

Future Banker

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Bailar, Connelly, Pass the Baton

BYLINE: Michael Dumiak

Hotfile 9: **Gregor Bailar**, CIO, Capital One; Marge Connelly, EVP, Operations Capital One

If there's a place where a calm sea of data can whip into a monsoon in a hurry, it's at a credit card firm. Competition is fast and intense; misread or misplay the information and yesterday's Providian becomes, well, today's Providian.

Capital One, a card issuer with 44 million customers, claims its business to be not debt management but information management. It tests 45,000 different offers in a year. It uses data to match those offers to customers and make sure, as much as possible, those offers pay.

So in a tumultuous 2001, it was notable to see Capital One get through the year on its bench strength, with Marge Connelly and Laura Olle carrying over co-CIO duties from 2000; **Gregor Bailar** then took the reins as CIO just before the end of last year. Bailar, a top talent featured before in FB in his post as CIO at Nasdaq, brings additional punch in heading a top-flight team of 2,500 technologists. It should be interesting to see how Capital One's data holds up as the economy continues to spiral. "We've been aggressive about being conservative in our recession models," he says, adding that one factor in his firm's favor is the use of "real" data, as opposed to statistics or sampling.

Connelly, as strategist, and Olle, as technologist, did more than keep a complicated machine humming last year. Technology was a driving force in wiring the army of Cap One and volunteer phone operators who took calls for the Sept. 21 telethon in the wake of the terror attacks. "Demonstrate to me the plan that's going to get there, and then let's work together to pull it off," Connelly says.

At Capital One the CIO role continues to be pivotal, part of the top tier of management in shaping and developing strategy. "The whole crux of Capital One's competitive advantage is information management," Bailar says. "It's got to keep pace."

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