

# CITINET SOLUTIONS | CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



## CREDIT NONPROFIT BANKS ON CITINET TO DRIVE GROWTH

Bedrock Credit America, a nonprofit for credit education and restoration, had outgrown its spreadsheet and email approach to client management and needed to become more efficient if it were to sustain growth.

### CHALLENGE

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Transition a financial services nonprofit from Microsoft applications to a relational database platform that can service more than 4,000 accounts annually while protecting client confidentiality.

### SOLUTION

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A customized backend platform based on FileMaker that automates nearly all of the intake and correspondence, tracks client progress, generates payment reminders for clients and sends formatted, personalized letters to the three major credit bureaus on the client's behalf.

### RESULTS

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- 97% increase in report-creation efficiency
- 60% daily hours recapture by shedding manual tasks
- Automated credit card processing
- Customized portal for referral partners
- Client portal for progress tracking, document uploads

**“ 60 percent of my day will be covered by automation. ”**

In a typical year, Bedrock Credit America will send letters to credit bureaus on behalf of about 200 clients trying to improve their credit scores.

The letters are sent monthly, so that's 36 letters per year for each client, 7,200 letters in all, and that doesn't include power-of-attorney forms, emails or incidental correspondence.

Bedrock CEO Stephen Robert had been doing these letters manually for most of his 15 years in the business. He had the template letters for each credit bureau, but customizing the dispute for each client took the bulk of his day.

Collecting information about the client for each letter meant combing through the labyrinth of Microsoft emails, documents and spreadsheets.

"It was the most labor-intensive thing I did every week," says Stephen.

Today, he has cut the form letter time by nearly two-thirds because he no longer has to wade through all the Microsoft applications and collect data.

"I don't even have to think about what letter to use," he says. "With this Citinet platform, the information is collected and the AI chooses an appropriate dispute letter from our library."

Using different letters each month is a keystone of Bedrock's strategy in correspondence with credit bureaus, so the agencies don't develop that "same-letter-as-last-month" indifference. Each letter sounds fresh and new.

The letters are among some of the more than 600 data points created by Citinet to enhance workflows and drive efficiency.

Bedrock uses the platform as an ERP and CRM.

## A HALF-DAY'S WORK IN MINUTES

Another series of data points handles the debt settlement process. Because clients typically have two to 10 open debts, contacting the collections agencies and negotiating a settlement was a time-eater.

Now, a half-day's work is done in minutes, especially with the electronic signature functionality for all documents, Stephen says:

"We can push out an offer letter that says we want to settle for this amount. Once that is accepted and we get the settlement letter back, we put in that amount and push another button and it sends a letter to the client telling them how to pay it. They send us back proof of payment, we hit another button and send a request to the collection company for a zero-balance letter. We get that and then a request goes to the credit bureau to remove the negative data."

That's a huge shift in efficiency for Lynn Rivers, Bedrock's collections supervisor.

She used to spend most of her day obtaining the power of attorney from the client, writing the settlement offers and shepherding the rest of the process through phone calls and additional letters.

"I just click now, fill in the offer number and start the process," says Lynn.

Showing Lynn the new automated process was a joyful moment for Stephen.

"There were tears in her eyes when she saw how simple it was versus what she used to have to do," he says.

**"I just click now, fill in the offer number and start the process."**

—Lynn Rivers, collections supervisor

## A PARTNER PORTAL

Part of the Bedrock project in the next phase will be the creation of web portals for client referrals and a client portal that will enable them to upload documents and track their progress toward settling debts and improving their credit rating.

Most of Bedrock's clients come through referrals from mortgage lenders or real estate sales agents, who are trying to help potential homebuyers improve their credit rating in order to qualify for a mortgage.

In addition to containing downloadable information about Bedrock, the portal will allow the bankers or agents to upload information about the potential buyer, include credit reports

or other types of financial screening forms, and then track the potential buyer's progress if they agreed to work with Bedrock.

FAQs will be another time-saving portal feature.

"I really think it's going to help us skyrocket our overall customer base," says Stephen, explaining that his referral partners won't have to ask him questions about the process or explain the Bedrock to potential homebuyers in such detail.

"Being able to generate that portal is going to free up a lot of time, as well as give us a little bit more clout with our partners because we have supplied all this educational material about credit."

## A CLIENT PORTAL

Improving credit scores can be a lengthy process that might become discouraging to clients. Except in rare cases, it takes at least a year for clients to pay off debts and see their scores begin to rise.

Although Bedrock's action plan for each client shows debts being paid step by step, it can seem like a sluggish pace to clients.

Encouragement along the way helps substantially.

"They're going to be able to see in full transparency what's happening with their accounts when they go to the portal," says Stephen. "They're going to see we've sent out the power of attorney and we're waiting to hear back from the collection company. Or they've made a payment, and we're waiting for the zero-balance letter. Or the zero-balance documentation has been sent to the credit bureaus, and we're waiting for them to delete the debt.

"The real beauty from our end is that we no longer have to update all this manually."

For those forgetful clients, Citinet has built in an automated reminder system. With it, the Bedrock platform begins sending emails about payment due dates 10 days before a payment to creditors is due.

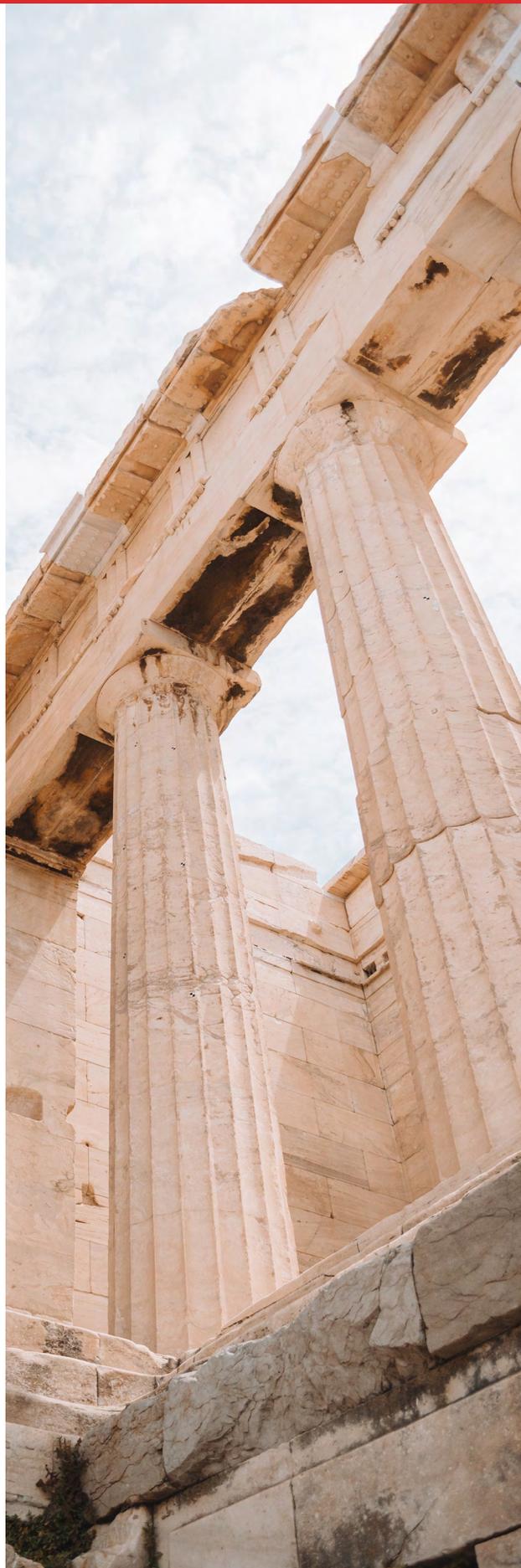
The system sends a daily reminder until it gets a statement that the bill has been paid.

In addition, the automated document storage can be used to support payment claims if a collections company disputes whether a payment was made.

"They might be like, 'Oh, we didn't receive any payments or anything like that.' And we have to say, 'Yes, you did. Look, here's the proof of the payment. Here's proof of the tracking information all that,'" says Stephen.

Using Bedrock's dashboards, staff for the first time instantly can pull complex reports that track client service time, top partner referrals, trends in the credit industry and many more pieces of business intelligence – information that might take a day to compile from the old Microsoft applications.

"We're already a smarter business," Stephen says.



## FROM NICE CAR TO ROCKET SHIP

Because Citinet builds customized platforms that contain only what a customer needs, much of the clutter and extraneous functionality imbued in the big out-of-the-box systems is eliminated.

That doesn't mean that the customer can't add functionality during the development or implement process.

As Stephen learned about the Citinet platform's versatility, he wanted his system to do more and more.

"Over the past year and a half, I've just continued to add and add and change and edit: what about this; can the system do this? Let's make it do this. This will be good for us. This will be good for the client. This will be good for the referral partners," he says.

Because of the FileMaker platform's versatility, Citinet developers easily said yes to every request and produced an outstanding solution for Bedrock.

Says Citinet CEO Edward Zaremba: "We went from building Bedrock that nice little car to building a rocket ship. It's not even an upgraded car, like a Mercedes, it's a whole different stratosphere."

Stephen appreciated the can-do approach.

"To Citinet's credit, they've been absolutely incredible in listening to what my wants are, and in taking my thoughts and making them into technological reality," he says.

Lynn, the collections supervisor, used to send clients the daily reminders about payments coming due.

The new platform cuts hours to minutes:

"With the system doing that, that's like pulling a rabbit out of a hat."



**“ I really think it's going to help us skyrocket our overall customer base. ”**

–Stephen Robert, CEO



### ABOUT CITINET SOLUTIONS:

We strengthen technology, enhance relationships and inspire businesses with best-in-class solutions. Citinet provides support capabilities: from production, design and data analytics to infrastructure, cyber security, automation and much more. We are hands on; no outsourcing. We have been that way since our founding in 2004 as New York City's second Apple Computer authorized business agent. We deliver the right solution at the right time for enterprise and SMB partners. Citinet is a member of the Westchester Business Council and the FileMaker Business Alliance.

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