



CASE HISTORY: BUILDING ON SUCCESS

META HELPS BANK BECOME QUICK-CHANGE ARTISTS

Having become one of the largest banks in the United States, one firm found itself at the beginning of 1997 with a problem common to many winning companies: How could it sustain its impressive record of growth?

The bank was enjoying its fourteenth consecutive year of record earnings, and its assets during this period had increased forty-fold to \$21 billion. The company's branch system had expanded from less than a dozen locations to a highly sophisticated network of 415 offices.

There was no secret formula to account for the bank's achievement; the organization's Chief Executive Officer attributes the feat to having a clear mission and common values. "The concept that best defines our corporate culture is objectivity," the CEO says. "By being grounded in reality and relying on reason, we can focus on the facts and employ clear thinking, which results in objective decisions. This is how we succeed," he maintains.

The bank wanted to sustain performance improvement by continuing to exploit its core competencies in logical thinking and objective decision-making. But the firm's growth had created a double-edged sword of organizational complexity. To be sure, the intricate web of interrelationships that

came with increased size had real benefits, such as economies of scale. The complexity also protected the firm's hard-won competitive advantages from being easily understood and duplicated by rivals.

The downside to the bank's larger, more complex organizational structure was its potential to undermine the sound, rational decision-making environment at the bank. Logic dictated that something be done.

In response, the bank set a company-wide strategic objective for 1997 to redesign key areas of its business. The goal was to develop optimal information processes and delivery systems that would furnish expert information to everyone who needed it, thereby assuring that sound analysis and judgement would continue to drive growth.

Time was of the essence. In February, management declared that by the end of July, the bank would have completed a thorough restructuring of one of its most critical business functions: the process by which loan applications are received, maintained, and reviewed.

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The bank called on the Business Process Management Group at Meta Software to help ensure the success and speed of this change initiative. Working on site with a cross-functional team of staff members, Meta Software consultants applied a combination of proven methodologies with Meta’s market-leading suite of software solutions to achieve a newly defined set of aggressive business outcomes.

These outcomes were linked to specific process improvements. For example, one improvement was to handle the increasing level of loan applications with no concomitant increase in staff. Another enhancement was to meet regulatory requirements more efficiently by imbedding business rules in the new imaging and workflow systems that the bank and Meta Software were co-developing.

“Meta Software enabled us to meet our ambitious four-month timeframe for completely overhauling our loan processing function,” says the executive in charge of the project. “We would not have succeeded without them.”



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