



FIRST BANK

# Growth Made Easier and Business Experiences Made Better

**FIRST BANK**

## Benefits summary

- A better user experience makes it easier for First Bank to onboard customers—and increases the likelihood of account holder retention.
- A robust set of business banking features allows First Bank to compete with larger institutions for commercial customers.
- An intuitive and comprehensive digital banking platform helps First Bank acquire and serve both consumer and commercial customers of all kinds and sizes.

## The challenge

Now more than ten years into their partnership with Q2, North Carolina's First Bank was an early adopter of Q2's digital banking platform. With a robust merger and acquisition strategy, they've needed equally robust technology to keep up with the needs of their growing and diverse customer base. This includes the ability to support both consumer accounts and large commercial interests—as well as provide better, more intuitive user experiences. Q2 has not only delivered the features and usability that First Bank requires, but has also helped the financial institution develop a digital roadmap to accommodate the shifting technology needs of their rapidly expanding customer base.

## The solutions

- Q2 Digital Banking Platform™
- Q2 Business Banking™
- Centrix Exact/TMS™

## The results

With the help of the Q2 Platform and its robust commercial offering, First Bank enjoys immense flexibility and functionality. This is crucial to meeting the needs of their customers and their communities.

"Our community means so much to us," said First Bank SVP of Treasury Services, Jenna Houston. "We love our North Carolina businesses, but we're not a niche or specialty bank. We're a community bank. We can serve consumers and any type of business out there." Michelle Leibowitz, the SVP of Digital Channels for First Bank, agreed, adding, "North Carolina is a unique place in that you can drive for five hours and go from the beach to the mountains. We have large metropolitan areas like Charlotte and Raleigh, then extremely rural areas in between. The businesses across all these areas are diverse, with needs unique to their size, industry, and local flavor."

Lisa Smith, VP of Treasury Service Sales for First Bank, added, "The best part is that we're nimble. We do have a very wide variety of businesses that we serve, but we also have technology that supports all of them—no matter how big."



### About First Bank

Since 1935, First Bank has taken a tailored approach to banking, combining best-in-class financial solutions, helpful local expertise, and technology. Headquartered in Southern Pines, North Carolina, the state-chartered community bank has grown 40 percent over the past three years to an impressive \$5.7 billion, with over 100 branches across the Carolinas. They credit this success to "uncompromising excellence in a remarkably personal package." Everything they do is built on a belief that their customers are meant to achieve financial independence, prosper, and pursue their dreams.

## Onboarding made easier

A large part of First Bank's growth is due to their vigorous acquisition strategy. But bringing acquired institutions' account holders and data into the fold takes a lot of work—and the right technology. As far as the hard work goes, Leibowitz credits "testing, testing, testing," for much of First Bank's success. "We spent untold hours testing templates for wires, for ACH, testing pass through files, testing every version of every kind of file," she said. "When you're talking about trying to retain those large customers, you have to test—and we've had very few issues post conversion."

As far as the technology piece of the onboarding equation, Leibowitz cites Q2's feature-rich platform. "It's a fallacy that community banks don't have the technology that the bigger banks have," she said. "We prove it wrong every day. We can do all the file processing that the big banks do. We can do the remote deposit capture and the bill pay; we can also do touch ID and have compatibility with so many mobile devices—and we have a user experience that is consistent across all devices. So, it doesn't matter which device you pick up. You know what to do."

"I think the acquisitions we've done show the real value of the platform," Leibowitz continued. "In our last acquisition, we converted 15,000 online banking users and 70 percent of those users had logged in within the first two weeks. We had people signing up in droves for mobile remote deposits, P2P payments, and e-statements. You could just tell from the level of activity and how everything ballooned in the first two weeks that they were engaged. Because everything was easy for them to find and easy to use."

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- Michelle Leibowitz, SVP of Digital Channels,  
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## Serving business at the highest levels

The Q2 Platform's extensive business banking features, as well as First Bank's commitment to customer service and an open communication, has helped the FI win and serve even very large corporations. Smith recalled the onboarding of their largest customer to date: "I worked closely with our digital operations supervisor to create an implementation schedule, and I have to credit his attentiveness for a big part of our success. On-demand access to our digital ops people played a big part in making this implementation go as well as it did."

"We were all particularly mindful, because of the scope of the project," said Smith. "Not just mindful of working out solutions, but of following up and ensuring solutions were applied—and that they met everyone's expectations." This included making sure that they were able to interface their new platform with a third-party payments processor as well as an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. "They had a rigid methodology," said Smith, "but we worked closely with their IT and with the vendor. We were all really pleased that we were able to accommodate all of it—and to do it securely."

First Bank was also able to implement a positive pay solution for their largest client to date, in the form of Centrix Solutions' Exact/TMS. The comprehensive solution gave the customer the ability to manage and detect fraud effectively on the scale their size required. "We'd implemented positive pay much more quickly in other situations," said Smith, "but for them—as large as they were, with as many systems as they had to consider—we all felt good about the timetable, and we stayed within it."

With the Q2 Platform and Centrix Exact/TMS, First Bank was able to offer all of the crucial business banking functionality and back-office efficiency the customer needed, as well as a better user experience. "They commented on the ease of use," said Smith. "And they'd talked about having to sign onto different modules for different applications with their previous digital banking system, so they were very happy about Q2's single sign-on and the efficiency it created. They also liked that they could do their own user management and entitlements."

## A competitive advantage

"We've taken away from every other major player in our market," Leibowitz said, "and, across the board, the response from users coming to our platform has been, 'Wow, this is easy. This has a nice look and feel. I can navigate this really well. This is so simple.'"

Case in point, Houston revisits the story of their largest commercial customer to date. "A member of their leadership didn't think we'd be able to do half of what their former big bank could, and he didn't want to change. He was tough. But at the end of it, he said, 'I'm so incredibly pleased with First Bank and their capabilities and their support.'" Not only was First Bank able to meet this tough customer's technology needs, but they also delivered superior service and partnership. They were able to create a strong relationship with this customer—who has since become something of a brand ambassador for them, serving as a reference to prospective customers.

By combining the experience-focused and feature-rich Q2 Platform with their own attention to detail, testing, and exceptional service, First Bank has been able to onboard and provide excellent service to customers of all kinds and sizes. And, their rapid growth to date is only the beginning.

**For more information on Q2, go to [Q2ebanking.com](https://www.q2ebanking.com) or call (833) 444-3469.**

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