

A person in a blue suit is pointing at a tablet with a pen. The background is a blurred office setting with a laptop and a bar chart on a desk.

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CASE STUDY

Advisors Plus

Creating insightful, data-driven recommendations to help credit unions and community banks grow their portfolios and thrive in a rapidly changing market.



THE CREDIT UNION

Reliant Credit Union

Reliant Credit Union rose from humble beginnings in 1970 when, in a science classroom at Sodus Central High School, WCTA Federal Credit Union was conceived as a benefit for Wayne County, New York, teachers. Today, Reliant has grown to serve more than 48,000 members in communities throughout Wayne, Monroe and Ontario counties, with checking accounts, savings accounts, auto loans, mortgages, personal loans, credit cards, and more banking products and services. Headquartered in Sodus, Reliant operates 10 branches and holds assets of more than \$742 million.

In a move to rejuvenate their product line, bring in more members and boost their portfolio, Reliant Credit Union created Debit Rewards Checking, an account that paid out rewards to members based on transactions. Members were required to meet certain thresholds to earn the rewards, but if they failed to do so, penalties would apply. Unfortunately, the program proved cumbersome to manage – even the concept itself was difficult to sell and explain to consumers – and the new account never gained traction.

Reliant turned to Advisors Plus, who helped them create the Cashback Account, a streamlined product that has attracted a steady stream of new accounts since its launch in March 2024.

Advisors PLUS

As leading-edge financial institution consultants with decades of combined experience, Advisors Plus works with credit unions and community banks to help expand their credit and debit card portfolios, optimize operations and fully manage marketing growth campaigns that strengthen the bottom line.



Engagement



Focus



Knowledge and Experience



Leadership



Integrity



Service



THE OPPORTUNITY

When Reliant Credit Union sought to reinvent their checking products, they decided to create a rewards program in-house. “We were a little bit nervous about rewards because we felt it was going to cost us more than what we’d be earning in interchange,” said Heather Chapman, Reliant Credit Union’s Chief Operating Officer. “So we created a really conservative checking account product, calling it Debit Rewards Checking.”

The problem? Debit Rewards Checking was extremely difficult to understand. “It included many caveats,” Chapman continued. “If you did X number of transactions, you would earn up to X dollar amount back. But if you did fewer than X number of transactions, you got charged a fee.” Soon, the numbers told the story. “It wasn’t growing,” said Chapman. “Our staff wasn’t able to sell it. Our team didn’t even know what to do with it.”

Also, in an effort to bring in younger members, Reliant explored options to compete with the likes of Venmo and Greenlight. “But,” said Chapman, “Teen Checking didn’t resonate. Kids don’t know what checks are. I mean, if my kids needed to write a check, they wouldn’t know what to do.”

THE SOLUTION

Reliant Credit Union had a well-established partnership with Velera through credit processing, signature debit and Shared Branch accessed through NYCUA, the New York Credit Union Association. They also drew upon the expertise of Advisors Plus for marketing strategies to increase interchange income, build portfolio balances and move their cards top-of-wallet. With their deep insight into the marketplace, and expert analysis of credit union operations and membership, Advisors Plus had already helped the Reliant marketing team focus their efforts for the best return.

So now, with Debit Rewards Checking at a standstill, Reliant turned once again to Advisors Plus.

A Holistic View

The Advisors Plus team began with a comprehensive analysis of the credit union, taking a close look at product management, marketing, operations, membership and culture – gaining a holistic understanding of Reliant’s strategic direction. They evaluated their entire checking portfolio and responded with streamlined products designed to attract and engage a new wave of active members.



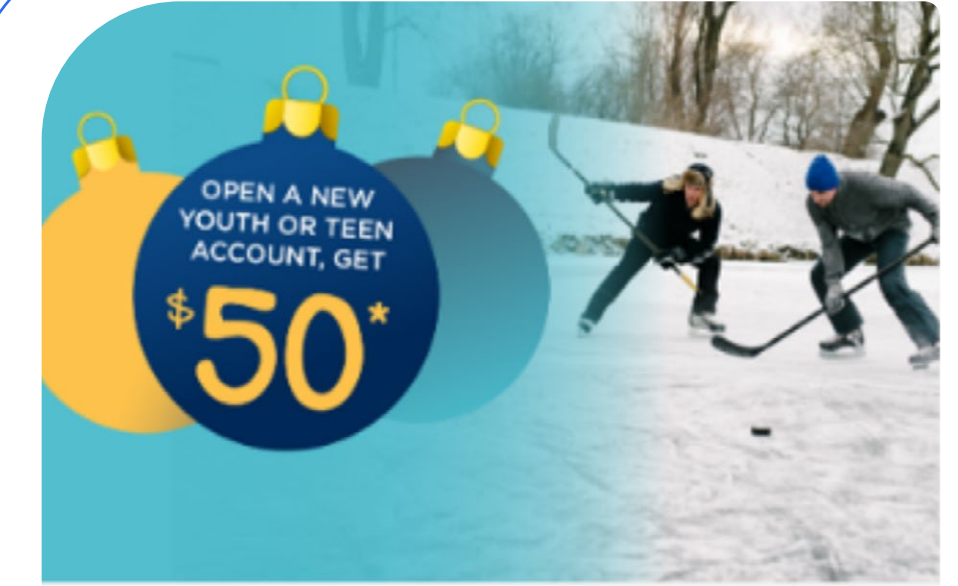
cash back has never been so simple

With a Cashback Account, you’ll get even more from your debit card: 1/5% cash back on everyday purchases, up to \$10 each month? Just enroll in e-statements and set up direct deposit to start earning your rewards.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Cashback Account: Reliant Credit Union’s Cashback Account rewards members with up to \$10 per month, once they enroll in e-statements and set up direct deposit. Even the name reflects today’s consumer, eliminating the word “checking” to focus on what matters most – cash back – and the fact that check writing is becoming a thing of the past.

“Once people understood what it was, they actually wanted an account where they could get cash back for using their debit card,” said Chapman. “And we’re not giving away millions of dollars. We’re giving up to \$10 a month. It’s simple and it works.”



Teen Account

Empower your teen to manage their money and set financial goals with an account designed to foster smart money habits for a brighter financial future.

[OPEN A TEEN ACCOUNT](#)

Teen Account: Reliant’s Teen Account also does away with the word “checking.” They lowered the qualifying age to 11 and run promotions to attract young members with seed money.

Listening to the Experts

“We listened to everything they had to say,” said Chapman. “We asked a lot of questions and in the end, started building new checking account types, taking directly from their recommendations for our Cashback Account and Teen Account. In the process, we tried to overcomplicate it a bit – and then we stepped back and said, wait a minute, the experts are telling us what to do here. We don’t need to put a creative spin on it. Let’s just take what they’ve given us and create what we need.”



THE RESULTS

Cashback Account

Reliant's Cashback Account has delivered strong and accelerating performance since launch, underscoring rising consumer demand for checking solutions that provide clear, meaningful value. In its first full year on the market, the product gained notable traction, reaching 1,070 total accounts by year end 2024. Growth continued into 2025, with new Cashback Accounts increasing almost 50% year-over-year to 1,567—demonstrating sustained adoption and member preference for value driven benefits.

Debit

Reliant's Cashback Account strategy has reinforced the credit union's strong, top tier debit performance, with 2025 debit sales volume growing 5.3% and transaction volume increasing 3.2%. This growth is driven by consistently high member engagement—Reliant debit card users average 30.3 transactions per month.

Overall, the continued momentum of Reliant's Cashback Account underscores its effectiveness as a differentiating, high value offering that drives both member acquisition and retention, strengthening Reliant's position as their members' primary payments hub.

"It helped to know that Advisors Plus recommendations were based on deep experience. They're looking at what other credit unions are doing, looking at industry data – but also were considering us and who we were in that process."

"It never felt like a canned recommendation. I'm sure there are things that carry over from credit union to credit union, some best practices. But this felt personal to us; the process to get us the end result was very thorough and made us feel comfortable with your recommendations."

— Heather Chapman, Chief Operating Officer, Reliant Credit Union



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For more information call 844.367.7728 or visit velera.com