



Introduction

Arvest Bank was founded many years ago by my father, Sam Walton and is a success today because it continues to embody the same fundamental belief that every customer would be treated in a friendly, courteous manner and their questions would be answered very quickly, regardless of what they looked like or how big their bank account.

You can see our core values in the unique way we serve customers today. Our branch designs don't really look like banks at all. And there's our strategies for serving customers – the 3-ring rule, nametags, friendliness and local decision makers – all designed to make our customers' experiences far superior to anything they would encounter at another financial institution. This fundamental belief goes beyond simply being friends when we greet and serve a customer. For example, we invest a great deal of time and resources in our training efforts to ensure that our associates are prepared to understand and meet our customers' needs. We feel the same way about technology – if a given piece of software or a system can help us serve our customers better, then chances are we're going to invest in it. That's how we view all aspects of our business and support functions.

You'll see here in *The Customer Approved Small Business*, one of his "secrets" to success is absolutely fundamental for our success at Arvest. We continually talk to our associates about our company's core values: communicating openly and striving for excellence. Without our history, without the passion with which our organization was formed and without an understanding of the core values and beliefs, we simply become another bank.

How do we keep our core values alive? We talk about them. Every decision we make, every customer we encounter, every task we undertake – we first apply our company's core values as a filter.

Knowing our competition and attention to details are two more inherited strategies for business success at the core of Arvest.

It is simple, straightforward and easy to understand and grasp. Michael Schell applies this same down-to-earth, no-nonsense, no-frills guidance here in *The Customer Approved Small Business*. I'm sure you will enjoy this work as much as I have.

Jim Walton
Chairman
Arvest Bank