



# Executive INSIGHTS

## 10 Questions with William F. Ziebell, Gallagher

*William Ziebell is the CEO of Gallagher's Benefits & HR Consulting Division*



Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting

### **1. Tell us about your company and where you see the biggest areas for growth in the next 5 years.**

We deliver a comprehensive approach to benefits, compensation, retirement, employee communication, wellbeing and engagement and workplace culture – everything that an employer needs to attract and retain talent to fulfill its business mission. We have clients across all industries including healthcare, the public sector, religious and nonprofit, commercial, manufacturing, higher education and the list goes on. We help employers with multinational locations and global mobility needs. We have client service capabilities in 84 countries and significant operations in the US, UK, Canada and Australia.

Our business is in a position of growth internationally. This is because employers around the globe are facing the same issues: a multigenerational workforce, a shortage of

talent and rising costs. They are asking: How do I attract talent to my organization? How do I keep them on board? How do I make them more productive by improving their engagement levels? These are all areas where Gallagher can help employers. These topics will be relevant for the foreseeable future as baby boomers move toward the end of their careers and the next generations enter the workforce. The needs of the workforce constantly evolve and we at Gallagher are asked by our clients to help them keep up with those changes and respond accordingly.

### **2. What are the most important decisions you make as a leader of your organization?**

The most important decisions have to do with our people and our culture. We have to determine where people fit best to be successful. We don't make widgets. We're all about advising other employers on their people issues,

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so we have to be good practitioners ourselves in terms of who we want running our business and who we want to put in front of our clients.

### **3. What characteristics do you look for when hiring on your team?**

Cultural fit is paramount to us. Culture is everything to us. And that means a lot of different things including ethical behavior, being a team player, and smarts. When I say smarts, I'm talking about the emotional quotient more so than the intelligence quotient. We want people that can actually understand what's going on around them, read a room, be responsive and handle situations as they come up. We are a people business run by people.

### **4. Tell us about an experience, or a person, who influenced you or had a major impact on your career?**

My predecessor, Jim Durkin, had the most significant impact on my career. He was a great example of how to be a leader. He always put other people first and was always a gentleman. That doesn't mean he wasn't driven, doesn't mean he wasn't competitive and didn't mean he didn't want to achieve results for himself and for his team. Every decision made and every communication he delivered was driven consistently by what's right for the team. And that has been a great model for me to live by.

### **5. What inspires you each day?**

Our team inspires me every day. All that we do for our clients is very noble. We help employers compete and fulfill their mission by getting the talent they need to be successful at an affordable and sustainable cost structure. Our work keeps the lights on, keeps the doors open and keeps our clients fulfilling their mission. But more importantly, and even more noble, is that when somebody needs help or somebody gets sick, the medical bills get paid because of the work we do. Our advice helps employees save enough to retire on time with grace. Everything that we do is very noble and it's exciting. Seeing the passion that our people bring to work every single day to help our clients is amazing and very inspiring.

### **6. What's one characteristic you think every leader should have?**

One characteristic every leader should have is a strong emotional quotient. Leaders need followers and to be successful in getting followers, you have to know what

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your followers need, perceive how they're responding to what you're saying and be able to communicate with them on multiple levels. It can't be one directional or one dimensional. That's why I think a strong emotional quotient is essential.

### **7. What's one thing happening at your company you're most excited about?**

I'm most excited about our company's focus on continuous improvement and growth. We're constantly looking for ways to improve our quality and our productivity. We ask ourselves: How can we do something better? How can we learn from each other? What's a best practice that should be shared across our platform? What's a new idea that's working for a client? We're always sharing with each other with different internal communication tools. We also believe in using data to drive decisions. That's why we publish our [Benefits Strategy & Benchmarking Survey](#), as well as thought leadership pieces that our own practitioners create like our [Organizational Wellbeing & Talent Insights Report](#). Sharing these informative resources with our clients allows us to help them make the right choices for their employees. That's something we really believe will be a differentiator for us in the future.

### **8. Separate from your own, what industry are you watching and learning from, and why?**

Technology is the industry I'm watching. Data is becoming more important now and it'll be essential in the future. We need to continue to learn how to better use data to make good decisions for our clients and how to use data to win new clients. We're seeing all kinds of unique ideas on how to use data throughout the technology industry and we're applying it to our own initiatives today.

## 9. Outside of work, what does your perfect day look like?

Outside of work, a perfect day would be spending quality time with family and friends on a golf course or a skeet field.

## 10. What are you reading right now OR top 3 business books you would recommend?

Of the three business books I would recommend, the first two are pretty well known and the third one is a little different:

The first is “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen Covey and the second is “Good to Great” by Jim Collins. The third is “Watership Down” by Richard Adams. I like this one because the protagonist and leader of the group is a rabbit. He’s not the fastest, he’s not the smartest, he’s not the strongest, yet all the other rabbits follow him. They do this because he finds different ways to deal with the strongest and the cleverest and then is able to give them what they need. It’s an odd concept, but it’s interesting to read the book with the mindset of what can you learn from this protagonist as a leader.

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