

KRISTEN SMITH - CREDIT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR 2017



The coveted Credit Professional of the Year Award was won by Kristen Smith, Senior Credit Controller at Mutual Credit Finance Limited. The award was announced at the NZCFI President's Dinner at the National Conference.

The award recognizes the achievements of leading credit professionals in the New Zealand market, displaying technical, leadership, management and communications skills. It was last held in 2011.

This year the award was made possible with the support of Rapid Results and Skills. The finalists, who included Claudia Gleeson, National Credit Manager of Plumbing World and Helen Kocks, Invoicing Team Leader at Geneva Healthcare, were judged by a panel of industry experts on their knowledge, capabilities and effectiveness at managing accounts and minimising risk.

Kristen Smith's impressive career began at Postie Plus Group Ltd in 2001 where she went from Office Junior to Accounts Payable Clerk to Credit Controller. Her major achievements at Postie Plus included successfully managing the recovery of the debtors ledger obtained following the purchase of another retail company, and the implementation of an automated bank reconciliation system across 120 stores nationwide.

Today Kristen is the Senior Credit Controller at Mutual Credit Finance Limited (MCF). She joined the company in 2006 as one of five credit controllers and was promoted to her present position in 2007.

She operates at a senior level with sole authority for credit management including managing the ledgers, preparing all court documentation, attending court hearings, and ensuring MCF meets all its statutory obligations and deadlines in relation to its credit recovery function. She also assists with lending arrangements as required.

She also sub-contracts to an accountancy firm to oversee their credit control function and steps in as required, and to a Maori Land Incorporation to manage their credit control function in respect of both residential and commercial leases, together with additional project work for the Incorporation.

Kristen is well versed in the company's strategic approach to reduce defaults.

"Our firm prides itself on engaging with prospective clients directly and at a face to face level wherever possible. Laying down extensive ground work at the lending end to ensure we're providing funding to the right clients has contributed towards success and growth of the firm in recent years.

"In addition to this we initiate our credit management and recovery procedure as soon as an issue is identified. This aids us with not letting matters escalate to a point of no return. We work with our clients in an attempt to ensure the best possible outcome is found for all parties. Our focus is on identifying and proactively

resolving issues in a constructive manner to protect our position and retain the relationship with the client wherever possible."

At MCF Kristen enjoys the autonomy that comes with being part of a small team.

"I pride myself on my ability to make the right decisions on behalf of the company and my ability to see arrears situations through from start to completion. Having worked for MCF for 11 years has enabled me to build extensive relationships with our clients and this has had a positive affect on our ledger. For the most part our clients seem to prefer having a personable relationship with the one person within the firm over a prolonged period of time, and I firmly believe this has worked in our favour. Our arrears currently sit well below industry standard at around 0.1% of our ledger."

Kristen's also receives satisfaction from her additional contracts.

"In addition to my standard credit control role I also enjoy taking on additional project work to assist other companies/entities/individuals with their debt/recovery and management matters. This helps to provide variety and additional challenge to my role and I enjoy being able to put my hand up and help others where possible."

Kristen's proven track record and her appetite for challenges makes her a very worthy recipient of the 2017 Credit Professional of the Year Award.

Delegates at the President's Dinner.

