



Employee Spotlight

Michelle Ryan

ESIS®



Michelle Ryan had no idea when she sat in her high school typing class that she was about to embark on a successful career path that would eventually earn her the position of Vice President of Partnership Services at ESIS. In addition to managing a team of 11 people, Michelle is also responsible for creating ESIS' Staffing Practice Group, making ESIS the first TPA with this type of industry practice. However, she doesn't stop there. She also takes great pride in mentoring others to help give back to an industry that has given so much to her. She shares her life and stories, and the wisdom she has learned since entering the insurance industry at just 18 years old.

How long have you been with ESIS?

7 Years!

What is your current job position at ESIS?

I am responsible for the Partnership Leaders in the Pacific Region. I have 11 people on my team.

Members of the Partnership Services team provide our clients with proactive account management for our clients and a single point of contact when dealing with ESIS.. We're the one group that is involved in every possible function of ESIS. The position requires knowing a little bit and sometimes *more* than a little bit about a LOT of things to coordinate responses to clients and brokers and manage whatever questions or needs they may have.

What drew you to the industry?

I've been in this industry in some fashion since I was 18. My entire career has been spent in insurance. I blame it all on my mother. She laughs when I tell this story. When I was in high school there was only one class that she insisted I take. I think at the time it was called Typing and Business Machines or something like that. She told me she wanted me to have an employable skill before I left high school just as a backup. Her theory behind that was I would never have to worry about supporting myself because I could always be someone's secretary. Thanks Mom for aiming me high!

This was in the early stages of companies using computer systems and the fact that I could type very well was a very useful skill. I was sent to a bunch of temporary assignments. I ended up being an admin assistant for the Branch Claims Manager for Allstate Insurance. They ended up offering me a part-time position and I worked there through college. This morphed into a full-time job a few years later and I ended up working with Allstate for 7 or 8 years.

What kept me in the industry was the fact that no two days are the same. There's always something new to learn. Thirty years later I can tell you I'm still learning new things all the time! And the other part is, there's so many different directions you can go within this industry.

What brought you to ESIS?

One of the things I believe is so important—and this is in life, not just insurance -- is that you should build good relationships with people. You can learn a lot from other people; the people that you respect and like, and enjoy working with, you might end up running into them more than one time in your career.

Back in 2013, I received calls from two different people who were previous colleagues of mine at two different companies. They were both currently working with ESIS. They talked to me about a position that they wanted me

to consider here. They were people I truly respected, and I learned that there were other people I respected who also worked for ESIS. Although I wasn't necessarily looking for a position at the time, those are the kind of opportunities where you say to yourself 'hey if there are people that I really respect and like to work with working here maybe this is an opportunity I should consider'. And I feel like the rest is history! I've never looked back. It was a great decision for me all around.

You founded our staffing practice group! When and why did you decide to do that?

ESIS has a large book of staffing industry clients. We handle claims staffing companies both large and small, companies that handle different types of staffing... so a few years ago I was having a conversation with our ESIS President, Keith Higdon, about the focus that Chubb was putting on industry practices and how ESIS aligns with that as well and I mentioned that the one area we haven't talked about yet is staffing. This is an area where we really do excel, and this might be worth exploring and he said "Good idea! Go ahead. It's all yours." I had a good idea that ended up becoming my own to grow.

Why did you think it was so important to focus on Staffing?

I think it's important to focus on staffing as a practice as we do with all our practice groups, we are using a targeted approach that leverages our deep understanding of the challenges these clients are facing, how those challenges are different from other industries, and how we can help! We combine that expertise with analytics for even greater insights, and we deliver great outcomes.

What do you think differentiates our Staffing Practice Group in the market place?

The biggest thing is that we actually have one! We were certainly the first and we very well might possibly still be the only TPA that has staffing as a specific practice group. When I was establishing the practice group, I looked at the analytics on these programs and the evolution of those analytics. I talked to the folks in the claims offices to understand their daily process and the focus they have on these clients and how that focus has changed over time. I spoke with several of our larger clients and the partnership leaders in charge of those clients just to get a broad view of where we currently are. And then we take all those lessons learned, all of the expertise that we have, all the information that we gathered, and bring it into a format we can use to talk to new clients to show them how we can benefit and help them. And the other part of it is what else can we develop or create that would be helpful to those staffing clients?

The data that we can share with clients and prospective clients that focusses on this industry segment, quickly paints that picture of how effective we are in the claim handling processes that we've put into place.

You recently became a mentor for ESIS' Women of Impact Group. Can you tell me a bit about the group and what made you want to become a mentor?

This is a concept that is very near and dear to my heart and it was an honor to be asked to join this program. Women of Impact was created to empower, inspire and challenge women as leaders and as learners. For me, I have had so many wonderful mentors throughout the years and I appreciate this opportunity to give that back. I really hope that I can challenge and inspire other women in the way that I have been challenged and inspired. In a situation like this if you're doing it right, you learn as much from your mentee as she learns from you and that's been the case so far. I thoroughly enjoy working with my mentee and it has been a rewarding experience all the way around.

I have been involved in a group for quite some time called 'The Alliance of Women in Workers Compensation'. Their mission is to effect positive change within the industry in several ways: networking, mentoring, support, collaborating. I've been an ambassador for this group since 2016, so ESIS Women of Impact is a natural extension for me

These groups are important to me outside of my regular job just to continue to foster that next generation of people in the industry or help people in the industry who are ready to take that next step in their careers.

What are some of your hobbies outside of work?

Outside of work I really love spending time with my family. I have two kids. One just graduated from high school and the other one just graduated from college last year. They're both here locally and we try to make sure that we get together with them often. My husband and I tend to do a lot of things outdoors. We live in the land of beautiful weather, Phoenix, so we love to bike ride, paddle board, or row on the lake. There's a lot here to see and explore so we take advantage of that as often as we can.

I would also say, if I have down time I'm an avid reader! I read frequently, and I read all kinds of things! I'm a big believer in that.

What is your favorite thing about your job?

I think that's an easy one for me... it's the people that I have the pleasure of working with. My team is AMAZING. They challenge me every day. They teach me every day. I could only hope that I do the same for them. We're a tight team. We've been together for quite some time. They're important to me.

Outside of them it's my colleagues here, the clients and brokers I get to meet and work with, and other people I've met in the industry. I couldn't be prouder of what we do at ESIS and that's all because of the people who work here.

Favorite thing about ESIS?

We are focused on continually doing things better for our clients. We try to engage our client partners and broker partners so we're not only resting on what are we doing right now, we're looking at how we can improve what we do, develop innovative new approaches, and how we can help our clients achieve their organization's goals. It's great to be a part of a company that makes that such a strong focus.

Do you have any advice for those just now entering the industry?

I would say ask a lot of questions. Be open to new opportunities and get involved! Get involved within your organization or other groups in the industry. Continue to learn. Continue to challenge yourself. Don't be afraid of opportunities that might present themselves because some of the best opportunities I've ever had were the ones that really made me feel like I was taking a chance. Being a little uncomfortable isn't a bad thing.

What are your future plans?

That's a tough one. My plans are really to just continue to be involved and to find ways to give back and to help where I can.