



## **Executive of the Month: Santacroce, executive vice president and chief lending officer of Bridgehampton National Bank**

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Not yet 50 years old, Kevin Santacroce has a lifetime of banking and commercial real estate lending experience. He is part of the dynamic executive team that runs Bridgehampton National Bank (BNB), a 100 plus year old community bank with a reputation for working in partnership with local businesses, helping them achieve their financial goals. As executive vice president and chief lending officer, he has been a key architect in developing the bank's structure and putting in place a strong lending team that provides a customized approach to commercial real estate lending, throughout the bank's 23 branch network. And, while the bank has roots on the East End of Long Island, it has continued to move its banking model westward. The BNB footprint will expand again in 2014, with the acquisition of FBNBY and its branches in Melville, Massapequa and Merrick, as well as a lending production office in New York City.

Santacroce joined the Bridgehampton National Bank in 1997 as a commercial loan officer and was promoted to senior banking officer of the East Hampton/Montauk region the following year. In quick succession, he was promoted first to vice president, credit administration in charge of credit underwriting and loan processing and in 2003 to senior vice president and chief credit officer in charge of corporate lending policies and credit quality for both consumer and commercial loans. In 2005, he was promoted to chief lending officer. He serves on a number of board level committees including: credit risk, enterprise risk, ALCO and loan approval and pricing and strategic planning. Santacroce graduated with distinction in 2000 from the American Bankers Association's (ABA) Stonier Graduate School of Banking conducted at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and holds a BS in Business Administration from Bryant University in Smithfield, R.I. where he graduated magna cum laude in 1990. He is also a member of the Risk Management Association for Commercial Lending.

Under Santacroce's direction, BNB's strong and nimble commercial lending team of bankers has produced over ten years of consistent double-digit loan growth. During the last five years, that loan growth has quickly escalated especially in the area of commercial real estate - and, for good reason. Santacroce and his lenders make sure to deliver what customers need. "Deals move fast," said Santacroce. "We know that it is important that the borrower has confidence that the loan can be executed quickly, that there is personal attention to the details necessary to close, and at the same time that rates are competitive. Our customers' business dealings reach out beyond the local market, and we have been able to accommodate their lending needs because of our growth and our partnership with them."

BNB has grown from \$800 million five years ago to \$1.7 billion today, which has enabled it to take on larger commercial loans, not only across Long Island, but also in New York City. And, as larger banks left the marketplace, took their lending decisions to other states, and in some cases turned

their backs altogether on broad categories of businesses, Santacroce and his team have stepped in to do what BNB does best: a brand of community banking that delivers results based on a partnership, personal attention and a commitment to helping businesses succeed.

"Understanding and knowing the marketplace makes a big difference when you are facilitating the completion of a deal," said Santacroce. "In many cases when we sit down with a borrower one of our lenders is already familiar with the property or location. We are on-site and in-person. And we pick up the phone when it rings. That dialogue throughout the process, allows us to make timely decisions based on solid data. We do our homework in concert with our customer."

The BNB philosophy is best illustrated by an example. Jobco Realty & Construction Inc. of Great Neck had a unique and complicated commercial real estate project that needed funding and by its very nature was considered unconventional to many financial institutions. The property in western Nassau County involved historic rehab and restoration, three lots, a church and a property line that ran through the building. "Nothing about this project was ordinary," said Michael Puntillo, Jobco president. "I was restoring a Church's Parish House built in 1930. It entailed subdividing the building and property into a free standing bank branch, church offices, as well as a mixed use commercial property that will be home to a child care facility, physicians and corporate offices. Most lenders found it too complicated, but my BNB lender just got it. Working with BNB was a fantastic experience. They carefully analyzed the deal, presented a strong proposal that was both creative and customized to meet my needs, which included providing all the construction financing. I was thrilled at the quality and speed of their approach. It seemed the philosophy was - we believe in you and we will help you get this deal done. That project now nears completion."

When discussing success stories like Jobco, Santacroce points directly at his lending team and the credit administration staff behind them. He views his role as chief lending officer as basically one of team leader, supporting the efforts in the market place to deliver the kind of customized and personal banking services that are inherent in the BNB mission statement. "I am looking forward with great excitement to the next few years," said Santacroce. "We are continuing to add customer centered bankers to our team, grounding them in the community banking philosophy that has distinguished BNB and enhancing credit administration so that loan processing is faster and more efficient. And we are building new partnerships every day. In the end, while the dynamics of the deal are important, I believe our ability to deliver is all about having the right people - the lender and the customer working together towards a common goal."

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