

**ACTIVITY ONE – THE JOB OF A BANK TELLER****Instructions – Read the scenarios and answer the questions at the end of the reading**

- A. People accuse Nick of cheating them, and he wishes them a nice day. But it was too much when his own employer, Sunbank, threw a party last month for some of its tellers and hired a comedian who joked about tellers being reluctant to tell strangers what they did for a living. "I was really shocked," Nick said. "I'm not ashamed to be a teller."
- B. Nick, who is 22 years old and has been a teller for about 5 months at the Sunbank headquarters branch in Chicago. To be a teller at this location places him squarely in the midst of banking's finest. One of the favorite complaints of people in Chicago is the incompetence, indifference, or downright impertinence of bank tellers. But the tellers have a complaint, too: they say banking brings out the worst in many Chicago people.
- C. "The first thing you learn in teller training is that there are people who come in here, they're angry, they can't count money and they take it out on you," said Nick, who underwent two weeks of classroom instruction in a mock banking setup and two days of on-the-job training. "There is a right way to deal with tellers," said Nick. "Sometimes I think there ought to be training for customers."
- D. Some of the sources of aggravation for tellers are customers wanting to draw on funds that haven't cleared, to cash third-party checks, and to split a personal check they are depositing. Cautious bankers do not permit such transactions, which irritates many people who feel they should be presumed innocent, not guilty. "We say to tellers that if the customers are irate, they're not angry with you; they're angry with Sunbank," said Cathy, the branch's operations manager. As she sees it, there will always be prickly customers.
- E. For Nick and the other 18 tellers who work at the headquarters branch, the day begins shortly after 8:00 a.m. at the downstairs vault where they get the cash boxes they left the previous evening, carry them upstairs to their assigned windows, and sort out the cash. They place a few thousand dollars in the drawers and lock the rest in a box a few feet away. Placing the cash in more than one location this way is a precaution designed to minimize losses; in the event of a holdup, a robber has to wait for money.
- F. About once a month, a supervisor springs a surprise inspection of the drawers to ensure that each teller is under the cash limit. A teller who is over by \$500 or more will be reported. "It's something that gets everyone nervous," said Nick.
- G. At 8:30 a.m., the bank opens and the rush begins. Nick, two windows from the head of the line, works at a steady clip, serving 10 customers in the first half-hour. (The tellers nearest the head of the line has been found to be the busiest.)
- H. Sunbank, with its passion for technology, does everything to step up the pace. A recent bank study found that people would tolerate a maximum wait of nine minutes, and the bank has been meeting that target most of the time. As soon as a customer steps away from a teller's window, the light above it, activated by sensors, flashes to signal the next person. A bank computer records the number of customers and transactions that a teller has each day. Tellers average between 150 and 170 transactions during five and a half-hours at their stations. The average soars on paydays, particularly double paydays, when Sunbank's headquarters employees also get extra pay. On one such payday, Nick processed about 280 transactions.
- I. The fastest teller at the branch is Amy, a part-timer who is completing a bachelor's degree at Trinity University. On a double payday in October, Amy processed 361 transactions, a feat for which she got a day off with pay. "Amy's just incredibly fast," said Nick.
- J. In the morning Nick is so energetic he rarely sits on his teller's chair. He counts \$100 bills faster than most people shuffle cards and taps his fingernails impatiently when customers fumble for their money or deposit slips. He

punches data into the computer, waiting for it to catch up to him. He pauses for a machine to time-stamp receipts, then tosses the waste stubs to the floor.

- K. His first customer of the day wants to deposit \$3,000 in cash into her money market account. Nick counts the \$20 bills, gives her a receipt, and puts the money into the cash box.
- L. Sunbank, which employs some 2,000 tellers including part-timers, says tellers are "leading candidates" to work in customer service, in sales, new accounts, or as line managers, directing customers to the correct line. It is rare for a teller to advance much beyond that. Each year, one teller in four goes into such a job or leaves the bank.
- M. Before he can be considered for another job, however, Nick must put in six months of taking deposits, cashing checks, and coping with difficult customers. Later on in the day that began with the \$3,000 deposit, a customer accused Nick of holding back \$20. Nick patiently counts the bills again. Then at 2:58

p.m., two minutes before closing, a customer empties a plastic bag containing \$5,000 in bills and asks for a money order. The bank will not issue money orders for more than \$2,500 in cash, to minimize the laundering of illegally obtained funds. A customer who is over that limit must make a deposit, which guarantees that there will be a record of the transaction.

- N. At 3:00 p.m. comes the time that Nick finds to be the most nerve-racking part of the day: "proving out." He must reconcile the balances he shows with those tallied by the computer. When the balances do not agree, the teller is "showing," and if the discrepancy is significant, the teller must try to discover the cause. If the discrepancies become large in the course of a month, the teller's performance will be closely scrutinized by the bank.
- O. Amy, to Nick's right, is showing \$0; to her left, Jennifer laments, "A lousy 10 bucks!"
- P. Nick shows only 35 cents. "I'm not going to look for it," he announces, and picks up the cash box to return to the vault.

**Questions – Answer the questions below by putting the letter from above after the question**

1. Which parts of the article deals with a teller's skills? [*G,J –but answers can vary* ]
2. Which part of the article demonstrates a teller's good judgment? [*N* ]
3. Which part of the article shows a teller's knowledge of banking regulations? [*M* ]
4. Which parts of the article demonstrates a teller's accountability? [*F,N* ]
5. What letters above contain information that you never knew before? [*answers will vary* ]
6. What parts of the article contain information about the training and time it takes to become a teller or to "move up the ladder?" [ *C,L,M* ]