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Diversity Provides the Competitive Edge

By Joyce Saunders

An open management style featuring wide diversity exemplifies the working environment at MortgageFlex Systems in Jacksonville, Florida.

The innovative technology provider is a leader in the lending software industry, yet the corporate atmosphere remains relaxed and open for its employees. The company's smaller size enables employees to bond as a team and create a "personal touch" business style for clients.

Lester Dominick, founder and president of MortgageFlex, transformed mortgage software back in 1984 with the introduction of the first fully automated micro-computer based loan origination system. Today the LoanQuest™ Residential Lending System covers the entire life-cycle of the loan from origination through servicing.

His hiring philosophy brings together employees from diverse ethnic and professional backgrounds, with a male - female ratio that is nearly equal. In roles that are typically viewed as male-dominated in the banking industry, MortgageFlex is proud of the women within its workforce for redefining this perception.

While all employees are vital links in the organization, these four women provide a 'fair' sampling of the company's entire work culture. Their decision to join the MortgageFlex team was largely based on the corporation's innovative style and strong commitment to produce exemplary products for customers.

Cecilia Bautista, senior programmer analyst at MortgageFlex, describes the company as "a melting pot" of various cultures: Indian, Filipino, Turk, Pakistani and Russian. "The company is like one big family," Cecilia says.

She started her career with MortgageFlex in 2000 as a consultant, providing programming support. Due to her expertise, Cecilia was asked to stay and become a permanent staff member.

She has more than 10 years of progressive experience in IT strategy, relationship management, product management, software quality assurance, and user training. Cecilia has in-depth experience in overseeing multimillion-dollar application implementations and prides herself with a results-oriented, "take charge and do it now" attitude.

Two prominent female executives at MortgageFlex are: **Nancy Ann Clig-Wiles**, vice-president of production programming services; and Shelley Barth, vice-president for consulting services. Nancy started her career with the company in 1994

and quickly rose to her management position in 1999. She is responsible for the development, programming and client interfacing for the MortgageFlex product line.

Nancy says she has seen a positive movement in women transitioning to more technical and leadership roles within the banking industry. "Women are not content to be processors or underwriters, they are going for data base administrator, Web developer and CIO positions. This is a very positive movement."

Shelley Barth joined MortgageFlex in 2000, as a project manager in the Consulting Services Division. Currently as vice-president of consulting services, she is responsible for the everyday management of the Business Analysis and Project Management team. Shelley has over 25 years of experience in client management, product strategy, and new product development, sales and marketing. Her decision to join MortgageFlex was largely based on the challenge and intrigue of the new position.

During her career, Shelley says, one of the bigger challenges has been getting past the industry idea of consulting, which often had the connotation "that ours was a limited role. We want to work with the client so they can maintain the application and then we move on."

Kathy O'Brien joined the Consulting Division in April, 2000. She provides gap analysis support and develops system specifications for customizations, enhancements and software problems. Kathy has over 17 years of IT and user training experience, and has been previously employed by BancBoston Mortgage Corporation, HomeSide Lending, Inc. and Blue Cross Blue Shield. Her desire to learn new technology through MortgageFlex's leading edge applications sparked her interest in the company. Kathy also was drawn to the company's "personal touch" business style. "It seemed that the personal touch was not as prevalent in the larger corporations and this is important to me," she says.

While MortgageFlex employees have diversified professional and cultural backgrounds, they share the common goal of keeping the company on the leading edge, evidenced not only in the company's products, but also in the way employees are encouraged to take on higher roles.

Hours can be long and the work tough, but everyone involved has a strong commitment to the company they call their "second home." *