



### Given that there has been a plethora of new bridgers is there room for another?

You bet! The decision to launch Bridge Corporate Finance was not taken lightly.

It was driven by a need that we ourselves were constantly experiencing while building up a sizeable portfolio buying, selling and developing property.

Whenever we needed short-term finance, we always seemed to have to go through an extraordinarily lengthy process of evaluations, approvals, meetings, reviews and revisions. By which time we could have lost many of the deals.

So we decided that the best solution was to source the funding ourselves and build our own brilliant relationships with surveyors and solicitors.

It became so successful that we launched Bridge to offer the service to others looking for the same level of commitment.

### What is the ethos of your company?

Look, there are two key requirements that brokers expect from us. First is a fast decision and completion. Second, they want an excellent rate for themselves and their clients.

So these are the two guiding principles of our business – we are in the financial services industry and our emphasis is on the service part.

### Who do you lend to?

Mainly, we provide short-term bridging loans for small to medium-sized enterprises, developers and individuals. However, we are finding that our approach is attracting enquiries from some of the UK's biggest property investors, with whom we have recently closed several million pounds worth of business.

For us, it's not about the size or type of client, it's about the service expectations they have and how we can deliver on them. We have more than adequate resources to fund deals from £50,000 to over £3 million, so long as it is secured on UK commercial property.

### What do you do that is different from your competitors?

This business depends on mutual trust, rather than hanging around for a few Is to be dotted and Ts to be crossed, our clients want to buy a property. To do so, they need a bridging loan, often because they can't wait for the bigger mortgage organisations to get their act together.

It's not unusual for me to get a call around ropm asking me to set in motion a valuation. That's how brokers work, so why shouldn't we? I can get everything done in record time because of the tight knit, highly skilled team I have around me. No big board meetings, no management conferences and no lengthy



# Service culture

## Abigail Farran, finance director of Bridge Corporate Finance plc, explains why her company was formed

waits in solicitors' offices. A quick yes and we're off. Our infrastructure, which consists of a small integrated professional team, allows us to perform miracles – sometimes.

Although we are more than happy to compete on fees, our real strength is the level of service we can offer brokers, which we believe is second to none.

Let's face it, we ourselves are entrepreneurs, and so are many of our customers. That's why we know how they think, we know their passions, we understand the thrill of the deal, we know their expectations – after all, that is why we set up in the first place.

I think there are too many financial institutions out there that see themselves as sellers of products. I have to reiterate that we are not in the products industry, but we are in the services industry. That means you have to get to know what your customer wants and do

everything in your power to deliver it, when they want it and how they want it. In that respect, it's very simple for us to differentiate ourselves.

### What is the most unusual commercial bridging loan you have arranged?

I have to say that so far, no two deals were the same. Each one is unique; not least because each person we are dealing with is unique. And we deal with people, not bank notes or organisations.

### What are your future plans?

First of all, I never want to lose our passion and entrepreneurial spirit. The first and biggest challenge is to build a business that always stays true to its ethos. We are investing in our service by training some of the brightest talent out there so that we

can maintain this level of consistency and commitment to our clients.

We hope, very shortly, to be able to form a complete supply chain of like-minded companies, offering everything from simple mortgage introductions, to long-term finance, that is, from the marketing and selling of a property to the financing of the deal. As long as we maintain our focus on customer service, I am very confident that we will be a unique, yet major force in the market. Watch this space.

### What are the major challenges facing the industry?

This is a growing market and, as yet, the full potential for bridging loans has not been realised. There is a fine balance between providing access to additional short-term finance and recklessness.

Part of our goal is to work closely with our brokers to explore with them new ways of not only accelerating the process, but of making it more financially inclusive. I know we can do this without succumbing to over-complicated 'legalese' and financial structures. To some extent, this comes down to the transparency inherent in the team working on a deal and

by improving the levels of communications between all parties involved.

The tendency over recent years has been for greater specialisation. While that creates advantages of better knowledge of certain aspects of the business process, it loses the ability to have an overview of the whole project. It also leads to an inability to amalgamate and manage the different skills needed to complete a project fast, cost-effectively and pain free.

For example, another aspect of our business, which I believe will be of real benefit customers, is the fact that we have an associated company, commercial estate Agents Thomas Willmax.

Together, if required, we are able to market clients' properties, help them develop their portfolios, keep them in touch with market activities, such as repossessions, and work with them on valuations and sales, even if a bridging loan is not an immediate requirement.

With our backgrounds, we have personally experienced the down side of needing to deal with too many suppliers, all wanting to add their two cents' worth. If part of the service is the integration of a team of different skills, then the least you can do is make sure that the team you have works beautifully together, has a common goal, a similar mindset and absolute customer focus. ●

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