

Competitive Analysis: A2 Banking

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Executive Summary

A competitive analysis was conducted to aid in the development of A2 Banking, a local bank opening in Ann Arbor that will offer a full range of financial products and services. The websites of three competitors were studied in order to prepare this analysis. Two are large financial institutions with a strong banking presence in the Ann Arbor area as well as many branches in other cities and states. The third, a small local bank, provides many of the products and services offered by the larger banks but stresses a commitment to personal service.

All three competitors offer on-line banking services allowing customers to monitor their bank balances and transactions, pay bills and transfer funds via the Internet. Although other products and services offered by all of these banks are similar, the web experience in purchasing and/or initiating products and services varies greatly. The larger financial institutions cater to large corporate customers as well as individuals and small businesses, however because products provided to those kinds of customers generally require personal interaction with a bank officer or representative, they have not been included in this summary.

Although all of these competitors employ varying labeling and organizational schemes, there are some similarities between the larger two. A good organizational scheme for A2 Banking would emulate a somewhat simplified version of that of the two larger banks while adding some of the more personal elements of the third, smaller bank.

Content and functionality appearing to be standard on bank industry websites that should be included in A2 Banking's website are:

- Full service on-line banking system
- Bank branch and ATM location information
- Ways to contact bank representatives
- Information about products offered

Each competitor's website offered some unique strengths that could be considered for inclusion in A2 Banking's website. Also, each site had some weak areas that led to ideas for an improved banking website:

- Quick home page login to on-line banking
- On-line applications at least for some of the more simple and straightforward products offered, such as deposit accounts, loans and credit cards
- Navigational structure separating products and services by user type (i.e., "personal", "small business" and "corporate")
- Easy to find "contact us" page offering a choice of contact methods including local and toll-free telephone numbers, email ID's and an on-line contact form
- Toll-free telephone number in an obvious location on the home page.
- Simple HTML-based bank branch/ATM locator system that doesn't use a search function
- Current interest rates

- Current stock quotes
- “Calculators” that allow customers to plug in numbers to help them answer questions related to their personal financial planning questions

Competitor 1: National City Corp (<http://www.nationalcity.com>)

National City

Help | Contact us | Locations

Personal | Small Business | Corporate | About National City

Your Special Offers

Log in to your account

1. Select account

- Personal Online Banking
- Card Services Online
- Mortgage Online

2. User ID 3. Password

Enroll | Log in help
Consumer alert | Security | Privacy

Access other Online Services

Choose...

Featured Rates for ZIP code 48103 (EST)

Product	APR	Get more rates
Loans & Credit Cards	APR	
Home Equity Line	4.50%	Get more rates
New Automobile Loan	6.99%	Get more rates
Diamond Edition Elite Visa®	9.50%	Get more rates
Checkings	Any	
Money Market Checking	0.97%	Get more rates
Savings & CDs	Any	
Money Market Savings	0.97%	Get more rates

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National City home page (home page extends for 1.5 screens at 1024x768)

National City

Help | Contact us | Locations

Personal | Small Business | Corporate | About National City

Your Special Offers

Personal > Checking > Free Interest Checking >

Free Interest Checking

With direct deposit, you get a free account that pays interest. No minimums to worry about.

Free with this account

- No minimum balance to avoid fees
- No monthly maintenance fee or per item fees
- National City Visa® CheckCard [Learn more >](#)
- Online Banking, including online statements and check images
- Online Bill Payment

Also Available

- Overdraft protection!

Minimum opening deposit	\$50.00
Annual Percentage Yield (APY)** Balance	.APY
\$1,500.00 +	0.20%
Appropriate rate is paid on entire balance when daily balance threshold is met.	
Rates displayed are for ZIP code 48103. Edit ZIP code >	
Monthly maintenance fee	None
Balance requirements to avoid fees	None

More information

[Free Student Checking >](#)
Going to college? We have a checking account designed for you.

[Compare rates and fees >](#)
[Review other checking account options.](#)

Downloads
You must have the free Adobe® Reader® installed to download and read our pricing schedules.

Pricing schedules >
A complete list of fees for personal accounts opened in the 48103 ZIP code. [Edit ZIP code >](#)

Related tools

[Checking analyzer >](#)
Get help deciding which checking account is right for you.

Online Banking >
Check your National City account balances and activity, view online

Switch banks the easy way
Change banks with our online tool and receive a free backpack. [Learn more >](#)

National City sub page (sub page extends for 1.5 screens at 1024x768)

Content/Functionality

National City Corporation (NCC) is a full-service financial institution that operates banking branches in a 6-state region and services select groups of national customers. NCC maintains a high profile in the Ann Arbor area with 12 branches and 24 ATM machines within a 10-mile radius of the city. It also operates an extensive website with a full-service on-line banking center as well as a wide range of products and services supported by a wealth of information.

Specific content/functionality includes the following:

Products Offered:

- Accounts for individual and business customers:
 - Deposit accounts:
 - Checking
 - Savings
 - Investment (CDs and IRAs)
 - Loans for individual and business customers:
 - Home mortgages
 - Home equity loans and lines of credit
 - Automobile loans
 - Student loans
 - Cards:
 - Credit
 - Debit/ATM
 - Pre-paid
 - On-line banking facilities:
 - Personal accounts
 - Card services
 - Mortgages
 - Account aggregation service (allows customers to include non-NCC accounts of all types, including non-financial accounts like email, in one viewing area)
 - Switch center: on-line service for managing the process of moving accounts from other banks to National City
- National City also offers other products and services for individuals and businesses of all sizes. Although information about all of these is provided via the website, most of them are of a complex enough nature that consultation with a bank representative is required to purchase the product or initiate the service. In addition, some of these products and services are outsourced to other companies. Because they are not available directly via the website or are not specifically delivered by National City, they are not included in this list of products.

Technology used:

- On-line banking system
- On-line application forms for deposit accounts, mortgages and loans

- Spanish language pages
- Flash demonstration tours

Search functionality:

This site does not have a global search function but there are more localized searches in several areas, including a branch/ATM locator and job search.

Ordering Options:

- On-line applications are available for some products, typically deposit or investment accounts and loans/mortgages.
- Products of a more complex nature or not directly available at the bank require a phone call or visit to a bank representative.
- Even in cases where on-line ordering is available, National City usually provides contact information so customers can speak with a bank representative.

Supporting Content:

- Help desk with flash demo tours of site
- Contact NCC (phone and email forms available)
- Bank branch/ATM locator
- Site map
- Terms of use
- Privacy notice
- Careers with NCC
- How to protect your identity
- Help with login
- Current interest rates
- About NCC
- Event calendars
- Executive biographies
- Customizable stock information
- Email stock alerts
- Financial reports
- Community relations events
- News releases

Strengths

This site was designed with a relatively consistent and easy-to-follow navigational scheme. General information about each product or service offered is displayed on a content page with links to further information and application forms (if available). The site is divided into sections according to user type (i.e., “personal”, “small business”, and “corporate”) and the home page can be to a default page according to user preference.

Specific strengths include:

- Login to on-line banking services is placed prominently on the left navigation bar of the home page and is also available on most sub pages.
- The NCC logo appears at the upper left of every page and always links to the home page.
- The top navigational bar always contains links to the four “default” home pages.
- “Help”, Contact Us” and “Locations” are at the extreme top of each page.
- A toll-free telephone number is listed on the home page and many of the sub pages.
- The left navigational bar always contains an on-line banking login box and a menu appropriate to whatever section of the site the user is currently viewing.
- Content pages display a “bread crumbs” style navigational path at the top, showing users where the page they are currently viewing resides within the overall structure of the website.
- Users can choose between html and Flash demonstration tours.
- The website indicates the average length of time required to complete on-line applications and allows users to save their applications to complete later if necessary.

Areas for improvement

There is a huge amount of content on this web site and there are a lot of links in the content area of each of the home pages (the user can specify a default home page like “personal” or “small business”). This can cause confusion when trying to locate a specific product, service or information.

Specific areas for improvement are:

- If a user does not take careful note of where a page of interest exists within the site’s organizational hierarchy, it can be very difficult to return to that page during a subsequent session.
- Many hyperlinks related to investment products lead to a page that displays nonsense characters.
- Links to some products lead off the site to other companies without warning the user or providing documentation about the relationship the other company has with NCC.
- A user ID and password was required to view one demonstration tour.
- “Analyzers” that are supposed to help customers decide which account or loan product they need do not give effective advice. They either ask the user about recent “lifestyle events” (marriage, retirement, etc.) or ask general questions about preferred account features. Since there is usually not a huge selection of accounts available in a particular product area, most users should be able to make a selection from the product descriptions.
- A link on the home page appears to lead to a Spanish-language version of the website but there are only a few pages available in Spanish, not a comprehensive Spanish website.
- Flash demonstration tours did not all use the same version Flash player, therefore, some worked, some asked for a plug-in.

Competitor 2: TCF Bank (<http://www.tcfbank.com>)

Locations | Careers | About TCF | Contact Us | Customer Service

Personal Banking | Small Business | Commercial

TCF
Open 7 Days

Search Go

Online Banking >

Online Brokerage >

Personal Banking

- Checking
- Savings
- Loans & Credit
- Insurance
- Investing
- Convenience Banking
- Help for Busy Lifestyles
- Online Banking

TCF Miles Plus Card

Do you pay annual fees on your credit card to get airline miles you cannot use because of restrictions or blackout dates? With your FREE TCF Miles Plus Card, use your points like cash to purchase tickets on all major airlines or make purchases at online retailers. [Learn how](#) to get a TCF Miles Plus Card. [Sign in](#) to TCF Miles Plus Rewards.

[Learn More](#)

Need Money for College?

TCF offers loans for students and parents to help finance a higher education. Let us guide you through the financial aid process by helping you understand how to plan and pay for school, choose between federal and private loans, and begin the application process.

[Learn More](#)

TCF Miles Plus Rewards Sign In

TCF EXPRESS TRADE™

Discount Brokerage

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

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TCF Bank home page (home page is 1 screen at 1024x768)

Locations | Careers | About TCF | Contact Us | Customer Service

Personal Banking | Small Business | Commercial

TCF
Open 7 Days

Search Go

Online Banking >

Online Brokerage >

Home | Personal Banking | **Checking**

Checking

TCF Bank has checking accounts designed to fit your financial needs. From our most popular account - TCF Totally Free Checking - to our interest-earning products, you will find a checking account that is right for you. TCF customers enjoy the convenience of 7-day banking at most locations. All TCF checking accounts receive a FREE TCF Check Card, FREE TCF Express Teller® ATM transactions, FREE automated 24-hour phone service, Free Online Banking, and FREE unlimited Customer Service support by phone.

Product	Description
Totally Free Checking	The perfect solution for simple, worry-free checking without monthly service charges or minimum balance requirements. Learn More
PLUS® Checking	If you prefer electronic banking, but with no restrictions on branch visits or check writing, this is the right account for you. Learn More
Checking With Interest	Earn interest and enjoy unlimited check writing privileges. Learn More
55+ Checking With Interest	Reserved for those age 55 or better! No minimums, lots of extras and you earn interest on your balance. Learn More

TCF Miles Plus Rewards Program

[LEARN HOW](#)

Reach Your Savings Goal

[LEARN HOW](#)

TCF Bank sub page (sub page extends 1.5-1.75 screens at 1024x768)

Content/Functionality

TCF Bank is part of TCF Financial Corporation, a full-service banking and financial institution that operates branches in a 6-state region, including 9 bank branches and 24 ATM machines within a 10-mile radius of the Ann Arbor area. Its website offers comprehensive on-line banking and brokerage facilities and provides information about a wide range of products and services offered by the bank.

Specific content/functionality includes the following:

Products Offered:

- On-line banking
- On-line brokerage
- These are among the most popular types of products offered by the bank. Although they are described on the website, they are not available via on-line application:
 - Deposit accounts:
 - Checking accounts
 - Savings accounts
 - Investment accounts (CDs and IRAs)
 - Loans for individual and business customers:
 - Home mortgages
 - Home equity loans and lines of credit
 - Automobile loans
 - Student loans
 - Cards:
 - Credit
 - Debit/ATM
 - Pre-paid
- TCF offers other products and services for individuals and businesses of all sizes. They are not documented in this analysis because most of them are of a complexity that they could not easily be purchased or initiated via the website and are not always adequately described there.

Technology used:

- On-line banking system
- Audio web cast replays
- “Calculators”: forms customers can use to help answer questions such as how much they need to save for a mortgage, etc.
- On-line form to provide customer service feedback.
- On-line form for information requests.
- Email alerts
- PDF documents

Search functionality:

- There is a global search capability with a search box on every page.

- A bank branch locator also uses a search function.

Ordering Options: Other than enrolling in TCF's on-line banking or brokerage systems, there are no products or services that can be ordered on-line. Users must visit a bank branch and talk to a representative.

Supporting content:

- Contact us page listing phone numbers for the company in various states.
- About TCF.
- Bank branch/ATM locator
- Careers
- Customer service
- Frequently asked questions
- "Calculators"
- Terms of use
- Privacy
- Security
- Help for busy lifestyles
- Information about financial topics

Strengths

The overall navigation system of the TCF site is quite consistent and easy to follow. It is organized with a similar scheme to NCC, divided into areas according to customer type: "personal", "small business", and "commercial".

Specific strengths include:

- The search function and quick links to online banking and online brokerage are placed in a fairly prominent place at the top of the page and also on most other content pages on the site.
- The bank logo is placed in the upper left corner of each page and links to the home page.
- When browsing a particular section of the site, the left navigational bar keeps all of the other links in that section visible for quick navigation between content pages. (For example, if you are in the "checking account" section, links leading to information about all types of checking accounts offered are visible on the left navigational bar.)
- Quick links to Locations, Careers, About TCF, Contact Us, and Customer Service are located at the top of each page.
- Many content pages (but not all) display a "bread crumbs" navigational path at the top, showing users where the page they are currently viewing resides within the overall structure of the website.
- There is a simple and quick loading html-based tour of the on-line banking system.

- A number of online “calculators” are available to help users answer questions such as “How much will I have to save to purchase a house?” These are easy and fun to use and can graph the results.

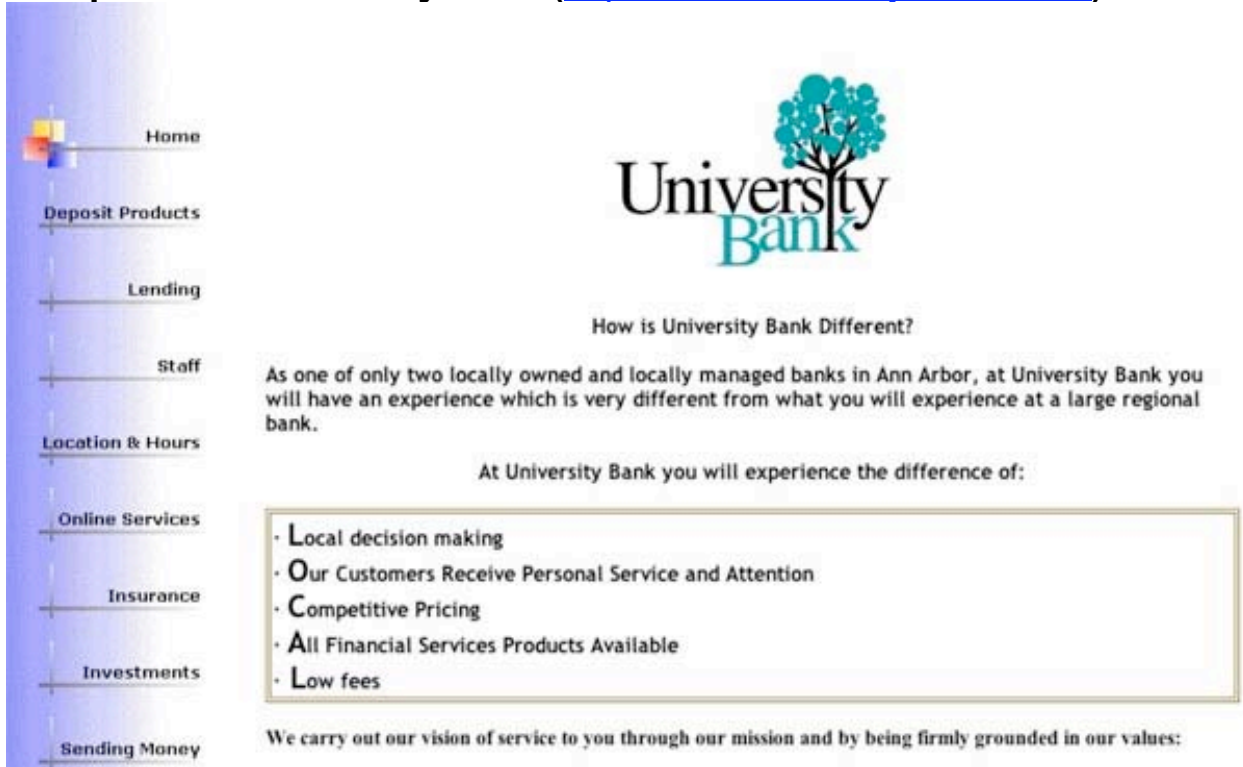
Areas for Improvement

Despite the consistency of the overall navigation scheme, there is a lot of content on this site and, in many sections, labeling is not clear and links are very confusing.

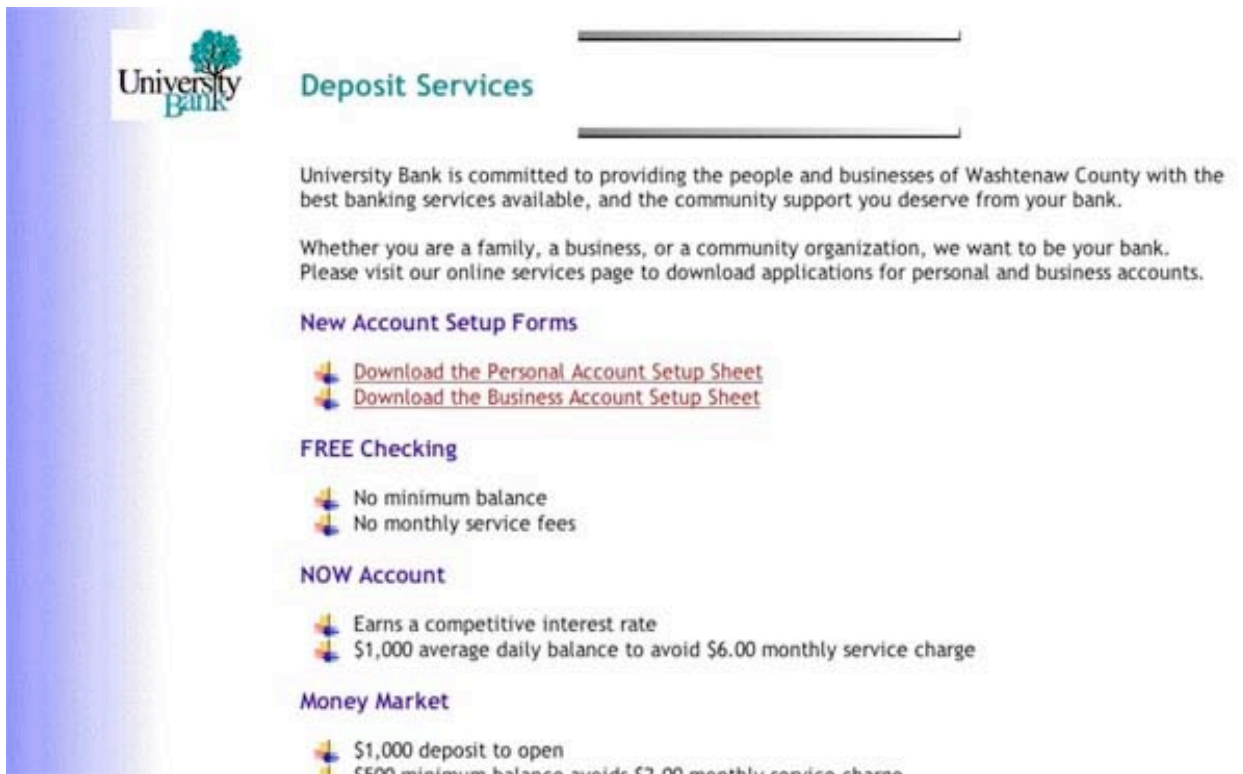
Specific areas of improvement are:

- The search function on the branch locator page does not always locate **any** bank branches, despite entry of accurate search parameters (i.e., a valid Ann Arbor address).
- Information about credit and debit cards is buried under the misleading label “convenience banking.”
- Content pages are available to help customers choose a specific product from a group of products in the same genre (e.g.: “checking accounts”) but links to these pages are not always visible.
- Information about how to apply for various products vary widely:
 - On-line application forms do not exist for any type of account, even relatively straightforward ones like personal checking accounts or products like credit cards that are widely available via on-line application.
 - For many products, users are instructed to contact a bank representative to apply, however the contact link leads to a page listing mostly toll-free numbers for each state in which TCF operates branches.
 - For a few products, notably credit cards, there was no information about the application process.
- Frequently asked questions are buried in the customer service section.
- Links to “calculators” are not easily visible and usually not clearly labeled.
- Although there is an electronic contact form, the link is buried within a list of links on the “customer service” page.
- Some links labeled “learn more” or “get a quote” lead to other web sites. The user is not given a warning that they are leaving the site and no documentation is provided about the relationship between the company providing the outsourcing and TCF.
- Most pages take a long time to load even with a broadband connection.
- Not all PDF pages are clearly marked “PDF”.

Competitor 3: University Bank (<http://www.university-bank.com/>)



University Bank home page (home page extends for 6 screens at 1024x768, 3 of which are blank)



University Bank sub page (sub page extends just over 2 screens at 1024x768.)

Content/Functionality

University Bank is a small locally owned bank with one branch location and three ATM machines. It stresses a commitment to personal service while offering competitive prices. University Bank has a simple, rather amateurishly designed web site offering information about the bank and its products. Online banking is available via outsourcing to another company.

Specific content/functionality includes the following

- Online banking (outsourced to “secure5.regency.openbank.com”).
- These are among the most popular types of products offered by the bank. Although they are described on the website, they are not available via on-line application:
 - Deposit accounts:
 - Checking accounts
 - Savings accounts
 - Investment accounts (CDs and IRAs)
 - Loans for individual and business customers:
 - Home mortgages
 - Home equity loans and lines of credit
 - Automobile loans
 - Student loans
 - Cards:
 - Credit
 - Debit/ATM
 - Pre-paid
 - Insurance: the bank acts as an independent insurance agency.

Technology used:

- Online information request form
- PDF application forms for opening some types of accounts.
- Microsoft Word documents are used for general company information such as vision and mission statement.

Search functionality: There is no search function on this web site.

Ordering Options: There is a PDF application form for some products such as deposit accounts can be mailed to the bank. For all other products and services, customers must visit the bank and talk to a representative.

Supporting Content:

- Staff page
- Location and hours
- How to send money to the bank
- ATM machine info: transactions and locations

- “Shareholder” (or “about us”) information
- Privacy statement
- Employment opportunities
- Links to two different off-site ATM locators

Strengths

The University Bank web site’s main strength is its simplicity and welcoming tone. Although there is not a huge content of information, a staff page shows photos of staff members and lists their business email addresses, which encourages customers to visit the bank and discuss their individual needs with the staff.

Areas for improvement

This site seems to have been put together by an amateur web designer. It is haphazardly organized with no overall navigational scheme and many links are either broken or lead to unexpected places.

Specific areas for improvement are:

- There is no direct log in to on-line banking on the home page.
- The bank logo appears only on some of the site’s sub pages and never links to the home page.
- There are no navigational links on any page except the home page. Users must either use the “back” button to return to the previous page or, if a page has opened in a new window, close the window. The bank location and ATM locations are on separate pages.
- The bank location and ATM locations are on separate pages.
- Many links, including the link to on-line banking, lead to other web sites, some of which were not available during this analysis. Users are not warned that they are going to be taken off site and there is no information on the site that tells anything about these other companies and their relationship to University Bank.
- Information about the bank (history, mission statement, etc.) is contained in word documents that must be downloaded.
- There is no online application process for even simple, straightforward products such as checking accounts or credit cards.
- “Happenings” and “Kids B’Cause” are included on the home page navigational bar but are not accessible with a user ID and password.