

The Long View

Insured Retirement Institute (IRI) is pleased to celebrate exemplary leadership within the insured retirement industry. Our monthly article series, *The Long View*, spotlights individuals who have proven adept at seeing change on the horizon and adapting accordingly. Through one-on-one interviews, we aim to learn about each highlighted leader's career, successes, failures, lessons learned, and proudest moments. [Click here](#) to view past articles.

Eighteen years after launching Global Atlantic out of Goldman Sachs and taking the helm as Chairman and CEO, Allan Levine's commitment to the business he co-founded and the consumers he serves has not flagged. Insurance products by their nature are long-term investments. Mr. Levine brings a similar approach to leadership, seeing the long-term payoff of investments made today for consumers, employees, and the industry. This includes Global Atlantic's commitment to a digital-first customer experience as well as to retaining employees' equity ownership in the business.



Read on to hear Mr. Levine's thoughts on the shift toward non-traditional ownership structures in the industry as well as who he counts as his leadership role models.

Q:

You co-founded and launched Global Atlantic while working at Goldman Sachs in 2004. How does your vision for the company's future today compare with what you planned for at the company's beginning? If you could reach through time and give the Allan Levine of 2004 advice, what would it be?

A:

My vision for Global Atlantic today is fundamentally the same as when I started the company nearly 20 years ago in 2004 — to be a leading life and annuity insurance and reinsurance company that delivers clear value, with best-in-class people aligned around a strong culture. I see that value taking many forms. We're always looking for ways to provide value for our policyholders, distribution partners and institutional clients, employees, and communities, as well as for the investors who believe in and support our mission.

We created Global Atlantic by acquiring decades-old insurance franchises and layering on expertise in risk and investment management from our Goldman Sachs heritage — and today, we have enhanced it further with our KKR relationship.

Reflecting back, one of the things that attracted me most to insurance was its long-term nature. I have a deep respect for the promises we make, which can last for decades. There aren't many industries like that. That's why it is so important that we build our business thoughtfully and patiently, with a strong balance sheet to perform across economic cycles. Our business and the promises we make to our stakeholders rely on that.

When it comes to words of wisdom for my younger self, I would say: take the time to celebrate successes along the way. On a journey like ours, it's important to commemorate the milestones. I would also advise my younger self to commit to digital transformation early on. In hindsight, we could have leveraged technology in dynamic and interesting ways sooner.



As founder and CEO, you set out to build Global Atlantic as a leading insurance company. How do you define success for the company, and what role do you see it playing in the industry?



We certainly want to be commercially successful and are proud of our positioning as a top five player in our core markets, but we define leadership through a much broader lens.

We have worked hard to establish a presence and rapport within the industry — building strong relationships with our peers, distribution partners, and institutional clients, as well as industry groups, regulators, and policymakers. By continuing to partner together, I'm certain we can expand the market to help *more* people, create new operating standards and continue to modernize the customer experience. There are things we can do together that will help the whole industry, and Global Atlantic is well positioned to usher in this new era.

A healthy industry benefits everyone – Global Atlantic, policyholders and clients, peers, and the public. The industry trade associations are doing great work in this area, which is why we are active, engaged members of the American Council of Life Insurers, Committee of Annuity Insurers, LL Global, Alliance for Lifetime Income and, of course, IRI, where we participate in every working group.



Global Atlantic has been a key voice in IRI's work to lead digital modernization efforts across the life cycle of the annuity, and your company has set a visionary goal to be paperless by January 2023. What are the competitive advantages of committing to this transformation?



Digital transformation is the industry's future, and we're all in. We're committed to supporting financial professionals and policyholders with a customer experience that delivers on digital-first expectations. That means easy access to what they want, when, where, and how they want it.

Technology is deeply embedded in our risk and investment platforms, and we think it can have the same powerful benefits on the creation, distribution, and servicing of products.

At its core, this is about creating greater connectivity, optimizing, and simplifying the flow of information among customers, financial professionals, distribution firms, and carriers. Whereas today's process is highly manual and somewhat disjointed, it will soon be quicker, easier, and more transparent.

Digital capabilities are also integrating clients' insurance products with their asset portfolios as part of their overall wealth management strategies. Insurance products have often been incorporated "on the side," managed separately from the rest of their financial assets. That approach has sometimes left clients and their financial professionals struggling to see the role insurance plays in enhancing their wealth management strategy. Today's technology can enable a more holistic view.



The insurance industry has experienced a shift in recent years with more companies moving to non-traditional ownership structures through investment and private equity firms. Global Atlantic became part of this movement when KKR acquired a majority stake in February. This trend has received its share of scrutiny in the media. What's your take? How is Global Atlantic's relationship with KKR differentiated?



We're seeing the industry evolve against the backdrop of a persistent, low-interest rate environment. When done right, I think the expertise and investment origination capabilities of large asset managers, along with the capital that many of these firms are infusing into the industry, can be very beneficial.

Many of the stable, secure investments insurance companies need today must be originated directly by specialized teams. Large firms with developed origination footprints provide that expertise, as well as more sophisticated risk management capabilities to accompany it. It's important to note, though, that it's the sourcing, not the quality, of the investments that is changing. And all insurers are held to the same rigorous regulatory standards, regardless of ownership structure. These investment firms are also typically registered investment advisers that must adhere to their own strict regulatory requirements.

Although the media is somewhat skeptical of this trend, regulators and rating agencies have generally recognized the benefits of insurance companies having access to the resources of large asset managers.

This access to new sources of capital is also facilitating reinsurance transactions that help companies across the industry de-risk and release capital, allowing them to focus their resources where they can have the greatest impact for their clients, as well as the company.

We're fortunate to realize these benefits in our relationship with KKR, and our alignment goes much deeper. When [KKR Co-CEO] Scott Nuttall and I met in early 2020, our first conversation was focused on culture and a long-term vision for the business. As a founder of the business, I believe there is nothing more important than culture. I take great pride in what we have built at Global Atlantic, and I credit the strength and commitment of our teams and the culture they have built – I didn't want to disrupt that with a sale of the business. I also wanted to be sure he understood our long-term commitment to the industry. From our first conversation, I found we were on common ground. It was evident from Scott's interest and willingness to speak at length about common values — like integrity, teamwork, investing in diversity, and others — that we could take the conversation further.

We identified several important strategic benefits, and since closing the transaction, we have benefited in more ways than we ever anticipated. Our relationship with KKR strengthens our position as a leading insurance and reinsurance company, enhances our ability to deliver compelling solutions for our clients, and deepens our access to long-term strategic capital.

KKR's ownership stake is directly held on its balance sheet, not in a fund. This was a very important aspect of the transaction because it reinforces their alignment with the needs of policyholders, as well as their investment for the long-term.

Our management team, mission, and strategy are all the same today as before the transaction, and we continue to operate as a standalone business with the benefit of KKR as our majority owner.



Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a key focus for companies around the country. Executives are looking to diversify their employee populations and leadership structures. How important do you think this is for the industry, and what benefits do you see?



We recognize that there are many benefits to a diverse team. Our approach centers on representation, as well as inclusion, community, and a supportive infrastructure. We want everyone to feel valued, empowered, and respected. We want our people to thrive in a diverse and inclusive culture where they all succeed and feel like they belong.

It starts with our recruiting team, who are focused on building a pipeline of diverse candidates. I also signed the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion pledge, and Global Atlantic is a member firm in the recently launched [Coalition for Equity in Wholesaling](#) (CEW) industry initiative.

We've made some great strides in the right direction, but there is even greater opportunity and room for progress in the future.



Who has been your leadership role model? What key traits have you witnessed in that individual that have been critical to your leadership success?



I am very fortunate to have had two role models who served as mentors each step of the way throughout my career – Tim O'Neill from Goldman Sachs and John Graf, who I met through our acquisition of Forethought. Both are successful leaders who built great businesses, and they continue to provide the perspective, insights, and coaching I need to develop and grow. They are professional confidants and have become close personal friends, as well.

Tim and John share a lot in common that I admire. Both are intellectually curious, possess a strong moral compass, and have conviction in their strategy. I've witnessed the effectiveness and power of these qualities in leaders and have worked to adopt them in my approach. My career began in finance – business development, strategy, and M&A. I was new to the insurance industry when Global Atlantic was founded, but I knew these qualities were universal, and I leaned on them heavily to build from the ground up in a new market.

Another approach to leadership I have adopted from them is to invest in people and recognize their meaningful contributions to our success. Ultimately success comes down to the people who make up an organization. I truly believe that, and at Global Atlantic, we work hard to attract, retain, develop and mentor great people. We then empower them to lead. In my seat, I need to trust that decisions are being made at the right level, but I also want to be informed and engaged. I like to stay close to our business decisions, teams, and

clients while supporting the development of our emerging Global Atlantic leaders.



You've talked about how Global Atlantic's culture and people differentiate it in the marketplace. What sets them apart, and how critical are they for spurring innovation?



Global Atlantic was founded and built with an entrepreneurial spirit that still permeates the company today. People feel invested in the company's success and engage across disciplines. I'm proud of the fact that we made 100 percent of our employees equity owners of the business, both when we separated from Goldman Sachs and again when we closed the KKR transaction. This has helped us retain great people who embody an ownership mentality and want to make an impact. The entrepreneurial nature of our culture facilitates problem-solving and drives innovation.

Our culture is built first and foremost on integrity — doing the right thing. Without integrity and teamwork, we would not have been able to execute at the highest standards.

It amazes me to think that we separated from our parent company, completed two major acquisitions within our first 18 months, built two market-leading businesses, and sold the company to KKR — all with much of the same leadership team in place. More recently, we were named Partner of the Year at Wells Fargo, executed our first international reinsurance transaction, and are launching the Global Atlantic Foundation with a meaningful corporate contribution. All of this activity was executed with exceptional teamwork and exemplifies the broader aspects of our culture.

I'm very proud that this is the culture we have at Global Atlantic. My job now is to continue to nurture it as the ultimate source of our success.



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