



Asia Pacific Has A Lot to Celebrate When it Comes to Diversity and Inclusion

Michael Garrison

President, Asia Pacific, Allied World

Asia Pacific's Insurance industry provides a unique example of how diverse and inclusive workplaces help propel growth.

Generally speaking, where other, more mature insurance markets have taken decades to become more diverse and inclusive, Asia Pacific already presents a melting pot of backgrounds and experiences. This, I believe, is one of the main reasons for the region's rapid growth; 76% of the growth in the global insurance business came from Asia (ex-Japan) in 2017*.

What has been exciting for me, having spent 3 years with the Allied World team here, is seeing the people behind our products and services reflecting the diversity of our customer's perspectives.

In our APAC offices - in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Australia - I'm

proud to say that we have 17 different nationalities across our 350 people, and that two-thirds of our workforce is female. 30% of our senior leadership team are women, and I expect we'll see this figure continue to rise.

How have we achieved that? Outside of the inherent ethnic diversity of Asia Pacific, in some ways I believe it's an economic theory – demand and supply - if your demand for talent outweighs the supply, you're less likely to follow preconceived notions and views on who should be handling those positions – and therefore you hire for the right reasons.

“We hire people who can add the greatest value and diversity of thought.”

Diversity at Allied World APAC

17 Nationalities

2/3 Female Workforce

30% Women in Leadership

And while being a younger organisation has given us the opportunity to build the right teams, we're focused on concrete actions that support diversity as we mature.

The people running our teams are looking for diversity of values and thought leadership. Throughout the hiring process we provide honest and open

Allied World's commitment to a diverse workforce

- Every role is filled based on finding the right person that adds diversity of value and thought leadership.
- Ensure openness in the hiring process with potential employees – we tell them who we are and what we stand for and encourage them do the same.
- Look within our own company to diversify our existing teams – and facilitate individual growth and career opportunities for employees based on their individual goals.

information on who we are and where we want to be as a business. We encourage the same level of openness from our potential hires, and anyone that applies has an equal opportunity to succeed. We also ensure diversity in our succession planning; we look at what we need for future roles, and what we have in our current talent pool. Through quarterly discussions we encourage

our people to openly look for ways to grow their careers within Allied World. Wherever possible, we aim to accommodate our talent wherever they want to be, either in terms of lifestyle or role choices.

I've seen wonderful examples of placing people in roles across borders, where their background and skills have been a tremendous asset. Top talent from Asia Pacific also have representation in global initiatives such as our High Potential program, which gives them access to global senior management and the ability to influence corporate strategies, and which conversely gives Allied World a diversity in thought at the most senior strategic level.

But we can always do more; and of my colleagues and counterparts in the region, I ask: "Where else should we focus our attention?"

I believe there are cultural norms or expectations that may be holding back employees from expressing their true self. That's not necessarily unique to Asia Pacific, but I think this is an area we can improve on; to encourage employees to have greater freedom of expression.

As an industry there are also opportunities for those with special needs to enter the workforce and we should be committed to ensuring a focused improvement in this regard.

Can the global insurance industry do better?

A 2017 survey of UK insurance firms showed a 1.2% representation of people with disabilities.*

Diversity in thought drives better business outcomes.

For people outside of Insurance, I tell them that whilst, historically, our industry may not have been viewed as diverse, if we can generate your interest in insurance as a career choice, the doors are open and there are opportunities for all.

I genuinely believe that having diversity of thought and values creates a better working environment, building more effective teams that achieve results. To ensure that we exceed the expectations of our customers, we all have a responsibility to ensure a diverse and inclusive environment and community. Just look to your own Asia Pacific teams for inspiration.

Michael Garrison is President, Asia Pacific, Allied World. He is responsible for the strategic leadership of the Global Markets insurance operations in Asia Pacific and is charged with oversight of the company's direct insurance offices in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Australia.