



Seeking the Right Fit, One Smaller Credit Union Turns to First Data for Big Solutions Built to Size

- **CLIENT**
JM Associates Federal Credit Union
- **CHALLENGE**
As a smaller financial institution with national reach, JMAFCU needed a network partner big enough to support its needs but willing to work closely with an institution of its size
- **SOLUTION**
Since 1994, First Data has supported JMAFCU by providing innovative solutions as new needs arise, including:
 - PIN debit and ATM processing
 - Single-point settlement
 - Conversion management
- **RESULTS**
Debit POS transactions have become a lucrative part of the credit union's business, and First Data continues to provide innovations that promote growth

→ **Building solutions to fit its needs, First Data helps JM Associates Federal Credit Union keep growing.**

While JM Associates Federal Credit Union (JMAFCU) holds \$80 million in assets and operates only a handful of branches, it serves a membership that's spread out across the country. To fully support its members, the credit union needed a network partner big enough to keep everyone connected but willing to work with a smaller institution.

"That's always a challenge with a national company—will you be a small fish in a big sea?" explains President and CEO Jim Ryan.

In 1994, First Data began working with JMAFCU, and over time the relationship grew, as First Data was able to meet the credit union's evolving needs—from debit card processing to managing new system implementations. Today, JMAFCU relies on First Data as its main network and single-point settlement agent, and the innovations continue. But for JMAFCU, it all comes down to building a strong relationship.

"With First Data, we're not just a small fish," says Ryan. "We've been treated as a partner."

THE CHALLENGE

As part of its 30th anniversary celebration, Jacksonville, Fla.-based JM Associates Federal Credit Union posted a note of appreciation on its Web site that starts off:

“Like the tree in our logo, JM Associates Federal Credit Union is built on a solid foundation of trust, service and support.”

From the beginning, establishing solid relationships has been at the heart of this self-described “large small financial institution” whose sole sponsor group is in the automotive industry.

Managing \$80 million in assets, JMAFCU serves a membership that’s practically nationwide. But with only a few branches spread out from Florida to Missouri, the credit union needed to go beyond its physical locations to fully support its members. It needed a network partner that had the resources to keep everyone connected and the ability—and willingness—to stay in touch with the needs of a smaller institution.

“One of the pieces we look for in a relationship with any vendor is whether we can build a business partnership,” explains President and CEO Jim Ryan. “For a smaller financial institution, that’s always a challenge with a national company—will you be a small fish in a big sea?”

THE SOLUTION

In 1994, JMAFCU selected First Data to provide its card originations and settlement processing. Back then, the credit union viewed ATM service as a “necessary evil.” But over time, technology changed and so did members’ transaction habits. And as new needs arose for the credit union, First Data was able to meet them—from debit card processing through its STAR® Network to managing new system implementations.

“Because we don’t have an extensive physical presence, electronic access, card volume and card transactions are key to our business model,” explains Ryan. “First Data offers a lot of solutions for an institution our size, but they haven’t tried to force them on us. They’ve been ready when we’re ready. And change has been fairly simple.”

One of the most significant changes occurred when JMAFCU converted its entire core data system.

“From the very start, working with First Data gave us a high level of confidence,” says Ryan. “They’re well organized. They schedule a good timeline, stick to it and get things accomplished.”



THE RESULTS

Today, First Data serves as the main network and single-point settlement agent for JMAFCU, processing all of its PIN-based debit transactions. In addition, JMAFCU now uses First Data ATM Outsourcing for its ATMs across three states, and First Data drives the credit union's prepaid program. The days of ATM services being seen as a necessary evil are long gone.

"Both PIN-based and signature-based POS transactions have become a lucrative piece of our relationship with our members," says Ryan. "Transaction volume has grown tremendously."

And from contactless cards to online payments through the PayPal™ payment system, First Data continues to work with JMAFCU to provide practical innovations to meet members' evolving needs and the credit union's ongoing growth.

"Our members are fairly technically savvy, so for an institution of our size to offer some of these services has been very helpful," says Ryan. "Our members look at us and say 'Wow, how are you doing that?', and that's the 'wow factor' we want to have."

For Ryan, though, it all comes back to the fundamentals—building a strong relationship.

"We have a wonderful relationship manager. He makes us feel like we're his only client. He knows what products we're using, and he knows what's going on with them. When we ask for something to be done, he's on top of it," says Ryan. "We look at First Data as they're growing with us. As a smaller financial institution, to find a larger company that is actually talking to us at our level is very refreshing."



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*– Jim Ryan
President and CEO
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Credit Union*