

# CASE STUDY

## get your members INVOLVED!

The most important voice in your organization is your members! They are the backbone to your structure and using their voice can enhance your programming and capabilities for growth. These external voices can bring light and observations to the table that may have been overlooked. It's important to utilize open communication and member participation to enhance programming, important decisions, and community relationships.



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## BUILDING MEMBER PARTICIPATION ONLINE VOTING

### DISCUSSION ON VICKIE SCHMITZER OF FRANKENMUTH CREDIT UNION

As member opinion is the foundation for a thriving credit union, it is important to be continuously communicating. Credit unions must utilize communication resources to their advantage to appease member desires and make changes to uphold member opinion. This allows for fluid communication between member and credit union, better reducing uncertainty concerning large decisions.

In 2009, CU\*Answers began a project to increase communication by allowing members to directly participate in important elections. Through CU\*BASE, members can complete online ballots after logging in to **It's Me 247** online banking. Spearheading the introduction of this project is Vickie Schmitzer, CEO of Frankenmuth Credit Union. Her leadership has initiated the path for transition into this online voting option.

Schmitzer utilized the online banking system for Frankenmuth Credit Union's 2009 Board of Directors Elections. Frankenmuth had investigated online ballot platforms on a number of third-party vendors for several years. They found the set-up of online voting using a third-party was too expensive. Costs ranged anywhere from a base package of \$2,950 for the first year and \$1,950 in subsequent years to as high as \$12,848 for the first year and \$11,508 in subsequent years. CU\*BASE allows credit unions to use the online voting option for **no cost**.



**“CONSIDERING  
THE EXCELLENT  
PENETRATION  
your online banking  
system has achieved,  
your members  
may be willing to  
embrace internet  
only voting.”**

*-Vickie Schmitzer*

## CASE STUDIES: The Power of Collaboration

This series of Case Studies demonstrates how CU\*Answers credit unions and [cuasterisk.com](http://cuasterisk.com) network partners are improving their operations through collaboration. Some are forming CUSOs to take advantage of market opportunities. But, many others are earning their success simply by leveraging the accomplishments of other clients who have shared their ideas. All contributors have agreed to answer your questions. We urge you to contact them.

Tell us about your “great ideas.” Regardless of the size of your project, your contribution may be exactly what some other credit union has been looking for. Just put together the major details and email it to [mhaehnel@cuanswers.com](mailto:mhaehnel@cuanswers.com).

Another consideration necessary when using online voting is the legal ramifications. By laws must be checked to see if they allow electronic voting. Both the Compliance Departments at the Michigan Credit Union League and OFIR were consulted before online voting was giving the green light.

After finding a cost efficient way for online voting and gaining the necessary legal permission, Schmitzer and her team went forward with the election. During the election process, the Frankenmuth Credit Union received 405 online votes. Paper ballots were also used. Although this number was slightly down from the previous year, as more members are aware of the election process change it is likely numbers will increase.

The staff was enthusiastic about the online voting option. Those in-charge of collecting votes were appreciative of no after hours of counting ballots and was a real time-saver.

In the future, the Frankenmuth Credit Union is hoping to see their “true joint” membership be able to vote online. Because timing was also an issue, Schmitzer is considering holding the voting period for a longer period of time. Looking farther into the future, they may consider using a phone option for voting as well.

Schmitzer is recognized for her enthusiastic attitude in using a new product and igniting the entrance into online voting through CU\*BASE. As with any new project, tweaks will be made to develop this option to its greatest potential. CU\*Answers looks forward to the development of this project and gives its gratification to Schmitzer and the Frankenmuth Credit Union for their participation.