

Case Study: PiXELL River Financial

Background: PiXELL River is an Indigenous-owned financial institution founded in 1975, headquartered in Headingley, Manitoba. It serves clients across Canada with in-person branches and ATMs in every province and territory. Known for its innovation in the banking sector, PiXELL River is expanding its digital services to offer more accessible, culturally sensitive banking solutions, while ensuring safety and security. The institution's primary digital offerings include online banking and mobile apps for both individual and business clients, as well as a dedicated investment services portal. As part of this expansion, PiXELL River aims to improve its digital platforms based on user behavior and needs.

User Groups: Based on research findings from surveys and focus groups, PiXELL-River identified three key user groups that represent its diverse customer base. These groups reflect distinct behaviors, goals, and challenges when using PiXELL River's services:

1. Individual Customers

The target demographic consists of Indigenous individuals aged 25 to 45, married or single, residing in both rural and urban areas. Many of them are employed or self-employed, with varying degrees of digital literacy. Geographically, they are primarily from rural and remote Indigenous communities in Western Canada, including provinces such as Manitoba, British Columbia, and Northern Ontario. A portion of the users also live in urban centers like Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Toronto, seeking to balance their personal financial needs with their cultural values.

These users have key goals, such as securely managing their personal finances—paying bills, transferring money, and ensuring that their financial data is protected. They also seek access to culturally relevant banking content and use financial services to stay connected with family and community members, often through providing financial support. Aspirations include achieving financial stability and independence, contributing to the well-being of their communities, and learning to make smarter financial decisions to support their families.

However, they face several challenges, including limited access to high-speed internet in rural areas, unfamiliarity with digital banking tools, and concerns about the security of personal data. Their behaviors reflect frequent use of mobile apps to monitor accounts, transfer funds, and make payments, with a strong desire for reliable financial advice, particularly related to savings and credit management. They prefer simple and intuitive platforms that include culturally relevant features, such as support for Indigenous languages.

In terms of technology, these users are primarily mobile-first, accessing services through smartphones (both iOS and Android). Their tech proficiency tends to be moderate to low, indicating a need for user-friendly apps and clear tutorials. Opportunities for improvement include simplifying navigation within mobile apps and online portals, offering educational resources on digital banking security and financial management, and introducing Indigenous language support along with culturally sensitive content to enhance their experience.

2. Business Clients

The target demographic consists of Indigenous entrepreneurs aged 30 to 50, married or single, who own small or medium-sized businesses in both rural and urban areas. Their businesses are primarily located in rural and semi-urban Indigenous communities across British Columbia, Alberta, and Northern Ontario, with a presence in larger urban centers like Vancouver, Edmonton, and Thunder Bay. These entrepreneurs balance the demands of business ownership with the need to maintain their connection to Indigenous values and practices.

Their key goals include managing business cash flow, invoicing, and payroll efficiently through a banking portal, as well as accessing support to grow and scale their businesses. They are also interested in networking with other Indigenous business owners and gaining support from their community to foster mutual growth. These entrepreneurs aspire to scale their businesses while maintaining a strong connection to their Indigenous roots, achieve financial independence, and contribute to local economic development. Additionally, many are focused on building a legacy that will benefit future generations within their communities.

However, they face several challenges, including limited business management tools for invoicing, payroll, and financial forecasting. As their businesses grow, they also have concerns about scalability and accessing the necessary support. Delays in receiving timely customer service for business accounts further hinder their operations. In terms of behavior, these entrepreneurs regularly use online banking portals to manage their finances and prefer tools that integrate seamlessly with accounting software. They are particularly interested in receiving tailored support that aligns with Indigenous cultural practices.

In terms of technology, these users primarily rely on desktops or laptops for managing business finances but also utilize mobile devices for quick access. Their tech proficiency is moderate to high, enabling them to navigate more complex tools such as accounting software. Opportunities for improvement include adding tools for managing invoicing, payroll, and cash flow within the business banking platform, improving customer service channels with faster and more specific assistance for Indigenous businesses, and expanding networking opportunities through PiXELL River's community programs to support Indigenous entrepreneurs.

3. Bank Employees

The target demographic consists of Indigenous community members aged 25 to 40, married or single, who are employed at PiXELL River in customer service or operations roles. These employees primarily reside in mid-sized towns and cities across central and western Canada, including locations such as Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton. Some employees may also work in smaller rural areas where PiXELL River operates branches, contributing to both individual and business banking needs in their communities.

Their primary goals include delivering excellent customer service to PiXELL River's diverse clientele, efficiently managing internal systems, and handling customer inquiries in a timely manner. Additionally, they seek to stay updated on the latest digital banking tools to improve their work efficiency. Many of these employees aspire to advance their careers within PiXELL River, aiming to become key contributors to the institution's growth. They also have ambitions to develop the skills needed for leadership or specialized roles, particularly in customer service or operations. Supporting their local communities by providing financial literacy and resources is another key motivation for these team members.

However, they face several challenges, including outdated internal systems that lead to slower response times and inefficient workflows. Many employees feel they have insufficient training on new digital platforms and tools, which hinders their ability to keep up with evolving customer needs. Additionally, limited access to real-time data makes it difficult for them to manage customer accounts and inquiries effectively. These employees frequently use internal systems to handle transactions, inquiries, and account management but often find themselves in need of faster access to real-time data to provide timely and accurate information to clients. They are highly engaged with training and support programs that help improve their customer service skills.

In terms of technology usage, PiXELL River employees primarily rely on desktop computers to manage internal banking systems and customer service tools. While they possess moderate tech proficiency, they often require additional training on newer platforms to perform their roles more effectively. Their work is heavily dependent on internal communication systems, such as email and messaging apps, for coordinating tasks and managing customer interactions. Opportunities for improvement include updating internal systems to streamline workflows, offering regular training sessions on digital tools and best practices, and implementing real-time tracking of customer requests to ensure more accurate and faster responses.

Research Findings: PiXELL River's research identified several key areas for improvement across its digital services. These include:

- **For Individual Customers:** Simplifying the mobile app and online portal, integrating Indigenous language support, and providing digital banking education.
- **For Business Clients:** Adding business management tools (e.g., invoicing, payroll) and improving customer support tailored to Indigenous entrepreneurs.
- **For Bank Employees:** Updating internal systems, providing better training on digital tools, and implementing real-time tracking for customer requests.

Customer Feedback:

Customers and their feedback:

- **Customer A:**

"I appreciate the convenience of the mobile app, but I wish it had more features related to managing my investments. It's also not very user-friendly, so I often struggle to find what I need."

- **Customer B:**

"I love the mission of PiXELL River and how it supports Indigenous communities. However, I feel that the online banking portal could be more inclusive by offering additional language options and cultural elements."

- **Customer C:**

"I recently started using PiXELL River's online banking portal for my small business, and it's been helpful overall. However, I'd like to see more tools for managing cash flow and invoicing, as I currently have to rely on third-party solutions."

- **Customer D:**

"I enjoy using the mobile app, but the security measures seem lacking. I'd feel more comfortable using two-factor authentication or other advanced security features to protect my account."

- **Customer E:**

"As a PiXELL River customer, I appreciate the bank's commitment to serving Indigenous communities. However, I sometimes find it difficult to understand the unique features and benefits of their financial products. More educational resources or tutorials would be helpful."

- **Customer F:**

"The user interface of the online banking portal is quite outdated and not very intuitive. I often have trouble navigating it and finding the information I need. I hope they invest in improving the overall user experience."

- **Customer G:**

"I'm a bank employee, and while the internal systems generally work well, there's a lack of integration between different departments. This sometimes makes it challenging to collaborate and provide efficient customer service."

- **Customer H:**

"PiXELL River's customer support is great, but I wish they had a more comprehensive FAQ section or help centre on their website. This would save me from having to call or email for simple inquiries."

- **Customer I:**

"I like the investment options offered by PiXELL River, but it would be helpful if they could provide more detailed performance reports and analysis tools within the online portal. This would help me make more informed decisions about my investments."

- **Customer J:**

"As an entrepreneur, I appreciate the support PiXELL River provides to businesses like mine. However, I'd like to see more networking and collaboration opportunities, such as an online community or forum where customers can connect and share resources."

- **Customer K:**

"I've been using PiXELL River's mobile app for a while now, and I'm generally happy with it. However, I've noticed that it often crashes or experiences performance issues. I hope they can address these technical problems soon."

- **Customer L:**

"The online banking portal has been beneficial for managing my accounts, but I'd like to see more customization options for the dashboard. Being able to personalize the interface to show only the information and features I frequently use would make it even more convenient."

Internal Report: Digital Services Usage Data and Trends

Overview:

This internal report summarizes the usage data and trends for PiXELL River's digital services, including the online banking portal for individual customers, the mobile app, the online banking portal for business clients, and the dedicated online portal for investment services.

Number of Users:

- Online banking portal for individual customers: 7,500 users
- Mobile app for individual customers: 5,000 users (3,500 iOS users and 1,500 Android users)
- Online banking portal for business clients: 2,000 users
- Dedicated online portal for investment services: 1,200 users

Most Commonly Used Features:

- Account balance and transaction history
- Bill payments and funds transfers
- Mobile check deposits (for mobile app users)
- Investment portfolio overview and management (for users of the investment services portal)

Areas Where Users Experience Difficulties:

- Navigation and user interface in the online banking portal and mobile app
- Understanding the unique features and benefits of financial products tailored to Indigenous communities
- Integration between different services, such as individual and business accounts or investment services
- Accessing educational resources and tutorials to better utilize the platform's features
- Limited tools for business clients, particularly in the areas of cash flow management, invoicing, and payroll

Trends and Insights:

- A growing number of users are accessing the mobile app, with a 15% increase in the past year, indicating a preference for mobile banking among customers.

- The usage of the investment services portal has also increased by 10% in the past year, suggesting a growing interest in investment products and services among PiXELL River's customers.
- Customer feedback and data analysis indicate that improvements to the user interface and navigation could significantly enhance user satisfaction and engagement across all digital services.
- Addressing the difficulties experienced by users in understanding the unique financial products offered by PiXELL River, as well as providing more educational resources, may lead to increased adoption and customer satisfaction