Busey Bank cuts months from the mergers and acquisitions process while concurrently managing 10 times the projects with Smartsheet

Busey Bank wanted to manage a wider range of projects, with a platform that would be easy to learn and use. Smartsheet helps Busey standardize project setup and execution and securely tailor access, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars.

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> **Our ability to stand up the project plan for mergers and acquisitions is 95% quicker than before. The last acquisition we did was the quickest we've ever done. The data conversions used to span from nine to 12 months; we completed the last one in four months.**
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Randi Potter, Senior Vice President and Director of Technology and Business Systems, Busey Bank

BuseyBANK®
Business | Wealth Management | Personal

Customer:
Busey Bank

Industry:
Finance

Organization Size:
Large (1,000–9,999 employees)

Region:
Region North America

Website:
busey.com

Busey Bank is a financial services organization that invests in associates, exceeds the service needs of customers, delivers long-term value to shareholders and bridges the needs of communities.

Background:
Busey Bank is building a stronger community bank, pursuing strategic growth through mergers and acquisitions. Busey is a subsidiary of First Busey Corporation — a $12.9 billion institution that serves commercial, wealth management and personal banking customers through five lines of business. Busey is using technology to strengthen its operations through cloud-based infrastructure, and Smartsheet is one of its most powerful resources for driving efficiency, scalability, and transparency.

"Smartsheet has allowed us the visibility and ability to manage so many concurrent activities," says Javed Hassan, Vice President and Business Systems Process and Automation Manager, Busey Bank. *"If we were trying to run 46 projects, 14 process reviews and 15 change requests — which is where we are now across 11 working groups — without some sort of centralized structure, it would be a hodgepodge of priorities. Creating these working group structures and leveraging Smartsheet allows us to run a lean project team and still be effective."*

Hassan joined Busey in 2012 and moved to project management in 2017, when the bank was completing its search for a technology solution to track and simplify projects. Randi Potter, Senior Vice President and Director of Technology and Business Systems at Busey Bank, says she and another project manager used to enter the majority of the information on behalf of others because colleagues found the previous system difficult to learn and use.

"I had been with the bank for five years when we were looking for a new solution, and was heavily involved with project management," Potter says. *"The challenges we had with our previous vendor included a lack of accurate reporting and metrics from a project. Dashboards were not available. The user experience was not optimal; there was a large learning curve to understand where to go to update tasks. Users just could not adopt it or understand it, and we only used it for project management. We are doing so much more with Smartsheet."*

Customer:
In addition to an easier learning path for users, Potter and her team wanted more powerful reporting capabilities and metrics. Smartsheet not only provided dashboard reporting and data visualization, but it also inspired employees across the organization to learn how to use it for previously unsolved problems.

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I am blown away by our adoption and utilization of Smartsheet. When we first purchased it, we only had 20 licensed users, and now we have 200 licenses. It has grown to be one of our most critical vendors and systems throughout the enterprise; we are so reliant on it, the usage is so wide-scale, and the adoption throughout all of our lines of business is truly remarkable.

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Randi Potter, Senior Vice President and Director of Technology and Business Systems at Busey Bank

Solution:
Today, in addition to supporting more than 10 times the number of concurrent projects Busey could manage with its old solution, Smartsheet powers automation and improvement of processes as well as configuration changes to technology systems. Employees submit requests through Smartsheet forms, which display full methodologies to help them complete the forms accurately and use conditional logic to direct the work to the appropriate teams. A collaborative review process ensures the right people weigh in to confirm that any changes align with company standards and priorities. The resulting improvements have saved both time and money.

"We launched with IT because it was IT project management driving the Smartsheet solution initially," Hassan says. *"We started looping in other departments as they had technology needs. That program grew to the point where we centralized all of our technology project management into a single solution in Smartsheet. We also have processes which are identified as high opportunities for automation or improvement. In the first half of 2021 we've saved over $200,000 from those processes."*

A faster track to mergers and acquisitions

Busey Bank's growth strategy includes mergers and acquisitions. Smartsheet has streamlined that process with templates that enable a standardized approach, comprehensive tracking of a vast number of details, and continual improvement as lessons from one acquisition are applied to the next one.

"Our ability to stand up the project plan for mergers and acquisitions is 95% quicker than it was with our previous solution," Potter says. *"All tasks are already defined by line of business within standardized project templates; we just update the dates and the assignees if any of those have changed. Our last acquisition was the quickest we've ever done. I think I've done eight data conversions since I've been with Busey and they used to span from nine to 12 months; this last one we completed in about four months."*

M&A data acquisition time cut from

9-12 to 4
months   months

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The IT project management template we've developed allows us to ensure that we are meeting the requirements and the guidelines of the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC). When our examiners come in annually, we have documented and will be retaining all of the information that they look for with a large IT project or implementation. On the M&A side, it also allows us to retain all of the approvals and data validation tasks that we did, which the examiners look for when they come in the year after an acquisition. It's in one place, and we can easily provide the requested documentation without any unnecessary manual effort.

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Randi Potter, Senior Vice President and Director of Technology and Business Systems at Busey Bank

Flexible, secure data access management

Smartsheet enables Busey to flexibly manage access to data. It's easy to update permissions so former employees can no longer access proprietary data. Smartsheet also allows tailored access for external users, which helped Busey collaborate in real time with a vendor to quickly develop and launch a portal for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan applications, providing crucial support to small business customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Busey team collaborated with their vendor to use a shared Smartsheet to flag defects and performance issues, confirm whether they had been fixed, and track progress to completion, without spending extra time in meetings or creating an avalanche of emails. Tailoring access for employees is also simple, establishing the right balance between visibility and data security.

"With permissions in Smartsheet, we can manage our whole program with very minimal administrative effort," Hassan says. *"In the centralized project, process, and change management platform solution that we created, as soon as someone engages, they get access to everything that's being worked on; we're very transparent in that regard. But they're not able to modify those projects unless they're assigned to work on them. Being able to distinguish those permissions, along with the new commenter role that's coming, is a big win for us."*

Perhaps the biggest change resulting from the adoption of Smartsheet is a dramatic increase in collaboration throughout the bank. Information can be found in one place, ensuring real-time visibility into data and the status of work. Automated notifications and alerts ensure people get the updates they need when they need them, without losing the details in an email thread. Meetings are run from Smartsheet-based agendas and dashboards, with decisions and action items captured in the sheet in real time to eliminate any uncertainty around next steps.

Over
$200,000
saved
in technology process improvement in just 6 months

95% faster setup
of mergers & acquisitions project plans

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I think people want to engage with project management. When I first joined the project team, we were kind of seen as an inconvenience — 'Project management needs an update from me' — whereas now we're an asset. Teams want to partner with the technology groups because they can get that visibility and support. You can see what's not going as scheduled, but you can also see what's been successful.

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Javed Hassan, Vice President and Business Systems Process and Automation Manager, Busey Bank