Bank IT Department Spearheads Enterprise Solution
to Improve Internal Communications as Part of Strategic Initiative

Situated in upstate New York in the Finger Lakes Region, Canandaigua National Bank and Trust manages $1.8 Billion dollars in assets in its wealth management companies. The banking corporation has over 30 locations in New York and Florida with an employee population of 500. In the May 2012 issue of American Banker, CNB (Canandaigua National Bank) was ranked number 15 in the top 200 community banks in the nation.

Challenges

A core value of the company is to maintain a vibrant corporate culture compared to other area employers. Executive management at CNB works to actively advance employee engagement, involvement, and communications. To help ensure that these vital objectives are maintained, the company conducts bi-annual employee surveys to measure these and other strategic objectives across the company. During one of these employee surveys, the scores for internal communications were one of the lowest ranking scores of the survey. Two areas needing improved communications were horizontal communications, which is between departments and functional areas, and the other, downward communications from top management through the organization.

A Canandaigua National Bank employee views an eScreenz slide sharing customer feedback from Facebook.

CNB's IT Department was tasked with the evaluation of existing internal communication systems, making recommendations to improve the communications challenges, and then implement an appropriate corporate-wide solution. Led by Sandra Roberts, senior vice president of IT, the department reviewed the existing approaches to employee communications. "We needed clear and consistent communications to a widespread audience across multiple companies and multiple locations. We had

Sandra Roberts
CNB Senior Vice
President of IT

the traditional forms of electronic as well as web-based communication tools," said Roberts, noting that while e-mail and the corporate intranet provide value, there was a void in their communication systems. "The risk of email is that your corporate message gets diluted with all the other information," said Roberts. "It's easy for people to read your message and then forget about it. Or when people get creative with photos and graphics within e-mail, then it impacts storage space when archiving these messages."

The bank's corporate intranet provided some improvement, yet there was limited space to display recent news and other information to keep employees more engaged with the organization, as much of the main information on the intranet focused on other company data such as compliance, HR information, project information, support systems, and regulatory requirements.

Solution

Recent trends in communications technology and theory suggested that high impact visuals with short, to-the-point messages are needed to succeed for today's internal communication programs. While social media tools offer value for some companies, for the bank, they needed to keep their news and information internally managed as part of their security requirements. CNB's marketing and IT departments recommended an emerging technology called eScreenz™, an enterprise solution that would address the bank's need for improved internal communications. eScreenz not only met the need for creating an improved communications solution for the company, but it was easily adaptable into the company's existing IT network.

Similar to digital signage, but with more interactive features that are displayed across a company on desktop PCs and laptops, eScreenz' visual messages enabled CNB to actively engage its em-

ployees and their departments in ways that were not possible with the bank's traditional employee communication tools.

A major feature of the technology is its patent-pending ability to incorporate hyperlinks within its messaging display that enables eScreenz' interactive viewer and screen saver options to take employees directly to other internal (or external) resources, such as new benefits information located deep within a corporate intranet. This enables organizations to not only reduce the number of e-mail communications to all employees, but also provides a more efficient manner to take people directly to the specific information they need, without the risk of employees not being able to find vital information on an intranet. For example, if a company with 1,000 employees can reduce the amount of time by one minute per day per employee, spent either reading emails or searching for information on an intranet, a typical company can bring back over $100,000 annually in productivity.

Implementation and Empowerment

The bank's IT department deployed eScreenz technology across its network to client desktop and laptop PCs through group policy. To meet its goal of creating improved horizontal and top-down communications, Roberts empowered multiple departments across the company to be content providers to the eScreenz system. "By enabling each department to be a contributor to this new

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technology, we gave them the sense of ownership and participation," said Roberts. "After all, each of our departments has news that we all need to ensure that we are actively engaged not only in what we do as individuals and departments, but collectively as a unified organization." This cross-departmental involvement not only engages all employees at all locations, it also helps minimize content creation as multiple people across the organization contribute to the success of the program. To further help reduce the amount of time needed to create content, CNB's marketing department created over a dozen templates that each department

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uses when creating their eScreenz content. This includes departmental templates for marketing, IT, consumer lending, HR, retail, corporate risk, mortgage, security, and executive management, to name a few.

Results

Today, eScreenz is CNB's employees' preferred method of internal communications. A follow-up survey indicated that since using eScreenz, communications has improved. A few of the many types of messages deployed over the bank's eScreenz include:

- Network upgrades – reminders of when the network will unavailable for scheduled upgrades and improvements
- Network outages – lets employees know when systems are down and when they will be restored, saving valuable time for both employees and IT staff from sending and receiving calls and/or initiating and responding to web-based support tickets for outages
- Annual compliance functions: Bank Security Training, Business Continuity Planning, Information Security Training, Physical Security Training, Sarbanes Oxley, and others as part of the bank's ongoing reporting
- Emergency alerts and intruder notifications
- Human Resources information that welcomes new employees, benefit communications, wellness initiatives, and code of conduct
- Corporate vision and mission statements
- CEO and executive communications
- New marketing programs, banking campaigns, and products

Continued...

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An employee reviews Canandaigua National Bank's core values on eScreenz.

"Of course, we also make it a point to include the fun stuff on eScreenz," says Roberts. This includes eScreenz messages to promote holiday parties and events, the annual employee meeting, family holiday movie nights, quarterly employee awards, and bank anniversary festivities.

As an IT executive familiar with the challenges facing IT managers, Roberts recommends that for any communication initiative to get IT involved early. "Corporate-wide engagement is important, and make sure you define your objectives first. Understand what types of communications can be performed with the tool, and educate many departments early on value of the solution. For us, eScreenz was easy to implement, it was cost-effective, and enabled us to better engage and inform our employees regardless of where they worked."