

I Am an Eagle

Eight years ago, I attended a district-executive meeting and noticed that a particular district was known as the Eagles (no relation to NELL). It didn't take long to notice the passion, interaction, and drive with which they operated, and, right away, I confessed that I, too, wanted to be an Eagle. How ironic is it that, eight years later, I was nominated for the Eagle Award?

Numerous temptations could have derailed the life path of Carlos Soto, but didn't. Having grown up as a first-generation Hispanic American in the South Bronx of New York City, he knew economic challenges firsthand and understood their implications. However, his parents influenced a sense of family, education, and community that, to this day, guides his ambition.

Soto lost his father when he was just 18. Suddenly, he assumed the role of family patriarch, and his first priority was to ensure that his younger sister graduated from college, which she successfully accomplished. His second priority was to own a home—accomplished.

As senior vice president and district executive of the Queens, New York, area for HSBC Bank, USA, N.A., one of the world's largest financial institutions, Soto has accomplished much to be proud of. He leads 16 branches and a team of more than 225 individuals, who, collectively, manage more than \$2.7 billion in assets.

"Carlos has an incredible work ethic," says Mayra DiRico, HSBC's regional president and executive vice president. An alumna's Eagle award winner herself, DiRico nominated Soto for this year's Eagle Award. "He inspires excellence from others because he requires that of himself. He puts his team first," she says.

During his first year as a district executive, Soto once returned to work early from vacation to minimize the impact of an employee exodus. Five key branch employees—essentially, the entire branch's management—suddenly decided to leave HSBC for a competitor. "I had prepared for this type of



Carlos Soto

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scenario,” he says, thankfully. He immediately canceled the balance of his vacation to mobilize a team of professionals trained for such circumstances. His quick leadership saved the company roughly \$10 million.

DiRico goes on to say, “Carlos has a very strong sense of community.” Early in his career with HSBC, his passion for serving small, urban businesses helped build a solid foundation of trust within the South Bronx community surrounding the branch he once managed. He recalls that his senior manager at the time hesitated to move Soto from that post, fearing a potential outcry from the community. Soto took it upon himself to groom his successor—one who would nurture the relationships that he had established—and eventually moved on to other assignments.

Soto credits DiRico for influencing his continued career path, and, in turn, he accepts the opportunity to mentor others. One protégé was a young African-American woman, who, like Soto, was the first in her family to graduate from college. Not only did she want to become a successful branch manager, she dreamed of homeownership—a dream that resonated with Soto “because it mirrored my own,” he says. “I provided encouragement and information, and, after two years, I received a call informing me that she was expecting to close on her new home.”

When asked how his ethnicity may have impacted the progression of his career, he acknowledges that it has been a catalyst for both obstacles and opportunities. “Your ethnicity is your DNA. There is no doubt that my ethnicity has opened doors, but it has been my ability to deliver results and lead successful teams that has kept those doors open.”

CareerFOCUS Magazine™ and the National Eagle Leadership Institute® salute 2007 Eagle Award winner Carlos Soto.

Nominating Company

HSBC Bank, USA, N.A

Current Position

Senior Vice President / District Executive

Professional Milestones

- HSBC Bank Presidential Award for Diversity Leadership
- Metro New York Regional Awards
- Bronze Branch of the Year Awards

Community Leadership

- Board of Directors, Greater Jamaica Development Corporation
- Appreciation Award Recipient, Metropolitan Black Bar Association
- Committee Member, Queens Chamber of Commerce Builders Award

Leadership Principle

Take sincere interest in knowing your team: their dreams, desires, and fears.

Education/Training

- The City University of New York, Baruch College
- Professional Development Program, Duke University Corporate Education
- Professional Development Program, Canon Financial Institute

Birthplace

Bronx, NY

Current Home

Fair Lawn, NJ

The Leadership Promise at HSBC

HSBC operates with the premise that the most important competitive differentiators are the quality of individual service we provide to our customers and the way we treat our employees. We believe making significant investments in our people will help our long-term success and help us develop the future leaders of HSBC. As a global organization, we encourage our employees to grow with us by promoting and recognizing their achievements as well as encouraging different points of view. We offer many career development opportunities that can take those that choose across the country or around the globe. HSBC is proud of its high-performance culture, which has made us one of the top 10 financial services companies in the U.S. For those reasons, we encourage and develop our employees' leadership skills every step of the way.