BLACKLINE CONSULTING

A HIGHER STANDARD

CHIEF DISTRIBUTION OFFICER

A market intelligence brief for insurance distribution leaders

June 2026

THE BLACKLINE RADAR SERIES

The Radar series is a set of role-based briefings for insurance executives, designed to be read in minutes and discussed for longer. Each Radar takes a single seat at the executive table and asks one question: *what should this leader have on their screen for the year ahead?*

Every Radar is structured around five lenses:

- → **THE BRIEF:** The mandate for the role this year, stated plainly. What the organisation is asking of this executive, and how that ask differs across General Insurance (UK retail and commercial) and the London Market and Specialty.
- → **HEADWINDS:** The forces working against the role. Market conditions, cost pressures, regulatory constraints and structural shifts that make the mandate harder to deliver.
- → **TAILWINDS:** The forces working in the role's favour. Capabilities, market dynamics and tools that, used well, give the executive room to move.
- → **BLIND SPOTS:** The areas where visibility of risk is limited. Not the known problems, but the places where the data, the reporting or the operating model may be quietly masking an issue.
- → **EXECUTIVE TENSIONS:** Where interests may align or diverge. The points of natural tension and natural partnership across the executive team, and where the CDO's agenda intersects with that of the CFO, CUO and CEO. Knowing where interests align is often the difference between a mandate that gets delivered and one that stalls.

Throughout, we treat General Insurance and the London Market and Specialty as genuinely distinct markets. The pressures rhyme but they are not the same, and a Radar that blends them serves neither.

This edition focuses on the Chief Distribution Officer: *Driving the growth the business needs without letting volume pressure, broker consolidation or soft market incentives quietly compromise the book.*

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Managing Partner, UK

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CHIEF DISTRIBUTION OFFICER

THE BRIEF:

Distribution's challenge is the same in both worlds, winning profitable flow through channels the carrier increasingly does not control, but who holds that control differs sharply between retail GI and the London Market.

GENERAL INSURANCE:

In General Insurance, distribution runs through aggregators, brokers, direct and increasingly embedded and affinity channels. Personal lines are commoditised and low loyalty, AI assisted shopping is changing the buying journey, and broker consolidation is concentrating commercial lines distribution.

HEADWINDS

Commoditisation & low loyalty

→ Aggregators and AI assisted shopping keep personal lines price driven and switch happy, eroding retention.

Thin margins on competitive business

→ In a soft retail market, winning on price risks buying unprofitable growth as underwriting margins shrink.

Broker consolidation in commercial lines

→ Consolidation concentrates buying power and squeezes commissions and panel positions.

TAILWINDS

Embedded & affinity growth

→ Embedded insurance and affinity partnerships open lower-friction routes to customers at the point of need.

Data driven targeting & retention

→ Analytics led GI distribution target segments and predict and reduce lapse, competing on more than price.

Telematics & value propositions

→ Usage based and value-added propositions build stickier personal lines relationships.

BLIND SPOTS

True cost to serve by channel

→ Few firms cleanly understand the real loaded economics of each retail channel once acquisition, servicing and retention are counted.

Fair value across the chain

→ Commissions and add-ons are less defensible than assumed with regulatory scrutiny sustaining but so far stopping short of structural intervention.

How fast the buying journey is changing

→ AI assisted shopping may be reshaping the personal lines journey faster than strategy is keeping up.

CHIEF DISTRIBUTION OFFICER

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LONDON MARKET & SPECIALTY:

In London Market and Specialty, distribution runs through wholesale and retail brokers, coverholders, binders and a fast-growing set of facilities and MGAs. Facility led and follow market placement is expanding, broker power is concentrated, and delegated authority is both a major growth route and a sharpening regulatory focus.

HEADWINDS

Facility and follow market pressure

→ As facility led placement expands, follow market models face pressure, and the economics of participation are shifting.

Concentrated broker power

→ A small number of large brokers hold significant placement power, with leverage over terms and access.

Regulatory scrutiny of delegated authority

→ The PRA's focus on delegated underwriting, oversight and data quality raises the bar on coverholder and binder arrangements.

TAILWINDS

Delegated authority and MGA growth

→ Growing MGA capacity is a route to specialist distribution and niche risk for carriers that support partners well.

Structured solutions and new capital

→ Structured solutions and capital through vehicles like London Bridge are opening new ways to access, deploy and distribute capacity.

Aligning distribution and underwriting

→ Closer alignment of distribution and enhanced underwriting gives specialist carriers a structural placement advantage.

BLIND SPOTS

Concentration in the broker & coverholder base

→ Dependence on a few large brokers and coverholders is often greater than it looks.

Partner financial & conduct health

→ The stability and conduct of MGAs and coverholders is hard to see, yet the carrier carries the consequences.

The quality of facility flow

→ As facilities grow, whether the business flowing through them genuinely meets appetite is harder to see than direct placement.

CHIEF DISTRIBUTION OFFICER

Distribution is the engine of growth, but in a soft market, it can also be the route through which underpriced risk quietly fills the book.

The incentives pulling against quality are structural: consolidating brokers with growing leverage, aggressive targets from above, and channels built for flow rather than selection. The CDO sits in the middle of all of it.

WHERE INTERESTS MAY ALIGN

The alignment here is natural - *invest, & build on it*

On Book Quality

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→ Appetite and distribution set together: clear competitive appetite in GI, clear binder and facility appetite in the London Market.

On Go-to-Market

PROPOSITION AND MARKETING LEAD

→ Proposition, brand and distribution have to move as one to compete on value rather than price.

On Channel Economics

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→ A partner in understanding and funding the channels that actually create value, and in pricing the cost to serve.

WHERE INTERESTS MAY DIVERGE

These tensions are structural – *navigate them openly*

On Volume vs Quality

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→ The flow versus quality tension, through aggregators in GI and facilities and binders in the London Market.

On Commission & Terms

LARGE BROKERS & CONSOLIDATORS

→ Aligned on placing business, but their consolidation increases leverage over the carrier on commission and terms.

On Growth Targets

CHIEF EXECUTIVE & CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

→ Aggressive growth targets in a soft market push toward share at any price, against the discipline the firm needs.

BLACKLINE CONSULTING

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Founded in 2013, Blackline Consulting is a multidisciplinary boutique advisory and execution firm operating across the UK and North America. We help organisations define strategy, enhance operations, drive transformation, and manage change

A higher standard, delivered quietly by people who care

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