

# MARKETING YOUR BANK ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

AN IMPACT @ SCALE WORKBOOK FROM **MABUS**  
[mabusagency.com/cdba](https://mabusagency.com/cdba)

# Contents

## CHAPTER 1 —

### Brand Strategy

- 01 Brand Strategy Case Study
- 03 INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY  
Brand Strategy Questionnaire

## CHAPTER 2 —

### Social Media

- 07 Social Strategy
- 11 Social Media Overview
- 13 INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY  
Social Post Review
- 14 Social Content Contribution Worksheet

## CHAPTER 3 —

### The Art of Communication

- 16 Brand-Tier Marketing
- 20 Speaking to the Individual
- 22 INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY  
Inverse Triangles
- 23 Shoestring Budget

## CHAPTER 4 —

### Diversity, Equality, & Inclusion

- 25 Checking the Box vs Changing the World
- 26 What Can You Do?

CHAPTER 1

# Brand Strategy



## Case Study

Distinguishing a bank from its competition requires a careful examination of who your bank is, what it means to your customers and what you want it to become.

Two separate banks are looking for ways to dramatically grow their deposits. The following two case studies and activities show how similar banks can find the differences in how their brands communicate. Then use these tools to build *your* bank's brand strategy.



**BANK** — \$756 Million in Assets  
**A** — 13 Locations  
 — Founded in 1911

Bank A is a long-established, small, family-operated bank. It does business in an area that has seen a large metropolis grow up around it, growth that has seen national corporate banks arrive as well. Bank A takes a great deal of pride in delivering personal, relationship-oriented service, but its messaging and its delivery vehicles are somewhat behind the times. It has low name recognition, and its current messaging does not communicate its modern competence.



**BANK** — \$698 Million in Assets  
**B** — 12 Locations  
 — Founded in 1914

Like Bank A, Bank B has spent many decades building the trust of its clientele. It defines itself by the breadth of services it provides, but it suffers from the fact many other banks in its footprint have recently overextended themselves, reaching into areas of service they were not equipped to properly fulfill. Bank B's current brand messaging, in fact, unfortunately and unfairly associates it with that negative market trend.

## BANK A

Bank A told us that personal, hands-on customer service was its top priority. “Our people make the difference,” Bank A said, “Our employees simply care more.”

**Clients were often surprised by the bank’s capabilities**, despite its small size. Its outdated branding undersold its value to consumers.

Despite its hundred-year history in the footprint, Bank A suffered from a lack of name recognition.

“Our customers love us,” Bank A said. “But to non-customers, **we’re invisible.**” Bank A’s footprint had been defined by the tumultuous growth, mergers and acquisitions, and departures of other institutions, resulting in serious **fatigue among the banking public.**

Bank A was desperate for change. It was even open to changing its name.

## BANK B

Bank B pointed to its friendly staff and culture of community service. For decades, **Bank B marketed itself by making a grassroots difference in its communities.**

“When we say we’re going to do something, we back it up,” Bank B told us.

But the field was crowded by institutions of similar size, which boasted equal equity in the area. **Bank B couldn’t decide whether to go after the customers of their peers or customers of smaller banks.**

Not only did Bank B lack a strategy for growth, it lacked a functioning brand system to adequately communicate with new and existing customers.

“**We know we do things better,**” Bank B told us. “**We just have trouble getting people to switch and try us.**”

### WHAT WE HEARD

- With no name recognition, we could start fresh for a stellar first impression without having to correct an unfavorable reputation.
- All banks talk about stability and service, but Bank A lived it out — a huge advantage amid the false promises made by the revolving door of competition.
- Bank A’s commitment to change showed it would listen to our expertise and talk honestly about the bank’s challenges.
- Bank B had never endeavored to truly market itself and tell the story of its impact on communities.
- Though at odds over which customers to pursue, Bank B wanted to own its home market more than it wanted to expand its footprint.
- Process and efficiency are important to Bank B, and that manifests itself in a better experience for customers.

### OUTCOMES

**Key Benefit:** You won’t have to wonder who your bank will be tomorrow.

**Reason Why:** People deserve the stability and care of a long-term financial partner.

**Tagline:** A partner for today — and tomorrow.

**Key Benefit:** We know what you’re going through, and we’re always working to build the gap between you and your goals.

**Reason Why:** Better banks create better communities.

**Tagline:** Serving you with care.



# Brand Strategy Questionnaire

## // INTENT

These are the clearly defined, quantitative goals of your marketing efforts. This may be the number of new customers or a quantifiable increase in deposits.

What do you want to achieve? In how much time?

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## // KEY BENEFIT

Your bank's key benefit is the one thing your bank does best. It's the single, strongest aspect of its character that sets it apart from its competition. You will likely never communicate your bank's key benefit to the public as it is written here, but it will be the basis from which you build your brand messaging. It may be difficult and may take multiple drafts to get it right, but focus on making it substantial and expressing it in a single, simple sentence.

**KEY BENEFIT EXAMPLES**

- We provide unmatched, confident care through banking services.
- We provide our clients more control over their finances by ensuring holistic understanding of available banking products and services.
- We provide stable, diligent care that helps our clients accomplish more.

Why do your clients choose you?

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If your bank did not exist, what would your clients be missing and why?

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What is your bank's key benefit?

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## // REASON WHY

This is the substance behind your Key Benefit. If you make a claim, you have to back it up. Why and how can you provide your benefit to your clients? Better product? Superior training? More experience?

Why and how can you provide your key benefit?

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### What drives your bank?

Poll your customer-facing coworkers about what excites them to come to work every day.

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Review what you've discovered from answering the questions above, and find the common thread among them to write your "Reason Why" statement.

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## // AUDIENCE

Describe the makeup of the communities you serve, both demographically and psychographically. What do they value? What is their lifestyle? What are their habits?

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## // TONE

The tone of your marketing message is another important part of your strategy. This embodies the way you come across to your clients.

## // PERSONALITY

The personality of your brand is integral in introducing yourself to prospective clients. Your clients should know what to expect when they show up to do business with you.

### EXAMPLES FROM WELL-KNOWN BRANDS:

#### *Nike*

Energetic, motivational, powerful

Industry standard; rugged and proven

#### *McDonald's*

Energetic, fast, responsive

A timeless American classic

List 5-8 words that describe the way your entity speaks.

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List 5-8 words that describe who you are as a bank.

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CHAPTER 2

# Social Media



## Social Strategy

**COMMON GOALS**

- Enhance online brand presence and recognition
- Improve customer experience and service
- Gain client insights
- Increase revenue through paid advertising
- Support employee recruiting

### // GOALS & INTENT

Defining the intent for your social posts and determining how you will measure the posts' success ensures you only invest time, effort and money in work that moves you toward your goals.

What are your goals?

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How will you measure success?

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## // CHANNELS & APPROPRIATE TYPES OF CONTENT

List the most appropriate social media channels for your audience(s) and types of content that those audiences would value most.

## // FREQUENCY

What is a reasonable frequency for you to post consistently?

*We recommend one post per branch per week or one post per day — whichever is greater.*

<i>Facebook</i>	<b>TYPES OF CONTENT</b>	
<b>AUDIENCE / PERSONA</b>	<i>personal finance tips</i>	<i>top-ten lists</i>
<i>general audience</i>	<i>posts from local businesses</i>	<i>new products or services</i>
<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<i>community events</i>	<i>infographics</i>
	<i>banker spotlights</i>	
	<i>local charitable work</i>	

<i>Instagram</i>	<b>TYPES OF CONTENT</b>	
<b>AUDIENCE / PERSONA</b>	<i>personal finance tips</i>	<i>behind-the-scenes photos</i>
<i>general audience</i>	<i>banker spotlights</i>	<i>engaging questions</i>
<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<i>local charitable work</i>	<i>new products or services</i>
	<i>community events</i>	<i>infographics</i>
	<i>finance-related memes</i>	

<i>LinkedIn</i>	<b>TYPES OF CONTENT</b>	
<b>AUDIENCE / PERSONA</b>	<i>business-related blogs</i>	<i>client success stories</i>
<i>business clients</i>	<i>business client testimonials</i>	<i>infographics</i>
<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<i>upcoming events</i>	
	<i>new products or services</i>	
	<i>engaging questions</i>	

Now fill out your own guide for your bank's social platforms. Keep in mind: you might have different types of posts for each platform.

	TYPES OF CONTENT
AUDIENCE / PERSONA	
FREQUENCY	

	TYPES OF CONTENT
AUDIENCE / PERSONA	
FREQUENCY	

	TYPES OF CONTENT
AUDIENCE / PERSONA	
FREQUENCY	

	TYPES OF CONTENT
AUDIENCE / PERSONA	
FREQUENCY	

## // INTERNAL ROLES

Determine your stakeholders and how they fit in the process.

ROLE IN PROCESS	STAKEHOLDER NAME	CONTACT INFO
COMPLIANCE APPROVAL	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
CUSTOMER SERVICE / CLIENT RESPONSE	_____	_____
	_____	_____
APPROVAL PROCESS	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

## // INTERNAL RESOURCES FOR CONTENT

List subject-matter experts from each LOB who may be willing to contribute and how they can help.

NAME	HOW CAN THEY HELP?
_____	_____
LINE OF BUSINESS	_____
_____	_____
NAME	HOW CAN THEY HELP?
_____	_____
LINE OF BUSINESS	_____
_____	_____
NAME	HOW CAN THEY HELP?
_____	_____
LINE OF BUSINESS	_____
_____	_____

# SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

## // SET YOUR STRATEGY.

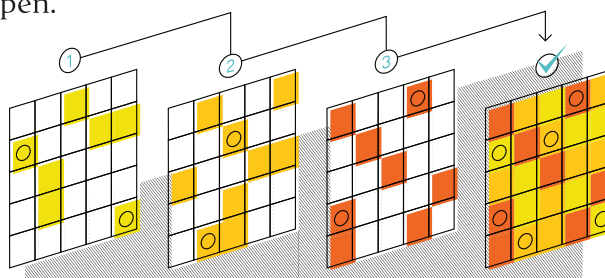
Your entire organization needs to be aligned and aimed toward a company-wide goal appropriate to your bank's strategic goals, clients and key benefit.

## // PLAN YOUR WORK. WORK YOUR PLAN.

Here's a guide we made to help you plan your social content ahead of time, so you can focus on the day-to-day as they happen.

1

**DOWNLOAD THE THREE-COLUMN SOCIAL TEMPLATE**  
[mabusagency.com/cdba](http://mabusagency.com/cdba)



2

**LEARN HOW TO USE IT TO PLAN** [mabusagency.com/make-social-media](http://mabusagency.com/make-social-media)

### OTHER RESOURCES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF

#### **Canva** (*canva.com*)

Graphic design platform that allows users to create social media graphics and other visual content using templates and their bank's brand elements.

#### **Sendible** (*sendible.com*)

Schedule social posts on multiple channels ahead of time and get more in-depth reporting on interactions and activity.

#### **Linktree** (*linktr.ee*)

Allows you to reference multiple social media with their own links on one landing page — perfect for Instagram's link in bio.

#### **Coschedule Headline Analyzer** (*coschedule.com/headline-analyzer*)

Website that analyzes and helps you improve your headlines.

#### **Royalty-free Stock Photos**

- *pexels.com*
- *unsplash.com*

#### **Social Assurance** (*socialassurance.com*)

Provides social media strategic and creative support for banks.

## // THINK BEFORE YOU POST.

### Does it have context?

If you're posting a banker spotlight, provide basic information the audience will need to know about the banker.

- Who are they?
- What do they do?
- What problems do they solve for their clients?

### Does it communicate my bank's value and / or brand benefit?

### Are you embodying the tone and personality of your institution in your post copy?

### Does your audience care about or find value in this?

## // DON'T JUST HAVE A PRESENCE. BE PRESENT.

### 1. Engage with your clients (without trying to sell them something).

- Reply to their comments.
- Like their posts.
- Congratulate them on big life events.

### 2. Create shared value with every post.

Educate your clients about banking in creative ways (and without using jargon). When your clients understand banking and their personal finances, you both win.

- Blogs
- Financial tips
- Educational videos featuring bankers

### 3. Drive traffic to your website.

### 4. Use your clients' feedback to improve.

If a certain type of post gets a lot of engagement, do more of that type of post.

### 5. Make your posts visually appealing and on brand.

Use an inexpensive service like **Canva** to upload your bank's visual brand elements to a library that you can share internally and use to create cohesive branded graphics that will get your clients' attention.

### 6. Show how your bank is engaging with the community.

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY



# Social Post Review

Review the following social posts from two banks. Use what you learned on the previous page to determine how each post could be improved.

 **Flat City Bank**

Make sure your process capitalizes on market inefficiencies and delivers capital preservation balanced against careful risk management.

 Flat City Bank

**@flatcitybank** 

Keep this handy tip in mind for all your investments!  
#financialtipfriday #flatcitybank

How could Flat City Bank improve their social post above?

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 **Hillstown Bank**



 HILLSTOWN BANK

**@hillstownbank** 

Chris James  
#hillstownbank #bankerspotlight #Chris

How could Hillstown Bank improve their social post above?

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See p. 14 for our comments on how these posts could be improved.

PRINT AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOLLOWING PAGE TO YOUR LOB LEADERS FOR SUPPORT.



# SOCIAL CONTENT CONTRIBUTION

Name

Your LOB

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What stories do you want to share?

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What are some common questions from clients?

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What non-banking topics are important to your customers?

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What's interesting about your bank / LOB?

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What's happening in your bank?

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## CHAPTER 3

# The Art of Communication

## Brand-Tier Marketing

You have the difficult task of promoting an incredibly complex product mix to an incredibly complex audience. If you approach the project head-on, you'll wind up going in circles to find the right balance. We have a reliable technique to make it easy:

**Divide your advertising into three tiers — Brand, Transitional, and Product.**

### // TIER ONE: BRAND

Brand messaging should serve as the core of your advertising. We advise committing 40 percent or more of an entire advertising budget to brand-focused efforts. Brand advertising works best when speaking to a broad audience, usually through broadcast media like radio, newspapers, television commercials, and billboards.

While brand advertising isn't tied to a product, and is thus hard to pin down ROI, consider this:

Imagine you are running a commercial spot to air during a football game. Like the fans in the stadium, the audience watching at home (who will see your spot) runs the gamut of demographics, experience, priorities, needs, and so forth. If you choose to promote a specific product or line of business you will, by default, exclude most of that audience.

Therefore, you should speak broadly, touting your bank's brand position and key benefit. This will raise brand awareness and remain relevant to the audience's individual needs, no matter what those needs actually are.

### **Brand Advertising:**

Helps build name recognition and increase brand awareness

### **Brand Messaging:**

Promotes your bank and clearly communicates its key benefit — the fact or factor that makes it different from other banks

### **Brand Media:**

Television, billboards, newspapers

## // TIER TWO: TRANSITIONAL

Transitional advertising makes the handoff from general awareness to specific interest or need. It's harder to define than brand and product advertising, but it serves as an imperative bridge between the two. Transitional ads are always created with a specific audience in mind (business owners, people in the market for a new home, people who care about your community or a specific cause that you support, etc.).

Transitional ads span the gap from brand to product by outlining, with depth, what type of bank you are.

This could be focused down a line of business:

*We're a commercial bank.*

*We're a retail bank.*

*We're a mortgage bank.*

If those don't necessarily fit for the media channel, your transition may be better made through a message more philosophical:

*We're a community bank.*

*We're a bank that crusades for a cause.*

*We're a bank that supports our community.*

Define for yourself what and who your bank is, then communicate that to your audience early and often.

### **Transitional Advertising:**

Appeals to a more specific audience

### **Transitional Messaging:**

Tells what kind of bank you are — usually focused down a line of business, but it can also be more philosophical

### **Transitional Media:**

Magazines or niche publications

## // TIER THREE: PRODUCT

Product advertising plays an important role in your overall advertising plan, and its purpose is very simple: Sell products. We recommend allocating 20 to 30 percent of your budget to advertising specific products your bank offers. To advertise products effectively, the message needs to be straightforward and conversion needs to be easy for the client. Drive hard on your features such as rate, cashback, and so on, and marry them tightly to your bank's key benefit. Make conversion easy by creating landing pages specific to the product and campaign to give context and continuity from the ad.

### **Product Advertising:**

Connects a client or potential client with a need (your product)

### **Product Messaging:**

Promotes a specific product and makes conversion easy

### **Product Media:**

Digital display advertising, PPC, other digital channels events



— DOWNLOAD OUR BUDGET PLANNING TEMPLATE: [mabusagency.com/cdba](https://mabusagency.com/cdba)

## Advertising Examples

Now that we've described how each tier of brand advertising works, let's explore how their practical applications will look. Advertising is about speaking to potential customers of course, but the conversations are different in each of the three tiers. See the example ads on the following page to help get an idea of how you'll write and design your ads, depending on the breadth and depth of the audience to which you'll be speaking.

## // BRAND TIER

- Clearly communicates your bank's key benefit
- Contains a strong, engaging message



## // TRANSITIONAL TIER

- Focuses on what type of bank you are in a particular situation
- For a client with specific needs



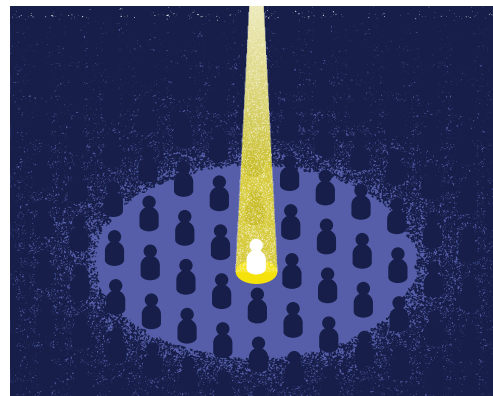
## // PRODUCT TIER

- Direct message that includes product features
- Makes conversion easy



# Speaking to the Individual

— READ BEFORE YOU START:  
[mabusagency.com/one-tip-boost-writing](https://mabusagency.com/one-tip-boost-writing)



There are a handful of tips that can help poor writing become fair, and one more that can make fair writing good, even outstanding. Thankfully, they’re all easily applied.

What’s the difference between poor writing and mediocre writing? Generally, it’s pretty simple: the technicals. Poor grammar, spelling, and sentence structure. For poor writing, there are easy fixes:

- Run spellcheck.
- Buy a subscription to Grammarly.
- Write short, simple, clear sentences.

That’s it. You can communicate the facts in an acceptable way with these rules. You may even surpass mediocrity. You can be funny, interesting, and even compelling. It worked for Ernest Hemingway — but I’m not promising anything more than decent.

Bank writing tends toward long, meandering sentences and circuitous thoughts. It’s much better to get to the point with clarity and brevity. Most of the content you’ll write will communicate features of complex financial products in the simplest terms.

Try it. Rewrite the sentence below using shorter, more direct sentences:

*To get the most out of your account, download our new mobile application and you’ll get all the features and benefits of a visit to the bank right in your hand.*

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So, now you're ready to move from mediocre to good. Are you ready for that one tip?

### **Write to an individual instead of an audience.**

Sometimes, it's easy and overt:

Mediocre: *Everyone will love XYZ Bank.*

Good: *You'll love XYZ Bank.*

It's a one-word change that makes a difference.

Other times, it's a bit more nuanced:

Mediocre: *We have banking solutions for every need!*

Good: *We specialize in enhancing your life with our products.*

This change is more about tone. Again, it relies on simply using a *second-person* pronoun. And the second statement doesn't sound like it's being read from a stage. Too many of us sit down to write and imagine we're walking up to a lectern on a huge stage, with blinding lights in their eyes — getting ready to deliver a masterpiece to throngs of people. You think of your advertising audience as a literal audience.

That just isn't the case. While you might be writing to tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of people, each one of those people will likely engage with your messaging individually.

One person at a time sees a digital ad on his or her phone. If you don't think that is a personal experience, try grabbing a stranger's phone, or peeking over a stranger's shoulder to read the ads as they scroll.

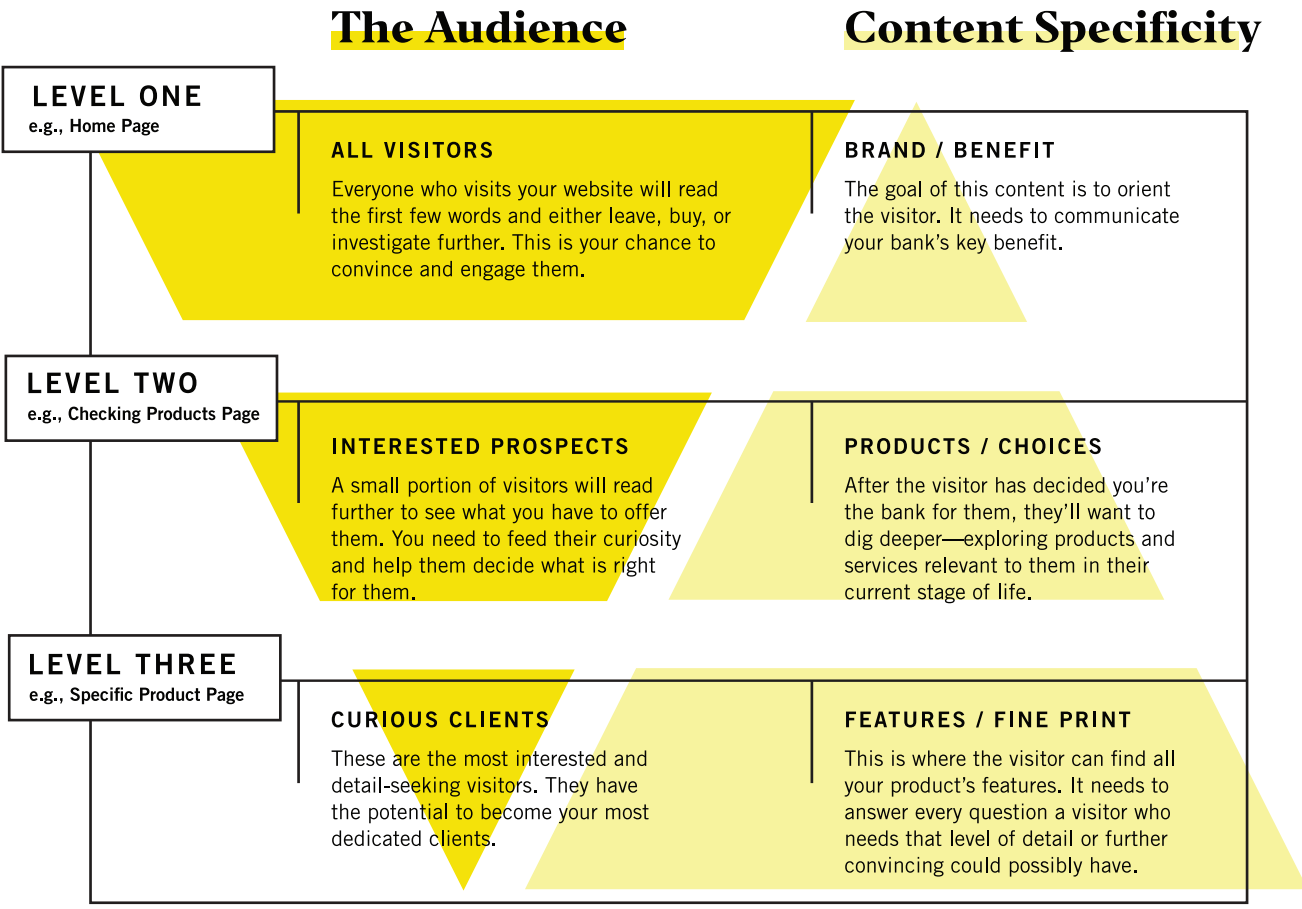
From mobile ads to billboards and at all points between, most reactions happen internally. It's the voice in your head that says, "Hm. It might be a good idea to switch banks."

So, the next time you sit down to write, imagine the person you really want to convince. The words might not come easily, but the message will be better once it emerges.

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY



# Inverse Triangles



**What are your website visitors thinking at each level?  
 Draw lines to match each.**

- LEVEL ONE**  
e.g., Home Page
- LEVEL TWO**  
e.g., Checking Products Page
- LEVEL THREE**  
e.g., Specific Product Page

- “Is this bank right for me?”
- “Am I ready to open an account?”
- “What checking account is right for me?”
- “Do I need to speak to a banker?”
- “Am I at the right place/page?”
- “How do I decide what mortgage loan is right for me?”
- “Does the benefit resonate with me?”
- “Do I have more questions?”
- “What small business loans are available to me?”



# Shoestring Budget

**// MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MARKETING BUDGET**

What events can you create that would add value to your community?

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How can you expand and/or improve your bank's community board(s)?

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What group of people could you write an impactful letter to, and what should the letter be about?

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CHAPTER 4

# Diversity, Equality, & Inclusion

## Checking the Box vs Changing the World

Achieving diversity, equality, and inclusion in the workplace requires conscious thought and deliberate effort. When we seek to put programs into place to address these needs, it's important to seek both external and internal development. They're efforts that require dedication to see through and real capital to thrive, but they make our banks and the communities they serve stronger over time. They're also efforts to be undertaken incrementally, with steps to take today, this quarter and this year to get you underway.

### // KEY INDICATORS OF EXTERNAL PROGRESS

Representation	Diversity	Equality	Equity	Inclusion
Institutions are growing and cultivating relationships with new clients	Clients can see content that relates to them.	Your clientele, staff, and job candidates reflect / surpass your area.	You have diverse programs for and with underrepresented people groups.	Your community boards and initiatives welcome and listen to all voices. "Community Banking"

Where is your bank now? What can you do to make progress?

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### // KEY INDICATORS OF INTERNAL PROGRESS

Representation	Diversity	Equality	Equity	Inclusion
You have diverse applicants, thoughts, and ideas.	Decisions are made in rooms with people from different backgrounds and experiences.	You have diverse programs and continued education.	You start to reach a diverse staff.	Employees feel seen and heard.

Where is your bank now? What can you do to make progress?

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