



Case Study



CommunityAmerica Credit Union: If We Build It, They Will Move

When CommunityAmerica Credit Union (CACU) began in 1940, its founder, TWA pilot George Duvall, could not have known it would eventually become what it is today—one of the largest credit unions in the United States, with \$2.85 billion in assets, 234,000 members and 32 branches. He would be proud.

And perhaps the Kansas City, Mo.-based credit union's own proudest moment came in early 2016, when it became an official sponsor of the best-known family business in Kansas City: the Kansas City Chiefs NFL franchise.

CHALLENGE

CommunityAmerica Credit Union wanted to expand their marketing relationship with the Kansas City, Mo.-based Kansas City Chiefs by providing a full-suite set of treasury services, becoming their sole financial services partner.

SOLUTION

In collaboration with Arriba Advisors, CACU developed a strategy to analyze and evaluate its technology environment to identify and execute new solutions the NFL franchise required.

It began solely as a marketing partnership, and a valuable, happy one at that. So it stood to reason that the two organizations would look at other areas for increasing and strengthening their relationship, and the next logical step was joining forces for the team's banking needs. However, that wasn't a done deal.

"It was a very warm relationship, and we had the opportunity to have that conversation with the Chiefs because of the marketing partnership, but it was by no means a given that they would move," says Pam Berneking, CACU's chief operating officer. "The conversation was informative, but at the end of it, I told them that with our current systems, we could not provide any of the services that they required."

According to Berneking, who came to CACU in 2016 from a lifelong career in banking, many credit unions don't typically run the type of systems that support the sophisticated—or even minimal—deposit, treasury, and cash management services typically used by both small and large businesses.

"The Chiefs really needed the most comprehensive set of treasury services possible, and we didn't have anything to offer at the time," Berneking recalls. "But it was a significant opportunity, and we determined that if we could build it, they would move."

And CACU needed to work quickly. Although the Chiefs didn't give a specific timeline, time constraints came into play.

"There were windows during the year when they wouldn't consider making a move," Berneking says. "The only time of year that they would consider making the move was the June/July timeline. Before that they had other priorities, and after that, they're playing football. So we really had this very narrow window."

It was the first quarter of 2017, so CACU decided they'd shoot for June 2018 to go live.



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THE PRESSURE IS ON

To meet the Chiefs' requirements, CACU needed to implement a second comprehensive core system that would deliver treasury services and traditional business banking products. The credit union would also require a second online banking solution that would enable those same functions, at a level that did not exist within its current online banking solution. In effect, CACU needed two entirely new systems.

Faced with such an aggressive timeline, Berneking knew they'd need help. Fortunately, the credit union's then CIO had collaborated successfully with Arriba Advisors in the past, so the decision to work with the advisory firm made perfect sense.

When Arriba Advisors came onboard, they quickly determined that CACU needed a complete re-tooling of its entire technology environment, across core processing, cash management, wires, ACH, remote deposit capture and enterprise document imaging.

Having come from the vendor side, Arriba's partners enabled the credit union to capitalize on their intimate knowledge of the vendor community, thereby steering CACU through solution offerings, strengths and weaknesses, pricing and contract positions.

The firm set to work, and was instrumental in navigating through CACU's technical, operational and strategic requirements while providing an analytical framework that enabled efficient and objective decision-making. Arriba architected the online cash management and technology infrastructure for the entire

project, taking the credit union from blank sheet to execution in record time. "Arriba became an extension of our team."

"Fast forward to April of 2018, and we successfully stood up both systems," Berneking says. "It was an extremely successful project."

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SUCCESS KNOWS NO LIMITS

But nothing speaks more to the accomplishment than the reaction from the Chiefs, which Berneking calls the credit union's "client one."

"We delivered to the Chiefs more than they ever hoped for, and they tell us all the time that it's the best, most comprehensive banking relationship that they have ever had," Berneking says with pride.

And the effects reached far beyond the Chiefs' satisfaction.

"We've had tremendous growth in our commercial line of business," Berneking says. "We tend to measure success in terms of growth in assets and liabilities. The really important thing is our ability to grow deposits, because commercial checking accounts are one hundred percent dependent on the solutions that we put in place as part of this project. Without those solutions, we could not provide the levels of entitlement that would allow a business to run a sophisticated finance team. So we've significantly increased the number of sophisticated clients who use these services, really from zero to what it is today."

Perhaps it's the numbers that say it best. In less than two years, CACU has increased:

- Member business lending: 300%
- Commercial Deposits: 75%
- Commercial deposit fee income: 60%

A Beautiful Partnership Continues

The success with the Chiefs has paved the way for multiple enterprise engagement projects between CACU and Arriba Advisors. In addition, Arriba expertly negotiated contracts with the credit union's technology partners for its consumer digital channels, including online and mobile banking, remote deposit capture and bill pay.

And Arriba is currently managing the institution's enterprise core consolidation project across retail and commercial platforms.

Berneking says Arriba exceeded her expectations, and fully recommends them to other institutions: "The Chiefs project has allowed us to grow our business the way we hoped it would. It was a success from top to bottom. What we were trying to achieve was really hard and we got it done."

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Chief Operating Officer, CACU

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