

People-Centered

An Interview with Ilene Anders, Chief Financial Officer, Alliant Insurance Services

EDITORS' NOTE *Ilene Anders oversees the company's finance, accounting, and IT operations. She brings a multidisciplinary approach to the position well-suited for an industry where the worlds of finance and technology continue to merge. Anders previously served as Alliant's Chief Information Officer, where she created the vision for client-facing technologies, directed business intelligence, and oversaw the integration of systems and infrastructure. Prior to that, she was Alliant's Vice President and Director of Financial Planning and Analysis. She also has experience in investment banking and corporate development with Prudential Volpe Technology Group, GMAC-RFC, and has served as a strategic consultant to start-up organizations. Anders holds a bachelor's degree in finance from Boston University and a master's degree in business from San Diego State University.*



Ilene Anders

COMPANY BRIEF *Alliant Insurance Services (alliant.com) is one of the nation's leading distributors of diversified insurance products and services. Operating through a national network of offices, Alliant offers a comprehensive portfolio of services to clients.*

What have been the keys to Alliant's industry leadership and how do you describe the Alliant difference?

Alliant has gained a leadership position in the industry because of the strength of our entrepreneurial culture, financial discipline, and stellar client service. Our leadership has worked to build a structure that provides our employees with the autonomy and flexibility to grow their business, while providing the tools and resources that empower them to deliver the highest

level of service and sophistication to their clients. We also have embraced technology as a means to help drive success through intelligence tools and automation for both Alliant and our clients.

Will you highlight Alliant's culture and values?

Our culture is an entrepreneurial one, but at the center of that is people. So, our values have to be people-centered. That's true both in terms of who we hire and the relationships we maintain with clients. We believe if you build a place where people want to work, hire the best-in-class, and provide them with the tools to collaborate and succeed, the results are just a reflection of those values and actions.

How critical is it for the CFO role to be engaged in business strategy?

The role of a CFO is broader and more diverse than ever before. Central to this evolution is the influence of technology, which is woven into every part of our business. Whether it's internal reporting, external client tools, or information for investors, a CFO has to be able to envision the use of data and current technologies to accomplish these tasks and drive differentiation in the industry. Look at the buzz and impact generative AI has had in just the past few months. CFOs need to understand the potential impact – good or bad – to the company and industry when making investment decisions about new tools that emerge. Additionally, capitalizing a company continues to change, requiring a CFO to be continuously engaged in every aspect of the business strategy to ensure its capital needs will be met in the short term and long term. In a rapidly growing company, that is always a focus.

Will you discuss your multidisciplinary approach to the role and how valuable this approach has been in an industry where the worlds of finance and technology continue to merge?

My approach as CFO is largely influenced by my dual background in finance and technology. In addition to my longtime focus on finance and corporate development, I also spent

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five years as CIO of Alliant. This experience has been instrumental in helping me navigate the changing landscape of the insurance industry and better leverage technology in my role. Technology can be an accelerator of strategy and a differentiator with clients. But technology is only effective if there is solid data feeding it and the users have positive experiences with it. My approach to finance is no different – it’s about how we can better leverage data and tools to drive analytics, in turn increasing efficiencies, and enable us to grow in a more strategic and disciplined way.

How important has Alliant’s financial strength and discipline been to the company’s ability to grow and lead?

Financial discipline is core to Alliant. We have been highly strategic in how we approach spending on M&A, for example, in addition to other growth initiatives. This discipline also drives our ability to ensure that acquisitions fit into our culture and strategic growth plans. We understand that, as we grow, we need to maintain a focus on innovation. We approach innovation in the same way – disciplined, but with a focus on strategic outcomes. This has enabled us to gain a strong market share and retain our strength and independence as an organization while maintaining an entrepreneurial focus.

Will you discuss Alliant’s commitment to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?

We believe that building a diverse workforce is critical to our long-term success. There continues to be a strong focus on recruiting diverse employees and providing diversity and inclusion programming to our existing workforce. We also made a strong commitment to impacting the future of our industry through the launch of Alliant Insurance Foundation. As a nonprofit organization, the Foundation is focused on expanding career growth and advancement opportunities in insurance for individuals with different backgrounds and life experiences. In partnership with Southern University and the Louisiana DOI, the Foundation is building one of the first Risk Management degree programs at an HBCU. Alliant also has an active focus on building and supporting internal employee resource groups (ERGs), with nearly a dozen in existence. These ERGs create a strong sense of community and provide resources, relationships, and alliances that are essential to the health and productivity of Alliant’s workforce.

Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women in leadership positions in the industry?

Insurance has long been a male-dominated industry, but we are now seeing a diverse and dynamic generation of women leaders come to the forefront. Although opportunities have existed for women to advance, there is now

a more focused, more unified commitment to helping women reach the C-suite. Most importantly, there seems to be a commitment to helping women find their voice in the workplace. Mentorship also plays a crucial role in accelerating women in leadership, and I have personally had the privilege of mentoring several emerging leaders in our business. By sharing our experiences and providing growth opportunities, we should see this grow in scope which is a positive development in our industry and in the greater business landscape.

What do you tell young people about the type of career the insurance industry offers?

Contrary to the long-held belief that insurance isn’t an “exciting” business, our industry provides a broad range of opportunities for young professionals to use their unique skill sets to chart a path for long-term growth and success. Our industry is highly diverse, incorporating consulting, finance, sales, marketing and communications, technology, law, and compliance. Additionally, the insurance industry is in a transitional phase where innovation is welcomed and encouraged. This provides an opportunity for someone to make their own mark on the industry and help shape the future. Finally, the insurance industry has proved more resilient than others in times of economic uncertainty, which means there is more job stability and financial security over the long run. ●

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