



Four Corners Community Bank (FCCB) — with three branches in Farmington, New Mexico, one branch in Aztec, New Mexico, and branches in Cortez and Durango, Colorado — prides itself on providing better-than-expected service to the communities it serves. Founded in 2000, FCCB is committed to promoting the financial success of its customers and its local communities, to understanding their needs, to providing personal attention and flexible financial options, to responding promptly, and to always being available to help.

Mark Autrey joined FCCB as Chief Information Officer (CIO) in December of 2013. As a self-described bank IT guy, Mark was witnessing technology moving towards virtualization and then towards the cloud. We asked O'Brien Communications Group (OCG) to talk with him to get his thoughts on the evolution of technology and the ways in which Rhodian Group has helped Four Corners Bank keep pace:

MARK: Ten or 15 years ago, when I was at another bank, virtualization was showing advantages to physical servers, making things easier, and utilizing hardware to a greater extent than you can with typical server infrastructures. So, I started doing virtualization here at FCCB. The word, cloud, started becoming prevalent. But to me, it just means the servers are somewhere else. We called it outsourcing or data centers before cloud became a term. We recognized the cloud presented advantages in scalability, redundancy, disaster recovery, and business continuity. That's when I started researching vendor partners, and Rhodian Group rose to the top.

OCG: Since Rhodian Group also considered itself to be a managed services provider, there had to have been advantages with multiple locations, A) to moving to the cloud, and B) having someone like Rhodian Group to work with. Is that a fair assumption?

MARK: Yes and no. I'm in their private cloud division. We do all our own support. I have an IT staff, so we really don't use

Rhodian Group for day-to-day support or have a managed service ladder between us. They help us when we go through server upgrades or major infrastructure kinds of things.

OCG: In light of what you just shared about what you do and don't use Rhodian Group for, what are the advantages you've realized or benefited from working with them?

MARK: When I first came to FCCB, we'd just acquired another financial institution. When you acquire a company that does the same thing you do to get economies of scale, you need to combine operations, which is technically difficult — connect buildings, create a wide area network, deconstruct their network and reconstruct your network in their location, get rid of their old software, add your software and more server infrastructure, more user licenses, and beef up your internal infrastructure to add users.

OCG: Whew!

MARK: Exactly. With Rhodian Group, we were able to use a single piece of software, the VMware Horizon view virtual desktop. If you load that software on a PC and run a virtual desktop, that PC instantly becomes part of your network. As soon as users sign into their virtual desktops, they're part of your network. They can learn your system without abruptly disconnecting them from theirs, and you can slowly deconstruct their old network. They still have access to their stuff, their network. So it's a much easier way. And scalability wise, I order up more server space from the Rhodian Group cloud and — "Voila!" — more infrastructure to accommodate our growth.

OCG: You mentioned redundancy, disaster recovery, and business continuity earlier. What can you share about that?

MARK: Rhodian Group's server infrastructure is in tier-three data centers with just massive amounts of redundancy: multiple power sources, backup generators, multiple internet service providers, communications channels, and security we could never imagine or achieve in our own data



centers. A lot of things might happen. But lack of functional availability won't be one of them.

OCG: When you first started talking about this, we imagined there had to be a great deal of operational efficiency involved, but we hadn't considered the fact that you had a whole legacy infrastructure to gradually sunset. Were you prepared for that? Was that something that you expected?

MARK: It was another reason I started looking at the cloud. When I came to FCCB, they hadn't had a strong CIO for a while. A lot of their infrastructure was dated anyway and had to be replaced, top to bottom. That spoke to the cloud because we could get a new backend, all at one time. Moving to the cloud solved the legacy hardware problem, too.

OCG: From the perspective of change management, there must also be something like legacy people who are accustomed to doing things one way. It's one of the very few instances in which turnover might almost be an advantage because when new people come aboard, you don't have to convince them or encourage them to change old habits. Is that true?

MARK: It's absolutely true. I spent a lot of time talking to the board and the staff about the advantages of virtualization. With Rhodian Group, we had the advantage of being able to access that virtual infrastructure on the legacy infrastructure. That gave our people time to understand what we were doing. Once they understood the difference between a physical desktop and a virtual desktop, they started to get the hang of it. And they also realized they could access their desktops anywhere. That's a huge advantage, especially when you're multi-branch like we are. None of them would go back now. It's so much better than it was before.

OCG: When it comes specifically to Rhodian Group, how were they different from other vendors that could have provided a cloud environment?

MARK: I researched pretty much anyone I could find that had similar offerings. Without naming names, there was one company that served banks only. But they wanted to replace our entire IT staff. My team and I would have lost our jobs. That's one of the reasons I talked to Phil [Smith, Rhodian's CEO] about doing this case study to help Rhodian Group attract more banks. The primary thing that sold me on Rhodian Group is their admin portal, which no one else has. The portal allows us to add users to the network quickly and easily, to bring up server resources, to start and provisioning new servers and desktops. Most administrative tasks you have to do in a network are in the portal. It's much more efficient. Even our less experienced people can

perform tasks it would otherwise take a more experienced, higher-paid person to do. That was the huge, huge advantage. Plus, all of Rhodian Group's people are great.

OCG: Rhodian Group seems committed to customer service. Do you have anything to share about the service they provide to FCCB?

MARK: Because we have the Private Cloud Infrastructure from Rhodian Group and our own IT staff, we don't need a lot of support. I have a relationship manager with whom I interface about once a month. But a while ago, we did server infrastructure upgrades, moving from the 2012 version of Windows server to a newer one. One of the Rhodian team members named Marco did our implementation. He's a rockstar. And any other time I interface with Rhodian, it's always very, very good.

OCG: When we asked Rhodian Group their purpose, they said, "To give their customers peace of mind." Based on what you're saying, is it fair to say they're succeeding at FCCB?

MARK: Absolutely. Yeah. It's maybe the best decision I've ever made in my 20 plus years as being a CIO.

OCG: Many vendors say they want to give their customers self-sufficiency. Especially because you said you talk to your relationship manager about once a month, that seems to suggest self-sufficiency. Is that also a fair characterization?

MARK: Yes, very much so. I'm thrilled with Rhodian Group, and so far, Phil Smith's been just great to work with and very accommodating. And so yeah, I'm just super happy.

OCG: One last question: If you had the opportunity to speak to a Rhodian prospect, would you be willing to do that?

MARK: Sure. I'd be a reference. If Rhodian Group can attract more banks as clients, that's good for me and FCCB. That's another of my motivations for doing this case study. Helping them helps me. And I told Phil if we're ever at a conference together and he has a prospect for Rhodian, I'm happy to speak to anyone about my experience.

OCG: Well said. Thank you for your time. ●

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About Rhodian Group

We combine the capabilities of an MSP with cybersecurity and compliance services, providing accessible, reliable, and secure work environments so you can grow your business.