

building commercial services on the Symitar[®] platform



Wildfire Credit Union

Address

Saginaw, Michigan

Website

wildfirecu.org

Assets

\$1.1 Billion

Accountholders

49,780

Founded

1937

After Wildfire Credit Union hired a new Vice President of Business Services, commercial loans began to roll in. It was just what they wanted, but the credit union was not quite prepared to easily process them. According to Mark Schuiling, Chief Technology Officer, “We had to scramble to set everything up. Each loan is different, and we needed to find ways to make them all work.”

That was Wildfire’s situation about 10 years ago. Today, the credit union is not only set up, but highly successful -- experiencing exponential growth (even throughout the COVID-19 pandemic). “Even excluding PPP loans, 2020 was our best year ever for commercial servicing,” says Schuiling. The credit union also maintains a diverse \$70M commercial loan portfolio that includes real estate, equipment, construction, and participation loans.

adapting to a range of lending needs

Wildfire’s commercial members vary from mom-and-pop businesses to those with 150 employees. Their ideal and most typical commercial member has around 20-50 employees. With different types of commercial accounts (ranging from manufacturing to medical equipment), Wildfire had to create unique procedures to efficiently serve their diverse clientele. Utilizing features built into their Symitar® core processing system, the credit union was able to serve their customer base without hesitation.

Some of the loan servicing is handled using only the Symitar built-in lending modules, while others have been modified by the credit union using Symitar’s PowerOn® customization tool. For example, the Participation module is used unchanged for participation lending. The Collateral module is used for tracking documents, with built-in ability to customize notifications. Many of Wildfire’s modifications center around such things as notifications and reporting. They have also built automation regarding processes for billing, repricing, and re-amortization schedules.



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Mark Schuiling

Chief Technology Officer, Wildfire Credit Union

Describing the process of setting up and customizing core processes for commercial loans, Schuiling said, “It was challenging at times, but nothing was overwhelming. We just had to put a little thought into it. Any credit union with good developers and some experience setting up processes can do it.”

Wildfire tries to do all the business account activity it can within the Symtar core platform – savings and checking accounts, credit cards, mortgages, and so on – with the goal of having as much as possible consolidated in the core. Most of the deposits, for example, are also handled within Symtar. “I’ll just sum it up in this way,” says Schuiling, “Having all of your accounts on one core has its advantages. It makes things like integrating home banking and automated transfers easier to manage.” Another advantage he cites is that staff members aren’t managing or needing to learn different systems, which reduces workload and complexity.

keys to success

Schuiling has advice for credit unions that want to follow Wildfire’s path and provide commercial loan servicing using Symtar. “Take it slow and try to think through the scenarios before they come up,” he says. “Take stock of what you’ll actually offer, think about what terms you will do, what types of loans you’ll handle, and then architect how the process is going to work.” He says that it’s fine to do many different loan types but don’t do them all at once and understand in advance what PowerOn modifications will be needed.

Regarding their own success in securing loan business, Schuiling lists the qualities of his credit union. “We’re easy to work with,” he says. “We do a good job with servicing and are good at building personal relationships.” He emphasizes the need for competitive pricing, saying that they meet or beat the competition. He also stressed the importance of offering a full suite of solutions and filling both lending and depository needs.

Regarding their internal lending procedures, Schuiling has one final message – “It really comes back to having everything in one system. That makes everyone’s lives easier and provides a better member experience across all channels.”



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Mark Schuiling

Chief Technology Officer, Wildfire Credit Union

create limitless possibilities

[Learn how](#) to efficiently serve your members while enabling future growth with the highly customizable and scalable Symitar core platform.

[Request more](#) information about expanding your credit union's commercial services offering.