

CASE STUDY: **FREEDOM FEDERAL CREDIT UNION**

HOW STRATEGIC IT LEADERSHIP POWERS FREEDOM FEDERAL CREDIT UNION'S GROWTH - INCLUDING A $100M MERGER

HARTMAN
EXECUTIVE ADVISORS



OVERVIEW

Freedom Federal Credit Union recognized that long-term growth requires more than stable systems. It requires executive-level technology leadership aligned with business strategy.

To modernize its infrastructure, strengthen governance, and position the organization for expansion, Freedom partnered with Hartman Executive Advisors under a fractional CIO model. This partnership embedded strategic IT leadership directly into the executive team, transforming technology from a support function into a driver of operational excellence and growth.

TESTIMONIAL

“We’re experts in financial services, not IT, so we sought a strategic IT partner who could work alongside us as we grew. Hartman has been indispensable - connecting us with the right people at the right time, bringing seasoned perspective to key decisions, and helping us execute with confidence. They’re part of our team. Their empathy, collaboration, and problem-solving mindset have made our lives, and our members’ experience, better.”

Michele Young
Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer

HARTMAN EXECUTIVE ADVISORS



THE CHALLENGE

Over the course of a long-standing partnership, Hartman has worked closely with Freedom to address a range of evolving IT challenges - impacting both daily operations and long-term strategic goals, including:

- Aging, inconsistently maintained infrastructure limiting scalability
- Limited executive IT representation, resulting in reactive decision-making
- Governance gaps impacting alignment between technology investment and business priorities
- Growth ambitions, including branch expansion and acquisition strategy, without a scalable IT foundation

Freedom did not want reactive fixes. They wanted structure, alignment, and confidence in their next phase of growth.



THE SOLUTION

Following a comprehensive assessment, Hartman developed and executed a multi-year transformation roadmap built on four pillars:

1. Embedded Strategic IT Leadership

- Integrated fractional CIO leadership into the executive team
- Established multi-year strategic IT roadmap
- Rebuilt and stabilized the internal IT function
- Elevated IT to a core component of board-level strategy discussions

Technology decisions became aligned with business growth objectives.

2. Governance & Operational Discipline

- Implemented formal IT governance structure
- Defined accountability, risk visibility, and reporting standards
- Transitioned IT from reactive support to proactive strategic function

This created the operational maturity required to scale responsibly.

3. Infrastructure Modernization & Security Advancement

- Modernized core infrastructure and strengthened cybersecurity posture
- Renegotiated key technology contracts
- Advanced cloud migration strategy to improve scalability and cost optimization
- Launched a Digital Journey Committee to enhance member-facing technology experience

System resilience improved, cost structure stabilized, and member experience advanced.



THE SOLUTION

4. Merger Readiness & Execution

With foundational governance and infrastructure in place, Freedom was positioned to pursue strategic growth through acquisition.

Hartman partnered with executive leadership to evaluate potential targets through a technology and integration lens - assessing core compatibility, infrastructure scalability, data integrity risks, vendor overlap, and regulatory implications prior to transaction approval. This ensured the institution's growth strategy was supported by operational readiness.

When a strategic merger opportunity moved forward, Hartman led the integration effort from pre-close planning through full systems conversion.

Execution included:

- Technology due diligence and integration road mapping
- Core and ancillary system alignment
- Infrastructure consolidation and security continuity
- Data validation and migration oversight
- Structured governance to maintain accountability across business lines
- Operational readiness planning to protect member and customer experience

The transaction added approximately $100 million in assets, expanded Freedom's geographic footprint, and strengthened its membership base - all without disrupting member service or creating regulatory or operational strain.

Members experienced a seamless transition, and the organization emerged stronger and ready for its next phase of growth.



RESULTS

Hartman's long-term partnership has delivered measurable strategic value:

- **Enhanced Member Experience:** Improved call center efficiency and digital integration strengthened service responsiveness.
- **Cost Optimization & Scalability:** Cloud advancement and vendor renegotiation improved financial efficiency while supporting future growth.
- **M&A Execution Capability:** Successful integration of a $100M asset merger with operational continuity and governance control.
- **Executive Alignment:** Embedded CIO leadership transformed IT into a forward-looking strategic partner to the executive team and board.

A TRUE LEADERSHIP PARTNER

Hartman does not operate as an external consultant. The firm became part of Freedom's leadership fabric - providing steady guidance, executive accountability, and disciplined execution at every stage of growth.

Technology is no longer simply operational. It is a structured enabler of Freedom's strategy.