

Reducing Customer Attrition with Predictive Analytics for Financial Institutions

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ABSTRACT

As smaller banks market themselves to increase their market share against the big banks, they understandably focus on gaining new customers. However, they must also retain (and further engage) their existing customers. Otherwise, the new customers they gain can easily be offset by existing customers who leave. Happily, by using predictive analytics as described in this paper, it can actually be much easier and less expensive to keep (and further cultivate) existing customers than to enlist new ones.

This paper provides a step-by-step overview of a relatively simple but comprehensive approach to reduce customer attrition. We first prepare the data for a statistical analysis. With some basic predictive analytics techniques, we can then identify those customers who have the highest chance of leaving and the highest value. For each of these customers, we can also identify why they would leave, thus suggesting the best way to intervene to retain them. We then make suggestions to improve the model for better accuracy. Finally, we provide suggestions to extend this approach to cultivating existing customers and thus increasing their lifetime value.

Code snippets will be shown for any version of SAS® but will require the SAS/STAT package. This approach can also be applied to many other organizations and industries.

The %makeCharts and %makeROC macros in this paper are available at nderby.org/docs/charts.zip.

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM WITH CUSTOMER ATTRITION

Suppose we're the fictitious Fisher Bank of Ames, Iowa, which has 70,359 customers and \$928MM in assets as of June 30, 2015, with none of those customers having only a car loan.¹ Three months before, we had 69,534 customers and \$920MM in assets, so we grew their customer base by 1.19% and their assets by 0.91%. That might sound good on the surface, but it's really not. Our gain of 825 customers is a *net* gain. We actually gained 3541 *new* customers but lost 2716 *existing* customers. **Our customer attrition is dramatically affecting our net customer growth.**

- If we had retained just 20% of those departing customers, we would have gained a net 1368 customers, for a 1.97% net customer growth.
- If we had retained 25% of those departing customers, we would have had gained a net 1504 customers, for a 2.16% net customer growth.
- If we had retained 50% of those departing customers, we would have had gained a net 2183 customers, for an amazing 3.14% net customer growth.

In fact, **retaining existing customers is usually easier and less expensive than gaining new customers**, since these customers already know and trust the bank, and the bank already knows so much about them. Keeping them might be as simple as making a friendly phone call. **The key is making full use of the data we have on our customers.** Since customer attrition can have such a huge effect on customer growth, why not focus some attention to it? Specifically, we can focus on those customers with the highest value and the highest risk of closing their accounts.

¹ Customers with just a car loan typically behave differently from the normal customers, so we're ignoring them to keep this analysis simple.

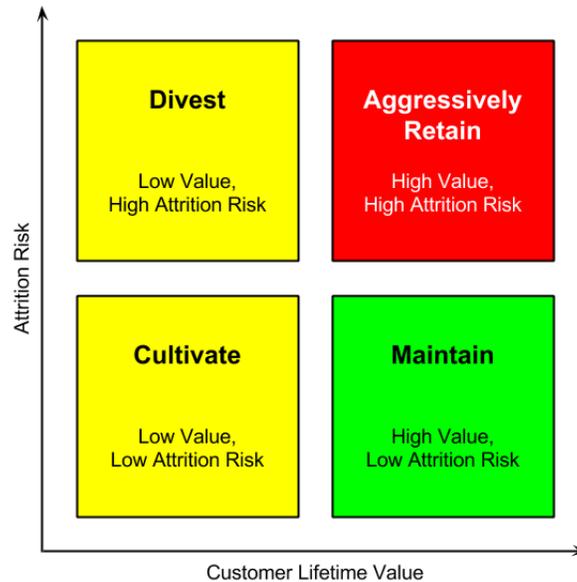


Figure 1: Customer segmentation into quadrants of lifetime value and attrition risk.

If we can identify which customers are most likely to leave, we can proactively focus our marketing efforts on retaining them. With this in mind, Figure 1 shows four attrition marketing quadrants that describe the segmentation of our customers. The horizontal axis shows the *customer lifetime value* (in terms of the aggregate balance of deposits and loans), which may be very different from the present value. For instance, a student typically has a low present value but will have a much higher lifetime value. The vertical axis shows the attrition risk. We can divide this region into four quadrants:

- *Maintain*: These are customers with a high value and low attrition risk. These are generally our best customers, and we should keep them satisfied without focusing much attention on them if possible.
- *Cultivate*: These are customers with a low value and low attrition risk. We're not in danger of losing them, but they aren't growing our bank. We should cultivate these customers to have a higher value.
- *Divest*: These are customers with a low value and high attrition risk. These are the customers that we wouldn't really mind losing, since they're low value and would require some effort to keep.
- *Aggressively Retain*: These are customers with a high value and high attrition risk, and **they are the ones we should pay the most attention to**. If we lose these customers, it will make a large difference to our asset size (either now or in the future).

So how can we use our data to focus on these high-value, high-risk customers?

Thomas (2010) presents a basic but very useful approach using logistic regression, and Karp (1998) provides details on the logistic regression procedure itself. Lu (2002) and Lu (2003) predict attrition and lifetime value using survival analysis, whereas Su et al. (2009) use statistical clustering. Both of these are more complex methods.

In this paper, we'll follow the example of Thomas (2010), showing a basic but very useful approach that can produce quick results once the code infrastructure is in place.

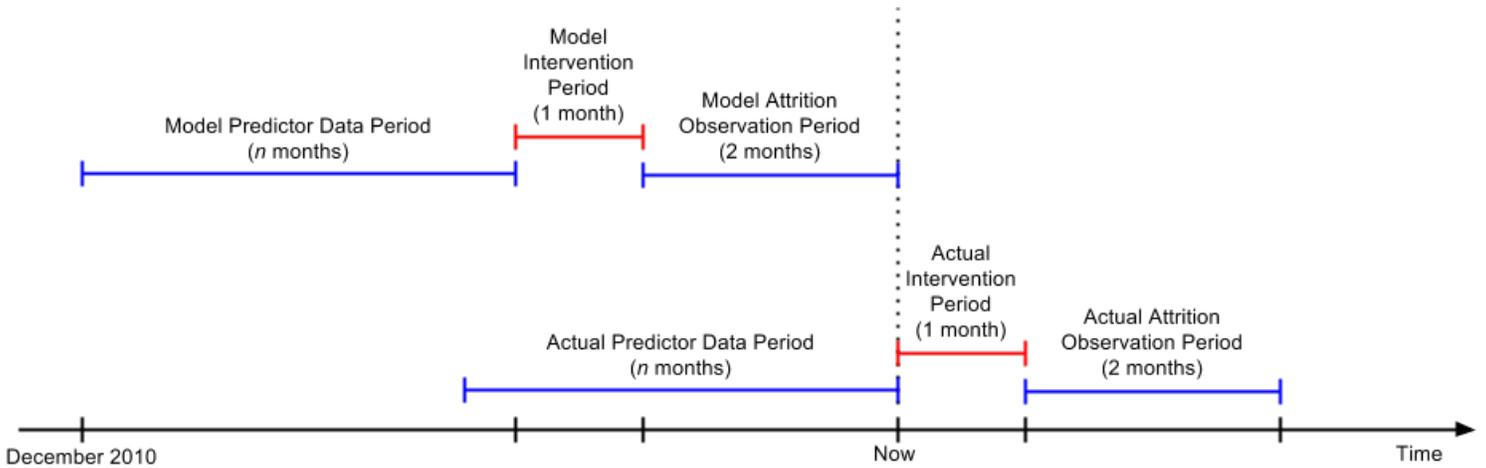


Figure 2: The scheme for duplicating our raw data into a modeling (upper) and a scoring (lower) data set.

DATA PREPARATION

We're building a *statistical model*, an equation that will tell us the probability that a customer will close his/her account 2-3 months later. Before we can do that, we'll need to prepare the data, which involves three steps applied to raw data from our core processor (customer demographic, account, and transactional data):

- *Duplicating the data* into two data sets that are almost the same: one for building the statistical model, and the other for using that statistical model to give us our forecasts.
- *Building our variables* for both of the above data sets.
- *Partitioning the data* (the first one above, for building the statistical model).

We'll explain the reason behind each step and how we're implementing it. We'll then show results from simulated data inspired by real data from Verity Credit Union of Seattle.

DUPLICATING THE DATA

A statistical model is an equation where the *input variables* are from the known data and the output variable is the unknown quantity we'd like to know. In this case, the input variables X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots are attributes about the customer effective as of this point in time and the output variable is that customer's risk of leaving the bank 2-3 months later:²

$$\text{Probability of leaving 2-3 months later} = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots)$$

where f is some function we don't yet know. Once we have the function f , we'll use the input variables X_1, X_2, X_3 and get our probability of leaving. This may sound simple, but to figure out what that function is, we need to use mathematical algorithms on data at a point in time when we can see which customers actually left 2-3 months later. In other words,

- To *build* the statistical model, we need to use data as of three months ago, coupled with which customers left 2-3 months later (which we know).
- To *use* the statistical model, we need to use data as of now, which will tell us which customers are likely to leave 2-3 months later (which we don't know).

Since the statistical model requires input and output variables to be defined in the same way (whether we're building or using the statistical model), the time interval for the input variables must be the same length for both creating and using the statistical models. Therefore, from our raw data we'll create two data sets adjusted for the time intervals, as shown in Figure 2:

²2-3 months later gives us a month to intervene and hopefully change the outcome so that the customer retains his/her account.

- The data set for *building* the statistical model will include input variables up to three months in the past, plus attrition data for the last two months (i.e., which customers closed their accounts).
- The data set for *using* the statistical model will include only input variables, for a time period moved forward by three months.

For consistency (i.e., some months have 31 days, some have 30, some have 28 or 29), we actually use groups of 4 weeks rather than 1 month, even when we call it a month in Figure 2.

We can efficiently code this in SAS by defining a macro:

```
%MACRO prepareData( dataSet );

%LOCAL now1 now2 now ... attritionEndDate;

PROC SQL NOPRINT;
  SELECT MAX( effectiveDate )
    INTO :now1
    FROM customer_accounts;
  SELECT MIN( tranPostDate ), MAX( tranPostDate )
    INTO :startDate, :now2
    FROM customer_transactions;
QUIT;

%LET now = %SYSFUNC( MIN( &now1, &now2 ) );

%IF &dataSet = modeling %THEN %DO;

  %LET predictorStartDate = &startDate;
  %* starting at the earliest transaction date ;
  %LET predictorEndDate = %EVAL( &now - 84 );
  %* ending three months ago ;
  %LET attritionStartDate = %EVAL( &now - 56 + 1 );
  %* starting two months ago ;
  %LET attritionEndDate = &now;
  %* ending now ;

%END;
%ELSE %IF &dataSet = scoring %THEN %DO;

  %LET predictorStartDate = %EVAL( &startDate + 84 );
  % starting at the earliest transaction date plus three months ;
  %LET predictorEndDate = &now;
  % ending now ;

%END;

[SAS CODE FOR PULLING/PROCESSING THE DATA, USING THE MACRO VARIABLES ABOVE]

%MEND prepareData;
```

We can now create both data sets using the exact same process for each of them with the time periods shifted, as in Figure 2:

```
%prepareData( modeling )
%prepareData( scoring )
```

BUILDING OUR VARIABLES

For both of the data sets described above, we'll build variables that might be predictive of a customer closing his/her account. We don't care if these variables are *actually* predictive, as the statistical modeling process will figure that out. But the statistical modeling process is just a mathematical algorithm that doesn't understand human behavior. It needs to know ahead of time which variables to try out. So it's our job to give it those variables to try out, which of course we have to create.

Here are some examples of variables we can try out:

- *Transaction Recency*: When was the last transaction (other than automatic transactions like interest)?
- *External Deposit Recency*: When was the last external deposit?
- *Recent Large Transaction*: Was there a recent large transaction? (Above the 90th or 95th percentile of all transactions over the most recent 2 or 4 weeks)
- *Small Number of Transactions*: Was there a recent small number of transactions? (Above the 90th percentile for the monthly number of transactions)
- *Large Number of Transactions*: Was there a recent large number of transactions? (Below the 10th percentile for the monthly number of transactions)
- *A Seasonality Component*: This is a dummy variable to determine if certain customers are more likely to close their accounts in the summer, or during the Christmas season.

Within SAS, we can code these variables into the %prepareData macro we previously defined so that we do the exact same process for both time intervals. As shown below, we have to be sure that we confine ourselves to certain transactions type codes (tranTypCode).

```
PROC SQL NOPRINT;
  CREATE TABLE predictorData1 AS
  SELECT
    id_customer,
    MAX( ( &predictorEndDate - tranPostDate )/7 ) AS tranRecency
      LABEL='Transaction Recency (Weeks)',
    MEAN( ABS( tranAmt ) ) AS meanTranAmt LABEL='Mean Transaction Amount',
    N( tranAmt ) AS nTrans LABEL='Number of Transactions',
    N( tranAmt )/ MAX( INTCK( 'month', tranPostDate, &now, 'c' ) )
      AS meanNTransPerMonth LABEL='Mean # Transactions per Month'
  FROM customer_transactions
  WHERE
    tranPostDate BETWEEN &predictorStartDate AND &predictorEndDate AND
    UPCASE( tranTypeCode ) IN ( 'CCC', 'CCD', ... 'WTHD' )
  GROUP BY id_customer;
  CREATE TABLE predictorData2 AS
  SELECT
    id_customer,
    MAX( ( &now - tranPostDate )/7 ) AS depRecency
      LABEL='External Deposit Recency (Weeks)'
  FROM customer_transactions
  WHERE
    tranPostDate BETWEEN &predictorStartDate AND &predictorEndDate AND
    UPCASE( tranTypeCode ) = 'XDEP'
  GROUP BY id_customer;
QUIT;
```

The percentiles can be computed with PROC UNIVARIATE, and all of these data sets can be joined by a simple MERGE statement within a DATA step.

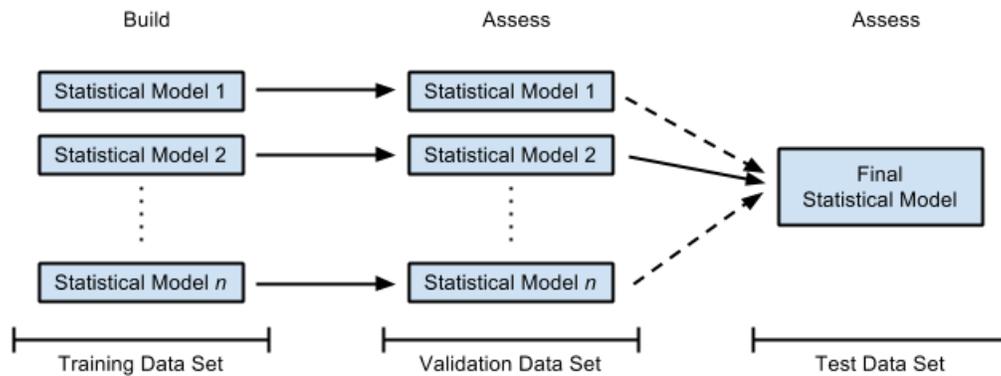


Figure 3: The three data partitions. Only one of the models makes it to the final model (in this case, model 2).

PARTITIONING THE DATA

For the modeling data set in Figure 2, we won't build *one* statistical model for our forecasts. Instead, we'll build several of them, choose the one that gives us the best results, then give an estimate of how accurate those results are. While this process may sound simple, we can't use the same data set for each of these steps, since that could give us biased results (which would be bad). To understand this, think of the data set we use when building a statistical model. This process involves mathematical algorithms that find the equation that best fits the data. If we used the same data set to assess how well that equation fit those data points, then by definition (since the algorithm was *designed* to get the best fit between the equation and the data points) we would get a really good fit! But the whole point of building a statistical model is to predict *data that we haven't seen yet*. **If we've never actually tested how well our statistical model predicts unknown data points, then we won't know how well it forecasts unknown data until we use it.** This could be a recipe for disaster.

There's a much better way to do this. Instead of using the same data set for making the model and then testing it out, we can randomly partition the data points into three distinct sets:

- *The training data set* (60% of the data) is used to build each of the statistical models that we're trying out.
- *The validation data set* (20% of the data) is used to determine how well each of these statistical models actually forecasts attrition. That is, using each of the statistical models we built with the training set, we'll forecast the customers in the validation set who closed their accounts and check their accuracy. **The statistical model that has the best accuracy will be our final statistical model.**
- *The test data set* (20% of the data) is used to determine how well the final model (i.e., the winning model from the validation set) actually forecasts attrition. That is, we'll use the final model to forecast the customers in the test set who closed their accounts and check their accuracy. We do this to double check that everything is OK. If the accuracy is much different than it was for the validation set, it's a sign that something is wrong and we should investigate this further. Otherwise, our final model is all good!

This is illustrated in Figure 3. In SAS, we can do this with the following code at the end of our %prepareData macro, using a random uniform distribution with the RAND function:

```
DATA trainingData validationData testData;
  SET inputData;
  CALL STREAMINIT( 29 );
  randUni = RAND( 'uniform' );
  IF randUni < .6 THEN OUTPUT trainingData;
  ELSE IF randUni < .8 THEN OUTPUT validationData;
  ELSE OUTPUT testData;
RUN;
```

For our data set of 69,534 customers at the end of March 2015, we get 41,875 customers in our training set (60.22%), 13,807 customers in our validation set (19.86%), and 13,852 customers in our test set (19.92%).

BUILDING THE STATISTICAL MODELS

Building the statistical models is actually easy, as we'll just use logistic regression with different sets of explanatory variables. We can use the following code to implement this with the training set in Figure 3:

```
PROC LOGISTIC DATA=trainingData OUTMODEL=trainingModell;  
  CLASS ageTier( REF='18 and Under' ) / PARAM=ref;  
  MODEL attrition( EVENT='1' ) = depRecency ageTier lom nProducts calls;  
  ODS OUTPUT parameterEstimates = parameters_modell;  
RUN;
```

A few details about this code:

- The `CLASS` statement establishes the first age tier (for 18 and under) as our reference age tier.
- In the `MODEL` statement,
 - We set the `attrition`³ reference level to 1 so that our statistical model predict those customers who are leaving, not those who are staying.
 - We've listed external deposit recency (`depRecency`), age tier (`ageTier`), length of relationship (`lom`), number of products (`nProducts`), and number of customer service calls (`calls`) as our explanatory variables for this particular model.
- The `ODS OUTPUT` statement exports the parameter estimates onto a separate data set.

ASSESSING THE STATISTICAL MODELS

To assess our statistical model as shown in Figure 3, we take the model created from the training set above and apply it to our validation set. We do this in SAS with the `SCORE` statement in `PROC LOGISTIC`:

```
PROC LOGISTIC INMODEL=trainingModell;  
  SCORE DATA=validationData OUT=validationForecasts OUTROC=validationROC;  
RUN;
```

The output data sets `validationForecasts` and `validationROC` will be used in our assessments as described in the next few pages. If this is our best model and we want to apply it to our test set in Figure 3, we simply change the `SCORE` statement accordingly:

```
PROC LOGISTIC INMODEL=trainingModell;  
  SCORE DATA=testData OUT=testForecasts OUTROC=testROC;  
RUN;
```

Finally, when we're done and want to make forecasts of the entire data set, we change the `SCORE` statement once again:⁴

```
PROC LOGISTIC INMODEL=trainingModell;  
  SCORE DATA=inputData OUT=finalForecasts;  
RUN;
```

To compare different models with the validation set, we use *gain charts*, *lift charts*, *K-S charts* and *ROC charts*, as described in the next section (as originally described in Derby (2013)).

³The variable `attrition` is an indicator variable equal to 1 if the customer closed his/her account 2-3 months in the future and 0 otherwise. The outcome of our model gives the probability that this variable is equal to 1.

⁴The `OUTROC` option won't be needed this time, since we're just making forecasts and won't be assessing them with the ROC curve.

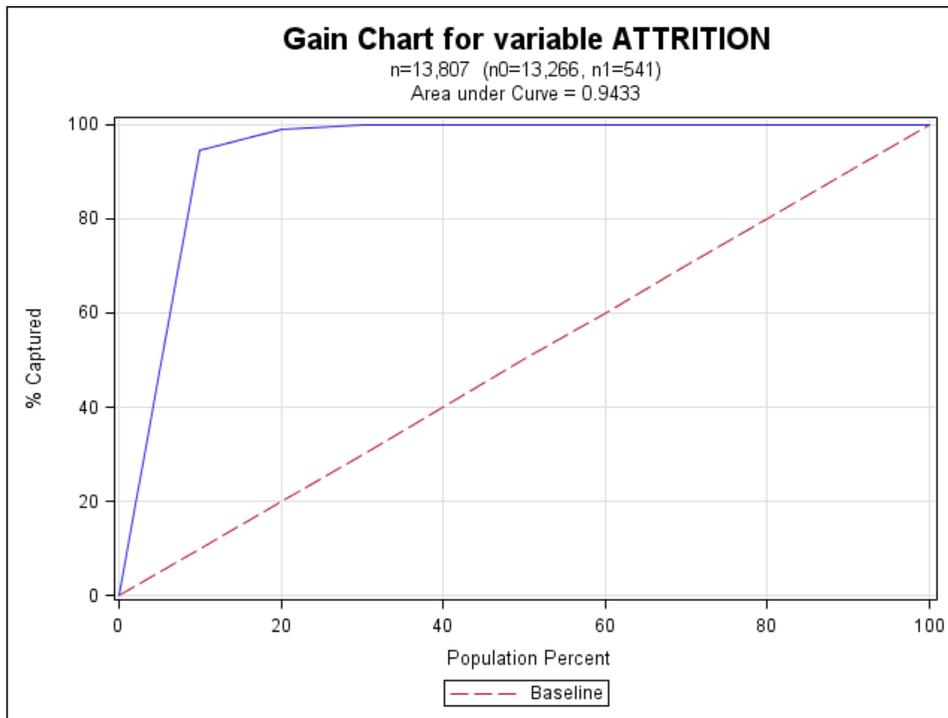


Figure 4: A gain chart.

GAIN CHARTS

A *gain chart* illustrates the effectiveness of a classification model calculated as the ratio between the results obtained with and without the model. Suppose we ordered our cases by the scores (in our case, the attrition risk).

- If we take the top 10% of our model results, what percentage of actual positive values would we get?

In our example,

- If we take the top 10% of our model results, what percentage of actual customers who left would we get?

If we then do this for 20%, 30%, etc., and then graph them, we get a gain chart as in Figure 4.⁵

For a baseline comparison, let's now order our cases (i.e., customers who closed their accounts) at random. On average, if we take the top 10% of our results, we should expect to capture about 10% of our actual positive values. If we do this for all deciles, we get the straight baseline in Figure 4. If our model is any good, it should certainly be expected to do better than that! As such, the chart for our model (the solid line) should be above the dotted line.

How do we use this chart to assess our model? In general, the better our model, the steeper the solid line in our gain chart. This is commonly reflected in two statistical measurements:

- *The area under the curve:* The better the model, the closer the area under the curve is to 1. In our case (Figure 4), we have 94.33% (which is unusually high mainly because we simulated the data).
- *The 40% measure:* What percentage of our actual targets are captured by our top 40% of predicted values? In our case (Figure 4), we have 100% (which again is unusually high in this case).

In practice, these measures don't mean very much unless we compare them to measures from other models. Indeed, some phenomena are easier to predict than others.

⁵We could do this for *any* percentile, but it's typically just done for deciles.

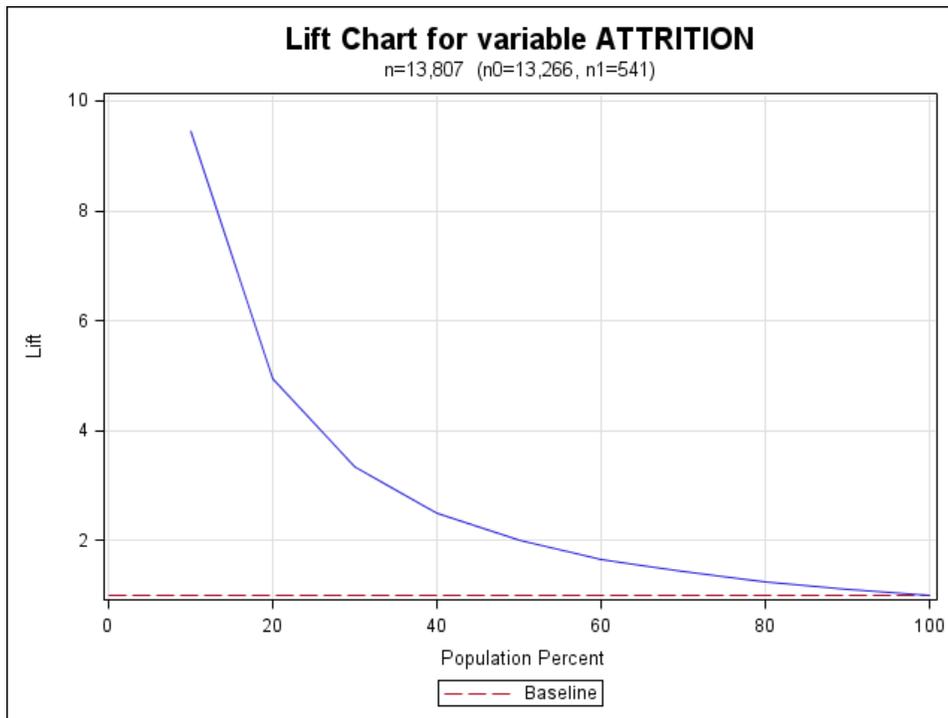


Figure 5: A lift chart.

How did we make the chart in Figure 4? SAS Institute (2011) gives us a macro that makes it relatively easy to create a gain chart. We created our own macro based on that one but creating some more details, as shown in Figure 4:

```
%makeCharts( INDATA=validationForecasts, RESPONSE=attrition, P=p_1, EVENT=1,
  GROUPS=10, PLOT=gain, PATH=&outroot, FILENAME=Gain Chart );
```

The parameters are the following:

- INDATA: The input data set. (Optional: default is `_last_`, the last created data set)
- RESPONSE: The response variable.
- P: The probability/score variable.
- EVENT: Is an event defined when the RESPONSE variable is 0 or 1? (Optional: default is 1)
- GROUPS: Do we want to break the data down in groups of ten (at 10% intervals) or twenty (at 5% intervals)? (Optional: default is 20)
- PLOT: What graph do we want to plot? Three options (all described in this paper): `gain`, `lift` or `ks`.
- PATH: The path of the resulting graph (as a PNG file).
- FILENAME: The name of the resulting graph (as a PNG file). (Optional: default is `output`)

LIFT CHART

A *lift chart* simply looks at the ratio of the gain chart results with our model and with the baseline – i.e., the ratio of the solid line to the dotted line. This is shown in Figure 5. Using our same macro from before, we have the following syntax in SAS:

```
%makeCharts( INDATA=validationForecasts, RESPONSE=attrition, P=p_1, EVENT=1,
  GROUPS=10, PLOT=lift, PATH=&outroot, FILENAME=Lift Chart );
```

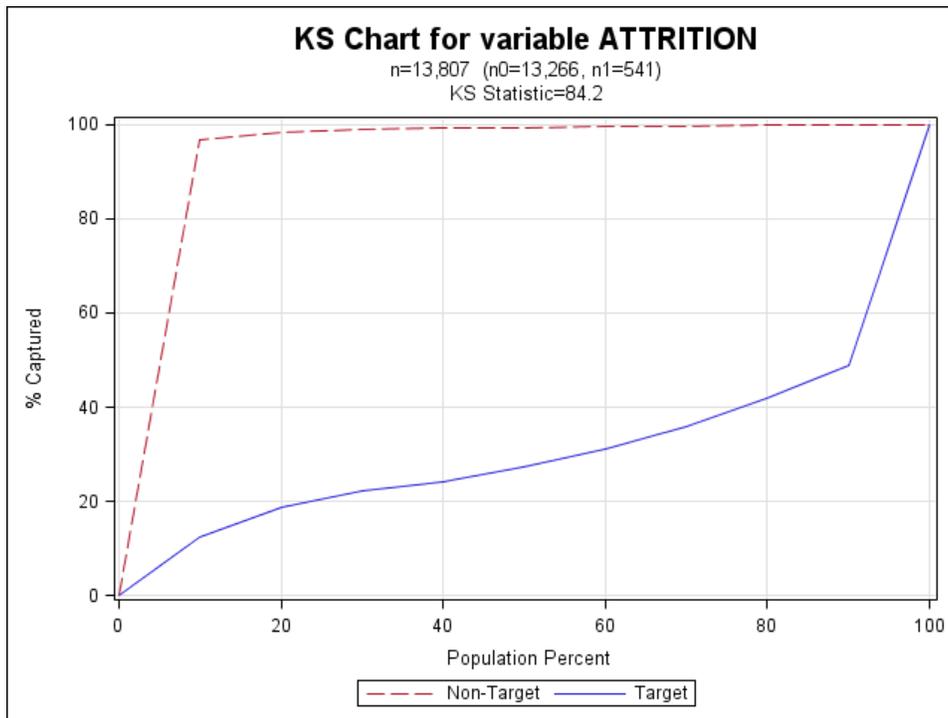


Figure 6: A K-S chart.

K-S CHART

A *K-S Chart* or *Kolmogorov-Smirnov Chart* measures the model performance in a slightly different way:

- If we look at cases with a target probability below 10%, what percentage of actual targets and non-targets would we get?

For our specific situation,

- If we look at customers with an attrition risk below 10%, what percentage of actual customers who left and customers who stayed would we get?

We then look at this for every decile, giving us the graph in Figure 6. We have two lines: For the target (attrition customers) and for the non-target (non-attrition customers). Depending on how we defined our target (e.g., whether we defined attrition as 1 or 0), the target line will be either above or below the non-target line. What's important is their maximal distance away: If we can find a probability cutoff point⁶ that maximizes the difference between the targets and non-targets, we should use that one for optimal results. This maximal distance is called the *K-S statistic* or *Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic*, which is 84.20 for our data (as before, unusually high because we simulated our data). The higher the K-S statistic, the better the model.

To code this in SAS (and generate Figure 6), we use our same macro from before:

```
%makeCharts( INDATA=validationForecasts, RESPONSE=attrition, P=p_1, EVENT=1,
  GROUPS=10, PLOT=ks, PATH=&outroot, FILENAME=KS Chart );
```

⁶i.e., if the probability cutoff point is x , then we predict that a customer will close his/her account if his/her attrition risk is above x and predict that he/she won't close his/her account otherwise. The best cutoff point isn't always 50%!

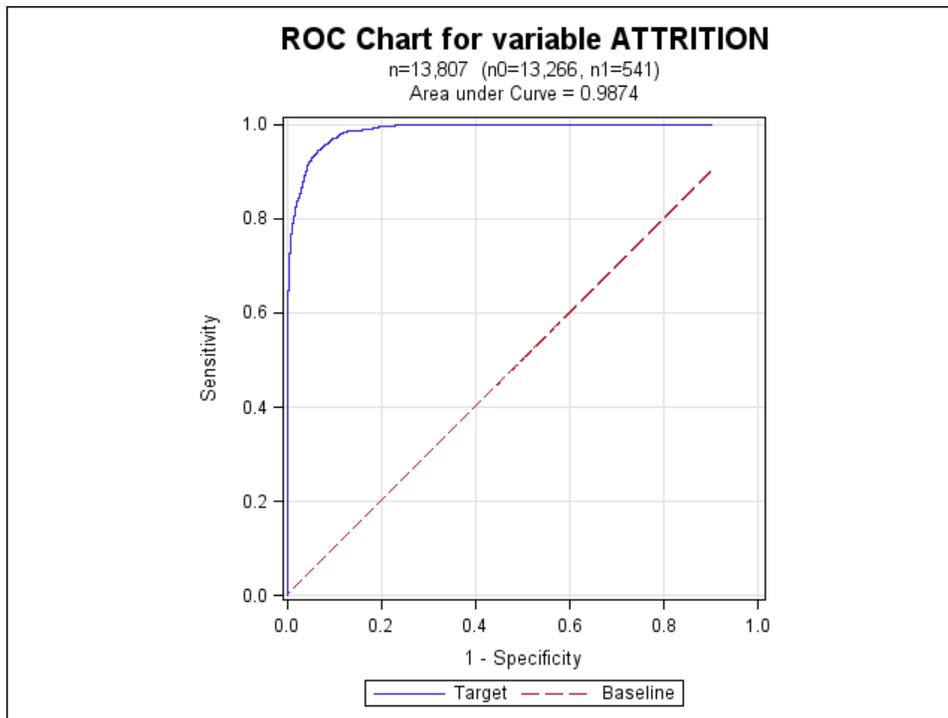


Figure 7: An ROC chart.

ROC CHART

With the K-S chart, we varied the probability cutoff values and looked at the percent of the targets and non-targets captured. With an *ROC chart* (*Receiver Operating Characteristic chart*), we simply look at the different values we would get for different probability cutoff values:⁷

- *Sensitivity*: The proportion of actual positive cases (attrition customers) that were correctly identified.
- *1 - Specificity*: The proportion of actual negative cases (non-attrition customers) that were incorrectly identified.

The area under the curve (0.9874 here, which is unusually high because we have simulated data) shows how well the model predicts the outcome. The higher it is, the better the model.

SAS makes it very easy to produce ROC charts from `PROC LOGISTIC`, but that's only possible for the training set, as it won't work when using the `INMODEL` option. Therefore, we created a macro similar to the ones before, based in part on SAS Institute (2008):

```
%makeROC( INDATA=validationForecasts, INROC=validationROC, RESPONSE=attrition,
          P=p_1, PATH=&outroot, FILENAME=ROC Chart );
```

The result is in Figure 7.

OVERALL

Overall, we pick the model that gives us the best results (highest area under the curve for the gain or ROC chart, or the highest K-S statistic). If there's disagreement among the results (i.e., one model has the largest area under the curve for the gain chart but another one has the highest K-S statistic), we can make an educated judgment call.

⁷More precisely, which values would we get in our *confusion matrix* as described in Derby (2013).

RESULTS

We fit 25 different statistical models, each one with a different set of predictor variables. Using the process described in the previous pages, we chose the model that gave us the best results.

PREDICTIVE MODEL

Here is our predictive model, where the outcome is a number from 0 to 1 telling us the risk of a customer closing his/her account:

Risk of a customer
closing his/her account

$$\begin{aligned} \text{in the next 2-3 months} &= \frac{1}{\left(1 + \exp\left(0.0715 - \sum_{i=1}^{15} a_i X_i\right)\right)} \\ &= 1 / (1 + \exp(0.0715 - 0.00425X_1 - 2.0201X_2 - 3.2913X_3 - 2.9120X_4 - 3.2148X_5 \\ &\quad - 2.7609X_6 - 3.3691X_7 - 2.3624X_8 - 2.6723X_9 - 2.7469X_{10} \\ &\quad - 4.4689X_{11} - 4.1651X_{12} + 0.0938X_{13} + 4.9355X_{14} - 2.9855X_{15})). \end{aligned}$$

where $\exp(x) = e^x$ and

- X_1 = external deposit recency (weeks).
- X_2 = 1 if the customer is of age 19-24, 0 otherwise.
- X_3 = 1 if the customer is of age 25-30, 0 otherwise.
- X_4 = 1 if the customer is of age 31-35, 0 otherwise.
- X_5 = 1 if the customer is of age 36-40, 0 otherwise.
- X_6 = 1 if the customer is of age 41-45, 0 otherwise.
- X_7 = 1 if the customer is of age 46-50, 0 otherwise.
- X_8 = 1 if the customer is of age 51-55, 0 otherwise.
- X_9 = 1 if the customer is of age 56-60, 0 otherwise.
- X_{10} = 1 if the customer is of age 61-65, 0 otherwise.
- X_{11} = 1 if the customer is of age 66-70, 0 otherwise.
- X_{12} = 1 if the customer is of age 71 or over, 0 otherwise.
- X_{13} = length of relationship (months).
- X_{14} = number of products.
- X_{15} = number of customer service calls in the past month.

However, having this equation doesn't help us interpret it. We can interpret our model using *odds* (the ratio of the probability of something happening to the probability of that something not happening). To relate odds to probabilities, here's a helpful rule:

- If the odds of something = x times the odds of something else, then the probability of something = y times the probability of something else, where
 - If $x > 1$, then $y > 1$.
 - If $x < 1$, then $y < 1$.
 - y is always closer to 1 than x .

In other words, **if the odds increase, then the probability also increases. Likewise, if the odds decrease, then the probability also decreases.** With this rule in mind, here's the interpretation of our model:⁸

- For every week that a customer goes without an external deposit, his/her odds of attrition multiply by $e^{0.00425} = 1.004$. (This number may not sound high, but it's still significant, especially after multiple weeks)
- The odds of a customer age 19-24 leaving is $e^{2.020} = 7.5$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 25-30 leaving is $e^{3.291} = 26.9$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 31-35 leaving is $e^{2.912} = 18.4$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 36-40 leaving is $e^{3.215} = 24.9$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 41-45 leaving is $e^{2.761} = 15.8$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 46-50 leaving is $e^{3.369} = 29.0$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 51-55 leaving is $e^{2.362} = 10.6$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 56-60 leaving is $e^{2.672} = 14.5$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 61-65 leaving is $e^{2.747} = 15.6$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving.
- The odds of a customer age 66-70 leaving is $e^{4.469} = 87.3$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving. (This is likely due to customers dying, which is unavoidable)
- The odds of a customer age 71+ leaving is $e^{4.165} = 64.4$ times the odds of a customer 18 or under leaving. (This is likely due to customers dying, which is unavoidable)
- For every month that a customer keeps his/her account open, his/her odds of attrition multiply by $e^{-0.0938} = 0.91$. (So it decreases, as we would expect)
- For every product that a customer signs up for, his/her odds of attrition multiply by $e^{-4.9355} = 0.0072$. (So it sharply decreases, as we would expect)
- For every customer service call that a customer makes, his/her odds of attrition multiply by $e^{2.9855} = 19.8$. (So it sharply increases, as we would expect)

FORECASTS

From our predictive model on page 12, we can assign to each customer an attrition risk. We can then order these customers by that risk so that the customers with the highest attrition risk are on the top. Furthermore, we can add the customer's aggregate balance, plus all the explanatory variables from the predictive model. This will give us a measure of customer value⁹, plus give us indications why each customer is at risk.

These results are shown on Figure 8. Here, all aggregate balances more than \$10,000 are shown in red, highlighting our more valuable customers that we should pay attention to. We then highlight the probable reasons for that customer's high attrition rate in yellow, following our interpretations above:

- *Age Tier*: Age tiers of 25-30, 36-40, and 46-50 have the highest attrition risks, so we highlight them.¹⁰
- *Length of Relationship (Months)*: Customers with smaller relationship lengths have a higher attrition risk, so we highlight all relationship lengths of 6 months or less.
- *External Deposit Recency (Weeks)*: Longer external deposit recencies have a higher attrition risk, so we highlight all external deposit recencies of 10 weeks or more.
- *Number of Products*: Customers with a fewer number of products have a higher attrition risk, so we highlight all listings of only 1 product.
- *Customer Service Calls (past month)*: Customers with more calls have a higher attrition risk, so we highlight 5 or more service calls.

Overall, **the color-coded forecasts in Figure 8 give us a very convenient way to quickly focus on our high-risk, high-value customers mentioned in Figure 1.**

⁸See Quinn (2001) for a full explanation of how this interpretation comes from our model on page 12.

⁹This isn't as good as the customer lifetime value shown in Figure 1, but it's something we can quickly calculate. We can incorporate a more robust estimate of a customer lifetime value later on.

¹⁰We're ignoring age tiers of 66-70 and 71+, since those attrition rates are likely due to customer death, which is of course unavoidable!

Fisher Bank Customer Attrition Forecasts as of 15-06-30.xlsx - Excel

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A1 Customer ID

Customer ID	Risk of Attrition in 2-3 months	Aggregate Balance	Age Tier	Length of Relationship (Months)	External Deposit Recency (Weeks)	Number of Products	Customer Service Calls (past month)
23357	97.99%	\$7,343.09	66 - 70	22	89.45	1	2
37121	97.97%	\$306.19	19 - 24	3	0.35	2	4
6835	97.97%	\$33,810.71	31 - 35	15	54.57	2	4
54617	97.92%	\$18,252.19	41 - 45	78	314.28	1	4
7223	97.92%	\$277.47	19 - 24	39	86.15	2	5
26069	97.90%	\$53,879.71	66 - 70	36	144.50	2	4
29658	97.90%	\$511.44	19 - 24	61	111.00	1	4
53693	97.89%	\$21,670.47	56 - 60	38	151.19	1	3
18569	97.89%	\$1,818.19	25 - 30	45	159.92	1	3
49841	97.89%	\$7,963.98	36 - 40	40	67.40	1	3
40355	97.89%	\$23,799.72	71 +	17	38.60	1	2
40925	97.89%	\$20,598.32	51 - 55	28	2.85	1	3
64085	97.88%	\$11,871.56	66 - 70	97	327.04	1	4
3169	97.86%	\$17,634.38	31 - 35	66	6.96	1	4
17670	97.86%	\$77.45	19 - 24	30	123.83	1	3
18866	97.84%	\$3,391.72	36 - 40	18	35.43	2	4
28667	97.84%	\$63,047.67	56 - 60	99	86.41	1	5
52839	97.82%	\$4,578.23	61 - 65	65	18.60	1	4
49918	97.80%	\$16,024.61	31 - 35	15	35.86	2	4
53649	97.80%	\$19,453.98	71 +	49	32.52	1	3

Customer Attrition Forecasts Explanation

Ready Filter Mode 100%

Figure 8: Customer attrition forecasts from our final model. The many customers with the 99.99% attrition risk is highly unusual and just a reflection of our simulated data.

CAVEATS

These results are based on statistical approximations and standard assumptions from the data and not at all guaranteed. If some external unforeseen circumstance happens (such as, say, a competitor running a major marketing campaign), these results may not hold.

The forecasts listed in Figure 8 are only half of our retention strategy. **Nothing will happen unless these forecasts are paired with an effective intervention strategy** to change the decision of our customers at high risk of attrition. Finding the optimal strategy for this purpose is one of our goals for the future.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

Predictive analytics can be a very powerful tool for customer retention. This paper describes a relatively simple yet very effective way to predict which customers have a high attrition risk so that we can focus on them. However, this needs to be paired with an effective intervention strategy to be effective! Predicting alone won't solve anything.

However, **the techniques in this paper just scratch the surface of how we can reduce customer attrition with predictive analytics!** Thomas (2010) shows how we can profile our customer attrition rates by deciles and then evaluate the biggest overall sources of attrition. Lu (2002) and Su et al. (2009) show how we can better estimate attrition risk with more complex statistical methods. Lastly, Lu (2003) shows how we can develop a better measure of lifetime customer value.

This approach can also be used to predict other aspects of customer behavior, such as when a customer will buy a car or a home (and thus need a car loan or a mortgage). As such, **we can also use these techniques to further cultivate our customers** by marketing additional products to them at just the right time.

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