

# Profile

STRATEGIES FOR INDUSTRY LEADERS

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## Helping customers weather tough times

Though its lending went down due to the economic recession, Western Heritage Credit Union was flooded with deposits, growing \$5 million in one year

**D**ubbed “Bossy Becky” at an early age, Becky Reed knew her drive to succeed was not being downplayed. Despite the good-natured name-calling, Reed’s inherent instinct to lead has helped Western Heritage Credit Union weather through challenges. As the community-based credit union’s CEO, she’s helped the financial institution during a time when “delinquency was up and the economy was sketchy,” she recalls. Here, she shares with *Profile* how she gained the trust of customers and helped find solutions during troubling financial times.

AS TOLD TO TRICIA DESPRES

**My sister and my cousins used to call me “Bossy Becky.” From a very early age, I have always had this classic Type A personality.** I have always been very driven, and I guess some people read that as being very bossy. But, I’ve always been a leader and generally, people have always liked me. I remember in school how people would always nominate me to be their group’s leader. I’ve never been afraid to get up in front of people and take charge of the situation.

**So far, my personality has suited me well in my professional career.** Even though I started in retail management, my entire 25-year career has been spent running a business and managing people. I have always been a part of the service industry and was promoted to the management ranks at a very early age. In 1996, I took a job within the credit industry. I basically went from a retail environment working 80 hours a week to bankers’ hours, so to speak. I have been hooked ever since. I agree wholeheartedly with the credit-union philosophy and have become very passionate about credit unions and how we help our members. It just seems to fit well within my customer- service background.

**My family has always been with credit unions, so I was familiar with them from a customer perspective.** I started off just wanting to work with a financial institution, but as I started getting into it, I really became immersed in the philosophy of credit unions. The whole credit union environment was quite different back then. Most were based with an employer group, but now,

“[Back in 2009], a number of large employers were experiencing layoffs, which greatly affected our members. Our credit union was very proactive and tried to work with them and find solutions.”

**BECKY REED**  
CEO



## Aha! MOMENT

“When I realized that everyone was not like me ... Early in my career, I remember how it would shock me if someone would come late to work! Through the years, I have had to learn how to manage different personality types who just might have a completely different work ethic than I might have. As a manager, I have always tried to be introspective and learn from my mistakes. I have always looked at what happened and what role did I play, and how could things have gone differently. Instead of molding them to turn into me, I considered changing myself.”

most have evolved into community credit unions.

**There have been challenges through the years.** We are a community-based credit union, and back in 2009, Western Heritage Credit Union was serving a number of rural counties within the panhandle of Nebraska. At the time, a number of large employers were experiencing layoffs, which greatly affected our members. Our credit union was very proactive and tried to work with them and find solutions. Delinquency was up and the economy was sketchy. Our lending went

down, but we were flooded with deposits. In fact, we grew \$5 million in a year. People trusted us and wanted to put their money where it was safe.

**No matter what happens in the future, I think we are going to continue our efforts to maintain relationships with our employer groups and maintain those contacts within the communities we serve.** Throughout my career, I have worked with credit unions worth \$50 million to \$2 billion and I have seen a lot of different things. At this point, I think we need to maintain

what we are doing. It's tried and true. Why change the formula?

**And no, they don't call me “Bossy Becky” anymore.** They are proud of me certainly. Whenever I say that I am a natural leader, people seem to think I want to have authority over people. Leadership is an act of service. I need to make decisions that affect a lot of different people. “Bossy Becky” has grown [up] to be a highly collaborative executive. At the end of the day, it's not about me. It's about our staff ... our members ... our community. [P]