

BCU: A new level of partnership. How Maple Street is helping a credit union accelerate vendor performance



From a humble beginning at Baxter Healthcare, BCU has grown to be one of the nation's top 100 credit unions. Based in the Chicago area and serving over 300,000 members in the United States and Puerto Rico, BCU provides the benefit of financial well-being for employees of major organizations such as Target, GEICO, Baxter Healthcare and many others.

BCU's purpose is to empower people to discover financial freedom. As such, their tagline "Here Today For Your Tomorrow," expresses their promise to support members throughout life's journey and to offer everything they need to experience a bright financial future.

As the fastest-growing credit union in 40 years, BCU upholds member satisfaction as the greatest measure of its success. The Credit Union strives to provide authentic and friendly banking experiences that give members peace of mind. These goals played a key role in why BCU chose Maple Street's unique approach to vendor selection and contracting.

Carey Price, SVP, Digital Strategy and Delivery, came to BCU 15 years ago at a time when technology was becoming recognized as a pillar of 21st century banking. Price first engaged Maple Street in 2014 to negotiate a contract for a new digital banking platform with a relatively new vendor. BCU had been using an in-house platform and Price knew the Credit Union did not have the experience and negotiation skills Maple Street brought to the table.

"Maple Street and Mike Crofts did a great job," Price shared. "He kept saying 'What if this happens?' in response to language in the vendor's contract and letting us know where we could do better in defining a fair contract. For example, Mike made sure strong remedies were in place, including SLAs, so the vendor was accountable and had to compensate BCU for poor performance."

But it's about more than just the money. "Maple Street took negotiation to another level," Price stated. "So, when we needed to negotiate a contract with another vendor, Maple Street was my first call."

It was during the second negotiation that Crofts suggested a new idea. Maple Street introduced BCU and the vendor to a relationship contract, using Maple Street's Performance Addendum.

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"The Performance Addendum has never been done before. Maple Street takes vendor relations to a higher-level relationship and brings leadership to the table, making sure vendor performance is there."

CAREY PRICE
SVP, Digital Strategy and Delivery

The Performance Addendum adds a layer to the contract that establishes a working relationship process and ground rules between client and vendor in which both parties agree to work in unison to achieve the desired results.

The relationship contract includes service-level agreements, uptime and performance requirements like transactional contracts, but also adds contractual commitments by the vendor to work toward specific, measurable results using a scorecard process. Maple Street is the go-between and works on the clients' behalf throughout the life of the contract to measure achievement and scorecard results with the client. The vendor agrees to provide time and information, and to meet and discuss ways to improve performance and meet requirements.

Price was impressed. "The Performance Addendum allowed me to see the depth Maple Street brings to its clients. Since its team has lots of experience from working with others, Maple Street opened our eyes to blind spots in the contract we would never have seen."

The Performance Addendum not only opened BCU's eyes to blind spots that give the vendor an advantage, it will also allow Maple Street to remain active in vendor relations, serving as a buffer when needed, so clients like BCU can maintain a positive relationship with the vendor.

Price appreciates Maple Street's on-going relationship with the Credit Union. "Maple Street will be there with us, talking to the new vendor and making sure the performance is there. Our relationship with Maple Street is more consultative than transactional. We have someone else who's got our back."

One of the first Maple Street clients to use the Performance Addendum, Price and her team were pleasantly surprised to see the Performance Addendum in action. Price shared that the vendor called on its own volition to discuss an aspect detailed in the Performance Addendum. "The vendor was taking ownership in a spirit of collaboration, which we feel was supported by the Performance Addendum."

When asked how she feels about Maple Street's Performance Addendum, Price replied, "It's a paradigm shift in vendor management. By adding Maple Street as another seat at that table, you have someone representing your interests that can see the blind spots and do what it takes to foster cooperation, rapport and better results between you and your vendor."

In summation, Price said, "We were told by the vendor that Maple Street's contract was one of the strongest ever negotiated with them. Our primary goal is to be there for our members. Maple Street is helping us deliver."

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"Maple Street opens your eyes to blind spots in contracts and helps you understand areas of relationships you might not be privy to or know about."