

# From Above-Market Costs to a Strategic Partnership

## How River Valley Credit Union Reset Its Card Processing Program

A structured RFP, competitive evaluation, and end-to-end negotiation unlocked more than \$2.26M in negotiated value, improved pricing and service terms, and gave a 9,200-member credit union the leverage it needed — without disrupting members.



*Even a long-standing relationship should be periodically evaluated to ensure pricing, service levels, and product capabilities remain competitive and aligned with the credit union's needs.*

JANELLE FRANKE, CEO · RIVER VALLEY CREDIT UNION

**\$2.26M+**

TOTAL CONTRACTUAL INCENTIVES NEGOTIATED

**Expanded Capabilities**

PRICING · SERVICE TERMS · FUNCTIONALITY

**4 → 1**

PROCESSORS EVALUATED ONE PROVIDER SELECTED

### THE CHALLENGE

#### When a trusted vendor relationship stopped delivering

River Valley Credit Union — a 9,200-member institution based in Ada, Michigan — had a long, positive history with its card processor. That changed after the provider was acquired, and a forced platform migration introduced a cascade of operational issues: delayed chargeback postings, ATM network disruptions, BIN configuration errors, activation failures, and missed card reissues.

When monthly card-processing expenses surpassed the credit union's core data-processing costs, leadership had a clear signal: the arrangement no longer reflected market pricing or the level of service River Valley's members deserved. The incumbent offered only a minor debit-processing concession by email — without acknowledging the full scope of the card program.

*"Our monthly card-processing expenses had increased to the point where they exceeded our core data-processing costs. That imbalance was a clear signal that we needed to reassess."*

JANELLE FRANKE, CEO · RIVER VALLEY CREDIT UNION

### KEY PRIORITIES

- > Validate pricing against current market benchmarks
- > Maintain debit, credit, ATM & PIN alignment
- > Protect members from transition disruption
- > Expand product capabilities & functionality
- > Secure long-term contractual flexibility

### CLIENT PERSPECTIVE

The engagement reframed what a vendor evaluation could look like — from a transactional exercise into a strategic process that delivered measurable savings, stronger service terms, and expanded capabilities for members.

Reviewing vendor contracts isn't "rocking the boat." It's responsible leadership — an essential part of safeguarding members' best interests.

### KEY SERVICES DELIVERED

- Structured RFP issued to four leading processors
- Incentive identification & negotiation
- Solution demos & functional evaluation
- Contract support through signature
- Contract review & risk assessment

## THE APPROACH

### A competitive, structured process — not an internal tug-of-war.

ADVANTAGE managed the engagement end-to-end: building the RFP, orchestrating vendor demos, and staying at the table through contract negotiation and final review. River Valley's team supplied the information, and ADVANTAGE carried the weight.

#### END-TO-END ENGAGEMENT

- 01 Detailed RFP issued to four leading card processors covering debit, credit, ATM & PIN
- 02 Structured pause to give the incumbent a fair opportunity to retain the business
- 03 Solution demonstrations to evaluate functionality, scalability & operational fit
- 04 Contract review & risk assessment — identifying unfavorable terms and hidden costs
- 05 Targeted negotiations on pricing, incentives & service levels, with support through final review

*"Having multiple processors participate in the process fundamentally shifted the dynamic. It quickly became clear which vendors were genuinely invested in earning our business."*

JANELLE FRANKE, CEO

#### UNEXPECTED UPSIDE

Capabilities and terms that were previously limited or cost-prohibitive were included in the new agreement, including expanded card portfolio functionality, clearer service-level commitments, and a more responsive vendor partnership.

## THE RESULTS

### Measurable value, without added operational burden

River Valley secured more than \$2.26M in contractual incentives and gained improved pricing, service terms, and product capabilities through a competitive, benchmark-driven RFP — while keeping card services aligned under one provider relationship.

#### BEYOND THE NUMBERS

Expanded functionality, clearer service-level commitments and a more responsive vendor partnership.

## WHY ADVANTAGE

### A strategic partner — not just a vendor advisor

ADVANTAGE brought deep specialization in card processing, market intelligence, and decades of experience negotiating complex vendor agreements. That expertise gave River Valley confidence that every decision was grounded in real-world data, not assumptions.

Beyond identifying savings, ADVANTAGE uncovered incentive opportunities and structural improvements that would have been easy to overlook — staying at the table through every phase, from RFP through the credit union's attorney review.

*"I once viewed ADVANTAGE solely as an overdraft provider — through this process, they've proven to be a true strategic partner."*

JANELLE FRANKE, CEO · RIVER VALLEY CREDIT UNION

**\$2.26M+**

NEGOTIATED VALUE

Contractual incentives and value identified through a competitive RFP process

**Single Provider**

CARD SERVICES ALIGNMENT

Debit, credit, ATM and PIN maintained under one relationship

**Market-Aligned Terms**

PRICING & SERVICE LEVELS

Improved terms benchmarked against current standards

**Contingency-Based**

SUCCESS STRUCTURE

Fee model tied to negotiated savings and incentives

## WHAT ADVANTAGE DELIVERED

#### Leverage in the marketplace

Four-processor RFP created real competition on pricing, terms, and service levels.

#### Objective benchmarking

Independent analysis exposed where the incumbent's offer fell short of the market.

#### Minimal internal lift

RFP development, vendor coordination, benchmarking and contract support were handled end-to-end, reducing the burden on River Valley's lean internal team.

#### Continuity through signing

Support continued throughout the entire process to ensure negotiated terms were accurately reflected.

## START THE CONVERSATION

### Are you getting the maximum value from your current contracts?

A structured review reveals whether your agreements reflect today's market — or yesterday's assumptions.

CONNECT WITH OUR TEAM

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Vendor Contract Negotiation · Tech Stack Evaluation