



# **The Strategic Advantage:** How Technology Integration Powers Successful Bank M&A



# Executive Summary

The financial services industry is experiencing a pronounced surge in merger and acquisition activity. As banks seek scale, enhanced capabilities, and competitive positioning in an evolving landscape, technology integration has emerged as a critical factor in determining M&A success or failure.

Financial institutions that approach mergers with sophisticated technology strategies gain measurable advantages: faster integrations, higher employee adoption rates, improved customer retention, and quicker returns on their investment. Those that treat technology as an afterthought face predictable challenges, such as operational disruptions, customer attrition, and deals that don't deliver their promised value.

This white paper examines the current M&A environment in banking, explores why technology integration can determine merger outcomes, and demonstrates how the nCino Platform has supported institutions through successful acquisitions by enabling rapid onboarding, operational efficiency, and seamless customer experiences.

# The State of Banking M&A in 2025: A Look Back

In 2025, the banking industry experienced an unusually active merger season. In early October, Fifth Third Bancorp and Comerica Incorporated [announced a definitive merger agreement](#) valued at \$10.9 billion, which will create the ninth-largest U.S. bank with approximately \$288 billion in assets.<sup>1</sup> This follows [PNC Financial Services Group's announcement to acquire Colorado-based FirstBank](#) for \$4.1 billion,<sup>2</sup> and the [\\$8.6 billion merger](#) between [Pinnacle Financial Partners and Synovus Financial](#).<sup>(3,4)</sup>

## Why Banks Are Pursuing M&A

Organizations are looking to mergers and acquisitions to:

- Increase market share and decrease costs through consolidation
- Expand geographical footprint or consolidate overlapping markets
- Achieve scale to better meet regulatory requirements and compliance burdens
- Boost digital offerings and enhance technology capabilities
- Deploy and update technology stacks while modernizing legacy infrastructure

According to [Cherry Bekaert's 2025 banking M&A outlook](#), one of the key drivers of deal activity is the pursuit of economies of scale, with banks seeking greater efficiency and competitiveness through strategic acquisitions that enable them to spread fixed costs over a larger asset base and enhance revenue potential, particularly as regulatory requirements and compliance costs continue to escalate.<sup>5</sup>



# The Technology Integration Challenge

While dealmakers typically focus on cultural fit, customer retention, and financial synergies, technology integration frequently receives insufficient attention until after the deal closes, often with costly consequences. The reality is sobering: according to a 2020 study from the [Harvard Business Review](#), 70% to 90% of mergers across all industries fail during the post-merger integration phase, with technology integration cited as a top pain point where companies make the most mistakes.<sup>6</sup>

## The Hidden Costs of Poor Integration

The financial impact of inadequate technology planning extends far beyond IT budgets:

- **Customer attrition accelerates** when service quality degrades during integration. [A 2024 study from Ideanics Advisors](#) shows that while the average churn rate for banks is around 5%, this figure can rise to 8-10% after a merger.<sup>7</sup>
- **Employee productivity suffers** as staff struggle to serve customers across incompatible systems, with talented employees growing frustrated and seeking opportunities elsewhere.
- **Operational efficiency declines** rather than improves as the promised synergies evaporate while employees spend more time fighting technology than serving customers.
- **Regulatory compliance becomes more difficult** as institutions struggle to report accurately across fragmented platforms.
- **Strategic synergy targets go unrealized** as technology limitations prevent the combined entity from functioning as an integrated organization.

Merging core banking systems, digital platforms, and data infrastructure is one of the riskiest aspects of any bank merger, with many banks underestimating complexity and leading to big cost overruns and service disruptions.

The stakes are high when integration goes wrong. [First Union Bank lost 20% of its customer base in the first year after purchasing CoreStates Financial](#).<sup>8</sup> Other institutions have faced customers locked out of accounts, unable to make payments, or losing access to records when security systems unnecessarily flag legitimate behaviors during system migrations.

Financial institutions with modern, cloud-based platforms, on the other hand, have demonstrated a markedly different experience. Industry analysis shows that banks emphasizing technology investment and scalability before M&A activity are better positioned for successful integration. Rather than facing the typical scenario of forcing incompatible systems to communicate, institutions with integration-ready platforms can focus on the strategic work of combining operations rather than wrestling with technological limitations. [As one industry expert noted in American Banker](#) regarding the BB&T-SunTrust merger, "The theory here is combine the companies, cut a lot of costs, and plow that cost-cutting into technology investment."<sup>9</sup>



# The Platform Advantage: A Different Approach to M&A

The uptick in M&A activity is coinciding with digital transformation efforts. This can present many opportunities as financial institutions transition to new corporate entities. Forward-thinking institutions are fundamentally changing how they approach M&A technology strategy by establishing unified platforms before acquisition conversations even begin.

An institution with scalable cloud-based technology, like the nCino Platform, can more efficiently integrate complex business models and processes. Rather than inheriting technology debt from every deal, these institutions create common platforms that acquired banks can adopt quickly and efficiently.

## Three Critical Technology Capabilities for M&A Success

### 1. Technology That Enables Scale

According to [Bank Director's 2025 Bank M&A Survey](#), 43% of bank leaders are open to acquisitions, driven by scale and technology investments.<sup>10</sup> Seamless integration is critical to unlocking post-merger value. Cloud-based platforms provide the agility and flexibility needed to rapidly onboard acquired institutions without extensive infrastructure migration.

Busey Bank, a \$11+ billion financial institution headquartered in Champaign, Illinois, has pursued an aggressive acquisition strategy to expand its footprint across Illinois, Missouri, and Florida. The bank's ability to quickly integrate acquired institutions has been central to its M&A success. By implementing the nCino Platform, Busey built a scalable technology foundation that allows the bank to rapidly absorb new entities without the typical delays and complications of legacy system integrations.

Van Dukeman, President and CEO at Busey Bank, explains: "We've been fairly acquisitive, so as we've bought banks,

we can get them onto the nCino Platform very quickly and interface with our core operating system. If you don't have a cloud-based system, it's much more difficult to onboard."

Paul Clarkson, Executive Vice President of Global Revenue at nCino, reinforces this advantage: "There are a lot of mergers and acquisitions taking place, and the winners like Busey Bank have good cloud infrastructure so that they can rapidly onboard those banks that they do acquire, and it gives them the scale to quickly do it."

### 2. User-Friendly Experiences That Drive Adoption

[16% of bank leaders cite technology integration as a key hurdle.](#)<sup>10</sup> M&A involves merging disparate systems like core banking, CRM, and loan origination. Integration platforms connect legacy systems and modern tools with API-driven solutions, reducing silos and inefficiencies.

Intuitive platforms with modern interfaces reduce training requirements and accelerate employee productivity during transitions. When staff from acquired institutions gain immediate access to superior tools with intuitive experiences, adoption happens naturally rather than through forced change management.

Bryn Mawr Trust's experience demonstrates how having the right technology foundation pays dividends during M&A. When the \$5.4 billion institution implemented the nCino Platform in early 2020, Adam Bonanno, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, emphasized the importance of their approach: "nCino was going to change the way we worked. It was important for us to think about lending differently and learn to trust the system. We went through a change management program, focused on communication, training, and education to prepare for that."

That technology infrastructure became a strategic asset when WSFS Bank acquired Bryn Mawr Trust in 2022.

Rather than facing the typical challenge of reconciling incompatible systems, both institutions were able to leverage their shared nCino Platform. Brian Biasini, then VP of Salesforce Application Strategy Lead at WSFS (now VP, Salesforce Product Owner Business Banking at Citizens Bank, another nCino customer), noted the value of having common technology partners during the integration: "In addition to WSFS being committed to our success, we have partners like Salesforce and nCino who are incredibly engaged with the projects we're working on and work closely with us to help achieve our goals."

The transferability of cloud-based platform skills also smoothed the integration process. Biasini's career trajectory—moving from WSFS to Citizens Bank, both nCino customers—illustrates how standardized, modern banking platforms create a more mobile workforce with immediately applicable skills. WSFS actively recruited for nCino-specific roles during the integration period, recognizing that employees familiar with the platform could contribute immediately rather than requiring extensive retraining on proprietary systems.

### 3. Data Centralization and Portfolio-Level Decisioning

[53% of bank executives see post-merger integration as a top challenge.](#)<sup>10</sup> Beyond the technical complexity of connecting systems, mergers create a fundamental data problem: how do you gain a unified view of risk, performance, and customer relationships across what were previously separate institutions with different data standards, reporting frameworks, and analytical approaches?

Traditional M&A integration approaches often result in banks operating multiple systems in parallel for months or even years. Commercial lending might run on the acquiring bank's platform while the acquired institution's retail operations continue on legacy systems. Credit analysis teams use different methodologies. Risk officers compile reports manually from disparate sources. This fragmentation creates tangible risks including duplicate customer records leading to inappropriate credit decisions, inability to identify concentration risks across the merged entity, and missed cross-sell opportunities because relationship managers can't see the complete customer picture.

Integration platforms with unified data models solve these challenges by creating a single source of truth from day one. Modern cloud-based platforms like the nCino Platform demonstrate how integrated data architectures accelerate post-merger value realization. [nCino Portfolio Analytics](#) provides merged institutions with immediate visibility across their entire loan portfolio, regardless of which legacy system originated the relationships.<sup>11</sup> Credit officers can analyze concentration risk across both institutions' historical portfolios without waiting for lengthy data migration projects. Executives can generate consolidated regulatory reports without manual reconciliation processes.

The operational advantages translate into concrete outcomes: faster account holder onboarding through standardized workflows, reduced errors and operational redundancy with single data entry points, and scalability for future acquisitions as teams develop repeatable integration capabilities. Integration platforms can significantly accelerate deployment timelines and reduce costs. [Industry case studies show](#) that banking-specific integration solutions can achieve up to 50% savings in both cycle time and cost for post-merger integration of business processes, applications, and data.<sup>12</sup>



# nCino Customer Success in M&A: Real Results

For over a decade, the nCino Platform has supported numerous financial institutions through successful merger and acquisition activity, delivering measurable results across integration speed, operational efficiency, and customer experience.

## **Busey Bank: A Multi-Acquisition Growth Strategy**

Busey Bank, a highly adaptive institution consistently named by American Banker as one of the Best Banks to Work For, is paving the way for growth and innovation through its use of cutting-edge technology. The institution's M&A journey with nCino demonstrates how the right technology foundation enables sustainable, acquisition-driven growth.

Busey Bank was introduced to the cloud-based nCino Platform in 2016 when it acquired Pulaski Bank (\$1.5B asset size). At the time, Pulaski Bank was utilizing nCino within its commercial lending function. During the onboarding of Pulaski in late 2016, the team at Busey Bank recognized that nCino could support its multi-regional organization while also automating its workflow. Busey Bank made the decision to expand their use of the technology and, in 2017, implemented the nCino Platform across its commercial line of business.

Busey Bank's Van Dukeman explains: "nCino really transformed manual origination, credit, and closing activities for the origination or renewal of commercial loans to an automated process. We went from doing a lot of the nuts and bolts manually to doing it in an automated fashion."

In January 2019, Busey acquired The Bank of Edwardsville (TheBANK), an active nCino user since June 2014. The project team leveraged lessons learned from the Pulaski conversion and successfully merged TheBANK's documents and data to Busey's instance of nCino.

Julie Kavy, Executive Vice President-Commercial Banking Service Support at Busey Bank, notes: "Busey Bank's growth has been achieved through organic growth and acquisitions while maintaining a community-minded approach to serving

our various markets. We're a highly adaptive organization focused on continuous improvement."

## **First Horizon Bank: Enterprise-Wide Transformation Through M&A**

In November 2019, [Memphis-based First Horizon and Louisiana-based IBERIABANK announced their merger](#) in a stock deal valued at \$3.9 billion deal framed as a merger of equals.<sup>13</sup> The transaction closed on July 2, 2020, [creating a combined company](#) with \$79 billion in assets, \$60 billion in deposits and \$58 billion in loans across 11 states in the Southeast.<sup>14</sup>

IBERIABANK had been a long-standing nCino customer prior to the merger, giving the combined institution an opportunity to leverage proven technology across a significantly expanded footprint. Michael Brown, President of Regional Banking at First Horizon Bank, explains the bank's approach: "Based on IBERIABANK's strong partnership with nCino for many years, we are excited to expand our use of nCino as a combined organization. nCino is a major part of a broad business transformation to provide an exceptional technology-enabled experience for our associates, create more efficient processes and add more value to our client relationships."

Cloud-based technology stacks offer robust, flexible, and highly configurable solutions that can be more easily deployed across newly merged entities in comparison to traditional legacy systems—a critical advantage when integrating operations across an 11-state footprint.

## South State Bank: Digital Capabilities and Customer Service

South State Bank has pursued an active acquisition strategy, leveraging technology as a foundation for growth. In June 2019, [the bank selected the nCino Platform](#) across its commercial banking division to improve lending efficiency and provide a digital, omnichannel experience for customers.<sup>15</sup> Just one year later, [South State completed a merger with CenterState Bank](#), creating a combined bank with \$34 billion in assets.<sup>16</sup>

The institution's acquisition activity continued with [an agreement in May 2024 to acquire Independent Bank Group](#), which closed on January 1, 2025,

expanding the combined company's asset size to approximately \$65 billion.<sup>17</sup>

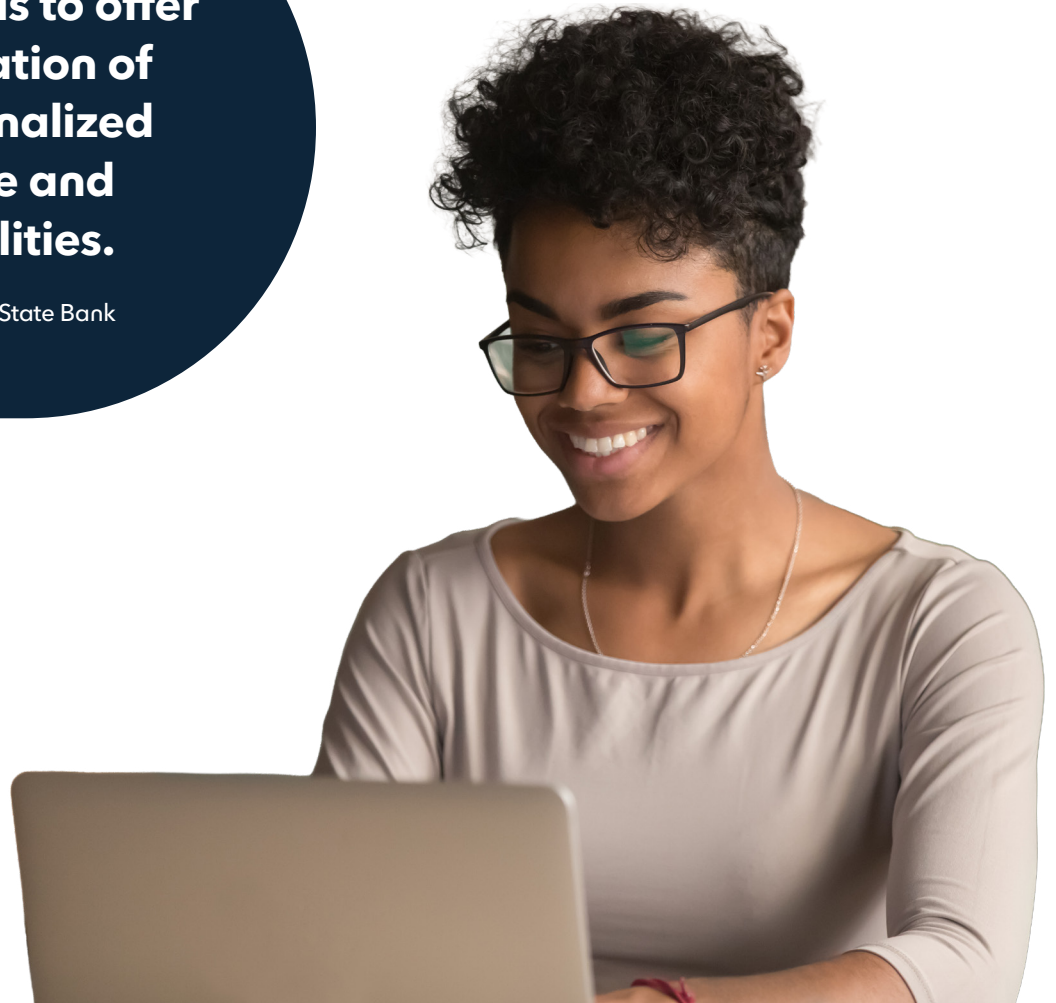
Greg Lapointe, President at South State Bank, emphasizes: "It's important to us to offer the right combination of high-touch personalized banking expertise and high-tech capabilities. We're committed to delivering exceptional service and believe nCino's market-leading platform will provide our staff with the right tools and digital infrastructure to quickly and efficiently serve customers' evolving needs."

This approach demonstrates how cloud-based technology stacks and bank operating systems allow for quick adoption of digital capabilities and flexibility to adapt to evolving customer needs, particularly critical when scaling from \$15 billion to \$65 billion in assets through multiple acquisitions over a five-year period.



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# Why nCino: A Partner for the Entire M&A Lifecycle

The nCino Platform combines loan origination with customer relationship management (CRM), customer onboarding, account opening, workflow, credit analysis, enterprise content management and instant reporting capabilities, allowing institutions to either scale and continue their growth trajectories or become a valuable asset to institutions looking to grow their footprint via acquisition. This is one of the reasons that, in M&A events in the United States from 2015 to 2025, nCino was maintained as a vendor after the event 95% of the time.

## Before the Merger: Assessment and Planning

nCino's unified platform provides clear visibility into operational efficiency, lending productivity, and customer engagement metrics that inform accurate deal valuation. Acquirers can assess target institutions' true operational health rather than relying on incomplete financial statements alone.

## During Integration: Rapid Deployment and Employee Enablement

Integrating businesses quickly and efficiently is often critical to the success of the newly merged entities. Institutions already using the nCino Platform can onboard acquired banks faster than traditional approaches. The cloud-based platform eliminates complex infrastructure migration, while standardized workflows reduce training time and accelerate employee productivity.

Staff from acquired institutions gain immediate access to superior tools for lending, account opening, customer relationship management, and treasury services. The intuitive interface reduces training requirements and flattens the learning curve.

## After the Merger: Sustained Value Creation and Scalability

nCino's intelligent platform unifies customer data, loan portfolios, compliance records, and operational metrics from day one—eliminating the need to juggle multiple systems or reconcile inconsistent data across platforms.

nCino Integration Gateway enables acquired institutions to connect their specialized technologies to nCino's ecosystem, preserving valuable capabilities while building toward long-term standardization. Financial institutions can connect best-in-class mortgage platforms, commercial lending tools, or analytics solutions without forcing immediate replacement.

Once the first acquisition succeeds, subsequent deals become progressively easier. Common platforms, proven integration playbooks, and experienced teams accelerate each successive merger while reducing risk.



# Conclusion: Technology as Strategic Advantage

An integration platform is a strategic investment that reduces costs, accelerates timelines, and positions banks for sustainable growth. Integration ensures scalability for future acquisitions, making it the cornerstone of M&A success.

As consolidation activity continues across the financial services industry, technology integration strategy has evolved from a post-close detail to a pre-deal strategic imperative. The institutions that recognize this reality—and partner with cloud-based platforms purpose-built for banking—position themselves to extract maximum value from M&A activity.

With 43% of financial institution leaders open to acquisitions and technology cited as both a key driver and a key hurdle, the ability to seamlessly integrate systems, maintain customer trust, and achieve operational synergies determines which institutions thrive through consolidation and which struggle to realize deal value.<sup>18</sup>

nCino's proven track record supporting customer M&A success—from rapid integration timelines to measurable operational improvements to enhanced customer experiences—demonstrates how the right technology partnership transforms merger challenges into competitive advantages.

For financial institutions evaluating acquisition opportunities or preparing to be acquired, the question is no longer whether technology matters. The question is whether your institution has the platform foundation to make mergers work.

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