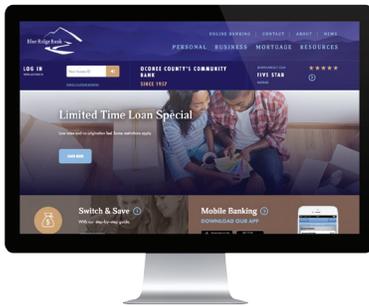


.BANK Success Story: Blue Ridge Bank

www.blueridge.bank



“We understood then and now know that .BANK means security. I anticipate that in a few years’ time, .BANK will become known as the new “little SSL lock” in a browser bar for your financial institution.”

**CHRIS ELLENBURG,
CHIEF OPERATIONS
OFFICER & NETWORK
ADMINISTRATOR,
BLUE RIDGE BANK**

Founded in 1957, Blue Ridge Bank serves the community of Oconee County, South Carolina across its three branch locations. With an asset size of \$110M, this community bank and its 27 employees are guided by the words in the bank’s mission statement— “emphasizing quality customer service and offering the most up-to-date financial services” - which is why Blue Ridge Bank decided to upgrade its online presence from .COM to .BANK last year.

WHY .BANK?

Chris Ellenburg, Chief Operations Officer & Network Administrator for Blue Ridge Bank first heard about the coming wave of new Internet web extensions nearly a decade ago. Ellenburg was interested to learn more when the bank’s national trade association, the American Bankers Association (ABA), communicated about its involvement in .BANK to its members in 2014.

For a long time, leadership at Blue Ridge Bank had not been satisfied with how the bank’s URL, BRBWAL.COM, reflected its branding. Other companies named Blue Ridge had secured .COM domain names before the bank could, so .BANK was a new opportunity to better match its current branding and marketing with a fresh and relevant domain name. Increased security was also a major selling point. Ellenburg describes, “We understood then and now know that .BANK means security. I anticipate that in a few years’ time, .BANK will become known as the new “little lock” in a browser bar.” Ellenburg added that the general public doesn’t understand the value of security features .BANK adds to their online financial security. Having a .BANK name is another way to provide additional education about how Blue Ridge Bank is working to meet the needs of its customers and the bank’s mission statement.

MIGRATION

Blue Ridge Bank, like many other banks, chose to tie the migration to its new domain name to the launch of a newly designed website. Holleigh Evans from the bank’s marketing team lead the web design effort with the help of an outside group. Ellenburg lead the technical effort, and utilized the skills of the bank’s registrar, EnCirca, when needed. It was primarily a two-person operation, and Ellenburg describes the experience as “pretty easy.”

Blue Ridge Bank did not have a nationally recognized trademark to be eligible for the .BANK sunrise period, and would not have been able to obtain one in time to compete in that earliest registration period; so they “risked it” by waiting until general availability. In June 2015, Blue Ridge Bank was able to secure the BLUERIDGE.BANK domain. Although Ellenburg estimated that a simple migration to the BLUERIDGE.BANK domain could have been accomplished in a couple of months, the wait for the new design meant that the launch took place in December 2015 which was still a short time for completing the entire process.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Like many banks, transitioning the company’s new email system, which was rolled out in July 2016, is an ongoing process. Blue Ridge Bank uses Office 365, and under .BANK’s security requirements, some additional email changes that need to be implemented to be completely compliant. For now, the old .COM emails are being forwarded to the new .BANK addresses, and employees have set up signature lines that alert recipients to their new email addresses. Ellenburg’s plan assumes that the bank will keep this process in place for a few months to help customers and business partners with the transition until the email updates are completed.

There was also an early issue of gaining access to their DNS portal maintained by EnCirca to make changes to settings. What Ellenburg learned was that the portal was being hosted in a country that the bank had identified as being access restricted. Through EnCirca’s online chat feature he was able to quickly trouble shoot the problem.

Ellenburg shared that the biggest challenge encountered in the migration was the move to Office 365 and training employees on its use and new features. In comparison, the actual shift to .BANK was smooth.

MARKETING CONSIDERATIONS

Ellenburg calls the transition to .BANK an organic one. When the new .BANK website was turned on, Blue Ridge Bank also updated business cards, letterhead and statements to take full advantage of the more coherent branding that the new BLUERIDGE.BANK name provides. On-statement advertising to customers, and announcements via social media were also made, but no media outreach was needed for this somewhat seamless conversion to a name that was already familiar to customers and the local community served by the bank.

LESSONS LEARNED

Ellenburg knows that education around the value of a .BANK domain name continues to be the biggest hurdle for the banking industry, and is unaware of other banks in South Carolina utilizing the web extension which he finds surprising.

“Plain and simple: if you want your bank to have the most security that is out there and available, you need to be using a .BANK domain.”