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The Personal Side of Relationship Banking

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Abstract:

This paper documents a widely overlooked dimension of relationship lending: the personal interaction between the borrower and the lender reduces the willingness of the borrower to engage in moral hazard and default on the loan officer. We conduct a randomized experiment with small business borrowers of the largest commercial bank in India to test the impact of three different levels of interactions between the borrower and the bank. Borrowers who are regularly called either by a single assigned relationship manager or by one manager randomly selected from a small team of managers shows much better repayment behavior and greater satisfaction with the bank services than borrowers who either receive no follow up or only receive follow up calls from the bank when they are delinquent. The results are economically and statistically significant: borrowers who receive the more intensive treatment see a large reduction in the number of late payment spells and delinquencies.

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The Personal Side of Relationship Banking in India

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January 01, 2012