



# Art Elias

## HED INSURANCE AND RISK SERVICES

Not many people can say their first job out of high school ended up being a career.

Art Elias can.

After graduating from high school in Morris, Man., in 1963, Elias and his family moved to Winnipeg and he got a job selling insurance for Aon Reed Stenhouse, a worldwide insurance broker that still has a Winnipeg office.

That job turned into a successful 44-year insurance career.

Elias founded HED Insurance and Risk Services in 1979 with two partners, and is now majority owner, president and chief executive officer of the award-winning independent insurance broker that's headquartered in Winnipeg. The company also has an office in Laval, Quebec.

This year, HED was recognized as one of Manitoba's Top 10 employers, a new provincial category connected to *Maclean's* magazine's Top 100 employers in Canada list. HED has twice made the short list of 200 Canadian companies considered for the Top 100.

*Manitoba Business Magazine* also named HED one of province's 50 fastest-growing companies, a distinction the company has achieved for the past several years.

And earlier this year, HED received an Excellence in Leadership bronze award from the Human Resource Management Association of Manitoba.

"It means that people will perhaps recognize the name and consider us as a place where they could carve themselves out a pretty good career," Elias says of the awards.

HED also owns SecuriCan General Insurance Company (SGIC), a federally registered company that underwrites Petplan pet health insurance. It has \$20 million of premium volume and insures 50,000 pets across Canada.

When including SGIC, HED has 210 employees, with an average age of 34. His son, Colin, manages the commercial client service centre. His other son, David, is at Great-West Life.

The company supports events at the Asper School of Business, and many of its employees are graduates.

"I don't think I could use a more appropriate word than mutual respect," Elias says of HED's work environment. "I think it pervades our company."

Seventeen senior managers are part of the two companies' stock ownership plans. A minority interest is also held by Western Financial Group, an Alberta-based publicly traded insurance and financial services organization.

Over the past five years, HED has seen more than 20 per cent annual growth in Petplan and 10 to 12 per cent in property, casualty, health and dental benefits programs, Elias says.

As the company has prospered so have its employees.

HED offers a profit-sharing pension plan, in-house training program, covers 100 per cent of tuition and books for employees' job-related education and up to 50 per cent of the cost of non-related education.

"We like to have well-rounded people," says Steve Korman, HED's vice-president human resources and corporate services.

"You can't sell short experiences that one acquires through education and pursuing other interests."

Employees can also take advantage of a laptop computer acquisition program, staggered work hours, receive up to \$1,000 through an employee-referral program and bank time so they can leave work early on Fridays in the summer months.

The HR reward HED received this year recognized the company's Intranet programs. Employees can self manage their vacation and overtime by accessing their records online.

"We never overlook the fact that it's the people that are the most essential resource we have," Korman says.

"If we can attract and retain the best, it only serves our own purpose to be successful and grow."

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**INSURANCE AND RISK SERVICES**