

A Values-Driven Culture

An Interview with Marc Costantini,
Executive Vice President, Commercial and Government Markets, The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America

EDITORS' NOTE Marc Costantini is charged with advancing the company's commercial and government strategy and continuing its growth across all markets. Previously, he led the financial, risk, actuarial and internal audit functions as Chief Financial Officer of Guardian. Prior to joining Guardian in early 2014, he held a variety of executive level positions with Manulife Financial and John Hancock. Most recently, this included



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Executive Vice President, Corporate Strategy and Corporate Development for Manulife Financial; President, Annuities for John Hancock; and Executive Vice President and CFO for John Hancock. Costantini is on the Board of Directors for Children's Health Fund and a trustee of Tenacre Country Day School in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Additionally, he was on the board of the Insured Retirement Institute and was the organization's treasurer during his tenure on the board. Costantini is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries, a Member of the American Academy of Actuaries, and a Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries. He earned his bachelor's degree at Concordia University in Montreal.

COMPANY BRIEF The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America (guardianlife.com) helps protect families, secure futures and improve well-being through insurance and wealth management offerings for individuals, employers and businesses. Its ability to always put its 26 million customers first is driven by its 158-year heritage as a mutual company committed to serving the long-term needs of its policyholders. With approximately 9,000 employees and a network of over 2,750 financial representatives in 55 agencies nationwide, Guardian is passionate about advancing innovation, service and knowledge to help build strong families and communities for generations to come.

What makes Guardian so special and what are the keys to its success?

I joined Guardian five years ago after nearly 24 years with my prior employer. I was not looking to leave the company as I was quite happy there. However, when I was

recruited to join Guardian, I started meeting people here and quickly learned that this is a special place.

Everyone I spoke with took tremendous pride in delivering value to our consumers day in and day out by putting themselves in their shoes and treating them with the care they deserve, which is to be expected of an insurance and financial services provider.

Part of what sets Guardian apart from the competition is our unwavering commitment to time-tested values.

We deliver by cementing the values by which we stand – we do the right thing, people count, and we hold ourselves to very high standards.

We take those three values and permeate them through every discussion we have, be it how we deal with our communities or our employees and, ultimately, with our customers. As a mutual insurance company owned by the participating policy holders, we have an alignment of interest and purpose that guides how we deliver value to our customers and create value for ourselves.

We pride ourselves in the company's performance over the past few years. It's not just a question of managing expenses or investing in cutting edge technology or how we approach our markets; we want to win, but we want to be one of those select companies that wins the right way so we can all go home and be quite proud of the association we have with this company. It's a company where one wants their kids to work someday.

Our reputation is also dear to us. At nearly every meeting I attend, the discussion comes back to doing the right thing. There may be financial ramifications for us, but we always look at how we would like to be treated if we were in the other person's shoes.

That is what has guided this company, certainly for the short five years I have been here, but also for the preceding 150+ years. I always say that, if we could bottle this and bring it to other companies throughout America, we would have an even higher-performing and engaged workforce.

Will you discuss Guardian's commitment to corporate citizenship and community engagement?

Guardian has 26 million customers tied to our products and value proposition. The fabric of those customers represents the fabric of America.

If we parlay that in the way we serve our communities, it means we focus on issues that we think are important and consequential.

For example, last year, we announced a partnership with Children's Health Fund to launch a community program we named Guardians of the Smile to facilitate kid's access to oral health services. We sponsor dental vans that reach children in schools and communities that otherwise would not have the means to see a dentist.

Another way we manifest this is through financial literacy. Over the past few years, we formed partnerships with local community colleges where we fund a program called Money Management for Life. Students can take these classes and get credit for them, all paid for by Guardian.

Do you feel that the next generation is looking to work for companies that have a bigger purpose than just the bottom line?

Being a purpose-driven company definitely enhances our ability to attract the next generation to work at what otherwise could be a lesser known industry.

When we visit colleges and espouse what we stand for and how we engage our employees in building that community presence, I feel we're making an emotional connection with younger generations.

This is why we interview for cultural fit. People will determine very quickly whether they fit into our firm or not.

When one is hired at Guardian, they go through a number of interviews and they meet a number of people who are part of this company.

We are very transparent, and we want everyone to determine if they fit into our values-driven culture. Will they be as passionate about our core values as we are? The people who interview candidates understand and live the culture on a daily basis, so they make sure the early entrants understand our values.

Our culture is seen as refreshing for a company that is based in Lower Manhattan. Once they walk in, they get a different perspective on what we do. ●