



# ENERGY

## or experience?

### PEOPLE

HOW DO YOUNG INSURANCE PROFESSIONALS DIFFER FROM EARLIER GENERATIONS? WHAT CAN THEY LEARN – AND WHAT CAN THEY TEACH MORE MATURE PEOPLE IN THE INDUSTRY?

Do younger people in the industry have a different attitude to older, or should we say, more mature insurance professionals? The *Journal* asked the opinions of four young professionals (all members of the Institute's Generation I group – formerly known as Young Insurance Professionals (YIPs)). All felt there is a difference – but pointed out that experience is not everything. In many cases, energy and knowledge of technology is equally important.

Right from the start, young professionals are different, says Michelle Di Petta of QBE Insurance. “Young professionals definitely have a different attitude when they join the industry. In most cases, they come in with far more technological knowledge and business understanding than earlier generations had. When they start work in a traditional insurance organisation, in some cases it is quite obvious that they view the processes, practices and systems as antiquated, because they have grown up in the computer age.

“What older professionals offer in experience, younger professionals match in energy and fresh ideas.”

“They are also willing to challenge ideas at a much earlier stage in their career, when more mature insurance professionals feel the need to earn their stripes before challenging how things are done,” she said.

said. "As a result, young professionals tend to exhibit higher enthusiasm for projects. However the smart ones tend to work closely with the more mature professionals to develop this as well as to develop knowledge of the industry."

There is a marked difference between the expectations and career patterns of Gen Ys compared to their parents (either Gen Xs or Baby Boomers), Catherine Pettitt of Steadfast commented.

She said Gen Xs expect that career progression and monetary rewards will flow after working hard for a number of years with one company

Young people can also teach their elders how to use technology to their advantage, Michelle Di Petta said. "In our organisation we have found that the more mature people have been able to leverage from the younger professionals and their technological ideas. In the past they used manual spreadsheets to complete underwriting processes, the younger professionals have assisted with automating these and ensuring more efficiencies.

"I have found mature professionals are starting to challenge a lot more of the traditional ways things are done. The introduction of

## "As a result, young professionals tend to exhibit higher enthusiasm for projects."

and are more prepared to stay for long term gain. "Gen Ys highly value career and life balance and will not accept more money as compensation for long hours. They expect to move up the ranks much faster than their parents and if a company is not able to provide career progression or they do not move up as quickly as they wish, they will move on. They also expect innovation, good quality leadership and direction from management.

"I don't think these differences are the fault of either generation, but rather a product of the way in which one generation was brought up by the other, combined with changes in the standard of living," Catherine said.

### Teaching new tricks?

Johanna Lucas believes that both generations working together can definitely be beneficial to both. "They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks, but the industry is always evolving. What older professionals offer in experience, younger professionals match in energy and fresh ideas," she said.

"With a scarcity of staff and resources, older professionals need to be more willing to embrace technology on a personal and corporate level to continue to deliver a high level of service to their customers," Ian Poustie cautioned. However he can see both sides of the equation: "On the flip side, young professionals can be too reliant on email to be in contact with their customers rather than getting off their chair and making that crucial face to face contact. There is certainly a balance to be struck," he said.

Ian Poustie of Zenith believes young professionals look for the challenging and new. "In my experience, young professionals are more willing to move between companies if they believe their current employer isn't providing them the right opportunities or a defined future career path. They constantly want new challenges and strive to 'climb the corporate ladder'. This is different to older professionals who are more willing to put in many years of work to develop within a role before looking for career advancement and would likely spend more time with each employer during their career," he said.

Johanna Lucas of Rodgers, Barnes & Green, Lawyers, highlighted the experience/energy difference: "A young insurance professional does not have the experience or contacts to get by on reputation alone," she

younger professionals within our organisation has re-energised a number of the more mature people, it has given them an opportunity to share their knowledge, and coach the future generation of insurance professionals," she added.

Catherine Pettitt has a suggestion for young professionals: "I think young professionals could learn a lot from mature professionals who have done the 'hard-yards' to get where they are and have the experience to go with it. They didn't do this overnight. I think this should be respected by young professionals more than it is and they should also understand why Gen Xs do things the way they do. Being mentored by a mature professional can be invaluable for a Gen Y.

"However I also think mature professionals can learn from young professionals by looking 'outside the square' and their established way of doing things. Just because something has worked in the past, doesn't necessarily mean it is relevant today. One thing Joe Plumeri (Chairman and CEO of Willis) once said sticks in my mind regarding traditions – "If you live on them or rely on them, they will become your prison, if you allow them to support updated and current practice, you will remain relevant."

### Networking with "the insurance leaders of tomorrow"

All four interviewees believe that the Institute's program for young insurance professionals has been valuable for them.

"Networking is one of the keys to success in our industry," Ian says. "The recent young professionals



**MICHELLE DI PETTA**  
SENIOR HR BUSINESS  
PARTNER FOR QBE INSURANCE.

MICHELLE DI PETTA IS A SENIOR HR BUSINESS PARTNER WITH INTERNATIONAL GENERAL INSURANCE, QBE INSURANCE. SHE'S IN HER EARLY THIRTIES.

- Q. What are your qualifications?**
- A. Certificate 4 in Training and Workplace assessment and Graduate Certificate in Human Resource Management.
- Q. How long have you been in the insurance/finance industry?**
- A. I've been in the industry for 17 years, eleven of those with QBE.
- Q. What does your role involve?**
- A. Currently, I work with QBE managers to further develop their skills in people management, performance management, career management and succession planning with their teams. My department's role is also to support staff with issues and queries, as well as assist them to achieve their career goals.
- Q. It's sometimes said that most people "fall into" insurance – why did you choose this industry?**
- A. Like most people, I fell into Insurance. I started as an administration assistant at the State Insurance Office one week after my final Year 12 exam.
- Q. Do you see yourself staying in the industry into the future?**
- A. Yes, having worked in a number of areas of the industry such as claims, underwriting, e-business and human resources, I definitely feel that this industry has been able to provide me with a number of experiences and opportunities. As most of us "fall into" the industry, it is our duty as young insurance professionals to ensure that the perception of the industry changes and insurance becomes one of the careers of choice in the financial services sector.



**CATHERINE PETTITT**  
MEMBER TRAINING AND  
COMPLIANCE MANAGER FOR  
STEADFAST GROUP LTD.

CATHERINE, WHO IS IN HER LATE TWENTIES, IS THE MEMBER TRAINING AND COMPLIANCE MANAGER FOR STEADFAST GROUP LTD. SHE SAYS THAT STEADFAST IS THE LARGEST AUTONOMOUS INSURANCE BROKER CLUSTER GROUP IN AUSTRALIA WITH 270 VARIOUS SIZED, INSURANCE BROKERAGES PROVIDING A WIDE RANGE OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND ACCESS TO INSURANCE PRODUCTS TO MEMBERS.

**Q. What are your qualifications?**

**A.** I have a BA, have attained Tier 1 (Insurance Broking) compliance and have attained ANZIIF Member and CIP status. I regularly complete many short courses in the area of compliance and HR.

**Q. How long have you been in the insurance/finance industry?**

**A.** I have been in the insurance industry for six years, five of these years have been with Steadfast. I find it interesting and motivating – there is always more to learn.

**Q. What does your role in your current organisation involve?**

**A.** I am responsible for managing the Training and Development, Compliance and Human Resources components of Steadfast's services to members. Also, I am involved in the Steadfast Convention organisation committee and assist with Steadfast's communications projects.

**Q. It's sometimes said that most people "fall into" insurance – why did you choose this industry?**

**A.** I needed practical experience after completing my degree, so I looked for an industry that would allow me to mix with people and solve commercial issues. My first job was with Royal and Sun Alliance (now Promina/Suncorp) in January 2002, in the workers compensation department. From here I was invited to join Steadfast as Member Services Manager. In conjunction with this I later began to manage and maintain the Steadfast website and was offered my current role in September 2006.

I think insurance is an industry that is so often not considered as a career path due to its perception by the community as being less than stimulating. This couldn't be farther from the truth – I have found it to be a very interesting and rewarding industry, with a great group of people. Unfortunately it is not promoted at school as a career. If more information were to be distributed to schools, universities and other educational institutions we could help build school leavers' awareness of the industry and provide them with the opportunity to make a career of choice.

**Q. Do you see yourself staying in the industry into the future?**

**A.** Yes, I certainly do! Like so many others, it's not something I considered that I would do after university, but I am very glad I am in it. It is the message that I think the industry as a whole should be getting together and communicating to high school students, university students and graduates. This is an interesting, vibrant and rewarding industry to work in and a fantastic career choice. Give it a go – you never know where it will take you.



**IAN PROUSTIE**  
ZENITH INSURANCE SERVICES

IAN PROUSTIE IS IN HIS EARLY THIRTIES AND WORKS FOR ZENITH INSURANCE SERVICES, WHOSE HEAD OFFICE IS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA. HIS ORGANISATION SERVICES A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF AGED AND COMMUNITY CARE, TRANSPORT AND INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS AS WELL AS LOOKING AFTER A LARGE BOOK OF GENERAL CLIENTS.

**Q. What are your qualifications?**

**A.** I completed a Bachelor of Commerce from UWA in 1997 with a Major in Marketing and a Minor in Accounting. Subsequently, I completed a Diploma in Financial Services in Insurance Broking in 2004.

**Q. How long have you been in the insurance/finance industry?**

**A.** I started working in the sector in August of 1997 and have been working with Zenith Insurance Services as a broker for almost six years now.

**Q. What does your role involve?**

**A.** I am a manager of the Aged and Community Care team. The team is responsible for the overall servicing of our clients including insurance risk audits, relationship management, negotiation of renewals, workers compensation risk reduction and general claims management. I am also responsible for growing the book through established new business goals.

**Q. It's sometimes said that most people "fall into" insurance – why did you choose this industry?**

**A.** I'm also guilty of falling into insurance. I was always interested in a career in the financial sector but hadn't thought about insurance specifically. However, my first job offer after university was with an insurance company and I haven't looked back.

After starting my career in claims, I found my way into broking in 2002 and really enjoy my current role.

**Q. Do you see yourself staying in the industry into the future?**

**A.** Although I have a few years to go, I believe that I will remain in the insurance industry until I retire. I feel fortunate to have found a job I really enjoy that has a challenging balance of diversity, technical knowledge and personal relationships within an industry that is highly rewarding.

---

**"I started working in the sector in August of 1997 and have been working with Zenith Insurance Services as a broker for almost six years now."**

---

## A BIG YEAR FOR GEN I AND THE INSTITUTE

"This year will be a very big year for young insurance professionals in Australia and New Zealand," the Institute's Marketing Manager, Cameron Skews, told the *Journal*.

"The Institute's long-running Young Insurance Professionals initiative will be expanding into an internationally co-ordinated program designed to promote a stronger sense of community within the younger ranks of the insurance industry.

"Supporting the next generation of insurance leaders is of vital importance to insurance organisations across Australia and New Zealand and their support will enable the Institute to partner with the state-based committees to create a great series of networking and professional development programs," he said.

from page 07

Meet the Leaders Breakfast was a great opportunity to network on a close personal level with established insurance professionals but also to make connections with other young insurance people who are driven to make the best of their career. On a personal note, the contacts I've made in the past few years of being involved with the young professionals have already proven helpful to my insurance career.

"I believe that the other young people I am interacting with at these

community, but also equipped me with a number of tools that I can use back in my organisation. It has also allowed me to understand other parts of the industry that I was not so familiar with," she said.

Catherine said: "Networking is a very important part of life and of any industry. It allows you to extend your contacts, which can be valuable in so many ways. You come into contact with other people in the industry (and even outside it) that you may not otherwise come into contact with via

"The introduction of younger professionals within our organisation has re-energised a number of the more mature people."

events are the insurance leaders of tomorrow, so it's great to have the opportunity to meet with them at this early stage – you never know when you will cross paths again in the future," he said.

As a lawyer, Johanna feels that the Institute's networking opportunities far exceed most other organisations. "Many other networking events primarily attract lawyers but the young professionals' functions provide face to face contact with other members of the insurance industry, such as claims officers, brokers and re-insurers."

Michele appreciated the usefulness of networking. "Being a member of the Gen I committee and program has provided me with the opportunity to not only increase my networks throughout the wider insurance

your day-to-day activities. It also helps you to learn about other companies, their role and increases your general understanding of the industry and its personalities.

"As a member of the Institute's Gen I committee, I find both the involvement in the organisation of events and participating in them equally rewarding. The educational and the social sides of the events are equally important to young employees and employee engagement. I think employers should see the educational benefits as well as less tangible benefits in allowing staff to broaden their industry network by encouraging them to attend these events," she said. [I]



**JOHANNA LUCAS**  
SENIOR ASSOCIATE  
WITH RODGERS BARNES  
& GREEN LAWYERS

JOHANNA LUCAS, MID-THIRTIES, IS A SENIOR ASSOCIATE WITH RODGERS BARNES & GREEN LAWYERS. HER FIRM SPECIALISES IN INSURANCE LAW, COMMERCIAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION, PROJECT, BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION LAW, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND INSOLVENCY, PERSONAL WEALTH STRUCTURING AND ESTATE PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAW. HER PARTICULAR SPECIALITY IS WITHIN THE INSURANCE GROUP.

### Q. What are your qualifications?

A. I obtained a Bachelor of Laws Degree from the Queensland University of Technology and was admitted as a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 2002. Prior to my admission, I was employed full-time from 1993 onwards in various roles – ranging from a Legal Secretary/Paralegal to an Articled Law Clerk.

### Q. How long have you been in the insurance/finance industry?

A. I have been working in the insurance law field for over ten years specialising in insurance litigation since the beginning of 2003. The firm of Rodgers Barnes & Green commenced on 1 July 2007 – it comprises the insurance and other groups formerly of TressCox Lawyers.

### Q. What does your role in your organisation involve?

A. My role as a Senior Associate involves direct client relationships, file responsibilities, supervision and mentoring of Solicitors, ensuring I'm continually kept apprised of legal and insurance updates and generally working to achieve the best possible results for my clients.

### Q. It's sometimes said people "fall into" insurance – why did you choose this industry?

A. I always wanted to be a litigation lawyer. As part of that field, I handled various insurance related claims during my early working years. When I felt that I had a good general knowledge of the area, I elected to become a specialist insurance lawyer. I was (and continue to be) extremely lucky with the mentoring I've received from the partners under whom I've worked.

### Q. Do you see yourself staying in the industry into the future?

A. I can't imagine myself doing anything else. I hope to continue as an insurance law specialist in the long term.