Session 56

Seeing the Forest for the Trees: Bringing Value Back to the Actuary-Client Relationship

1. Introductions
    a. Panel members
        i. Rick Jones
        ii. Paul Zeisler
        iii. Tom Terry
        iv. Blake Murphy (recorder)
    b. Ground rules for session – open dialogue
        i. Steve Eisenstein will lead a panel discussion with esteemed colleagues covering a variety of subjects such as developing the trusted advisor client relationship, leveraging the skills of younger actuaries, and thoughts about the future.
        ii. The audience is encouraged to actively participate in the dialogue. Please do not hesitate to raise your hand to ask a question or share your thoughts.
2. Session objectives
    a. Understand how recent changes may have impacted your professional practice
    b. Identify opportunities to strengthen and/or expand your skill set and understand how existing skills may be deployed in non-traditional ways
        i. Asset/liability
        ii. Soft skills (consulting, presentation, negotiation, etc.)
        iii. Litigation support
        iv. Testifying before Governmental bodies
        v. Etc.
    c. Develop ideas to expand your trusted advisor relationship with your clients
    d. Prepare for future change; adapting to an environment of constant change
3. Background
    a. The last two years
        i. PPA, economic crisis, recession
        ii. Effects on actuarial profession (particularly pension actuaries)
    b. Responses
        i. "Freezing" or terminating DB plans

ii. Temporary elimination of matching contributions to DC plans

iii. Triage consulting based on immediate needs

iv. Downward pressure on professional fees for "commodity" services, increased expectations, do more for less

4. Panel discussion – potential topics

    a. Non-traditional roles for actuaries

    b. Moving into areas demanding new technical competencies

    c. Moving beyond technical competencies (non-technical skills that can be acquired and which may be useful

    d. Financial advisor role as underfunded pensions become larger portions of companies' balance sheets

    e. Annuitization for portion of assets during retirement years; shifting focus from the accumulation years to the "decumulation" years

    f. Other approaches to "defeasing" risk in decumulation years

    g. Broadening project management roles due to reductions in HR staff

    h. Competition from other professions

    i. Globalization

5. Panel questions (in no particular order)

    a. If your college-bound son, daughter, niece, or nephew was interested in an actuarial career and came to you for advice, what would you tell them?

    b. Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently in your approaches due to PPA regulatory changes and the recession? (The intent of this question is to focus on the client relationship and the balancing of short/mid/long-term client needs).

    c. How can actuaries distinguish themselves on criteria other than price?

    d. What are your thoughts on an actuary's ability to protect and grow their personal income in the future?

    e. Actuaries are seeing competition from other professions and alternative professional designations such as CEBS, QPA, QKA, ERPA, etc., what are your views on whether actuaries should expand beyond their traditional designations?

    f. Please describe some of your non-traditional projects or engagements where you leveraged your actuarial skill set.

    g. The actuarial stereotype is an introverted, highly-technical professional with little outgoing personality, how can actuaries move beyond the stereotype and what kind of training should they seek?

h. How has the examination process changed? What new skills have you observed younger actuaries bringing to the table? And, How have you utilized these skills in your daily practice?

i. Do you see differences between how actuaries perceive themselves and how actuaries are perceived in the marketplace? If so, do you think we need to narrow the differences and what are your suggestions for doing so?