A combined passion for business and people led Janet Mascitelli to a career as a surety underwriter. She is now vice-president, surety with Trisura, a leading Canadian specialty insurance and surety provider, with leadership responsibilities for Ontario and Atlantic Canada.

Mascitelli began her career in banking. Deciding she wanted a change, she sought a new path that would include the elements of banking she had enjoyed most. “I started as a financial analyst, learning about the business of construction and how to understand financial statements in relation to contractors,” she says.

In those early days she began interacting with insurance brokers and contractors. She quickly realized that every client had individual needs, a different approach to business and unique personalities.

“Some people were naturally forthcoming and others more reluctant to share the details of their businesses that I needed to know,” she said.

She found an advantage in getting people to open up: she truly wanted to hear their stories and had a genuine interest in the businesses her clients had built. “People are always proud of their companies and what they have built. Once they knew I was interested many were happy to share and that helped educate me about the industry along the way.”

At work, she learned from people who were knowledgeable and had more experience. Soon she moved into underwriting, a position involving more autonomy and negotiation.

“I truly enjoyed what I was doing and it made me want to dig in and figure things out,” she says. “This isn’t a job for sitting back waiting for someone to hand over the answers. I had to jump in and solve things myself.”

In time she found her way to Trisura, founded in 2006 on the premise that exceptional service, comprehensive products, and hard work would create a company that would appeal to brokers.

Chris Sekine, senior vice-president, surety, says the company’s difference is not in product – a bond is a bond – but rather, in providing superior service to brokers and their clients and the belief that business can be done better.

Mascitelli says she liked Trisura’s founders’ vision of collaboration, and knew they were bright, hard-working and passionate people. “There was integrity in the people at the heart of the company that made me want to make the move,” she says.

When she began her career 28 years ago, the world looked different. She says at that time people found ways to make family and life fit the job. “I always made sure I put in the extra time as needed and my employers have been flexible with understanding family commitments. If I needed time off for family I would take work home and put in the extra hours to get the work done.”

Now she says, people seem to look for careers that will fit their family and lives outside work. She says part of this is a result of connectivity and people understanding they can work from home and still do their job. While companies are finding ways to meet the home-based work demands, she says in-person contact is still important.

“Juggling family and career is hard but it makes life interesting,” she says. “Networking electronically is great but I always tell people that picking up the phone or having a face-to-face meeting is the best way to build a real relationship. When times are tough those face-to-face connections are real and will stand the test.”

Relationships are a big part of the industry and Mascitelli says she has been able to forge them through the same mechanisms as her male counterparts, but had to understand there were differences.

“I am an avid golfer so I had the ability to build relationships on the course and through industry tournaments the same as...
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