

eMerge

QUARTERLY

BUILDING CUSTOMER FIRST BANKING

League Data's Digital Blueprint:
Migrating 30+ Credit Unions at Scale

AI, Compliance & the New Age of Islamic
Banking

Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt accelerates its
Retail Banking Transformation

Transforming and Running the World's
Largest Treasury Operations

Bulkley Valley Credit Union's Journey of
Community-Focused Digital Banking
Innovation

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Published on 14th July 2026

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From the editor's desk

Dear Readers,

As we navigate the defining economic realities of 2026, the mandate for financial institutions has crystallized: it is no longer enough to simply adopt new technologies; we must meticulously architect their value around the consumer. Following last quarter's focus on tangible business impact, we recognise that achieving these results requires more than ambition—it requires an unwavering commitment to the end-user.

Welcome to the July 2026 edition of eMerge, where our theme is exactly that: **Building Customer-First Banking**.

In this issue, we continue to equip you with actionable frameworks that translate strategic vision into measurable reality. The insights within this edition provide the architectural drawings for modern banking success, exploring the delicate balance between high-tech convenience and genuine human connection. **Rajesh Anbarasu, Technology Lead at League Data**, lays the critical groundwork for cooperative innovation, discussing how they act as a virtual CIO to seamlessly migrate over 30 credit unions to a future-ready digital platform. Building on this foundation, Intellect's Rajesh Saxena and Rami Roukos demonstrate how to scale ethical finance, examining the **\$4 trillion Islamic banking boom** through the lens of purpose-built, AI-driven Islamic banking platform. Showcasing this in action, we explore how **Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt (FIBE) accelerated its retail transformation**, transitioning from decade-old legacy systems to an intuitive, customer-first digital banking experience. Expanding our perspective to global macro-operations, we examine the monumental journey of a top global systemically important bank in transforming its **fragmented treasury infrastructure** into a real-time, zero-downtime global operating environment. Finally, **Tony Dunham, Chief Operating Officer at Bulkley Valley Credit Union**, provides a compelling blueprint for community-focused innovation, proving that digital agility—when blended with purpose-driven leadership—can amplify the human touch and preserve local decision-making.

I hope these articles spark meaningful dialogue and provide the structural clarity you need for your transformational journey in the year ahead. I am deeply grateful to the leaders who contributed their expertise to this edition, helping us bridge the gap between technological possibility and achieving business impact.

As we shape the discourse for our next edition, we invite visionary banking leaders to share their insights and success stories with our global community. If you would like to contribute an article to our upcoming issue, please reach out to our editorial team at marketing.gcb@intellectdesign.com.

Happy reading!

Warm regards,



Mithu Gupta
CMO and Head - User Experience, Consumer Banking,
Intellect Design Arena

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CUSTOMER SPEAK

PARTNER SPEAK

League Data's Digital Blueprint: Migrating 30+ Credit Unions at Scale

For many community credit unions, keeping pace with the rapid evolution of digital banking is a daunting, resource-heavy challenge. Discover how one cooperative FinTech is acting as a virtual CIO, breaking legacy bottlenecks and bringing future-ready digital banking to Atlantic Canada.



A perspective from:

Rajesh Anbarasu

Technology Lead, League Data

→ About the Organization:

League Data helps its 32 member credit unions across Atlantic Canada thrive in a digital-first world by providing leading-edge technology solutions and strategic guidance—all with a human touch. While some technology overcomplicates, the organization works closely with its credit unions to offer the most relevant and user-friendly solutions to serve today's market demands and retain members throughout every stage of their financial lives.

L League Data is a partner of Intellect Design Arena. In the conversation with Jessica Morettie, VP, Client Partnerships, Intellect Design Arena, Rajesh Ambarasu discusses how League Data is translating its role as a cooperative fintech into digital-age innovation. League Data has a very interesting model, supporting over 30 credit unions in Atlantic Canada. As a cooperative fintech, League Data plays the role of CIO and technology provider, aligning with the long-term strategy of the credit unions to solve technology challenges so credit unions can focus entirely on serving their members.

As League Data looks to the future, they are implementing Intellect's eMACH.ai Digital Engagement Platform (DEP) to power the digital banking experience. This transformation aims to build future-ready solutions that accelerate innovation, modernize core banking, and support credit unions with API-built, cloud-native technologies.

Jessica: How does League Data's model as a cooperative fintech differ from a typical vendor for the credit unions?

Rajesh Ambarasu: We play the role of CIO and technology provider for all the 30-plus credit unions. We work with major vendors, especially with the DEP platform, so it's one we are happy to be integrated with. We play the role of aggregator and provide the technologies to the credit union. That solves a problem for the credit union not to worry about the technology; they worry about the members. Back to your question about how we differentiate ourselves from other technology providers, it's because we align with the long-term strategy of the credit unions. That makes a clear difference, and we are not interested in selling this license to the credit unions. We strongly believe in supporting the credit union by providing the technology to the credit unions.

Jessica: When collaborating with your credit unions to select a digital banking experience to layer over your unified platform, what were the most critical considerations in your decision-making process?

Rajesh Ambarasu: Yeah, one of the critical things that we would like to have as part of our partnership, and this is one of the key reasons that we are partnering with Intellect Design, is the future-ready solutions. The last few years, we have been working on modernizing the core banking platform so we can partner with vendors like Intellect Design and prepare the credit unions for future readiness. Obviously, down the road, we have so many things lining up like open banking or so many technologies lined up with AI.

We need to have a partnership with technology providers who align with our strategy to support the credit unions. That's a key thing that we would like to have before we make any decision to partner with any technology providers. Also, we need to make sure our current platform is an API-built, scalable platform. From another partner, we would like to make sure they have the similar technology scalability to support us and, eventually, the credit unions and members as well.

Jessica: *Before the partnership, were there particular things that were creating bottlenecks for your credit unions that credit unions wanted to change?*

Rajesh Ambarasu: Absolutely. We would like to innovate at a faster pace. One of the challenges that we had was the slow change, which is a bottleneck for us. We would like to cope with the speed the way technology grows.

The existing integration had a bit of slowness, which does not align with our goals. That's where DEP and Intellect Design really help us, and we're really looking forward to that fast change, and hopefully, we'll have a good partnership together.

Jessica: *Are there particular features that you're hearing from your credit unions that their members are looking for or that they're most excited about regarding this change?*

Rajesh Ambarasu: Absolutely. Digital onboarding is one of the key features that members would like to do. There is a variety of membership. We used to have elderly people, and now we have Gen Z. As you can see, it's a different variety of membership that the credit unions have.



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API-built, cloud-native platform is an ideal key component that we always look for, and I think that's where DEP supports us very well and aligns very well in this collaboration.

A lot of people now, even the elderly people, would like to do everything at their fingertips. Digital onboarding and mobile apps are key for League Data and eventually for the credit unions as well. That API-built, cloud-native platform is an ideal key component that we always look for, and I think that's where DEP supports us very well and aligns very well in this collaboration.

And when I talk about the technology, it's not just about a feature. A lot of times, technology providers talk about cloud-native and stuff, but what is more important is how best it's aligned with the Canadianized version. How it supports Canada's policies, procedures, everything. I think that's where DEP has past experience as well. That's one of the key components we don't want to neglect or ignore. We want to ensure payments follow Canada regulatory rules. That's our responsibility as a technology provider for credit unions. We want to make sure everything is aligned. I think that's where DEP will align with our roadmaps. They don't have to focus on what cloud is, what onboarding is, what the UI is, or what the technology behind it is. They don't have to worry about it. They just have to focus on serving the members.

Jessica: *Moving so many credit unions away from legacy systems like Forge is a monumental task. What is giving you the confidence that this is going to be successful in terms of working together with Intellect to do this transformation?*

Rajesh Ambarasu: Yeah, absolutely. The transformation is pretty massive, I would say. And it's not new for League Data. We have done this in the last couple of years. We did core conversions at a rapid pace in less than 48 hours. We had a lot of challenges that we went through, so we understand the complexity around it, and we built a process on top of it. It's not new for DEP as well, and it's proven within the Canada market. So, that will align. We know what's going on, what the difficulties are before us, and we have a process. We have a solution for that, and I think both Intellect Design and League Data are ready to take the challenge with our past experience. We are ready to take the challenge together for sure.



Jessica: *The pace for innovation and making changes with current systems is slow, without much self-service. With all of that baked into DEP, what kind of impact do you think that will have for League Data and for your credit unions?*

Rajesh Ambarasu: Yeah, I think from the credit union perspective, not everybody would be ready for the change, right? For some of the smaller credit unions, it might be too fast for them. For some of the larger credit unions, they might think, "Oh, we need to go a bit even faster." So, I think League Data makes that bridge. We provide the confidence for the smaller, medium, or larger-sized credit unions. Even for smaller credit unions, they might have some anxiety saying, "How is it going to work with members onboarding themselves?" We show them how DEP works and how League Data supports from the technology perspective. Not just the technology perspective, but how best we can customize the core banking or onboarding process to adapt not just for the larger credit unions, but even for the smaller credit unions. That's where they gain the confidence to say, "Yes, we trust League Data," and eventually they trust Intellect Design to support them, right? They don't have to feel anxiety within the credit unions about their members. So, I think that's a key component that solves the problem. The partnership between Intellect Design and League Data is going to solve that.

I think some of the medium-sized credit unions are interested in technology as well, so we support them in a different manner. We don't provide the same format of support for all the credit unions. Depending on their need, we support them with different technology or other supports that the credit union needs.

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I think some of the medium-sized credit unions are interested in technology as well, so we support them in a different manner. We don't provide the same format of support for all the credit unions. Depending on their need, we support them with different technology or other supports that the credit union needs.

Jessica: *If we're sitting here a year from now, what does success look like for League Data and for your credit unions that you're on this journey with?*

Rajesh Ambarasu: Yeah, I think we are already in the first step, ready to convert to the new digital banking platform. So, I have no doubt that we'll successfully migrate. I think that's step one. Then in a year from now, the credit unions should have the confidence that members can serve themselves better with digital onboarding, and understand how the technology is going to serve them better. When they use all the features that DEP provides, I think they're going to make themselves very comfortable. That's a key success that we would like to see from the credit union member perspective. Let's say if tomorrow a member says, "I can make my bill payment through my online banking platform. I don't have to come to the credit union. I can serve myself." If the member and eventually the credit union have that level of confidence, then that's the success for League Data.

AI, Compliance & the New Age of Islamic Banking

With a projected 20% CAGR, Islamic banking is attracting global interest for its stable, asset-backed model. But to capture this immense growth, institutions must move beyond manual compliance and embrace AI-driven, automated pool management.



Excerpt from IBS Intelligence Podcast Ep 980 | A Cedar Consulting Unit



Rajesh Saxena,
CEO, Intellect
Consumer Banking



Rami Roukoss,
Product Expert,
Intellect Design Arena
Limited

BS: Why is Islamic banking becoming more relevant across the globe now?

Rajesh Saxena: I think that's a very good question and a very relevant question at this point in time. Islamic banking is the dominant pillar of the Islamic finance industry and roughly represents two-thirds of its total assets. Last year, in 2024, these assets reached about 4 trillion, and they are expected to increase by a CAGR of about 20%.

Some of the tailwinds that we are seeing, which are really helping Islamic banking, are the following:

- The first is the digital transformation with mobile banking, AI, and cloud platforms becoming prevalent. This is helping customers expand their access.
- The second key tailwind that we are seeing is really from an ethical finance appeal. The interest-free and the asset-backed model that we have in Islamic banking is increasingly attracting non-Muslim investors also.
- And third is really about resilience and stability perception. Since Islamic banking avoids speculative derivatives and requires real underlying assets, it is often seen now in today's volatile world as more stable, and therefore these are the three tailwinds that we are seeing.

And just to reinforce my point, I'll give you some proof points. For example, in the last 18 months, what we have seen is that 45 conventional banks have launched Islamic



windows around the world. So there is demand being generated from an Islamic banking perspective. 15 new digital Islamic bank licenses have been issued worldwide. And for example, in Bahrain, AUB (Ahli United Bank) has converted from a conventional bank to a full-fledged Islamic bank. We are seeing this trend even in Africa, where in Djibouti, for example, we have the first Islamic bank, which has opened up to serve 14% of that population who are Muslim. So we are seeing a lot of forces coming together, and this is the right time we feel from an Islamic banking perspective.

IBS: What are the key challenges Islamic banks face in the current digital banking era?

Rajesh Saxena: I think that's a very good question and a very relevant question because what we are seeing from a bank's perspective, the product personalization, the ability of the banks to customize new products, and the time to market these new products are severely challenged because these have to follow Sharia compliance. We find that there is a lot of manual work required in calculation and accounting. Managing Islamic investment pools can be a very manual, error-prone process.

For example, unlike fixed interest, which is a simple formula in conventional banking, in Islamic banking returns have to be calculated based on the actual performances of the assets, and then you have to allocate these profits fairly across different pools, and this can get very complicated. I think also skills and knowledge of people—trained resources who understand these Sharia guardrails—are limited. A limited talent pool makes this even more difficult.

IBS: Now speaking of eMACH.ai, that is Intellect's product, how is the eMACH.ai Islamic banking proposition different from the others in the market? How does it distinguish itself?

Rajesh Saxena: Sure, and I think it's important to note that we are coming a little late in the market, and therefore we have this advantage that we had the ability to purpose-build our product to address these challenges—the challenges that I talked about in your earlier question about speed to market, composition, etc.

So we had that advantage. What we did was when we really went to design this product, we said we will make Sharia and AAOIFI compliance an integral part of the system and logic by design. So we built our platform around these principles. Therefore, this platform enforces the right structures, calculations, and flows from the very beginning.

Most of our peers and our competitors actually started with a conventional banking platform, and they did some band-aids to make it Sharia-compliant. That's why this makes it very difficult and rigid for them to maintain and change.



Our platform is really composable by design and has Sharia principles built as a fundamental principle. So this is a very significant advantage that we bring to the market versus our competitors or peers.

From our perspective, since we started with this design, our platform is really composable by design and has Sharia principles built as a fundamental principle. So this is a very significant advantage that we bring to the market versus our competitors or peers. For example, pool management which is composable, transparent, auditable, and fully automated. A fully automated profit calculation and distribution engine is built in as a key component of our platform.

IBS: Could you expand on pool management and why this is a critical feature for banks, also the role of AI in the process?

Rami Roukos: Well, when we speak about pool management, we are speaking about the base foundation and the fundamental engine which any Islamic bank in the market needs to operate. And when we speak about Islamic pool management, transparency has to be there to abide by Sharia principles and guidelines. This is why the eMACH.ai Islamic pool management has been built as a fundamental based on Sharia by design, and accordingly, for sure, on the AAOIFI regulations and compliant with the architecture of eMACH.ai.

Secondly, when we speak about pool management, we have the component of real-time monitoring and performance, which we have to provide to all the customers inside the bank, and this is also where automation of the profit calculation distribution has to be in place to give this kind of accuracy to the customer.

So it's not only about automation of the processes. It's about the confidence that you have to bring inside Islamic pool management and to provide to the customer whenever you are operating under this model. And this is where I believe AI, which is an embedded component inside our Islamic banking offering, will give more accuracy; it will give more transparency, especially whenever we are running a data-driven application inside the application. And just to end on this part. AI will not replace the ethical or the religious framework of the Sharia board or the committee inside the bank. It will put additional power or strength on the application on how the banks should run the pool management or the Islamic pool management.

IBS: Which Islamic financing products are supported and how does the platform streamline their lifecycle?

Rajesh Saxena: Yeah. So let me start. I'll just say that the platform that we are launching now covers the majority of our Islamic products. However, having said that, we also have a roadmap and we will ensure that we keep covering newer products, including trade finance and treasury.

Rami Roukos: As mentioned by Rajesh, we are looking at the full customer journey when it comes to Islamic banking, specifically from the Islamic core banking and the Islamic accounts. So whenever we are speaking about the Mudarabah or the Wadiah or the Wakala deposits from the liability side for any customer, then going to the second fundamental thing, the Islamic pool management, which we spoke a little bit about, and of course going to the Islamic financing by supporting the majority of the key Islamic products like Qard Hasan. So these are the most important pillars for any Islamic bank, and we also have a very clear roadmap which is coming into place to cover Islamic trade finance, Islamic Sukuk, and treasury and all of those aspects as well.

Rajesh Saxena: And if I can just add to what Rami said, what is really more important is how we manage the entire lifecycle. Right. So everything is connected in our platform from origination to approval to disbursement and servicing within a single configurable flow. And this really helps us and the banks to reduce fragmentation. It speeds up the processing and minimizes manual effort. So the value from a platform is just not about supporting the products, but it is about making the entire customer journey and the customer lifecycle efficient, scalable, and easy to manage.

Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt accelerates its Retail Banking Transformation journey with eMACH.ai Digital Engagement Platform



A perspective from:
Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt

→ About the bank:

Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt (FIBE) is a flagship Islamic financial institution with a clear vision — to be the best provider of Islamic financial services while achieving sustainable growth across regional and international markets. With over 2 million customer accounts and \$4.8 billion in assets, FIBE has long maintained a trusted position in Egypt's banking landscape. To remain competitive in a rapidly evolving digital economy, FIBE identified the need to replace its decade-old digital banking system. The goal: deliver an intuitive, modern, and personalized digital experience aligned with its forward-looking Islamic banking philosophy.

Challenges:

FIBE's existing digital platform was more than 10 years old, unable to meet the growing expectations of its

digitally savvy customer base.

Key challenges included:

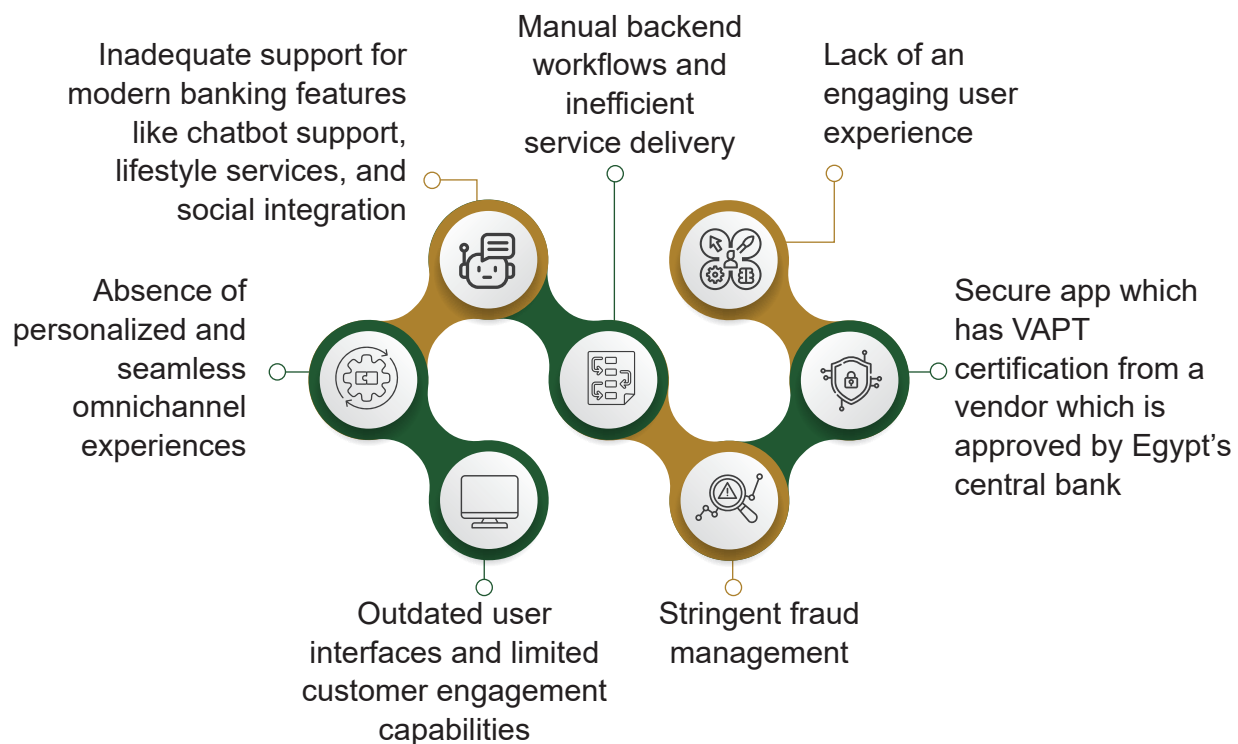


Image 1 : Key challenges faced by FIBE

Solution:

FIBE partnered with Intellect to implement the eMACH.ai Digital Engagement Platform (eMACH.ai DEP) - a digital banking platform built on Events, Microservices, APIs, Cloud, and Headless architecture with embedded AI. 39 user

journeys across Accounts, Deposits, Transfers, Mutual Funds, and more were implemented in the transformation. The platform is integrated with 22 applications, including core banking, third-party systems, VASCO and Fraud Management Systems.

Transformation highlights

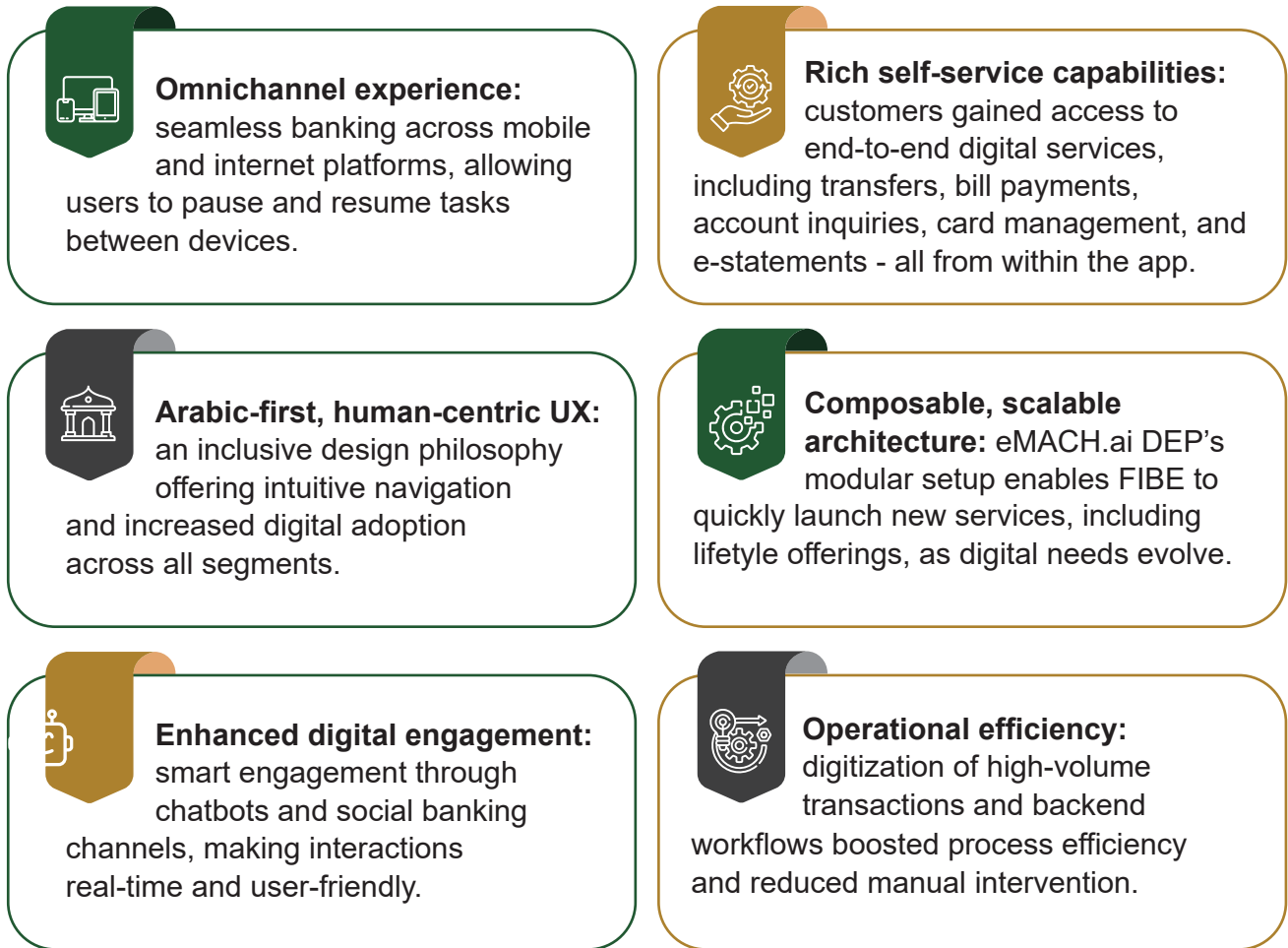


Image 2 : Key highlights of Intellect-powered transformation at FIBE

Metrics at a glance

The transition from legacy systems to a unified, customer-first platform brought rapid and tangible business benefits for FIBE within just two weeks of go-live:

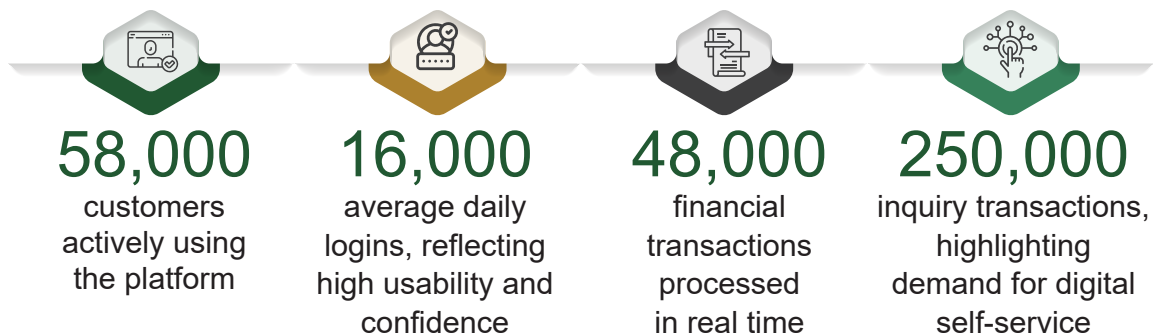


Image 3: Key metrics of Intellect-powered transformation at FIBE

Sustainable Growth:

By embracing end-to-end digitization, FIBE improved operational efficiency while

minimizing resource usage, supporting its goal of sustainable Islamic banking.

Transforming and Running the World's Largest Treasury Operations for two Decades with Zero Downtime for a Top Global Bank



A Case Study from:
Team Intellect

→ About the bank:

The client is one of the world's top-five global banks and a designated Global Systemically Important Bank (G-SIB) - operating across 180 countries, with a physical presence in 94 markets, serving 19,000 institutional clients including 85% of Fortune 500 companies.

Global Operating Scale

- ✓ Equivalent of Germany's GDP moved every day
- ✓ 95% of global FX transactions powered by QFX
- ✓ USD 11+ trillion monthly money market flows
- ✓ Operations spanning 180 countries and 94 markets

At this scale, even minor inefficiencies could have global operational repercussions. Within its Institutional Clients Group (ICG), the Markets and Treasury divisions manage one of the most complex high-volume treasury operations on the planet - spanning multi-currency funding desks, global FX settlement, intraday liquidity management, and private banking reconciliation across legal entities in EMEA, Japan, the United States, and Canada. Today, the Intellect-powered Quantum FX (QFX) platform processes 95% of the bank's global FX transaction volumes - making it one of the operational backbones of the bank's worldwide FX infrastructure.

Challenges:

The client's relationship with Intellect spans more than two decades. Collectively, these operational constraints created moments of "operational blindness"- where fragmented systems, delayed visibility, and manual treasury processes limited real-time decision-making during critical market windows. Across that time, each engagement was driven by a distinct and pressing operational challenge - rapidly growing volumes, legacy systems at their limits, and a regulatory environment demanding more, faster, and with greater accuracy. Collectively, these operational constraints created periods of "operational blindness" - where fragmented systems, delayed visibility, and manual processes limited the bank's ability to make real-time treasury decisions during critical market windows.

Money Market Front & Mid Office - Markets

- **Treasury desks managed 52 legal entities** across EMEA, Tokyo, the US, and Canada through isolated standalone systems.
- **Traders could not view all 40 currencies simultaneously**, and position consolidation took up to 8 hours.
- With 8 cut-offs per day requiring 30–45 minutes of manual consolidation each, **treasury teams lacked real-time visibility during the moments that mattered most** - creating periods of operational blindness across critical treasury operations.

Intraday Liquidity Management (ILM) -Markets

- The bank was scaling its ILM Cashflow Manager programme across 90+ country accounts.
- Manual regression testing created deployment delays and validation risk across one of the bank's most critical liquidity programmes.

Solution:

Over a 20+ year partnership, Intellect progressively re-architected the bank's treasury infrastructure across front, mid, and back-office layers - transforming fragmented, volume-constrained systems into a unified, real-time, global-scale operating environment. Rather than a single deployment, this transformation evolved progressively across four strategic solution pillars - moving the bank from fragmented, operationally blind treasury infrastructure to real-time global treasury control.



Real-Time Liquidity & Position Control - Money Market Front & Mid Office Transformation

Intellect replaced fragmented treasury systems with a unified eMACH.ai Treasury platform, enabling real-time visibility across currencies, entities, and global desks. The solution established centralized treasury control and transformed delayed treasury visibility into real-time global decision support.

RESULT

Transitioned from fragmented visibility to real-time global treasury control.



High-Volume FX Processing at Global Scale - FX Back Office Transformation

Intellect co-developed Quantum FX (QFX), a next-generation FX back office platform designed for high-volume processing with zero downtime. Today, QFX processes 95% of the bank's global FX transactions - making it the operational backbone of the bank's global FX infrastructure.

RESULT

Eliminated performance bottlenecks and enabled resilient, high-speed FX processing at global scale. Today, the Intellect-powered Quantum FX (QFX) platform processes 95% of the bank's global FX transactions - proving the platform is not a regional deployment or pilot initiative, but a mission-critical backbone supporting the bank's worldwide FX operations.

Image: Treasury transformation at a global bank powered by Intellect

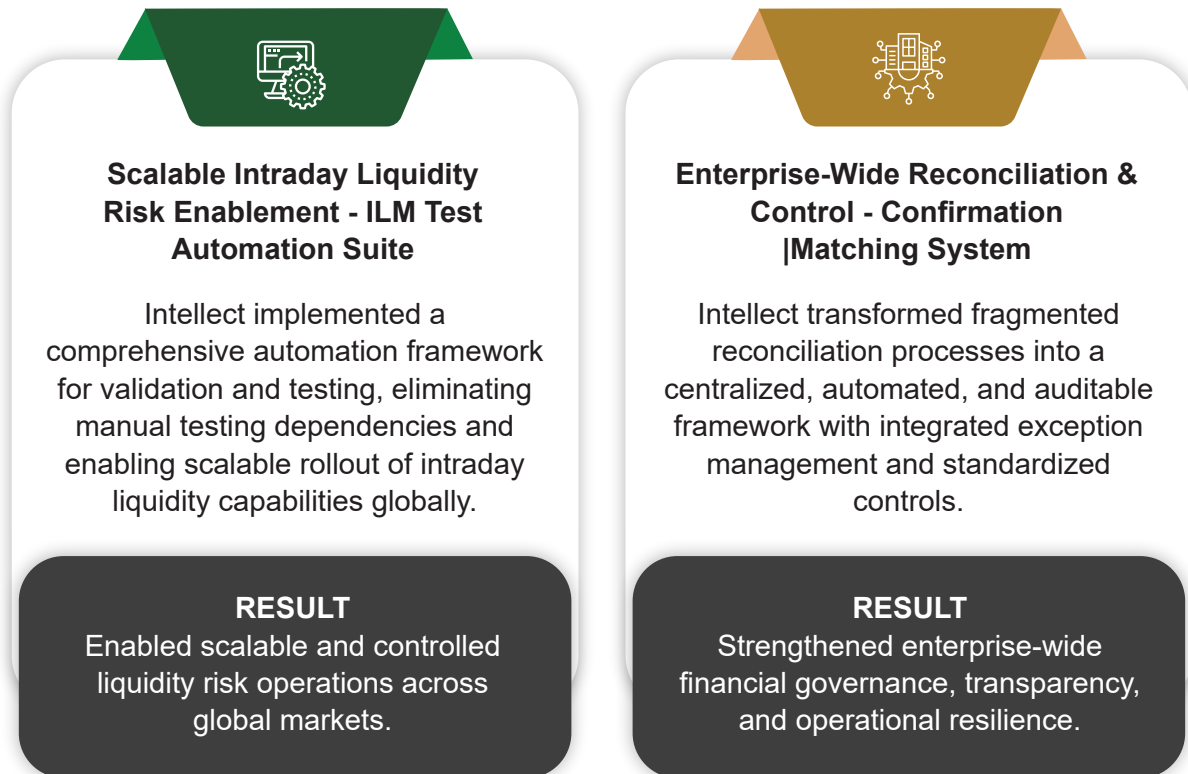


Image: Treasury transformation at a global bank powered by Intellect

Intellect-Led BAU Operating Model

Today, the engagement has evolved into an Intellect-led IP-based Centre of Excellence (COE) operating from India delivery centres - functioning as an extended treasury

operations and technology team for the bank's Front Office Money Market operations. The operating model now supports regular BAU operations with minimal business-user dependency. Intellect manages the complete lifecycle of treasury change execution including:

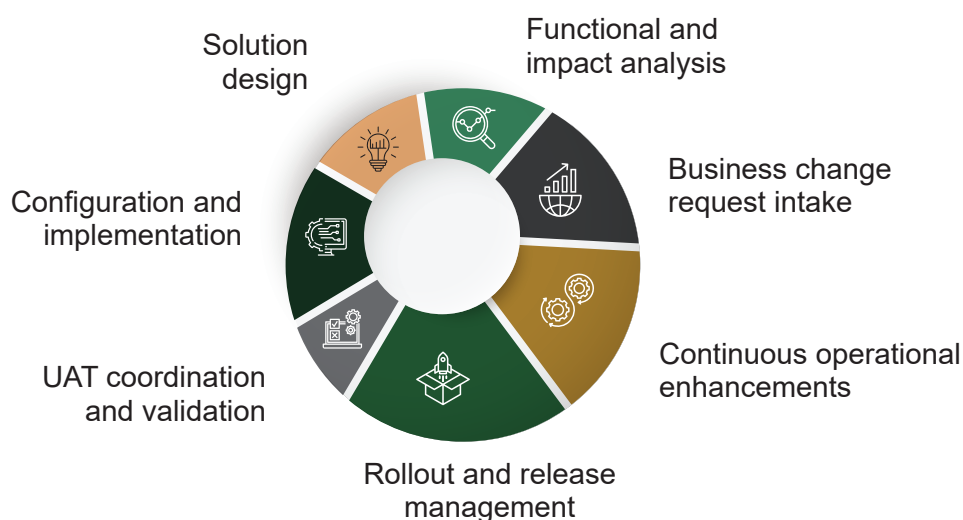


Image: Treasury transformation at a global bank powered by Intellect

This model enables the bank to operate an always-on treasury environment while Intellect continuously drives operational stability, scalability, and transformation outcomes globally.

GLOBAL SUPPORT FACTORY

Delivering Always-on Operations for the World's Largest Treasury

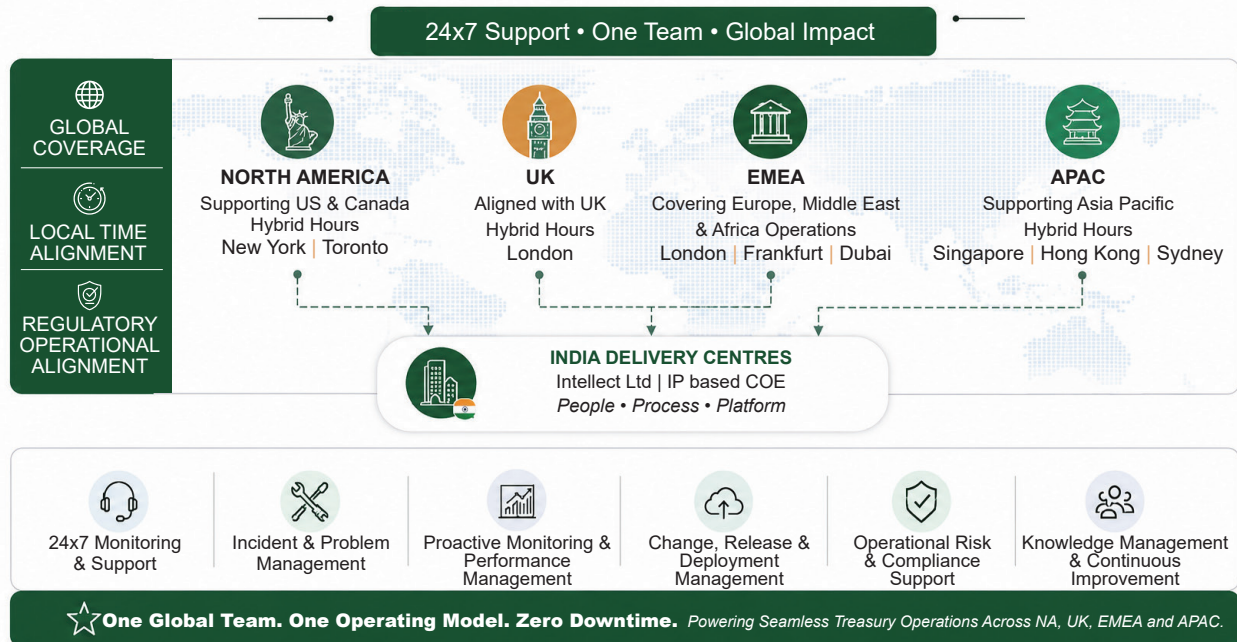


Image 4: Treasury transformation operating model powered by Intellect

Transformation highlights



Image 5: Intellect's treasury support offered to banks

Metrics at a glance

RADICAL SPEED

<1 sec

Deal booking time - reduced from minutes to sub-second execution

<10 sec

Funding report generation time

2 Clicks

Templated trade booking execution

GLOBAL SCALE

USD 11+ Tn

Monthly money market flows managed

2M+ / day

FX transactions processed daily

300+ / sec

Transaction throughput capacity

52

Legal entities consolidated

95%

Of The Bank's Global Fx Transactions

Processed through Intellect-Powered QFX

OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE

**0
Incidents**

Across
trillion-dollar
balance sheet
migration

<2 sec

GUI response
time (previously
>60 seconds)

**17
Countries**

Consolidated
under a single
implementation
across Europe &
North America

EFFICIENCY GAINS

>50%

Reduction in
per-transaction
processing cost

>96%

Reduction in
position
consolidation
time

60%

Integration
touchpoints
removed through
redesigned data
flows

AUTOMATION MASTERY

**90%+
STP**

Straight-
Through
Processing for
daily FX
volumes

30+

Manual
Excel-based
reconciliations
automated
globally

100%

Trade &
settlement
confirmation
matching
coverage

10+

FTE
operational
savings

The transformation enabled the bank to evolve from fragmented, operationally constrained treasury operations to a resilient, autonomous, and always-on treasury operating environment capable of supporting global markets at trillion-dollar scale.

Transforming Main Street: Bulkley Valley Credit Union's Journey of Community- Focused Digital Banking Innovation

In today's hyper-competitive market, community loyalty alone can't compete with instant point-of-sale loan approvals. To fight back, legacy credit unions are turning their online platforms into high-volume "fifth branches" that automate compliance and accelerate underwriting.



A perspective from:

Tony Dunham

*Chief Operating Officer,
Bulkley Valley Credit Union*

→ About the Credit Union:

Bulkley Valley Credit Union is an 80-year-old, community-focused financial institution operating in northern British Columbia. Deeply rooted in relational banking and local decision-making, the organization is currently modernizing its digital infrastructure to balance legacy, high-touch member service with high-tech convenience.

Bulkley Valley Credit Union is a partner of Intellect Design Arena. In the conversation with Jessica Morettie, VP, Client Partnerships, Intellect Design Arena, Tony Dunham discusses how Bulkley Valley recently chose Intellect's digital banking and loan origination platform and is translating 80 years of community-focused leadership into digital-age innovation.

Bulkley Valley Credit Union has served members across its community for more than 80 years. Its biggest driver has been solely focused on knowing its community and everyone in it, where bricks and mortar was almost considered the same thing as a grocery store—part of their members' day and weekly routines.

As Bulkley Valley enters its next phase, the credit union is implementing Intellect's digital banking and loan origination platform to build digital capabilities that amplify relationship, not replace it—preserving the human connection and local decision-making at its core.

Jessica: *So, we've had multiple conversations over the last while about technology. What I want to start with today is thinking back a bit to when you were in the process of making this decision and kind of where your headspace was at that point in time.*

Tony Dunham: Well, yeah, great question. Obviously being in the credit union space, we've had our ups and our downs. We've had our challenges obviously with technology and third-party vendors. And so from Bulkley Valley's perspective, our biggest driver for the last 80 years has been really solely focused in on we know our community, we know everybody in our community. Bricks and mortar was almost kind of considered the same thing as a grocery store. People would come in, it was part of their day and their weekly routines.

But as we were kind of working through this process, there's a lot of capabilities that we weren't offering and our members were looking for and we didn't have options for it. So obviously from a competitive standpoint, we do actually share—call it sharing a wallet—but there's a lot of products and services that our members are obviously seeking at other institutions which over time presents a little bit of risk to us as an organization.

But from a technology standpoint, going through this process was: how do we find ourselves aligned with a vendor that thinks the same way we do? Who actually has a lot of the same core values we have as an organization and is looking to not necessarily just scale a solution, but is actually looking to partner with the credit union in this situation that wants to grow

and expand and learn, and allow us to be able to actually be part of the solution, part of the destiny, and actually take some guidance and try to make sure we're preserving our value proposition around being different in the community, not losing sight of relationships, and obviously trying to find a partner that will help to enable and excel our organization.

Jessica: Thinking forward for the next decade, what's important when you're thinking about serving your members when you look forward for your organization?

Tony Dunham: As an organization, obviously we're community-focused, and our profits stay within our communities. I always explain this to staff that banking as a whole has really become a commodity at the end of the day. So what does that really mean? Every institution offers the same products and services. Really, it's going to come down to, especially in a small community, how we differentiate ourselves from the bank on the corner. Are we going to be that institution that's going to make ourselves available to take the time to learn about the kids, grow with the family needs, be there for the good times and the bad times, and be that trusted adviser that is available? So to continue down that path and be able to achieve that in today's day and age, with the expectations accelerating, especially from the member perspective, going forward we need to figure out how we balance speed and flexibility, convenience, and accessibility with that personalized compassion. The ability to be able to take the time and try different solutions and different paths. Some may work, some may not, but be able to have the ability to be



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creative with our members' needs and be able to find a way to truly, hopefully, give them the comfort of knowing that we're in their corner all the way through the different stages of their problems.

Jessica: Are there any other non-negotiables regardless of how technology evolves that you see in terms of serving your members?

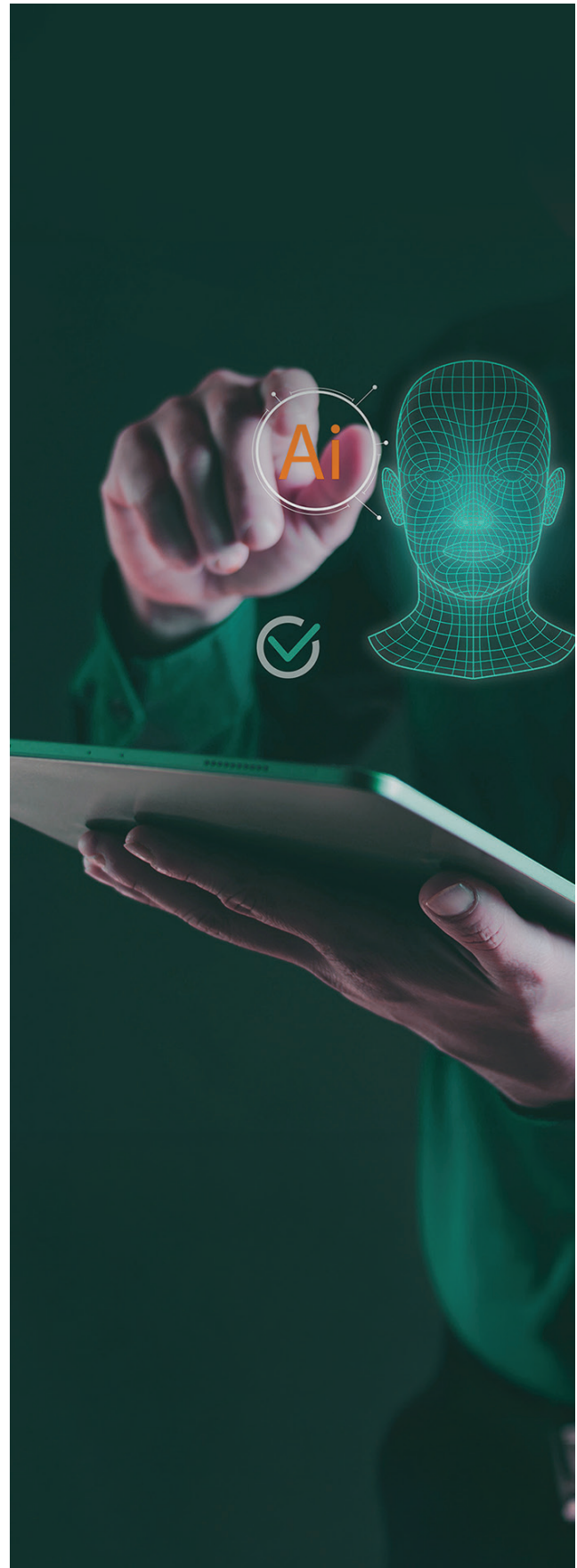
Tony Dunham: Ultimately for us, we're in the business of people and in the business of relationships. From a non-negotiable standpoint, from a staff perspective, we're not abandoning the community. Local decision-making is something that's very critical and near and dear to the heart. So it's one of our differentiations, but also having the capability of not becoming robotic. There's always that concern that we're going to become hyper-digital, people are going to have to self-serve, and they're not going to have somebody available for them. And so, a non-negotiable for us is we're not abandoning the community. And what that means is we're not letting people go, but we're not replacing them with technology. If anything, what we're trying to do is

actually trying to find a way to accelerate our business so that we can actually retrain, retool, and reinvest in our people so that we can actually grow and expand our business. So people are non-negotiable. This isn't a strategy around operational efficiency by removing staff. It's about trying to figure out how we can reallocate time and gain back time so that we can actually invest and double down with our people and the training that is needed to be able to deal with people's problems. Because they're only getting more and more complex and more and more difficult these days.

Jessica: *When you think about it from the perspective of Bulkley Valley and yourself and your role, what do you see as success there for digital transformation that you're undertaking?*

Tony Dunham: For us success is not about getting things perfect. We as an organization have always fallen into the trap that this is always the way we've done it. And to be very honest, as an organization, over time we had not been spending a lot of investment in technology and tools and taking the time to actually talk to our staff a little bit about, "Talk to us. What are some of your pain points in your day?"

Because of the hyper-competitive market that's out there, due to the fact that members actually have choices, they have multiple products and services available to them through technology, so it doesn't have to be in our community. And we're constantly being challenged to the point where when they need something, we, as a credit union, seem to define it under our bricks and mortar. What it really means is if you have a problem, make sure you bring it to us between 9:00 and 5:00.



And so what we as an organization have to do, and what our staff have been telling us, is that members are feeling restricted and staff are not having the tools in front of them. They find their eyes spending more time on administration and paperwork and less time with their eyes up and building relationships and connecting with their members.

So from our standpoint, transformation really is about wanting to instill a voice into our staff. This isn't a top-down initiative; this is a bottom-up rebuild. And as leaders, as much as we want to say that we feel like we have all the answers, we don't. We don't live and eat and breathe the day in the life of our staff. So more importantly, our staff are the most connected to the member.

So transformation to us is about helping our staff understand the why, help them to be part of the solution, and encourage them to fail fast and fail forward. We know we're not going to get it right. This is a journey and not a destination. So from our standpoint for transformation, the question is, can we actually have our staff feel like they have a voice? Because we feel it'll get us closer to connecting to the voice of the member, and more importantly, if the staff are part of the solution, they'll own it. And that will help to give them a little bit more confidence in what they're doing, and that should portray into a solid brand for us as an organization.

Jessica: Do you see any differences in a definition of success for a digital transaction versus an in-branch transaction?

Tony Dunham: I think ultimately for us, yeah, there are definitely some metrics

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that we're kind of working through. It's around, financially, as an organization, if we can solve for time—ultimately if we can get that loan underwritten, procured, and put on the books in half the time—that has a lot of financial benefit to us as an organization. So, not only do we become efficient, we're actually accelerating the time that's on the books. So, it's obviously generating revenue, and it just helps our whole financial model.

But from a staff perspective, I think the biggest metrics for us are how do we get back to the basics and how do we find 80% of our processes that are going to help us accelerate and scale our business, and we're going to forget about the 20%.

Because if we try to strive for perfection and solve for everything, we won't achieve anything. So it's about just breaking it down into small chunks, encouraging people to try new ideas, and then if it doesn't work, we just continually tweak it because it's more of a journey instead of a destination.

Jessica: *When you think about that and you're talking to a small local cafe owner versus a personal member of a larger business, what are they asking for now that they weren't maybe asking for 5 years ago?*

Tony Dunham: Well, so we have this philosophy; we're pushing our staff and our organization to (question) how we become that financial institution of choice or how we own Main Street. In small communities everybody's got a Main Street. But what we are hearing from our members is operationally it's becoming harder and harder for them to be able to take time to move away from their shop between 9 and 5 to come and see us. Typically when they're having their biggest challenges financially or they're trying to figure out solutions, it's 9, 10, 11:00 at night and of course we are not open or available.

So members were looking for not necessarily having to talk to somebody, but they wanted to have a reliable platform that they could go in, that they could start telling us a bit of their story, and that we were able to either give them the tools to start self-identifying some of the solutions or paths of consideration. But more importantly, we would have a tool or a platform that we could actually gather information so that we could actually circle back with them in the morning and come by their shop and talk to them. And that's the other component on the business side of it, as even on the retail side, is our members and generations are busy. They're living busy lives. So they want to be able to talk to us, and we need to be able to provide products and services to them through an omni-channel perspective.

All our policies and procedures have been



I think right now is we need to mobilize our staff because it's becoming more and more difficult for people to come in and see us, so we need to figure out how to go to them.

built around "You must come and see us"; "Your signature needs to be—we need ink to paper"; and "We need to see your identification." Everything we're doing is more regulatory and compliance-related, and we have not evolved that with the actual consumer, especially pre-COVID. COVID was a reset moment, and all generations were impacted by this, and their comfort level around technology and tools like biometrics and their ability to provide some very personal information online and feel safe and secure have changed. But we as an organization had realized very quickly that we hadn't evolved with that. And so the restrictive nature that we've brought has caused people on Main Street to start raising questions around are we actually investing dollars back into helping them be successful, because they're actually investing in their businesses, but they don't see the same reciprocal experience happening to them?

So, it's time for us to up our game. If they don't see it or they can't experience it, then when they pose the question, "Is the money staying locally? Are decisions being made locally?" It starts to raise a reputational risk perspective, and so this is an opportunity for us now to remove that noise. And most importantly, I think right now is we need to mobilize our staff because it's becoming more and more difficult for people to come in and see us, so we need to figure out how to go to them.



Jessica: *You've chosen to focus first on the digital platform and then, from there, look at modernizing your lending journey. Can you share a bit about your thinking in terms of the order of approach there?*

Tony Dunham: Yeah. So operationally we're trying to take our in-branch experiences and we're looking at trying to digitize or take a digital-first approach. What we've realized is you need to have the foundational piece of the platform, really starting with digital and look at it from an online banking perspective. So, if we can allow our members to actually log in, authenticate, be able to have a variety of different options available to them—they can do it self-serve or move it even into some type of partially assisted type of approach and allow different business units of our organization to be able to see what's going on in real time

and help them—we found that that was kind of the most critical first step.

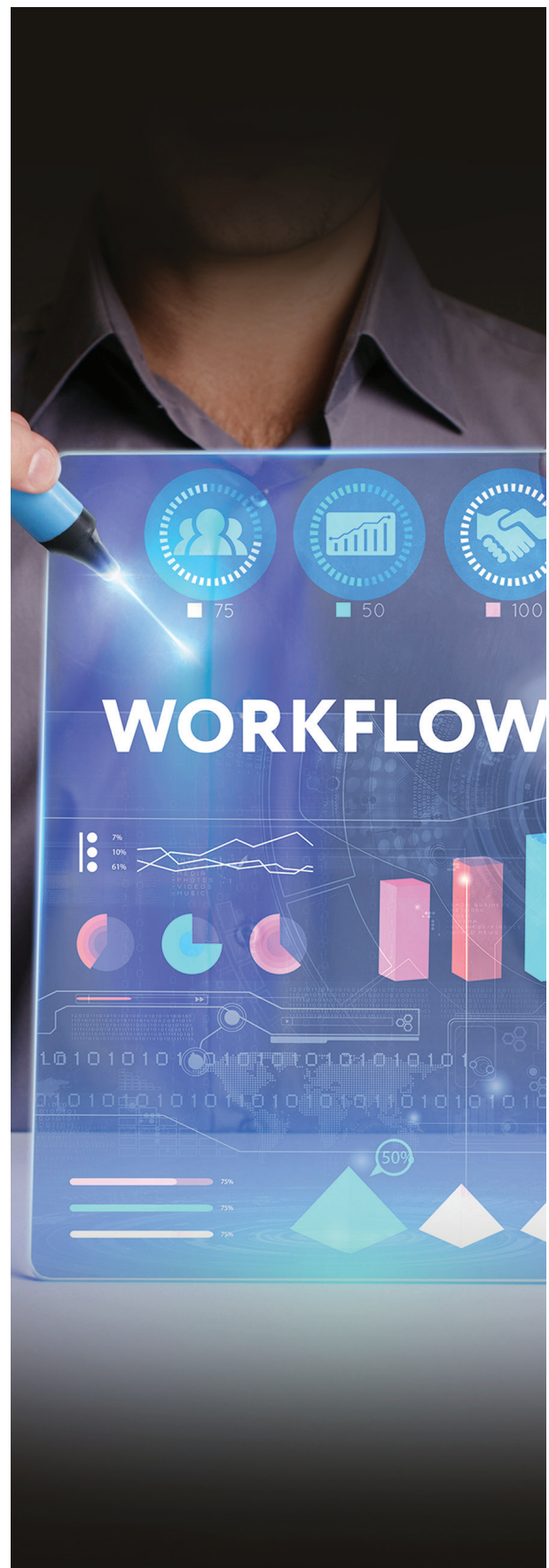
Looking at it from a standpoint of, you know, we have some small communities we represent, and we've got four key locations that members have been accustomed to going into, but when you collectively look at online banking, it is our fifth branch. It collectively houses and services all of our members. So, if we can actually figure out how to create the highest volume and the busiest branch and actually digitize that environment and get people comfortable with it, then that will actually free us up and buy some time to be able to figure out how to modernize and trickle this down into the community. So digital was a very critical piece because ultimately our past experiences in the environment, it was safe and secure but it was limited in what members could do. And so what we were finding is that members were now seeking other services, products, and platforms that were making their lives easier. So this will hopefully help us to bring back some of the members and their share of wallet and their products and their loyalty to us. But on the lending side of it, it just became natural that in today's day and age, when we talked to our members, we surveyed them and asked them to determine what the most frequent lending product was that they actually went out and acquired in the last 24 months. And it was a combination between a car loan and, in our situation, obviously being up north, it was like whether an RV, an ATV, or a side-by-side fun vehicle type of thing. But when we asked them why they didn't come to see us about the loan, they said, "Well, when I bought it at the dealership, it was just an extension of their service, and it took literally minutes, and they were approved, and they were actually walking away with the vehicle."

If they were to come and see us, there would have been a delayed process, potentially run the risk of not getting the vehicle or losing out on it. So **what we heard from that was convenience is extremely important, and our members want to know when they're ready to buy something and they're emotionally committed to it, so speed is very important. So of course, we know in our organization that lending is a critical piece for us around sustainability.** So we needed to figure out how to be in that space digitally and make things quick.

Jessica: *What do you think some of those biggest hurdles are when you think about the lending workflow that you have today that you're looking to modernize?*

Tony Dunham: Well, part of it is we have a couple challenges that we're facing today. As an organization, we've been around 80 years. We've had some very committed staff. We've had some very long-tenured staff. Leading up to COVID, I would say that we probably had our staff average—our tenure was probably north of 17 years on average. And we had, over the years, a lot of skill sets that had been attained through that process. Coming out of COVID and through the changes, we as an organization started to see retirements happening and some impacts to our business.

So going out and looking for resources wasn't the challenge. It was about finding resources that actually had the knowledge and the expertise and the understanding. And that's when we actually started to realize that we're not actually solving necessarily for—although our members want ease of access and products—if they come into the bricks and mortar, we don't necessarily have that 30-year tenured



lending officer who understands all the complexities and decision-making, and our business model was very manual in nature. So we as an organization talk about local decision-making. The crux of this was we needed to solve for knowledge. We needed to be able to find a way to increase the agility and speed in our organization, but at the same time we had to make sure that we didn't paint a picture that we were losing our local decision-making. That ultimately our staff had an opportunity to build relational pricing, not necessarily focused in on some lending matrix and some risk ratio and scoring that came out that made it impersonal.

So as an organization, we needed to find a way to partner with an organization that could help us bring that personal touch, be able to use the tools and the technology and help us build a narrative that could then translate into an actual product or a solution that was very easy for our members to complete. And why that was important is if we can simplify the process and allow a member to drive that process and get to some form of a decision, that started to answer one of our biggest challenges, and that was we don't have to worry about the knowledge. We need to focus in on hiring people who want to build relationships or are very good at building relationships, who are good listeners, and who are able to actually help guide and build trust very quickly with our members. Ultimately if the technology itself can get us the decision that we need, what is most difficult is how you deliver that decision, and the context and the narrative behind how you deliver it are very critical. So now we're actually solving for—we're able to double down on our communities. We're hiring more staff. We're spending more time on the retail

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kind of experience and focused on our brand versus the actual credit knowledge. So this relationship with Intellect has really helped us now to actually kind of change a little bit around our approach around how we actually build a fun, engaging, efficient, and effective organization.

Jessica: When you look at technology where you want to embed AI or you have technology making some of those decisions and whatnot, what's your kind of litmus test to say, "What's something that's going to work within the confines of still keeping true to that local decision-making but also using technology?"

Tony Dunham: Some of the biggest challenges that we're facing right now is regulatory pressure, of course. So if we can get a platform that is continually finding ways to evaluate the stages of the application you're going through, help us from a quality control management perspective, and make sure that accuracy of documentation and that professionalism layout at the end of the day that we're looking to try and achieve—I see AI can help create and can do the quality checks and balances that we need to make sure that the application is meeting all the

regulatory pieces that we're being measured on. We don't need our staff to be continually having to circle back, and ultimately we shouldn't have to—our staff shouldn't have to currently today; if they have to go in and manipulate a form, they're actually increasing the risk to the organization and to the member. And we're human, and we get busy, and sometimes there are errors; well, obviously errors happen.

I think we learned today; obviously, it's not really a mistake. It's more of a blind spot. Well, I think as an organization thinking about that today, there are tools that will behind the scenes be able to help identify those blind spots a lot quicker, and we as an organization will be able to put the controls in place and tighten those very quickly. Again, to me, that ties back to our members' knowing why local decisions are important because they know that we have their back; they can trust us. We're willing to take ownership of those decisions that are there.

So I think AI is doing two things: it's going to help us standardize and optimize. But most importantly, I think when we communicate with our members, what we're looking for is whether we can identify trends. **Can we learn some of the behaviours of our members? Can we use this information intelligently to start personalizing that relationship and proactively reach out to those members?** That's what we used to do when we had time in the day. Now we're actually busy spending all our time focused on administration. We aren't getting to those personalized, proactive conversations, which we need for share of wallet. So I'm hoping from an AI standpoint it's going to help us come full circle but hopefully allow us to fight a little



bit higher—above our weight class—and allow us to be able to compete with the big banks because we're using very similar tools. And I think that if we can actually build that share of wallet and that loyalty, I think we're going to be a hard organization to knock off in the local community, on Main Street.

Jessica: You had a tour of our Intellect Design centre here in Chennai a little bit earlier this afternoon. Any reflections on that from the tour today, Tony?

Tony Dunham: Well, it was interesting. I think we live in a world where everybody thinks you're going to knock it out of the park. But what I learned today is that we're not alone and it's okay to make mistakes. Really at the end of the day when you look at them, they're learning opportunities. If we are encouraging people to be creative, recognizing everybody is slightly different, today taught

me that it's really important that we continue to focus on relationships. As a credit union, we do this with our members every day. We need to be doing it with our staff. **We need to spend more time listening and give them the opportunity to be part of the solution, part of the why. We're stronger together as a team than we are individually is really what I took out of today.**

And it starts with communication and openness, and we can leverage the power of multiple voices in the organization. So those are some of the things that I learned or confirmed or kind of had some affirmation of what we're doing through, and it's okay. We know that we're not going to knock this out of the park. And I guess ultimately I'm walking away here knowing that Intellect understands the pains that we're going through, and we probably should be able to partner and lean on each other, and we'll figure out a successful solution for both our organizations.

“ Clearly Intellect has a really strong roadmap, has a really strong vision around the ecosystem of banking, and has a passion for the Canadian market, which was something that was definitely very appreciated and obviously opened up a lot of doors to some discussion. And I think obviously putting their money where their mouth is. And what I mean by that is coming in and actually seeing an opportunity to help solve for a big problem in the industry,

Jessica: *Can you share a bit about the elements that you were looking for in terms of a partner, things that you saw in Intellect that led to your decision to move forward with us?*

Tony Dunham: Yeah, I think from an Intellect standpoint, obviously as a system, our role coming in and obviously helping to scale a product and a solution into Canada was important. But I look at it from a vendor standpoint as an investment—so knowledge and investment. Clearly Intellect has a really strong roadmap, has a really strong vision around the ecosystem of banking, and has a passion for the Canadian market, which was something that was definitely very appreciated and obviously opened up a lot of doors to some discussion. And I think obviously putting their money where their mouth is. And what I mean by that is coming in and actually seeing an opportunity to help solve for a big problem in the industry, and that was obviously the transition of our previous supplier and being able to help credit unions actually maintain what they have today until they can figure out a path forward.

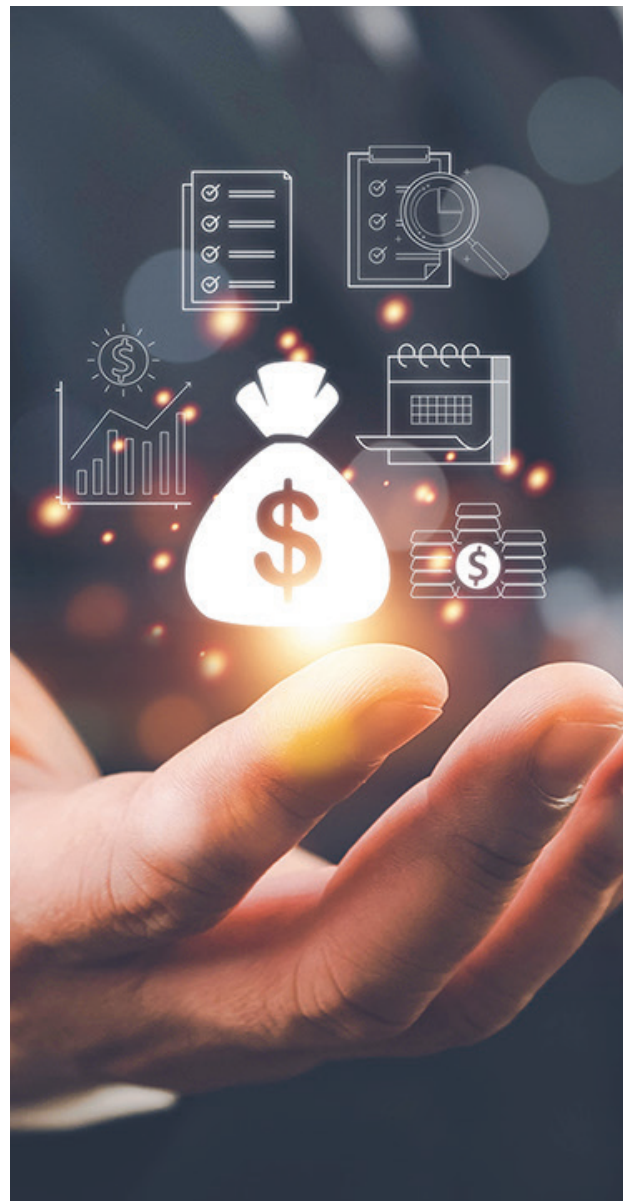
I had a lot of respect for the risk that Intellect took on, stepping up. But at the end of the day, ultimately it's been a challenging industry, and there's no guarantee. So I think taking a step up, the gamble, and the investment in Canada is important. But what we did realize as we went through this process is that there's a lot of knowledge here, a lot of experience; they bring a global perspective to things. Which is, I think, something very important for Canadians: we have a tendency to just look within our bubble, and we don't necessarily look at what's going on around the world. We are experiencing as an organization; immigration has had a very

positive impact on us. So bringing a global perspective to things and an understanding of some of the different types of systems that are available in the world and open banking—those were some of the key drivers for helping us look at Intellect.

Jessica: Looking 12 to 18 months into the future, as you plan to layer on loan origination, what subtle successes are you hoping to see regarding positive changes for both your staff and members?

Tony Dunham: I think a big win from a member perspective is that they actually see us making the investment in the right tools to be competitive. I think that having a community focus and continually being that kind of community-minded local decision-making are all great, but these are not sustainable success factors or KPIs going forward. **We live in a world where it's high touch, high expectations. A lot of stuff is really technology-driven, and these have become table stakes, and our members are using other solutions out in the marketplace. It's just a matter of time if we don't start doubling down and investing in these right areas, we will eventually have a challenge of growing in our communities.**

So I think the silent wins for us are hopefully we're able to showcase that we're actually, as a profitable organization, investing our dollars into the infrastructure because we care. And we're building an organization that's going to have to go beyond the next 80 years. We recognize that if we don't make this investment in our brand and everything that we have stood for for the past 80 years, that legacy could come to an end. So this is really



important for us about redefining, reconnecting, and refocusing our energies and our direction as an organization. Owning Main Street. That's very important. These communities, a lot of the big banks, especially where we are, love to come up here from a deposit standpoint, but when it comes to taking on elements of risk, they don't. So we have an opportunity. There's a lot of pride in the small local, you know, buy local, be local, invest in the community, and we play a big role in that. We want to make sure we can continue doing that.



About Intellect Design Arena Limited

Intellect Design Arena Ltd is a global leader in enterprise-grade financial technology, delivering composable and intelligent solutions to forward-looking financial institutions across 61 countries. With three decades of domain expertise, our product suite spans Consumer Banking, Wholesale Banking, Central Banking, Wealth, Capital Markets, Treasury, Insurance and Digital Technology for Commerce. Applying First Principles Thinking and Design Thinking, we have elementalised the financial services landscape into a finite set of events, microservices, and APIs, enabling faster, modular transformation with measurable outcomes.

At the heart of this are eMACH.ai, the world's most comprehensive, composable and intelligent open finance platform; Purple Fabric, the world's first Open Business Impact AI platform; and iTurmeric, our composable platform for seamless integration and configuration. We are a pioneer in applying Design Thinking and our 8012 FinTech Design Center, the world's first Design Center dedicated to Design Thinking Principles, underscores our commitment to continuous and impactful innovation, addressing the ever-growing need for digital transformation. We proudly serve over 500+ customers worldwide, supported by a diverse workforce of solution architects, and domain and technology experts in major global financial hubs. For more information, visit <https://www.intellectdesign.com>

We invite you to share your perspectives and success stories with our global community. Whether through a contribution to our 'Client Speak' section, a detailed case study, or a strategic article, we welcome your insights as we shape the future of banking together. Please reach out to us at marketing.gcb@intellectdesign.com by 01 March 2026 to explore a collaboration.

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Intellect Consumer Banking launched the 'Insights from Inside' podcast series to unravel the complexities of banking, providing banks with a technological and strategic roadmap to transformations. Each episode of the series features industry leaders sharing their expertise on challenges, innovations, and the future of banking. The series attracted 13 Lakh listeners from 2200 banks across the globe.

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