



Case Study



CrossFirst Bank: New Digital Platform Set to Fuel Continued Growth

Chartered in 2007, CrossFirst Bank entered the Kansas market as a branch-light, technology-focused commercial bank with a mission to serve people in extraordinary ways. This strategy, backed by a team of experienced, community-centric and relationship-driven bankers, has grown the bank's assets to over \$5 billion in nearly 15 years with its reach now extending to Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas and Arizona.

CHALLENGE

When CrossFirst Bank needed to upgrade its digital ecosystem to continue to meet the evolving mobile-first needs of existing and prospective clients and to capture the data insights to fuel their digital growth, they sought after a partner to provide an analytical framework to assist them with their decision.

SOLUTION

Jana Merfen, CrossFirst Bank's Chief Technology Officer, reached out to Arriba Advisors—whose 150 years of combined technology experience would prove invaluable to the bank as it explored and selected the optimal digital platform vendor to facilitate its digital growth.

CrossFirst caters to businesses, business owners, professionals and their employees and families. It attracts this target market by pairing an integrated digital-first environment with exceptional client service. The bank prides itself on this model's ability to facilitate even the most complex business transactions or private banking requests along with everyday consumer banking needs.

CrossFirst announced at the beginning of the year that they were making several strategic investments to further enhance their client experience while continuing to deliver the extraordinary service for which they are already known.

"We are committed to broadening our capabilities, expanding our reach, and customizing our approach to meet each of our clients banking and financial needs," said Mike Maddox, President and CEO of CrossFirst Bankshares, Inc., the holding company for CrossFirst Bank.

Enhancing the Bank's Digital Platform

From its de novo roots to its present asset size, the bank has continually nurtured a distinct culture grounded in putting clients first and serving them in extraordinary ways. It does this by layering in-demand digital products with a limited branch presence

and exceptional client service from highly experienced bankers.

With plans to capitalize on its brand success, the bank knew it was imperative to build a modern technology stack that will keep pace for future digital growth. For its strategy to succeed, CrossFirst needed a vendor offering more agility, innovation and investment in self-service functionality, integration capabilities, and data driven solutions to support client engagement.

"Since we are branch light, technology is the key to fulfilling our strategy," said Amy Fauss, a 13-year veteran of the bank and its current Chief Human Resources and Operating Officer. "We wanted a strategic partner that would grow with us."

That's why Chief Technology Officer Jana Merfen engaged Arriba Advisors to help with their search. She knew Arriba's culture was highly compatible with the bank's and she trusted their expertise.



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CROSSFIRST BANK®

Trusted Advisor Steps In

In leading CrossFirst's digital provider search, Arriba brought with it a portfolio of over 600 vendor evaluations and more than 1,600 contract negotiations.

Moreover, Fauss appreciated the partners' previous experience on both the vendor and bank sides of the industry.

"It's invaluable to have a firm that's seen both sides, can understand our position and will advocate for us from that unique perspective," Fauss said.

As anticipated, this intimate knowledge of vendor offerings, strengths and weaknesses, and pricing and contract intimacy would prove highly beneficial to CrossFirst.

From the outset, the project team explained to Arriba that, in addition to enhanced functionality, their platform needed to position the bank to pursue other key strategic initiatives, such as identifying and integrating fintech partnerships. Arriba helped the bank identify all the technical, operational and strategic requirements for this desired end-state.

According to both Fauss and Merfen, Arriba took the bank from blank sheet to execution within their expected timeline. The firm supported the requirements documentation, created functional and technology blueprints and engaged everyone, including the bank's executive team, at each step.

Arriba also used its proprietary analytical framework to ensure that objectivity and transparency ruled vendor evaluations. This allowed every member of the project team to rank the vendors based on the bank's strategy-based criteria and priorities, which resulted in highly efficient and data-driven decisions.

Beyond their expertise and efficiency, Arriba's personalized attention was another key differentiator.

"The Arriba partners participated on every call, and they stayed engaged in communicating with our team at every step of the process," explained Merfen.

This partner-level engagement allowed the bank to fully benefit from working with industry veterans who collaborated to identify risks and develop strategies to mitigate those.

Arriba became a natural extension of CrossFirst's project leadership, guiding a process that eventually uncovered the perfect digital partner for the bank on two fronts. First, the new vendor featured technology that included the sophisticated features and AI-embedded data insights that CrossFirst needed. Additionally, the new vendor was culturally compatible with CrossFirst, something that mattered greatly to the bank's executive team.

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Jana Merfen
Chief Technology Officer,
CrossFirst Bank

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True Partnership Takes Root

Arriba's guidance did not stop once the new vendor was selected. The advisory firm created an effective strategy with the vendor that resulted in what CrossFirst describes as an "ideal vendor partnership that exceeded its expectations." Arriba provided their support and feedback to ensure that all the platform's necessary components were fully addressed to the bank's satisfaction.

As the internal project leads, Fauss and Merfen emphasized that Arriba took the time to get to know their team, understand the bank's culture, and ultimately represent the CrossFirst Bank brand with professionalism. They both view Arriba as the bank's advocate and a trusted advisor thanks to the firm's expertise, honesty, transparency, and willingness to listen.

Both Fauss and Merfen, along with the CrossFirst team, would absolutely partner with Arriba in the future for any of their strategic enterprise projects.

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Amy Fauss
Chief Human Resources and
Operating Officer,
CrossFirst Bank

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