

## Prudential Insurance Company of America



### John W. Greene, CLU, ChFC—President, Agency Distribution

President of Agency Distribution John W. Greene serves in Prudential's domestic Individual Life Insurance Business. Mr. Greene is responsible for the national insurance sales organization, which consists of some 2,500 agents and financial planners, and represents the company's face-to-face captive distribution system for insurance and investment products.

Mr. Greene joined Prudential in 1979 as an agent in Danville, Illinois, qualifying for Million Dollar Round Table during his first full year as a producer. He held various sales positions before being named vice president of regional marketing of the Illinois area in 1988. Mr. Greene continued to lead several assignments and regions before being promoted to the rank of senior vice president, agency distribution in 1998, where he was responsible for the sales activity of ten states throughout the midwest and east coast territories. He was promoted to chief field officer in 2000 and appointed to president of agency distribution in 2002.

Mr. Greene holds the chartered life underwriter (CLU) and chartered financial consultant (ChFC) designations. He is chairman of the board of Pruco Securities, LLC, has been a member of The American College Board of Trustees since 2006 and serves on the marketing and certification committees. He was recently named to the

executive committee of the board of trustees for the American College.

Mr. Greene is also a member of general agents and managers association, and a member of National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors. The Prudential Insurance Company of America based in Newark, New Jersey.

### Q&A with John Greene

#### What are some steps that you took to get to the position that you are in now?

I've always believed that the challenge in life isn't getting what you want; it's deciding what you want. There is great competition in corporate America today. I believe a big differentiator lies in setting goals and defining a career path. That means thinking seriously about what your ideal position looks like, where you want to be in five to 10 years, and what steps you need to take to get there. It's important to plan your career path, set high goals and memorialize them in writing.

It's also important to create an aggressive self-development plan. For example, when I first established my own career path, I began by doing an inventory of my skills and abilities. I took a candid look at my developmental opportunities—meaning the areas where I thought I needed to improve upon to achieve my career objectives. I also didn't wait for the company to develop me. Someone once said, the best development is self-development, and living by that motto has served me well over the years.

#### What are some things that you learned on the job and not in the classroom?

That's an easy one. I learned about people!

I don't think the classroom can totally prepare you for understanding human behavior. My experience proved that actual work experience was the best way to learn how to effectively lead a team. Early on it's important to determine whether a leadership role is something you want to pursue, because it's not for everyone. Some people are better served and find more gratification from being an individual contributor. If you do choose a path of leadership, then I would suggest that it begins with learning about developing people, developing your own leadership qualities and continuing to study human behavior.

Good leaders excel in these areas and are critical to the success of corporate America and, I might add, they're quite rare. Good leaders take people to places they wouldn't have traveled on their own. They create environments where people want to participate; they want to be part of something big. They're proud of their results and they work collectively and collaboratively for the good of the team. Good leaders cannot fully educate

themselves in a classroom; it is acquired through work experience and maturation.

#### What personality traits or attributes do you think make for a good, effective executive?

What come to mind in no particular order are quite a few things.

Conceptual thinking—Having the ability to think through decisions about a business with its many moving parts, and to be able to clarify the key issues in complex situations is a critical attribute of good leaders.

Ethical Behavior—Effective executives act with integrity and demonstrate a commitment to company values and principles. Through his or her leadership and personal example, they set an exemplary tone at the top.

Courage—Effective leaders know when the course of action is right based on business judgment, customer needs, ethics and values. They are willing to take personal and career risks to serve the long-term interests of the company and the constituents they serve, such as customers, shareholders and employees.

Strategic Leadership—This is needed in order to drive a compelling business vision that does not accept the status quo.

Drive for Results—Leaders who have a strong drive for results demonstrate an underlying passion for continuous improvement every day.

Initiative—It is another important attribute that is required to understand and recognize changes in the marketplace, and to know what customers need and being passionate about filling those needs.

Seeking Information—Good executives continually seek out information; stay up to date on trends, opportunities and problems that occur in the workplace.

Building Organizational Capabilities—Lastly, effective executives build organizational capabilities. No one can do it alone. Actively engaging and retaining talented people in essential positions and developing a bench of successors for these positions are absolutely critical.

#### What impact has your career had on your personal and family life? Do you have any special techniques, methods and philosophies that help you maintain a work/life balance and be a successful professional?

Many years ago, someone once told me that you can't have it all. I disagreed then, and I disagree now. I aspire to have it all; and all for me is making time for my family, having time to myself

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and being a solid contributor in my professional life. I think this requires incredible focus, organization and prioritization.

I've watched many people who were entirely committed to their profession burn out. I look at a career as a marathon, not a 100-yard dash. I found it's important to have time blocks—Time blocks for my family, time blocks for my career and time blocks for me. Once you make appointments for those important things in your life, you can't cancel them. It's important to remain focused.

As an example, I am an avid runner. I run every day, 365 days a year, and sometimes, as absurd as it may sound, I'll do a six-mile run at 2:30 in the morning so I can reach the airport for a 6 a.m. flight. Someone once told me that if you are too busy to run, you are just simply too busy. For me, it's important because it's something I need to do, and ultimately my work benefits from it.

### **What has surprised you the most about working in the financial services industry?**

What surprised me 29 years ago and continues to surprise me today is that many financial and insurance protection products that are so needed, are not owned by more people. We sell dreams, we sell promises for the future, but these are promises that customers can't hold or touch or see, and because of that, we compete with consumer dollars that are often allocated to more tangible commodities.

We have people in the insurance and financial services industry that come to work every day with a burning, continuous desire to educate and help individuals secure a better financial future. I can't think of many industries that have done more good for more people for a longer amount of time.

### **What advice would you give a young person considering a career in finance?**

I would encourage any young person considering a career as a financial services professional to learn as much as they can about the financial services industry. A career as a financial services professional has a compensation structure that allows people to be compensated as much as their talents permit. There's potential for excellent compensation. It is an incredible career, but it is not for everyone.

To be successful in this career, an individual must be self-driven, highly focused and be able to keep pace with changes in the marketplace. In order to understand what that means, I would suggest interviewing men and women who are presently financial services professionals and who have built their own successful practices, and learn as much as you can from them.

This is an industry that has done a lot of good for a lot of people and if someone has a desire to make an impact and not just a living, this may be the

right career for them. Once an individual determines that this is the right career, then it's time for due diligence in search of the right company. There are lots of companies in this industry so I suggest an interview with several to determine whether or not the company shares their values. Find out if it's a company that will provide training and expertise in the specific area he/she wants to pursue.

I would also encourage examining a company's value proposition. Basically, it is evaluating a company's training programs, health and welfare benefits, salary structure, and understanding the advancement opportunities they offer.

### **Have you ever been mentored, or mentored others?**

I would suggest that anyone who has accomplished anything has been the benefactor of not one, but several mentors. A mentor should be someone who has clear strengths in an area you need to develop.

A mentor should at times make you feel a little uncomfortable. Good mentors ask tough questions and they challenge you. They talk to you about your growth and development and take you to places that you wouldn't have gone on your own.

I also believe that mentoring is like a relay race. I've had several mentors throughout my career. One mentor carried the baton and helped me grow and develop to a point in my career and then handed the baton over to another mentor who helped me reach a higher level of success. I would also suggest that as you develop and are the benefactor of good mentoring, then you have a responsibility to mentor other people. At some point, you have to be able to give back and transition from being the mentee to the mentor. I have found over the past five to seven years I have spent an incredible amount of time mentoring others and I intend to continue to do so.

### **How can someone find a mentor within his or her company/industry?**

First, understand your strengths and developmental areas. Once you have a good handle on what your dreams are and what you need to do to achieve them, seek out people in your company who have the attributes that you want to have or that you need to improve upon. Go to your manager, go to co-workers, look internally in the company, but also look externally. Try to find a match that is very strong in the areas you want to develop.

Don't rely on your boss or your company to develop you. It's about being pro-active, dreaming, and mobilizing. A lot of people say in corporate America that there is a lot of competition vying for advancement, and I suggest to my mentees that there may be far less competition than they think. If you have a plan, if

you develop yourself, if you add value and if you are committed to continuous growth, I don't think there are as many qualified competitors as you may have think.

### **What other careers and life choices did you consider before deciding on a career in finance?**

I started with Prudential when I was 20 years old, so I didn't have a long list of things I wanted to do at that point of my life. I was involved in a family business that was going to transfer to me, but it was a transfer I was not looking forward to. I was looking for a different life than my father's, and so that is how I began. I had a desire to help others and this industry provides that opportunity. I have been fortunate in that I have been with one company for 29 years. I've grown, my priorities have changed, and I've developed. I've had the privilege of taking on new and larger responsibilities, and I've worked with a great company that has allowed me to grow and has grown with me.

### **Any predictions about the future of the industry?**

For the financial services industry, there is a need for financial services professionals in a market where one generation's wealth will transfer to another, and where an aging population is nearing retirement and must plan for the distribution of their assets. These groups need to understand the multitude of products, and they need experts who can provide sound advice and guidance at arguably the most important time of their lives.

Equally important as we go forward is that consumers and employees are going to be asked to "be their own rock." They will have portable cash balance savings plans and they're more likely to have multiple employers. It will be up to them to develop strategies to help grow and protect their wealth. There will be multiple and emerging outlets where they will be able to acquire these products, such as worksite marketing and the Internet, to name a few.

Having said that, I continue to believe that most people will seek out a trusted advisor whom they feel comfortable with, to help them navigate through the complexity of the products and services that are available to help secure their financial future. I believe the provider of choice will be the financial services professional. Consumers will likely want to establish an ongoing relationship with a knowledgeable professional they can trust; someone who can make sense out of a mountain of information they need to navigate through, and someone who will help them make some of the most important decisions of their life. I believe qualified financial services professionals are in the best position to help consumers meet their goals and to achieve their hopes and dreams for a financially secure future.