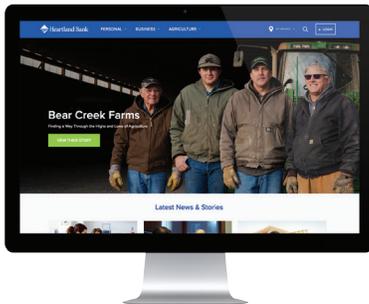


.BANK Success Story: Heartland Bank

www.myheartland.bank



“Using a .BANK domain helps us continue to give our customers peace of mind that they are safe in banking with us.”

CAITLIN DUMAS,
MARKETING DIRECTOR

Heartland Bank, formerly known as Geneva State Bank, opened its doors in 1899 and continues as a local, family and associate-owned operation. In the “heartland” of Nebraska, the bank continues to focus on banking products needed by the farmers, ranchers and businesses in the community. This understanding of its customers has driven its steady growth to about \$400M in assets supported by eight full-service branches and two loan processing offices with more than 80 associates. The bank is a member of the American Bankers Association (ABA) and the Nebraska Bankers Association (NBA).

WHY .BANK?

Caitlin Dumas, Marketing Director of Heartland Bank, detailed how the bank's focus on its customers shows up in the initial training of each new associate, which emphasizes they are each empowered to do what is best for customers and to always ask “How does this impact our customers?” As noted on the bank's website, its vision is “To be a growing organization providing leadership that improves the lives of customers, associates and communities.”

Dumas noted that the “customer first” approach was integral to making the .BANK domain part of the new website and customer management system that provide “a continued excellent digital experience” for the customers in their online and mobile banking. The security requirements that are inherent to .BANK can be compared to the investments that banks make in vaults and security systems in their physical locations, and Dumas continued “We want to provide the same level of security for our digital banking experience.”

When she joined the bank in April 2016, a new website had just been launched and the work to convert to MYHEARTLAND.BANK was just beginning under the guidance of the previous marketing manager although the domain name had been purchased in 2015 in anticipation of the project. For both the website design and development and the .BANK conversion, the internal IT and compliance teams worked with Media Junction from St. Paul, Minnesota. The MYHEARTLAND.BANK domain is registered with EnCirca and the bank uses Hubspot for the website hosting, Datavision for DNS services and Fiserv for core services including online banking.



@fTLD_Registry

| www.register.bank



MIGRATION

The implementation team for the migration to .BANK included the Marketing Director at that time as well as the heads of the IT and compliance departments. The Media Junction team was also directly involved in the migration effort.

The bank plans to keep previous domains including MYHEARTLANDBANK.COM, MYHBANK.COM and GENEVASTATEBANK.COM forwarding to MYHEARTLAND.BANK indefinitely so customers are not impacted by the domain name change, but are still able to benefit from the security of the .BANK domain. The bank has decided not to change the email address at this time.

Although the migration to .BANK was originally scheduled to be completed in September 2016, the actual migration was delayed until November. The delay was triggered when the bank was notified by EnCirca that several DNS-related items needed to be corrected, which required coordination among EnCirca, Hubspot and Datavision. Once the outstanding issues were addressed, the bank started using its .BANK domain and has not experienced any problems since that time.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The bank's IT, compliance and marketing teams worked closely with the Media Junction team in developing and implementing the .BANK migration plan and used the information in the [Technical Guide to Leveraging a .BANK Domain](#) to assist them in this work.

As noted, there were issues complying with the .BANK Security Requirements based on the configuration of the DNS setup. The bank has a custom SSL Package that used SHA-1 ciphers, which had to be disabled, and there was a problem with the setup of the CNAME record for the redirects of the prior domains. The coordination of the changes needed between the various service partners took longer than anticipated, which resulted in the delayed migration. No other technical issues have been encountered since the migration was completed.

MARKETING CONSIDERATIONS

Initial marketing efforts focused on providing information about the migration to MYHEARTLAND.BANK for the bank's associates so they would be prepared to answer customer questions. This educational process started with several meetings and associate trainings followed by an email including the timeline. Additional details were provided in the bank's monthly marketing trainings. As more information was available about the migration bank employees were notified via email. Dumas shared there were some initial questions about the reason for the change to .BANK, which she noted reinforces the bank's commitment to the security of its customers.

Based on a previously conducted media-consumption survey, Heartland Bank primarily used a digital approach to notifying its customers about the change because that is where they would reach the customers that the update would affect. Customer outreach was based on a "heads-up" [email](#) that linked to the bank's [blog](#) that provided information about the transition in a Q&A format and made it easier to provide updates about the conversion schedule. When the migration was completed in November the bank sent another [email](#). Associates had materials available for customers who visited branches and offices. In addition, the bank has been updating other materials as new supplies are needed. "Since our previous domain name redirects to the .BANK domain, using it doesn't interrupt our customers' experience," explained Dumas.



LESSONS LEARNED

A primary factor in the successful transition was the training of the bank's associates. Dumas emphasized, "They are the ones on the front lines who get the questions and phone calls, so having a great system like our weekly trainings made this internal communication process flow very smoothly."

As the conversion to .BANK took longer than planned, Dumas recommended that banks make sure that everything is in place before a transition date is announced. The plan should also have some flexibility for unexpected issues. She commented that new components of the [fTLD Guides](#) such as the [Quick Start Guide](#) and [Implementation Planning Checklist](#) will be helpful to banks just starting to plan their conversion.

Dumas reiterated that the primary value of .BANK to Heartland Bank is to demonstrate to the bank's customers its continuing commitment to keeping their information secure. Dumas closed by noting, "Going the extra mile for our customers is what the bank and its associates do and using a .BANK domain helps us continue to give our customers peace of mind that they are safe in banking with us."

