

A Relentless Pursuit Of Innovation

An Interview with John S. Koudounis, Chief Executive Officer, Calamos Investments

EDITORS' NOTE John Koudounis joined Calamos Investments in April 2016. Previously, he was President and Chief Executive Officer, Mizuho Securities USA Inc.; Managing Director, ABN AMRO Inc; and Vice President, Merrill Lynch. He graduated from Brown University with a degree in international diplomacy, foreign affairs, and economics.



John S. Koudounis

FIRM BRIEF Calamos Investments (calamos.com) is a diversified global investment firm offering innovative investment strategies including alternatives, multi-asset, convertible, fixed income, and equity. The firm offers strategies through ETFs, mutual funds, closed-end funds, interval funds, and UCITS funds and separately managed portfolios. Clients include financial advisors, wealth management platforms, pension funds, foundations and endowments, and individuals, globally. Headquartered in the Chicago metropolitan area, the firm also has offices in New York, San Francisco, Milwaukee, Portland, and the Miami area.

How do you define Calamos Investments' culture and values?

Our commitment to innovation and rigorous risk management practices is at the core of everything we do. These values are not just abstract concepts; they are actively emulated through our strategic decision-making process and inform the way we design products, wealth management capabilities, and service our clients.

Our culture is defined by a relentless pursuit of innovation and a deep commitment to the success of both our clients and employees. Additionally, our status as a firm with 350+ highly tenured associates contribute powerful benefits to our culture, including the ability to retain talent, innovate with speed, and maintain a collective, long-term perspective.

While the average tenure is eight years, it's not uncommon to find 20 to 25 years of service with Calamos – a testament to our culture and the prioritization of our people.

Calamos is a pioneer in the world of alternative investing. What has this delivered to Calamos clients?

Calamos Investments has been at the forefront of alternative investing for over four decades. Over several years, we've found ways to innovate and push boundaries that move our legacy forward. Developing competitive product offerings, such as a private credit interval fund, was a natural next step for the firm. In 2023, we partnered with Aksia, a global leader in private credit funds, to launch Calamos Aksia Alternative Credit and Income Fund (CAPIX). This collaboration allows us to provide our clients with access to a solution that invests across the full spectrum of private credit assets, extending beyond the conventional U.S. direct lending focus.

We've also made tremendous strides in the ETF space, introducing new products that leverage our firm's investment and risk-management expertise and reimagine investors' access to varying markets. This year alone, we've launched eight ETFs – a monthly series of Structured Protection ETFs that for the first time deliver 100 percent

downside protection to the U.S. equity markets of an investor's choice – S&P 500, Nasdaq-100, Russell 2000 – over one year outcome periods. These products are changing the way investors mitigate volatility in their portfolios without inhibiting their ability to participate in market upside. All our ETFs have been thoughtfully designed to offer our clients innovative ways to manage risk and capitalize on market opportunities and to further diversify their investment options.

We remain focused on innovation, it's in our DNA – we'll continue to take the alternatives business to the next level and dominate in this competitive space.

As you mentioned above, Calamos introduced a revolutionary new suite of funds called the Calamos Structured Protection ETFs. Will you highlight these funds?

On May 1, 2024, Calamos proudly launched the first of our groundbreaking 20-part series of Structured Protection ETFs, with subsequent launches scheduled monthly through 2025. These ETFs offer 100 percent capital protection and defined upside participation to major indices over a one-year outcome period.

The power of Calamos' Structured Protection ETFs is truly remarkable. They are designed to perform and protect in any market scenario, whether a flat market, a bull market, or even a market downturn. They deliver 100 percent downside protection and offer upside capture potential to compelling caps, delivered over one year outcome periods. These ETFs can be an ideal choice for investors nearing or at retirement age who seek to shield their investments from market volatility but are still interested in some upside potential. They are also ideal for individuals looking to move cash off the sidelines while limiting their risk.

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At Calamos, we are committed to delivering innovative investment solutions that meet our clients’ evolving needs. The Structured Protection ETFs exemplify our dedication to engineering products that democratize access and allow our clients to confidently pursue their financial goals.

What values and traits are most important to you as a leader when selecting your executive team?

As CEO, my primary focus has always been on building a team of exceptionally talented individuals united by a shared commitment to innovation. Our team comprises people who not only possess the skills and expertise to execute our strategic vision, but are also driven by a deep sense of motivation and determination. We remain focused on being aligned to our strategic, long-term goals, creating a sense of unity and purpose. In such a competitive industry, having a clear vision is crucial. Together, we are navigating the complexities of our business landscape with a clear and focused strategy, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of innovation and excellence.

Private credit is one of the fastest growing areas in investing and Calamos has an already strong footprint in the private credit space. Do you have plans to expand Calamos’ capabilities beyond credit?

Since the launch of the Calamos Aksia Alternative Credit and Income Fund (CAPIX) in June 2023, the fund has garnered more than \$240 million in assets as of July 31, 2024. CAPIX has opened doors for investors, providing them access to a breadth of opportunities in private credit, an asset class once reserved for institutional investors, to invest in today’s private credit offerings.

While we’re not able to divulge future offering plans, I can assure the markets that Calamos will not stop there. Let’s not forget our roots. Calamos Investments began as a firm dedicated to innovation and risk management. That’s in our DNA and will continue to shape our strategic and product development plans as we move our 47-year firm forward.

Calamos Founder and Global CIO, John P. Calamos, Sr. has led a very interesting life. Will you highlight his background and how it has influenced you and the firm?

Our Chairman and Founder, John P. Calamos, Sr., has indeed led a fascinating life that has shaped both the firm’s approach to investment management and my personal perspective. His military background has profoundly influenced our risk management strategies. He served in the United States Air Force as a Forward Air Controller during the Vietnam War, logging more than 400 missions in combat, where meticulous planning and risk assessment were crucial.

These core values were seamlessly translated into his investment strategies when he began his financial journey in the challenging 1970s – a period marked by high inflation and interest rates. Shortly after establishing Calamos Investments in 1977, John became renowned for his expertise in managing convertible securities and launched one of the first convertible funds in 1985 to manage risk for clients in volatile times.

We continue this heritage of risk management in everything we do, from product manufacturing to our sophisticated wealth management capabilities. It’s this relentless pursuit of excellence that makes Calamos the premier alternative investment and wealth manager it is today.

How would your executives describe your leadership style?

My executives would likely describe my leadership style as visionary and results oriented. I’ve focused on setting a clear vision for Calamos, ensuring that each leader understands their long-term goals and the steps needed to achieve them. This fosters a culture of innovation and creativity at all levels. I believe in the power of diverse perspectives and collaboration which enables us to tackle challenges more effectively and leads to better decision-making.

I also prioritize performance and results from each goal that is set by the individual teams. Setting high standards and holding ourselves accountable ensures that we consistently deliver exceptional results.

You have twin daughters who will be entering into the workforce in the coming years. What advice do you have for them as they start to form their career paths?

I often tell them to embrace learning with enthusiasm and to take pride in their hard work. The knowledge gained in the beginning of their careers will serve as a crucial building block for future endeavors. I also tell them to surround themselves with people who share their values and that the company you keep will significantly influence your growth and career path. Aim to work for organizations that not only align with your principles, but also foster your development and aspirations. And finally, find causes and organizations that ignite your passion. Regardless of the field of their choosing, doing what you love will naturally lead to success. Work diligently towards your dreams, and fulfillment will follow. ●

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