

## Loni Meiborg's Digital Growth Story

1ST NATIONAL'S DIGITAL GROWTH TRANSFORMS FROM MERE HOPE TO SOLID RESULTS

1st National Bank (\$395 million in assets; Berlin, WI) has been a federally chartered financial institution for more than 140 years, experiencing the many highs and lows of the American economy during the last millennium. 1<sup>st</sup> National has weathered it all. However, times change, and the bank has had a challenging last four years keeping its message and delivery channels fresh for the masses.

According to the bank's Senior Vice President of Marketing Loni Meiborg, 1st National has been recovering from a lack of focus in its marketing efforts. Being in a blackout period for advertising and having a website that underperformed and was hard to use didn't help matters any either. Furthermore, the bank suffered a setback in 2012 because it decreased its lobby hours without consulting clients. Loyalty had gone out the window because 1st National missed the mark on providing a convenient and valuable service to clients on their time.

According to Meiborg, the bank was suffering from not having a marketing professional for many years – which fostered the lack of focus evident through the confusing bank messaging, uncertain client journeys, and lack of sales process. “We had virtually no online presence, no way to target our website visitors, and no story to tell,” Meiborg admits. “We didn't know who we were talking to or what we were talking to them about.”

Without these things, 1st National was having a hard time creating compelling and interesting campaigns. Beyond that, once leads were generated, the bank wasn't working them through their sales funnel to convert. “We just ‘hoped’ that they would become clients,” she says. “We weren't doing anything to directly impact their likelihood to convert. It was time to regroup and set out on the right foot.”

The right foot meant going digital – along with the rest of the world. But Meiborg, who was a team of one, couldn't just jump feet first without a plan. That wasn't an option.

A couple of years ago, Meiborg participated in the Digital Growth Training Program to gain clarity about the short- and long-term digital marketing opportunities for 1st National. “After the training program, it was clear that not only does the team at Digital Growth Institute know what they're talking about, they were capable of sharing step-by-step strategies,” Meiborg says. “This made the insights they share very valuable – as other companies ‘consult’ but Digital Growth Institute shows you the way.”

Upon returning to her bank, Meiborg reached out to Digital Growth Institute for additional guidance and together, they began working on 1st National's Digital Growth Blueprint.

After an in-depth discovery period that included key stakeholder surveys and interviews, in addition to website, digital channel and content assessments, Digital Growth Institute developed a comprehensive digital marketing plan for 1st National. It was so comprehensive that it included items Meiborg wasn't even ready to approach. However, when seeing key elements placed into the plan and gaining clarity about how they worked together, Meiborg was able to implement the first steps of the plan – including a brand refresh.

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While working through the phases of their Digital Growth Blueprint, many new and exciting initiatives for 1st National were launched:

- New mission/vision
- New brand identity
- New website that sells
- New content marketing website
- New video direction (which has had a huge success on social media)
  - The bank tells compelling business stories for their “Growin’ Wisconsin” video series. This free-to-clients project puts the business owner in the spotlight. The goal of the series is to inspire entrepreneurs, new business owners, and owners ready for growth to be more and dream big. Videos have exceeded 50k views each, pushing the business out to the world while building credibility for the bank.
- New digital lead generation campaign
- New digital nurture campaigns

“We’re building a website that sells instead of a static, online brochure,” she adds.

One of the compelling storylines that attracts new clients to 1st National is its “Growin’ Wisconsin” mantra. “Many banks focus on the numbers,” Meiborg says. “We focus on helping current, and future business owners seize their potential.”

She believes the most valuable thing her bank can offer to clients is the staff’s experience and guidance to help first and sell second - a foundation for the advisory role Meiborg wants to play within the community.

1st National has capitalized on its “Growin’ Wisconsin” motto, building a website that revolves around it: [GrowinWisconsin.org](http://GrowinWisconsin.org). This site allows 1st National to take the knowledge of its employees to create compelling and valuable content and push it out to the masses rather than just its lobby traffic.

The bank also sees more opportunities to develop relationships over the long run, partnering with clients whenever possible – whether doing a co-op, a promotion, ordering supplies, or hosting a community event. “We think of our clients first and take pride in connecting them with people that can support their vision,” Meiborg adds.

The results for 1st National have been a much more prominent digital presence, as Digital Growth Institute helped Meiborg and her team find a new domain name: [MyFirstNational.com](http://MyFirstNational.com) – as opposed to its previous [firstnationalbanks.biz](http://firstnationalbanks.biz).

Since the digital brand refresh, website visits have increased 20% and while online account opening applications have grown 7%. The bank has also experienced a positive turnaround in brand loyalty with a resulting increase in its NPS score.

“Working with Digital Growth Institute, you’ll find some of the insights and recommendations they make out of your comfort zone,” Meiborg says. “But be open to new ideas, and they’ll help guide you along a steady course towards completion.”