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Stillwater company gains national recognition

Business Consulting Group advises such giants as Wal-Mart, Barnes & Noble

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OKLAHOMA CITY – Stillwater-based Southwest Bancorp Inc. has quietly been growing its nonbanking subsidiary for several years, garnering national retail clients such as Hollywood Video, Payless Shoe Source and Wal-Mart by word of mouth.

The books being sold off Barnes & Noble's shelves? They're there in large part because of Business Consulting Group Inc. By streamlining and correcting stocking processes under BCG's direction, the national bookseller improves its bottom line. Other companies hear about it and seek out the same.

"BCG's capital is intellectual in nature," Southwest Bancorp spokesman Jerry Rackley said. "So what they sell is their expertise and time, which is different from the bank's model for generating revenue and income. ... Historically, Stillwater National Bank and the holding company have not sought out any kind of publicity; part of our operational strategy has been to just be kind of quiet. But this is one thing we've decided that deserves some attention."

BCG is led by Allen Glenn, who is also an executive officer of Stillwater National Bank and Trust Co. Glenn brings industrial engineering degrees to the company and extensive operations management and business efficiency experience – or as he put it, "We provide a perspective that looks at retail operations much like a manufacturing operation."

"Looking at a Barnes & Noble, they asked us to come in and standardize the way they flow their books into their stores and onto their shelves," Glenn said. "Prior to our involvement, they had gone through a rapid expansion where the name of the game for their growth was to put up new stores, and they let their managers run things as they saw best. It was a little bit of cavalier entrepreneurship. They realized they needed to standardize a lot of how they executed their business."

BCG helped revamp the entire stock flow process, even down to details such as receiving cartons of books and moving them onto carts for distribution on store shelves in a particular order.

"Our approach has been to help our clients understand where there are opportunities to improve the way they run their businesses, looking specifically at operations and processes," Glenn said. "From Southwest Bancorp's



Allen Glenn

perspective, it's a way that we can differentiate ourselves from competitors. ... By helping businesses improve their operations and enhance their profitability, we're able to offer those services to bank clients."

The company usually works out reorganization plans at local stores in Oklahoma City and Tulsa and then rolls out the details to the larger chain.

As a wholly separate unit of Southwest Bancorp, the company doesn't have much cross-over business with the Stillwater National Bank, officials said. Rackley cited banking privacy laws preventing discussion of specific clients. But Glenn pointed out, "On the bank side, there have been a couple times that we have helped out bank clients."

"BCG doesn't really have to advertise; they haven't advertised to go find clients," Rackley said. "They get word-of-mouth references that bring additional work into them. And you can tell from the type of clients that they're doing some pretty interesting projects. ... We know they are a major differentiator."

Publicly traded Southwest Bancorp reported assets of \$2.1 billion as of March 31. It is the financial holding company for Healthcare Strategic Support Inc. and Stillwater National Bank with branches in Texas and SNB Bank of Wichita.