

Ahead of the Pack

An Interview with Ian Macartney, Head of Innovation and Digital, Argo Group

EDITORS' NOTE *Ian Macartney joined Argo Group earlier this year, and his 32 years of experience in senior leadership positions within the insurance industry are driving innovation and digital business at the company. Macartney is well-versed in commercial and consumer lines, strategic planning, claims management, underwriting, risk assessment and digital innovation. Prior to taking on his role at Argo, Macartney served as Chief Executive Officer of Torrent Technologies, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of U.S. placement at Marsh, and COO of Global Marine Business at AIG.*



Ian Macartney

years – including a claims database and risk-management applications – few have transformed how we operate. Insights is among those few and is setting us apart from the competition. Start-ups are building their brands from scratch, leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning to set themselves apart, while legacy insurers are trying to catch up. Argo is ahead of the pack by having built digital products that can be replicated and scaled to enhance all lines of businesses.

How is the speed of innovation impacting Argo's business processes?

Argo has done the right thing by refusing to accelerate its speed of innovation merely to compete with other businesses. We take things step-by-step. We know it's okay to fail because failure is a good way to learn. Our speed of innovation correlates with testing how well a product truly works. Once we establish the true effect of innovation, we either refine our product or move ahead. Only when we know what works will we ramp up our efforts. We have a plan to speed up the processes across Argo through digitization.

In what ways have the applications of digital technology set Argo's grocery and retail products apart from the competition?

Applications such as Argo Risk Tech – a custom-tailored app designed to help supermarkets and retailers reduce the occurrence of slips and falls – have really given Argo an edge over the competition. The risk-management component of that app is one of the reasons for its

success. Moreover, the fact that the technology itself is quite versatile adds to its popularity; it can be used on a handheld device for any front-end client.

To ensure our products are truly practical, we involve clients in every step of the development process. This differentiates us from other businesses, and in our opinion it's something the entire industry needs to do better. Involving users in the process of innovation is critical. Successful applications are built on true understanding of what customers need. By offering digital products that meet those needs head on, we create relationships that last.

How do you build customer trust in an era of digital transformation and increasing cybercrimes?

While we build cyber products based on our customers' immediate needs, we appreciate that we have to keep evolving as new digital threats emerge. It's fine to say, "If you get hacked, we'll cover you," but it is much more appealing to declare, "We're developing technologies to help you prevent it." Right now, we're building a technology-driven cyber experience which will help build that trust. Cyber coverage needs technology to back it up; sadly, many organizations fail to understand this.

Similar to our process of developing risk-management products for grocery and retail, we are fostering trust by engaging our customers at every touchpoint. Customers trust us more when we simplify risk management, share updates with them face-to-face at every stage, and build technology that makes their experience better. ●

What are some noteworthy internal and external innovations at Argo?

Working in the insurance industry for 32 years, I can truly say that I've never experienced anything more auspicious than the culture of innovation at Argo. The digital team has the core ideas and principles needed to help create a fully digitized insurance company.

One of the innovations we're most excited about is an internal product we call Insights. This underwriting tool is the first step toward the full digitization of the organization. It collects external and internal data, and then uses artificial intelligence to push that information to underwriters who can then make critical decisions. Since its inception, Insights has generated great outcomes from the standpoint of profitability and risk management. Not only does the digital tool save underwriters time, but it also eliminates inconsistencies that would otherwise lead to losses.

As for what's next in terms of innovation, we're determining the best ways to integrate machine learning into our products. Our aim is to expand the implementation of artificial intelligence to make technology an even bigger part of the underwriting process. With Insights in place, underwriters won't have to deal with certain risks, focusing instead on the more technical aspects of risks and claims.

Do you consider Insights to be Argo's most transformative innovation over the last two years?

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