



What a ride

Keith Jordan has been a farmer's boy and a university grad wondering what to do with his life. He's worked on credit ratings for Dunn & Bradstreet, became a chartered accountant, developed and managed real estate and owned a successful commercial cleaning business – all before trying his hand at insurance, where, at 57, he's now the head honcho at Winnipeg's Hub International Horizon Insurance. **By Ron Shorvoyce**

“A phenomenal ride” is how Keith Jordan, the president and ceo of Manitoba's Hub International Horizon Insurance, describes his 17 years in the business.

The “ride,” it might be said, actually began in the Killarney area, in the southwest of the province, where Jordan's parents farmed. He left home at 18 to attend the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, but he had no idea what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. Insurance wasn't on his radar.

So like a lot of students who don't know what they want to do, he enrolled in the Arts program, graduating in 1976, then worked for a year in Winnipeg with Dunn & Bradstreet, the corporate credit reporting and rating agency, helping accountants

and lawyers. The experience inspired him to become a chartered accountant himself. He earned his designation in 1980.

After articling he worked for a real estate firm, developing and managing property. In 1985 Jordan entered into a partnership to buy a business, Oxford Building Cleaning.

“It had 75 employees,” he says. “We built it up to a point where we had a couple of hundred employees. We did jobs like the Winnipeg airport, some of the Canadian Forces bases, including Shilo. At one time we had a majority of the office buildings in downtown Winnipeg. It was a good business.”

Good or not, it wasn't what Jordan wanted to do. The business was sold to a national firm in 1994.

A year later he was in the insurance business.

When Keith Jordan thought he might try buying an insurance agency, he sought the counsel of Peter Leipsic, who had provided insurance for Jordan's commercial cleaning business. Leipsic called in his cousin Michael, and a partnership was formed. By 2009 their Horizon Insurance had 18 locations, making it the largest independent in the province.

“I heard about a Winnipeg agency that was for sale – Lylyk Agencies in the Kildonan Place shopping centre – so I talked to them, even though I knew nothing about insurance. I needed some partners, so I went to Peter Leipsic, who'd provided me with insurance and bonding for the cleaning business. He referred me to his cousin Michael, who told me, ‘We like to break the legs of people who want to get into the insurance business.’ At this point I was wondering what the hell I was getting into here.”



Michael Leipsic

The Leipsics and Jordan joined forces and purchased the agency in Kildonan Place, Jordan managing the business. A year and a half later they bought another agency. More would follow.

“We've largely grown through acquisitions,” Jordan, 57, says. “Peter and Michael brought information to the table, they brought financial resources to the table and they brought credibility to the table. I don't think I'd be here today without them. We don't always see eye to eye, but we've been great partners.”

By 2000 the company had five locations in Winnipeg, each with its own manager. In 2003 Jordan and his partners were approached to start an insurance brokerage in Nunavut, which was soon expanded to include the N.W.T. A year later, as suggested by Tony Taronno, one of the principals, the partnership was rebranded Horizon Insurance.

Expansion continued from 2007 through 2009, when, with 18 sales and service centres throughout the province, it had become the largest independent insurance brokerage in Manitoba.

The success of Horizon caught the attention of Hub International, a leading North American insurance brokerage



Andrew

headquartered in Chicago and a firm with a lot of Canadian content. Hub proposed to Jordan that Horizon join the operation.

"I was skeptical and not all that interested," Jordan says. "I largely ignored them until March 2011. But they kept calling and saying, 'Why don't you come to Chicago and see what we're all about?' I was expecting to deal with a bunch of U.S. guys when I got there, but I found most of the people were Canadians. Of the six-person executive, four are Canadians. They didn't apply any pressure. The strategic plans were the same; the history was the same. You'd think we were the same company."

In the fall of 2011 Horizon Insurance became Hub International Horizon Insurance. All partners continue with the new company, with Jordan as president and ceo.

"We retain complete autonomy with how we operate day to day. Our mandate is to grow organically and through acquisitions. We're responsible for Manitoba, Saskatchewan and northwest Ontario."

Scott Andrew, who runs Andrew Agencies in Virden, got to know Jordan through his work on the board of the Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba.

"He's smart, thoughtful and just a good guy," Andrew says. "Keith can be challeng-

ing, but in a constructive way. He thinks outside the box, and I certainly enjoyed the time I spent with him on the board."

IBAM ceo Dave Schioler has known Jordan for a number of years and describes him as a great asset to the insurance industry and the association.

"Since I've known Keith, he's become a friend," Schioler says. "He's very bright, willing to lead and to lend a hand. He's an intelligent guy. I'm sure the challenge of putting together the deal with Hub was quite rewarding."

Jordan was recently appointed chair of the Insurance Council of Manitoba. He also serves on the board of directors of the Centre for Study of Insurance Operations.

When he looks back on the last 17 years, Jordan is appreciative of the opportunity to get into the insurance business.

"I love the people and I love what I do every day. Insurance is a great industry." **rw**



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VITAL STATS

- Jordan and second wife Vicky like to travel. Five times a year they rent a condo in South Beach, Florida.
- His daughter Chelsa is a University of Manitoba Arts grad.
- He loves listening to music. "Madonna is my all-time favourite artist. I've seen her perform twice in Toronto. She's awesome!"
- The Jordans love watching movies. "Action movies are my preference."
- On golfing: "If I shoot under 100, I'm happy. It's a sport that needs a ton of time. You've got to practise."
- The couple are walkers. "In the summer we walk every night for an hour or two."
- They live in a 4,000-square-foot home in Winnipeg's Tuxedo area, a seven-minute drive from his office.
- Jordan likes a good red wine and reading, mostly historical works. He also appreciates architecture.
- An older brother and older sister still live in Killarney. **rw**