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are a driving factor when business owners choose a financial institution.

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highest scores since the study began,” said Frank Aloï, CEO, ath Power. “This demonstrates their increased efforts to acquire the highly coveted small business customer.”

Based on more than 800 in-person branch visits by prospective Small Business Owners (SBOs) at banks across the U.S., the ath Power Small Business Banking Study revealed what small business clients expect from their banking relationship, gaps in the service experience and how banks measured up in this all-important market segment.

A significant finding from this year's study was the impact of a bank's mobile banking offering. Sixty-six percent of SBOs said they would be likely to switch banks for one with a superior mobile offering. Conversely, despite its growing prevalence and importance to SBOs, 37% of bankers in the study failed to even mention their bank's mobile offering.

“Mobile represents opportunities and challenges for banks to attract and retain small business clientele,” said Aloï. “Banks with mobile offerings tailored specifically for small business will achieve success by delivering differentiated features and functionality not available in standard mobile banking services.”

Results also revealed that bankers from the highest rated banks were significantly better at determining needs and building rapport with prospective customers. Of those SBOs who reported that the banker built a rapport with them, 91% said they would become a customer compared to 28% of those who did not.

“Personal connections remain critical for banks seeking to acquire new small business customers,” Aloï said. “The most successful institutions are training bankers on how to build rapport and then using applicable research and coaching to continuously improve.”

The study further uncovered missed opportunities for sales, as only about half (52%)

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