

CCUA Awards of Excellence 2026 - Professional of the Year

Nomination Essay: Dante DiMassa, SVP, Chief Lending Officer - BrightBridge Credit Union

To describe Dante DiMassa's impact on BrightBridge Credit Union (BrightBridge) is to describe a leader whose influence is felt not only in performance metrics, but in the culture and long-term success of the organization. With 36 years in banking and a career defined by growth, transformation and operational excellence, Dante represents the very best of what the credit union movement stands for: expertise paired with service, and results driven by people-first leadership.

Dante joined BrightBridge more than eight years ago at a critical turning point. The organization's residential lending program, a core service for members, was underperforming and in need of both strategic direction and cultural revitalization. Brought in as Vice President of Residential Lending, Dante was tasked with rebuilding the function to both improve performance and sustain the credit union's plans for expansion. Pairing his knowledge and willingness to learn and collaborate, he delivered exactly that.

Starting with a strong foundation in sales, Dante quickly assessed that sustainable success would require more than production alone. He immersed himself in the operational and technical aspects of lending, expanding his expertise into process design and workflow optimization. This hands-on, holistic approach allowed him to modernize the residential lending operation and create efficiencies that improved both team member experience and member service. His ability to evolve beyond his initial discipline speaks to his commitment to continuous learning and exceeding the credit union's goals.

Equally important is Dante's focus on people. Recognizing that a strong organization is built by strong teams, he rebuilt the residential lending department from the ground up, cultivating a high-performing, collaborative and deeply engaged group of professionals. His leadership style emphasizes accountability and open communication to create an environment where team members are empowered to succeed and contribute to shared goals. As one colleague aptly described, Dante is both a "subject matter expert and a people expert," a rare combination that has defined his success.



Dante DiMassa (right) in his Bridgewater office with Mortgage Loan Originator Linda Brackett. The BrightBridge mortgage team has grown exponentially under Dante's leadership.

The results of Dante's leadership are both measurable and transformative. By 2025, residential mortgages accounted for 60% of BrightBridge's total loan accounts, demonstrating the growth and stability of the program he rebuilt. What was once a struggling department has become a cornerstone of the credit union's success, delivering value to members while strengthening the organization's overall financial position.

Beyond performance metrics, Dante's impact is perhaps most evident during times of change. During his tenure, BrightBridge has undergone five significant mergers and a major rebrand, each bringing their own unique periods of uncertainty and operational challenge. Time and again, Dante has demonstrated exceptional leadership in navigating these transitions. He has successfully integrated new teams, aligned differing processes, and fostered unity among teammates from diverse organizational cultures. Rather than allowing disruption to hinder progress, he has used these moments as opportunities to strengthen his department and reinforce a shared vision.

During each merger, Dante and his team maintained lending performance and preserved the collaborative culture that defines BrightBridge. His ability to lead through transformation while maintaining momentum is a testament to both his strategic mindset and his genuine investment in people.

Dante is also widely respected across the organization for his accessibility and willingness to support others. He leads by example, working alongside his team to offer guidance when needed and celebrate successes at every level. His presence fosters trust and confidence, and his leadership style encourages others to grow into leaders themselves. This ripple effect extends beyond his own department to strengthen our organization.



Dante DiMassa (far left) enjoying the 2026 BrightBridge Charity Golf Classic with colleagues and business partners. Dante is a regular supporter of the credit union's community efforts.

At its core, Dante's work reflects the principles that distinguish credit unions within the financial services industry. He is deeply committed to serving members with integrity and excellence, ensuring that lending solutions are accessible, efficient and responsive to their needs. At the same time, he prioritizes the well-being and engagement of his colleagues, knowing that exceptional service begins with a strong supported team.

Dante DiMassa is more than a high-performing executive, he is a transformational leader and a steadfast advocate for the credit union mission. His career is marked by innovation, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to both people and performance. Through his leadership, BrightBridge has not only grown, but thrived, even in the face of significant change.

For these reasons, Dante embodies the spirit of the CCUA Professional of the Year award. His contributions have strengthened his organization and demonstrated the power of leadership rooted in both expertise and humility. He is an exemplary candidate and a true credit to the industry.



Dante DiMassa's corporate headshot.