

A Focus on Character and Customers

An Interview with Christopher J. Swift,
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, The Hartford

EDITORS' NOTE Christopher Swift joined The Hartford in March 2010 and served as Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer through June 2014. Previously, he held senior leadership and finance roles at American International Group. He began his career in public accounting at KPMG LLP focused on financial services, and was eventually appointed head of the Global Insurance Industry Practice. Swift is a C.P.A. and earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Marquette University. He serves on the Dean's Advisory Board at the Villanova School of Business and is a member of the International Insurance Society. Swift also serves as Chairman of the Board of the American Insurance Association, and is a member of the Business Roundtable and The Financial Services Roundtable.



Christopher J. Swift

COMPANY BRIEF With more than 200 years of expertise, The Hartford (theHartford.com) is a leader in property and casualty insurance, group benefits, and mutual funds. The company is widely recognized for its service excellence, sustainability practices, trust, and integrity.

The Hartford has been an industry leader for years and is known for quality, service, and innovation. What makes The Hartford so special?

We have been successful as an industry leader because of the excellence of our businesses and our values, and an unshakeable commitment to our customers. An insurance company sells a promise, and for more than 200 years, The Hartford's customers have been able to count on the company to be there to help them in times of trouble.

The Hartford has a long history and heritage around corporate responsibility and community engagement. Would you highlight how critical this is to the culture of the company?

It's part of our DNA. Throughout our history, we have believed in being the best corporate citizen we can be. It is so important to us that it is reflected in our vision statement, which is "to be an exceptional company, celebrated for financial performance, character and customer value." For The Hartford, character includes an unwavering commitment to integrity and ethical conduct; fostering a diverse and inclusive culture; caring for customers, partners, and one another; engaging with and serving the communities in which we work and live; and protecting the environment.

This focus on character and our customers has been part of our tradition for more than 200 years.

How do you decide which causes to support with your CSR efforts and is it necessary for those causes to align in some way with the business?

Instead of scattering our efforts, The Hartford strongly focuses on programs that make a significant impact, such as our national philanthropic program, Communities with HART, and our local Asylum Hill neighborhood program in Hartford. Many of our programs

also have ties to our businesses. Our partnership with Junior Achievement, for example, complements our small commercial business. As part of Communities with HART, we are the title sponsor of Junior Achievement's flagship JA Company Program, helping to spark the entrepreneurial spirit with students, and enabling financial literacy and business success.

The Hartford made a major investment in Asylum Hill in Hartford, the neighborhood that is home to the company's headquarters. Would you discuss this project?

Asylum Hill has been home to the company's headquarters for almost 100 years. Our roots run deep in this historic neighborhood, but we also know that the challenges present on Asylum Hill are interconnected and deeply rooted. In November 2010, The Hartford announced a \$7-million, five-year investment in Asylum Hill. Much work remains to be done, but our collaborative approach – focusing on education, community support services, and neighborhood revitalization – is already helping to strengthen the Asylum Hill neighborhood.

Would you highlight your focus on engaging The Hartford employees in your CSR programs and in providing opportunities for them to participate in these efforts?

The Hartford's social responsibility would not be possible without the time, talent, and dedication of our employees. Each year, thousands of The Hartford's employees take part in programs that help fight hunger, teach and mentor students, and empower vulnerable neighbors with the skills and coaching they need to realize their full potential. Our largest programs serve as leadership development opportunities and are led by high potential employees who are nominated by our senior leadership team. The company's community service program makes volunteering easy for employees

to get involved by providing a portal to access upcoming opportunities. All employees are also granted eight hours of paid time off to volunteer each year.

The Hartford's Junior Fire Marshal program has had a major impact. Would you touch on this effort?

The Hartford's Junior Fire Marshal Program (JFM) was created in 1947 to teach fire safety education to kids. Our famous red fire helmets have been worn by generations of children who have learned the basics of fire safety. The Hartford has reached more than 110 million kids since the JFM program began.

What was the vision behind Communities with HART and how critical has it been to build integrated partnerships with this program?

The goal of Communities with HART is to help communities by growing neighborhood businesses and inspiring the next generation of business leaders. The Hartford has committed \$16 million over five years to help small business owners and empower students across the country. Together with Accion and JA USA, The Hartford provides loans and training to small businesses that lack access to traditional sources of capital, and teaches high school students how to develop and run their own companies.

How important is it to put metrics around your philanthropic/CSR programs to track their impact?

Metrics allow us to gauge the success and sustainability of our social responsibility initiatives. With our recent focus on larger, more impactful programs, metrics continue to play a vital role in measuring the effectiveness and reach of our efforts.

The Hartford has made a great impact in its CSR efforts. Do you take time as a company to celebrate these accomplishments?

The Hartford and our employees get to celebrate every time we can help make a difference in our communities. Seeing the smile on a child's face when that child receives holiday gifts or new school supplies is our moment to celebrate.

How do you define the role of the CEO today and what are the key aspects of effective leadership?

CEOs need to have the tenacity to execute personal beliefs despite bumps in the road along the way. It is important to have a long-term perspective, customer focus, an exploratory mindset, and a commitment to a common vision to bring people along. ●