your mobile device.



Task & Project Management Nightmares... Over - With Trello



Most web browsers include a spell-checker that can save you from embarrassing typos, but grammar errors are harder to spot. Grammarly automatically flags common mistakes and suggests corrections as you type. You

can also upload pre-written documents for analysis and get advice to help improve your written language.

Control your time spend on social media? Take a Five

As they say, time is money, and you can easily waste both by spending most of the day staring at social media feeds and watching videos on Facebook. Take a five allows you to take a break without falling into the internet rabbit hole.

Simply select the number of minutes you want to goof around on the internet, and then browse until your time is up. At the end of the time, the tab will automatically close and you will be prompted to get back to work.



Invoicing, expense tracking, etc? Harvest does it.....simpler!

One of the banes of running a business is having to deal with time and expense sheets. But Harvest makes the task a lot simpler. The app is a way for you to track time, log expenses and manage invoices on-the-go. You can use Harvest to send invoices to clients and track

when they've paid, add, view and edit time entries, take photos of receipts and upload them, monitor mileage, and much more besides.

You schedule an ideal time for a meeting with Doodle

Diary clashes are annoying but pretty common in the business world. This is where Doodle comes into the picture. It's an app that helps you streamline meetings and stay productive. How does it work? You sign in, set up an event

and suggest times to your colleagues. They then choose the times that work for them, and the app tries to find the best slot for everyone. What's great is that your colleagues don't even need to be signed up to the app in order to participate.



BRAIN TEASER

14. There was an airplane crash, every single person on board died, but yet two people survived. How is this possible?

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COLUMNIST



Francis Enimil Ashun

Seven things Rural Banks must do to survive the next decade



(RCBs) to take a hard look at their long-term survival. Everyone knows of the unfortunate collapse of UT Bank and Capital Bank. Recently there were news reports that 41 out of 141 Rural Banks had not been able to meet their minimum capital requirement of GHS 1 million and were appealing to the BoG to extend the deadline. This means that a lot of these Rural Banks do not have adequate capital to withstand new threats of financial upheavals or take advantage of new opportunities arising each day in the banking sector. In this article I attempt to explore few areas RCBs in Ghana should pay attention to in order to ensure their long-term survival and sustainability in the face of increased pressures on banks to provide quality service to their clients.

1. Think Long Term

A cursory look at some of the policies of some RCBs points to emphasis on short term profitability, few have strategic policies ensuring their sustainability into the next decade. Happenings in the banking sector all over the world show a systematic move away from business as usual and banks are changing their

Rural and Community Banking was established in Ghana to bring basic banking to the doorsteps of the rural folks who hitherto had no access to banking facilities due to the stringent requirements of traditional commercial banks. As at today there are 141 rural

banks, as at December 2017, in Ghana with about 700 branches offering various basic banking services to the rural Ghanaian communities. However recent developments on the banking front have necessitated the need for Rural and Community Banks



(JOHN EMMERLING)

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operational models to embrace the needs of the next generation, the so-called millennials and generation Z. Many progressive banks have recognized the signs and are adapting to the changing environment to ensure their survival. The banking sector as we know it today may be very different ten years from now and rural banks cannot afford to be doing business as usual but must embrace these changes to remain relevant. Branchless and agency banking may become the most widespread method of delivering banking services in the coming decades. Presently some traditional banks are pursuing agency banking in hitherto Rural Bank strongholds. This phenomenon would have dire effects on the mobilization drive of RCBs. RCBs must therefore explore this and other new methods to bring banking to the doorsteps of their clients. If rural banks will survive in this new age

then they need to focus on their long-term survival and relevance instead of the short-term profitability. They must invest in new technologies in this new information and intelligence age.

2. Be Innovative

It is said that innovations spur growth: innovate or die. Banks have been known to be conservative when it comes to changes and RCBs are no exception. However recent advances by FINTECH start-ups in the financial sector have made many managers of traditional banks rethink their strategy and sometimes overhaul the whole rhetoric of conservatism. Many major banks have recognized the potential of these disruptive technologies and the effect they can have on their long-term survival.

They have therefore integrated a lot of these FINTECH ideas,

techniques and technologies into their existing products and services and rolled out new ones to expand their product base. RCBs cannot afford to be left behind. Today's connected citizens are everywhere including the rural areas and RCBs in collaboration with the ARB Apex Bank must explore ways of integrating their products and services to reach a wider clientele base. RCBs must take advantage of these disruptive technologies to serve their clients well. For instance, mainstream banks have largely moved away from printing paper bank statements to issuing electronic ones and thus save on cost. Rural Banks could explore enabling their clients assess mini-statements from their smartphones by deploying simple apps that their clients can download to have access to their accounts. Only about five RCBs have been able to deploy ATMs and none is into internet or online banking. However, this should quickly change with the recent ARB Apex Bank roll out of the ATMs powered by the cutting-edge GH-Link EMV technology. This should spur on the RCBs to sign up to it and roll out ATMs for their busy branches within the next two years. The usual response may be that ATMs are expensive to deploy but a look at the financial statements of a lot of RCBs shows a huge propensity towards sinking funds into acquiring fixed assets like huge office complexes which bring no revenues to these banks. These huge sums of money poured into acquiring these huge office complexes could be redirected into acquiring and deploying technologies that would make rural banking more attractive to potential and existing clients.

The Telecom companies, through their mobile money products, are also drawing people away from the banks even in the rural areas. In view of this threat banks are looking for ways to linking mobile money e-wallets to their clients'



account so they can engage with their banks without necessarily stepping into the bank premises. RCBs cannot and must not be left behind. ARB Apex Bank must quickly look into the possibility of integrating the mobile money system into the Temenos banking platform. A client does not need to leave her petty trading or market to undertake banking services but should be able to transact normal business with her bank using their smartphones.

3. Attract the Youth

RCBs must also find ways to attract the youth to save or do business with them. A visit to most rural bank premises shows most of their clients are the elderly. Rural bankers are not doing enough to attract the youth who prefer mainstream banks. Their egos are boosted when their banks send them text messages on festive occasions, their birthdays or other occasions. These connected youths or millennials are ever present on social media and RCBs must be present on these platforms to connect with them. The traditional banks such as Fidelity Bank, GT Bank, Zenith

Bank, among others, are active on the social media scene and are reaching and attracting the youth even in the rural areas that are supposed to be the turf of RCBs. It does not talk to these millennials who are the entrepreneurs of tomorrow. In preparing this article I searched for rural banks on Facebook and out of the 141 RCBs in Ghana only one bank, South Akim Rural Bank, in the Eastern Region popped up. There was none on Twitter or Snapchat, and only 6 on Instagram. But these platforms are where the youth are and can be engaged and attracted to become clients.

4. Look Beyond Comfort Zones

No one has ever achieved anything sitting in their comfort zone. Every great achiever moved out of their comfort zone and decided to do something different. They exposed themselves to a higher than just comfortable risks. There will be no long-term success and growth if one keeps doing the same things their forebears did. In much the same way many RCBs may not achieve the success and long-term sustenance desired if they keep doing the same things

they were doing a decade ago. Take a typical RCB product line up you are most likely going to see current account, savings account, fixed deposit, I-Trans, Western Union Money transfer and loans. Yes, these are the traditional less risky bank products almost every RB has, very few have the courage to venture deeply into SME banking which is riskier but more rewarding. There seems to be an over reliance on salaried workers by some banks to the detriment of having a relationship with the growing SMEs. But I foresee a future where salary earning employees would be paid directly through their E-zwich cards, or even mobile phone e-wallets. Already National Service Persons are being paid through the E-zwich system and other sectors may follow soon. And rural banks who depend heavily on them may be hit seriously as clients may be able to transact banking business anywhere or use their E-zwich account to access a loan from any bank.

5. Invest in enhancing Human Resource Capacity

It is a truism that in many businesses when costs are rising or when the economy takes a nose dive and cost must be cut the first expense to be done away with is training expenses. However, it must be emphasized that the growth and sustenance of a business and in this case rural banks depend not so much on fixed assets but on the quality of personnel with the requisite training and knowledge base to drive the business forward. It is an open secret that RCBs suffer a higher staff turnover than traditional banks and other analogous financial institutions due to the relatively poor remuneration. However, it is also a proven fact that if the knowledge and capacity of employees are enhanced through the active

and do not take management seriously. Sometimes before staff asks certain questions they already have a fair idea of what the situation or the truth is and so measure their managers' response against what they already know. Remember they are the same people who work and produce the reports you use daily; they are closer to the action than you are.

7. Merge or Perish

There are many RCBs that are too small to make any meaningful impact in their communities. These are some of the over 41 banks that were reported to be unable to meet their minimum capital of GHS 1 million. It will be economically wise for them to consider merging with bigger rural banks or two or three smaller banks merging to consolidate their operation to take advantage of economies of scale. A consultant on mergers I spoke to was of the view that RCBs are refusing or unwilling to merge because of some vested interests of some directors and rivalry among some communities. According to her, some directors consider their

directorship as employment for themselves and fear losing their seats on an expanded bank. She reports some directors have been on some rural bank boards since those banks were established and always manoeuvre to get themselves elected when their current terms expire. It is the hope of industry players who have rural banking at heart that this changes as there are talks of both capping the tenure of boards and top executives of banks. I believe that if the BoG's intention of capping the tenure of directors become operational, it should include RCBs to help remove this incentive to stay on and encourage smaller banks to merge. The ARB Apex Bank and the BoG should sensitize the RCBs on the need for bigger and more resourceful banks to acquire smaller ones or group of smaller ones within nearby geographical locations to consolidate to remain relevant in the next decade or risk dying.

In conclusion I believe that RCBs applying a combination of these would ensure their relevance for the next digital decade.

The writer works at Lower Pra Rural Bank, Shama. He can be reached on +233 050 636 3388 or at enimilashun@gmail.com,

ANSWERS TO BRAIN TEASERS



1. The surgeon was his mother
2. Yesterday, today, tomorrow
3. The letter "m"
4. Because an apple a day will keep the doctor away
5. Charcoal
6. The letter "s"
7. He sleeps at night
8. Mount Everest was still the highest even though it had not been discovered
9. Survivors generally are never buried
10. It didn't roll - roosters don't lay eggs
11. He is walking and not driving
12. The garbage truck
13. Post Office
14. The two were married

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STEPHEN SARFO KANTANKA

CEO, ATWIMA KWANWOMA RURAL BANK

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward, it is the Lord you are serving". I encourage my fellow CEOs to be good stewards who work with humility, honesty and obedience.

My name is Stephen Sarfo Kantanka, CEO of Atwima Kwanwoma Rural Bank Limited. I attended school at Asante Mampong in the Ashanti Region where I obtained my "O Level" I proceeded to Konongo Odomase Senior Secondary School for "A" Level; then to the University of Cape Coast to study Economics. I graduated with BA (Hons) Economics. I furthered my education to GIMPA for Executive Masters in Business Administration. I have also been awarded Doctoral Fellow from the Chartered Institute of Financial and Investment Analyst, Ghana. I am

married to Grace Sarfo Kantanka with three children: Harriet, Sammy and Akwasi. I have one granddaughter, Maame Afia.

TRB: On behalf of the Editorial Board, we want to thank you for granting us hearing for this interview

SSK: You are welcome

TRB: How did your banking career start?

SSK: After completing my national service at Antoa Senior Secondary School, I attended an interview at the Ghana Police Service Headquarters in Accra where I met the late Edward Adu Aboagye, very good friend and a course mate from UCC who informed me of a job opportunity at the Ghana Co-operative Bank. I got the job and was posted to Kumasi as a Management trainee on 15th June, 1987.

TRB: Can you share an experience at Co-operative Bank with us as a young Banker?

SSK: My first trainer was the Branch Messenger who took me through handling of counter cheques. I remember the young man sending me on an errand to buy roasted plantain and groundnuts. The ladies in the office made fun of me for running errands for a messenger but then, that was how I humbled myself to learn on the job. I was privileged to have worked under experienced and strict managers (Mr. Boateng from Barclays Bank,

Mr. Adu-Takyi from Stanchart and Mr. Quaye from Ghana Commercial Bank).

Out of eight (8) graduates who were employed, only three (3) were left after the period of training. The others had their appointments terminated or were dismissed due to fraud, malpractices and poor work habits.

TRB: From your days at Co-operative Bank, what significant developments have emerged in the banking industry?

SSK: Banking has moved from the use of manual ledgers to the use of banking software. Technology and product innovation have made it possible to transact banking business from our homes, ATMs and POS. We enjoy convenient services like SMS and Email Alert systems.

TRB: You started your banking career with a Commercial Bank, moved to Savings and Loans company. Can you let us know what informed you to join a rural bank?

SSK: I left Ghana Co-operative Bank due to job insecurity, even though I was appointed to manage the biggest branch. The bank was going through many challenges and as a young Officer, I had to plan for the future. Two (2) months after I had resigned, the bank was liquidated. My move from Savings and Loans Company to join a rural bank was



to occupy a higher position with higher responsibilities.

TRB: You joined Atwima Kwanwoma Rural Bank in 2010, top executive appointment in the rural banking industry is mostly internal; as a new “external person” how did you assimilate into the terrain?

SSK: Yes, that is true. I must admit I had a lot of cultural shocks. The bank was going through many challenges. Most of the staff were finding it difficult to respond to change and wanted the new leader who will maintain the status quo. The challenges included weak internal controls, staff attitudinal problems, weak enforcement of the Human Resource Policy Manual, high Portfolio at Risk, poor loan monitoring and recovery, high cost-to-income ratio, ICT and systems related challenges.

TRB: Having outlined some of the initial challenges, can you brief us on the strategies that worked the magic.

SSK: As a product of UCC, I resorted to regular training for the staff and ensured that communication was Bottom-Up Approach. We intensified branch meetings and responded to the issues raised swiftly. One

significant training area that has been consistent since is risk awareness training for every staff including Security Officers and Messengers. Mr. Joe Appeah of Pentax Management Consultancy who was the Board Chairman then together with his able Board members were determined to ensure that we deal with the challenges for positive results.

TRB: What specific Communication tools did you adopt

SSK: I used Annual Staff Durbars a lot and also used Annual Shareholders’ forum, whiles I reviewed and developed key operational policies such as Credit, Procurement, Risk and Compliance, Human Resource and audit.

TRB: Can you say that the strategies have yielded results?

SSK: Very positive results. The most important is the Atwima Kwanwoma Rural Bank (AKRB) Brand. We are a respected institution in the industry with both local and international recognitions. Ever since I joined the institution, there has not been a single year without an award. We have given shareholders value for their investments, since our dividend per share see positive

increase every year. We have been able to expand our branch operations with the opening of Alabar, Sokoban and Kronum branches. This also means we are giving jobs and livelihood to Ghanaians. Our Corporate Social Responsibility activities speak for itself and we have been a good corporate citizen by ensuring prompt payment of our taxes to government.

TRB: For about two (2) years now, Amenfiman Rural Bank from the Western Region has overtaken you in deposit mobilization. Are you worried about that?

SSK: We are not worried; we wish to commend the bank’s leadership. However, remember that we are operating in different economic environment. Do not forget the oil business in the Western Region as well as ‘galamsey’ which led to high propensity to save in respect of their customers and their related businesses.

TRB: How do you intend to catch up with them?

SSK: Whiles commending the leadership for taking advantage of the economic environment; AKRB is not going to relax but we have at our last Strategic Committee Meeting taken some pragmatic measures that will see us very soon at the top in terms of deposit mobilization.

TRB: They have moved to Ashanti Region and they continue to expand their operations in the region. Does AKRB have plans of moving beyond Ashanti Region

SSK: Their move to Ashanti Region means that there exist unbanked populations in the Region for successful banking operations. We conduct due diligence before we open a new branch and if we find a strategic location outside the region where business will yield good returns for our stakeholders, I believe the Board will not hesitate to consider it.

TRB: Can you confirm to me whether you are a member of the Council for the Association

of Rural and Community Banks-Ghana?

SSK: Yes. I represent Managers in the Middle Zone on the Council

TRB: Congratulations

SSK: Thank you

TRB: What is the primary aim of the Association

SSK: The primary aim is to play advocacy role for Rural and Community Banks.

TRB: How does the Association collaborate with ARB Apex Bank to spearhead issues affecting the industry?

SSK: There is a strong collaboration between the two (2) bodies. A recent move is a delegation from the two (2) institutions to Bank of Ghana to negotiate for an extension of the deadline for Rural Banks to meet the minimum capital requirement.

TRB: Since the increase in corporate tax from 8% to 25%, what steps has the Association taken to see a reduction?

SSK: Several petitions have been sent to the Ministry of Finance and discussion with various stakeholders and top Government Officials to consider a reduction of the new tax rate.

TRB: In your opinion, what alternative measures are available for rural banks who are not likely to meet Bank of Ghana's directive to increase Stated Capital to GHS 1,000,000 by December, 2017

SSK: The Governor of Bank of Ghana at the 6th Rural Banking Week at Kpong in the Eastern Region promised to extend the time. Should this happen, RCBs who have not met the minimum capital requirement of GHS 1,000,000 should embark on intensive share mobilization. They should appeal to the public to invest in their banks by buying shares. Another alternative could be mergers and acquisition.



TRB: There are numerous challenges that face the industry, which one is very pressing and how well can it be addressed?

SSK: Poor corporate governance. I believe that, though there are myriad of problems in the industry; if there exists good corporate governance by way of capable Board members and management; those problems could be addressed squarely.

TRB: How can the rural banking industry position itself in the midst of tight competition in the banking industry?

SSK: Competition is good because it pushes one to always think outside the box for innovative ideas. Rural banks should begin to be innovative in service delivery, product development and brand management. Innovation is the catalyst for sustainable growth and development and this was seriously addressed at the last Managers' conference at Volta Serene Hotel.

TRB: Any advice to your fellow Managing Directors?

SSK: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters since you know that you will

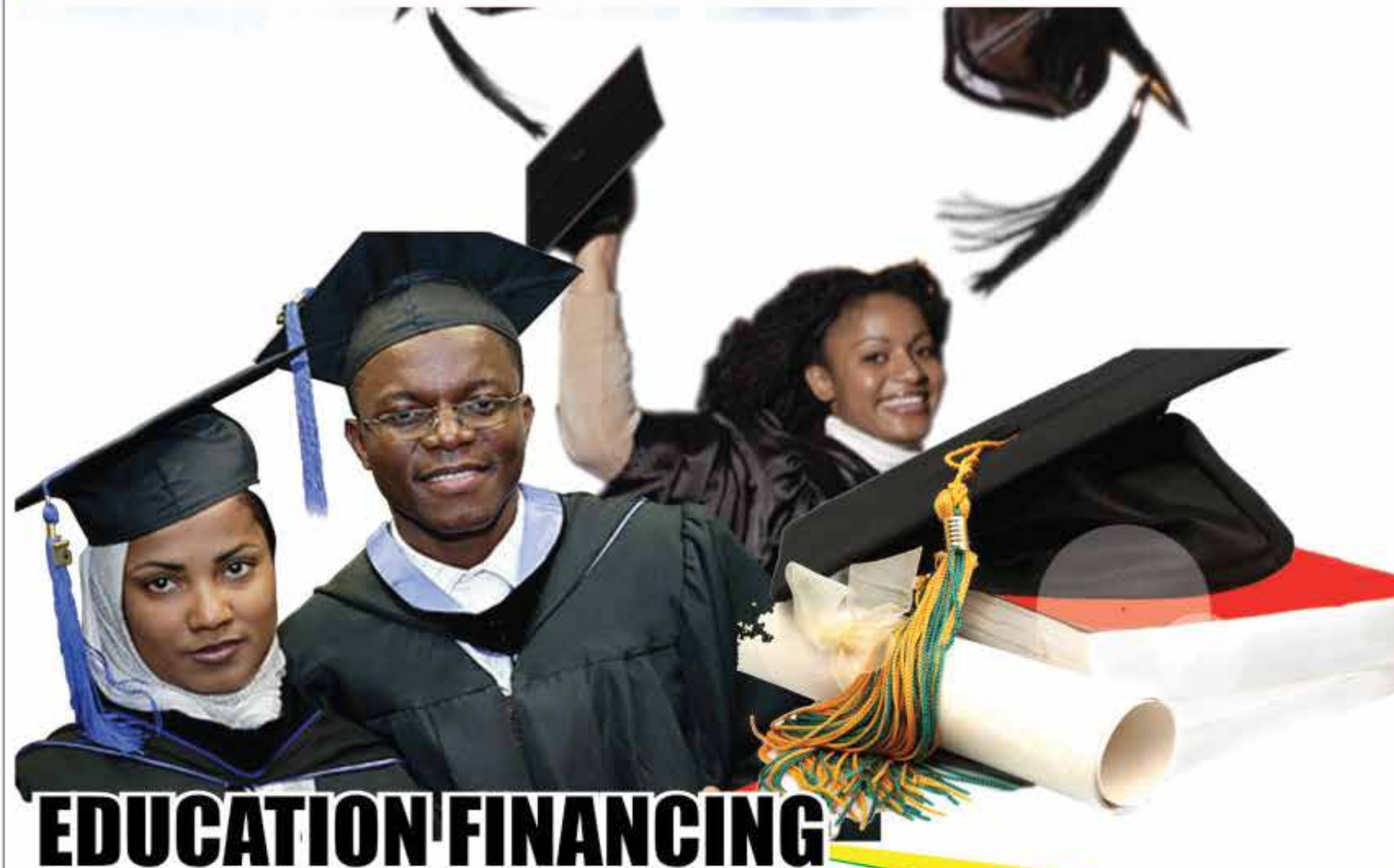
receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward, it is the Lord you are serving" (Colossians 3:23). I encourage my fellow Managing Directors to be good stewards who work with humility, honesty and obedience.

TRB: What is your message to your staff, customers and well wishers

SSK: May the Good Lord take care of all your needs. Touch your life with joy and contentment. Bless your heart with love and faith. Comfort your soul with inner peace and grant all Managers and staff good health.

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COLUMNIST



Frank Attu

Security Measures to Deter Burglars

Nine Important Home Security Tips to Keep You and Your Family Safe



There must be a personal commitment and determination to deter burglars and make them think twice before trying to enter your home. Fortunately, there are practical security measures one could take to make such intrusion difficult for burglars. These include the following vigilant measures:

Secured Doors and Windows

- The first line of defence in your home's security is having solid main doors with high quality grade locks.
- Front doors must be secured with quality locks and a slide bolt penetrating the upper or lower doorframe.
- Sliding glass doors are especially vulnerable if they do not have proper burglar proof shields behind them.
- A snug-fitting dowel (a piece of cylindrical wood - similar to a broom handle) fitted in the lower half of the door would also prevent doors from being easily broken.
- Ensure that doors and windows are not easily penetrated, at least not in a short time to allow you an opportunity to call for help.

A Loud Dog

Another good and cheaper line of defense is to have loud

Most often we think we are not at risk of being victims to burglary or there is nothing we could do to lessen the risk of home break-ins. I would urge all of us to think again, because if there was an opportunity to invade your home, no matter who you are or where you live, burglars would always

take the chance. Burglaries are considered "crimes of opportunity" because the criminal would always look for an easy way to get into your home, either through unlocked doors, opened garages, opened windows, etc.

dogs. Dogs are not only man's best friend, but could also be a burglar's worst enemy. In fact, research indicates that most burglars avoid houses with dogs. Burglars do not want to be noticed, seen or caught. Even small noisy dogs could be effective deterrent to burglars.

A Home Security System

If you want something that not only makes noise to deter intruders, but also calls for help, consider installing a home security system. Home security systems detect intrusion, set off alarms, and also notify security service providers of imminent intrusion. If you have valuables or there are rampant burglaries in your area, a home security system could be a good option for you. You may do some online research and check with local alarm system companies to find the best system for your needs.

Motion Sensor Lights

Installing sensor lights, which turn on when they detect motion, is a great way to illuminate portions of your property. Sensor lights would come on as soon as someone enters under cover of darkness as a burglar would. Outside lighting is one of the cheapest and most effective deterrents to crime. Motion sensor lights give you the ease of having lights come on automatically.

Surveillance Cameras

A video surveillance system could be a bit costly, but could also help you sleep better at night. Installing a video security system could give you peace of mind and act as a deterrent to burglars, especially when you are on vacation. If you cannot afford the whole system, think about putting up a "dummy" camera or two to give the illusion of protection. Installing a "dummy" camera could intimidate a burglar, but cannot provide evidence if a

burglary occurs.

Protection Warning Signs

It is also believed that making public your security arrangements is deterrent enough. If you have a dog or a home security system, share that information with signage on your fence, wall, door, or window. Letting a burglar know you are well protected makes you less of a target. It is important to

A good combination of some of the above points at your home would keep you free from burglars as they suspect someone is always watching.

look at your home from a burglar's point of view. Burglars who think they might be seen or caught would think twice before targeting your house.

A Trimmed and Tidy Yard

Untrimmed trees and shrubs provide good hiding places for burglars and could obscure their entry into your home. To get a better sense of what this suggests, stand out on your front sidewalk and take an objective look at your house. Do you have trees or shrubs providing hiding places for someone? If so, consider trimming branches of the trees up to six feet from the ground and shrubs down to below window sills. A bushy lawn, could also indicate to a burglar that you might be away on vacation, or simply away on business for a long period of time. Consider getting someone to mow your lawn if you are going to be out of town for more than two weeks.

The Appearance that 'Someone is Home'

Burglars learn your routine, and when there is a break in that routine, it is a signal that your home is clear for a break-in. With that in mind, your home must appear occupied even when you are away. To accomplish this, use motion-sensor lights and timers on your radio and TV to simulate occupancy and create the illusion that you are home. Anything you could do to make your home look occupied while you are away is a good thing; and timed electronics are great for that. Alternatively, ensure that there is someone at home all the time.

Helpful Neighbours

In addition to making your home look lived-in while you are away, simulating occupancy could get tricky. The good news is, you could solicit help from your neighbours. You should ask a trusted neighbour to park their vehicle at your gate occasionally while you are out of town.

Surely a good combination of some of the above points at your home would keep you free from burglars as they suspect someone is always watching. Good Luck!

Frank Attu is the Security Coordinator at the ARB Apex Bank.

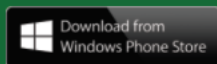
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6th Rural Banking Week in Pictures

The 6th Rural and Community Banking Week celebration was held on the 11th of November, 2017, at the premises of Ensign College of Public Health on the theme: "Rural Banking; Key to National Development".



The event was used by RCBs to assess their activities and challenges over the period, deliberate on the way forward and to also devise strategies to promote the growth of the rural banking sector. As part of the celebrations, a donation was made to the Atua General Hospital.





THE NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Today's banking industry could rightly be described as both the best of times and the worst of times, depending on your perspective. The upside is that this is clearly a period of unprecedented innovation in the banking industry, and new players and products are pouring into the sector with the intent of upturning what for a long time has been a very docile industry structure. Over time, both individual customers and the broader economy will be the beneficiaries of this disruption. The downside is that the unusually fluid competition has caused many people to go under, while a great many continue to remain on

the brink, struggling to respond to the massive disruption. In Ghana, the combination of technology, especially mobile money and the proliferation of players in the field of banking, can be described as the two key drivers of change. In the area of technology, there is no doubt that mobile money is cutting off many customers of traditional banks. Within the past 2 years, transaction on mobile money has grown by some 112%, from GHS 51.4 billion in September 2016 to GHS109 billion in September 2017. In response, the Bank of Ghana has issued guidelines – Electronic Money Issuers (EMI) Guidelines and Agent Guidelines

– to regulate Mobile Financial Services in the country.

The second change about the proliferation of financial service providers is equally big. It has been argued that for a population size of just 28.21 million, Ghana has too many financial service providers relative to more advanced economies in and outside of Africa.

The thing with change is that it is the only constant; you either adapt to it or perish. Surely, those of us in the Rural and Community Banking ecosystem need to strategize to remain relevant and competitive. The solution lies in



innovation and product development (and improvement).

The New Product Committee & its Purpose

In order to keep RCBs competitive, the management of ARB Apex Bank has taken the initiative to constitute a new Product Development Committee (PDC). The purpose of the PDC is to set the strategic product direction, allocate product resources and investments, and provide a level of oversight of the company's (and the RCB industry's) product efforts.

The committee is responsible for the company's product strategies, particularly in the areas of innovation, emerging technologies, industry trends and their implications for RCBs, its customers and product development.

This committee is not trying to set the company's business strategy, but rather, given the business strategy, they are tasked to come up with a

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product strategy that will meet the needs of ARB Apex Bank and the RCBs. For the avoidance of doubt, the following are within the remit of the Committee in advising management:

1. Review proposed product strategies and product roadmaps.
2. Review product prototypes and issue go/no-go decision to leadership.
3. Review Opportunity Assessment and make recommendations.
4. Scan the market and make recommendations to management related to the industry's growth strategy including the scope of activities and markets.

Composition

The Product Development Committee comprises a cross-functional set of people from ARB Apex Bank, RCBs and consultants. The diversity of its members is aimed at enriching the quality of the group. The group currently consists of 24 members made up of;



1. The Managing Director, ARB Apex Bank.
2. Ten representatives of ARB Apex Bank.
3. Ten representatives from Association of Rural Banks.
4. Three Consultants with backgrounds in Banking Operation, Marketing & Communication.

Maiden Retreat & Outputs

The maiden retreat took the Product Development Committee to the Ensign College of Public Health (ECOPH), Kpong, for five (5) days of brainwriting and retreat. There the team was put into four groups; Marketing and Rebranding, National Essay & Quiz, Channel, and Products Group. The various groups were tasked to produce strategic documents to achieve key objectives related to challenges that confront RCBs. The marketing and rebranding group produced a strategic marketing and communication plan. The Quiz and Essay group produced a strategic plan to help execute a national quiz and essay competition. The Channels Group also produced a strategic document on how the industry's products can effectively reach the target group. The Products Group also produced a strategic audit of the company's products within the context of changes in the industry and what can be done to stay relevant.



Additional note

As with any such group, the effectiveness of committees is largely a function of two things; first is the kind of support such committees receive for their work and the second is commitment to implementing their recommendations. Considering that the decisions made by the group directly impacts the success of all within the industry, it is important that RCBs give the committee all the support it needs. It will involve sacrificing man hours, money, and skill, some of which will come at great cost. In the end, however, the success of the committee will catapult the industry to the fore of banking in the country.

COLUMIST



Comfort Owusu
Acting Executive Director,
Association of Rural Banks

BREAST CANCER: The Deadly Disease That Respects no One



Sometimes in life, when certain issues are spoken of, we never pay much attention. Even when the beam of curiosity in us tries to light its way through the cracks of our minds and souls in the direction of such issues, we quickly seal the cracks with this

thought – “this can never happen to me”. One may attribute this thought to religious teachings of faith or to high waves of positivity in our view of the issues of life. But whatever the reason, we all have thought, “this can never happen

to me” at one point or another. For me, I would say it was a mixture of faith and positivity. Upon getting home after a long day at work on the 28th of November, 2008, I undressed as always. But this time, I noticed something different. Something unknown to me was going to change the trajectory of my life. It was a sore on my right nipple. I didn’t think much of it. However, I reported to the hospital the following day and I was given some topical treatment for it. Initially, the sore seemed to heal but after two weeks I realized it had gotten worse. I went back to report at the hospital and I was given another set of medication which was supposed to heal the sore. Even at this point, I still didn’t think much of it although, I wished I had. I guess it was because I performed regular self-breast examinations and I found no lumps in my breasts. To the best of my knowledge then, I only had to be alarmed if I found lumps in my breasts. Indeed, the Bible speaks the truth when it says “for the lack of knowledge my people perish”. With all the knowledge I have now about this deadly disease - breast cancer, what I then thought was a good enough knowledge about the disease was just a tip

29 Seconds

How long it takes for a fresh breast cancer case to be diagnosed around the world

85%

Percentage of women diagnosed with breast cancer who have no family history

1 in 8 women

Number of women who will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.

of the iceberg. Also, the positive faith-based attitude with which I approached life somehow made me relegate to the recesses of my mind, the thought of the sore being anything other than a normal self-healing one.

After three months, the treatment, to my surprise, was not improving the condition of the sore so I went to report at the hospital again. I was given another new set of medication which also couldn't heal the sore. I then decided to visit another hospital where a well-known Obstetrics and Gynaecology Specialist worked. I believed that doctor could offer me an expert opinion and care considering his achievements and passion in the medical field. He also performed a physical examination on me and prescribed another treatment for me. I did all that the treatment entailed but, like before, there was no progress. At this point, I began to worry because for almost seven months I had sought a cure for this sore but I had found none. The doctor then requested I do a mammogram. So I had one done and to my relief,

I must say, he found nothing unusual on the mammogram. This relief was short-lived because he then told me he wanted to give me a referral to Korle-bu Teaching Hospital for samples to be taken for a breast biopsy.

As I drove to the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital a couple of days later, I kept confessing in faith that no matter what might be wrong with my breast, God was going to heal me.

To be continued in the next issue...

“

Having had cancer, one important thing to know is you're still the same person at the end. You're stripped down to near zero. But most people come out the other end feeling more like themselves than ever before - Kylie Minogue.

”

JUST FOR LAUGHS



Little Johnny's Chemistry teacher wanted to teach his class a lesson about the evils of liquor, so he set up an experiment that involved a glass of water, a glass of whiskey, and two worms. "Now, class. Observe what happens to the two the worms," said the professor putting the first worm in the glass of water. The worm in the water moved about, twisting and seemingly unharmed. He then dropped the second worm in the whiskey glass. It writhed in pain for a moment, then quickly sank to the bottom and died. "Now kids, what lesson can we derive from this experiment?" he asked. Little Johnny raised his hand and wisely responded, "Drink whiskey and you won't get worms!"



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