

Communication skills

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



As a banking official of the Bank for Foreign Trade of Vietnam (Vietcombank), I have to supervise interns and colleagues who are on probation. According to the bank's policy, I am asked to give them feedback at the end of the year. However, in response to your request for this assignment, I decided to provide my objective comments over phone to Mr. To, who was an intern and have been on probation at Vietcombank since the beginning of 2004. Through this experience, I recognize the importance of how to give an effective feedback.

As I left Vietcombank, Hanoi for the Eller College of Management, Arizona at the end of this July, my feedback just covers the first seven months of 2004. A written copy of my feedback will be sent to the bank later. Based on Mr. To's performance at the bank's Marketing Division during that time, my comments to him are divided into four areas: communicationskills, understanding of job, technical understanding, and potential for advancement.

Communication skills Mr. To demonstrated good communication skills while performing his duties within the marketing division. His ability to listen to the bank's new clients (small and medium enterprises- SMEs) and convey to his colleagues clients' needs for financial funding was demonstrated in the successful implementation of Vietcombank's micro-credit program supporting SMEs, particularly in private sector.

Mr. To effectively interacted with the projectfinancedivision and clearly explained SMEs' concerns on mandatory collaterals in applying for banking financing. Thanks to his efforts in passing feedback from SMEs, the rigid

financing procedure in which financing decisions had been based on the collaterals rather than on the feasibility of business plans was removed. Mr. To exhibited ability to smoothly communicate across the bank's channels while maintaining good relationships with SMEs, which became the key client segment of Vietcombank in the reform to diversify investment portfolios and reduce credit risk.

Job understanding Though sometimes digressing from his core duties, Mr. To was quite knowledgeable of the scope of work activities expected of him. Within the realm of client segmentation, he properly analyzed characteristics of the two key client segments and researched their needs of financial support from Vietcombank. For example, based on researches, Mr. To pointed out that monopolistic state owned enterprises had long term investment projects guaranteed by the Government (low risks, questionable feasibility), possessed sufficient collaterals for the loans but were under poor management models.

Contrary, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in private sector had feasible business projects, owned insufficient collaterals for the loans (poor financial backup) but they followed flexible and efficient business strategies and management models. The client segments' profiles Mr. To had developed were useful for the bank's management to streamline credit policies in favor of SMEs, which led to diversified customer bases of Vietcombank and better credit facilities for SMEs.

As a matter of fact, it was difficult at times to distinguish the job responsibilities from those of consumer segmentation research and those of

policies and strategies development. Mr. To is a strong advocate for the development of the private sector and SMEs. He initiatively recommended a number of policy reforms to facilitate credit procedures for SMEs; yet, many of them could not be applicable given serious loopholes in the banking legal system of Vietnam. Recommending policy reforms is beyond the scope of his actual job responsibilities; this focus is the core duties of the strategies development division.

Instead, Mr. To should have fully focused on the regular update of clients' profiles, and intensively researched on newly established enterprises as the third potential consumer target of the bank. If he had recognized this segment's potential, Vietcombank might not have lost 8% of revenue (concerning this segment's banking activities) to the bank's competitors in the first half of this year.

Technical understanding The broad needs of corporate clients marketing demand strong risk management skills and sufficient legal understanding in order to be successful. At times when the needs of clients or other divisions of the bank involved the application of existing legal regulations or extensive risk analysis, there was a shortcoming of technical knowledge by Mr. To. Though he had begun efforts to address this by enrolling in additional coursework to enhance his knowledge of the legal system, he still needs further intensive training on risk analysis for improvement.

Potential for improvement Mr. To is an example of the intern program when it works to the benefit of both the bank and the individual. The program brought in quite qualified candidates like Mr. To who have been given a

platform to demonstrate their abilities and knowledge. Based on my personal observations, working relationships, as well as feedback from corporate clients, Mr. To's performance is ranked in the upper one-third of those who are on probation at the bank, and falls firmly within the "sustained" grade. He appears to be comfortable with the expectations ahead. With more training on risk analysis and better legal understanding, Mr. To would be included in the group-level management of the bank.

Mr. To, on the one hand, appreciated my objective comments. He confirmed that my feedback was impersonal, quite concrete and clearly understandable; thus, was useful to him. On the other hand, he also had some feedback over phone on my feedback as follows: First, concerning technical understanding, my feedback did not focus on specific behaviors. He wondered on what basis I concluded that he needed intensive training on risk analysis.

He enrolled in law coursework because of his own interest in the general legal system; yet, he did not think that his legal understanding had been inadequate for his job requirements. He expected that hard data were supported in explaining why he was critical. For example, when, where and how the needs from clients and the bank's divisions concerning legal regulations application and risk management were not well handled by him.