

BUSINESS DAY

Edward P. Gilligan, American Express Executive, Dies at 55

By DAVID SEGAL MAY 29, 2015

Edward Gilligan, the president of American Express and heir apparent to the company's chief executive, Kenneth Chenault, died on Friday after falling ill during a flight to New York. He was 55.

The cause was believed to be a heart attack, a company spokesman said. Mr. Gilligan was aboard a corporate jet with several colleagues returning from a business trip to Tokyo. CPR was performed during the flight, which was diverted to Green Bay, Wis., the spokesman said. Mr. Gilligan was pronounced dead at a hospital in the area.

Mr. Gilligan was appointed president of American Express, the world's largest issuer of credit cards, in 2013, establishing him as the likely future chief executive. He oversaw the company's small business, merchant, global consumer, network, merchant, risk and banking groups.

He started at American Express 35 years ago as an intern while earning an undergraduate degree in economics and management from New York University. He rose steadily through the company's ranks, becoming vice president for business travel and later senior vice president for commercial card and business travel for the Eastern United States.

In 2002 he moved to London, where he headed the company's international consumer card division. He returned to the United States in 2009 and led efforts to integrate American Express into social media, helping to embed the company's offerings on Facebook as well as through tech companies like Uber.

"Ed loved to talk tech; he loved to talk sports; he was a great storyteller," said Michael O'Neill, American Express's executive vice president for corporate affairs. "He was the guy at dinner you wanted to be seated next to."

Mr. Gilligan's death comes during a challenging period for American

Express. In February, the company and the big-box retailer Costco announced that they were unable to agree on terms to extend a 16-year relationship in which American Express was the only card Costco accepted. Mr. Chenault said at the time that the news would affect one-tenth of all American Express cards, describing it as a financial blow that would hurt the company's results for two years.

That same month, a Federal District Court judge in Brooklyn ruled that American Express had violated antitrust law by prohibiting retailers from directing consumers to lower-cost cards. The judge, Nicholas Garaufis, ruled that the company's actions "imposed actual, concrete harms on competition." The company said it would appeal.

American Express's statement on Friday did not say how Mr. Gilligan's death would affect succession plans at the company.

Mr. Gilligan, who lived on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, was born on July 13, 1959, in Brooklyn and attended Xaverian, a Roman Catholic high school there, before enrolling at N.Y.U.

He is survived by his wife, Lisa; their four children, Katie, Meaghan, Kevin and Shane; and a brother, Michael.

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