

Core Systems: Getting Upgrades and Conversions Right

Every credit union has a slightly different business strategy, but each one needs a quality core system in place to support their unique goals. Their business strategy must be the driving force behind their choice of software, and their software applications must give them the flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing market conditions and competitive pressures. Unfortunately, sometimes fear of core conversions can be a major deterrent to converting to a core system that provides the functionality and flexibility needed to support diverse business strategies and respond to dynamic member and market demands.

Twenty years ago, it was much easier to change core system vendors because the systems were less complex and the number of third-party applications was far fewer. Today there is a lot more connectivity to third-party networks and the overall project is much more complicated, which is why we are extremely focused on the quality of conversions. Just as software has evolved and adapted over the years, we have changed and improved our entire conversion process.

Today we assign a single point of contact – the project manager – to handle the conversion process from start to finish. Of course, they have a team of subject area specialists reporting to them, but the project manager oversees the entire project. We encourage our credit union partners to do the same thing on their side. We have found that this is a great approach to ensure that the timeline is maintained and deadlines are met. It also keeps the lines of communication open, makes for a consistent process, creates a sense of accountability, and allows for a smooth rollout.

When you take a systematic approach to a conversion then there is really no need to be fearful. Naturally, there needs to be a strong commitment to the process because it takes anywhere from six to 12 months to accomplish. It is a big job and there are going to be many changes for the credit union's employees, but in the end it will be worth it. Right now, we are performing about four very successful conversions per month thanks to the cooperative efforts of our team and our new credit union clients. I strongly believe that if you get the right people in the right jobs and empower them to do their work, that you will always get good results.

Many credit unions today are interested in attracting commercial or business members and helping those business members, while others have special services or products that they would like to offer in their marketplace. Since speed is of the essence in many cases, we provide the tools to our customers that allow them to perform virtually unlimited customization of the Episys® system. Using our PowerOn® utility program, our clients can fully customize Episys, including building user-defined data mining queries and inquiry screens. Plus, applications to automate specific tasks can be easily developed; and custom reports, forms, and member correspondence can be generated on demand.

We provide the tools that credit unions need to be nimble, solve real world business problems, and set themselves apart. All of the hard work of a conversion is worth it when a credit union can execute their unique strategies, while supporting their growth, service, and operational goals. This fact is born out in our post-conversion surveys which confirm that our conversion process is successful time and time again.



Kathy Hooker Burress
President

Kathy Hooker Burress is President of San Diego, CA-based Symitar. Symitar, a wholly owned subsidiary of Jack Henry & Associates (Nasdaq: JKHY), is the single source for totally integrated, enterprise-wide automation that credit unions need to execute dynamic business strategies. Our client-centric solutions are supporting more than 600 diverse credit unions by blending unmatched personal service ... innovative products and services ... state-of-the-art technology ... in-house and outsourced operating alternatives ... and integrity-based business relationships.

