

## Strategic Direction

An Interview with Greg Zimmer, President, Alliant Insurance Services

**EDITORS' NOTE** *In conjunction with other members of senior management, Greg Zimmer is responsible for implementing the strategic direction of the firm. He also is responsible for corporate operations and all mergers and acquisitions activity. Prior to joining Alliant in 1998, Zimmer and his partners built a significant financial services firm that ultimately was sold to GMAC, where he served as Senior Vice President. His career also includes corporate finance and venture capital experience while serving as Vice President at Security Pacific, which ultimately merged with Bank of America. Zimmer holds a bachelor's degree in economics/systems science from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and a master's degree from the Anderson Graduate School of Management at UCLA.*



Greg Zimmer

foundation of our business – to continually drive growth and expansion in targeted areas where we can make a significant impact.

**What have been the keys to Alliant's growth and how do you define the Alliant advantage?**

The keys to Alliant's growth are threefold:

1. Pursuing targeted industry segments
2. Working as teams as opposed to individuals
3. Providing ownership opportunities to allow our employees to share

in our successes.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?**

I am generally responsible for the strategic direction of the company and directly responsible for all M&A activities. Our corporate development team is focused on two core objectives: First, to enhance our presence within either geographic territories or industry verticals where we compete. Second, to continuously evaluate new markets, segments, or products where we believe we can make a substantial difference, then executing a strategic plan to become a major player within such segments. We achieve this through the identification of top-level talent or firms within such space. For example, in 2020, we saw a major opportunity within the retirement health space, which is predominately Medicare. We responded by acquiring Senior Market Sales, a category leader in this industry. Since joining our team, SMS has helped us expand our presence within this market significantly by hiring talented professionals and making selective acquisitions within the Medicare space.

**How do you define Alliant's mission and purpose?**

Our mission is to be the best at what we do. We achieve this in many ways, with one way being through specialization. We're not trying to be "all things to all people" but to excel in the areas where we focus, then scale those areas as extensively as possible. This means not thinking on a local or regional basis, but on a national and/or international scale. This is the

**“This is the foundation of our business – to continually drive growth and expansion in targeted areas where we can make a significant impact.”**

At the end of the day, the key advantage for Alliant is having great people that can leverage the expertise and products that we control. By focusing on expertise, taking a collaborative, team-based approach, and, where possible, offering proprietary products and services, we have gained a significant competitive advantage in the marketplace.

**Alliant has been involved in several acquisitions. What do you see as the keys to making sure there is an effective integration when bringing two organizations together?**

Alliant is not a serial acquirer, and this is by design. We don't make a lot of acquisitions, but the acquisitions we make work extremely well. We achieve this because we spend a lot of time both prior to and following the acquisition making sure that both parties are on the same page in terms of strategic intent. We believe in fully integrating our acquisitions, which ultimately creates exceptional long-term results.

**How critical is it to maintain the company culture when pursuing acquisition opportunities?**

Culture is extremely critical, which is why we do a lot of work leading up to the acquisition. We work diligently to ensure that the acquisitions we make are a good fit strategically and culturally. The best way to ensure a cultural match is to spend a lot of time with the leadership of a potential acquisition to ensure we have a shared view of what success will look like.

**Will you discuss Alliant's core values of Entrepreneurialism, Service, and Strength, and how these values are embedded in Alliant's culture?**

Entrepreneurialism hinges on two key factors. First, remaining flat organizationally and allowing your professionals to do their job in an open way where they are not strangled by bureaucracy. Second, allowing our employees to be owners in the business so they can reap the rewards of their success. It's about offering an environment that enables talented people to use their creativity, then rewarding them for their successes with ownership.

Service begins and ends with the client. This means always putting the client first and offering the service, expertise, and products they need to be successful.

Our strength comes from leveraging our size and scale to the benefit of our clients. We are able to offer a depth of resources and opportunities by virtue of being a large and diverse organization. This also enables us to leverage our relationships with carriers to ensure that our clients receive the best products in the market.

**What has made your experience at Alliant so rewarding for you?**

Watching the people in our business grow and flourish has been extremely rewarding. Our growth has created tremendous opportunities for our employees, both personally and professionally. Witnessing people in our organization achieve more than they could have ever believed is the best part of the job. ●