

**BLOG**

# Honoring Our Entrepreneurial Roots

By John Mina

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Managing, mitigating and understanding the unique risks of our clients is how Risk Strategies has built a national reputation for expertise with half a billion in revenue and nearly 1,800 employees. So naturally, when Founder and CEO Mike Christian started thinking about the company's future after 22 years at the reigns, the issue of leadership succession was met with the same level of careful consideration and planning that we give our clients every day.



Both Mike and I wanted to ensure the change in leadership caused minimal disruption for the company, that we were both aligned on the future of the organization and that there would be a thoughtful continued trajectory of the firm.

In preparation for my transition from president to CEO, I was able to spend the last two and half years visiting and working with every office across the country (there are over 60!), meeting just about every employee in person and getting to know the organization inside and out. While my focus as Mike's successor is on the long-term success and perpetuation of the business, it's important to me that we never forget our roots.

## **Shifting Gears**

Mike Christian is an entrepreneur at heart. That's obvious when you see how quickly he's built a unique organization. Through smart, robust M&A activity, Risk Strategies has undergone explosive growth, with 60 acquisitions in the last six years. But Mike recognizes that the entrepreneurial skills required to rapidly grow a company are very different than the skills required to run and scale it. We've reached a time in the maturation of a firm when it's appropriate for the next generation to step in.

There's now a greater need for systems, processes and technology to keep us nimble at scale, robust internal communications, and programs to enrich and nurture our associates, and to ensure professional standards are in place. These are all critical elements for a large brokerage like Risk Strategies. Over the past 30 years, I've done almost every job there is to do within a brokerage, and my skillset — particularly in professional management and production — has been stress-tested in a variety of ways. Mike will continue to guide the strategic direction of the company, actively participate on the board of directors, focus on ways to materially deepen the value proposition of our specialty practice areas and enhance the overall client experience.

## Looking Ahead

I'm often asked about my goals for leading Risk Strategies into the future. Over the short term I have two: reach \$1B in revenue in the next five years and become known as a destination employer in all the places we do business.

How will we get there? We'll use a combination of the elements that brought us success so far as well as some new ones. Historically, focusing our acquisition strategy on business specialties rather than geography has given us a real advantage in the market. Effective integration into the Risk Strategies family means ensuring cultural alignment with the firms we acquire. Does the organization have a similar philosophy to employee engagement, for example? Do they do charitable work? Collaboration is a key organizational value for us as well. We'll continue to look for firms that are well-grounded and that demonstrate some humility in their leadership.

Moving forward, we recognize that it's incumbent on us to keep up on how the industry and the world-at-large are changing. In today's on-demand marketplace, there's a greater emphasis on technology and efficiency.

Specialty insurance is complex and nuanced, and not something you can purchase with the click of a mouse, but today's buyer expects convenience and personalization instantly. The more we can use technology to create a better client experience by offering quick, concise, actionable information, the more aligned we'll be with their expectations. As we've grown, we're also offering more services - like actuarial, pre- and post-loss cost containment and safety - that will further enhance our client's risk management programs.

As I take up the mantle as CEO, I feel incredibly fortunate to have an amazing team behind me who make magic happen every day for our clients. In the end, it's important to me that Risk Strategies is known as an employer of choice, that we attract and retain quality people, that we go above-and-beyond in adding value for our clients, and that we create an environment in which people are empowered to work collaboratively toward a common goal. Staying true to our core values as we continue to scale and grow will help get us there.

I am greatly looking forward to the future of Risk Strategies. If you'd like to talk, you can find me on [LinkedIn](#).

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