

# Empowering the Passionate

An Interview with Liz Aguinaga, Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, CNA

**EDITORS' NOTE** Liz Aguinaga is responsible for strategies and operations for global human resources across the entire CNA enterprise. She joined CNA in 2010 as a Vice President and Human Resources Business Partner. Her responsibilities included the development of talent solutions and a human capital strategy for CNA's global business, encompassing 64 branches around the world. Prior to that role, she served for nine years in both recruiting and human resources management roles at Chubb. Aguinaga holds a BA degree in industrial-organizational psychology from the University of Illinois and a Master's in human resources from Loyola University.



Liz Aguinaga

DEI – diversity, equity and inclusion. One cannot be successful with the others.

At CNA, we are focused on building an inclusive culture that attracts diverse talent and also provides opportunities for that talent to grow and lead as they progress in their careers. I am very proud of how far we have come in our D&I journey at CNA, but I am even more proud of how embedded D&I is in our culture and in our future. Living an inclusive culture, being a true company of real allies, will always be a work in progress.

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I believe that there are a few keys to making D, E and I work effectively together. First is a shared mission from the top of the organization, as this is something that your senior leaders not only have to talk about, but need to live and breathe. Second is commitment with accountability measures so that you are able to track progress and ensure that your efforts are driving change. Third is a relentless focus on education with the understanding that there are things we do not know and that we can learn from one another. Some of the most powerful moments we have had in the company over the past few years have been people at all levels of the organization waking up others to their perspectives and experiences. Fourth is the importance of building external partnerships since we know that we cannot do it all on our own.

Finally, at CNA we are committed to empowering the passionate. We have heavily empowered employee resource groups and a D&I Council, and they lead the way. They guide us and ensure

that what we are doing is having impact. They raise the bar for us each and every day.

**What are your views on the future of work?**

When I look back prior to the pandemic, like many companies, CNA was more of an office-centric company. The pandemic forced us to rethink that model and adapt. We learned new ways of working because we had to, and we are better for it. A global crisis forced us to adapt, but it also allowed us to practice so that the future of how we work at CNA could be an informed decision. At CNA, we live and breathe collaboration. We value the collaborative culture that we have built over time, but we also value what we have learned about efficiencies as well as the importance of balance that a hybrid work model provides. Bringing a new hybrid model to life and optimizing this model will be the next chapter for CNA.

**How important is cultural fit when hiring talent for CNA?**

It is important to us when bringing new talent into CNA that the person understands and appreciates the culture and values of the company. At the same time, we embrace the idea of bringing difference into our culture. Fit does not mean “same.” It is our responsibility to articulate who we are and what we stand for while also encouraging our talent to voice their own perspectives, experiences and shape the future of our culture with us. At CNA, we have a lot to talk about since we have a clear perspective around issues, such as D&I and the future of work, that we believe resonates with the people we want to attract to the company. I see this as a role of the HR function in helping the organization define its purpose and how to best convey that message to its constituencies.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the insurance industry?**

At CNA, we are heavily committed to training programs and bringing in new talent to build the future of our business. This is a dynamic industry and new skills are needed in insurance companies today. Data analytics and advanced technology skills are critical for our business. To embrace this future, we need to welcome new talent into the industry with these skills. Insurance is a noble profession and also an exciting, evolving industry and we need to collectively tell that story. ●

**COMPANY BRIEF** CNA ([cna.com](http://cna.com)) provides a broad range of standard and specialized property and casualty insurance products and services for businesses and professionals in the U.S., Canada and Europe, backed by more than 120 years of experience.

**How has the human resources function evolved?**

An impactful HR function lives at the intersection of people and strategy. Companies today are facing entirely new challenges, like a global pandemic shifting the workplace remote overnight and redefining the workplace. Companies are also called to take a stand on systemic societal issues, like racial injustice and equity in the workplace. HR professionals today have an incredible opportunity to demonstrate real value. These past couple of years in particular have proven the impact a strategic business-centric HR function can have.

**How critical is it for CNA to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?**

The importance of a diverse and inclusive workforce is clear and it has been proven time and time again that diverse companies achieve better business outcomes and unlock new levels of performance. At CNA, this is something we deeply believe in and we know that it is vital in order to compete and to attract and retain the best talent in the industry. However, it is not enough to just focus on having diverse talent with diverse experiences in your organization – you need to focus on each component of