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## THE NEWS

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# Diversity In The C-Suite Draws Talent, Prepares Industry For Emerging Society

APIW 'Insurance Woman Of The Year' says carriers benefit from wider perspective

BY MARK E. RUQUET

**E**XPANDING THE INSURANCE industry's workforce diversity, including recruiting and developing more female executives, is not only good politics and good corporate citizenship, but good business, one award-winning woman suggests.

Indeed, for more female insurance executives to rise to the coveted "C-suite"—where CEOs, CFOs and other top company officials reside—carriers need to establish proactive recruitment, mentoring and development programs that are family-friendly, according to Janice Tomlinson, named 2009's "Insurance Woman of the Year Award" by the Association of Professional Insurance Women.

This year's honoree—who is executive vice president and international field operations manager for Chubb Corp.—has over 30 years of experience in the business. She began her career with St. Paul Insurance (now Travelers), before joining Chubb Corp. in 1973 as a commercial underwriter, then managed several underwriting departments before becoming worldwide human resources director in 1990.

In 1995, she was appointed Canadian zone officer, chair and president of Chubb Canada, and was named to her current position in 2003.

In an interview with *National Underwriter* prior to her APIW award presentation last week, Ms. Tomlinson said she is surprised that the rise of more women to chief executive levels has not been more rapid. One reason may be that women have not been exposed to the variety of positions and op-

served. "There is just no way anyone is automatically ushered in the door and named a V.P. or COO position. That is just not going to happen. You have to have the experience."

However, considering the number of women in the industry and the years of experience some have, it is surprising more have not moved into those top positions, she said. Companies, she believes, "have good intentions about what they want to do, but it hasn't necessarily been demonstrated at the highest levels of most organizations."

While there are no easy answers on this issue, she said, diversity at the top is essential to doing business, so insurance companies need to focus on developing not just women, but all of their people, to have the necessary experience to be ready for top jobs when they open up.

"We really have to look at how we cross-train. How do we create those assignments that are wonderful learning opportunities so that you can in fact be ready for that [top-level position]?" Ms. Tomlinson said.

"It is really diversity-of-job in terms of making certain that no matter who is ultimately going to be in a senior position, that they have that experience level and

### BIO

## Who Is Janice Tomlinson?



The 2009 APIW "Insurance Woman of the Year Award" made her mark over a diverse, 30-plus-year career in the industry.

▶ **Her current post** is executive vice president and international field operations manager for Chubb Corp., a position she has held since 2003.

▶ **She began her career** in St. Paul's training program in 1972.

▶ **She joined Chubb** in 1973 as a commercial underwriter, then managed several underwriting departments.

▶ **Chubb named her** worldwide human resources director in 1990.

▶ **Chubb appointed her** as Canadian zone officer, chair and president of Chubb Canada in 1995.

**"I think one of the things we need to do is to make certain that we are creating a good message about the industry so that as talent leaves, we are able to attract the best and brightest to a business that is a major part of everyone's life and [a major] part of the economy."**

*Janice Tomlinson, Executive V.P., Chubb Corp.*

portunities an individual needs as the background and foundation to be catapulted into the highest levels of a carrier.

"If you look at anyone who is in an executive position, they have to have a certain amount of experience," she ob-

have it across levels so that they can move into those jobs," she added. "That is what I think companies have to do."

Her entry into the industry was in some ways typical of many, as she never planned to be in the insurance business.

After graduating college with a degree in English, she found there were not a lot of job opportunities available. Someone suggested she look into getting a position with the St. Paul Companies, and she ended up entering the insurer's training program.

After a year with St. Paul, she married her husband, Tom, and moved from Massachusetts to Connecticut, leaving St. Paul and joining Chubb. It was there that she began to understand the possibilities of a career in the insurance industry and started making her way to the top.

In the early 1970s, she noted, women were just starting to move into the industry, but the issue of gender was never a hindrance at Chubb. However, there were not a lot of role models at that time, and what was required of someone to rise in company was not always clear, she said.

Today, however, the path for women has been blazed with the help of mentors and development programs, according to Ms. Tomlinson. "It was just not clear back then what was required in order to be successful," she said. "A woman really needed to ask a lot of questions and find someone to answer them."

She said that for her, at Chubb, there were a lot of supportive people who did not stand in her way moving forward.

She admits that her experience at Chubb was probably unique because the company has always had a culture of being "supportive and collaborative, and that makes a big difference."

The issue of executives respecting her as a manager would periodically arise while dealing with producers, who would sometimes challenge her authority and try to find ways around working with her—although eventually, her determination won out with acceptance, she noted.

One issue challenging many women in the corporate world is how to balance managing a family while continuing their career—which she faced while raising her son Ryan (who is also in the insurance business today). Ms. Tomlinson said that meant dedicating a lot of time working on both aspects of her busy life.

"One is not exclusive from the other," she pointed out. "They go hand-in-hand."

She noted that it is not easy for any woman to strike that balance, and trying to find it may not be right for everyone. "Sometimes it has to be a choice between the family and the corporation," she said. "I was fortunate that I have a very supportive husband who wanted to see me be successful."

She found her balance by working hard during the week and reserving the weekends for her son. "There is no pat answer," she pointed out.

However, she is supportive of part-time programs that help women to return to the workforce while raising a family. She said these programs allow

women to remain connected to the industry, making it easier to return to full-time work eventually.

Such policies also help carriers retain valuable talent and experienced personnel, and are far less expensive than having to train someone from scratch. "If a company wants to retain talent, how better than putting a program in place that keeps talent rather than losing what has been invested in that individual," she explained.

Ms. Tomlinson said the industry should not only be recruiting more women, but aim at a whole generation of new types of people in this increasingly diverse society.

"There is no question that there is a war for talent with the baby boomers retiring over the next 10-plus years," said Ms. Tomlinson, adding that to diversify the work force, it will be up to the insurance industry to do its upmost to make sure it has an image that will attract all types of individuals.

"This is a challenging, but wonderful industry that has created significant opportunities, not just for me but for many other people," observed Ms. Tomlinson.

"I think one of the things we need to do is to make certain that we are creating a good message about the industry so that as talent leaves, we are able to attract the best and brightest to a business that is a major part of everyone's life and [a major] part of the economy," she concluded. ■