

On Brand and On Message: CoBiz Financial Centralizes Communications to Drive Results

National-level services with a local touch: It's a message that resonates powerfully with business owners and executives, high-net-worth individuals, and professionals in Colorado and Arizona. By focusing intensively on its clients, CoBiz Financial has grown from a two-location operation with \$100 million in assets to a \$2.5 billion diversified financial services firm.



Eric Curry
Assistant Vice President,
Communications
CoBiz Financial
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The secret of the firm's success? According to **Eric Curry, Assistant Vice President, Communications**, "We're a one-stop shop. From banking and insurance, to employee benefits and M&A services, to wealth management, we serve as true partners to our customers throughout the full lifecycle of their businesses—integrating our approach and delivering the highest levels of service to meet all of their financial needs."

With its reputation for comprehensive, bespoke service, **CoBiz Financial was eager to evolve its communications to match its brand.** Previously, the company used both emails and an email marketing service to communicate with its employees and clients. But the results weren't ideal. According to Curry, employees would send emails for product and other announcements, clogging their colleagues' inboxes with constant updates. Client relationship managers would send company information and presentations to clients via blind copy, meaning customers could have received

multiple copies of items or even worse, not received them at all if the emails were filtered as spam. “That was a problem,” says Curry. “With the advent of the CAN-SPAM laws, we needed to offer customers valuable, targeted messaging, as well as a centralized and easy unsubscribe option — or risk facing fines.”

The company’s previous email marketing solution, which should have consolidated information flow, was part of the problem. It was difficult to use, didn’t provide good segmentation tools, and couldn’t deliver accurate metrics. “The reporting drove us crazy,” says Curry. “Sometimes unique opens and total opens conflicted with each other. Click-through percentages were a few points off here or there. Or the report would show there were three unsubscribes but we’d only see one. There is nothing more embarrassing than meeting with an executive to go over campaign results and having to explain numbers that didn’t add up the right way.”

Reaching Out with Resources

The communications team wanted to empower each of the company’s subsidiaries to do outreach to its clients, while maintaining control of the tools and messaging at the corporate level. Marketing budgets were tight, so advertising couldn’t be the only way to reach the target audience—middle-market businesses and their leaders—effectively. As a consequence, leveraging branded email newsletters made good sense from both a strategic and financial standpoint.

On Curry’s to-do list was finding an email marketing solution that offered **superior segmentation capabilities, user authentication and role-based access controls, and accurate reporting**, so that CoBiz Financial could implement better controls and do test-and-learn marketing with its campaigns. The company also wanted hosting services and unique URLs for each article, so readers would have clean, multi-column newsletters that wouldn’t require them to scroll through a lengthy, multi-page email to read all of the articles. That functionality would spare CoBiz Financial from having to manually create

pages on its own website for each article, and it would be easy to determine which articles were being read, enhancing content planning.

Serious Brand Appeal

Curry's research led him to EmailOpen, and he selected the company to be his new communications partner in July 2011. The communication department oversaw the design of multiple internal and external communications tools, which used the CoBiz style guide to provide a consistent look and feel. "Having that brand consistency across all our electronic messaging is very important for us, because we have so many companies under the CoBiz Financial umbrella. **EmailOpen really got our brand and translated it well into an electronic format with consistent elements.** Having those templates keeps everyone on the same page," says Curry.

Curry says the communication solution is so easy to use that the users can do "95% of everything themselves" after EmailOpen trains them. Five staffers gather content and create an initial draft of each newsletter. The communications team edits the issues and sends them to compliance for a legal review. After they are approved by both compliance and communications, the initial user can distribute each issue with a click of a button.

If users do need help, it is only a phone call or an email away. Joking, Curry says, "Sometimes we are needy. We'll ask stupid questions. We are impatient. If we messed something up, we need it fixed quickly because we are working on tight deadlines, like a Friday or a Saturday for a Monday delivery. **The support at EmailOpen has been great:**

"EmailOpen has really helped us take both our internal and external communications to the next level. With amazing training and support, powerful tools, and quality analytics and reporting, we're able to get our messages out to our audiences quickly and easily."

- **Eric Curry**

Assistant Vice President
Communications
CoBiz Financial

The staff will patiently walk us through a fix that we probably already knew how to do.” On a more serious note, he adds: “Some of the other email solutions I looked at didn’t provide support. They say, ‘Here are 12 templates, add your logo, and hit send—but don’t call us.’ That doesn’t work for us. Sometimes we have unique needs or want to try something a little out of the box that requires a bit more than just a standard template.” CoBiz Financial not only gets the technical help it requires on short notice, but employees also suggest new features that often find their way into solution updates.

Currentcy that Carries Weight

The company distributes three internal newsletters: Monday Morning Roundup, which goes to all of the firm’s employees each week; Currentcy, which is distributed to bank operations staff on a monthly basis; and Altitude, which is sent to managers each month. The company sends out e-newsletters from CoBiz Insurance and CoBiz Wealth and publicizes its annual Biz Bash and other events with specialized emails that are sent to targeted groups across the CoBiz Financial family. It also has various alert templates for late-breaking industry developments. Curry says that he is pushing for deeper segmentation, using location, customer lifecycle, company size, industry, assets, and other variables, to drive content marketing. “We’re working on it. On the



Monday Morning Roundup
Email Newsletter & Landing Page



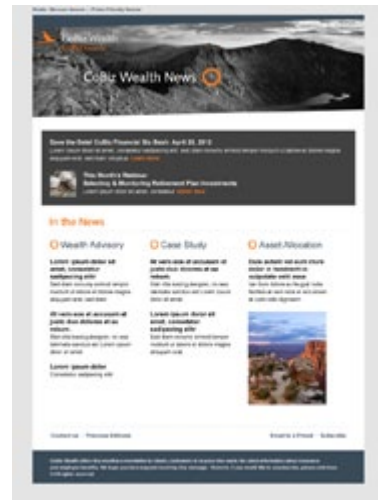
Currentcy
Email Newsletter & Landing Page

front end it takes more work, but over the long term it is worth it to our customers. We always want to be a partner to our clients, a resource to help them make critical decisions for their businesses. By segmenting and delivering quality content that meets their needs, we ensure that we'll never be just another email in an inbox," says Curry.

The seven email templates and newsletters are all hosted on EmailOpen's servers, which are protected by state-of-the art security. **"We want our employees and clients to be able to read the newsletters on their phones or computers or in their hotel rooms, without having to access our network or intranet. They are secure and private, but still on the Internet,"** states Curry.

EmailOpen has helped CoBiz Financial to achieve great success with its internal communications. **"We have a 90% to 95% read rate with our internal newsletters. We are very selective about what we allow in our newsletters. Our employees know these tools are excellent sources of company information and that we won't waste their time with fluffy stories,"** says Curry.

The communications team uses EmailOpen's analytics to review metrics, which include newsletter opens, clickthroughs, and demographics. "I am a data freak," says Curry. "I am constantly looking at what our recipients are and aren't reading, to see what we can do better.



CoBiz Wealth News
Email Newsletter & Landing Page



CoBiz Insurance News
Email Newsletter & Landing Page



The integrity of the data helps us to make informed decisions about which articles to write, what subject lines to use, which links to include, and how often to send something out.”

Curry feels EmailOpen has helped his team dramatically increase its communications effectiveness. **“Our goal is to consistently provide relevant, targeted content so that we keep our employees and customers engaged. That is where EmailOpen comes in,”** he states.

Meet Eric Curry

Eric Curry oversees marketing, advertising, and branding for CoBiz Financial and its subsidiary companies: Colorado Business Bank and Arizona Business Bank, which provide commercial banking services; CoBiz Wealth Management, which offers wealth planning and investment management; CoBiz Insurance, which delivers property and casualty insurance brokerage and employee benefits; and Green Manning & Bunch, which is the firm’s investment banking operation. Previously, Curry served in high-visibility media roles, including publicist and spokesperson for Six Flags Elitch Gardens; press secretary for Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer; and executive producer and evening anchor for KGWN Newschannel 5.