

People First

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Ginny Bannerman, recipient of the CIP Society's established leader award, picked up some leadership attributes from her father while he was running the family brokerage that still serve her today.

Ginny Bannerman, 2013 recipient of the established leader award from the CIP Society, the graduate division of the Insurance Institute of Canada, has some simple leadership advice for brokers.

"Put people first," says Bannerman, a former Calgary brokerage owner who is now vice president, finance (West) for Intact Insurance. "Get involved. Be proud of what you do. This is a great industry," she says.

It is something that Bannerman has taken to heart. She has served two terms as president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta (IBAA), from 1997 until 1999, and later as president of the Insurance Brokers

Association of Canada (IBAC).

Bannerman was one of five executives recognized with a national leadership award in 2013 by the CIP Society. Of the five, she is one of two — the other was James Cameron — who also received an established leader award through which the institute recognizes graduates of its Chartered Insurance Professional (CIP) and Fellow Chartered Insurance Professional (FCIP) programs.

HOME FRONT

Bannerman began her insurance career in the family business — Bannerman Agencies Ltd. — which was founded in Calgary in 1921 by her grandfather, Jack Bannerman, and later run by her father, Bob Bannerman.

"There was a lot of pride in the name of the business and the family name," she says. "My dad's one and only rule was to treat people the way that you want to be treated yourself. Dad was a guy who was absolutely colour-blind when it came to class or whatever. He treated everyone with the utmost respect regardless of background or gender or age."

In the 1970s, Bannerman recounts, she started working at Bannerman Agencies after school. Initially, her duties included filing, emptying

garbage cans, washing the coffee pot "and many very important things like that," she quips.

It was the start of learning the wide range of duties that makes up a family business. "You stayed until the work got done," she says.

Jack Bannerman, who founded the brokerage in 1921, originally had property

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and casualty partners. His p&c partners went on to found Reed Shaw McNaught, which, after several name changes, became Aon Reed Stenhouse Inc., Aon plc's brokerage and risk management subsidiary in Canada.

Jack Bannerman was joined in the family business by his son, Bob Bannerman, after the latter graduated from the University of Alberta. Bob Bannerman, who passed away in 2011, was named Insurance Man of the Year for

Canada in 1969 and had led both the Alberta and national brokers' associations.

In 1988, Ginny Bannerman bought the business from her father, and sold the brokerage to Canada Brokerlink Inc. in 1999. A year later, Canada Brokerlink was acquired by Allianz Canada, itself purchased by ING Insurance, now called Intact, in 2004.

Six months after selling to Canada Brokerlink, Bannerman left the brokerage and she and her husband, Don Radford, established Bannerman Radford & Associates Inc., which she describes as a "small boutique" insurance brokerage.

GETTING CONNECTED

"During that time, I was asked to go in on the executive of the Insurance Brokers Association of Canada," she notes. As president of IBAC from 2001 until 2002, Bannerman had opportunities to meet other insurance professionals from across the country.

"With IBAC, you get to meet with the federal minister of finance, dealing with the federal regulations that impact insurance," she says. While she was on the IBAC executive, a major issue for brokers was the *Bank Act*.

After her term as IBAC

president, Bannerman worked for both IBAA and the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) from 2002 until 2006.

At the time, she was approached by both Harold Baker, then CEO of IBAA, and Jim Rivait, then IBC's western regional vice president. "We worked out some ground rules about what a conflict of interest might look like, where insurance companies' and brokers' interests were not aligned — and through that I represented the two organizations with the Alberta government."

At the time, Alberta politicians were concerned about both affordability and availability of auto insurance. The province eventually brought in reforms, including a premium grid setting maximum premiums that carriers can charge for basic coverage for any driving record. It also brought in the *Minor Injury Regulation*, which sets a maximum amount that can be recovered as damages for non-pecuniary loss resulting from a minor injury, and the *Diagnostic and Treatment Protocols Regulation*, which provides people injured in auto accidents with faster access to medical care.

"In essence, the legislation reduced costs by making people better sooner," she says.



Photo: Ginny Bannerman

Bannerman eventually went on to become IBAA's full-time executive officer in 2007, and chief executive officer the following year. She left that job in 2010, Bannerman says, when Intact hired her as vice president of personal insurance for its western division, which handles Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the three territories.

THE BIG PICTURE

In 2011, Bannerman moved to her current position as vice president of finance for the western division. She oversees several operations,

including budgets and accounts receivable, printing and mailing of policies, as well as scanning documents.

Bannerman also oversees the business excellence, transformation and practices and process centres of excellence for Intact West.

"Their area of focus is to find ways to do work more efficiently, more effectively and to improve work flows," she says. "Imagine a company the size of Intact. We have a number of projects that are ongoing simultaneously. So they manage the development of the projects, making sure that the timing is right. That group is also very

good at looking for manual functions that can be automated," she suggests.

In managing teams from different offices, she notes that she had gained valuable experience while working about a decade ago on her Master of Business Administration at Royal Roads University in Victoria. The educational pursuit entailed both one-month residency periods and online work from Calgary, she says.

"The other students came from all around the world and one of the things we really learned to do — and you have to remember this is 10 years ago — was work as a virtual team through different time zones," she explains.

"I had teammates all the way from China to Abu Dhabi," Bannerman relays.

After almost four decades of leadership roles in brokerages, associations and at a carrier, Bannerman has some words of wisdom to offer her insurance industry colleagues.

"Sometimes I think when we go through times where we have got product changes or rates are increasing or we are dealing with catastrophic events, all of our people can get pretty beat up," she says.

"Never lose sight of the value that we, as an industry, bring to society." ■