

Nov/Dec 2022 | Vol. 49, No. 7

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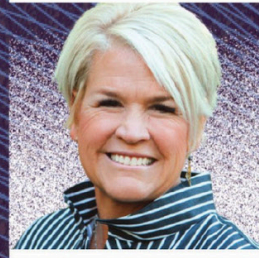
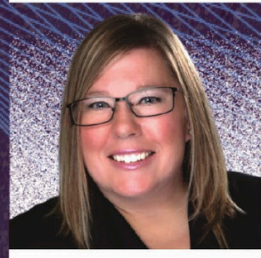
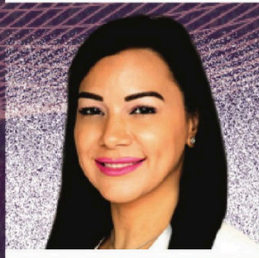
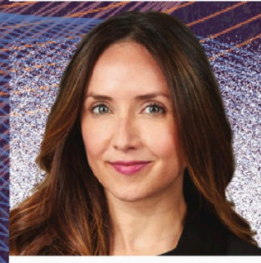
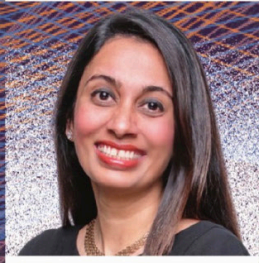
The Independent Voice of Equipment Finance

4TH ANNUAL WOMEN IN  
EQUIPMENT FINANCE

BANK 50 RANKINGS



# WOMEN



# IN EF



MONITOR'S FOURTH ANNUAL  
WOMEN IN EQUIPMENT  
FINANCE LIST HIGHLIGHTS  
NOTABLE WOMEN WITHIN THE  
INDUSTRY THAT HAVE BEEN  
NOMINATED BY OUR READERS  
AND HAND-SELECTED BY  
MONITOR'S STAFF AND  
EDITORIAL BOARD.

# **4TH ANNUAL WOMEN IN EQUIPMENT FINANCE**



# KRISTEN CARUSO

*Contracts Administrator*

**First Financial Equipment Leasing**

ELFA



**“YOU DON’T NEED TO HOLD A CERTAIN TITLE TO BE A LEADER. LEAD BY EXAMPLE AND OTHERS WILL NATURALLY FOLLOW. REMEMBER YOU ARE PART OF A TEAM, SO TRY TO CREATE SPACE FOR OTHERS TO SUCCEED WITH YOU. AND ALWAYS GO INTO ANY NEW OPPORTUNITY WANTING TO LEAVE IT BETTER OFF THAN WHEN YOU STARTED.”**

Bringing new and innovative thinking to the documentation process, Kristen Caruso is constantly challenging the status quo and asking how First Financial Equipment Leasing can do better for its clients. She uses her 15 years of experience in the equipment leasing industry and her out-of-the-box thinking to support customers by offering them creative solutions for their leasing needs, which leads to them seeking out more business with First Financial.

For the last 10 years, Caruso has been an integral part of the contracts department at First Financial Equipment Leasing. At the start of her journey with the company, Caruso helped create and streamline documentation templates and pushed for an electronic filing system to increase efficiency. As an advocate for electronic signatures, she was one of the main reasons the company switched to DocuSign before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The move has allowed her team to close business faster and produce much higher volume.

“You don’t need to hold a certain title to be a leader. Lead by example and others will naturally follow. Remember you are part of a team, so try to create space for others to succeed with you,” Caruso says. “And always go into any new opportunity wanting to leave it better off than when you started.”

Caruso supports the top two sales reps at First Financial and works very closely with the company’s customers, many of whom are Fortune 500 companies and household names. Her encyclopedic knowledge of various aspects in the industry has made her consistently requested by many customers. Cultivating strong relationships with her vendors, Caruso ensures timely orders and payments, leading to new customer leads and leasing opportunities for the company.

Caruso was recently tapped to step in and take a significant leadership role in a new company-wide system implementation. Caruso went above and beyond what was asked of her to ensure the successful migration of data, system testing and new user training, and she even created a highly detailed instructional training manual for her department to guarantee her team’s effective adoption of the system. Caruso has also assisted with interviewing and training new hires to grow the contracts department further, and her goal is to help grow the team and attract new talent to First Financial.

Caruso sets the standard for the contracts department by leading by example. Her competitive sports background gives her an unwavering drive to raise the bar and a solid foundation to foster inclusiveness amongst her colleagues. Her positive can-do attitude

is infectious and makes people want to work with her. Colleagues from other departments often come to Caruso for help with complicated issues and are always met with openness and thoughtful guidance.

“While being in the industry for more than 10 years, I’ve yet to meet someone else as strong as Kristen. In the heart of the challenge, she thrives; in the face of problems, she strives, and that courage is hard to find,” Elise Hardy, regional vice president of First Financial Equipment Leasing, says. “Our customers can rely on the fact they have Kristen on their side as someone who has their back through thick and thin, and that’s what makes Kristen so special to our company and our customers.”