

Elevating the Private Bank

An Interview with Katy Knox,
President, Bank of America Private Bank

EDITORS' NOTE Katy Knox is a member of Bank of America's executive management team. She has more than 25 years of leadership experience in financial services, and today leads more than 4,300 professionals serving ultra-high-net-worth individuals, families and institutions. Prior to her current role, she served as the head of Business Banking at Bank of America. Previously, she led the company's nationwide retail banking and distribution business, responsible for the financial centers, ATM



Katy Knox

network and digital banking platform. Knox has also held leadership roles overseeing business strategy, commercial banking, global treasury management and wealth management. Knox is a leader within the company's diversity networks and has served as vice chair of its Global Diversity and Inclusion Council. She was recognized as one of the Top 100 Diverse Executive & Emerging Leaders by *Diverse MBA* magazine. She is active in Bank of America's Global Ambassador Program, which provides mentoring to women leaders worldwide, fostering economic empowerment, effective advocacy, more equitable opportunity, and measurable enhancements for women and their communities. Knox is involved in several charitable and civic organizations in Charlotte, New York City and Boston and serves on the board of trustees of the JFK Library Foundation. She earned her undergraduate degree in business administration from Elmira College and her M.B.A. from Boston College.

BUSINESS BRIEF Bank of America Private Bank (privatebank.bankofamerica.com) helps ultra-high-net-worth individuals and families, business owners and institutions preserve and share wealth, build legacies, and plan for growth and success. The business meets clients' complex financial needs through institutional-quality expertise, boutique-style private banking, highly specialized services, and the global resources of Bank of America, one of the world's leading financial institutions. For over 200 years, the Private Bank has served clients through dedicated teams of experienced advisors who deliver a range of sophisticated and customized solutions for credit and banking, investment management, trust and estate planning, art services, wealth transfer and philanthropic solutions, alternative investments and specialty asset management.

What were your initial priorities when you assumed the role to lead Bank of America Private Bank?

We wanted to leverage the company's brand to elevate the Private Bank. Therefore, one of my first big initiatives coming into this role was to retire the U.S. Trust brand and integrate it more closely with Bank of America. We were a legacy of many different trust companies and private banks that came together over two centuries, and we wanted to bring all of those legacies together under one powerful brand.

Another priority was expanding into new markets where the Private Bank didn't have a presence, as well as within existing

markets, making sure that we were present in at least 40 of the company's top 50 markets across the country which cover more than 90 percent of the wealth in our segment. This continues to be a big part of our responsible growth agenda.

We also set out to strengthen partnerships with the other lines of business across the company, making sure that we had close partnerships with our consumer bank, small business, business banking, commercial banking, and investment banking businesses so that we can bring all of the company's resources and capabilities to bear for our clients. These businesses provide a significant volume of referrals to the Private Bank.

In what other ways has the Private Bank business evolved in recent years?

We've been extremely focused on the client experience. We set out to execute what we call operational excellence, which involved looking at every activity and capability that touches a client to make sure that it's designed in a way that it provides an exceptional experience. That is a journey that Brian Moynihan (Bank of America Chairman and CEO) put us on several years ago which became critically important to the Private Bank as we relaunched the brand and everything that it stood for.

Another business imperative for us was to invest in the future through the modernization of our technology, which had three major components. The first was to make sure that all of our client touch points, whether digital or via a mobile device, were updated, automated and integrated with the broader technology delivered across the company. The clients we serve in the Private Bank are some of the most sophisticated people in the world and they expect our team and technology to provide them with the best service and experience. The second piece was looking at all of the tools that our internal employees use to make sure that we were making it easier for them to do their jobs. And the third had to do with major infrastructure and platform enhancements. We created a three to five year road map to modernize the business which we are now executing against.

In addition, we focused on the development of our people and making sure that Bank of America Private Bank, and Bank of America overall, is a great place to work. We redesigned

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Our priorities and evolution over the last two years are likely to lead to record Private Bank growth in 2019 by several measures. For instance, as of the end of the third quarter, net new relationships were up 64 percent compared to the prior year.

When you are transforming a business around the priorities you mentioned, how critical is it to communicate internally with the team and to engage them in the process?

We first developed a two-year strategic plan along with a financial plan and measurement system to make sure that we were growing the business while also making meaningful investments in its future success. Once we had this in place, we created the story for the Private Bank so that everybody could hear the vision, understand where we were on the journey, where we were going, and how we were going to get there. Much of that was internal communications and being repetitive day in, day out, around a consistent and compelling vision.

It was important that everybody knew the vision and could talk to their teams about it. We started communicating first with all of our market leaders, and then brought it more broadly across the Private Bank. In doing so, we found pockets of legacy areas on which we needed to do more work, so we held face to face town halls as well as listening and feedback sessions.

How critical is it for the Private Bank to have a diverse and inclusive workforce?

At Bank of America, diversity and inclusion are part of the fiber of how we do business. Throughout my career I've been heavily involved in our company's diversity and inclusion initiatives that Brian has led so beautifully over the years.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work in the company's consumer bank and the global commercial bank, which gave me perspective on how to tap into a diverse population aligned to the communities that we were serving. We want to further diversify the Private Bank in a way that helps us better understand and engage with the communities we're trying to serve from both a language and cultural standpoint. It is both a moral and a commercial imperative.

There is a major focus today around gender parity and opportunities for women in business. Are you happy with the progress being made and are there strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?

We have made tremendous progress as a company over the 10 years that Brian has been CEO and Chair of the company's Global Diversity and Inclusion Council. Today, more than 50 percent of our global workforce are women, including more than 45 percent of our management team. I'm proud to work for an organization that has such a dedicated focus on investing in women. This work includes being a great place to work for our female employees, our focus on making the financial lives of our female clients better, and our focus on advancing the economic empowerment of women in communities around

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the world. We still have work to do, and we've set out to make sure we're creating even more opportunities for women.

How important is it for Bank of America to be a purpose-driven brand and to be engaged in the communities it serves?

When I first joined the company, we were focused on corporate social responsibility, and then this transitioned to environmental, social and governance (ESG) in which we're leading in many different ways. There's a great deal of support for and engagement in what we're doing in the global community through the company's philanthropic and volunteer efforts, and we are deeply engaged in the local communities we serve. Everyone, and specifically younger professionals, wants to be part of a company that is innovative and meaningful in the way it does business.

At the Private Bank, we're helping our clients understand how to invest in a meaningful way. Many wealthy people have significant passions and goals for making an impact. We have a deep knowledge and access to resources to deliver philanthropic solutions, impact investing opportunities and other strategies that give them the power to make a difference in the world.

What has made Bank of America a place where you have wanted to spend your career?

I actually had a dream of being a sports announcer, but the bank provided me a great opportunity coming out of college with a solid salary and terrific benefits. It was a decision that I made and never looked back. It feels like I have had multiple careers within the same company because of all the opportunities that I've had. It has been very important to me that I have always aligned culturally with the direction of the company and with its leadership.

Most importantly, the company gave me the opportunity to grow professionally, while also allowing me personally to follow so many passions. When I talk to our younger professionals, I tell them that you have a professional career at a company, but you also have the opportunity to grow personally, give back to the community, and follow your passions. I do a lot of mentoring with women globally which has been so rewarding. My career at Bank of America has provided many different and great experiences, both professionally and personally. ●