

Arch Insurance International Pursuing Better Together Podcast: Arch Women & Allies Network – Gaia Corbetta and Barbara Rizzi

Arch Insurance International

Hello and welcome to another in Arch Insurance International's Pursuing Better Together podcast series. In today's conversation, we are marking International Women's Day and I'm delighted to be speaking to Arch Insurance International's Gaia Corbetta, Senior Actuarial Analyst and Barbara Rizzi, Vice President and Head of Third-Party Claims, and perhaps more importantly in the context of our discussion, they're both Co-Chairs of the UK arm of Arch's Women and Allies network. Firstly, thank you both for joining us today to talk about the activities of the network itself and also why such groups are so important to giving people a voice.

I'd like to start our talk by asking you to give me an understanding of some of the overarching objectives of the Women and Allies network?

Barbara Rizzi

I should say that network fits very nicely into the inclusive leadership and culture that we promote at Arch. The overarching mission of the network is to drive career advancement for the women at Arch through a series of initiatives including sponsorship, mentorship, and networking in general.

Gaia Corbetta

And what we aim to be doing with the network as well is to develop the engagement of both the women and allies and overall the creation of our community within Arch to help foster an inclusive environment.

Arch Insurance International

In line with our theme of Pursuing Better Together today, I want to ask how important you would say such networks are to making people heard and how do you ensure they help influence the organisation itself?

Barbara Rizzi

I think Nigel, these networks are essential. In my view they represent a perfect bridge between the workforce and HR. They're a channel for the workforce to make their voices heard, to bring new ideas, also concerns. The network, as I mentioned before, is very inclusive, very open to new ideas. We welcome everyone's views. And in terms of internally, the way the network is perceived, we receive the highest support from the highest levels of the organisation, our sponsor is our president. So, ideas do reach the highest level of the executive team. So, members can rest assured that their ideas are shared and heard.

Arch Insurance International

Can I ask you both what role the allies play in helping to promote workplace equity and greater gender equality?

Gaia Corbetta

I think allyship is absolutely essential. And of course, our network is called Women and Allies, similarly to all our employee networks at Arch. We actually did an event last year where we asked a few of our allies to come and talk to us about how they can best support the networks and how they can help promote gender equity and equality in the organisation. And I think one of the best ways that this can be achieved is through sponsorship and mentorship. And we talked at length, about the differences between the two and how each individual can go and find a sponsor or a mentor, either on their own or with the help of various programs, which are available both within Arch and externally.

Barbara Rizzi

Yes, I completely second that, allies are crucial to the success of the network, because as Gaia said, it's women and allies, so hopefully the network encompasses everyone. And we need allies to foster better workplaces where there's more equality and workplaces where there's more inclusion and diversity.

Arch Insurance International

Fantastic. And Gaia turning to you, I believe that the network itself was launched in 2021. How has it grown since then? And how have you looked to build and maintain the engagement with it?

Gaia Corbetta

Yeah, that's right. So, it was launched at the beginning of 2021. So in terms of growth, we currently have a base membership of around 600 employees worldwide and our objective is, of course, to maintain this membership and to ensure a constant growth. And what we've done to build the network was at the beginning to put together all these building blocks and create a structure for it, which includes of course, an administration structure. So, in terms of monitoring the membership base, and making sure that the feedback that we hear is used and shared with the leaders of the organisation. And then ensuring that we have the activities set up for our network. So, we put together an agenda, which consists mostly of monthly meetings, we have every year a fixed appointment, which is in March, to celebrate International Women's Day with various events. We have other events that we collaborate with the other network groups to celebrate, for example, Black History Month, or Pride Month in June. So, these are the main things. We've built an extended leadership group, which is made of volunteers on which we rely upon for different tasks. For example, it could be communications, it could be project management, and helping us carrying the activities of the network forward.

Arch Insurance International

Could you perhaps tell me about some of the standout initiatives that the group has been involved in or carried out to date?

Gaia Corbetta

I think one of the objectives that Barbara mentioned earlier of the network is about attracting and promoting career development for women. And for this particular objective, we've worked hard in terms of spotlighting women at Arch. So, we've done a series of events, where we invited internal women that have senior leadership roles within the company to talk about their career, and how they measure their own success. So, we had a couple last year, and we had one at the beginning of this year, where we invited our ACGL board members to talk about their career and what it means being on the board of Arch.

Barbara Rizzi

Yes, that was a fantastic event, I thought. Obviously, all female, non-executive directors of Arch Group, with very different stories, and so fascinating and inspiring.

Arch Insurance International

We've talked there about activities that have already been conducted. But of course, there must be so many things that are in the pipeline as well. Can you just give the audience a bit of an indication of some of the things that are planned for 2023?

Barbara Rizzi

Yeah, sure. We've been working hard to try with our co-chairs also from the US to try and plan out activities and initiatives for International Women's Day. We're organising not one but three events all in March. One would be an external speaker who's incredible and she's going to come and talk to us about growth mindset, amongst other things. We're going to also have a panel, an internal panel, led by our fantastic HR team on the theme of equity, which is the theme for the International Women's Day worldwide this year. And I think we're going to finish off with another event linked awareness, so watch this space.

Arch Insurance International

How important do you think networks like this are to helping drive change not just within an organisation like Arch but also potentially at the industry level. That idea of them starting to influence these issues at a market level? How important is that?

Gaia Corbetta

I think, as Barbara said at the beginning, I share her vision that this is absolutely essential in organisations like Arch, and we want to collaborate with our peers and competitors externally to create a more inclusive workplace at an industry level, not only for our organisation. And because of this, we partner with external organisations such as, for example, iCAN, and the ISC, the insurance supper club, to create sort of an external network that then we can offer to our members as well.

Barbara Rizzi

And I should also add that when I started out in this industry, it was a very male dominated environment and

these topics weren't even discussed. The fact that we're here today discussing about this, in such an open forum is already kind of impacting, is already making waves and change. So, it's not just us talking about it but it's our peers, it's our competitors, everybody is talking about it. And that in itself creates opportunities and opportunities to create change. So absolutely, we do believe that the networks are a fantastic tool to help affect change.

Arch Insurance International

Thank you, both for giving us such a fantastic insight into the activities and the achievements of the Women and Allies network and also a real sense of why such networks are so important for uniting people and also helping to bring about that positive change that we've been talking about. It's been an absolute pleasure speaking to you both and thank you once again for your time today.