

WALL STREET JOURNAL

Online Lender Elevate Taps Fintech Vet as CIO

Wall Street Journal

By Angus Loten – March 25, 2016

Online lender Elevate Credit Inc. has tapped Joan Kuehl as its first chief information officer, seeking to leverage her IT background in banking and insurance.

Ms. Kuehl, who was previously CIO at Travelers Inc. and a senior technology manager at Bank of America, replaces retiring Chief Technology Officer Jeff Flynn, the company said.

While the move is effective immediately, Mr. Flynn will help transition “all roles and responsibilities to Ms. Kuehl,” according to a company statement.

Ms. Kuehl brings some 30 years of experience in technology and financial services to the Fort Worth, Texas, startup, which was spun out of former lender Think Finance Inc. in 2014.

At Travelers, where she led eBusiness for nearly four years starting in 2012, Ms. Kuehl oversaw efforts to create Web, mobile and social-business capabilities across the company, according to her LinkedIn profile.

Before that, she was a senior vice president and senior technology executive at Bank of America for nearly six years. There, she managed consumer and small business ecommerce technology, leading teams that created and maintained the bank’s public website and its online banking and mobile banking services.

She also worked in IT at travel-booking service Sabre Holdings Inc.

Ms. Kuehl said her top priority in the year ahead is to ensure Elevate’s technology and analytics platforms “continue to perform and scale successfully” to drive growth and help “accelerate time to market for new product features and underwriting enhancements,” she told CIO Journal.

She said a key issue for online lenders is the ability to strike the right balance between agility and regulatory compliance: “Big data, in particular, offers tremendous opportunities to improve customer outcomes, but requires careful controls and quality management,” she said.

“My job is to support the exciting developments initiated by our data scientists, while maintaining the appropriate infrastructure and data management controls required by our compliance team,” she said.

Elevate is among a growing list of financial-technology and technology ventures that raised cash from private investors at high valuations, but are now struggling with weaker prospects for public stock offerings. Shares of other online lenders, such as LendingClub and On Deck Capital, have declined more steeply than bank stocks in the past year.

In January, Elevate postponed a planned IPO, [citing difficult market conditions](#), though its revenue grew steadily last year to more than \$300 million.

Ms. Kuehl's Fintech experience "makes her a perfect fit to lead Elevate's technology team," Ken Rees, the company's chief executive officer, told CIO Journal. "She has successfully built industry-leading e-commerce applications for top financial institutions and has deep insights into the regulatory requirements," he said.

She has a bachelor's degree in computer science from West Virginia University.

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