

CASE STUDY

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Synopsis

In recent years Greater Iowa GICU nearly doubled its assets from approximately \$200 million to nearly \$550 million today. As the credit union continues to scale, executives wanted to further strengthen its overall operational processes. This noteworthy growth brought to light some areas within the credit union that could not scale as adeptly as both credit union associates and members needed. The credit union's existing loan origination software was one of those areas. After an in-depth and thorough selection process, TCI's DecisionLender 4 loan origination solution (LOS) was selected to help GICU deliver the frictionless lending experience and the online digital capabilities and features that members now expect, as well as the added flexibility to evolve with the marketplace for years to come.

IN THE BEGINNING

GICU IDENTIFIED OVER TIME THAT THERE WERE CERTAIN CHALLENGES for both members and staff.

The credit union was looking to enhance its service level and improve its members' digital expectations, while expanding the products it offered and continuing its growth trajectory with membership. Nate Scott, Operations Manager at GICU, said, "We began to see a real need for automation in areas that would elevate our member's experience. Our current system did not give us the features, functionality, and/or integrations to meet our members when and where they choose to conduct banking, whether that was at home on a computer or on their tablet or phone. If our members needed resources and answers in the middle of the night, we wanted to be able to provide them."

Since member expectations evolve quickly, the need to be digital has become table stakes; it is no longer a nice-to-have, but a must-have. Marketplace demands are dictating

new partnership requirements for credit unions as they dive into the deep end of the digital pool.

THE PROCESS

The leadership team at GICU identified 10 possible vendors in the initial selection process that represented a full range of platform options, including account opening only platforms, loan opening only platforms, and a few vendors that provided both. Even before starting the project, GICU identified and compiled a list of the pain points in its current system and determined what features were most needed; this helped to narrow down the list of potential vendors.

As the selection process moved forward, one of the desired features that continued to rise to the top of the list was a robust decision engine and built-in integrations to multiple sources such as the core platform, credit card processors and online banking. This way, the credit union could facilitate automated services for members as much

as possible. Open APIs and tight integration were very important to GICU. The credit union preferred a single platform to unite its workflow so that associates did not need to use different systems for different tasks within the loan origination process, allowing them to focus more on the borrower relationship. Scott continued, “We needed an active partner that would collaborate with us in order to push the relationship, and the capabilities, forward. Two-way communication is paramount for success.”

Throughout the process, GICU had a main driving concept behind its technology ambitions: simplification. Whatever process(es) the user must go through in any application should be as short, easy, and automated as possible. The credit union wanted its frontline associates to be able to focus completely on the member relationship and as little as possible on the technology. Scott added, “The LOS should disappear in the background and work for us, rather than us working for it.”

STEPS FOR FINAL SELECTION

Choosing a new LOS provider can be daunting since a conversion project like this requires a lot of time and effort. Knowing this, GICU tapped CU Engage’s team of experts to help in the vendor evaluation and selection process. CU Engage is known for its expertise in understanding market trends and helping determine what solution would ultimately be the best fit for a credit union based on its unique needs.

Working with CU Engage streamlined the selection process by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of potential vendors so that GICU could make a well-informed decision. If the vendor does not meet the credit unions desired criteria or cannot meet them, it can cause a lot of residual problems down the road, and CU Engage did not want this to happen at GICU.

The credit union worked with CU Engage to narrow the initial group of vendors down to three finalists. Each of the finalists participated in a full day, on-site deep dive presentation. The vendors walked the executive team, including the Vice President of Lending, the Vice President of Member Service, and other participants, through the processes members would experience, how the system would be structured and how that configuration would weave throughout the credit union’s workflows, decision engines and document processor. CU Engage provided GICU with a standardized worksheet to guide the final decision process, which was a very helpful way to

start conversations around the strengths and weaknesses of each vendor and ultimately helped determine how the credit union chose its LOS partner.

In addition to the insight from CU Engage, GICU created an internal request for proposal (RFP) that interviewed key stake holders and participants within the credit union. These participants each had a vote and scorecard for the vendors they wanted, and each vote and scorecard was evenly weighted so a branch manager, an underwriter, MSRs, and/or a CLO all carried the same importance. Scott added, “It was of the utmost importance to get perspectives from the entire team – everyone has different needs and those needs had to be addressed. Because this is a product and process that involves everyone across the credit union, we really wanted this selection process to represent the viewpoints from everyone that would be using it. A decision like this can really go poorly if you don’t involve and understand the impact on the people affected by it – an experience that ultimately gets passed on to the member.”

ADVICE FROM GICU

Preparation is key. Do not expect a quick decision. This is a very big conversion with long-term effects, which is why it is important to establish your core product tenants before even looking at vendors. Which items on your wish list are must-haves, such as configurability and robust reporting tools and which items are nice-to-haves? Identify the expertise that your systems and people already have internally in order to determine the areas that will require outside partner engagement, and then create a checklist of all these important requirements. The first list of potential vendors should stem from this process.

Scott concluded, “Ultimately, we selected TCI’s DecisionLender 4 because it has both the account opening and origination functionalities combined into a single, robust platform. It is built on new technology with proactive updates pushed regularly to respond and evolve according to market demands. We believed that they would be a great partner for our credit union and our members, and this has held true in every step of the process. This partnership is a two-way street. TCI’s team is responsive to our feedback and has been able to share best practices that they have garnered through their industry experience. This is exactly what we were looking for in a partner. If we had to go through this process again – **TCI’S DECISIONLENDER 4 WOULD CONTINUE BE THE SOLUTION OF CHOICE FOR GICU.**”

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1377 MOTOR PARKWAY, SUITE 400 • ISLANDIA, NEW YORK 11749 • 800-824-9069 • WWW.TCICREDIT.COM

