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INNOVATING ACROSS CHANNELS: F.N.B. CORPORATION'S ESTORE® CONNECTS BRANCH AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

Winner of Celent Model Bank 2023 Award for
Omnichannel Retail Delivery

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CASE STUDY AT A GLANCE

With eStore[®], **First National Bank*** provides a unique and creatively designed platform that allows customers to compare available products and services, open accounts, apply for loans, schedule an appointment with a banker, and access financial education resources—all in one place, from whatever channel they choose. Part of the bank’s longer-term “Clicks-to-Bricks” strategy, the trademarked eStore[®] concept provides a consistent design and experience on any screen across online, mobile banking, and branch delivery points. Critically, the bank is seeing high engagement and improved new product acquisition since the launch of eStore[®] in the second half of 2021.

**First National Bank is the banking subsidiary of F.N.B. Corporation (FNB)*



Our CEO understood the need for a consistent experience between digital and branch, and we embarked on an aggressive strategy to accomplish that.

Samuel Kirsch, Chief Digital Officer, First National Bank

Case Study At A Glance	
Financial Institution	First National Bank, a subsidiary of F.N.B. Corporation
Initiative	eStore [®] digital experience
Synopsis	A creative, informative, and consistent onboarding experience where FNB customers can easily find the tools, information, and consultative support they need—in and between physical or digital channels.
Timelines	January 2020: Project kick-off November 2021: Go-live in mobile app September 2022: Go-live in branch
Key Benefits	500,000 eStore interactions in 2022 Digital mtg application volume now 70% Faster, customer-driven application process
Key Vendors	Proprietary in-house project and build
Source: Celent Analysis, F.N.B. Corporation	

CELENT PERSPECTIVE

While an engaging digital service experience is a key aspiration for nearly every bank, a quality branch experience, and the next-level educational assistance enabled by bankers, is still a critical component of relationship deepening and early customer onboarding. As Celent reported last year in *The Post-Pandemic Branch Network, Not Dead Yet!*, banks continue to originate new relationships largely in person. Consistency between physical and digital experience can drive success in those important account opening and early onboarding interactions. Celent is recognizing FNB as a 2023 Model Bank for Omnichannel Retail Delivery by accomplishing that consistency in a unique, creative, and well-executed way.

- The bank is achieving impressive results, with increased loan application submissions, higher completion rates, and impressive self-scheduled appointment volume in the first year of availability.
- Design quality for this customer-facing overhaul was especially impressive for a primarily in-house technology project, especially through the pandemic year of 2020.
- FNB chose to pursue a user interface model that prioritized the branch/digital experience, not just digital.
- Part of a longer-term, physical experience transformation that aligns goals and incentives between two distribution channels and with the bank's overall values—typically a difficult goal for many banks to achieve.
- Execution success was driven by top-of-bank leadership and required bank-wide training and adoption of the approach, also rare to achieve in such a short timeframe.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

eStore® was designed in-house by Pittsburgh-based FNB, and brings consistency of experience to online, mobile banking, and the branch, allowing customers to seamlessly learn about and acquire the bank's products in, and across, any channel they choose. The unique user experience blends digital and branch banking within a familiar retail services interface and is providing impressive results.

Introduction

First National Bank's "Clicks-to-Bricks" omnichannel delivery strategy was originally launched in 2016 to more broadly integrate the bank's in-branch, online, and mobile banking capabilities. For the latest enhancement in that initiative, the bank wanted to ensure that new customers received a great onboarding experience, including a clear understanding of the right product for their needs and a solid introduction to the bank's digital and in-branch services. Key to this was that digital-onboarding customers received the same level of product selection assistance as banker-assisted branch customers had always received.

F.N.B. Corporation Snapshot

Year Founded	1864
Assets	Nearly \$44 Billion
Geographic Presence	HQ: Pittsburgh, PA; footprint in OH, MD, WV, NC, SC, VA, DC
Employees (2022)	4,100+
Other Key Metrics	350 Branches

Sources: F.N.B. Corporation and Standard & Poor's

Opportunity

The major opportunity identified by FNB was to ensure that digitally-acquired customers remain as profitable as branch-acquired, which has been an ongoing challenge for the entire retail banking industry. To accomplish this more effectively, the bank decided to:

- **Continue a commitment to branch/digital collaboration.** The bank's view prior to the pandemic included a strong commitment to digital *and* a commitment to branch banking service and experience. For example, new digital customers were connected to a local banker, with regular check-ins

from the banker, as part of the new customer onboarding process. Also, the bank offered digital appointment scheduling prior to the pandemic.

- **Leverage a unique product packaging approach.** Previously, customers in FNB branch stores could interact with physical “boxes” and compare features across standardized product labels, similar to purchasing software from a store shelf. The bank saw a chance to update that experience to a digital screen, while also extending the same capability to online and mobile banking.
- **Use pandemic learnings to accelerate digital innovation.** Based on learnings from building their all-digital Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan application, the bank pushed forward, building a new application-start experience for all loan customers.

The Clicks-to-Bricks initiative has represented the vision of FNB Chairman, President, and CEO Vincent Delie Jr., and the eStore® project enjoyed support from the top of the bank’s leadership. In fact, Delie himself has demonstrated eStore® as part of company-wide video briefings for the employee base.

In 2019 Samuel Kirsch was named Chief Digital Officer to oversee FNB’s overall digital strategy and advancement of Clicks-to-Bricks, including the project that became the eStore® initiative. Other project team members included staff from Marketing, Network Services, Internal Training, Information Technology, and Corporate Communications, with significant input from different lines of business.

With the team in place, the bank kicked off the project in January 2020.

Solution

During primary research, including focus groups and in-depth interviews with branch personnel, FNB discovered that customers value transparency in website design, products, and educational resources. That insight drove the project’s intuitive UX design, which accommodates three distinct customer profiles:

1. Customers who know what they want.
2. Customers who want to research products and services.
3. Customers who are planning a life event.

eStore® is designed for all three customer types using an efficient shopping and product selection process, product comparison tools, and a “Help Me Decide” tool where customers answer a brief series of questions to determine the product(s) or service(s) that will best meet their needs.

eStore® was finally unveiled on digital and mobile platforms in November 2021 and was rolled out to all FNB branches in 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic began

shortly after project launch and gave the team the opportunity to step back and take user-design learnings from the federal Paycheck Protection Program loan application system and ultimately apply them to eStore®'s user interface.

As built, the storefront is a digital platform that gives customers consistent and intuitive content for products, services, and financial education, regardless of the channel.

Build highlights:

- **Scalable, progressive web design in the UI**, to auto-adjust screen size and allow for the reuse of product content display pages across branch kiosk and online and mobile (deploy-once architecture).
- **User experience testing** was conducted robustly across screens and channels to ensure behavior of the deploy-once web content was as expected. The branch kiosk was a new hardware element for which the bank had no prior experience.
- **Security features** include preventing access to internet browsing from the in-branch kiosks and blocking the entry of personally identifiable information in the kiosk form fields, which could accidentally be left for the next customer to see or be visible to another customer in line. Customers must send the product application to their home email address or into an appointment with a banker after initial product selection.
- **Banker education and training modules** were a critical aspect of the rollout. This includes videos on demand and a scripted choreography to simulate the customer visit into and through the branch floorspace, with specific emphasis on intentionally signaling to the customer that *their* needs would drive the conversation. The bank deployed an organization-wide training module to familiarize all employees with the project and its functionality, including role-specific content and reference articles on the corporate intranet.
- **The solution interfaces to several systems in the account opening flow.** Specifically, the consumer and small business loan origination and deposit servicing systems; Identity Verification platform; the bank's customer relationship management (CRM), customer communications management (CCM), and core data systems; and digital customer analytics.

In branches, customers use an interactive touchscreen (Figure 1) to shop for products and services and to either send their selections to their email to complete a purchase/application at home on their own time, or request to meet with a banker to finalize their business during the visit.

The entire solution borrows from the familiar workflow of online shopping. Product "packaging," informational content (Figure 4), and a shopping cart and checkout process (Figure 5) are all familiar to consumers.

Project Timeline

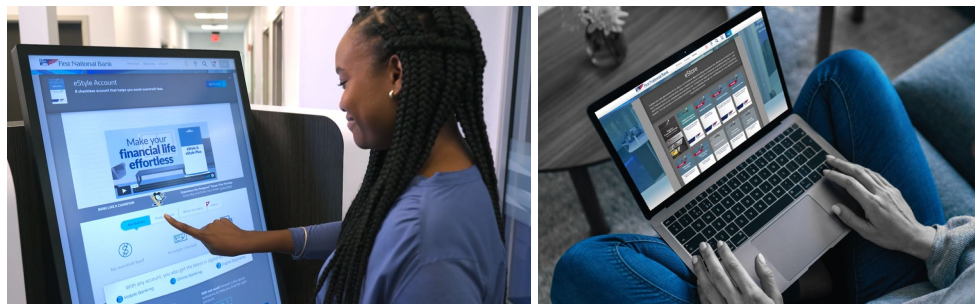
- **January 2016:** FNB launches “Clicks-to-Bricks” with in-branch Solutions Center kiosks and ITMs
- **January 2020:** eStore® project kickoff
- **1Q2021:** Employee training begins
- **November 2021:** eStore® added to mobile banking app
- **May – September 2022:** eStore® kiosks installed in branches
- **June 2022:** eStore® trademarked

When accessing eStore® via their computer or mobile device, customers can apply for and open accounts, and complete their purchase/application when and where it is best for them (Figure 6).

The product “checkout” workflow includes all the normal ID Verification and KYC/CIP/CDD elements, supported by strategic third party partners. Through the store, the bank accepts applications for consumer and small business deposit and loan products, as well as appointment scheduling with a banker.

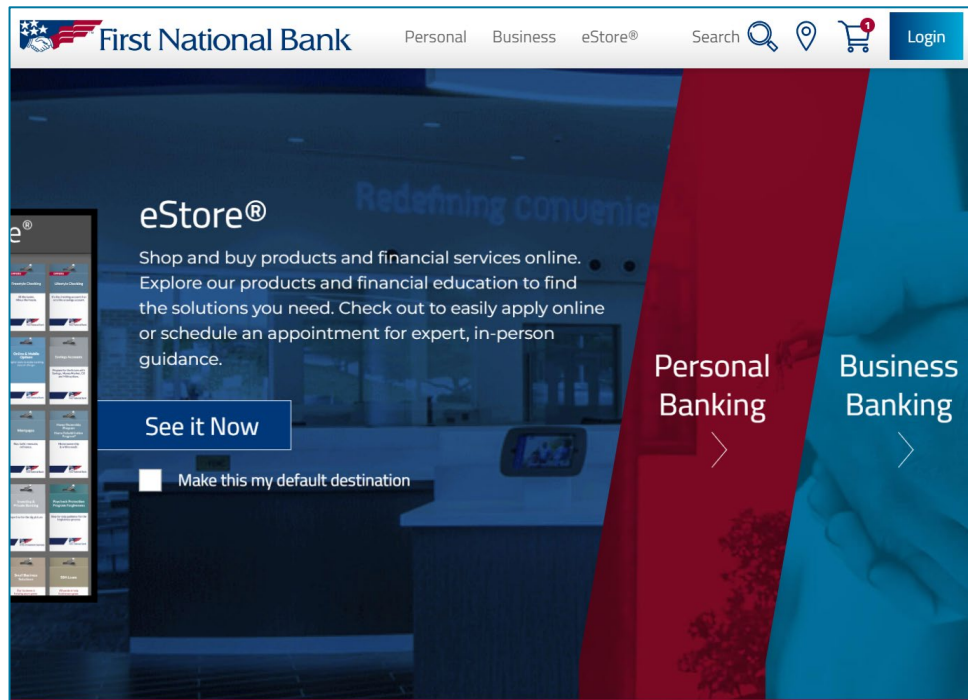
In Celent’s opinion, FNB has produced one of the more creative implementations of a product selection tool in banking. The in-house designed concept and UI are high quality, consistent, and rival the product selection experiences of much larger retail financial services institutions. This execution of a customer-led product decision workflow is a model for other retail banks.

Figure 1: The in-branch eStore® touchscreen and online platform



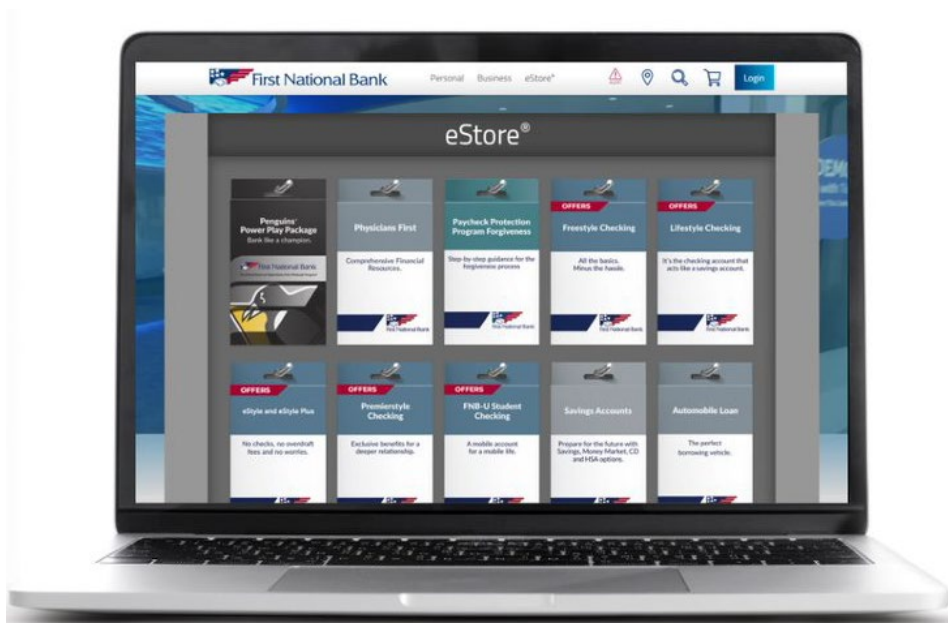
Source: F.N.B. Corporation

Figure 2: eStore® on the FNB public website



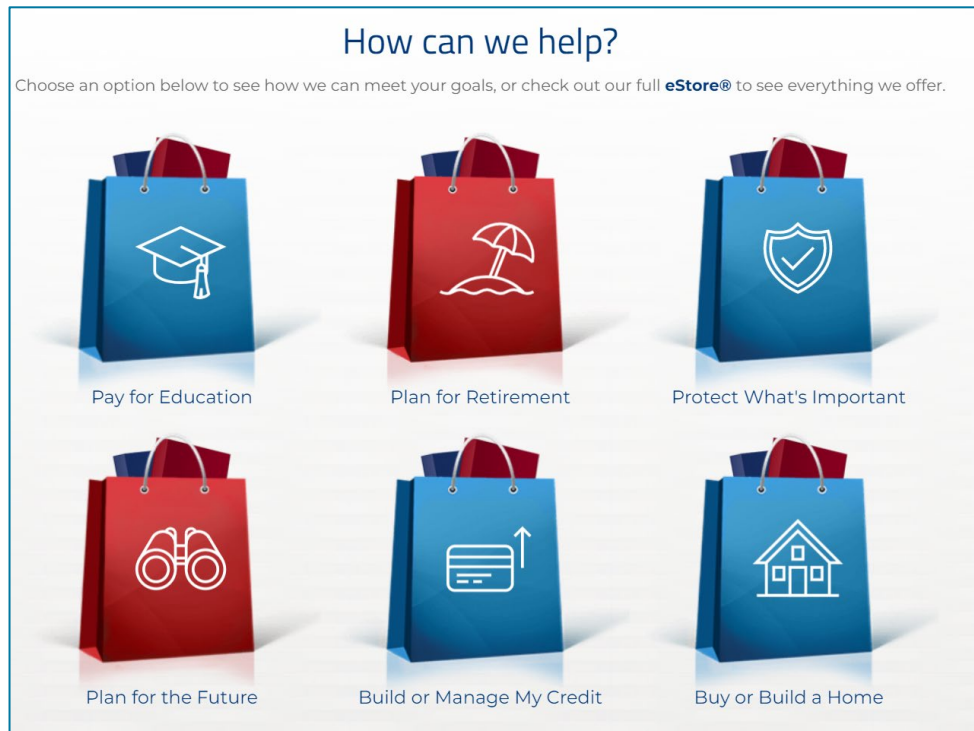
Source: F.N.B. Corporation

Figure 3: Product “boxes” on the eStore® virtual shelf



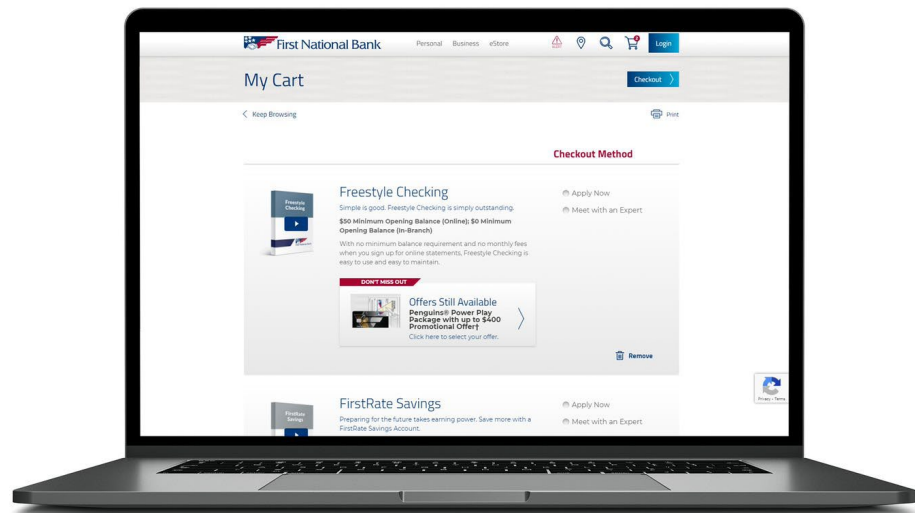
Source: F.N.B. Corporation

Figure 4: Helping the customer find the appropriate product



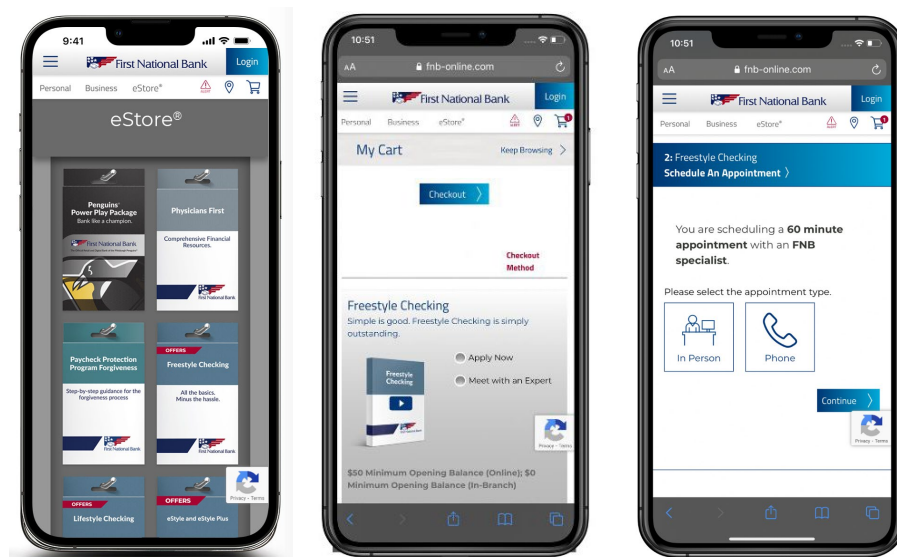
Source: F.N.B. Corporation

Figure 5: The checkout experience



Source: F.N.B. Corporation

Figure 6: Mobile device experiences for Product Selection, Checkout, and Appointment Scheduling



Source: F.N.B. Corporation

Results

eStore® provides a clear line of sight for customers to see the breadth of products and services FNB offers them in both personal and commercial banking. The unique storefront design enables customers to better select the right product, enjoy a more informed onboarding experience, and is helping the bank keep digital customers as profitable as possible.

- **The bank offers a tangible representation of their products and services in a digital format.** As noted earlier, FNB’s pre-eStore® branch experience also utilized physical boxes, on shelves, and helpful comparison labeling to help customers select the best product with a banker’s assistance. The visual design of eStore® was then modeled after that physical experience in-branch.
- **eStore® helps match the customer to the right product.** FNB is providing different ways to shop for people with different levels of banking knowledge. With comparison guides and the ‘Help Me Decide’ tool, eStore®’s user interface was designed to ask solution/goal questions up front, framing product selection in the customer’s terms rather than in the bank’s product terminology. This can be very difficult for banks to pull off successfully.
- **The bank is effectively promoting digital adoption.** FNB noted that the ability to introduce branch customers to the digital experience in such an intuitive interface, which those customers would then experience online, has been a bridge to digital adoption. The importance of cross-channel consistency in supporting banker/customer conversations around a new service cannot be understated. A key goal at any bank is the ability to educate the customer on additional services and tools that might benefit them.

- **The customer has total transparency around product selection.** FNB wanted customers to feel that they were making the best choice of product, not simply the bank's choice. The presentation of the bank's deposit and lending products, side-by-side with consistent comparison information, makes the benefit to the customer clear and provides control over decision-making, and most importantly, *trust*.

Summary of Business Results

Online deposit and loan applications up 17% YoY

~70% of mortgage applications submitted digitally in FY 2022 (+30% YoY)

80%+ start-to-complete rate for digital mortgage applications

More than half of all mortgage applications submitted outside normal business hours

Over 5,300 appointments scheduled since eStore® launch (and +19% YoY)

Total eStore® engagements grew by 104% YoY (2022 vs 2021)

Source: F.N.B. Corporation

Lessons Learned

While the bank had active support from the top of the organization through to the front-line bankers, there was still an acknowledgement that more training, earlier in the process, would have led to an even more successful first day rollout.

FNB shared a few other lessons learned:

- **Aligning to the bank's culture and long-term vision was key.** This initiative brought forward a heritage of careful, high-touch support of the customer's decision-making in the account opening and onboarding process. The bank stresses that convenience and customer choice has been the driving design philosophy, rather than simply deflection to digital self-service.
- **Industry and consumer research was done up front.** The bank felt that it knew its customers' needs after primary research and careful analysis of customer types.
- **Fortunate to have a strong collaboration culture.** FNB enjoyed a strong teamwork culture within the bank, from top leadership through front-line bankers.
- **There can always be more front-line training.** Additional training would have been helpful, even in a relatively successful project, and delivering that training early in the process can better align bankers across branch and digital channels.



The pandemic accelerated the journey we were already on. The eStore[®] is one of the results of that acceleration of our digital channel strategy.

Samuel Kirsch, Chief Digital Officer, First National Bank

Future Plans

The goal, as always, is to bring even more convenience and transparency to the account opening process. The bank plans to move forward with learnings from eStore[®]'s initial rollout and evolve the account opening process even further. Specifically:

4. **Invest in more robust** marketing, to drive awareness and new consumers to eStore[®]
5. **Create a single, unified digital application.** FNB envisions adding a multi-product application for all loan and deposit products in 2023, allowing streamlined opening of additional products after the first, without the need for repeated PII entry.
6. **Build out the data hub,** as an infrastructure to process large quantities of data and guide decision-making on next-best-product or next-best-action.



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July, 2022

[Technology Trends Previsory: Retail Banking, 2023 Edition](#)

November 2022

[Digital Account Opening: You Can Only Improve What You Measure](#)

September 2021

[Royal Bank Of Canada: Omnichannel Onboarding At Breakneck Speed](#)

March 2021

[State of Digital Customer Acquisition: Much Work Remains](#)

March 2021

[Raising the CX Bar: How To Close The Gap In Retail Banking](#)

December 2018

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