

Community Bank in Brockton, Massachusetts finding Success with Engaged Bankers who Educate and Put their Customers First



James W. Blake
Chief Executive Officer

HarborOne Bank
(Nasdaq:HONE)
www.harborone.com

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Mr. Blake, would you tell us about your core vision at HarborOne?*

Mr. Blake: We pride ourselves on providing great service to our customers and the fact that customers do not have to look at the fine print. It is a function of the engagement with our employees to carry that out. The more we have them involved with our strategies and plans, the more able they are likely to participate and interact with our customers on a level that meets that plan. By way of example for the last eight years in a row, our employees voted us One of the Best Places to Work in the Boston Globe and that was with 86% of our employees voting. We firmly believe that the key to our success would be the work that our employees do every single day. The closer they are to our customers the better that strategy will work.

CEOCFO: *Did you always know that engaging your employees made a difference?*

Mr. Blake: I have always believed this and it speaks to the experiences I had coming up through the industry and having worked for four other institutions before I came here. I had an opportunity to see how four banks managed their strategies so it became clear to me that staff knowledge is power. If you expect to have strategies carried out you cannot do it by edict, you have to do it by having employees involved. They have to know the strategy and why it is the strategy and what their role in that strategy is and how they are going to participate in the success of the company going forward. I have been here twenty years and that is my core belief. As part of our strategic planning process we have someone in the organization that is responsible for maintaining the culture that we have. It has worked for us and I think that is evident by the response we get from our employees when they enter that Globe survey about whether they understand where the organization is going and whether they have a say in it, do they feel the communication process is valid. This is particularly true most recently with millennials; we have found that over the last eight years, there is a thirst on the part of our younger millennial staff on what we are doing as an organization and what we are doing in the community. There is a desire to work for a company that is doing something good in the community and they want to be part of that. It is becoming an even more important item for us over the last number of years.

CEOCFO: *How do you decide where to focus efforts in the communities?*

Mr. Blake: We were until a few years ago a credit union and we were the largest community credit union in the country. Part of that is the involvement in the activities of your membership. Brockton, Massachusetts is a gateway city where our roots come from and there a lot of challenges in gateway cities. There were not a lot of large organizations in the community so because of our size there was a belief that we could have an impact beyond just doing financial