

Case Study:


Nevada Bank Enhances Company Culture, Streamlines Communication Through Portal Deployment

“We’ve always been very big on company culture,” says Noelle Azucena, communication specialist for First Independent Bank of Nevada, a community financial institution with branches around northern Nevada. “For example, we always hire local people when we can.”

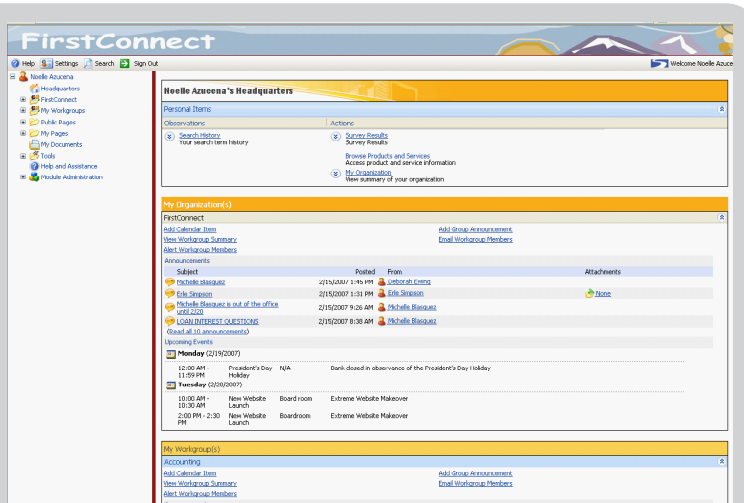
It was this commitment to the culture that led a team of First Independent Bank managers to visit another Nevada bank in late 2004. The bank in question had a strong reputation for promoting its own culture, so the First Independent team was anxious to learn more. One of the things they found during this visit was a relatively robust intranet that, according to the host bank, was key to promoting and maintaining the corporate culture there. The First Independent team was hooked.

According to Azucena, further research quickly showed that a true portal solution represented a more intelligent investment than a simple intranet. This led what soon became known as the portal team to Passageways. First Independent Bank deployed the Passageways corporate portal in September of 2006.

Streamlined Communication

One of the chief complaints among employees - and thus a significant hindrance to the culture First Independent Bank wanted to promote - was the lack of a standardized means of internal communication. Faxes, voice mails and especially email were employed almost randomly. The Passageways portal offered the solution.

As FIBN continued to grow it needed an effective tool to communicate internally to all employees. All internal communication is now done through the portal. Email has been eliminated with the exception of individual to individual emails.



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— Noelle Azucena, communication specialist

players are in control of the portal and can update information.

The Passageways portal has improved inter-branch communication, as well as communication among main office employees. “We have a content manager at each branch,” says Azucena. This is a volunteer position. In addition to updating the portal

“We don’t have any more email,” says Azucena. “Our only form of internal communication is through the portal.” As a matter of policy, “every employee is required to look at the portal every day,” she adds.

This transition to the portal as a primary communication tool allowed FIBN to reduce rumors and gossip, eliminate emails that did not pertain to certain areas of the bank as well as “everyone” emails. Key

At a Glance:

- First Independent Bank of Nevada

Company Background

- Opened in 1999 with the intent of forming a true “community bank” owned and managed by Nevada business people.
- \$402 million in assets.
- Four full service branches in Reno, Sparks and Fallon.

Issue:

- Needed an internal centralized communication tool.

Solution:

- Passageways Corporate Portal
- Group Collaboration Module
- Products and Services Module
- Branding Services

Benefits:

- All internal communication is done on the portal.
- Consistent message.
- Eliminated internal email
- easy to maintain and use.

as needed - but at least once a month - this person is responsible for creating portal excitement among branch employees. This offers a pride-of-ownership experience for that particular employee.

Ease of Use

Azucena says that she had worked extensively with an intranet at a previous employer, but found that system to be difficult, both in terms of maintenance and use. On the other hand, she claims that the Passageways portal is easy to maintain and even easier to use. "In our portal, we have a two-click rule," says Azucena, meaning that all content is designed so that it is only two mouse clicks - or an absolute maximum of three in rare cases - away from the main screen. This elegant design has eliminated virtually all of the employee frustration that Azucena witnessed firsthand at her previous employer.

The straightforward design of the portal has also helped to trim the amount of information that is presented to employees, while enhancing its quality. Adds Azucena, "The portal helped us eliminate the information that employees don't need." She adds that although the bank has an IT staff of two, their involvement in portal maintenance is minimal. "We're using the portal out of the box," she says. "We don't have any developers on staff."

Adoption

Despite the obvious improvements in communication, Azucena says that employees were initially resistant to the change. "Our younger staff has taken to it much more quickly," she says, adding that technology phenomena such as MySpace have indoctrinated younger employees to think in terms of this sort of technology. However, she says that through continual training, as well as constant use of the system, all employees have become comfortable with the technology.

Every "everyone" email prior to the portal launch contained a notice reminding employees that starting on a certain date, FIBN would be using the Portal as the main source of communication for meetings, alerts and announcements. FIBN also set the portal to automatically load when each colleague entered the network. The FINB Portal team was available to answer questions and issues the day and week of the change over to the portal and all colleagues were responsible to check the Headquarters, Home, Bank News and HR pages daily.

Once the portal was implemented FINB made sure to follow up for useful feedback. Using the Portal they were able to track and document Portal Traffic Reports and to get direct feedback from employees by posting questionnaires and surveys. There were also contests held to motivate colleagues to use the Portal.

According to Azucena, one of the key features offered by the Passageways portal was an extranet. In the case of First Independent Bank, the extranet is used as a board tool, allowing all board information to be distributed electronically instead of by hard copy. She claims that board members appreciate the fact that the extranet is both convenient and secure. The Passageways extranet has also reduced the number of live board meetings. "If something comes up," says Azucena, "they don't necessarily have to meet in person." Instead, all relevant information can be distributed, comments made, and decisions reached via the portal extranet.

Wrap up

What started as a quest to improve corporate culture at First Independent Bank of Nevada ended with the elimination of internal email, improved efficiency and convenience for the board, and the streamlining of all information across all departments. "We like the Passageways portal," concludes Azucena, "because it can do anything we need it to do."

About Passageways

Founded in 2003, Passageways is the leading provider of Portal Solutions to the financial services industry. Our award-winning Portal Solutions were developed exclusively to meet the unique operational needs and functions of financial institutions. The Passageways Portal Solution provides financial institutions with the ability to organize, manage and deliver role-based views and access to enterprise information; content, applications, workflow processes, and more. The result... increased collaboration, efficiency, and profitability!