



austinwilliams



awareness
enthusiasm
retention
ideas that inspire action

A branch acquisition
marketing strategy

Overview

Acquiring Bank, a regional New York bank known here as Bank A, entered a material agreement with a local competitor, Bank B, to acquire Bank B’s flagship branch in East Syracuse (pending regulatory approval). The banks will jointly announce this agreement on March 4, with an intended completion by July.

While this major milestone will benefit both institutions’ customers and employees, these constituencies are bound to have concerns. To overcome this challenge and ensure a successful transition for all, it’s vital that all groups feel informed, heard, and listened to.

Austin Williams is pleased to share our recommendations for a strategic communications plan for employees and customers to help you achieve this goal. By communicating clearly and consistently throughout the acquisition process, we will create the inclusive, welcoming, and transparent environment necessary to ease concerns and inspire confidence.

Our Strategic Approach

Our recommended approach aligns with the three key phases of the acquisition process – announcement, preapproval, and approval – and the distinct communications needs, goals, and environment for each.

Phase 1: Awareness & Inclusion

AGREEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT: MARCH 4 – 11

Announcement day and the days immediately following are critical to the success of the acquisition process. Communicating early, often, and consistently is key, as is providing employees and customers with easy access to the answers they may need so they feel included and important. The following recommendations would take place after the March 4 announcement at the East Syracuse branch.

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION
Employee Communications for the Acquiring Bank (Bank A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email to team: Announcement with link to intranet page with details. ● Intranet landing page: Provides details on the acquisition, press announcement, timeline, FAQs, “latest news” section, forms to submit a question. ● Branch roadshow: Follow up announcement with in-branch team meetings to share details and address concerns.

<p>Employee Communications for the East Syracuse Branch Team at Bank B</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email to Bank B’s East Syracuse branch team: Announcement and welcome to all team members with a link to landing page with details; invites them to in-branch roundtable. ● In-branch roundtable: Leadership meets with Bank B’s East Syracuse employees to answer questions, address concerns, etc. ● Landing page/intranet: Provides details on the acquisition, press announcement, timeline, FAQs, “latest news” section, sidebar with Bank A’s values statement, forms to submit a question. Could also include video message from Bank A’s president & CEO. ● Customer talking points: Quick “cheat sheet” with key points to help employees answer customer questions, alleviate concerns. ● Bank A “point person” and liaison: A designated individual (or team) who’ll answer employee/customer questions/concerns.
<p>Customer Communications for Bank A, Acquiring Bank</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email: Announcement to all customers with link to press announcement and/or landing page. ● Direct mail: Follow up with a personal letter.
<p>Customer Communications for Bank B</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email: Announcement to East Syracuse branch customers with a link to dedicated landing page (details below). ● Direct mail: Follow up with welcome letter. ● Welcome video: Featuring Bank A’s president & CEO, who outlines customer benefits of acquisition; use on the landing page, in branch, and on your social properties. ● Landing page: Acquisition benefits and timeline, welcome video, FAQs, sidebar with Bank A’s values statement, who to contact with questions or concerns. ● Other considerations: Mobile app notification, ATM screen message, in-branch buck slips, branch merchandising.
<p>External Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public relations: Announce approval of acquisition via a press release. ● Owned digital channels (website and social): Acquisition announcement on home page banner and in social channels.

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Phase 2: Acceptance & Enthusiasm

PREREGULATORY APPROVAL: MID-MARCH – JULY

You simply can't overcommunicate during this phase. Sharing regular updates on the acquisition's progress, outlining what's to come, and emphasizing the benefits of the acquisition will ease the transition for employees and customers alike.

Messaging to employees becomes more holistic (although additional tactics specific to the East Syracuse team are warranted), while customer communication focuses primarily on connecting with those of the new branch.

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION
Employee Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email updates: Send biweekly; drive to intranet. ● Intranet: Update "latest news" section as warranted, include customer-communication tips, encourage employees to share questions. ● East Syracuse sit-downs: Informal lunch or breakfast meetings with the branch team, their new Bank A colleagues, and leadership. ● East Syracuse sales training: Schedule product training sessions in early summer so branch employees can hit the ground running when the acquisition is approved. ● Branch roadshow: Continue if needed.
Customer Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● East Syracuse customer survey: Gauge overall customer sentiment, pain points and opportunities; foundation for messaging and communications strategy upon acquisition approval. ● Email: Send biweekly (or as warranted) to East Syracuse branch customers with link to landing page. ● Landing page: Update with latest news on acquisition, FAQs, sidebar with Bank A values statement, who to contact with questions or concerns. ● Update (as needed) any other communications vehicles utilized in phase 1.

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Phase 3: Retention & Community Engagement

ACQUISITION APPROVED: JULY – AUGUST

Our communications during this final stage must inform (but not overwhelm), excite, and engage. Ensuring that employees and customers know what’s going to happen when (and why) will not only boost retention but also position the bank for growth in the East Syracuse market.

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION
Communications Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leverage survey results to develop a compelling communications platform that brings the benefits of the acquisition to life, resonates with customers and employees, and strengthens brand awareness in the East Syracuse market.
Employee Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Team meeting: Present the plans for the transition weekend to the East Syracuse team. ● Welcome to the Team Kit: Distribute bank-branded swag with transition operational details. ● Customer talking points: Updated “cheat sheet” with key points to help employees answer customer questions, alleviate concerns. ● Bank A “point person” or liaison: A designated individual (or team) who’ll answer employee/customer questions/concerns. ● Branch spotlight: Highlight new East Syracuse team members on Bank A’s employee intranet.
Customer Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email & direct mail: Send details of the transition weekend to all customers; include landing page URL. ● Welcome video: Following the same format as the original, this video would feature Bank A’s President & CEO, who outlines the benefits of banking with Bank A; use on the landing page, in branch, and on social properties. ● Landing page: Rework to focus on the transition, update FAQs and video, sidebar with Bank A’s values statement, and who to contact with questions or concerns. ● Update any other communications vehicles utilized in Phase 1 and 2 Welcome kit: Develop a reference guide with everything a customer needs to know about the transition and their new banking relationship.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Product specials: Offer exclusive rate specials and other incentives to welcome new customers and boost retention. ● Branch merchandising: Create a celebratory environment in the East Syracuse branch with refreshments, sweepstakes, gifts, etc.
<p>External Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public relations: Announce approval of acquisition via a press release. ● Media campaign: Strengthen awareness for Bank A in East Syracuse with an integrated media campaign that may include placements in traditional and digital media, paid search, and direct marketing. Communications strategy will be informed by survey findings. ● Owned digital channels: Spotlight and celebrate customers and employees of the East Syracuse branch.

Thank You

We appreciate the opportunity to become your marketing partner and feel confident that together, we can accomplish a smooth and successful transition and pave the way to our continued collaboration.