

Women Leaders in Delaware

Q&A with Lisa Collison, Delaware Bank Commissioner

As Women's History Month comes to a close, the Women Connect Network honors the women who continue to strengthen and shape Delaware every day. This month reminds us that progress is built through connection, support, and the steady leadership of women across our state.

In our inaugural *Women Leaders in Delaware* Spotlight, we're proud to recognize Lisa Collison, Delaware's new State Bank Commissioner. Her leadership, expertise, and commitment to public service reflect the strength and impact of women shaping Delaware's future.

Here's to the women who lead, inspire, and move Delaware forward.

What was one pivotal moment or challenge in your career that shaped the leader you are today?

Believe it or not, the COVID-19 pandemic was a defining challenge in my career, as it was for so many others, and it shaped the leader I am today. If nothing else it reinforced the importance of flexibility and adaptability. I learned to adjust quickly when circumstances changed, embrace and rely on remote work and digital transformation, and support flexible work policies.

The pandemic was a stress test for leadership. It made life more difficult for everyone, especially those in leadership roles. Yet it also spotlighted leadership strengths - resilience, empathy, and innovation - that are now reshaping how we define effective leadership.

Another important influence on my leadership journey has been being a mother. I believe motherhood is one of the most challenging roles a woman can take on, but it also builds invaluable skills. It sharpens awareness of team dynamics, encourages more thoughtful responses, and strengthens the ability to motivate individuals in different ways (because, as we know, every child is different). It also reinforces the importance of prioritization and decisiveness.

In the banking/financial services industry, what strengths do you believe women bring to leadership, relationship building, and client outcomes, and how have you seen those strengths make a difference in your own work?

Women in banking/financial services bring strengths including enhanced empathy, adaptability, and collaboration that improves team performance.

Women tend to bring a collaborative and nurturing leadership style, which fosters better performing teams and enhanced employee engagement.

In my role as a leader in the financial regulatory sector, I have found that empathy, adaptability, and collaboration are essential to driving strong team performance. These qualities have enabled me to effectively lead a diverse staff through both challenging and transformative times. Recognizing that each individual brings a unique story, set of strengths and background; I can prioritize building on those strengths to encourage engagement, trust, and collective success.

Who were the mentors that helped open doors for you, and how do you intentionally support and elevate other women in the Delaware banking community today?

The women who paved the way before me at the Office of the State Bank Commissioner opened doors and created opportunities not only for me, but for all the women on our staff. Their leadership and perseverance laid a foundation that continues to shape our workplace today.

It is now my mission to carry that legacy forward. I am committed to supporting women within my office, across Delaware's banking and financial services industry, and those just beginning their careers. By promoting mentorship, creating meaningful networking opportunities, and building strong connections, I aim to help open doors for continued growth and advancement.

As I grow in my role as State Bank Commissioner, I recognize the importance of strengthening relationships with other women in our industry. Together, we have the opportunity to build a more connected, resilient network – one that not only supports individual success but also advances our workplaces and the industry as a whole.

What did you learn about advocating for yourself along the way?

Advocating for yourself in the banking industry is something that is built over time by speaking up, being prepared, setting boundaries, building relationships, and taking initiative.

It's easy to think that hard work alone will speak for itself, but in banking, especially in the regulatory environment, your perspective is part of your contribution. Asking questions, offering informed thoughts, and speaking up in decision making spaces signals confidence and competence.

Advocacy is about being prepared. Knowing your material and anticipating questions allows you to clearly declare your position. Setting boundaries by knowing when to say no when necessary and setting expectations are not signs of resistance, they are signs of clarity and leadership.Building strong, respectful relationships creates trust. And taking initiative demonstrates self-advocacy.

What is one change you would most like to see in our industry to help women thrive and advance?

I would like to see women speak up and advocate for themselves. Don't wait for opportunities to come to you, actively seek them out and speak up for what you want and deserve.

Once you have seized the opportunity for growth, don't stop there, pay it forward through mentoring others to make the change sustainable for the future.

What is the most important advice you would give about building confidence, growing a network, and pursuing opportunities in financial services, especially here in Delaware?

Delaware may be small, but it is incredibly powerful in the banking sector. We are fortunate to have an exceptional network of talented women across the industry right at our fingertips. By reaching out, embracing one another's strengths, and building meaningful connections, we can continue to elevate each other and strengthen our collective impact.