

Excerpts from **“Liberty Bank Steps into the Future with New System Conversion”**
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“After being on the same system for 25 years and with important goals to ensure substantial change throughout the bank, we hired Next Step International, a well-known consulting firm, to help our staff assess their areas’ technology needs, develop a comprehensive detailed RFP, evaluate vendors, and re-configure their workflows and procedures. This pulled our staff together by giving everyone a chance to share their visions and to consider how they might work together. The Next Step process enabled us to identify what we wanted in a technology partner and to select the best system and company for our bank.

We then established an ambitious plan to implement our new .Net core system, CRM, business intelligence, profitability, financials and more, all installed together, integrated with each other and with our existing solutions, and fully operational on Day 1.

To ensure our plans succeeded, we convened a meeting of 32 people face-to-face to discuss conversion tasks. We met once a week for all 14 months of the conversion preparation. The meetings included every department in the bank, every conversion specialist from our new core vendor, our consultants from Next Step and senior management. I firmly believe these meetings helped make our conversion a success. They

provided a forum where issues were raised and settled, and where tasks were assigned and monitored. That, along with a carefully tracked to-do list of all 2,840 tasks, kept everyone on the same page.

The team implemented the top 25 process improvement initiatives with guidance from Next Step. In addition, over 50 best practices as recommended by our new core vendor were implemented. We redesigned reports, reduced the number of customized reports, and made sure they were delivered automatically to the appropriate staff. Our conversion team also found ways to stretch the envelope. We asked ourselves, “Why not?” and built terrific solutions to raise internal impact and increase capacity. We integrated e-signatures and e-documents into our new account process, enabling us to file completed documents within seconds of the customer’s signature. We generate no paper unless the customer requests it. We used our new CRM system to automate the bank’s sales tracking and incentive functions, with individual home pages for each customer-facing employee, including a chart to show their progress in reaching their weekly and monthly sales goals. We created a seamless experience for any customer who contacts Liberty Bank’s customer service department by integrating our new IVR (Interactive Voice Response) and ACD (Automatic Call Distribution) software with the new core system and new phone system. This arrangement not only increases agent productivity, it also enables us to standardize service levels across all channels of communication. Best of all, the intuitive, consistent design of the system enables our staff to spend less time training and thinking about how to process a transaction and more time on serving customers. This was a major goal of the conversion – and we accomplished it on Day 1.

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How did we implement this level of change while converting nearly 300,000 accounts, nine million history transactions, and balancing the bank in a single weekend? By taking a focused, risk management approach. Liberty Bank and its partners left no stone unturned. There were trial conversions, training targets, even a core conversion risk management team to assess risks to the bank related to the conversion project. We had “past due” reports and contingency plans.

We also had a core steering committee consisting of senior management from Liberty Bank, the new core vendor and Next Step. This ensured that everyone who had a controlling interest in the conversion project was in the same room at the same time. We shared information, and developed and implemented plans when necessary. Everybody walked out of the room on the same page. As a result, the project never waived from the first day until conversion.

It’s important to remember that the technology conversion wasn’t the only project Liberty Bank worked on. While we prepared for conversion, the bank opened two new branches, introduced new products, and completed many other internal and external projects. We never skipped a beat, thanks to Next Step’s project methodology. We were even able to accomplish multiple major IT projects during the same timeframe as the conversion.”