Ocrolus | **ForwardLine**®

ForwardLine Financial improves online customer experience & reduces loan approval times by 75%

GOALS:

- Automate online loan applications to improve customer experience

- Reduce loan decision times to under an hour

RESULTS:

- Unified system for customers to submit bank credentials or documents

- Reduced loan approval time from over 3 hours to under 45 minutes

ForwardLine Financial is on a mission to help small business owners by providing affordable working capital to grow their companies. Los Angeles-based ForwardLine has an 18-year history of providing small business loans, with a focus on customer experience and an innovative approach to leveraging technology.

For the past seven years, ForwardLine has offered businesses an online option, where they can apply and submit documents digitally. The concept is a business-friendly funding experience for clients; from early repayment discounts to a member benefits program, it's more than just a loan, it's a long-term investment in the success of their small business owners.

"When small business owners reach out, they need access to capital quickly, and they are generally very busy," explains Sri Kaza, ForwardLine CEO. "We don't want to make the process of securing capital prescriptive or onerous."

The challenge for ForwardLine when it originally built an online application process was that it required permissioned access to banking data. The company soon realized that this was a solution for only a small portion of its customers: most were still submitting bank statements.

In essence, the most advanced processes only helped with a small segment of their customer base;

the majority of loan applications still required data entry and manual review.

This was when ForwardLine added the Ocrolus document capture and analytics solution to their core program.

"Using Ocrolus wasn't just about streamlining our process; it's about helping the businesses in the way that they want to be helped," said Mr. Kaza. "70% of our clients want to provide bank statements to justify their cash flow and accordingly access to capital". So we built a process to automate bank statements as well as permissioned account access. You don't try to change customer behavior."

ForwardLine also used the Ocrolus solution to capture historical data, which consisted of 15,000 sets of bank statements that helped the lender build out more effective analytical models. This retro analysis is used to build out an affordability model, where ForwardLine consultants can now offer some businesses more capital and also identify certain companies that would do better with a smaller loan. There is also an element of the model that allows the lender to structure the payout and payback of loans to match their business patterns.

"The idea is that technology like Ocrolus does not replace the human element of our business, but rather it focuses it on the customer servicing side rather than the operational, data entry portion," continued Mr. Kaza. "What we're doing with this technology is not depersonalizing. We have humans connected in the best ways. Having a human connection, listening to our customers, and offering great advice."

This is the dual benefit ForwardLine has seen from document automation: improved lending models and more efficient decisioning. The lender has been able to reduce average loan decisions from **3 hours to under 45 minutes**.

"Two indicators of the success of our model are lower loss rates than other online lenders and higher renewal rates among our customers," said Mr. Kaza. "Both measurements can be attributed to our mission-based approach and our effective use of technology."

Ocrolus unlocks data trapped on documents, addressing one of our core issues in operations: We need quality, consistency and accountability in data; this was tough to achieve with manual data entry. Ocrolus solves that problem by pulling data operationally at scale and consistently delivering quality data.

Sri Kaza, ForwardLine CEO