

Making a Difference

The Ally Culture

An Interview with Alison Summerville,
Business Administration Executive, Ally Financial Inc.

EDITORS' NOTE Alison Summerville was named to her current post in June 2015. Most recently, she served as Executive Director of CFO business support. She joined Ally in 2009 as Chief Administrative Officer for the company's Treasury function. Prior to Ally, Summerville spent nearly nine years at Bank of America, most recently as the company's Treasury business support executive. She holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Alison Summerville

COMPANY BRIEF Ally Financial Inc. (*ally.com*) is a leading digital financial services company and a top 25 U.S. financial holding company offering financial products for consumers, businesses, automotive dealers, and corporate clients. Ally has an award-winning online bank, one of the largest full-service auto finance operations in the country, a complementary auto-focused insurance business, a growing digital wealth management and online brokerage platform, and a trusted corporate finance business offering capital for equity sponsors and middle-market companies.

What excited you about the opportunity to join Ally and made you feel it would be the right fit?

I came to Ally because of the people. The leadership team was composed of people I had worked with in the past, and I was loyal to them. I also saw the Ally brand starting to grow, and I knew there were exciting opportunities ahead for the company.

How do you define your role, and do all of your areas of focus interrelate?

My primary focus is to support our CEO, acting as his "COO" if you will, and ensuring a seamless flow of information to the executive team and among all of our leaders.

I'm also responsible for the things that don't fit neatly into a business function but are critical to our company and to our culture. For example, I am responsible for the Corporate Workplace function, because our facilities are a very important part of our culture. I recently gained responsibility for Corporate Citizenship, which has become a key focus for Ally as we increase our financial education efforts and put greater emphasis on giving back to the communities where we live and work.

How are you able to make sure you're effectively communicating with and working with the business function leaders and engaging them?

Our executive leadership team is very open with each other and engaged, which helps all of us to work together to accomplish our goals. In my role, effective communication requires trust, respect, honesty, and accountability in terms of following through on the commitments I make.

Will you talk about what corporate workplace means and what it entails?

Ally's Corporate Workplace group oversees all of our facilities around the country. We have several corporate centers – Charlotte, Detroit, and New York. We also have regional offices and several servicing centers.

What we've realized over time is the importance of providing a work environment where people like to be and providing them with work spaces that allow them to collaborate with each other and interact with other groups that aren't necessarily their teams.

When we invest in our workplace, we're really investing in our people. We recently consolidated into a new office facility in downtown Detroit, and the modern, colorful, and collaborative space really reflects the revitalization of Detroit and the energy that exists there. We are finding that having a workplace that matches the energy of the city is attractive for recruiting talent and attracting young people, interns, and team members who prefer to work in a vibrant environment. We've also learned that by incorporating historical and cultural elements into the space, we have made it feel more personal to the team, and in turn they feel a greater sense of pride in the space and in the company.

For the culture of Ally, how critical is it to be engaged within the local communities where you're operating?

Community engagement and giving back to the communities where we live and work is a big focus for Ally. Our employees love to go into our communities, and they actively organize and participate in many volunteer activities throughout the year.

We find that giving back is a point of pride for individuals, for teams, and for our entire company. Helping others allows us to connect with our customers, partners, colleagues, and neighbors



Alison Summerville (center) joins Ally volunteers at a local house-building event in Charlotte, North Carolina

on a deeper level. It feels great to be making an impact when it comes to important causes like fighting hunger, providing resources for those in need, and supporting financial education.

Inherently, we believe people want to do good, and Ally supports our team members by providing volunteer opportunities and paid volunteer time off. We also have programs that match financial donations from our employees to maximize giving.

Do you look to support causes that in some way align with Ally's business?

From a corporate perspective, we focus on promoting financial literacy and education through our Ally Wallet Wise program. The program provides free tips, tools, and resources to help people learn important money skills like budgeting, saving, and credit. In addition, we support several national organizations that provide critical resources like food and shelter to the underserved, and we also support a variety of organizations and causes that are important to our employees at the local level.

How deeply ingrained is the focus around building a diverse and inclusive workforce?

We've placed increasing emphasis on our diversity and inclusion program in recent years, because we truly believe that bringing together individuals of different races, religions, backgrounds, ages, cultures, and sexual preferences gives us a broader range of viewpoints and perspectives that we can use to better navigate challenges and leverage opportunities. When different people come together at Ally with common goals, we believe there are exciting opportunities for deeper understanding, collaboration, and innovation. To this end, we are focused on continuing to support a culture and work environment that is open, inclusive, and respectful of all individuals. ●