

Profit-push puts public sector bank staff under pressure

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Expense curbs and stiff recovery, credit targets among steps taken at branch level



When a large loan goes bad the branch staff end up bearing the cross shutterstock Fedorov

Mumbai, September 18:

The pressure to get their banks out of the bad loans quagmire and back into profitability is bringing forth varied responses, ranging from well-meaning to knee-jerk, from senior public sector bank officials handling field formations.

Be it telling branch heads and officers not to tarry in the workplace beyond office hours (aimed at curtailing operational expenses and ensuring work-life balance) to threat of salary stoppage, all appears to be par for the course during the current stressful times for bankers as well as their banks.

The regional head of Bank of Baroda's Mehsana (Gujarat) region recently asked heads of all branches under his watch to ensure optimum utilisation of all staff members during working hours and avoid late sitting.

Probably believing in the dictum 'a penny spared is a penny earned', the senior official advised branch heads to curtail operational expenses.

Don'ts list

In this regard, a 'don'ts' list has been prescribed — lights, air-conditioners, fans and other electrical devices should be monitored to save electricity.

ACs should invariably be switched off latest by 5.30 pm; all computers (except Enterprise PC) should be shut down at close of office hours. Besides, when not in use, monitors of computers should be turned off.

"We advise branches to ensure that the work should not be stretched till late evening, except during an emergency situation. We have observed that some of the branch heads are habitual in late sitting...and insisting that all officers sit late.

Monitoring staff

"Late sitting beyond working hours not only affects physical and the mental condition of the staff member but also worsen qualitative aspects....They should monitor working of each staff member on a regular basis and take necessary measures/follow-up for completion of work by close of office hours," said the official in a communication to branches.

This advise from the senior official comes in the backdrop of Bank of Baroda changing the work timing of administrative offices (such as head office, corporate office, zonal office, regional office, SME loan factories, and specialised mortgage stores) to 9 am to 4 pm with effect from September 18. This change is aimed at providing more support to the operational units during business hours.

Late last month, UCO Bank's Kolkata zonal manager shot off a letter to the personnel services department in the head office seeking stoppage of salary for August of all staff members of select (11) branches in his zone till further instructions due to their non-performance in almost all the key business parameters. However, the decision was rescinded later.

“Large loans are usually sanctioned by banks’ headquarters and disbursed through branches. When a large loan goes bad the branch staff end up bearing the cross. At a time when there is a slowdown in the economy, ambitious recovery and credit (retail and MSME loan) growth targets have been set.

“It is really stressful to either head or work in a bank branch,” lamented a senior public sector bank official.

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