

INSURANCE – GENERAL

More turn to professional development during pandemic



The pandemic boosted self-reflection and some industry professionals have turned to training and qualifications for an advantage in a post-pandemic world, says **Chartered Insurance Institute Middle East's Ms Gaenor Jones.**



The COVID-19 pandemic has left a deep and lasting impact on the insurance and financial planning sectors. Despite the unprecedented challenges, in retrospect, the sector's professionals will probably consider it as a period that ignited opportunities, particularly for personal professional development.

For many, working from home (WFH) was welcomed initially as a chance to achieve a work/life balance through fewer hours spent commuting or on administrative tasks which became unnecessary when working from a home environment. However, as the months wore on, some people experienced feelings of isolation and loneliness. A recent social media survey by the CII revealed that six out of 10 insurance professionals suffered depression, anxiety emotional distress or another mental health condition during the pandemic. Another survey showed that half of the respondents expect to work remotely two to three days a week once the virus is controlled.

These outcomes have carved the way for employers to consider offering new hybrid working models, providing individuals with the opportunity to blend office working and peer group socialisation with home working and flexi-time. Companies that can do this will be demonstrating an empathetic and caring approach and a dedication to their employees' welfare, as well as boosting their reputation as progressive employers.

Greater self-reflection


The pandemic encouraged self-reflection and caused many individuals to question their career path progression and whether they held the qualifications and accreditations that would boost their career prospects. More individuals

across the globe have attained qualifications. This has been good for both the sector's employees and employers alike, creating a knowledgeable and confident talent pool.

The pandemic has shone a spotlight on issues that were not considered high priority such as business continuity, travel and aviation insurance and events.

Demand for more qualification

Membership of a professional body is valued because it offers the opportunity to boost learning and insight by providing regular webinars and information feeds. The next decade beckons a new era of innovation and progress and there are sector topics that professionals who wish to remain relevant must familiarise themselves with. These include data analytics, AI and climate risk. Employers prepared to invest in consistent learning and development programmes for their staff are bound to minimise their talent turnover and attract the most knowledgeable individuals.

Employers will also have to embrace challenges that will automatically come with WFH, such as cyber risks and security, which will require the provision of ongoing training programmes to ensure employees are fully compliant and consistently updated. The response to mental health and emotional wellbeing will have to be demonstrated with practical systems, processes and procedures aimed at relieving pressure points and work challenges. This is important in a sector that has to respond constantly to an evolving societal, cultural, political and economic landscape with all the challenges that that brings. 

Ms Gaenor Jones is regional director of the Chartered Insurance Institute Middle East.