
RISING STARS

Recognizing emerging talent in the insurance industry

Insurtech, new risks and the growing involvement of the capital markets are all making the re/insurance industry more attractive to young people—and they look increasingly important to its future. Intelligent Insurer interviewed a number of young executives who are tipped by their employers for success within the sector.



Anna Kosielska

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Tell us about your role now and how you got there.

I started my insurance career as a catastrophe modeller in Poland, a country where awareness about insurance is limited to life and motor policies. Catastrophe modelling was not a well-known discipline, so I faced multiple challenges during my career trajectory.

As I attained more responsibilities in my roles, one significant challenge was building robust teams that can deliver beneficial outcomes for insurance organisations. It was difficult to find talent with the right experience since catastrophe modelling practitioners in Poland were exceedingly rare.

Everyone who joined our team had to be extensively trained in the basics, influencing process flows and raising the risk of underperformance in the services my team and I delivered. Clearly, the only solution was to automate low-value tasks to boost accuracy and productivity, but a solid grasp of programming languages was required. I invested in honing my programming skills and collaborated with teams working on automating processes across the insurance lifecycle.

This phase of my career helped me gain valuable insights into the complex insurance landscape and leading-edge technology in support of business operations.

In 2018, I joined Xceedance with a significantly expanded role to combine my cat modelling and software development skills. This year, I took on a new role in the global solutioning team at Xceedance with the responsibilities to apply technical/programming skills and insurance domain knowledge to build digital-first solutions, solve multi-layered business challenges, and accelerate transformation initiatives for insurer clients.

My time at Xceedance has been exciting and fulfilling largely because our team and I can drive success for clients—by consolidating and calibrating a constructive mix of technology-enabled insurance capabilities to support insurer operations.

Why did you choose to go into the re/insurance industry?

When I was pursuing a second master's degree, I sought an interesting and unique dissertation thesis in the Polish context. During my research, I came across a wealth of information on catastrophe modelling and its widespread impact on communities and businesses served by the insurance industry.

I gained an appreciation for the benefits of commercial insurance and the critical workflows involved in risk assessment, exposure management, and policy and claims lifecycles, which combine to deliver policyholder protection and value. The more information I absorbed about insurance functions and catastrophe modelling, the more I realised there was much more to learn. Simultaneously, the abundance of opportunities in insurance that matched my interests and skillset attracted me to the industry.

During the work on my dissertation, I decided I didn't want to pursue the academic aspects of catastrophe modelling. I wanted to learn about it and appreciate real-world challenges, put my recently acquired knowledge into action, and centre my career around this sophisticated practice of evaluating and managing natural catastrophe risk.

With this goal in mind, I joined Catlin in 2016 and became part of a talented group of catastrophe modellers—the first of its kind in Poland.

Do you think the industry is attractive to young professionals?

The industry offers vast opportunities to young professionals across the front-, middle-, and back-office functions of insurance operations. Many of those opportunities are technology-focused, require data-management aptitude, and reward entrepreneurial and analytic acumen—comparable to what's considered to be exciting careers with technology startups and edgy brands.

The nuances of this very complex business, the rapid pace at which it is transforming, the enthusiasm for and practical deployment of intelligent technologies, and the purpose and impact of insurance in society are among the reasons young professionals should look into career growth in the industry.

Traditional insurance business models are fast evolving to meet the demands of the new-age, digitally savvy policyholder and there is a definite need for fresh talent to further accelerate innovation and digitisation. I believe the industry will continue to evolve quickly, and it will emerge as a digital paradigm, in part because a younger generation of professionals will drive and sustain the momentum for meaningful transformation.

Do you think the re/insurance industry offers good opportunities and career development to young professionals?

Learning and career opportunities in this sector are extensive. From product development, underwriting, actuarial and catastrophe modelling skills to policy service, claims, and finance proficiencies and many overarching competencies such as data management and process engineering, the insurance industry has a lot to offer for young, agile professionals with diverse skillsets.

With the proliferation of next-generation technologies, there is an abundance of industry roles centred around advanced analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence, robotic process automation, the internet of things, and more. Moreover, there are dedicated organisations, such as The Institutes, committed to imparting knowledge and certifying individuals in the risk management and property/casualty or life insurance domains.

The global insurance markets are generally stable, people-oriented, and offer a good work-life balance, which is important for most young professionals. We all know people who started their careers in insurance and stayed on for many years or until retirement. To me, this is an indication of an industry with a strong identity, mission, and purpose—an advantageous career proposition for the younger generation.