

# LONDON – A MAGNET FOR TOP TALENT

There is no other city in the world with a higher concentration of highly-skilled professionals in the risk management business



**Dominic Christian asked Greg Case, President and CEO of Aon plc, a series of questions ranging from his career background to his tips for future generations of CEOs and his thoughts on the future of the London and UK insurance markets**

## **How did you come to this market and has your career followed the path you expected?**

GC: I began my career on the advisory side of the financial services industry and feel lucky to have gained experiences across a really broad set of sectors and services from the very beginning, including everything from life insurers to credit card companies. Along the way, I was exposed to asset management and investment banking operations, as well as property and casualty. That diverse background provided me with a great foundation for my transition into risk management and fuelled my interest in helping clients measure and mitigate risk. As for my career path, I never had specific expectations about where that would take me, just the hope that I would land in a place where I could have impact every day.

## **What are the key changes you forecast for the insurance market?**

GC: The one universal truth in our business is that we must evolve faster than our clients on the topic of risk. In that context, we need to focus on achieving greater efficiency through the use of data and analytics, and technology in general. Traditional players risk becoming less competitive if they are slow to adopt some of the new analytical tools, particularly as other forms of capital enter the marketplace. We strive to be a business leader on that front, both in our retail and reinsurance operations, and we are highly supportive of technological innovation both within our firm and across the business.

## **Have you any tips for the next generation of insurance CEOs?**

GC: We all need to remain client-focused. If we do not listen to and understand the needs of our clients, if we do not analyse and predict what they will need, we will not earn their trust and provide compelling and valuable service. As risk advisers, we must provide a long-term perspective for clients. As you know, we continue to invest in data and analytics; at Aon, we invest over \$500 million a year in analytical expertise. When we combine that investment with insights from our interactions with clients, it broadens our scope and gives us a depth of experience that leads to better outcomes.

## **What are the business issues you think the next generation of CEOs will have to tackle?**

GC: When I talk to our clients about what they see on the horizon, I hear variations on three key themes: risk, retirement and health.

I think we would all agree that the speed and complexity of risk is greater than ever before. Think about the macro risk issues the next generation will face; increasingly interdependent supply chains, accelerating climate change, greater population density, scarcity of precious energy resources. That is potentially overwhelming, and it doesn't even include emerging issues such as cyber risk and the actual liability and perceived reputational damage that come from data breaches.

On the retirement challenge: our society is massively unprepared – and I'm talking countries and companies around the



**Dominic Christian**

Executive Chairman, Aon Benfield International and Chief Executive Officer, Aon UK Ltd. President-elect, Insurance Institute of London

world – to meet the needs of future retirees. Pension obligations are putting leading companies and large economies at risk. We advise clients on over \$5 trillion in pension assets – that is almost 20% of the total market, so we are having these conversations every day. Future business leaders are going to increasingly find their access to capital and, as a result, their ability to realise their growth goals hampered by these obligations.

Health is another issue that is consistently raised. The global population is becoming less healthy and the cost of care is outstripping innovation. The question for business leaders is twofold. First, how do you engage with your employees in a way that changes the wellness trend at your company? Second, how do you predict the growing cost and try to bend the cost curve? We are right in the middle of these conversations and are working with clients to deliver innovative solutions such as private healthcare exchanges that empower their employees and drive great predictability around cost.

### **To what degree do you believe training and talent are critical to business success, and how does London play its part?**

GC: Hugely – indeed, our talent agenda is critical to the overall strategy at Aon – and we see London as a magnet city for top talent. In 2013, Aon's People and Risk Index ranked the City as one of the top five in the world for talent. There is no other city in the world with a higher concentration of highly-skilled professionals in the risk management business than London, but we can still do more. The insurance sector alone employs about 48,000 professionals in the City and is the home for roughly 200 nationalities with as many as 300 different languages spoken here every day, yet only 3% of college students see the market as sufficiently interested in diversity to make it their professional home.

To that end, I was pleased with the sector-wide announcement in March 2014 of a UK apprenticeships scheme that includes brokers, carriers, and a host of professional organisations.

This programme demonstrates a desire to bring new people and talent into the market. We are extremely supportive of this effort as well as the government's insurance growth action plan. Dominic, I know that you have been a leading advocate of apprenticeships and have been instrumental in driving our efforts in the UK. We are proud of the leadership position you have helped us take on this issue in London, but acknowledge that the issue is not unique to this market. As a result, we have established similar programmes in our other key operational hubs around the world – Chicago and Singapore – and are committed to building the right local approach to this global challenge.

### **How do you see the future of the London and the wider UK insurance market?**

GC: We see the UK marketplace as compelling. Lloyd's and the London market are more important than ever with a resilience and strength that comes from its deep history, its unparalleled level of expertise, and the connectivity that exists between brokers, underwriters and clients.

I'm aware that recent reports have rekindled the debate over the future of the London market and what its leaders must do to maintain the preeminent position that it enjoys today. As I alluded to earlier, we should be mindful of the impact that new technologies are having on our market and continue to explore how they can supplement the strong relationships and long-standing structures that have made London such a vibrant and critical part of our industry for well over 300 years. I'm confident that the London marketplace can and will evolve to meet the needs of our profession in the 21st century.

### **Aon moved its headquarters to London in 2012. Could you tell us about the impact this has had on its business?**

GC: There is no doubt in the mind of Aon – and the minds of our clients – that Lloyd's and London is a critical hub of the global risk management business

and a major reason why Aon moved its headquarters here. It was important that we be in London, closer to this leading global insurance market and closer to our clients in EMEA and Asia, key areas in which we are experiencing substantial client growth. Our regional hub structure – with global headquarters in London and complementary regional capabilities in Chicago and Singapore – allows us to maintain our presence in critical markets and best serve our clients in over 120 countries.

The move has helped to reinforce our position as a leader in the global risk and insurance landscape, and we are working hard to be a good partner with the City of London. We are also very excited to be moving into our new headquarters at the Leadenhall building.



During Insurance Charities Awareness Week many thousands of insurance people heard for the first time about the help the Charity gives in times of difficulty. Many individuals, however, still remain in the dark as to help which could transform desperate circumstances. Visit [www.theinsurancecharities.org.uk](http://www.theinsurancecharities.org.uk) to read more about the Charity's work and enter this year's competitions to win some fabulous prizes.