



From News Desk to Distribution

Episode 50 Show Notes

In this episode of the Insurance Leadership Podcast, co-host Ben Markland sits down with Alisha Pequeno, National Distribution Manager of Consumer Solutions at Zurich North America. Recorded live from the ICMG Conference in Tampa, Florida, this conversation takes a look into Alisha's unconventional career journey—from broadcast journalism to executive leadership in the insurance world.

With over a decade of experience navigating carrier relationships and leading growth strategies, Alisha shares how adaptability, communication, and mentorship have shaped her career. Her insights are both practical and inspiring for anyone in the insurance industry—or anyone charting a new course in leadership.

From the Anchor Chair to Insurance Strategy

Alisha didn't grow up dreaming of insurance—but like many, she found her calling in an unexpected place. After working as a journalist and TV anchor, she returned home to the Northeast and began freelancing. Her freelance writing for an insurance marketing company opened the door to a new career path. Over the next ten years, she helped grow that company from a 12-person team to 200+ employees, evolving from PR to agent recruitment to national business development.

Career pivots often reveal our strengths. Alisha's story reminds us that leadership can grow out of curiosity, grit, and willingness to start over.

Explaining Value in a Crowded Marketplace

Working with over 150 carriers, Alisha witnessed the changing dynamics of the industry firsthand—from ACA shifts to waves of disappearing commissions. Early on, she had to educate carriers on what a Field Marketing Organization (FMO) was and why overrides were justified. She recalls negotiating value in times when commissions were slashed, proving that brokers and

agencies weren't just selling—they were providing infrastructure, licensing, training, and scalability.

As a leader, your ability to articulate your values, especially during hard seasons, can be the difference between surviving and thriving.

Mentorship, Zurich, and the Power of Persistence

When Alisha married the president of her previous company, she knew it was time for a new chapter. Instead of jumping into just any job, she leaned on years of built relationships and reached out to mentors she admired—Chris Howard and Ronald Kowski. Though Zurich didn't have an open position right away, she stayed patient and persistent for nine months until a role became available. Her decision was guided not just by opportunity but by alignment with values and leadership.

The right relationships can open doors, but it's your character and persistence that keep them open.

Service That Sets You Apart

As Alisha points out, most accident and health products in today's insurance market are quite similar due to regulatory limitations. But what *can* be differentiated is the level of service and communication that accompanies those products. She shares how she strives to be the kind of carrier representative who's available, proactive, and deeply supportive of broker relationships, helping partners avoid miscommunications, deliver training, and drive better client outcomes.

She also highlights how being responsive, doing what you say you're going to do—has become rare enough to stand out. Her goal: to be the kind of rep that brokers can count on not just for product details, but for real partnership.

In a regulated industry, your service becomes your product. Trust, clarity, and communication are the leadership tools that elevate everything else you offer.

Closing Thoughts on Leadership

At the Insurance Leadership Podcast, we believe the most powerful leadership begins when you're willing to evolve. Alisha Pequeno's journey is a powerful reminder that success isn't about following a traditional path, it's about showing up with clarity, building strong partnerships, and staying rooted in purpose even when the landscape changes.

Whether you're new to the industry, leading a growing team, or figuring out your next step, Alisha's story invites you to lead with intention, resilience, and service.

What's Next on the Insurance Leadership Podcast

In our upcoming episode, co-host Ben Markland sits down with Chris Ellis, founder and CEO of Thatch, a health benefits platform on a mission to revolutionize how people access care. Thatch delivers a modern, member-first experience that puts transparency, simplicity, and support at the heart of healthcare.

Chris brings a bold vision for rethinking benefits—from helping startups navigate plan design, to empowering employees to actually *use* their coverage. With a background in both tech and healthcare, Chris breaks down the barriers that have long made benefits confusing and inaccessible.

Don't miss it—this conversation explores where insurance, innovation, and real impact collide.

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