



Peer Perspectives: Does Your Card Program Stack Up?

“For a small program ACE is all you need when you’re first getting started to show where income is and how it will track.”

Cindy Bellet, Vice President
First International Bank & Trust Co.

For Cindy Bellet, vice president at \$950 million-asset First International Bank & Trust in Watford City, N.D. it’s all about perspective. Sure she keeps detailed spreadsheets noting income and expenses with all the variables affecting both sides of the balance sheet, but that doesn’t tell the story about how her card program stacks up against the competition.

That’s where ICBA Bancard’s, automated portfolio development tool, Automated Card Expert (ACE) comes in. “My management is always interested in total outstandings and how we match up.... We’re usually above our peer group and right below ICBA’s top performers.”

For Bellet, ACE provides a benchmark of where First International wants to be and a roadmap that details how to get there. By running “what if” scenarios she can gauge the impact of a change or addition to the bank’s card plans such as an adjustment to the bank’s APR or a new rewards feature. And by com-

paring year-over-year data she can quickly identify spikes or dips in profit and losses and tie it back to a particular campaign or plan adjustment.

“We want to see what we have to change, what type of loyalty program marketing we should [roll out] to get closer to income per account levels [of the] top performers,” Bellet says. It’s how she decided to run a limited incentive, offering cardholders extra points for paying at the pump, she explains.

Ever keen on maximizing the service, Bellet quickly adopted many of ACE’s product enhancements incorporated in the system overhaul in 2008—including expanded graphing features—to enhance her monthly performance reports to the board.

Her advice to banks that haven’t yet harnessed the power of ACE: “Start using it as soon as possible and stay faithful.” A rich data history to support a new marketing plan or product change can help make the sale “when you bring it to the board and they want to know how you are backing this decision or why they should invest in this new program,” Bellet explains.

