

## Customer Focus

An Interview with Bernard Garrigues,  
Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Webster Financial Corporation and Webster Bank

**EDITORS' NOTE** Bernard Garrigues joined Webster in 2014. Prior to that, he was with TIMEX Group where he was Chief Human Resources Officer with global human resources responsibility for several thousand employees in 22 countries. Previously, he worked 21 years for General Electric where he served as global head of HR for a number of GE businesses. Garrigues is Six Sigma Green Belt certified, a published author, and a seasoned guest lecturer. He is a graduate of the University of Montpellier in Montpellier, France with degrees in employee relations and law.



Bernard Garrigues

**COMPANY BRIEF** Webster Bank, N.A. ([public.websteronline.com](http://public.websteronline.com)) is a leading regional bank in the Northeast with more than \$28 billion in assets and 157 banking centers from greater New York City to Boston. It offers a full range of financial services, delivered by almost 3,400 employees. The company was founded in 1935 and is based in Waterbury, Connecticut.

### What have been the keys to Webster Bank's success and how critical is culture to the strength and leadership of the company?

Culture is a very important driver of how we do business at Webster, and diversity and inclusion provide the foundation of this culture.

A critical element of Webster's culture is our focus on the customer. We pride ourselves on doing the right thing for our customers, working with them to better understand their needs, and then finding the best solution for them. Taking personal responsibility for meeting our customers' needs is a clear differentiator and an integral part of Webster's DNA.

Another element of our culture is that Webster genuinely cares about employees. Of course, it is also a performance-driven culture and the bar is high, but every individual has the opportunity to contribute to business results and we strive to provide an environment that supports and enables their performance. Part of our strategy is to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds can excel in their jobs, have the opportunity to develop new skills and fulfill their career aspirations.

The third element of Webster's culture is our dedication to the communities we serve. Giving back to the community is very important for us. It makes a positive impact, and it's a good reflection of our Webster values in action.

These three elements motivate our bankers every day in many ways. A great part of our success is that people are inspired by our culture and fully embrace those Webster values. I like to say that our bankers drive the performance of the business, but the culture drives the performance and the behaviors of our bankers.

### Is it important to put metrics around Webster's diversity and inclusion efforts?

Yes. At the end of the day, metrics and measures are important elements that influence results. Our role is to make sure that our Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) strategic priorities are embedded in our playbook and become a regular part of our business practices. Specific metrics can certainly help drive the achievement of our D&I priorities. However, let's keep in mind that metrics are just vectors of the execution of our D&I strategy – leadership engagement is even more important and comes first.

Our approach is not to over-engineer things, but aspirational goals and simple metrics can positively influence diversity progress and drive meaningful results.

### How critical is C-Suite and senior management engagement in driving Webster's diversity and inclusion efforts?

It is the pivotal point. It is fundamental that the leadership of the organization, starting with the CEO, is fully engaged. Our CEO sets the tone at the top. He is absolutely committed to D&I and he makes that point by co-chairing our Diversity & Inclusion Council.

Because D&I is a priority for our CEO and for the entire executive leadership team, this commitment and focus generates a broader level of engagement across the organization. It has become a critical element of the way we conduct business at Webster. D&I is frequently on the agenda of executive committee meetings, which represents a great platform for raising the profile of D&I. A year ago, we implemented a program called "Leading a Diverse Team." We started the program with the executive committee to fine-tune the approach and garner their support for utilizing more inclusive behaviors with their respective teams. This sent a strong signal to the business, and it was well-received across the organization. The program was then rolled out to all leaders at Webster and in 2019 the program has been expanded to all bankers.

When people in a business unit see that their leader is really engaged and takes D&I very seriously, not only do they think that it is an important priority, but it also creates an unparalleled level of motivation and momentum in the workplace.

### How do you describe Webster Bank's value proposition?

We are obviously looking to hire the leaders of the future, those who are going to build on our successful legacy and take our business to new heights. Of course, not everybody can be a leader, but everybody can contribute in a meaningful way to the success of the business.

As it relates to our employee value proposition, our ability to attract and retain talent is based on several things:

First, it is about engaging people and showing them that Webster's vibrant culture provides a strong sense of purpose. People need to be inspired by something bigger than themselves. A diverse and inclusive culture is an important factor for employees. It is also about clearly articulating the business vision and strategy, inspiring people and showing them the promising future ahead.

Second, it is important to demonstrate Webster's commitment to investing in people, offering opportunities to grow and learn, to increase their domain expertise and enrich their leadership skills. Continuously nurturing our workforce represents a critical competitive advantage.

Webster offers a broad range of career opportunities. We do not hire individuals just for a specific job. We hire individuals with potential who can have a successful career and achieve their aspirations, and we work very hard to facilitate internal mobility.

Hiring strong leaders and domain experts and empowering them is a key to success. People aspire to demonstrate their potential in a way that is fulfilling and gives them the latitude to make an impact. Providing stretch assignments, challenging opportunities and developmental projects is also part of our talent strategy.

Finally, it is vital to keep people engaged around our culture of openness, transparency, honesty and appreciation. Appreciation for a job well done, recognition and celebration are also part of our efforts to push for more inclusion and excitement in the workplace.

These are some of the elements of our value proposition for prospective and current employees. They represent a unique combination that differentiates us and makes Webster a great place to work. ●