

.BANK Success Story: Horizon Bank

www.horizon.bank



HORIZON BANK



Horizon Bank serves its customers across four branches – two in Austin, TX (its headquarters downtown and a north Austin branch) Holland, TX and Salado, TX, plus its wholly-owned subsidiary, Self Directed IRA Services, Inc., in Waco, TX. They operate primarily as an online and small business bank, doing 90% of its business electronically and with three operating drive-through windows.

“I can’t imagine how this change could be seen as anything other than positive for banks.”

GREGG BENNETT, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, HORIZON BANK

WHY .BANK?

The .BANK web domain offers many benefits including robust security, and a more secure location online for customers. Another prominent reason stuck out for Horizon Bank—its current URL, HORIZONBANKTEXAS.COM, was 15 characters long!

Gregg Bennett, Horizon’s Chief Operating Officer shared, “We wanted a better URL, and had heard that .BANK was supposed to be more secure. We also assumed that regulators might look for all banks to begin making the switch in the future.” He added, “plus, we like to be the community bank that can compete with the larger ones.”

Horizon applied for four .BANK domain names and received them all, but its first focus was on migrating the current website over to HORIZON.BANK.

MIGRATION

After reviewing its options, the bank decided to handle the migration by themselves. In its own words, they “just decided to go for it.” No outside consultants were utilized.

The migration was left up to one man, Michael Henderson, Horizon’s Vice President of IT. Initially, Henderson contacted Rackspace, Horizon’s web hosting group, and then began to plug away with his implementation strategy.

Horizon used 101Domain as its registrar, which they lauded as a good experience. The process was off to a good start, and remained that way through the entire process.



@fTLD_Registry

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TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Though Horizon has moved to a .BANK website, they currently use .COM email addresses, which has resulted in its need to operate dual domains (i.e., .BANK and .COM), a decision they say helps the bank continue its momentum, while not interfering with the customer's daily needs.

They have yet to receive any customer service inquiries, which they chalk up to the fact that Horizon has not yet changed its email over to the .BANK except for a few employees. Bennett shared that Horizon plans to be very aggressive in 2016 in its complete transition to .BANK email.

MARKETING CONSIDERATIONS

Communications and marketing efforts to notify Horizon's customers and the public about the switch have taken a backseat to other priorities, but bank officials assert that 2016 should introduce a renewed sense of urgency on marketing. The bank is also looking closely at how the transition affects search engine optimization and how that will impact its messaging.

"Personal service is paramount," says COO Bennett.

LESSONS LEARNED

Horizon staff are quite pleased with the opportunities that the .BANK domain name has afforded them: updated branding, enhanced security and the capability to compete more fiercely with larger banks.

"The process was easier and more successful than we originally thought," shared Bennett.

Looking back, they are hard pressed to identify things they would have done differently, and urge all banks to consider making the switch.