



Build, Buy, or Blend:

creating the ultimate member experience ecosystem



Headquarters

Richmond, VA

Products

Mortgage Suite, Deposit Accounts, Blend Builder

Offering products, services and resources that build confidence and help members achieve greater financial success — that's been [Virginia Credit Union's](#) mission and recipe for success for almost a century.

Following an August 2024 merger with Roanoke, Virginia-based MemberOne Federal Credit Union, the now-combined VACU organization is fast-approaching \$7 billion in assets and 500,000 members. New members, new markets, but the same focus on its mission and the same unwavering commitment to leveraging its many strengths and today's best technology to create value for its members.

Back in 2020, as mortgage rates were dropping and loan volumes were increasing, VACU went live with Blend's Mortgage Solution — and they haven't looked back! In fact, [Blend and VACU](#) have continued their partnership with the addition of a full mortgage suite and consumer banking products that have made it possible for VACU to provide a unified digital application system to their members.

Problem: **Deciding between build, buy, or Blend?**

The VACU team was an early adopter of digital application solutions in the credit union space, having built in-house membership, account opening, and consumer lending products as early as 2013. Although their platform was tailored to a credit union experience and was able to serve their members well, Frank Macrina, Senior Vice President, Products & Channels notes the crossroads the credit union had reached by 2020. “It was the right time for us to explore the market and look for technology vendors who offered similar services. But we needed a platform that was flexible, innovative, and that would allow us to tailor it and, ultimately, differentiate ourselves.”

The VACU team was able to serve many more members using [Blend's Mortgage Suite](#), so Macrina and his colleagues had their eye on the future for the other banking products the credit union offers. Jason Moore, Director of Digital Growth, explained, “With Blend, we saw an opportunity to break free of siloed, individual applications and to create a digital application ecosystem for consumer loans, mortgage, membership, deposit accounts — all of it. We saw an opportunity to provide our members with a system that would have the same look and feel whether they are applying for a loan or opening a deposit account. Over time, it becomes familiar to them and it's all controlled in the same place.” Partnering with Blend made it possible for the VACU team to streamline their application process and offered the possibility to scale across product lines.

“Given the pace of technological change, it was a challenge to keep up —we're not a software development company. We needed to find a partner that would allow us to keep providing the great application experience that our members expected, but that would also give us the flexibility of adding features incrementally over time.”

Jason Moore

Director of Digital Growth

Solution: **Building a customer experience ecosystem**

Knowing that they wanted to build a unified member experience was the first step for the VACU team — they just needed to find the right platform.

After four years of mortgage success with Blend, adding on the full consumer banking suite seemed like a natural fit. Pursuing discussions with Blend about loan origination and deposit accounts, and after determining that both the front-end and back-end of the application were important to the VACU team, Macrina and Moore decided that Blend’s platform offered the perfect solution for VACU’s needs. With an extensive partner ecosystem and the full support of the VACU staff for the system’s backend, the next step was implementation.

“We talk a lot about the front-end tools, but there's a back-end component, too, that has to be supported by employees. Soup to nuts, Blend was able to solve both ends for us. We knew we had to reconstruct what we had, and we knew we needed newer technology. Blend came at the right time to present a truly forward-thinking solution. It used the latest and greatest tech, had a lot of great partnership integrations, and aligned well with the backend tools.”

Mitch Jones

Senior Vice President, Mortgage Lending

Outcome: **Delivering better member experiences across product lines**

Blend’s technology has transformed VACU’s [deposit account opening process](#). Since adopting the full Blend platform, member experiences have improved across product lines, and the VACU team is seeing results across the board:

70%

of member debit cards are funded upon account creation

90%

of members said they felt supported throughout the process, compared to 70% pre-implementation

83%

of customers said the process was easy to complete, compared to 77% pre-implementation

As far as operational efficiency gains, Mitchell Jones, Senior Vice President, Mortgage Lending said: “One of the biggest things that ties directly back to Blend is that we've gotten much better with things like day one certainty. We were able to integrate these automated data sources for income and assets. All of that comes together and certainly saves time for the applicant.”

Additionally, integrating Magic Links during 2024 has reduced abandoned applications. VACU employees are seeing considerable time savings and are reporting less follow-up is required, even as the quality of applicants/applications coming through the system improves. Blend’s solution has also influenced the membership experience across other products like vehicle loans, credit cards, and mortgages by transforming VACU’s deposit account strategy. Additional features like a shopping cart experience are on the horizon, which will allow members to apply for multiple products at once.

“I believe that a consistent member experience is important. I also believe that innovating in this environment at a pace that's needed is difficult. I think partnering with the right vendor lets you innovate at a pace that can keep up with what the market is asking for. We're not primarily a development shop, so it's better to partner with somebody who is always innovating, always building, and always skating where the puck's going.”

Mitch Jones

Senior Vice President, Mortgage Lending

Looking to the future

As Jones stated, banking industry trends change rapidly, and financial institutions like VACU need to be able to innovate and pivot just as quickly. Jones, Macrina, and Moore have their eye on the future and are carefully considering and evaluating how to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to things like AI, emerging trends in title insurance, down payment assistance, and finding best-in-class data sources with the right connections for more automated decisioning.

Jones explained, “We don’t just want to wait out the rates. We're really trying to look forward. There's also a lot to be done in the affordable housing space. We’re deeply committed to sourcing down payment assistance and grant funds for our applicants.” Partnering with Blend has allowed the VACU team to adopt the technology that makes it possible for them to lean into their strengths, like personalization, accessibility and their position as a trusted financial services provider, empowering members to live confidently and achieve greater financial success.



Blend is the infrastructure powering the future of banking. Financial providers — from large banks, fintechs, and credit unions to community and independent mortgage banks — use Blend’s platform to transform banking experiences for their customers. Blend powers billions of financial transactions every day.

To learn more, visit [Blend.com](https://blend.com)