

.BANK Success Story: TrailWest Bank

www.trailwest.bank



TrailWest Bank (TrailWest) is a locally-owned, independent bank with more than \$400 million in assets serving western Montana. Established in 1982, TrailWest currently has over 130 bank associates staffing 14 office locations serving Ravalli, Missoula, Mineral, and Flathead Counties.

“We want our customers to know that we care about them being protected. .BANK tells that story for us.”

**HALEY PITCHER,
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT
AND SPECIAL PROJECTS
OFFICER, TRAILWEST BANK**

WHY .BANK?

The decision by TrailWest to explore the potential of registering and using a .BANK domain name was based upon an inquiry from Rich Zins, the president and CEO of Trailwest, who initially learned about the .BANK initiative at an Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) convention.

The decision to move forward with the migration to a .BANK domain name was done at a Board level and based upon two strategic factors. The first was the broader company-wide rebranding initiative. Originally founded as Bitterroot Valley Bank, by 2011 the bank had grown to six branches under the umbrella of “Family of Banks.” TrailWest provided an excellent brand to incorporate the bank’s iconic steer head logo which has its roots in longhorn cattle ranching and symbolized an animal known for its toughness and ability to survive adverse conditions. The second strategic factor was the security benefits from changing to a .BANK domain name. There was a perceived benefit from the customer viewpoint that provided TrailWest with an excellent marketing tool to integrate into the broader rebranding initiative.

MIGRATION

The TrailWest team was never any larger than four individuals helping to move the dual effort forward—a feat that Haley Pitcher, AVP/Special Projects Officer, attributes to an incredibly close-knit staff. “Everybody had to be on-board, and everybody was.”

To help educate and train the staff regarding the rebranding and domain name migration, branch managers were apprised of the progress on a monthly basis who would then share the information with their branch teams in an orderly fashion.



@fTLD_Registry

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Additionally, bi-monthly customer service meetings were held to provide staff with the necessary training to help them better communicate with customers about the migration. As the process came to a close, email memos were sent bank-wide.

This aggressive migration timeline was made possible in part by the preliminary work at the TrailWest Board level. The Executive Committee made the decision to pursue the new domain name in February of 2015 and the Board approved soon after. TrailWest launched its new .BANK domain name on October 5, 2015, which was just four months after they had secured its .BANK domain names.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There were a number of minor technical issues that TrailWest's IT department had to address during the migration. One issue involved some mail server configuration settings. This re-configuration was not required as a direct result of .BANK/fTLD's security requirements, but because of an internal traffic routing issue. TrailWest was able to work closely with its registrar EnCirca to ensure that Domain Name System Security Extensions (DNSSEC) records were properly configured. TrailWest used EnCirca because its existing registrar for legacy domain names elected not to provide domain name registration services in .BANK.

There was also some education required by the IT department in working with the bank's vendors. Because the IT department was the first to roll-out the use of .BANK email addresses, it had to repeat its new email addresses on several occasions to its vendors stressing the new .BANK extension. Front-line staff were educated on the security benefits of the .BANK domain so that they could educate customers, vendors and the public when providing bank staffs' email addresses and the new URL.

MARKETING CONSIDERATIONS

TrailWest organized its external communications effort in close coordination with a large marketing operation to maximize its effectiveness and reach. The marketing team rolled out a huge campaign including television, radio and print advertising to share both its name and web domain change. Originally TrailWest planned on registering three domain names, but ended up registering a total of five including both singular and plural variations of the TrailWest mark. TrailWest did not do this for defensive reasons as .BANK's policies and verification process removed any concern of cybersquatting by a third party, but because they wanted to provide a more seamless customer experience if they accidentally mistyped the domain name. Of the five new domains, the Marketing Committee and Executive Committee agreed that the shortest version would be the most beneficial to have as the primary URL, therefore, TRAILWEST.BANK has become the URL that will be marketed. In the future, when two character URL's become available for .BANK domains, the bank will likely transition to tw.bank if possible. This is in an effort to make the bank as easy as possible to find online.

LESSONS LEARNED

The biggest lesson learned was the difficulty in trying to complete the fTLD verification process in connection with an institutional name change. The process basically had to be finalized on the day of the actual name change, leaving little room for error. TrailWest has recommended that fTLD look at potential processes to make this special class of registration more efficient.