

• CASE STUDY •

READY TO CREATE AN ALIGNED AND STRATEGIC DATA DESTINATION?

Discover how First City Credit Union partnered with THRIVE to **build a five-year data strategy** that identified the gaps in their existing data efforts, helped them **gain deep clarity** about their members' needs and wants, and **provided a roadmap** to guide their data journey



“When we were considering who to partner with to start our data journey, there were two things that made Anne and THRIVE stand head and shoulders above the rest. One is her focus on strategy, and the second is her ability to meet us where we’re at. We needed a partner who could speak at our level, who was empathetic, and who understood credit unions. Anne is all of that, and we knew working with her would give us the best chance for success.”

NAV KHANNA

PRESIDENT AND CEO, FIRST CITY CREDIT UNION



START WITH STRATEGY

At THRIVE we build a data strategy that focuses on solving your member friction, aligns to your credit union's strategic goals, delivers a data governance foundation and lays the blueprint for data activation success. We use your current live data to provide rich insights and a member-centric data strategy that's comprehensive and actionable.

HIGHLIGHTS

Start With Strategy uses a three-phase approach.

Phase 1: Assess your current data culture, member spend behavior, and identify current market disruptors.

Phase 2: Pinpoint an aligned, strategic data destination that works for your credit union.

Phase 3: Develop a multi-year roadmap to guide your data journey.

In less than 90 days, your credit union will have:

- Cross-functional understanding and alignment around why data strategy is necessary
- Rich insights on your members' spending patterns and preferences using your actual, live data
- Ideas for new sources of revenue
- Clarity on member friction
- A data governance foundation
- An enterprise data vision statement
- A customized, multi-year roadmap to a member-centric data strategy
- Best practices for data analytics capability

Challenges

Turning data awareness into an actual data strategy and plan

When Pasadena-based First City Credit Union decided to partner with THRIVE to build their Data Strategy, they'd been toying with how to better leverage their member data for years.

The biggest problem was they didn't know where to start — or if they had the resources to support it.

"I'd been hearing so much about data over the last few years and I knew we should be focusing more on data as an institution, but we weren't," First City's Chief Financial Officer Lourdes Ruano said. "Our data was in a lot of different systems, and we weren't using our data well because we didn't know how to pull the data together and analyze it."

"We just didn't have the resources or the knowledge, and the whole topic of data felt huge and vague. Still, I knew we should be doing something."

While at a conference, Lourdes saw a presentation given by THRIVE Founder and CEO Anne Legg where she spoke about the importance of having a true data strategy.

Impressed with Anne's vast experience with credit unions and her passion for data, she attended THRIVE's [Data Activation Series](#) — the only CPE accredited data education course offered in the industry — and purchased Anne's book, "[Big Data/Big Climb](#)". Not only did she find a wealth of knowledge from a true data expert, she also had a stark realization this wasn't an initiative she could tackle on her own.

"I know we needed to build a data plan, but it wasn't something I could do alone," Lourdes said. "We really needed to do it as an organization, and it had to come from our CEO down."

At that time, however, their CEO was in the process of retiring.

Fast forward to June of 2022 when First City welcomed Nav Khanna as their new CEO, a seasoned executive leader who quickly recognized the opportunity the credit union had to better leverage their member data.

So, when Lourdes encouraged him to attend Anne's presentation at the California and Nevada Credit Union League's REACH Conference in November 2022, Nav didn't hesitate.

"My first several months at First City had been about listening and learning, and it had become clear quite quickly that we weren't leveraging our data to serve our members," Nav said. "I knew we needed a data strategy, and so a lot of what Anne was speaking about resonated with me."

"Specifically, I liked when she said that instead of building a massive data center with lots of sophisticated infrastructure, just **focus on leveraging the data you have right now for certain use cases**, like helping members who are in payday lending traps, or aren't saving enough, or spending beyond their means, or who need specific loans. I thought, 'Yes!' because that sounded like a doable way to start."

Nav also loved that Anne spoke to the importance of creating a data governance foundation and having a roadmap for their data strategy.

“Anne spoke about having a roadmap, and that was exactly what I was looking for,” Nav said. “I wanted to spend some time planning before we did anything. The data governance was big, too, because that piece was really missing for us, and we didn’t have anyone with the skill set to build that. I knew we were going to need some expert help.”

For a \$900 million credit union who’d never embarked on a data journey before, Nav knew they had three main options: they could build their own data center with the help of data scientists; buy customer data software; or hire a partner to help them develop a customized data strategy.

“I knew the best option for us was to bring in a thought leader like Anne to help us build out a strategy and a roadmap,” Nav said. “We could always build and buy later, but what we really needed first was a plan.”

Solution

Data strategy that’s comprehensive, aligned, and actionable

First City partnered with THRIVE to build their data strategy — a three-part process that would **assess** their current data culture and gain rich insights on their members; **explore** the data designations that’s right for them; and **develop** a multi-year roadmap to guide their data journey.

For the assessment portion of the process, Anne distributed a survey to their entire organization to get cross-functional insights on member friction, current data culture, how data is being used, and capabilities they’d like to have to better leverage their data.

Next, she pulled 90 days of member transaction data and analyzed it to get a vivid picture of who First City's membership truly was, including their demographics, how they're spending their money, who they're spending it with, and what patterns, interests, and preferences they have.

She also completed a "data scorecard" so that First City could see exactly how their current data efforts measured up against optimal data maturity and best practices.

Nav said the results of their data scorecard were a big eye-opener.

"Out of a maximum score of 25, we scored a 4. I think that surprised people, because we'd been touching on data here and there and had created some use cases. The scorecard was a good reality check, and it actually made me very happy for two reasons. One, we knew exactly where the gaps were, and two, we had a tremendous opportunity to advance and improve and that is an exciting and worthwhile journey to undertake."

The findings Anne presented after analyzing their member transaction data were also very insightful.

"Anne creates a chart that has all the logos of the brands our members are interacting with," Nav said. "All of a sudden you start to see this picture of who our members are, what their needs and wants are, and who they're turning to."

"It opened up a great dialogue with our team where Anne said, 'You can't just expect that a member who came in today is going to stay an active user of your products and services tomorrow. You need to use your data to really understand your members, build relationships with them, and then create value that makes their lives better.'"

Lourdes noted that the transaction analysis also **uncovered opportunities for new sources of revenue.**

“We learned that our members are very interested in solar. This is something we’re not currently offering but can, so I talked to our Chief Lending Officer about potentially integrating solar into our initiatives for future initiatives.”

The second phase of the Data Strategy process was about exploring the possibilities for the data ecosystem First City could build and what features, characteristics, and success metrics would be best for their specific credit union.

In the final phase, Anne took everything she’d gathered about First City’s needs and wants for their data ecosystem, the insights she’d gleaned about their members, and the structure and capabilities they needed to develop to advance their data maturity and presented them with a 5-year roadmap to guide them on their data journey.



Results

A roadmap to drive action and insights that spark growth

Lourdes said that despite being a multi-layered roadmap that spanned years, the step-by-step detail Anne included made the roadmap clear and actionable.

“When I looked at the plan I thought, “Yes, we can do that,” Lourdes said. “Everything was laid out so easily and clearly and there are detailed action items with steps.

“You can’t get better than that to move your data strategy forward.”

Having the five-year roadmap — as well as the insights from their data assessment — has provided more value than First City initially anticipated.

“Going through this process with Anne helped us in the hiring process of our new Chief Information Officer,” Nav said. “We told the candidates where we are on our data evolutionary journey, that we knew what our gaps are, and that we have a five-year data plan we’re looking for our CIO to help drive.

“Also, learning about our members provided the answers to so many questions, but it also raised a lot of new questions for us to answer so we can better compete, meet the needs of our members, and remain relevant in the future. It led to some tough conversations about how we need to keep evolving and deepening our understanding of our members.”

Both Nav and Lourdes said partnering with Anne was a very valuable experience, and that any credit union wanting to understand and activate their data would benefit from working with her.

“I love that Anne believes in building a cross-functional team to support the data strategy,” Lourdes said. **“Other consultants only want to talk to the CEO or the executive team, but Anne makes sure all functions are represented from the start.** She knows that data isn’t an IT project; it takes buy-in from everyone to push a data strategy forward.”

Nav appreciated Anne’s passion for data and deep understanding of credit unions, and especially loved her focus on leading with the “why.”

“Her focus on why it’s an important investment to create a data strategy — and all that data can help us do — **created a lot of alignment on our team,**” Nav said. “She helped us see that when we stop engaging with our members and don’t leverage our data, the big banks and other competitors do not. They’re constantly mining their data and understanding their customers, their preferences, and their habits and then creating partnerships with other retailers to add value.”

“If we want to compete, we need to do this, too. It was really good to get an industry expert like Anne to help us, and I’m glad she came in exactly when she did.”



To learn how THRIVE’S Data Strategy can help your credit union *understand* and *activate your member data*, visit anneleggthrive.com.

