

60 SECONDS WITH.... Greg Martin



Why did you become an actuary?

It was hard, challenging, and in my day big life insurers provided comfortable scholarships to uni!

Where have you worked and what have been some of the most interesting things you've worked on as an actuary?

I started as an actuarial cadet with a large life insurer working in superannuation. After getting my FIAA, I moved into life insurance reporting, then product development with smaller life insurers. I then spent two and a half years helping with the management, business transfer and windup of Occidental and Regal (two insolvent insurers in the 90's), before joining KPMG as a Director of KPMG Actuaries, and later a Partner of KPMG. In 2011 I joined ClearView.

Some of my most interesting work has been advising with respect to dealing with businesses or activities where things have gone wrong – Occidental, Regal, HIH and James Hardie to name a few. You learn a lot about people and what "wrong" looks like. Equally, as a consultant, I have seen a lot of different ways businesses can successfully implement similar things – there are many and varied "right" ways.

When did you start applying your skills to risk management?

As an actuary, risk management or at least 'risk instinct' is a big part of our DNA. So I think I have been developing and applying risk management thinking and skills since the day I left Uni. In specific terms of focusing on risk management per se, that would have been in the early 2000's when industry focus increasingly turned to the impact of risk management on capital requirements and the financial benefit of better risk management – firstly with respect to financial items (e.g. hedging, ALM) and then onto operational risk.

How did this evolve to your current enterprise wide risk management role?

After the above work as a consultant, in 2011 it seemed a good time to jump into the deep end and take on the challenge of a broad-based, complex risk management role – it looked like fun!

What actuarial capabilities do you use in risk management?

'Risk instinct'. Deep understanding of the financial structure underlying the financial services sector. Ability to understand complex structures, time value and interactions. Being a bit of lay scientist (most actuaries inherently work on an "evidence" basis – important for seeing reality). Logical and lateral thinking and approach to problems. Understanding of statistical measures, modelling, etc.

What skills should actuaries enhance to be more effective in enterprise risk management?

Communication. Communication. Communication. Influencing people.

What do you advise aspiring actuaries to do to attain wider risk management roles?

Assuming getting a "role" follows "competence"... then No. 1 is 'say yes'. Be prepared to do some less glamorous stuff, stuff outside your comfort zone and get experience at the 'coal face'. As actuaries, we have lots of 'ivory tower' financial modelling, statistical, etc. skills and experience. The question is, do we understand the real world of day-to-day risks and their management – administration, how the 'front end' works, operational processes, 'compliance', internal audit, etc. Get some experience in these areas and your ability to interact, manage and communicate more broadly across a business increases.