

Blinding bank robbers with kindness

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Despite the friendliness of people in the Pacific Northwest (or perhaps because of it), bank robberies in the area are above the national average. But in the Seattle area they went down by nearly half in the beginning of 2007. The reason isn't known for certain, but one factor may be a new approach to thwarting bank robbers by employing "aggressive friendliness" and rattling the nerves of a would-be robber.

Scott Taffera sensed something was wrong when a man walked into the Ballard bank branch he manages wearing garden gloves, a hat and sunglasses.

But instead of following the nonconfrontational strategy used by most banks with suspicious people, Taffera approached the man with a hearty greeting and an offer to help. He invited him to remove his hat and sunglasses, and guided him to an equally bubbly teller.

In the end, the oddly dressed man requested a roll of quarters before slinking out the door.

By the end of 2007, bank robberies in the state hit a 20-year low, dropping the state from fourth most robbed in the nation to eleventh.

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