INTRODUCTION

The industry I've devoted my professional life to, insurance, is about managing future risk. To do it well—to do it with purpose—requires a great deal of preparation.

Hurricanes offer a case in point. In late October 2012, millions in the eastern United States braced for what shaped up to become the largest Atlantic storm on record. As Superstorm Sandy brought winds as high as 115 miles per hour offshore, I left our offices in New York City to prepare our home in Rhode Island, where it was expected to make landfall. On Friday, October 26, while stacking furniture, my phone rang.

"Hey, they are now saying it's going to hit New York City," I was told.

The implications were enormous. The insurance company I lead, Guardian Life, has thousands of employees in New York and tens of thousands of policyholders in the tristate area. As the city prepared to evacuate, my husband and I drove toward the storm with more than a little urgency. While en route, I spoke with our team, including the IT Department, which busily worked to flip our systems from a data center in New York to our data center in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

By Monday, October 29, National Guard troops were deployed, flights were canceled at all the airports, and the

Tappan Zee Bridge was closed to traffic. Even the Starbucks stores shut down. The following evening, the center of the storm made landfall. The nightmare for many Americans was just beginning.

Superstorm Sandy, which had swelled to twice the size of Texas, was pummeling the East Coast.[1] In New York Harbor, three-story waves crashed over retaining walls and into the city.[2] Already the storm had displaced thousands of Americans from their homes and caused countless dollars in property damage.

Fortunately, the storm surge was twenty miles from our home, but the winds were incredibly dangerous. To be safe, my dog and I found the sturdiest piece of furniture in our home and took shelter beneath it with a small portable radio and a blanket. On the radio I listened to reports of the destruction. Later I would learn that the storm had submerged fifty-one square miles of New York City, where our offices are located, and damaged or destroyed homes throughout the region.[3]

It would become one of the defining moments of my early tenure as CEO of Guardian. I was not standing in a conference room or sitting in a corner office. Instead, I was huddled under a desk, arms wrapped around my dog, praying the pair of us wouldn't get flattened by a falling tree.

Tucked beneath that desk, I wasn't worried immediately about flooded buildings or damaged property. I was worried about our people. Guardian employees lived in the path of the storm. Were they and their families safe? Because the phone and Internet were down, it was a question without an answer.

Instead of worrying, I started planning.

With the wind still howling, I headed to our Stamford, Connecticut, office—avoiding downed powerlines and tree limbs. On arrival I ran into Doug Greene from our IT Department. He was carrying a plastic bag from a local office supply store.

"Hi, Doug. What are you doing here?"

"We have to trade tomorrow morning if the stock market opens."

He had assembled a makeshift trading floor just in case. While he tended to his projects, I turned my attention to the question that preoccupied my time beneath the desk beside my dog. How could Guardian help employees get back on their feet? How could we get in touch with employees who had been evacuated or relocated? What did we need to do in the short and long term to mitigate the disruptive impact of the storm on the lives of our friends, neighbors, and colleagues?

In my head I began to sketch the rough outlines of a plan—a plan that was guided by a simple principle: people would be the priority, whatever shape Guardian's hurricane response took. Actuarial tables, margins, and profits would take a backseat to doing what's right for our policyholders.

During that devastating week, there were widespread power, phone, and internet outages, yet our team got on their feet (and their bikes) to find Wi-Fi where they could communicate with policyholders. Our goal was to ensure that they could receive the disability insurance and other payments on which they relied. A manager in our finance group cycled past store after store to find the nearest power source—a coffee shop—to charge his phone, upload data to connect to our systems, and close the quarterly books on time.

A few years later, Hurricane Harvey triggered devastating flooding in Houston, Texas, where we had recently acquired a business with about fifty employees. Harvey and Katrina are the two costliest hurricanes on record. Over a four-day period, many areas in and around Houston received more than forty inches of rain, flooding homes, businesses, vehicles, and livelihoods.[4] As the clouds were starting to part over Texas, our human resources director paused to reflect on what our employees would be experiencing as they returned home from evacuation.

"You know, there will be no power, and they are going to have to restock their refrigerators," he said.

"What do you suggest we do?" I asked.

"We should deposit $1,000 in everyone's bank account."

So we did, along with notes to use those funds for food or fuel to help them get through these difficult days and to let us know if they needed more. A few weeks later, at a Committee for Economic Development dinner focused on public policy, I reminded my colleagues that sometimes policy change at the macro level can be very difficult. But policies at the micro level can be achievable. That's what we did for our people in Texas.

Mother Teresa once said we're not called to do great things. But we can do small things with great love.

Responding quickly to a crisis is an enormous undertaking, one that requires commitment. Coordination, and creativity. But of all of the resources on which a company must draw to implement a crisis response effectively, perhaps the most important is consensus about values. Not consensus regarding *what* needs to be done, but consensus regarding *why*. Not consensus regarding specific strategy, but consensus on the broad principles underlying that strategy—fairness, putting people first, and accountability.

As a company, Guardian has evolved and advanced over the past century and a half. We have always worked to look out for people in good times and bad, to think long term about our business and our brand, and to ensure that no one has to go broke trying to stay healthy or recover after a loss. Leo Futia, one of my predecessors as CEO, was fond of a phrase that I believe clearly encapsulates what all of that means: "there is no right way to do a wrong thing."[5]

However, soon after taking the helm as CEO, I noticed some consternation in the company. Our industry, our economy, and our world were facing significant disruption. To survive that disruption, some wondered, would we need to compromise? Could the values that had guided us throughout our past also lead us into the future?

I believed they could.

During my first year as CEO, I worked with leaders throughout the company to review our shared values and to reanimate them in ways that helped us to make decisions for the benefit of policyholders, our customers. We refined those values, which were already in place. Those three core beliefs ultimately guided us during Superstorm Sandy and beyond:

- We do the right thing.
- People count.
- We hold ourselves to very high standards.

On March 10, 2020, New York was caught in a storm of a very different kind. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that there were 36 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the state and Governor Cuomo announced a containment zone in the city of New Rochelle.[6] I wrote to Guardian employees to remind them that our values are cornerstones and solid handholds in times of uncertainty. I told them we were built for situations like this.

Through upswings and downswings, through the uncertain and the unexpected, the Guardian leadership team vowed that these three principles would serve as our North Star. Today every Guardian associate can recite these values.

In making such a commitment, these principles became something more: a purpose. As I often say, a principle is something you have; a purpose is something you *live*. And we as a company had decided to live these principles.

To live our purpose, though, Guardian must be financially stable. As a mutual life insurance company, we are beholden to our policyholders, not to investors and Wall Street. That can be clarifying for a business.

Investor and author Dan Cable wrote in *Harvard Business Review* that "if you're a leader, helping others feel a sense of purpose can be a powerful tool." Employees don't want to be robots—they want to feel inspired and find meaning. But purpose can sound lofty and vague. "It's about helping people see their impact on others and helping them develop a story about why they love what they do."[7] Cable advises to make your company's purpose meet three bars: personal, authentic, and perpetual.

Business and industry now have seen the confluence of three important shifts that shape the ideas undergirding this book. At the meta level, businesses are becoming both purpose-driven and profit-driven. That's a welcome turn for both employees and consumers. Second, as a result, our team was prepared, not scared. We shifted to remote work instantly. Finally, we also see the rise of Big Data, artificial intelligence (AI), mixed reality, ever-increasing automation. Again, that can be very good for workers and consumers, but it also incites fear. Will my job go away? Do I have the right skills to evolve with the future of work?

With *Hire Purpose*, I set out to seriously explore the questions of whose jobs are going away or being disrupted by AI and whose responsibility it is to create a system to educate and train—to skill, re-skill and upskill—the workforce of the future.

This is a crisis that will affect blue-collar and white-collar—all-collar and no-collar—jobs. If my company's actuaries are retraining for the digital era, so should you. The duty to prepare every worker demands a multisector response—from traditional secondary and postsecondary schools to business and employers themselves—through nontraditional investments ranging from workplace internships and apprenticeships to certifications and job-specific upskilling.

So why is an insurance executive presenting this argument? First of all, financial services such as insurance are embracing Big Data for greater precision and better service. We have to compete. Today, a billion-dollar business can be out-innovated by one person in a garage. And with time, the pace of change will only accelerate. If companies fail to keep up, this failure could tank productivity, undermine competitiveness, and leave 85.2 million jobs unfilled globally by 2030.[8] The stakes couldn't be higher.

Insuring a person's life is an actuarial science in which education and employment correspond with health outcomes and mortality. Although a range of academic researchers and management consultants have offered their analyses of AI's potential impact on jobs, who better to provide insights than an insurance industry executive who has invested billions of dollars in projections about our future lives?

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has urged leaders in the public and private sectors to embrace what he calls "tech intensity" to create their comparative advantage in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.[9] Tech intensity is defined as adopting leading-edge technologies such as AI *and* investing in the human capital to optimize those technologies. General Assembly's Anand Chopra-McGowan echoed this argument: He writes that any business can invest in advanced technologies, but creating a workforce that's ready to use them is much harder. The business literature is ablaze with opinions and speculation about which jobs will be disrupted by automation and the implications for education and training.[10] Steve Glaveski, founder of Collective

Campus, writes that in 2016, organizations spent $359 billion globally on training.[11] The question often asked is this: was it worth it?

Preparing a resilient workforce for the future is not only gathering momentum, it is now being measured. Whiteshield Partners publishes an annual Global Labor Resilience index that measures a nation's level of future unemployment risk based on structural, policy, and technological shifts as well as geographical inequalities.[12]

The traditional lines between education and work have started to blur. As the skills required to be successful—whether in a factory or an office—are changing by the day, educators need real-time information about which skills will be useful in the market, employers need new tools to understand and assess which skills graduates bring to the table, and employees need new ways to grow and adapt with the changing demands of their roles.

In this book I endeavor to demonstrate how those needs can be met. I share what I've learned to help businesses fulfill their duty to society and prepare our workforce for the future. I offer research, case studies, and stories to help business leaders understand the unique challenges we face today. I also offer practical examples, from Guardian and elsewhere, that illustrate the ways in which we can create lasting change.

In the first part, I share the story of insurance in society and review the technological changes that brought us to this pivotal moment, from advances in machine learning to the proliferation of data. I examine the specific skills needed in the coming decades, as well as the ways in which our current education and training systems could be adapted to provide these skills to students and bridge the gap from classroom to career.

In the second part, I offer ideas and examples for business leaders seeking to implement change. Chapter 3 frames a specific theory of change that requires alignment across education, training, and industry. First, bring the classroom into the workplace: create lifelong learning opportunities so employees can grow and adapt to workforce changes throughout their careers. Second, bring the workplace into the classroom: forge innovative, cross-sector partnerships to bring cutting-edge expertise to students everywhere. Third, reimagine the diploma: adopt new credentialing systems that better communicate a person's skills. Finally, put people first: invest in your employees, inside the workplace and out.

Having spent my career in the insurance industry, I've learned enough about risk and reward to know how important it is to face an unknown future together, not alone. Having seen the immediate impact of automation in the financial sector and beyond, I know we cannot afford to do nothing. Our future depends on our ability and willingness to act—and to act with purpose.

We have lots to do, and not a lot of time to do it. But we also have everything we need to make the future of work *work* for all.