

Executive Profile

JOHN CONOVER

PRESIDENT AND CEO, BOREL PRIVATE BANK & TRUST CO.

Background: Conover joined the San Mateo-based bank as president and chief operating officer in April 2003. He became CEO in March 2004. Conover's roots run deep in Bay Area banking. He spent more than three decades at Bank of America, including posts in Los Angeles and another in San Francisco, where he managed 225 BofA branches in the Bay Area.

First job: An operations trainee with Bank of America, following a year in law school and serving in the California National Guard.

Education: Bachelor's degree in political science from California State University, Northridge.

Residence: Los Altos Hills.

Business philosophy

Best way to keep competitive edge: Stay focused and don't lose sight of what you do well.

Guiding principle: Build your business around people, both your customers and employees.

Yardstick of success: The easy answer is financial. The harder answer is growing the culture and the people side of the business. We've more than doubled our staff in the last six years.

Goal yet to be achieved: To continue to challenge myself and the people who work with me. It's important to assemble the right team and then let them loose. Six years ago, I never would have projected that we would be the size we are today.

Judgment calls

Best business decision: It's always about who to hire.

Worst business decision: My first reaction was, 'none.' But you miss some opportunities along the way, but you don't realize it because you make judgments as you go. Maybe it would have been a great opportunity to move to Charlotte with Bank of America. But I'm happy with the decisions that I made.

Toughest business decision: It goes back to people. You try to be fair, but sometimes you have to fire people.

Biggest missed opportunity: Personally, probably not finishing law school. But that created the opportunity for me in banking, so I have no regrets.

Mentor: Everybody I've worked with. You learn from everyone you meet.

Words that best describe you: Tough but fair.

True confessions

Like best about job: Working with people.

Like least about job: Paperwork.

Pet peeve: Meetings that go beyond their allotted time.

Most important lesson learned: At Bank of America, I never understood how critical relationships with clients are to get things done. At the big banks you really didn't build the relationships because you segmented clients based on what they did.

Most respected competitors: Bank of Marin and Mechanics Bank.

First choice for a new career: Teaching.

Predilections

Favorite quote: Lead or be led.

Most influential book: "Good to Great" by Jim Collins.

Favorite cause: Education.

Status symbol: My travel experiences.

Favorite movie: "Chicago."

Favorite restaurant: One Market Restaurant in San Francisco.

Favorite vacation spot: Maui, Kapalua, Plantation course, 18th hole.

Favorite way to spend free time: With my grandchildren.

What I drive: BMW 530.

— Mark Calvey ■

