

Alliant's Evolution

An Interview with Thomas W. Corbett,
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Alliant Insurance Services, Inc.

EDITORS' NOTE *Thomas Corbett serves as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Alliant Insurance Services and sits on the company's board of directors. He joined Alliant in 1977 as a producer and launched its Newport Beach-based Public Entity Group. Prior to joining Alliant, he was with Allendale Insurance in Los Angeles and spent three years as a loss prevention engineer at Factory Mutual Engineering Association. Corbett is a graduate of California State University, Long Beach, and is involved in various community and charitable organizations.*



Thomas W. Corbett

COMPANY BRIEF *With a history dating back to 1925, 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.*

Will you highlight the history of Alliant and how the business has evolved?

The company's history dates back 95 years but was not always called Alliant. The company I started with in 1977 was called Robert F. Driver. We went through a process of acquiring the company in 1998 and merging it with a group called Alliant Resources Group in 2001. I took control as chairman and CEO of that group in 2005 and it started as a very small company based in San Diego. We now have more than 100 offices, over 4,000 employees, and well over a billion dollars in revenue. You don't grow like that by accident. We've always believed that in order to grab market share, and we're all about organic growth, we had to do something better than the guy down the street. We have been organized in specialty groups for years and have a culture of entrepreneurialism

which allows people to execute on their own business plans and their own visions.

We have a culture where people are sharing in the ownership and the rewards of our growth. This all adds up to a very attractive place to work.

How do you define what makes Alliant different from its competitors?

I think our clients understand that we're delivering better solutions to them from a risk standpoint. We do this through our culture, products and solutions, and I think that our clients see the benefit of Alliant and our clear differentiation.

What is the sweet spot for Alliant when it comes to your client focus?

The sweet spot for Alliant would be large to mid-market risk on a commercial basis, a lot of which would be connected to the areas of specialty. We have a huge operation in construction, and our sweet spot would be a mid-market to larger construction client where we can deliver a better product and better expertise. We're not trying to be all things to all people.

Part of our organization is geographically-based where we're trying to sell product through geographic locations, but the specialty side of the business is primarily nationwide and based on the verticals and the expertise of the teams that are in place to address that class of business.

How is technology impacting Alliant's business?

We have done a lot of work in regard to technology in recent years and put a lot of money behind it since it's very important. We have invested heavily in making sure that we maintain a high-level of access to technology with a lot of technological support to provide information to our clients based on what they like to see that perhaps they haven't seen in the past.

We're also very sensitive to security, and that's a big part of our consciousness with technology. We want to make sure that our clients' privacy and information is well-protected. We put the security of our clients at the forefront of our efforts.

Will you discuss your efforts to build a diverse and inclusive workforce at Alliant?

This is critical for our business and we need diversity and inclusion to continue to lead. We've been working at it for years. We formally launched our diversity and inclusion program in 2017 headed by our HR director. We have established several employee resource groups

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and we have brought conscious bias and race identity training to more than 300 of our leaders. We recently hosted the 100th stop on the CEO Actions National Check Your Blind Spots unconscious bias bus tour.

Leading companies today are focused on being purpose-driven. How critical is purpose to Alliant and will you highlight Alliant's focus on supporting the communities it serves?

We are only as good as the communities we work in, and our reputation is hugely important as far as our ability to successfully grow the company and do business. We strongly support our employees involvement in giving and we set up matching programs from a corporate giving standpoint. We encourage our employees to take volunteer time off for engaging in charity events and to support charitable work through mentoring time. We have two company-wide initiatives. In 2019, these were Cancer Awareness and World Food Day. We have a number of regional initiatives as well. We think it's extremely important to give back. We understand our employees are here to pursue their professional life, but there's also a lot of personal care and involvement, and fulfilling their personal activities are very important too.

What makes the insurance industry so special for you?

It has always been about problem-solving, helping with the challenges that people face from a risk standpoint, and helping solve a financial need that can be confusing. It is about simplifying the process and trying to be part of the solution in an area that, frankly, can be full of landmines. It has been very rewarding for me to be able to provide that kind of help and direction.

Beyond that, being in the fortunate position to lead and help our young people develop their careers along the same lines, and providing the kind of environment and financial rewards and professional recognition that are so important to people, has been extremely rewarding. Part of the reason people come to work is so they can pay their bills and build long-term financial security. It is also important to provide recognition when they are doing a good job and to support their career growth. It has been particularly rewarding for me to be involved with an organization that fosters that growth and opportunity for our employees.

Has the insurance industry done an effective job of telling its story and highlighting its purpose to the next generation coming into the workforce?

That's a really good question. The insurance industry doesn't have the sexy image that high-tech businesses do. I think there's a lot for us to overcome there. When you give young people the opportunity to actually learn what we do and see how insurance really works, there is an excitement level that develops. I know I felt that when I got involved a long, long time ago.

Insurance can look like a pretty boring business from the outside, but from the inside it is very exciting. Getting that message across is not always easy, so we do campus activities and talk to young people about the challenges of the future and how the insurance industry is addressing those challenges.

Are you able to take moments to celebrate the wins and appreciate what Alliant has become?

Absolutely. We have a culture at Alliant for winning. It is all about recognition, winning, and doing a great job for your client. I have always taken time to celebrate that. For me, it's easier now. I have a fantastic team of people that I rely on to carry out the vision and direction of the organization.

I get to sit back more now and enjoy watching the people that I have helped mentor and grow in the company execute on their jobs. I'm happy to stand with them and celebrate their winning. It's been a very rewarding career for me. I'm not done. I've been in this business a long time, but I'm still having a lot of fun. I enjoy the people I work with. I enjoy the organization, and I am going to keep doing this as long as I can. ●

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