

# Insurance

## BUSINESS AMERICA

IBAMAG.COM  
ISSUE 8.06



## ELITE WOMEN 2020 DAWN D'ONOFRIO

### Challenging the Status Quo

#### THE SHIFTING RISK LANDSCAPE

What your clients need to know if they've started manufacturing PPE

#### TIME FOR SOME NETWORK SECURITY?

How one network is helping its member agencies weather the COVID-19 storm

#### BUILDER'S RISK IN THE COVID-19 ERA

The industry's response to new limitations introduced by the pandemic

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# The importance of words

**T**he coronavirus pandemic has infected the vocabulary of our daily lives. Terms such as 'social distancing', 'flattening the curve' and 'quarantini' have reached buzzword status, and conversations about remote working and virtual meetings have become that other overused phrase: the new normal.

This pandemic-induced vocab shift has infiltrated the insurance industry, too. While yesterday's buzzwords – from 'hard market' to 'social inflation' – remain as important as ever, today's top industry concerns are all virus-related. How long will the COVID-19 pandemic last? Is the industry sufficiently capitalized to handle the economic fallout? How can catastrophic pandemic risk aggregation be mitigated? Will the federal government support a pandemic insurance program? Will the industry have to fight some costly lawsuits?

Unfortunately, for many property & casualty insurers in the United States, the answer to that final question is yes. Pandemic-related litigation started coming thick and fast through April and May as many businesses sued their insurance carriers over a perceived lack of coverage. Most of the lawsuits so far have revolved around denied business interruption claims after mandatory closures of non-essential businesses.

The coronavirus has illuminated the importance of clarity in policy language, terms and conditions. For humans in a time of crisis, a solid 'yes' or 'no' is far more comforting than a 'maybe'

Most traditional policies do not offer coverage for business interruption or supply chain disruption due to a pandemic such as COVID-19. Generally, business interruption insurance will only be triggered by a direct physical loss to property, unless there is unique language written into the insurance contract that deems otherwise. Thus, plaintiff lawyers are coming in hard against P&C insurers over their choice of words. They are pouncing on any ambiguity in the insurance policy language, especially if policies do not expressly exclude losses caused by viral infections such as COVID-19.

What lessons can the industry learn from this? The coronavirus has illuminated the importance of clarity in policy language, terms and conditions. For humans in a time of crisis, a solid 'yes' or 'no' is far more comforting than a 'maybe.' Perhaps COVID-19 will ultimately help insurers flatten any curves in potentially ambiguous policy language.

*The team at Insurance Business America*

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## STATISTICS

## COVID-19 HITS INSURTECH FUNDING



**50%**

Quarterly drop in global insurtech funding in the first quarter of 2020



**29%**

Increase in insurtech deal count between Q4 2019 and Q1 2020



**54%**

Decrease in insurtech deal volume during the same period



**1**

Number of mega-deals (worth \$100 million or more) that took place in the first quarter

Source: Willis Towers Watson Quarterly Insurtech Briefing, Q1 2020

## A MONTH OF CATASTROPHES

While March 2020 will go down in history as the month when the COVID-19 pandemic escalated in the US, it was also an active month for catastrophe events across the country. All told, natural disasters caused more than \$2.4 billion in economic damage during the month of March, according to Aon. Two events – a string of tornadoes and hailstorms across the Midwest and South that hit Nashville particularly hard, plus a severe weather outbreak across the central and eastern US that included tornadoes, hail and flash flooding – caused more than \$1 billion in economic losses each.

### UTAH

Earthquake  
Date: **March 18**  
Economic losses: **\$1 million**

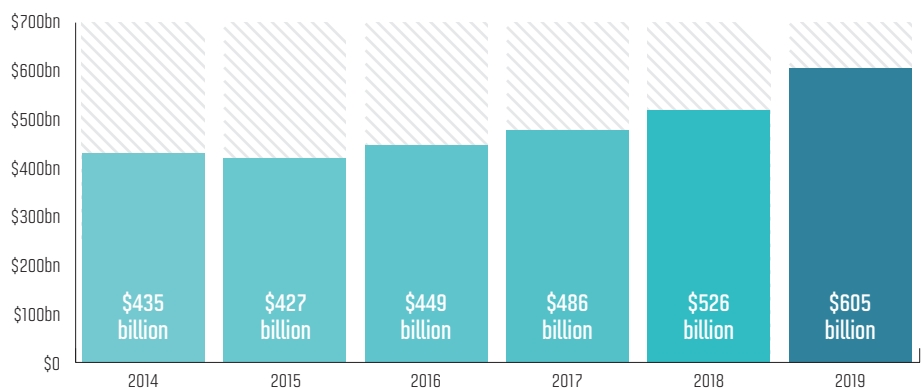
### PLAINS, MIDWEST, SOUTHEAST, NORTHEAST

Severe weather  
Date: **March 17-20**  
Economic losses: **\$290 million**

## REINSURANCE CAPITAL'S HIGH POINT

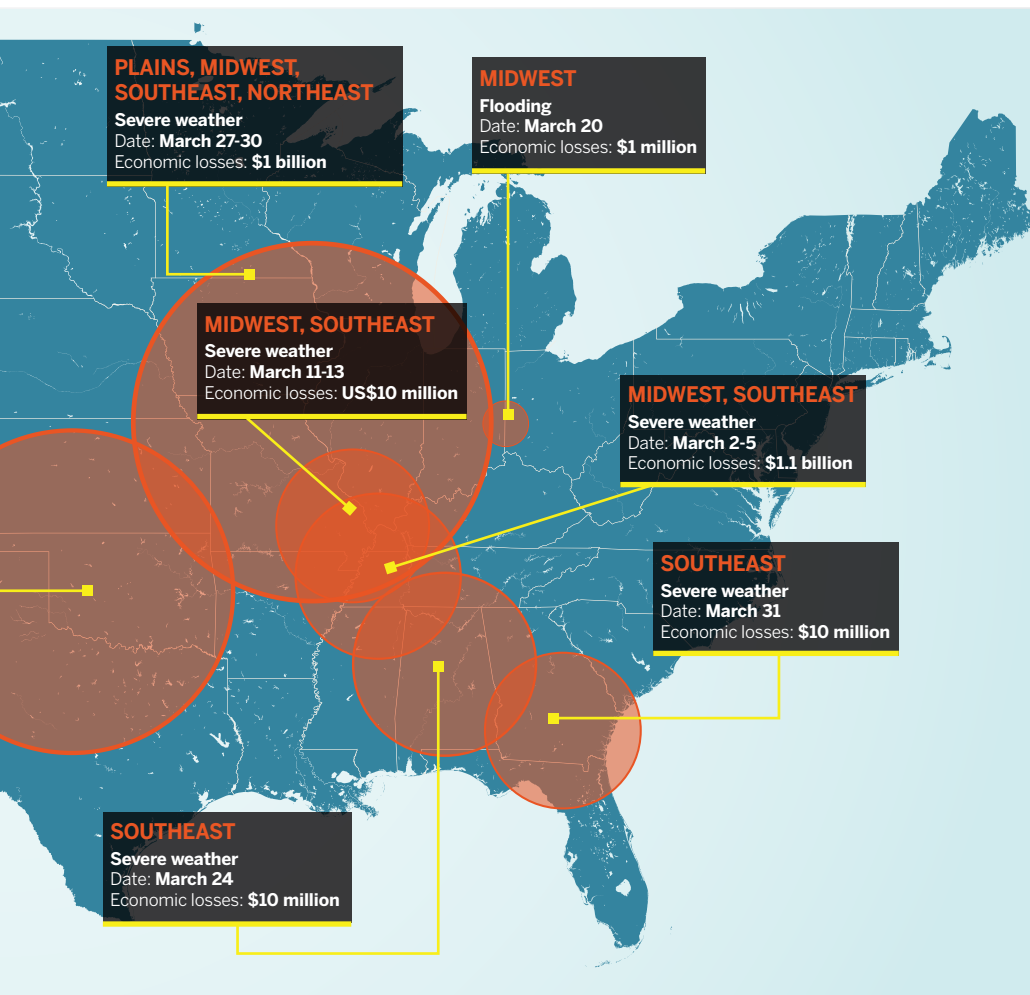
Global reinsurance capital saw robust growth in 2019, totaling \$605 billion by the end of the year, according to Willis Re – a year-over-year growth rate of 15%. However, Willis Re said it expects the first half of 2020 to erase most of these gains due to the steep sell-off in equity and corporate bond markets brought on by COVID-19.

TOTAL DEDICATED REINSURANCE CAPITAL



Source: Willis Re 2019 Reinsurance Market Report





Source: Aon Global Catastrophe Recap March 2020

## TOP 10 STATES FOR SEVERE WEATHER

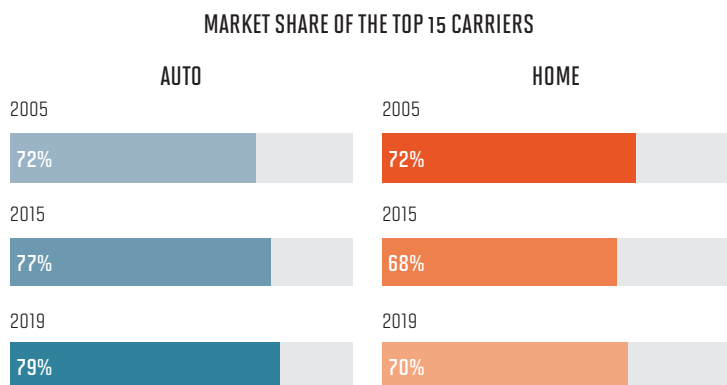
Severe weather is the largest contributor to catastrophe losses in the US, and certain areas tend to attract more of it than others. According to the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center, Texas, Kansas and Virginia led the way for severe weather events in 2019.

- 1. Texas**  
Number of events in 2019: **1,985**
- 2. Kansas**  
Number of events in 2019: **1,405**
- 3. Virginia**  
Number of events in 2019: **1,199**
- 4. Pennsylvania**  
Number of events in 2019: **1,064**
- 5. North Carolina**  
Number of events in 2019: **966**
- 6. Missouri**  
Number of events in 2019: **907**
- 7. Ohio**  
Number of events in 2019: **833**
- 8. Georgia**  
Number of events in 2019: **811**
- 9. Oklahoma**  
Number of events in 2019: **799**
- 10. Nebraska**  
Number of events in 2019: **779**

Source: NOAA/NWS Storm Prediction Center

## WHERE CONSOLIDATION LIES

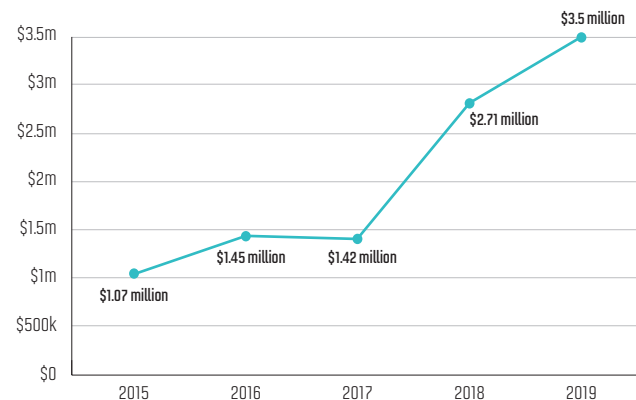
Over the past 15 years, the US auto insurance market has become increasingly consolidated. McKinsey & Co. recently found that the market share held by the top 15 carriers has increased from 72% in 2005 to nearly 80% last year. It's a different story in homeowner's insurance, however, where the top players' market share has remained mostly stagnant.



Source: State of Property & Casualty Insurance 2020, McKinsey & Co.

## CYBER LOSSES SKYROCKET

As the world becomes more technology-dependent, the value of cyber losses has grown rapidly. According to data from the Insurance Information Institute and the Internet Crime Complaint Center, total cyber losses in the US have more than tripled since 2015.



Source: Insurance Information Institute/Internet Crime Complaint Center

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# Changes on the assembly line

Many manufacturers are shifting their operations to produce personal protective equipment during the pandemic – and they're facing new exposures that their insurance policies need to address

**AS STATES** begin to reopen their economies in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the need for personal protective equipment (PPE) is not likely to diminish. The outbreak has created a supply shortage in the US for PPE, including face masks, surgical gowns and other tools critical to protect those working on the front lines of this crisis. As the numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to climb, keeping PPE in stock will be of the utmost importance over the coming months.

To help meet the demand for PPE, some US manufacturers have shifted their operations to produce this and related equipment,

produce related component parts, such as stands for ventilators.

How a manufacturer has transitioned its production output has implications for the exposures the company faces. For example, if a manufacturer that is already producing hand sanitizer decides to increase production of that essential good by 25%, “you now have an increase in productivity and output, which means you have an increase in raw material and finished products that you’re storing,” Steinmetz explains. “With that change in volume, you have storage configuration concerns, and you also have flammability issues related to the product itself.”



**“Manufacturers may have an obligation to alert their underwriters that they are involved in this activity”**

**Mike Stankard, Aon**

which in turn has changed their risk profile. Scott H. Steinmetz, global head of MidCorp at Allianz Risk Consulting, part of Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty, has noticed a diverse group of manufacturers turning their attention to the production of PPE and medical equipment, including those in the automotive industry, as well as ancillary Tier 2 suppliers that have the capability to

That manufacturer would need to consider whether its current fire suppression systems adequately protect its facility, given the higher volume of flammable product being stored. Additionally, increasing the pace of manufacturing to meet a new production target could create potential failure points for equipment breakdown. Other manufacturers might be adding a new product into the rotation, which



likewise presents risks and might require a change in their insurance program.

“If it’s a company from the automotive industry, medical products are typically insured in a different sector of the insurance industry, so it would be a noticeable change in their risk profile,” says Mike Stankard, managing director of Aon’s industrial and materials and automotive practices. “That would also trigger a search of what their current insurance policies are – how they’re laid out, what they’re covering, what type of indemnities they might be getting from other companies that they may be subcontracting for, and then ultimately looking at immunities that the US government is providing to manufacturers.”

The latter protection primarily comes from a March 10 declaration to the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act, which provides immunity to companies from liability arising from the manufacture, testing, development, distribution, adminis-





## UNDERSTANDING PPE



PPE includes gloves, medical/surgical face masks, goggles, face shields and gowns, as well as respirators and aprons for surgical procedures



Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, PPE prices have surged – surgical masks have seen a sixfold increase, while N95 respirators and gowns have tripled and doubled in price, respectively



An estimated 89 million medical masks are required worldwide each month for the COVID-19 response



To meet rising global demand, industries need to increase PPE manufacturing by 40%

Source: World Health Organization

tration and use of certain COVID-19 response products. Notably, these activities “must relate to an arrangement with the federal government” or be specifically authorized by an “authority having jurisdiction.”

in designing the [PPE] solution,” Stankard says. “In one case, our client volunteered labor and a facility, but the research and development behind the actual product was brought to the table by another party. In



**“[We need] to be sure that the company is protected and that the carrier understands what we’re signing on for”**

**Scott H. Steinmetz, Allianz Risk Consulting**

Insurers and policyholders alike need to understand how the PREP Act relates to new manufacturing operations and the strengths and weaknesses of that immunity, Stankard says, adding that an insurance review would also consider whether companies are acting as subcontractors for PPE production.

“In some cases, they’re subcontracting out to the lead company that might be involved

another case, the manufacturer is using their 3D printers to print out face shields, but then they’re being shipped to someone else that’s integrating them into the final product.”

When a manufacturer is working on behalf of another company, he explains, it might have a contractual indemnity that would support the immunity it would get from the government – and if anything went

wrong with those products, there might be relief from the main manufacturer’s insurance program.

Finally, the insurance programs manufacturers already have in place can provide a line of defense. However, Stankard notes that “manufacturers may have an obligation to alert their underwriters that they are involved in this activity that would represent a material change in exposure, giving the underwriter the opportunity to weigh in on whether they are comfortable with the situation.”

Ultimately, keeping the lines of communication open with insurance professionals during this shift in manufacturing operations is essential. “It’s an important dialogue to have – an exchange to be sure that the company is protected and that the carrier understands what we’re signing on for,” Steinmetz says. **IB**

## INTELLIGENCE

## CORPORATE

ACQUIRER	TARGET	COMMENTS
Alera Group	Georgetown Insurance Service	Maryland-based Georgetown Insurance provides specialty insurance for the construction, manufacturing, real estate and transportation industries
Higginbotham	Amerman Insurance Services	The deal adds eight PGC and employee benefits professionals to Higginbotham's existing practice in San Antonio
Hub International	The B&G Group, Healy Benefits	New York-based B&G Group provides commercial insurance to various industries, including real estate, business services and construction; Healy Benefits is an Indiana-based employee benefits specialist
OLI Insurance Services	Truck Writer Insurance Services	TWIS will operate as a separate, autonomous agency as an affiliate of the OLI network
Paragon Insurance Holdings	Trident Public Risk Solutions	Previously part of Argo Group, Trident provides commercial insurance coverage for public entities in the US
TWFG Insurance Services	Panoptic Insurance	TWFG has acquired Panoptic's personal and commercial insurance business in a bid to expand its specialty insurance offerings and its national footprint



## Hub makes slew of new acquisitions

Hub International announced several acquisitions in May, including The B&G Group, an agency located on New York's Long Island. One of the largest insurance agencies in the New York City metro area, B&G provides commercial insurance to industries such as real estate, business services and construction. The acquisition adds more than 100 employees to Hub's Northeast regional presence.

Also in May, Hub acquired Healy Benefits, the employee benefits division of The Healy Group. Based in South Bend, Indiana, Healy Benefits' services include benefits communications, workplace wellness plans and risk management seminars. The agency's owners and staff will become part of Hub Midwest East.

The two deals were swiftly followed by two additional agency acquisitions in Tennessee and Massachusetts. Commenting on the B&G acquisition, Hub president and CEO Mark Cohen said the company "continues to remain active and thoughtful in our M&A strategy throughout the COVID-19 crisis."

## PRODUCTS



## AXA XL offers virtual risk assessments

In response to restrictions imposed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, AXA XL has launched Remote Risk Dialogue, a new virtual risk assessment service that uses data captured from phone calls, reports and web tools to enable risk engineers to perform remote analysis that wouldn't normally be seen in traditional loss prevention offerings. In addition, the tool allows risk managers, brokers and underwriters to benefit from an up-to-date view of the client's risks, including changes in exposures due to shifts in operations and output brought about by the pandemic.

## AIG unveils largest-ever Lloyd's syndicate

AIG has made history with its launch of the largest-ever syndicate through Lloyd's of London. Syndicate 2019, managed by Talbot Underwriting, has been set up to exclusively reinsure risks from AIG's private client group, which has a leading market position in the high-net-worth segment. AIG has secured significant capital support for the syndicate from third-party investors and capacity providers. When combined with its existing Lloyd's operations, the new syndicate gives AIG the ninth largest managing agency in the Lloyd's market in terms of capacity.



## Axon Underwriting launches cyber program

Specialty lines program administrator Axon Underwriting Services has added a cyber liability program to its suite of products for SMEs. Known as CyberAdvantage, the program is backed by Lloyd's of London and is designed to respond to data breach and ransomware incidents with response services, defense costs, business interruption coverage, data recovery and credit monitoring services. According to Randy Hampton, executive vice president and partner at Axon Underwriting, the "broad product offering is highly relevant to the increasing number of exposures faced by companies, given changes in the work environment."

## CFC launches licensing agreement liability product

CFC Underwriting has introduced a new product designed to protect licensees against unintentional breach of a licensing agreement. An alternative to a full media liability policy, the product covers individual licensing contracts or annual licensing agreements with multiple brands. It provides coverage for incidents such as selling in unauthorized channels or territories, incorrect usage or quality assurance breaches, and improper sublicensing. It also includes coverage for intellectual property infringement in relation to the assets specified in the licensing agreement.

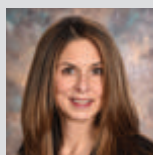
## CyberCube releases new version of risk platform

Cyber analytics provider CyberCube has released an updated version of Portfolio Manager, its cyber risk platform for insurers, reinsurance brokers and reinsurers. Portfolio Manager allows insurers to stress test reinsurance portfolios against a spectrum of cyber-related scenarios, including data breaches, cloud outages, global ransomware attacks and financial fraud. First launched in 2018, Portfolio Manager was the world's first fully probabilistic cyber catastrophe model. CyberCube said it has worked with leading market participants over the last two years to develop the latest edition of the platform.

## PEOPLE

NAME	LEAVING	JOINING	NEW POSITION
Dominic Adesso	Everest Re	BMS Group	Non-executive chairman
Robert Bell	N/A	PMA Companies	Senior vice president and chief financial officer
Nancy Bewlay	N/A	AXA XL	Chief underwriting officer
Frank Caplan	Foa & Son	Worldwide Facilities	Assistant vice president
Oliver Holme	Ørsted	Marsh	US and UK offshore wind leader
LoriAnn Lowery-Biggers	The Navigators Group	BMS Group	Non-executive director
Michelle McLaughlin	N/A	Chubb	Chief underwriting officer, North America SME insurance
Catharina Richter	N/A	Allianz Cyber Center of Competence	Global head
Pilar Villanueva	Price Forbes & Partners	AFL Insurance Brokers	Head, Latin America
Jonathan Zaffino	Everest Re	Ascot Group	President

## Chubb names chief underwriting officer for SMEs



Chubb has tapped Michelle McLaughlin to serve as chief underwriting officer for the company's North America retail commercial P&C insurance division, which serves middle-market and small businesses. McLaughlin will be responsible for guiding the business lines' underwriting strategies and authority, as well as overseeing the division's general underwriting management. Prior to this role, she was Chubb North America's EVP and property and marine manager for commercial insurance.

"Our small business division is focused on innovation, and I look forward to working with Michelle to ensure we continue to provide superior-quality solutions and services to agents and customers alike," said James Williamson, VP of Chubb Group and division president of Chubb Small Business.

## Ascot Group gets new president



Specialty insurance and reinsurance firm Ascot Group has appointed Jonathan Zaffino as group president. Zaffino, whose 26-year career spans underwriting and brokerage leadership roles, was a managing director at Marsh before becoming president and CEO of Marsh subsidiary Victor O. Schinnerer. He most recently spent five years as president and CEO of Everest Insurance before stepping down in April.

"I very much look forward to welcoming Jon to Ascot and working with him as we continue the build-out of our US and Bermuda businesses," said group CEO Andrew Brooks. "His appointment demonstrates the strength of Ascot's franchise, our commitment to building a premier global (re)insurance business and to attracting industry-leading talent."

# WORKERS' COMP UPDATE

## NEWS BRIEFS



### Sedgwick and One Call roll out return-to-work safety programs

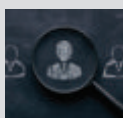
Sedgwick and One Call have teamed up to create programs that promote safety and injury prevention for employees re-entering the workplace once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. The programs include services such as at-home ergonomics and virtual conditioning and strengthening to help workers with physically demanding jobs readapt to their responsibilities after an extended leave. They're also targeted at employees who are working from home for the first time, helping them prevent injury by providing tips such as how to set up a proper workstation and avoid prolonged sitting.

relief efforts. The organizations include Big Table, which provides support to hospitality employees impacted by the outbreak, as well as the San Diego Food Bank and the Diablo Valley Foundation for the Aging, which are located near Preferred Employers' offices in San Diego and Northern California.



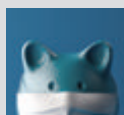
### Tangram expands program for social service workers

Tangram Insurance Services has partnered with national workers' comp carrier Service American Indemnity Company (SAIC) to enhance its social service workers' compensation program, allowing Tangram to provide workers' comp coverage to thousands of social service organizations throughout the US. "I am incredibly excited about our partnership with Service American," said Tangram president and CEO Rekha Skantharaja. "Their specialization and longevity in the workers' compensation space are highly complementary to our capabilities. Our social service program will be an even more meaningful provider of insurance solutions to these critical organizations."



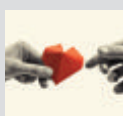
### Texas Mutual names new senior VP of underwriting

Texas Mutual Insurance Company has promoted Jeff Lentz to the role of SVP of underwriting, charged with overseeing the insurer's corporate underwriting, underwriting support services, regional underwriting, distribution, agency operations, business development and customer engagement. Lentz joined Texas Mutual in 1993 as an underwriter in the Houston regional office, where he spent three years before going on to work for several other insurance companies. He returned to Texas Mutual in 2004 to lead underwriting and marketing operations at the company's Dallas regional office and most recently served as vice president of underwriting.



### California state workers' comp fund offers COVID-19 support

The California State Compensation Insurance Fund has announced \$165 million in additional funding to support businesses and workers impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. This includes doubling the size of its Essential Business Support Fund – which essential employers can tap into for reimbursement of expenses for COVID-19-related safety improvements – to \$50 million. The insurer has also created a COVID-19 Safety Protocol Fund, which will provide nonessential businesses with grants to help cover safety-related expenses.



### Preferred Employers donates to pandemic relief

California workers' comp insurer Preferred Employers Insurance has made significant donations to three organizations involved in COVID-19

## Managing workers' risk amid COVID-19

Organizations need all the help they can get to manage their total workers' comp risk costs – and an updated tool aims to meet that need

The best way for an organization to keep workers' compensation costs down is to reduce the frequency of claims. But the unprecedented public health crisis of COVID-19 has thrown a huge wrench into businesses of all types and sizes, and it continues to raise concerns about worker safety.

Fortunately, organizations do have access to tools and technology that can help them manage workers' compensation costs. One example is Aon's Spectrum Analytics, a workers' compensation cost management tool that was updated in May. The latest enhancements include deeper data drill-down and added loss profiles to drive more prescriptive actions, an online calculator to quantify savings and prioritize initiatives, and a 12- and 36-month performance goal tracker, among other features.

Spectrum Analytics also incorporates Aon's Casualty Laser benchmarking results with advisory consultation, which can help risk managers identify potential cost savings and monitor the performance of pre- and post-loss total cost of risk mitigation strategies.

"Conservatively speaking, Spectrum typically identifies 12% to 24% in workers' compensation loss cost savings opportunities," says Christopher Iovino, managing director



of Aon Global Risk Consulting. “Spectrum has the ability to provide clients with a choice of savings ranges for each issue identified as actionable. This gives clients the discretion to select or refine target savings based on their own insights into the organization.”

**“We are not currently seeing significant claims volume, but we are certainly preparing our clients for that probability”**

The new version of Spectrum Analytics comes as COVID-19 remains a major health and economic concern for organizations around the world. Iovino confirms that “Spectrum Analytics can certainly be leveraged as a tool to track the relative volume and costs on WC claims coded to COVID-19,” but he adds that Aon has yet to see claims volume jump as a result of the pandemic. “We are not currently seeing significant WC or liability claims volume,” he says, “but we are certainly preparing our clients for that probability.”

More broadly, Iovino says, Aon remains committed to helping clients during the outbreak. “Aon has established several solutions and continues to advise our clients on the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversations are ranging from compensability and coverage advice to assessing current business continuity and recovery efforts and returning employees safely back to the workplace.”



**Rick Fineman**  
Vice president, risk  
management  
ICW GROUP

**Years in the industry**  
25+

**Fast fact**  
Before working in risk management, Fineman studied the impact of heavy metals from mining on native populations in Alaska

## ■ Q&A

# It's never too late to plan

### ● How should organizations returning to work assess and mitigate the risks they face due to COVID-19?

OSHA and the CDC have provided guidance to help organizations identify, quantify and reduce risks associated with infectious disease, including COVID-19. This includes the development of an infectious disease preparedness and response plan that lays out a formal risk assessment process, involving a role-by-role evaluation of an employee's exposure to COVID-19. It identifies the tasks that may drive risk and the associated controls that may be needed to mitigate those risks, such as personal protective equipment [PPE].

After completing a risk assessment and identification of role-specific controls, companies should implement the identified PPE, administrative and engineering controls. To help companies navigate through this process, ICW Group has prepared a framework that supervisors can use to determine the risk level for each employee's tasks. Once a supervisor knows the risk level, we recommend specific control methods. Clerical work, for example, is considered low-risk if the employee has little or no contact with others; controls include social distancing and awareness training. A task such as stocking shelves, where an employee has moderate exposure to others, is considered a medium risk, and nitrile gloves, cotton masks and other PPE are recommended.

### ● What workforce-related lessons has this pandemic highlighted, and how will those lessons guide disaster preparedness plans for future pandemics?

The biggest lesson to take away from the COVID-19 crisis is the need for thorough and advanced planning. Planning for risks that may only rarely be realized is still important. Organizations that had clear pandemic response plans in place performed better than those that did not. Furthermore, organizations that have planned effectively have had better access to PPE, quicker response times to daily changes in recommended controls and the ability to address employee concerns more consistently. If you don't currently have a response plan in place, it's never too late to get started. ICW Group regularly works with policyholders to get plans in place so they are ready for the next disaster.

### ● What are the things organizations should be training their employees on to prepare them for the next outbreak?

In general, organizations should inform their employees of response plans they have in place for pandemics and other disasters. As it relates to the current situation, ICW Group is guiding policyholders to train employees on how to recognize COVID-19 symptoms, the need for social distancing, isolation procedures for potential positive cases and the controls needed to protect themselves and other workers. In addition, employees must be trained on the work processes and expectations if they are working from home and what the modified workplace expectations are if they are returning to the workplace.



## TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

# How insurers can take on big tech

One insurance leader says incumbents need to be inventive to match the likes of Amazon and Google



Seth Rachlin, EVP and P&C insurance leader, Capgemini

Consumers of all ages are adopting a so-called “millennial mindset” when it comes to buying insurance, according to Capgemini and Efma’s latest World Insurance Report. Thirty-six percent of respondents to Capgemini’s 2020 survey said they would consider purchasing insurance from a big tech name like Google, Amazon and Apple, up from only 17% in 2016.

The growing interest in insurance technology should have been a good thing for insurers – had they capitalized on the trend

before insurtechs stepped in. For instance, Capgemini found that more than half of consumers are interested in usage-based insurance (UBI) for auto coverage; however, only half of insurers currently offer UBI, leaving a void that’s been filled by insurtechs and even major car manufacturers.

When it comes to meeting the consumer demand for innovation, Seth Rachlin, executive vice president and P&C insurance leader at Capgemini, believes the issue is not a

problem of will, but of capability.

“Insurance has not been a business that has seen the kind of real-time, third-party information that we’re talking about as core to its value proposition,” he says. “They’ve used third-party data typically as a tool for post-hoc analysis as opposed to real-time monetization.”

Capgemini’s report stressed that incumbents must transform into “inventive insurers” if they want to compete with big tech. But what does it mean to be inventive?

**“It’s a mindset that involves putting the customer at the center of the transaction”**

“I think it’s a mindset that involves, first and foremost, putting the customer at the center of the transaction and re-envisioning every aspect of the insurance process from the customer-first perspective,” Rachlin says. He adds that insurers also need two other factors to compete with tech companies: product agility and an understanding of their role in the insurance ecosystem.

“It’s figuring out how to fit into a broader ecosystem of providers, distributors and value-added services and just rethinking the entire insurance equation – its customer, its product, its ecosystem – and it’s powered by data,” he says. “If you get those things right, I think you have a fighting chance of becoming an inventive insurer.”

## NEWS BRIEFS



### Benefitfocus enhances its tech platform

Benefitfocus has upgraded its technology platform, which is designed to reduce administrative burden and streamline health plan enrollment. Based on feedback from the benefits community, the latest enhancements include mobile app improvements to make enrollment easier; upgrades to the Smart Moments console to allow administrators to easily create and send separate emails, SMS and push messages to their employees; and expanded imputed income configurations to include child and dependent life benefits.



### CAC Specialty collaborates on real-time analytics

CAC Specialty has partnered with Liberty Advisory Group to create a data analytics platform that allows clients to analyze real-time information to make better risk and financing decisions. The platform will also streamline legal processes and provide AI-powered document analysis. Cybeta, a cyber data-science company recently spun out of Liberty Advisory Group, will enhance the platform with its predictive Threat Alpha and Threat Beta metrics, which calculate the financial and business impact of a cyberattack on an organization.





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## TECHNOLOGY UPDATE



Laird Rixford

CEO

INSURANCE  
TECHNOLOGIES  
CORPORATION (ITC)

## Years in the industry

24

## Fast fact

Rixford first began working for ITC in 1996 at the age of 19 as a network administrator

## ■ Q&amp;A

# Rising to meet online insurance demands

## ● How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected online insurance sales?

Since the start of shelter-in-place directives in mid-March, more consumers are going online to do their insurance policy shopping. These are consumers who previously may have called an agent or stopped by their office to get a quote. This is clear in our data, which shows that while agent-quoted policies have gone down below normal levels during the pandemic, online quote requests were 22% above normal levels.

Historically, the online insurance shopping experience has not changed much since InsWeb in 1999, one of the first websites to provide comparative quotes online. Thanks to companies like Amazon, Netflix and Uber, consumers today expect a lot more from their online experience, including when buying insurance. The question is, will incumbent insurance carriers and agencies rise up to meet this demand, or will they fall further behind as insurtechs race to provide the online insurance shopping experience consumers want?

## ● What does ITC's TurboRater do for insurers?

TurboRater reduces data entry for independent agents and brokers when entering policy information to generate a comparative quote. Insurers can add their rates to TurboRater for their appointed agents to rate them with every policy. Being on TurboRater makes the insurer more competitive because they get quoted with every policy, as agents don't have to go to them directly to get a rate. Insurers also need to be focused on online

consumer rating because consumers have changed their buying methods, and traditional lead generation doesn't work like it used to.

## ● How can insurance agencies keep online customers engaged?

Insurance agencies need to make sure their website is designed to be mobile-first. When we look at the traffic to the more than 6,000 websites we host, 78% of that traffic is on a mobile device. Two-thirds of all quotes done on our online rating platform are done using a mobile device. If the website is not mobile-friendly, consumers will not stay. They will leave for a competitor that does offer a mobile-friendly website.

## ● With insurance technology advancing, how can insurance firms show that their products are still being sold by humans who care?

Start by mapping the customer journey. Identify the parts that can't be automated and focus on making those touchpoints the best they can be. It's also possible to show how you care in automated touchpoints. Create messages that include empathy and add personalization to the automation, show your people by using their name and email address as the sender, add testimonials to your website and automated messages, and include pictures of your people instead of stock photography on your website. Don't try to fake it. Stay true to your values and brand and be authentic.



### Brit and Google to launch digital Lloyd's syndicate

Global specialty insurer and reinsurer Brit is teaming up with Google Cloud to launch Ki, the first fully digital, algorithm-driven Lloyd's syndicate. A 'follow-only' syndicate, Ki aims to reduce the amount of time and effort needed for brokers to place follow capacity. Its algorithm will evaluate Lloyd's policies and automatically quote for business through a digital platform. It will follow several nominated lead syndicates, including Brit, and will offer brokers a line on every risk in the selected classes led by these markets.



### Hyperion X platforms see spike in demand

Hyperion X, Hyperion

Insurance Group's data analytics and digital delivery business, has seen record demand as the market reacts to the COVID-19 pandemic. In high demand are digital trading platform Tepfin X, which allows banks and brokers to obtain quotes from across the structured credit insurance market, and xTrade, Hyperion X's digital marketplace, which is expected to deliver \$100 million in premium throughput in 2020. To address the increased demand, Hyperion X has launched upgrades for both platforms.



### Sapiens upgrades underwriting software

Sapiens International

Corporation has rolled out a new version of its underwriting software, Sapiens UnderwritingPro for Life & Annuities. Version 11 of the software offers a new reinsurance interface to facilitate data transmission to reinsurers, enhanced underwriter notes for a complete audit trail, and annuity suitability to ensure fiduciary responsibility, along with MIB coding improvements, information banner enhancements, security advances and greater configurability.



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## INDUSTRY ICON

# CHAMPIONING THE PUBLIC SECTOR

**Sue Coates** brings decades of experience and enthusiasm for public entities to her role as president of Trident Public Risk Solutions

**SOME PEOPLE** stumble into insurance and discover that it's where they're meant to be. Such was the case for Sue Coates, who started her insurance journey 25 years ago with an entry-level, service-oriented role at an insurance agency near her hometown. Currently the president of Trident Public Risk Solutions, Coates spent the first decade of her career in service, sales and managerial roles before transitioning to underwriting, where she was introduced to the public entity specialization that would come to define her insurance career.

"The transition to underwriting was pivotal for me, as it gave me an opportunity to advance professionally, but to do so at a rapid pace while applying my skills in a dynamic environment," Coates says. "And I really enjoyed this specialized niche."

Entering this new space gave Coates an open runway to learn as much as she could and apply that knowledge in her work. It also provided her with an opportunity to be recognized for what she could deliver not only to agents and policyholders, but also to the organization. In 2008, Massamont Insurance Agency, the public entity specialist where Coates worked at the time, was acquired by Argo Group's Trident Insurance Services unit, which later became Trident Public Risk Solutions.

"It was a small regional firm, and with

the acquisition, it became a nationwide opportunity," says Coates, who held a variety of roles before being named president of Trident in 2017.

Today, her top goal for the organization is to ensure Trident is the best insurance provider it can be for all stakeholders. For employees, Coates wants to pass along the excitement she has for the public entity space to her staff. For policyholders, she's

knowledge of the marketplace," Coates says. "My goal is to meet these needs in the best way possible, grow our business and be that sustainable marketplace for public entity buyers over the long term."

## Not an average exposure

Because governmental organizations work differently than standard commercial businesses, insuring the public entity space

**"There are a lot of different types of insurance that public entity organizations purchase, so to be an underwriter for that marketplace, you have to have a good base of experience to help them. It can't be just one size fits all"**

focused on delivering value through products and services aimed at public entities' unique risks. Finally, for agents and brokers, she wants Trident to provide valuable expertise that they might not have in-house.

"We are a knowledgeable group of professionals who have over 100 years of combined public entity experience, so we can deliver value to agents – not just in the products and services that we provide, but also in our

requires specialized know-how. Every city and town is unique and has differing needs, based on the state where they're located. There are also certain expectations and functions that public entities have to provide to their constituents that are governed by regulations and legislation. That means insurance providers like Trident have to become experts in public entity administration to ensure that they're providing products and services that





## PROFILE

**Name:** Sue Coates

**Title:** President

**Company:** Trident Public Risk Solutions

**Based in:** Springfield, Massachusetts

**Years in the industry:** 25

# INDUSTRY ICON

actually meet the needs of their clients.

“There are a lot of different types of insurance that public entity organizations purchase, so to be an underwriter for that marketplace, you have to have a good base of experience to help them,” Coates says. “They really partner with their agents, and then their agents partner with us to make sure that we are meeting those needs. It can’t be just one size fits all.”

A lifelong learner, Coates is dedicated to making sure her team stays on top of developments in each state, as well as the risks that public entities face. Public schools or local law enforcement, for example, face many responsibilities, and municipalities

opened after Trident witnessed a gap between workers’ compensation and health insurance that was falling to individual firefighters to cover.

“We are always scanning the horizon for areas of gap – what’s something that your public entity is having to deal with that might not fit within a traditional insurance solution?” Coates says.

The company has also released a suite of cyber and data compromise insurance solutions tailored for public entities and has refreshed its entire suite of coverage forms for its first-party lines, including improved enhancements that recognize the unique challenges of public entities.

**“We are always scanning the horizon for areas of gap – what’s something that your public entity is having to deal with that might not fit within a traditional insurance solution?”**

continue to be challenged by social inflation, Coates says. Many public entities are rising to the challenge by adopting enterprise risk management strategies and implementing best practices around their risk management structure with the help of Trident. In addition to insurance solutions, the company provides tailored risk control services to assist every insured, from small entities that need risk management resources to large municipalities that have dedicated risk managers who are continually involved in crafting risk management strategies.

## Innovating in the public sphere

Just because Trident already has a robust product and service lineup doesn’t mean it’s skimping on innovation. One of its recent offerings is an insurance enhancement to help firefighters cover elective procedures for injuries received on duty, which was devel-

There’s more to come for Trident in the near term, too. At the beginning of May, Paragon Insurance Holdings completed its acquisition of Trident from Argo Group, kicking off the next chapter in both Trident’s history and Coates’ career. She says her team is excited and looks forward to expanding its level of public entity specialization while continuing to bring services to its policyholders. This deal will bring Trident that much closer to its customers, Coates says, allowing it to keep delivering on its commitment to public entities, and will strengthen the team’s partnerships with insureds via agents and brokers.

“I’ve been able to do my best work through my career by having an alignment around purpose and the motivation and empowerment to go do the work,” Coates says. “That’s what we have, and those are the tools to make everything else happen.” **IB**

## TRIDENT PUBLIC RISK SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE



### OWNERSHIP

Formerly part of Argo Group, Trident was recently acquired by Paragon Insurance Holdings



### CLIENTS

Serves more than 2,000 municipalities, counties, public K-12 school districts, community colleges, public districts and risk-sharing pools



### DISTRIBUTION

Operates through a distribution network of national brokerages and local agencies



### RATING

Boasts a rating of A- (Excellent) from A.M. Best and A- (Strong) from Standard & Poor’s





# The value of going virtual

Despite getting a bad rap from plaintiffs' attorneys, virtual claims handling has been a valuable tool in the time of COVID-19, write **Susan E. Egeland** and **Sara E. Inman**

**P&C INSURERS** are beginning to integrate drones and other means of virtual claims handling as part of their routine property inspections. But in litigation, virtual claims handling is unfairly getting a bad rap from plaintiffs' attorneys, who try to pass it off as solely a cost-cutting measure by insurers.

In actuality, virtual claims handling works to the benefit of both the insured and the insurer because it allows an insurer to handle a claim immediately without compromising accuracy. Previously, the typical property inspection for a claim followed this general procedure: The insured reports the claim, the inspection is scheduled, and the adjuster physically travels to the loss location and performs an in-person inspection of the property, which includes photographing the damaged areas. For a wind or hail claim, this usually requires the adjuster to get on the roof of the property to inspect the damage.

While every insurer strives to schedule an inspection promptly after a claim is reported, the ability to schedule inspections depends on having adjusters in the area available to perform the inspection, as well as conditions safe enough for the adjuster to do the job. When a catastrophe hits, finding an available adjuster can be extremely difficult, given the influx of claims filed.

With virtual claims handling, rather than waiting for adjuster availability for an in-person inspection, a drone can be sent to a property and controlled remotely to capture images of the damage. These images are

then reviewed by a licensed adjuster. This is especially helpful when the property is not easily accessible immediately following a catastrophe because the city is shut down or the property is unsafe or literally under water. Hurricane Harvey in 2017 is a perfect example of when virtual claims handling proved to be a valuable resource to bring immediate resolutions to many claims filed simultaneously under unsafe conditions.

**“The skepticism regarding virtual property inspections is simply unwarranted. Virtual claims handling is the claims handling of the future”**

Moreover, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important it is for companies and people to be able to rely on technology to operate remotely. Major metropolitan areas have issued shelter-in-place policies to minimize in-person contact. Even though such policies are gradually lifting, cities across the country are still practicing social distancing. Under such circumstances, insureds might not want adjusters to come to their property to perform an inspection. An insurer that has virtual claims handling capabilities can use drones to capture images without any in-person contact. Having this flexibility allows claims to be handled promptly, even under the most unusual circumstances.

Plaintiffs' attorneys might argue that

drone images are not fully capable of capturing damages present at a property, but the accuracy of such images has already been established. A virtual imagery system known as Eagleview has long been the industry standard for measuring properties among both contractors and insurers. Eagleview takes high-resolution aerial images of properties that are so comprehensive they can be used to measure the pitch of a roof and determine its size. In addition, in virtual claims handling, the images are taken in much closer proximity than aerial images. The details of any existing damages are clearly visible.

With every new technology, there are always some hiccups, and some people are hesitant of change. For example, Rhode Island requires insurers to use licensed adjusters to physically inspect damages for claims over \$2,500, and both Oregon and Vermont have issued directives to auto insurers to avoid over-reliance on virtual adjusting. But, through experience and counsel, insurers will perfect the use of virtual claims handling. Virtual claims handling should be an accepted means for handling property inspections.

Overall, the skepticism regarding virtual

property inspections is simply unwarranted. Virtual claims handling is the claims handling of the future, and insureds are fortunate if their insurer is one of the carriers leading the transition. This has become even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, when insurers remain legally obligated to conduct reasonable investigations under specific timetables. **IB**

Susan E. Egeland and Sara E. Inman are attorneys with Faegre Drinker's Dallas-based insurance team. As experienced litigators, especially in complex insurance disputes, they have recently represented insurers in property damage disputes and COVID-19 coverage issues.



## ELITE WOMEN

# 2020 ELITE WOMEN



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## IBA celebrates 77 of the insurance industry's foremost female leaders

**MENTORS. ENTREPRENEURS.** Fourth-generation CEOs. Diversity and inclusion leaders. This year's *IBA Elite Women* aren't just dedicated to the insurance industry – they are trailblazers forging a path for both current colleagues and future industry professionals.

The diversification of the industry wouldn't be possible without the many pioneers who began their insurance careers decades ago, before gender equality was a key factor in hiring practices or industry statistics. Several of those women, who entered the industry as fresh-out-of-school graduates and continue to pave the way now as executives, board members, adjunct professors and tireless advocates, are highlighted on the following pages.

From global influencers and specialty program experts to analytical masterminds, these 77 women have proved themselves capable of overcoming stubborn cultural and societal obstacles to achieve any goal. As they seek to recruit new talent and develop current employees, they are shining a light for future generations of insurance professionals and setting the standard on how to persevere through today's especially challenging economic climate.

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### CAROL WAGONER

Area president, benefit and HR consulting division

Gallagher

Carol Wagoner started her career in human resources, seeking a role that involved developing relationships and helping people reach their full potential. Eventually a door opened at Gallagher, where, 30 years later, Wagoner is still helping clients and the larger market realize that insurance is about supporting companies to build a better workplace, not products and services.

"We do that by taking a holistic approach in shaping the employee value proposition, which includes [supporting] not only physical and emotional employee health, but also career and financial well-being," she says. "When the workforce is thriving, the organization has a far greater chance of reaching its business goals."

Over the past year, Wagoner has taken on a new role as area president, and she says that regardless of your title, it's necessary to remain your authentic self. "Who you are got you to this place in your career," she says. "To succeed at the next level, you must lead with your strengths and always be aware of and work to mitigate your weaknesses."



## ELITE WOMEN

**K. BAIN HEAD**

Executive vice president

**CAC Specialty**

Bain Head got her start in the insurance industry when she joined Alexander & Alexander's risk management training program after college. She chose to focus on executive liability insurance due to its diversity and complex policy contracts, as well as the financial and legal bent of the underlying exposures. Almost three decades later, she continues to hone that specialty.

Head also inspired the formation of and actively champions CAC Specialty's Women's Development Network, which is designed to engage, empower and encourage women in all facets of life.

While Head says she thrives on the intellectual stimulation provided by her work, she's most motivated by the people. "I measure success in terms of a client who feels his or her job is easier as a result of my work on their behalf," she says. "I strive to understand my client's businesses, anticipate their needs and solve issues before they become problems so the clients can focus on other priorities."

**GAIL OLIVER**

Senior vice president of sales and marketing

**Sedgwick**

In her role as SVP of sales and marketing at Sedgwick, Gail Oliver is responsible for the business development and growth of the company's property Americas business. Her group maintains broker, self-insured and carrier relationships and is responsible for cross-selling the company's specialty services. Oliver also manages the group's client communications, keeping clients informed of weather events and Sedgwick's catastrophe response. She has served on Sedgwick's diversity and inclusion council and is currently a member of the D&I

advisory board and the Colleague Mentoring Network team.

Beginning her career as a property & casualty claims representative, Oliver is well acquainted with the intricacies of the claims business. She is known for developing and implementing strategies in complex selling and operations environments, spearheading cost-reduction initiatives, and creating a positive work environment focused on customer service. Outside of the office, Oliver gives back to her community in several ways, including as a volunteer for Friends of the Fallen, a group that assists families who come to Dover Air Force Base to witness the dignified transfer of their loved ones.

**LINDA BOBRO**

Vice president and managing director

**Burns & Wilcox**

Feeling called to a career in insurance, Linda Bobro accepted a position in the industry right out of school. Nearly 30 years later, she serves as vice president and managing director of Burns & Wilcox's Pittsburgh and Philadelphia offices, overseeing all Pennsylvania operations.

Bobro's appreciation for the industry stems from its emphasis on people. "The focus on relationship-building and self-motivation has been a driving force in my career," she says. "When people are buying insurance, they are buying a promise – a promise that if something catastrophic happens, insurance will work to make them or their business whole again."

Active in the industry, Bobro sits on the board of directors for the Pennsylvania Surplus Lines Association and is a member of the Pittsburgh Insurance Club.

"I would like to see the industry return to its roots as a service provider and observe the interests of the insured over its own," she says. "We are responsible for properly and professionally placing insurance as it relates to the financial security of the insured. We are also obligated to deliver quality submissions to carriers and deepen our expertise by continually learning and adapting to stay in tune with the ever-changing industry."



## JENNIFER HICKS

Managing director

### Marsh Wortham

Inspired by her risk management professor's passion for his specialty, Jennifer Hicks entered the insurance industry after graduating from St. Mary's University in 2003. Currently a managing director in Marsh Wortham's San Antonio office, Hicks works with clients of all sizes in various industries. She also collaborates with senior-level colleagues and project specialists to identify key decision-makers, account needs and underlying risks, and she uses her significant risk experience to perform critical client functions.

"No two days are ever the same, and I learn something new every day," she says. "I love the team I work with and have the best clients. I thoroughly enjoy acting as an extension to their risk management departments."

In addition to her daily responsibilities, Hicks co-heads the community service subcommittee and is a member of the culture committee at Marsh. Outside of work, she serves on the advisory board for the risk management program at St. Mary's University's Greehey School of Business, is a member of the Harlandale Independent School District bridging committee and mentors students from the south side of San Antonio and her alma mater.



## BOBBIE GOLDIE

Senior vice president, North America financial lines

### Chubb

After the law firm she worked at during college closed, Bobbie Goldie applied for a position at a national insurance brokerage, where she developed strong relationships and an acumen for the industry. Nearly 30 years later, she continues to enjoy "an extremely fulfilling insurance career."

In every situation, Goldie says she strives to expand her professional skill set, continue to learn and perfect her craft. She has held several senior leadership roles across multiple product lines on both the broker and carrier sides of the industry throughout the US and Canada. Today, she spearheads new initiatives that enhance the growth and profitability of Chubb's cyber solutions.

"As a female leader in the insurance industry, I thoroughly enjoy chairing women's leadership events and speaking at 'women in cyber and insurance' events," Goldie says. "It's important to give back and support other women, and I'm always looking for ways to celebrate and encourage their achievements, as well as rejoice in my colleagues' wins."



## AMANDAH GREILING

Senior vice president and head of underwriting support and service

### Zurich North America

With 18 years of industry experience, Amandah Greiling joined Zurich North America in 2017 and currently serves as senior vice president and head of underwriting support and service. "I was drawn to the insurance industry because of the deep history, rooted in a commitment to help each other during the most trying of times," she says. "Unexpected and tragic things happen, and that is inevitable. Helping insureds navigate through that loss is why we are here. Leading teams dedicated to protecting others is incredibly rewarding."

Reflecting on the past 12 months, Greiling is struck by the amount of change she's experienced professionally. "As a people leader, it is important to balance the acknowledgment of the impact of the changes the team or industry may be going through while trying to create stability and steadfastness," she says. "I have had the opportunity to strengthen this skill and am thankful for the life lesson."

Outside of Zurich, Greiling serves as an executive coach for a local pediatric cancer foundation and mentors professionals both inside and outside the insurance industry.

# ELITE WOMEN



## CLAUDETTE KELLNER

Public company D&O product leader; healthcare industry lead, management liability

### CNA Insurance

Claudette Kellner joined CNA in 2018 in a dual role as the public company D&O product leader and the healthcare industry lead for management liability, where she's responsible for product design and underwriting strategy. Prior to joining CNA, Kellner was the healthcare management liability product lead at QBE Insurance, where she developed the practice and steered the company's entry into the healthcare market for management liability lines. Prior to that, she spent nearly 15 years in Chubb Specialty's home office in various roles of increasing responsibility and leadership.

Kellner is also a frequent speaker at industry events.

"Looking back on the past 12 months, I appreciate the value of mentors more than ever," she says. "I have been very fortunate in my life and throughout my career to have incredibly smart and supportive mentors beside me – at times, it was their tough love that pushed me to new levels."



## CYNDEE MORTON

Executive vice president of operations and chief innovation officer

### Safety National

During Cyndee Morton's 27-year career with Safety National, she has risen from an underwriting support role to become the first female executive in the company's 75-year history. Striving to inspire current and future female insurance professionals, Morton regularly serves as an advisor and mentor, helping women identify their career paths.

Prior to joining Safety National, Morton worked as a sales representative for an international manufacturing company and as a business analyst for the federal government. Dedicated to sharing her passion for the insurance industry, she develops and conducts

workshops, has served as a speaker and panelist at various conferences, and has contributed to articles on industry-related topics.

"Looking ahead, I would like to see more initiatives implemented through female leadership in the areas of innovation, technology, data, operational efficiency and project management," Morton says. "Inspiring through proven efficiencies in our processes and demonstrating a commitment to making a more successful industry is how we break the glass ceiling and define a guided path for our next female leaders."



## ANNIE FLEMING

Managing director

### Beecher Carlson

With more than 17 years of insurance experience in both brokerage and production, Annie Fleming currently serves as managing director of Beecher Carlson's hospitality and real estate unit. Prior to joining Beecher Carlson in 2006, Fleming worked in the property department at Hobbs Group/HRH and in the small business department at Blackwell Insurance Agency. Since joining Beecher Carlson, Fleming has provided innovative solutions and assisted in growing a large book of business. A respected leader in risk management, she is committed to empowering women to succeed in their careers.

"Once I realized the depth of the industry and the ability to specialize in certain industries to help people and companies solve complex problems, I knew I wanted to have a career in insurance," she says. "The mentors I have encountered along the way have encouraged and helped my growth throughout my career, and I enjoy doing the same for others."

In 2019, Fleming was named a Top Gun by Brown & Brown, Beecher Carlson's parent company, in recognition of her success and commitment to her clients.





## LAURA R. BECKMANN

President and COO

### AmRisc

Prior to starting her career in insurance, Laura Beckmann worked in broadcast journalism. "I was looking for a change, and my mom, a schoolteacher, passed my resume along to one of her students' parents, who happened to be [AmRisc] founder Dan Peed," she says. At the time, AmRisc was a growing company, and there was a steep learning curve, "but I thrived with those challenges and discovered

that a career in insurance can be incredibly rewarding and fulfilling."

Recently, AmRisc launched a formal mentorship and corporate citizenship program. It plays a large part in the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion, and it's something Beckmann is especially proud of. Within the last year, AmRisc has also focused on growing and developing its leadership team.

"Taking time to build trust in your team pays off on so many levels," Beckmann says. "For example, I learned that my team didn't

see me as having much work-life balance. It challenged me to trust and delegate, and the benefits are already showing up. I can focus more on strategic initiatives for AmRisc, and I find the work even more rewarding when it's done as a team."

Being a visible and committed representative of the industry is important to Beckmann, and one way she meets this goal is by serving as a board member and vice chair of the volunteer committee for the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation's Houston chapter.



# ELITE WOMEN



## DAWN D'ONOFRIO

President and CEO

### WKFC Underwriting Managers and CorRisk Solutions

Dawn D'Onofrio joined WKFC Underwriting Managers in 2007 and brought with her a broad insurance background and a genuine passion for underwriting. Prior to her current role as president and CEO of WKFC Underwriting Managers and CorRisk Solutions, divisions of Ryan Specialty Group Underwriting Managers, D'Onofrio was WKFC's chief underwriting officer and was instrumental in program development and producing profitable underwriting results for capacity providers. In addition to her primary responsibilities, she strives to support education and career growth within the industry through mentoring, contributing to articles and participating as a panelist at insurance events.

"I am hoping the insurance industry embraces the adaptability of their employees," D'Onofrio says of meeting the challenges COVID-19. "Through the lens of insurance, it is much more than policy forms and claims; it is the magnitude of the uncertainty of what we thought could never happen happening – and the high chances of it happening again. My hope is that employers around the world will listen and learn from their team members about what worked and what did not work well when thrust into a mandatory work-from-home scenario."



## DENISE PAVLOV

Senior vice president and COO

### Topa Insurance Group

Denise Pavlov has worked in the insurance industry for more than 35 years, spending the past two at Topa Insurance Group. Growing up, Pavlov watched and learned from her father, a seasoned insurance professional who instilled in her a strong work ethic and passion for the industry. In early 2020, Pavlov was promoted to COO at Topa, charged with overseeing underwriting, products, program development, claims, marketing and human resources, as well as collaborating with department heads to use the company's talent to enhance overall results. Under Pavlov's leadership, Topa has created a program that allows employees to have meaningful conversations

with executives over morning coffee. As part of this program, Pavlov has personally met with employees at all levels.

"I've learned just how important it is for a leader to be decisive," she says. "Often times, no decision is worse than a wrong decision. Inaction paralyzes staff and destroys morale. I've also recognized the importance of remaining directly in touch with employees at all levels – employees who ultimately make the team and company successful."

Outside of her work at Topa, Pavlov sits on the boards of the California FAIR Plan Association, Cannasure Insurance Services and Volta Insurance Solutions.



## LAUREN GORTE

Senior vice president, financial lines

### Chubb

After a decade in production and field management, Lauren Gorte recently moved into a product management role, where she oversees the profit and loss, product development, underwriting guidelines, and growth strategies around Chubb's professional liability product suite. Gorte joined Chubb's Chicago office in 2009 as a professional associate, following in her father's insurance footsteps. Throughout her career, she has held a variety of leadership roles, overseeing the real estate E&O book, leading the Midwest region's underwriting team and overseeing the Western zone for E&O and cyber.

A frequent speaker and author on cyber and E&O topics, Gorte also regularly tutors

fourth, fifth and sixth graders and is active in Chubb's Associate Program, the company's early-career development initiative. "I'd like to continue to see the insurance industry actively attract top talent as a viable and exciting career path," she says. "I feel fortunate to have fallen into a career I love as I entered the workforce, and I believe it's our responsibility to pass that opportunity and passion on to the next generation."



## JUNE DWYER

Northeast regional leader, North America insurance

### AXA XL

Upon graduating from the NYU Stern School of Business, June Dwyer was inspired to enter the insurance industry after realizing insurance's role as an engine in the global economy, appreciating its function as a growth catalyst that enables large organizations to expand in emerging markets. She welcomed the opportunity to engage directly with clients and provide tailored risk management solutions.

After starting her insurance career on the brokerage side with Aon, Johnson & Higgins and Marsh, Dwyer moved to the carrier side, initially at Chubb and then at AXA XL, where she now serves as US Northeast regional leader, leading and collaborating with senior management on one of the largest P&Ls in North America.

Dwyer is dedicated to mentoring the next generation of insurance professionals and embraces opportunities to effect real change within the industry, from tort reform to developing new products in response to evolving needs. She participates in insurance networking organizations and events to further the conversation around diversity and inclusion in the industry and is an advocate for the AXA XL D&I group.

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## ELITE WOMEN

**JULIANNE SHILLINGTON**

Assistant vice president and public entity risk solutions underwriter

**Munich Re Specialty Insurance**

During her senior year of college, Julianne Shillington had the opportunity to interview for a position with a global P&C insurance company. When asked why she wanted to work in insurance, Shillington talked about 9/11 and how insurance companies help rebuild cities and societies after traumatic loss and destruction.

"After this interview, I became inspired to help people and communities by working in the insurance industry," she says.

After graduation, Shillington accepted a position as a commercial lines underwriter at a regional insurance company in Philadelphia; six years later, she moved into a public entity underwriter position at Munich Re Specialty Insurance. "I enjoy being in tune with the ever-changing environments our public entities are dealing with and helping them find solutions that aid them in mitigating future risk," she says.

In addition to her daily responsibilities, Shillington serves as chair of the Insurance Society of Philadelphia's NextGen organization, is co-founder of the Association of Professional Insurance Women's Philadelphia network and serves as a mentor to colleagues.

**CARRIE A. RYAN**

CEO

**ISU Hanson & Ryan**

Carrie Ryan lives by a Janis Joplin quote: "Don't compromise yourself. You're all you've got." Interpreting its meaning as self-worth, respect, reliance and understanding, it's those qualities that drive Ryan to run her family's fourth-generation insurance agency, ISU Hanson & Ryan, alongside her sister and brother.

The agency began in 1876 with Ryan's great-grandfather and was passed down to her grandfather and her father. Ryan's mother was also the daughter of an insurance agency owner; Ryan herself has been working at the agency since she was 19 years old. Today, the pride of having one of the oldest privately owned insurance

agencies in the US is a constant source of motivation, as is learning how each generation evolved the business over the decades. What she enjoys most, though, are the agency's clients and partners. "People and relationships will never stop being important," Ryan says. "Human experience and knowledge are irreplaceable."

Diverse and open-minded, ISU Hanson & Ryan has consistently attracted young talent, and Ryan is on a personal mission to educate and inspire youth to consider a career in the industry.

**CHRISTINE WILLIAMS**

CEO, US financial services group

**Aon**

With Aon for 18 years, Christine Williams currently serves as CEO of its US financial services group, which designs and negotiates insurance programs for a wide variety of commercial and financial institution clients and is one of the most prominent resource groups at Aon. In addition to leading the practice's strategic direction, Williams also manages senior market relationships and acts as a claims advocate for clients on large claims.

With an expertise in D&O liability, professional liability, employment practices liability, fiduciary liability, commercial crime, cyber and transactional liability, Williams spent two years working for Aon's London arm and also spent time in its M&A group. Prior to joining Aon, she spent five years in asset management at Citigroup (Salomon Smith Barney). She is a frequent speaker on D&O and E&O liability at various industry conferences.



## ROSE HALL

Strategic operations manager for risk engineering, North America construction

### AXA XL

Rose Hall joined the insurance industry by way of construction risk management. A problem-solver and consultant for her clients and colleagues, Hall's breadth of experience ranges from engineering, construction and expert witnessing to risk management and insurance. By leveraging her diverse experience, knowledge and skill set, she helps customers solve risk problems and improve their businesses.

Hall serves as an ambassador and spokesperson for AXA XL, presenting at industry events and participating in networking and educational organizations, including leadership and advisory board roles with the International Risk Management Institute, The CLM and ClaimsXchange. She is also a mentor, which she considers "an immensely rewarding opportunity to empower others and advocate for their success in personal and professional settings."

An advocate for diversity and inclusion, Hall actively seeks to help women find their voices in the workplace. "It is important to create 'big, hairy, audacious goals' in order to do great things," she says. "At times, women sell themselves short because they don't believe they are worthy of a task or potential promotion. But I think if you feel completely ready for something, then it's too late. Just keep saying yes, and the opportunities will be boundless."



## KERI PURVIS

Vice president, national programs division

### All Risks

A newspaper ad for a job at a retail insurance agency provided Keri Purvis with an entry point into the industry. Two and a half years after that first job, Purvis joined All Risks and has been there ever

since. "I love the challenge of helping people solve their problems," she says. "Simply being able to help agents understand the coverage and provide a resolution is a satisfying feeling."

In addition to her full-time duties, Purvis serves as a mentor for graduates of the All Risks University program. Reflecting on what she's learned over the years, Purvis says communication is key.

"We often enter a situation with a preconceived notion of what the other person is trying to convey and are ready to offer a quick response," she says. "Instead of providing an immediate plan of action, I focus on letting the other person fully explain what they need or want. Sometimes they already know what the answer is but just need to talk it through with someone else. If they are truly looking for my opinion or help, I'm better prepared with an answer if I completely understand what they need."



## BETTIE D. BAGGETTE

Director of operations, business insurance

### Higginbotham

What began as a part-time administrative job at an insurance office meant to be a placeholder until she found a "real job" has become Bettie Baggette's career of almost 40 years. Over the years, Baggette has held positions on

both the agency and carrier sides of the business; for a brief time, she even owned her own independent agency.

"Whether I was searching flood maps, making file folders, typing mobile home policies, rating multiple lines of coverage in several states, underwriting risks on the carrier side or helping a producer to close a deal, I have always found the insurance industry to be challenging as well as rewarding," she says.

Moving into management several years ago proved to be a new and rewarding challenge. "There is nothing better than seeing someone grow in knowledge, confidence and responsibility, even if only playing a small role in that development," Baggette says. "I love sharing knowledge and watching and helping others grow and succeed."



# ELITE WOMEN



## JENNI KUPERSMITH

Managing director

**Aon**

Since joining Aon in 2015, Jenni Kupersmith has led client engagement and placement strategies in a complex client segment while also helping to build a more engaging and connected culture. Kupersmith has become a go-to resource within Aon and is known for building and maintaining strong client relationships and developing business opportunities across the country.

Kupersmith has played an integral role in establishing Aon as a leader in the power and utility industry, and she serves as an inaugural member of the Women in Power & Utilities steering committee, which aims to establish professional and personal bonds to support career development and create an environment for professional growth, mentorship and sponsorship.

"In 2020, we've become more connected, more focused and more engaged than ever before," Kupersmith says. "This 'new normal' can be better, and I hope we can continue on this path as I think ahead to the next 12 months and beyond."



## SHAUNA BLACKBURN

Executive accounts director

**Cannabis Connect Insurance Services**

A passionate advocate for cannabis awareness, Shauna Blackburn focuses on protecting businesses via risk management and assessment and aims to tailor insurance products to fill businesses' specific needs. Because of her strong convictions regarding cannabis legalization, she has spent the past four years of her 20-year insurance career focusing her efforts on loss control for cannabis businesses. Blackburn currently serves as the executive accounts director and risk manager at Cannabis Connect Insurance Services, where she works with key cannabis insurers to compare and improve insurance contracts while simultaneously keeping pace with state and local regulatory requirements.

With significant knowledge of and experience in cannabis business structures, Blackburn is on a mission to protect and educate business owners by helping them avoid litigation and mitigate financial loss due to unforeseen property damage. "I enjoy the daily validation of using my passion to protect other business owners by using my background to educate whenever possible," she says. "This is my way of making sure the cannabis legalization and legitimization movement continues to grow and flourish."



## STEPHANIE CLIFF

Risk consultant

**Hub International**

A risk consultant with more than 17 years of experience, Stephanie Cliff specializes in construction, real estate and manufacturing accounts and is currently the builder's risk practice leader for Hub International Mid-America. Adept at reviewing insurance policies and contracts and managing relationships with clients, brokers and carriers, Cliff says her motivation comes from "getting to see the inner workings of each company, the passion from the executive teams and simply playing a part, even though my job is 'insurance.'"

She adds that "the past year has reiterated how important it is to have a relationship built on trust with customers and underwriters. This market cycle has also enforced how imperative it is to have a niche, since specialization differentiates the generalists from the targeted experts."

In addition to her daily responsibilities, Cliff mentors professionals within Hub and is involved in networking events for women in business. She is a member of the Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAIOP), was part of the Tulsa Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Tulsa 20 New Young Leaders fundraiser and served as co-chair of the American Heart Institute's Tulsa Heart Walk.



## MAUREEN GALLAGHER

Agency president

### AssuredPartners

As a recent high school graduate desperate for a job, Maureen Gallagher found work at Zurich Insurance Company – “the only company that would hire me” – and quickly learned that she possessed the skills and talent needed to succeed. “I really enjoyed the work,” she says. “I wanted to build a career in insurance.”

Over the course of her career, Gallagher has gotten to know the inner workings of many businesses in order to serve them best. “You cannot insure a business without intimate knowledge of their operations,” she says. “Insurance safeguards the interests of people and business from uncertainty by providing certainty of payment at a given contingency. Our economy and everyday lives are facilitated because we have insurance.”

Gallagher is an active participant in AssuredPartners’ mentoring groups for women and its AP University. She also owns Insurance Partners Academy and is a regular keynote speaker at colleges and women’s events. “I am in the twilight of my career,” she says, “and my focus now is on mentoring and supporting the next generation of leaders, producers and top service representatives, as well as continuing to service my current clients.”



## SYDNEY HEDBERG

Associate director, MMC Advantage

### Marsh & McLennan

As associate director of the MMC Advantage team, which spans the entirety of the Marsh & McLennan enterprise, Sydney Hedberg focuses on large-scale issues, particularly natural catastrophes and the associated protection gap. While still in college, Hedberg wrote *Barneys, Bergdorfs & Bill\$: A Girlfriends’ Guide to Finance*, a book aimed at helping women manage their money. “With knowledge comes confidence, and it has been a rewarding venture to see my readers approach their finances in stride,” she says. Through the book, she also became an advisor to the Women in Business Organization at her alma mater, the University of Mississippi.

Reflecting on the challenges of 2020, Hedberg says the importance of relationships has never been clearer. “Developing genuine, strong connections with clients, colleagues and beyond is paramount,” she says. “With the pandemic outbreak, we saw people of all seniority levels being quite fearful over what was to come. The humanity of people coming together at a time of immense need was an immeasurable learning experience. Most people hope to find a career that gives them purpose. Helping people is something in which I find immense joy, and insurance delivers.”

# ELITE WOMEN



## MELISSA PHILLIPS

Regional vice president

### Travelers Insurance Company

As a regional vice president with Travelers Bond and Specialty Insurance, Melissa Phillips is responsible for managing a team of 62 people across all product lines for public and private companies, nonprofits, and financial institutions in the New York City metro region, with a book of management liability business worth more than \$200 million. With 24 years of industry experience, Phillips primarily focuses on profitable growth, agency relationships and employee development.

"Employee development and employee engagement are big aspects of my job," she says, "and I really enjoy helping people grow in their roles and expand their career goals and ultimately succeed."

In addition to her work at Travelers, Phillips serves on the advisory board of The Bridge, a nonprofit focused on fostering an inclusive network that generates meaningful connections among industry professionals and develops and advances high-potential women to increase diversity in senior roles within financial lines. She is also a frequent panelist and a member of the Travelers-sponsored Disability Network, Military Network and Women's Network.



## CHRISTINE LARSON

President and CEO

### Empire Insurance Group

Christine Larson was inspired to join the insurance industry by her parents, who ran an Allstate agency before opening Empire Insurance Group, their own independent agency. In 2016, Larson took over ownership of the family business as president and CEO and has grown Empire into a multimillion-dollar-premium agency with 18 employees and three locations in Minnesota.

"I enjoy protecting families and my commercial clients from risks and crafting policies to fit individual needs by utilizing one of my agency's 60-plus insurance company affiliations," Larson says. "I also enjoy leading

my team and teaching the next generation of insurance advisors to be the elite."

Over the last 11 years, Larson has received several industry accolades, including the 2014 Emerging Leader of the Year Award from the Minnesota Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers Association (MIIAB) and being named to *IBA's* 2018 Elite Women and 2019 Top Workplace lists. In 2017, she was elected to the MIIAB board of directors.

"I am excited for the future," Larson says, "and, as a young female agency owner, will continue to make huge strides and contributions within the industry while continuing to expand my agencies."



## MEGAN STEWART HODGE

Founder

### Cultiver

Prioritizing authenticity and striving for whole-person success, Megan Stewart Hodge has cultivated her expertise as a leader throughout her insurance career by focusing on operational strategy, innovation, fostering talent and an inclusive culture, and consummate client advisory. Hodge is the founder of the advisory practice Cultiver, an executive coach for rising female leaders and the author of *Voix*, a monthly series featuring stories that "highlight the imperative of using our voices to advance and empower women in all facets of our lives. I believe that it is critical to use our individual and collective voices and our positions of leadership

to drive meaningful change for a more inclusive industry and society," she says.

Looking ahead, Hodge hopes that the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic will accelerate cultures of inclusion within the insurance industry. "Acknowledging, welcoming and respecting one another's authentic selves will pave the way for the inclusion that is critical for our industry to succeed in attracting and retaining diverse talent, advancing women, and innovating," she says.





## LEIGH ANNE SHERMAN

Executive vice president, North America financial lines

### Chubb

Upon joining Chubb in 1997, Leigh Anne Sherman immediately found the pace and cadence of the industry fascinating. Today, she is responsible for leading the private and nonprofit

segments of Chubb's financial lines division.

Throughout her career, Sherman has held progressive leadership roles in several Chubb offices and has developed an enthusiasm for working with colleagues new to insurance. Having served in leadership roles in diversity and inclusion initiatives at Chubb, Sherman continues to participate in events for women, mentor new professionals and provide individual coaching.

"As I look ahead, I hope to see the industry drive thought leadership and services supporting product offerings," she says. "Businesses and individuals will continue to navigate unique challenges and critical decisions, and I believe the industry can provide critical services and insights to mitigate the risks associated with those decisions. In today's world, the opportunities to learn, adjust, and drive innovation and thought leadership remain abundant."



## CAROL FREY

Divisional vice president, marketing

### Great American Alternative Markets

In her role as divisional vice president of marketing for Great American Alternative Markets, Carol Frey manages the division's marketing and oversees new business development for agency, association and group captives, as well as traditional retail-controlled programs. Frey also serves as a consultant on captive opportunities throughout Great American Insurance Group.

A leader in the captive sector for more than 20 years, Frey contributes her expertise through publications and as a speaker at various conferences. She has served as a member of the Vermont Captive Insurance Association and the Captive Insurance Companies Association, recently sitting on the board of the latter. "Working in the insurance industry, especially with captives, is dynamic and ever-changing," she says. "I seek to share my enthusiasm by mentoring early and mid-career professionals."

Throughout her career, Frey has been a consistent and passionate advocate for diversity. While at another carrier, she was involved in a women's leadership group and helped create and deploy a program to support women professionally and with work-life balance.



## JENNIFER SCHIPF

Global practice leader for art

### AXA XL

After receiving degrees in art history and economics, Jennifer Schipf was searching for a career that combined her interests in art and business when she was recruited by a family friend working for an independent claims adjuster for the Lloyd's market. As global practice leader for art for AXA XL, Schipf is responsible for the ongoing integration of the legacy XL Catlin art program and the AXA team – a transition that she sees as an opportunity to "refresh the business through a deep evaluation of what went well for both organizations and where there are opportunities to improve. I truly believe that the combined organization represents the best of both legacy teams," she says.

Passionate about data and analytics, developing her global team, and providing creative solutions for her clients, Schipf embraces being part of the global art community and is dedicated to preserving and protecting art. She gives back to the art community through the AXA Art Prize, which invites graduate and undergraduate art students to submit their work to be judged by a panel of leading artists. Through the prize, Schipf educates students about career opportunities in the art industry and helps them build networks.

## ELITE WOMEN

**NIDHI VERMA**

Vice president of learning, talent management and D&amp;I

**Crawford & Company**

For more than 25 years, Nidhi Verma's career has centered on learning, leadership development, change management, and diversity and inclusion. Nearly a third of that time has been spent in the insurance industry, which Verma says she enjoys due to its deep legacy and constant evolution.

In her current role, Verma is charged with identifying potential problems and building strategies that empower leaders, teams and cultures to achieve sustainable success. As the leader of Crawford & Company's diversity office and learning and development department, she's responsible for launching education and mentorship programs to help

employees reach their full potential. Additionally, she publishes industry articles, participates in panels and mentors early-career professionals.

"Today's skills will be vastly different from those needed to drive value tomorrow," Verma says. "The industry should join forces to redefine the critical capabilities – cognitive, social, emotional and technological – needed by the workforce of the future. To pivot to a new reality, I hope the insurance sector rethinks its focus on talent – what we have and what we need – and moves with renewed speed and a sense of urgency to reduce the gap."

**PATRICIA BERRIDGE**

Partner and co-CEO

**Stealth Partner Group, an AmWINS Group Company**

When Patricia Berridge began processing claims for Aetna at the age of 18, she says she knew nothing about insurance. After a decade in the business, she began working in TPA management and discovered a passion for fine-tuning operations and helping organizations become profitable. This led her to co-found Stealth Partner Group, an independent general agency that, in 10 years, progressed from a startup to a company with more than 100 employees and seven regional sales offices that currently places more than \$800 million in annual premium. Over the past year, the agency completed the transition to become part of the group benefits division of AmWINS.

"During my time in the insurance industry, I have worked with companies on refining processes, integrating and converting systems, relocating offices, and implementing compliance changes," Berridge says. "I love the constant change and evolution of this industry, as well as the positive impact it has made in so many lives."

Helping others has always been part of Berridge's personal and professional agenda. She takes an active role in mentoring women who have been the victims of abuse and believes that providing a healthy, worthwhile environment for all employees is paramount.

**STEPHANIE WALDRON**

Senior vice president, events and attractions division

**K&K Insurance**

Stephanie Waldron began her insurance career 33 years ago while she was still in college. The excitement and challenge involved with "insuring the world's fun" – from well-known zoos and tourist attractions to political campaigns, zip lines, fairs and special events – enticed her to stay in the industry after finishing her degree.

In addition to serving as senior vice president of K&K's events and attractions division, Waldron is passionate about cultivating young talent. She volunteers with Junior Achievement, has spoken at universities and has welcomed high school students into the office for job shadowing.

"The coming years will provide excellent opportunities for advancement in the insurance industry," she says. "I want to make sure young people know about our amazing business."





## STEPHANIE LOCKWOOD

Regional CFO

### AssuredPartners

After years of working in public accounting, Stephanie Lockwood's entrance into the insurance industry 10 years ago was pure happenstance. "I was ready to try my hand at being a part of what goes into shaping and driving a business instead of just dealing with the aftermath of other people's decisions," she says. "I knew very little about insurance or the agency/brokerage business, but was – and still am – fascinated with the entire business model."

Lockwood says that while focusing on financial results is necessary and inescapable, true success has come from the people she's worked for and with. "Over the past few years, I've seen firsthand the importance of surrounding yourself with people who are smarter than you," she says. "I've been fortunate to be surrounded by and to work directly with talented and accomplished people, and their success became the bar I held to account for my own success. None of the moments when I've felt the most successful in the work that I've done involve a set of financial statements; all of them involve people."



## KRISTIN DAUR

Senior underwriter

### PERse

With 10 years of experience insuring renewable energy projects, Kristin Daur is a senior underwriter and an integral member of PERse, the renewable energy-focused MGU within RSG Underwriting Managers. When PERse was formed in 2011, Daur was one of its founding team members and a driving force in shaping the company. Today, PERse leads the US renewable space with more than \$85 million in annual premium.

Given the changing and evolving nature of the renewable energy market, Daur has consistently been on the forefront of product innovation and has found creative ways to enhance offerings for her clients and brokers. "Growing up with both parents as schoolteachers, I was early endowed with a strong work ethic," she says. "Once I entered the business world, I watched the entrepreneurial spirit of my mentors. Being involved from the beginning with the startup of our company, I embraced the big time commitment to do things right – successfully, but right."



# ELITE WOMEN



## CHRISTINA MOTT

COO

Marsh &amp; McLennan Agency

Despite falling into insurance by accident when she joined Oliver Wyman, part of Marsh & McLennan, 15 years ago, Christina Mott says that “if I were to start my career over again, insurance brokerage would definitely be one of the top few [industries] that I would enter. Every day, I get to work on innovations that help our colleagues better serve clients through data analytics, technology tools and operational best practices.”

Mott attended school in South Korea, California, Spain and Switzerland, and she believes her exposure to different cultures emphasized the importance of diversity and helped

shape her career trajectory. “I continue to look for ways to broaden my horizons through helping others,” she says. “For example, training healthcare workers in Rwanda opened up a world that was completely unknown to me. I was also delighted to be able to mentor, through the Cherie Blair Foundation, a professor in Kenya who wanted to pursue her dream of building a preschool for children living in poverty. I continue to be amazed and inspired by the people I meet from all parts of the world.”



## KORI JOHANSON

Global chief compliance officer and corporate senior vice president

H.W. Kaufman Group

After more than three decades in the insurance industry, Kori Johanson says she enjoys the challenges associated with interpreting and complying with regulations that differ in all jurisdictions and relishes presenting her business partners with options that ensure compliance while optimizing business needs.

Johanson joined H.W. Kaufman Group in 2019; as global chief compliance officer and corporate senior vice president, she acts as a global compliance pipeline, overseeing the company’s corporate and regulatory compliance teams, as well as government affairs and state insurance taxation.

In addition to her daily responsibilities,

Johanson is an industry representative for the Surplus Lines Stamping Office of Texas board of directors, serves on the Wholesale & Specialty Insurance Association legislative committee, is an active member of the Federation of Regulatory Counsel and is editor of the *FORC Journal of Insurance Law and Regulation*. She also serves as a mentor to other women at H.W. Kaufman Group and helped form the Women’s Leadership Council, a new initiative dedicated to empowering and supporting women in the workplace.



## KRISTEN SKENDER

Director of corporate development and senior vice president

Jimcor Agency

After landing in insurance through a college internship at a retail agency more than 15 years ago, Kristen Skender has risen to become senior vice president and director of corporate development at Jimcor Agency, where she’s responsible for strategic growth opportunities, operational best practices, and expansion and innovation of the brokerage division. Skender works closely with regional leaders and the corporate management team and enjoys the fact that each day and each project looks different, depending on the company’s goals.

“I love helping our team build and grow with new opportunities, including carriers, specialties, people and geographical expansion,” she says. “I enjoy collaborating on initiatives, coaching and development programs across our teams to create meaningful results. In our ‘new normal’ post-COVID-19, I hope we hold onto the gratitude and appreciation of even the smallest moments, health and happiness we get to enjoy – gratitude for those around us, their contributions and our connections built in facing new challenges together.”



## ERIN LYNCH

President, global energy practice

### Beecher Carlson

Erin Lynch joined the insurance industry after working as a broadcast journalist for five years and quickly aligned with mentors who encouraged her to create a niche expertise. Today, Lynch serves as president of the global energy practice at Beecher Carlson, where she's been since 2006. Charged with leading the production team and directing the overall strategy for the department, Lynch is instrumental in developing risk mitigation strategies for difficult-to-place power generation exposures and takes pride in coordinating a broad array of resources for her clients.

Beyond her daily job duties, Lynch strives to recruit and promote women into senior leadership roles within the practice. Since assuming the role of president, Lynch and the senior members of her team have led a reorganization of the department, focusing on providing leadership and career development opportunities. She also serves on the GCube Insurance Services advisory council and is a member of the Young Presidents' Organization.



## MAUREEN TOOMEY

COO, commercial risk solutions broking

### Aon

Maureen Toomey is responsible for executing Aon's broking strategy across commercial risk solutions in the US. A consummate leader, she also champions diversity and inclusion across every part of the firm. "Inclusion is fundamental to driving change, which accelerates problem-solving and impacts Aon's ability to continue to be a leader in the industry," she says. To further her efforts, Toomey mentors colleagues and has partnered with other insurance companies on diversity initiatives.

Toomey says the past year has made it clear how critical it is for organizations to take a fact-based, analytical approach to decision-making. "After more than a decade of largely favorable market conditions, 2019 saw a dramatic shift across most insurance classes of business and product lines," she says.

"When we use analytics to stretch ourselves beyond the transaction, we find challenges that may sometimes feel beyond us, but are often what distinguishes us from the pack and leads to greater reward, personally and for the organization."



## BAOLING WANG

Executive general adjuster

### McLarens

Baoling Wang's role as executive general adjuster with McLarens has provided her with a platform to collaborate with brokers, insurers and multinational corporations on complex global commercial property accounts. Her diverse portfolio includes several Fortune 500 corporations and businesses in manufacturing, real estate, logistics, technology, private equity, financial services and retail. The valued partnerships she has cultivated over the years have been instrumental in providing desirable outcomes for all stakeholders.

Wang began her career as a property field claims adjuster trainee with Farmers Insurance. She went on to hold a variety of roles that demanded increasing levels of oversight, including operational efficiency, management and mentorship. Wang wholeheartedly commits her time to mentoring by providing her accumulated knowledge, understanding and access to the highly complex global insurance market to elevate the next generation of insurance professionals.

## ELITE WOMEN



## CHRISTINE CHIPURNOI

Senior vice president

### USI Insurance Services

For more than 30 years, Christine Chipurnoi has developed, placed and maintained insurance programs for regional, national and international clients. She specializes in property, casualty, professional and loss-sensitive insurance programs with expertise in real estate, construction, hospitality and nonprofits.

Chipurnoi is an active member of USI's national real estate, construction and hospitality practice groups and is a global board member of CREW Network. In 2015, she served as president of CREW New York, one of the largest professional organizations for women in commercial real estate. In 2012, she was named the first female president of the Insurance Brokers Association of New York.

Chipurnoi is a frequent speaker on a multitude of insurance-related topics as an adjunct faculty member for the Practicing Law Institute, a guest lecturer at the NYU Graduate School of Hospitality and Baruch College's Zicklin School of Business, and a guest speaker at the New York City Bar Association. She is also an active mentor and advisory board member for Globe Street Women of Influence, in addition to her involvement with several industry groups and her volunteer work with various philanthropic organizations.



## LAURA GUTHINGER

Associate vice president and managing director

### Burns & Wilcox

Laura Guthinger first realized her passion for the insurance industry after finishing graduate school. "The profession satisfies my natural curiosity to learn and provides me with ample opportunity to creatively underwrite while delving into the technical side of coverage forms and policy language," she says.

An associate vice president and managing director of Burns & Wilcox's South Carolina operations, Guthinger has more than 20 years of experience as an E&S underwriter and is known for her specialization in commercial and personal underwriting with a focus on high-value coastal property.

"Clients look to me for my expertise in property & casualty insurance underwriting, and I have learned that without daily research, creativity and persistence, I will lose my advantage," she says. "Every single day, I work to protect the interests of both my clients and carrier partners by seeking more knowledge and more efficient ways to process business and grow."

Outside of the office, Guthinger is involved in the Independent Insurance Agents of Horry and Georgetown County, the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of South Carolina and the CPCU Society.



## LISA A. HAYS

Vice president and chief actuary, property & casualty

### Great American Insurance Group

When Lisa Hays was appointed chief actuary at Great American Insurance Group in 2016, she became the first woman in company history to hold the position. Today, she's responsible for transforming complicated data into understandable and actionable information.

Throughout her 30-year tenure at Great American, Hays has embraced and led cultural change. She leads a team focused on meaningful engagement, education and collaborative approaches to problem-solving, and she has cultivated successful relationships with business leaders and senior executives. In addition to training Great American's claims staff, business services teams and underwriters on actuarial methods, Hays teaches students from 6th grade through college about "the tremendous potential to build a rewarding career in insurance" and serves as a mentor to high-potential female leaders in Great American's Women in Leadership program.

"I would like insurance to be a more attractive career option for recent graduates," she says. "The disruptions from COVID-19 have provided opportunities to re-evaluate long-held beliefs, including where and when people work. I hope companies realize that providing flexibility will help the industry attract and retain a younger, more diverse workforce."





## FAYE COOK

Senior vice president and head of global client engagement and key accounts

### Allied World

Faye Cook leads Allied World's major accounts practice, which specializes in relationship management for multiline clients worldwide. After years of working in journalism and media, Cook got an introduction to the insurance industry when visiting Bermuda in 2001 to write an

economic report during the industry's capacity crunch just after 9/11. Now a member of Allied World's global executive leadership team, mentor program and various D&I initiatives, she says she most enjoys learning about her buyers' businesses and working with her team to service and strengthen client relationships.

Cook is also the co-founder of Deals & Heels, a professional networking group for women in insurance and risk management. "I enjoy meeting new people, hearing about their goals and careers, and helping where I can," she says. "During our current COVID-19 situation, I'm reminded just how important relationships are to our business. Technology is a fantastic support tool, but it doesn't replace the experience you get from physical interaction with someone."



## SARAH JOHNSON COURT

Managing director

### VF Global Insurance Brokerage

With a master's degree in art history, Sarah Johnson Court began her insurance career in 2004 as a Lloyd's of London fine art and specie broker for Heath Lambert/Blackwell Green. In 2007, she took a position at Aon UK to place specialty coverage for university collections, museums, galleries, private and corporate collections, and artists.

In 2010, Court moved back to the US, taking a role as the national fine art specialist for Frank Crystal & Co. She returned to Aon as the director of its global fine art practice, then spent a year at Alliant prior to joining VF Global Insurance Brokerage as managing director. Court focuses primarily on ultra-high-net-worth individuals, families and family offices, as well as museums, galleries, corporate collections and foundations.

Thanks to her experience in working with UK, European, US and Latin American clients, Court can advocate for her clients with a full understanding of worldwide risk, complicated insurance placements, and the needs and discretion associated with ownership and maintenance of luxury assets. She is a member of several art organizations and frequently speaks at art and high-net-worth events.



## JACKIE BERGERON

Operations manager

### AssuredPartners

When she started as an accounting clerk assistant with an independent insurance agency in the mid-1980s, Jackie Bergeron says insurance was just a job. But the more she learned, the more curious she became about the other aspects of the industry, leading her to apply for new positions as they became available.

"Inexperience worked in my favor, as many times these were lateral moves," she says. "However, the real payoff was the opportunity to learn the many different roles within an insurance agency. Once I became aware of the educational opportunities in the industry, it was game on."

Bergeron credits her success to mentors who challenged her and encouraged her personal development. "Insurance as a career is certainly rewarding and provides me with the opportunity to mentor future insurance professionals and make a useful difference in the lives of others," she says. "Looking ahead, I am hoping to see an influx of new and diverse talent in the industry. We need to actively recruit while making sure candidates are informed of the various career paths, opportunities and benefits available."

# ELITE WOMEN



## GERALDINE KERRIGAN

Executive managing director

**Beecher Carlson**

As executive managing director of Beecher Carlson's global energy practice, Geraldine Kerrigan works to develop best-in-class insurance and risk management programs by implementing innovative risk mitigation solutions specific to her clients' needs. Kerrigan has more than two decades of industry experience with power generation and oil and gas clients. As the global energy practice service team leader, she directs the team's efforts in working with clients and collaborates to develop new products and solutions that will increase efficiency within Beecher Carlson and the industry.

"Our clients are facing many problems," Kerrigan says. "Solving insurance is just one small part of the puzzle that can make a difference for a client who is trying to close on financing of a new project or even get through a renewal meeting with a specific goal or objective. I am inspired by clients who are so passionate about their business plans that I can't help but want to become part of their team and do anything I can to help them be successful."



## GRETA VAN

Chief strategy officer

**Crawford & Company**

After more than 25 years in the industry, "I can say that insurance is an exciting career field," says Greta Van, Crawford & Company's chief strategy officer. "Insurance providers have the opportunity to make a real difference for people who are going through difficult times, and I take this responsibility seriously. I love how every day is different, and I'm fortunate to work with an incredibly talented team."

Van is passionate about introducing a new generation of talent to the industry and serves as a mentor for several internal initiatives, including Crawford's Emerging Leaders program, which provides employees with support to hone their leadership skills. She relishes the ability to facilitate conversations with Crawford's global leadership

team about diversity and inclusion efforts and discuss how the company can create a more diverse and inclusive workplace for employees.

"I would like to see the mix of talent continue to change within our industry to include more early-career professionals, as well as female leaders," Van says. "Diversity is something that our industry has struggled with, and I am hoping to see progress on that front very soon."



## LITA J. MELLO

Senior vice president, recreation division

**K&K Insurance**

As senior vice president of the recreation division at K&K Insurance, Lita Mello manages the daily operations of the underwriting team to provide coverage for a wide variety of recreational and entertainment facilities. With K&K since 1982, Mello started out insuring fairs and festivals before moving into the firm's motorcycle dealership program. She was promoted to vice president of that division before being named vice president of K&K's venues and gaming division, where she helped increase written premium to more than \$90 million, making it the largest division within K&K at the time.

Using her experience in program development, contract review, underwriting, sales and marketing, Mello serves as a role model of professionalism and leadership for many colleagues within K&K and the sports and recreation industry. In her current position, she works with several prestigious and well-recognized venues in the US, including sports arenas and complexes, music venues, pari-mutuel racing facilities, convention centers, and entertainment facilities.





## LISA HARRIS

Managing director

### Marsh JLT Specialty

As a client executive in the energy practice of Marsh JLT Specialty, Lisa Harris is responsible for the design, marketing, negotiations and ongoing service of complex risk management programs for upstream energy and energy service clients. She also leads

the client service team within the Houston energy practice.

Harris began her career with JLT's predecessor firm in 2003. In 2004, she was seconded to JLT London, where she worked as a wholesale broker, servicing energy clients. She joined Marsh in 2006 as an energy broker and manager of the upstream energy broking team before moving back to JLT (now Marsh JLT Specialty) in 2014.

Respected by clients for her meticulous attention to detail, tactical skills, forward thinking and planning, and impressive work ethic, Harris offers help from both a cost and administrative standpoint. She brings detailed knowledge of coverage and policy wording to her work, and she applies her acute knowledge of her clients' businesses to better position their coverage.



## KRISTIN D. MCMAHON

Senior vice president, Global Risk Solutions and North American specialty

### Liberty Mutual/Ironshore

At Liberty Mutual, Kristin McMahon is responsible for claims oversight and litigation management for the specialty

business lines within North America, including healthcare, environmental, financial management, professional liability, and mergers and acquisitions. McMahon joined IronHealth, the healthcare liability unit of Ironshore, at its inception in 2008 and worked to build the claims function and recruit talent to establish the specialty carrier.

Passionate about D&I efforts, McMahon serves on the committee sponsoring the fall 2020 launch of the New York City chapter of Women Empowerment at Liberty Mutual. She is also involved with employee resource groups focused on providing encouragement and professional development opportunities for employees of African and Asian descent and members of the LGBTQ community.

"Throughout my career, I have championed development of the next generation of industry talent through continuing educational resources, tools and training," McMahon says. "I have had the opportunity to mentor some amazing women in both private practice and within the insurance industry."



## ELIZABETH SCHENK

CEO

### Agency Network Exchange

Thirty years ago, Elizabeth Schenk took what was supposed to be a temporary job as a receptionist at an insurance brokerage. "I immediately fell in love with the business and began my journey with the help of some wonderful mentors," she says.

Schenk spent several years as a producer and manager at an independent agency before moving to the insurer side as an underwriter. She so enjoyed working with agents that she eventually took a job as a production underwriter with Berkley, a territory manager for Liberty Mutual and a position with a national agency network.

In 2019, Schenk was named CEO of Agency Network Exchange (ANE). She makes a point of paying forward the knowledge she's acquired by being an active participant in associations and mentoring young women entering the industry. "Our industry is currently entering an entirely new chapter," she says. "My goal is to make certain we do everything possible to help the independent agency not only survive but thrive."

## ELITE WOMEN

**MICHELLE MCLAUGHLIN**

Chief underwriting officer, North America retail commercial property & casualty insurance

**Chubb**

Michelle McLaughlin has spent her 26-year career at Chubb making a difference for her clients and the company. She began in the internal audit department in 1992 and then pursued underwriting in the financial institutions group. In 2006, she moved into Chubb's property department to further her technical knowledge. She was recently named chief underwriting officer of Chubb's North American SME division;

prior to her promotion, she was executive vice president and property and marine manager for Chubb commercial insurance, managing a book of business worth more than \$1 billion and responsible for overseeing profit, growth and strategy development; training underwriters; managing terrorism for commercial lines; reinsurance treaties; and product development.

McLaughlin says she's grateful for Chubb's investment in developing female leaders, which she furthers as chair of the Women's Development Council and as a mentor. "It's critical to surround yourself with bright people who think differently and have different perspectives and experiences," she says. "I have been very fortunate to have been mentored by some amazing and successful leaders. Now is the time to pay it forward and pass that down to the next generation of leaders."

**SARAH LIN**

President – casualty division, San Francisco

**RT Specialty**

As president of the San Francisco casualty division of RT Specialty, Sarah Lin is responsible for leading teams, cultivating new retail and carrier relationships, and recruiting and developing new talent. Lin uses her broad expertise in general and umbrella liability to build long-term partnerships to continually deliver top solutions. In the insurance industry for nearly 20 years, Lin was a top-producing casualty broker at CRC Insurance Services before moving to RT Specialty; she began her career servicing CNA Insurance Company as an auditor for Deloitte.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, Lin says she's learned that while change is challenging, the opportunity for growth, both professionally and personally, makes it worth the risk. "Additionally, I've learned that a team not only needs someone who leads by example, but a leader who understands the importance of the effort required to be present," she says. "Our business is constantly evolving, and it excites me to be part of a dynamic industry with a growing number of women leaders."

**LORA ROBBINS**

Branch manager, vice president

**All Risks**

Lora Robbins' insurance roots date back to her grandparents' retail agency in Indiana. As a double major in finance and risk management and an intern at NAPSLO (now WSIA), Robbins knew she wanted a career in E&S insurance. "Working in insurance met three important criteria for me," she says. "It was purposeful, challenging and offered a career path without a glass ceiling. I love what I do."

Robbins has built a successful book of property business and is a key leader at All Risks. She currently serves as branch manager of the Charlotte office and leads the brokerage and binding teams in Richmond and Atlanta. She's

also an instructor and mentor in the All Risks University program, has mentored several female graduates and is an advocate for diversity and inclusion within the insurance industry.

Outside of All Risks, Robbins has served on the WSIA education committee since 2010 and has been a member of the North Carolina Surplus Lines Association board since 2014, including a term as president in 2016. She also sits on the board of advisors for Appalachian State University's Brantley Risk & Insurance Center.





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## ELITE WOMEN

**MARY GRANDY**

Senior vice president, business insurance services

**EPIC Insurance Brokers & Consultants**

Mary Grandy began working in the insurance industry in 1995, serving as a claims adjuster for two major insurance companies. She took that expertise to Jenkins Insurance Group, where, as a P&C claims advocate, she worked to ensure that clients' interests were thoroughly represented. In 2010, she expanded her client focus to include insurance program design and risk analysis in a sales capacity, and she now uses her claims and coverage experience to assist clients in the proper placement of their insurance programs.

In her current role at EPIC, Grandy focuses on the design and implementation of insurance and risk solutions for all aspects of commercial, P&C and workers' compensation insurance. Her depth of expertise in litigated construction claims gives her a unique advantage in representing the construction industry.

Outside of EPIC, Grandy is active in a number of associations, including the Construction Financial Management Association, the Associated General Contractors of America and the American Subcontractors Association. In 2019, she received the CFMA National Joe Quigley Memorial Award for her dedication to the Sacramento chapter, the association and the industry.

**DAWNMARIE E. BLACK**

Northeast regional director

**Lloyd's America**

Dawnmarie Black was inspired to get into insurance by her father, who recently passed away. He was passionate about the business and instilled that same passion in her, mentoring her throughout her career and shaping her as a risk management and insurance leader.

"I enjoy insurance because it is a relationship business that also requires a high level of technical proficiency," Black says. "My current role gives me an opportunity to utilize my years and breadth of experience to find solutions for stakeholders across the US and London marketplaces. I thrive on exploring new solutions for emerging risks and engaging brokers and underwriters on how to implement them."

Black enjoys educating people on Lloyd's role in the marketplace and strives to continue learning as much about insurance and global topics as possible, embracing "every potential public speaking and networking opportunity." She serves as a mentor within Lloyd's; outside of the company, she is vice chair of the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation's Boston chapter and a board member for the Intermediaries Reinsurance Underwriters Association and the Association of Professional Insurance Women.

**MARYE BEASLEY KOHN**

Director of commercial lines

**Cobbs Allen**

Marye Beasley Kohn began her insurance career in 2007 at Cobbs Allen in what she thought would be a temporary job. Thirteen years later, she's still there. "Every day brings new challenges, forcing me to think outside the box and get out of my comfort zone by being vulnerable, whether with employees or specific client questions," she says.

In 2017, Kohn led a successful systems migration project that completely transitioned the company to cloud-based software – a technology enhancement that has proved to be especially beneficial in today's work-from-home reality. Last year, Kohn was integral to Cobbs Allen's formation of CAC Specialty, a specialty insurance brokerage and investment banking platform focused on combining structured finance solutions with insurance broking capabilities. Kohn's involvement in back-office and operations support helped get the new business off the ground.

"From introductory phone calls and writing welcome notes to systems training and integration, it gave a new meaning to time management and teamwork," she says. "It has been very rewarding to get to know the new 80-plus employees and seeing both companies prosper."



## HENNA KARNA

Executive vice president, chief data officer

### AXA XL

After serving as an actuary in the 1990s, Henna Karna rejoined the insurance industry in the mid-2000s with a goal of “making the world a safer place for people and businesses with a level of precision in managing risk that is commensurate with the level of digitization that exists today.”

Driven by the belief that the industry must keep pace with technological innovation and emerging risks in order to continue to serve as a sustaining buffer for the global economy, Karna is dedicated to creating a new basis of competition. She’s doing this through the build-out of data and digital products and solutions and by developing new career paths for colleagues, cloud-enabled data platforms, monetizable data assets, and digital solutions for customers and partners.

Together, Karna and her team have developed four specific D&I categories they seek to hire around: economic disparity, returning military/new to corporate, neuro and physical diversity, and diverse industries. “The colleagues we have brought on board with our D&I efforts have changed the fabric of our team to a level of breadth that we could not have imagined,” she says.



## LISA-ANN MARCHESI

Vice president of P&C

### NFP

An influential leader in the growth and expansion of NFP’s global P&C specialty divisions and programs, Lisa-Ann Marchesi has more than 25 years of experience in the construction and commercial insurance industries. Prior to joining NFP, Marchesi served as a director at Construction Risk Partners, spent almost a decade at Travelers and worked for more than eight years at Allied North America. She excels at assisting customers with their growth, helping them open new markets while offering significant carrier experience and insight.

At the start of 2018, Marchesi was appointed to the board of directors of the Women Builders Council (WBC); later that year, she was recognized as an Outstanding Woman at the WBC Annual Champion Awards dinner. She is a longtime supporter of the American Cancer Society, the Michael J. Fox Foundation and Share Cancer Support, where she serves as a committee member and is a corporate sponsor through her private company, Bella D’ Oliva by L.A. Marchesi.



## JEANETTE WARD

COO

### Texas Mutual Insurance Company

Jeanette Ward joined Texas Mutual in 1993, working her way up from an administrative assistant to a member of the C suite. She strives to lead by example, as she did last year when Texas Mutual went through a project management transformation, moving from a top-down decision-making process to one where leaders communicate strategic direction and then entrust teams to accomplish those strategies. Following training, Ward noticed that the teams were still working within the traditional structure.

“So I decided to lead by example and told everyone to ‘just go,’” she says. “The teams did more than I could have ever imagined as they collaborated in new ways, discovered efficiencies and came up with even better solutions to our business problems than we as leaders ever could have. Letting go of some control and giving our talented team members the space to determine how to best serve our customers has been one of the most fulfilling lessons I’ve learned in my career.”

In addition to her daily responsibilities, Ward helps other women recognize their leadership abilities through mentoring, volunteers with several charitable organizations and serves on the risk management advisory board at St. Mary’s University’s Greehey School of Business.



# ELITE WOMEN



## ERIN GONZALEZ

Vice president, Dallas MGA

### All Risks

A self-proclaimed “insurance baby,” Erin Gonzalez followed in her parents’ footsteps when she joined the All Risks University program in 2016. The following year, she helped launch All Risks’ Dallas MGA group as a co-lead and assumed sole team leadership in early 2019. She led the unit to 72% growth in just one year; since its inception, its premium has grown by 157%.

“I love the wins I get to help make happen,” Gonzalez says. “The win for the insured whose policy allows them to start a dream company or crafting coverage to protect their investments. The win for the agent who was struggling to find coverage or land a big account. The win for All Risks when rounding out a large account and solidifying it as the agent’s one-stop shop.”

In addition to her managerial role, Gonzalez mentors All Risks University graduates and speaks at local universities about the E&S sector. She is an avid supporter of diversity and inclusion and refuses to allow age or time in the industry to dictate how anyone’s contributions are measured.



## LIZ KING KRAMER

Head of technical underwriting – alternative markets

### Zurich North America

After spending 18 months living and teaching in Japan, Liz King Kramer returned to the US and heard about a Marsh division called Japanese client services and applied for a job. “I quickly realized that when you work in insurance, you work across the entire spectrum of industries,” she says. “The idea of being exposed to so many business areas while continually learning led me to follow the path to become an underwriter.”

Over the past 25 years, Kramer’s career has spanned risk management, pricing and analytics, product development, international management, and innovation. “Our industry is a strong supporter of resiliency measures, but there is even more we can do,” she says. “While insurers are there to help post-event, there should be more emphasis around pre-event resilience” – something she says Zurich Insurance Group is currently focusing on.

In addition to her daily responsibilities, Kramer is an advocate for D&I within Zurich and the wider industry. She is involved in several insurance associations, including the Association of Professional Insurance Women, and volunteers with Sanctuary for Families, an organization that supports abused women and their families.



## ELISSA KELLY

Associate vice president, product

### Nationwide E&S/Specialty

With more than 20 years of experience in the insurance industry, Elissa Kelly leads product strategy, innovation and execution for \$3.5 billion worth of products across all distribution channels at Nationwide E&S/Specialty. Her ability to develop and maintain internal and external partnerships has been instrumental to her success at leading through change and creating high-functioning teams that drive profitable growth.

In addition to her role at Nationwide, Kelly is a member of the advisory board for St. Vincent de Paul, the executive board of the Arizona Women’s Leadership Forum and the executive sponsor for the Nationwide Scottsdale Campus Pride Associate Resource Group. She is passionate about mentoring associates and leaders, as well as creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce and community.

“As more women have the broad skills and experience to fill key C-suite and board roles in the insurance industry,” Kelly says, “I hope to see increasing equity in the gender split of executive teams and boards.”



## JOAN ZERKOVICH

Senior vice president of operations

### American Association of Insurance Services

Before coming to the American Association of Insurance Services (AAIS) in 2012, Joan Zerkovich worked for several organizations in information technology positions, including more than eight years as CIO of catastrophe insurance intermediary

ICAT Holdings. Her work there earned her recognition in 2006 as one of the insurance industry's Elite 8 technology professionals by *Insurance & Technology*.

Prior to her tenure at ICAT, Zerkovich spent more than 13 years in IT positions in the University of California system, where her work included projects that contributed to the initial public access to the internet and the digitalization of the

university's library system.

As senior vice president of operations at AAIS, Zerkovich oversees daily operations for all product development and delivery, data management, regulatory compliance, and information technology. She enjoys the challenge of modernizing the 80-year-old organization so that it can continue to add value for its members and the industry as a whole well into the future.



## ELITE WOMEN

**JESSICA FERGUSON**

Wholesale distribution executive – East zone, Global Risk Solutions

**Liberty Mutual/Ironshore**

Jessica Ferguson joined Liberty Mutual in 2018 as the wholesale distribution executive for the East zone, charged with developing, implementing and executing strategic initiatives across Liberty Mutual's Global Risk Solutions business unit, including Ironshore. She is responsible for leading wholesale broker engagement, strengthening key relationships and partnering with brokers to deliver products to clients. Working in collaboration with specialty underwriting units, Ferguson supports the development of

innovative products and services for the wholesale market. Prior to her appointment at Liberty Mutual, she was vice president of the programs business development unit at JLT Re North America and spent more than 10 years in numerous positions with AIG and Lexington Insurance.

"I consider myself a lifelong learner, and reflecting on the last 12 months, the most significant lesson I've learned has been the importance of a solid continuity plan and the ability to act quickly in a time of anxiety and uncertainty to help navigate uncharted territories for our broker partners and clients," Ferguson says. "Now more than ever, meaningful, trusting relationships are of the greatest value."

**KATIE DAVIES**

President and CEO

**JEM Underwriting Managers and Technical Risk Underwriters**

Katie Davies is the president and CEO of two MGUs within RSG Underwriting Managers: JEM Underwriting Managers and Technical Risk Underwriters (TRU). A proven property market expert, Davies joined RSG with more than 18 years of experience in underwriting US property insurance. In addition to JEM and TRU, Davies sits on the underwriting committee of Geneva Re, a joint venture between Nationwide and RSG.

Prior to joining RSG, Davies spent nine years as president of AmWINS Special Risk Underwriters and worked for ACE as a US property underwriter at the AGM 2488 syndicate in

Lloyd's of London and as the Midwest regional property manager of ACE's global property unit in Chicago. While at Lloyd's, Davies was the first woman to sit on the London Market Association's US property committee.

"I'm keenly interested in working with the women and men who are college graduates entering the insurance industry," she says. "These incredible individuals have been behind major change movements in the thread of America's society. I'm looking forward to working with this next generation in a professional arena."

**PRIYA CHERIAN HUSKINS**

Senior vice president, management liability

**Woodruff Sawyer**

Priya Cheria Huskins is a recognized expert, frequent speaker and guest lecturer on D&O liability risk and mitigation. In addition to consulting on D&O insurance, Huskins counsels clients on corporate governance matters, including ways to reduce their exposure to shareholder lawsuits and regulatory investigations. She serves as a board member for Woodruff Sawyer and Realty Income Corporation, on the advisory board of the Stanford Rock Center for Corporate Governance, and on the corporate governance and nominating committee and as chair of the compensation committee for The Monthly Dividend Company.

Huskins' influence and expertise in the industry have earned her several awards and accolades. She has a long list of publications, is a frequent guest speaker, and is the author and editor of the D&O Notebook blog.





## RHONDA HENZE

Regional vice president

**Appalachian Underwriters Inc.**

Rhonda Henze always knew she wanted a career in a stable field where she could work with numbers and see immediate results. After college, she got a job as an underwriter at an MGA; five years later, she opened her own MGA/wholesale business. After selling it in 2011, she joined Appalachian Underwriters Inc. (AUI), where she serves as regional vice president and director of commercial specialty, leading the company's commercial efforts throughout the US.

"It is a joy watching our commercial team succeed," Henze says. "So many of the underwriters have grown to specialize in a specific niche, and they have helped their clients' books grow tremendously."

Henze believes the future of the industry lies in technology's role in shaping the quoting process. "AUI has created various online rating platforms, and many of our new carriers are doing the same," she says. "The amount of readily available information has rounded out the underwriting approach from a validation and efficiency perspective. I am excited to see how technology will continue to grow from an efficiency/accuracy standpoint."



## KELLY CARNEY

Executive vice president, Northeast region  
underwriting leader

**AmWINS Access Insurance Services**

Kelly Carney was on the finance track at college when she took an insurance-related class and found reading ISO coverage particularly interesting. She pursued a degree in insurance and risk management and entered the industry as a commercial underwriter at Selective Insurance.

Today, as the Northeast region underwriting leader for AmWINS Access, Carney works with more than 70 employees in 11 locations and is responsible for more than \$75 million in premium. "One of the things I like most about this industry is the satisfaction it gives both my left and right brain," she says. "It allows me to be a problem-solver, relationship-builder and teacher, as well as a creative and critical thinker."

Carney also enjoys having the opportunity to support and uplift fellow women in the industry. As a member of the Association of Professional Insurance Women, she has participated in numerous panel discussions to provide guidance and support to those new to the industry.

"In the coming year, I hope we see more diversity in industry leadership," Carney says. "We are committed to changing the face of industry management, C suites and boardrooms. I am excited to see the impact a broader perspective will bring to our insurance community."



## OLGA COLLINS

Managing director, multinational practice leader

**Beecher Carlson**

Olga Collins says she "fell into the insurance industry, and I am so glad it found me." Born and raised in Poland and having studied five languages, Collins quickly took to managing international programs, which she describes as "a gem within our industry where you can combine analytics, interpersonal skills and love for travel."

As managing director and multinational practice leader, Collins manages the efforts of all Beecher Carlson product groups to meet the needs and goals of global clients. Her passion for global business attracts clients looking for assistance in simplifying the ever-changing world of insurance.

Focused on growing the practice and attracting best-in-class talent, Collins is involved in programs within Beecher Carlson and the Worldwide Broker Network (WBN) aimed at retaining and expanding opportunities for young professionals. She'll be helping to launch the WBN Young Professional Academy in 2020. Collins was also recently appointed to the WBN board of directors, becoming the first non-CEO/owner and youngest member elected.

## ELITE WOMEN

**KARI GLENNON**

Chief sales officer

**Hub International**

During her 11-year tenure at Hub, Kari Glennon has served as sales manager, VP of sales and marketing, and VP of sales development; she became chief sales officer in 2018. She also serves as a mentor to her team members and an ambassador to the national Hub Women program.

"I love that selling insurance is a unique skill because it's not something people can see, touch or feel," Glennon says. "It requires a person to gain trust and have a high level of business acumen in order to assist organizations in managing their unique risks."

Reflecting on the past year's hurdles, Glennon says she feels she has "truly met the challenge of managing change and leading in uncertain times. As long as I and my team adapt, learn along the way and remain positive, I believe the results will yield stronger and smarter professionals."

**ANGELA DODD**

Assistant vice president

**Mile High Markets, a division of Hull & Company**

A third-generation insurance professional with more than 30 years of experience, Angela Dodd focuses on program development, underwriting and management. At Mile High Markets, a division of Hull & Company, Dodd leads a team that creates unique underwriting solutions and tailor-made coverages for a daily auto rental insurance program. By building and maintaining relationships with retail agents, insureds and colleagues, Dodd has established herself as a trusted resource and industry

expert. She is also active in the daily auto rental industry, attending and speaking at events such as the International Car Rental Show.

Dodd says her successes wouldn't be possible without the personal and professional support provided by her family, friends and colleagues. Outside of her work at Mile High Markets, she has mentored women coming out of homelessness, addiction and abuse; actively mentors young professionals; and is a supporter of YoungLife.

**KELLY NASH**

Regional president

**BKS-Partners**

As the regional president for BKS-Partners, Kelly Nash is responsible for commercial risk management, employee benefits and private risk management. She joined BKS-Partners with nearly 15 years of experience in the high-net-worth insurance industry and family offices; prior to taking on her current role, she served as the managing director for the private risk management team.

Nash has earned the CAPI designation through Chubb and Wharton, as well as the CPRIA designation through St. John's University and the Private Risk Management Association. She is a two-time member of the *IBA Elite Women* list, has served on Chubb's national advisory council and often speaks at conferences and industry events, most recently at the national Private Risk Management Association conference. **IB**



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# Women in Insurance

## VIRTUAL SUMMIT

B O S T O N

**JULY 14, 2020**

IBA's Women in Insurance series has been a global success story, empowering and celebrating women across the US and the world – and our mission is too important to be stopped by current events.

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- The lowdown on the biggest issues that women in insurance encounter today

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## SECTOR FOCUS: BUILDER'S RISK

# Building from a solid foundation

*IBA* explores how construction insurers, brokers and builders are banding together to address industry challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

**HEADING INTO** 2020, builder confidence was at an all-time high, and the construction industry was booming – but the coronavirus pandemic has since thrown a massive wrench into the mix, forcing builders to quickly pivot plans to maintain the health and safety of their teams while also keeping projects running efficiently.

for ongoing projects to continue with varied levels of restriction. In some jurisdictions, projects such as multifamily housing and healthcare, which were deemed essential by state regulators, could continue as long as social distancing protocols were put in place.

The pandemic has triggered numerous challenges for the construction industry,



**“Carriers are reviewing their forms, including clarifying and updating their exclusions surrounding communicable disease and virus coverage and the cessation-of-work clauses”**

**Paul Martin, CRC Group**

Some states – including New York, Massachusetts and Texas – chose to suspend nonessential construction because of the pandemic, while others left the door open

including labor disruption, supply chain issues and, of course, project delays and forced closures. As a result, builders and developers are turning to their builder's risk insurance

policies to see if any losses can be recovered.

“The impact of COVID-19 on the builder's risk market is similar to the insurance market as a whole,” says Paul Martin, senior vice president at CRC Group. “Carriers are reviewing their forms, including clarifying and updating their exclusions surrounding communicable disease and virus coverage and the cessation-of-work clauses.”

## COVID-19 challenges

Builder's risk insurance, also known as course of construction insurance, protects against damage to a contractor's property, materials and equipment on new construction projects or renovations to existing structures. Prior to the pandemic, demand for coverage was robust in light of the thriving construction landscape across the country. Despite the active builder's risk market, however, trends of reduced capacity were already beginning to form, even before COVID-19 hit.

“Where it used to take only one to three carriers to get full limits on a builder's risk policy, now it takes three to 10 carriers,” says Bryant Steele, associate vice president and managing director at Burns & Wilcox. “It's a lot more work, and the policies look a lot different.”

When states started to enforce mandatory shutdowns to prevent further spread of the coronavirus, almost all builder's risk insurance carriers agreed that most projects in progress would remain covered, despite inactivity. Under normal circumstances, such inactivity could result in coverage being denied, but in these unprecedented times, most carriers are doing what they can to meet coverage needs.

RT Specialty president and managing director Richard Flanagan says he's proud of the industry response to the pandemic. “In the construction space, I noticed many carriers reaching out to brokers or directly to insureds to find out what's happening on site, as opposed to issuing uniform policy changes.”



The broader impact of COVID-19 on the construction insurance market is yet to be seen, however. Project delays and extended construction timeframes are becoming an increasing issue as a result of labor shortages, slowdowns in material deliveries and other extenuating circumstances. Given social distancing requirements, it makes sense that project completions will take longer.


“Multiple or staggered shifts and revised sequencing are being implemented throughout the industry, but it is likely that they cannot fully mitigate schedule impacts,” says Cheri Hanes, a senior construction risk engineer at AXA XL. “Historically, when there are delays during the course of a project, the tail end of the project makes up for that time by compressing or stacking


trades. Those opportunities are now much more limited if social distance guidelines are adhered to.”


Supply chains are also at risk of manufacturing- and transportation-related delays, as well as price escalation related to demand, Hanes adds. When it comes to delays on site, Flanagan says there are often waiting periods and deductibles, but some contrac-


# SECTOR FOCUS: BUILDER'S RISK


## OSHA'S COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE


 Encourage workers to stay home if they're sick


 Workers should wear masks and continue normal control measures, including use of personal protective equipment


 Advise workers to avoid physical contact with others and encourage social distancing


 Encourage respiratory etiquette, i.e. covering coughs and sneezes

 If workers do not have immediate access to soap and water for hand-washing, provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol

 If tools or equipment must be shared, provide and instruct workers to use alcohol-based wipes to clean tools before and after use

 Keep in-person meetings (including toolbox talks and safety meetings) as short as possible and limit the number of workers in attendance

 Clean and disinfect portable job-site toilets regularly, and refill hand sanitizer dispensers regularly

 Encourage workers to report any safety and health concerns

Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration

tors are attempting to be proactive about addressing delays.

"I've heard of contractors who are building multiple projects looking to do longer-term contracts to try and stay in front of supply chain delays," he says. "They are now buying in bulk for two to three projects down the road to try and avoid disruption."

Another challenge that carriers and brokers must keep in mind, Martin says, is the fact that different states and jurisdictions will be reopening with different guidelines as the economy opens back up. If social distancing is demanded on job sites going forward, that's something underwriters will have to consider, Flanagan adds, especially for high-rise projects where workers are

in routine, letting something slide could result in serious negative impacts. Builders need to take the time to contemplate all possible exposures from every angle and plan from there.

"Once you have identified a risk, you can plan for it," Hanes points out. "If it never materializes, that's great; if it does, you're ahead of the curve."

Having open and consistent two-way communication with all involved parties, from crew to owners, is key, she says. Builders must also ensure all Occupational Safety and Health Administration guidelines are being followed strictly, as well as quality assurance and quality control procedures and material verification processes.



**"Once you have identified a risk, you can plan for it. If it never materializes, that's great; if it does, you're ahead of the curve"** Cheri Hanes, AXA XL

required to use elevators on site. When it comes to assessing claims, that will also have to be done on a case-by-case basis.

"Many carriers are coming out with absolute exclusions for COVID-19, but also all communicable disease," Flanagan says. "These are expected, considering the possibility of a second wave or until a vaccine is approved." Products to cover pandemics and other communicable diseases are likely to come out in response to this event, but how that will be underwritten and how it will pan out is hard to say.

### Doubling down on risk mitigation

Whether a project has been put on hold due to the pandemic or not, builders need to have a strong focus on eliminating any loss exposure. Amid all the turmoil and change

For closed or vacant sites, Flanagan suggests instituting nighttime protocols all the time until restarting is back on the table. This includes securing open spaces for water intrusions, adding guard service, ensuring proper fencing and, if allowed, doing walk-throughs. Carriers have been going a great job with getting this information out to general contractors, he says, offering protocols on how things should be running.

For projects that are restarting, Martin says carriers might choose to do physical inspections of the site and request updates on a revised construction schedule. Carriers are also being asked to extend the term for no additional premium or a reduced additional premium. "We are all trying to show empathy during these difficult, unforeseen times," he says. **IB**



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– Rob Leitner, VP Business Development



Rob Leitner with  
members of  
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## AGENCY INSIGHT

# Stronger together

**Tony Caldwell**, chairman and CEO of One Agents Alliance, tells *IBA* what agencies can gain from being part of an agency network, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic

**IBA: How did One Agents Alliance come about, and what need does it fill in the agency space?**

**Tony Caldwell:** I began my insurance career in 1996 in a small commercial insurance agency, and I got into the business hoping to build a large sales organization, but I didn't know how to go about doing that. In 1997, I learned about a company called Strategic Insurance Agency Alliance [SIAA], and their model solved all the problems that I was looking to solve, so we became a master agency for them in 2000.

From 2000 until 2020, we've grown into a \$500 million premium organization with 185 insurance agencies and about 750 employees all told, which is a little over a 30% compound annual growth rate. SIAA and our organization are focused on growth, and with that mindset, we've evolved over the last 20 years from a market access and aggregation organization into a coaching and development organization.

**IBA: What benefits does OAA provide to its member agencies?**

**TC:** The independent agency business is changing in ways that are unique in its 100-year history. Adapting to those changes and maximizing the opportunities that those changes present require people to get additional training and education, whether they're a captive agent making the transition and learning how to manage a business or

they're a larger existing independent agency learning how to leverage their books of business to maximize revenue or develop digital marketing.

We currently have programs to help existing independent insurance agencies of all sizes grow their books of business and build up revenue, income and value, but we also have a long-time specialization in helping captive agents make the transition to independent agent ownership. We've done probably 250 independent agency startups over the last 20 years, and we're really proud of that. We feel like we've been a part of the growth of the independent agency system, both in terms of premium and also in terms of the numbers of employees and entrepreneurs in the system.

[We also] help agencies have broader access to the carrier marketplace because they don't have to be concerned with maintaining minimum volumes to write for a carrier. That's particularly important to existing independent agencies that are relatively small, but it's also valuable to larger

agencies because it allows them to change the nature of the relationship they have with the carrier – now they're part of most carriers' largest-production organization. That means typically more money to the agencies across the board. It's also a benefit to the carriers because as a growth-focused organization, our organic growth for them is many multiples higher than the industry's growth rate, so everyone benefits.

**IBA: How are OAA and its members adapting to the COVID-19 outbreak?**

**TC:** We've been helping members conduct three-, six-, nine- and 18-month analyses of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as a baseline for their adaptation to the coronavirus. We also built a guide on how to move your agency online for our agencies at the very beginning of this crisis. We just recently published a 'how to return to an office environment safely' aid for them. And I collaborated with Eric Blue and Matt Masiello – two SIAA colleagues – in writing the book *COVID-Proof Your Agency*, where

## ABOUT ONE AGENTS ALLIANCE



Agency network One Agents Alliance (OAA) was born inside Tony Caldwell's independent insurance agency in 2000, when he signed up to be the first master agency west of the Mississippi River for the Strategic Insurance Agency Alliance (SIAA). Today, OAA offers a broad range of benefits to its member agencies. With its recent expansion into California, OAA now operates in four states, which also include Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas.

## ONE AGENTS ALLIANCE'S MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



Coaching



Education and training programs



Marketing tools



Profit-sharing



Other revenue opportunities

“We feel like we’ve been a part of the growth of the independent agency system, both in terms of premium and also in terms of the numbers of employees and entrepreneurs in the system”

we laid out the near-term future for the independent agent.

**IBA:** What challenges are independent insurance agencies facing during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**TC:** Premium reductions due to cancellations, mid-term audits and lower renewals next year are threats that agencies will face

in the next three to nine months. They have more time to get ready for that than, say, a restaurant would, but they still need to get ready for it, so in our coaching sessions, we’ve had lots of conversations about retention – both of customers and premium – but we’ve also focused on new business production as an antidote to that.

Consumers, both commercial and

personal, are stressed financially, so saving money on an expensive item like insurance is important to them. There will be more business on the streets probably than ever in history, and being prepared to take advantage of that is something that we are focused on with our agencies.

The third thing we’re focusing on is that this is a time to increase focus on leverage with particular insurance companies. Not all carriers are reacting to the crisis in the same manner, so we’re encouraging our agents to take a careful look at how they’re placing business and who they’re placing it with and maximizing the benefits both to their clients and to themselves by rethinking where the business goes. **IB**



## AUTOMATION

# Agency automation: the key to scaling your business

For agencies looking to expand their reach, an investment in automation can make all the difference. **Harsha Patnam**, technical product manager at EZLynx, explains how



**INDEPENDENT INSURANCE** agents are accomplishing more through technology as software unlocks capabilities that wouldn't be possible otherwise. One area that tends to miss the attention it deserves, particularly with smaller agencies, is agency automation.

Agency automation is a must-have for any company focused on growth and ready to scale its business. Agencies everywhere are leveraging technology to enhance their clients' experience and differentiate themselves from the competition. Today's insurance shopper has an ever-growing list of expectations, and agency automation is the only way to keep up – a continued reliance on the human element simply does not scale.

Software automation offloads tasks that software can perform with more efficiency and accuracy by targeting repetitive, time-consuming tasks. It helps minimize interruptions to staff throughout the day and can also keep each member of the team on schedule and accountable. Event-based triggers generate tasks and checklists within the

software, ensuring that the same sales and service procedures are followed each time.

### How your agency should be leveraging automation

**1 Birthday wishes:** This one consistently tops agent wish lists. With agency automation, the time that's being invested in monitoring birthdays and deploying emails will be returned.

**2 New customers:** Making new clients feel welcome is of utmost importance. Passing along relevant policy information the moment it's in force should be a priority, and with automation, you can be certain that customer service representatives are following procedure.

## Today's insurance shopper has an ever-growing list of expectations, and agency automation is the only way to keep up – a continued reliance on the human element simply does not scale

**3 Customers who add another policy:** The value of rounding out clients is well known across the industry. Automation can ensure you don't miss out on opportunities to thank your most valued customers for trusting you with their continuing insurance needs and can open the door for you to ask for referrals.

**4 Compliance demands:** Automation can reduce concerns about staying compliant with carriers. Verifications, signatures and follow-ups are automatically scheduled to ensure adherence to all necessary procedures.

**5 Real-time carrier notifications:** Instant reminders like a notice of cancellation, which serves as an alert of premiums due, prompt the agent to intervene by reaching out to insureds before a policy is canceled. Agents can remind insureds of pending premium payments and explain the importance of continued coverage. Because agency automation software combs through carrier notifications in real time, action can be taken immediately, saving clients money while boosting their confidence in the agent.

**6 Retention:** Low-risk renewals can be automatically triaged through simple strategies like email send-outs thanking customers for their continued trust. This is

also a great opportunity to cross-sell additional lines of coverage. When the bulk of renewals are automated, renewal teams can focus their time, efforts and expertise on higher-risk clients.

### Instilling best practices

Automation goes a long way toward saving agencies time and money, but this software doesn't just help your agency do more – it also helps your agency be better. Because the customer experience is rooted in the details, it's imperative to ensure that each client and prospect receives a consistently high level of attention and service.

Agency automation instills best practices with every customer touchpoint. In some cases, the software can reach out to the customer for you, while at other times, it simply takes on the heavy lifting of process management and ensures accountability among the team. With software performing routine client-facing tasks faster and more dependably, customer follow-ups will only become stronger.

### How EZLynx Automation Center can help

EZLynx Automation Center automates your agency's workflows to boost productivity and your bottom line. A simple-to-use workflow editor walks you through the process of setting up automated workflows for common scenarios in your agency.

The system employs event-based triggers so users can tailor customer touchpoints. Automation filters keep the agency in complete control, enabling a confident, 'set it and forget it' approach to the personal touches that mean so much to clients.

Moreover, EZLynx Automation Center frees up the time of the entire agency staff so they can focus on activities where their skill sets are put to better use, such as identifying new client opportunities, cross-selling and closing new business. EZLynx Automation Center also enhances many existing EZLynx products, making them even more powerful and efficient, truly transforming the way you do business.

With agency automation, agencies have the opportunity to improve the customer experience and demonstrate value in every step of the insurance life cycle. Sometimes it's difficult to equate technology with the personal touch, but the savings in time and energy that agency automation affords allow agencies to be hands-on when it matters the most with the confidence that software is taking care of the rest. **IB**

## MEETINGS

# How to run successful virtual meetings

With more people working remotely, virtual meetings have become crucial to gather a team.

**Donna McGeorge** explains how to make your virtual meetings more efficient and effective

**DOING ANYTHING** by distance takes twice the time and is half as good. Unfortunately, if our face-to-face meetings are bad, then it's likely our virtual meetings will be twice as bad (at least!).

Running effective virtual meetings means navigating time zone differences, language barriers and technological inconsistencies. The three biggest criticisms of participants in virtual or distance meetings are that people are not fully present on the call and are checking emails or having side conversations with their phones, that the speaker or presenter often simply reads the slides, and that they go on for too long and much of the content is not relevant to everyone.

Good protocols are important for both physical and virtual meetings. Here are some tips for handling virtual meetings.

- **Be prepared.** Make sure everyone knows why they're there and what's expected of

them. Send out an agenda, or at least a purpose statement, so that people are clear about the reason for the meeting.

- **Be punctual.** Start and end on time. As the meeting convener, be online at least 10 minutes early so you can manage any tech issues.
- **Be present** – and keep it short. Distractions are everywhere, so by keeping virtual meetings to 25 minutes or less, you are more likely to keep people focused.

In addition to improving how we meet generally, when it comes to virtual meetings, there are other things we need to consider.

## Use the camera

This is particularly useful for one-on-one meetings or smaller groups, but not so useful once you have more than six people on the

call. Using the camera creates a stronger connection, and you'll gain access to the visual cues that an auditory interaction can't provide. Of course, there are exceptions. Your teammates on those late-night conference calls don't need to see you in your pajamas.

When videoconferencing:

- **Speak clearly and slowly.** This is especially important for multicultural meetings. Accents can be hard to understand.
- **Move and gesture slowly and naturally.** Depending on the bandwidth, movement can slow things down or create pixelated images.
- **Look into the camera.** Don't look at yourself on the screen.
- **Dress appropriately.** Often we think that distance means we can be more casual, but this is not true; you still need to be professional. You also need to think about colors and patterns that might be jarring on the screen.
- **Put your microphone on mute.** When you aren't speaking, be aware of background noise and keep your movement to a minimum.
- **Use the 'hands up' function.** This is a better way to let people know you have something to say than trying to speak over the top of others.
- **Stay focused and present.** Keep focused on the task at hand, just as you should at an in-person meeting.

## Run it like a radio show

The next time you're listening to the radio, pay attention to how the announcer refers to the audience. Typically, they don't say, "Welcome, everyone out there in radio land." They say things like, "Thank you for joining me today."

This is because they realize that the relationship between the radio announcer and the listener is one-on-one. The listener is often alone in a car, sitting at a desk or listening via headphones, so referring to "everyone" creates a disconnect.





It can be the same when running virtual meetings. In many cases, the participants are sitting in a room or at their desks with headphones on, looking at a screen. Even when using the camera, the radio principle applies for creating inclusion and engagement. Instead of saying things like, “Thank you all for coming” or “Many of us have,” try saying, “Thank you for making the time” or “You have.”

### **Tell ‘em and tell ‘em again**

Everyone in a meeting has to have a role. This is especially important in a virtual meeting. You need to be very clear on what level of participation you need from everyone involved. Let them know in advance that you might call on them specifically for input or information. Remind them that you can’t afford for people to not be fully present.

In addition, to get the best from your

virtual or distance meetings, you need to:

- Use the video to see people’s faces, not to share slides
- Be considerate of other attendees’ time zones and schedule meetings appropriately
- Encourage those in remote locations to speak or contribute first
- Encourage those dialing in to book a room or private space for the meeting (not just be at their desk)
- Use different methods of communication to remind people of your expectations of the meeting; for example, instead of sending out an email, maybe take the time to send a personal instant message to make sure people are clear
- Make sure the meeting charter for recurring meetings is available to all

- Run a training session on how to effectively use the technology; don’t just assume people know how

Given a choice, face-to-face meetings are always going to be more effective, but for those times when you need to do virtual meetings, remember that, as the meeting leader, it’s up to you to set the tone and expectations, no matter where in the world people are. **IE**

**Donna McGeorge** is a speaker, author and mentor who helps people make their work work. Using a creative, practical approach, she improves workplace effectiveness while challenging thinking on leadership, productivity and virtual work. She is the author of *The 25-Minute Meeting: Half the Time, Double the Impact*. Find out more at [25minutemeetings.com](http://25minutemeetings.com).





# THE GREAT OUTDOORS

There's nowhere insurance executive **David Dybdahl** would rather be than out in nature

**DAVID DYBDAHL** has always been an outdoor enthusiast. As a child, he would collect frogs, turtles and snakes, bringing them home as temporary pets. Now in his 60s, Dybdahl remains an avid outdoor sportsman, balancing his passion for nature with his job as president of environmental insurance brokerage American Risk Management Resources Network.

Dybdahl says his insurance career has

allowed him to undertake many 'bucket list' adventures across the US, from the Florida Keys to Alaska, and around the world. He has been north of the Arctic Circle to look for grizzly bear and to New Zealand to fish for brown trout.

Like most outdoor enthusiasts, Dybdahl says he learned a great deal from various mentors, including a Chinese-born professor of agriculture from the

University of Wisconsin-Madison who taught him Chinese falconry when Dybdahl was just a teenager.

"Without mentors, it is difficult to be an outdoors sportsman," he says. "In many ways, it's like the insurance business – someone has to introduce and teach you. Books help, but books cannot replace a mentor. I've been lucky to have some very special mentors."

14

Dybdahl's age  
when he learned  
Chinese falconry

1/4

Miles of line a hammerhead  
shark took off Dybdahl's  
reel before it broke

5

Days Dybdahl  
spent finding a wild  
chukar partridge

*Dybdahl's outdoor  
adventures have taken  
him all over the US,  
including to Colorado's  
Snowmass Mountain*





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