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The Risk Retention Reporter

Dan Towle on the CICA Presidency and the Upcoming Conference

The **Captive Insurance Companies Association** (CICA) will be holding its annual conference from March 11th to 13th at the Westin Kierland Resort & Spa in Scottsdale, Arizona. It will be the first conference for CICA President Dan Towle since taking over for Dennis Harwick in April 2017. Towle recently spoke with the *Risk Retention Reporter* on the upcoming conference and his term as CICA president thus far.

Risk Retention Reporter: How are preparations for the CICA conference coming along? What is your role in the planning and execution of the conference?

Dan Towle: Clearly this is my first year in the role. I believe I'm adjusting well to it all, but there's a lot to learn and thankfully I've got a supportive board and a very good staff supporting me. The membership's been wonderful as well. I'm certainly learning the association side of the business; that's new to me.

As for planning, I oversee all functions of the conference. I would say one of the challenges this year, which I think is positive, is that I have rolled up my sleeves and got involved with as much of the planning activities as possible. I truly believe I need to understand this business from the ground up. So I'm asking a lot of good questions, but I'm sure I'm asking some silly questions as well. One of the things that I truly believe is that as a new president coming in, my role is to give everything another look from a new perspective. Just because we've done something for a couple of years and have been successful doesn't mean that we shouldn't look at it; perhaps tweak it or adjust it.

One of the new programs launched by CICA this year was the mentorship program. Do you have any sessions relating to the mentorship program and young professionals at the conference?

We have a number of sessions geared towards young professionals. We have a session that will be put on by **Butler University** students and their professor on "Using Captives and Experiential Learning to Recruit and Train Millennials", and we have another panel session that includes a student and a professor from **Temple University** titled, "Fueling the Quality and Quantity of the Next Generation of Captive Leaders."

We are also going to have a lunch for mentors at the conference where we plan to connect mentors and mentees together. We certainly want to promote the program since we could use more mentors. One of the challenges is getting enough mentors to make sure that the mentees have options.

How has response been to the mentorship program so far? Are you looking to grow the ranks at the conference?

There has been a great deal of excitement with the mentorship program and we want to continue to grow the ranks. Our current group is made up of mentors who are considered leaders in our industry; however, a disproportionate number of them are in senior roles. That's a positive, but many of the mentees signing up are very early in their

career. Our research shows that we need to get more mid-level people as mentors, because if I'm 25 and just starting in the industry, I might relate better to someone who's 35, as opposed to someone older.

Of course, experience isn't the only factor. It's up to the mentee to find the correct fit, and that's different for everyone. A mentee might want to contact a mentor that has gone through a merger or acquisition. Sometimes the issue may not even be work related; it might be dealing with work/life balance with children in the house. It's hard to define that, so we left it very open. We expect there to be a two way conversation between the mentor and mentee to make sure it's a positive fit.

The theme of this year's conference is the Challenge of Change. Do you have any goals for CICA moving forward?

Certainly, part of what I want to do is build more community among our members. We've spent a lot of time already this year building more avenues of communication. We have more dialogue with our members. I do a monthly president's letter. We're much more active on social media than we've ever been before. We're also doing things to help young professionals and hopefully that will help develop that next generation of captive leaders. Part of that is certainly what we're doing with our mentorship program, and we also have established a program with Butler University. I expect that we will have other partnerships with other universities in the future. Our members want us to increase our voice and visibility in the market place and continuing those efforts is an overall goal for CICA.

Speaking of change, are there any sessions that you feel are of particular importance given the current environment for captives?

From my perspective, that's probably the toughest question, because I'm excited about a lot of the sessions. First, we're an international association, and we have some incredible sessions from an international perspective. For the first time a session will feature the leadership of **ECIROA** (The European Captive Insurance and Reinsurance Owners' Association) that will cover challenges facing European captive insurers. I'm also excited about the sessions dealing with mentorship and young professionals.

From an RRG perspective, we invited Joe Deems of **NRRA** to put on a session. So far we have five sessions that either deal directly with risk retention groups or feature a risk retention group speaker. I think we have a lot to offer for risk retention groups looking to attend our conference. And, of course, the tax sessions are always popular. This year we will have two tax sessions, one from a small captive perspective and another from a large captive perspective, and while there will be some overlap, I think it is a good way to split it up. It will be valuable to see where there are commonalities and where there are differences.

Any other comments on your time as president or the 2018 conference?

I would encourage people if they haven't been to the CICA Conference in a while to come check us out again. We have a great event planned, and I think attendees will be pleasantly surprised with the developments and ideas we put forward.