# Actuaries Institute Podcast
# Title: How actuaries can carry insurtech forward

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**Interviewer: Angat Sandhu**
**Speaker:** Annette King
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**Angat Sandhu:**

**Hello, and welcome to the Actuaries Institute Podcast. My name is Angat Sandhu and I am the Chief Editor of Actuaries Digital. Today, we're privileged to be joined by Annette King, who is Vice President of the Actuaries Institute and co-founder of Galileo Platforms, a platform technology company serving the insurance sector.**

**Angat Sandhu:**

**On the podcast today, Annette and I will discuss the formation and purpose of Galileo Platforms, how actuaries contribute to the overall workflow of the company, and the important role actuaries will play in the development of the insurtech space into the future. With that, welcome, Annette!**

Annette King:

Thanks, Angat. Great to be here.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**So, Annette, it would be great for the listeners if you could give an overview of what Galileo Platforms is and how the concept came about to yourself.**

Annette King:

Well, Galileo Platforms is a technology company that serves the insurance sector. It basically provides policy administration for ecosystems. It uses blockchain technology to do that, because blockchain is the best technology to enable multiple parties to share a single source of truth. In this case, the single source of truth is everything about the client, their insurance policy, and the transactions that go between all the different parties.

Annette King:

It was founded in Hong Kong in 2016. Myself and two other co-founders got together, we were all C-Suite execs from the inside of insurance and wealth management companies. I had been a CEO, a CFO and a CMO, and my partners had been Chief Information Officers and Chief Operations Officers. And we really just saw the opportunity, particularly in Asia, for hundreds of millions of people who were uninsured, who basically didn't have access to insurance. And we felt that digital engagement would be the right way to help people who need insurance, gain access to that, but the legacy systems were not really the right way to do that.

Annette King:

And so, we used the most modern technology to enable a much more digital experience, real time, and also to connect the whole ecosystem, the whole value chain, for the benefit of the client. So, that's what Galileo does.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**Excellent. And today, Annette, which markets is Galileo active in? And could you also give the audience a better colour around, is it catered towards life insurance, general insurance, health insurance, or can play across the different sub sectors?**

Annette King:

Yeah, it is agnostic to the insurance type of product, so general insurance, life insurance and health insurance. Its home is Asia. The whole team, other than myself, I'm in Australia, but the rest of the team is still all based in Hong Kong. And really, the target market is Asia because there are four billion people there, three point something of them are uninsured, and more than two billion of them need insurance and can be digitally engaged to serve nowadays.

Annette King:

But actually, as a technology company, it is very global. So, it's not bounded by country borders. In fact, last night I was on a call with Hong Kong, a partner in Croatia who had been introduced by somebody in the UK, who I had met at InsureTech Connect, where, Angat, you and I sometimes meet. And the InsureTech Connect conference, when it's not being held digitally like this year, it's held in Las Vegas in the US. So, we were all getting together last night and actually talking about serving insurance customers in Japan and in the Philippines. So, it's very global, the insurtech scene.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**That's amazing. That's fantastic to hear. And it would be really helpful, Annette, if you could share any colour around the feedback you've gotten from large insurance companies. Because the space you're talking about, when I speak with major insurers, they're all wanting to make change and they're all wanting to solve these problems, but often find it challenging as to where to start and how to get started. So, it'd be good to get some feedback from yourself around what have been some of the breakthroughs and 'aha' moments you've had from your customers.**

Annette King:

Yeah, I think it all starts with either the opportunity or the pain point for the customers that Galileo has. So, Galileo's a 'B2B' company. Nobody will ever see the Galileo brand, it's always the insurer or the distributor's brand that the end consumer sees. So, for our clients, it's all got to do with what opportunity are they trying to seize or what pain point are they trying to minimize.

Annette King:

And so, revenue opportunity is key, in Asia in particular, really accessing unserved client segments. Or in more mature markets, we see the opportunity to reduce costs by improving the administration effectively, and really the tool kit enables much more differentiated client propositions to be taken to market. And because of the technology and the cost economics of the technology, the price point is such that the development to get to market is really fast. And so new designs can be taken to market in a matter of weeks, and the whole control cycle for improvement and optimization can be a week, it could be a day, it's all data driven.

Annette King:

And so that really changes what's possible in terms of engaging clients and creating differentiated propositions. So, I think for the clients, as insurers or as distributors, it all starts with what opportunity are they trying to seize, or what pain point are they trying to get rid of. And that really changes the design of what they take to market and the speed with which they do it.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**Yes, it's great to have that fungibility to, I guess, to point the solution to both revenue as well as cost problems, it's fantastic. And with COVID, obviously we've heard from many different sectors or many different player that in this short period, there's been clearly a greater focus towards digital adoption, just because we haven't had a choice. From where you sit, both from a Galileo perspective and broader insurtech perspective, how have you experienced it? Are you seeing significant uptake of opportunities and interest?**

Annette King:

Definitely. This has been a very interesting year. The first part of the year as COVID was starting to have an impact, pretty well every business halted everything, looked at their core and said, "Okay, how do we keep our people safe? And then how do we ensure we're delivering service to our clients?" And so, there were some delays in business decisions.

Annette King:

But COVID has really sped up the digital drive by many insurers and distribution partners. And so actually the opportunity has increased very significantly due to COVID, which it's been forced because people haven't been able to have face-to-face, they haven't been able to be in the office dealing with paper and people. And so, the whole digital enablement has become really key, both to drive revenue and the client proposition, as well as just to effect the operations of the business.

Annette King:

So, it's actually, short-term, been a little bit painful from a cashflow perspective for a young company, but medium to long-term, it's been a huge driver of adoption. Which is great, because the insurance industry has great opportunities to bring to clients, but sometimes it holds itself back with some of the legacy systems and really the digital adoptions being sped up this year.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**Yeah. I couldn't agree more. I think clearly the opportunity for the industry to digitize and become more efficient is in the billions of dollars in each market, so a lot there.**

Annette King:

Yeah, exactly.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**For me, insurtech perspective, you referenced short-term funding and operating challenges that most startups would have in an environment where large companies are looking at the cost base more closely, which has been the case recently. As you, I guess, forecast two, three, four years ahead, I guess, what are some of the other challenges that**

**insurtechs continue to face in trying to change the industry and drive about the revenue and cost benefits that we spoke about?**

Annette King:

A lot has to do with the partners. I mean, insurtechs, and I also sit on a board of a wealthtech company, FNZ, and I sit on SwissRe board, which also has its own insurtech, iptiQ. They're all innovation drivers and they're fleet of foot, they're quick. Their whole innovation process is design and then implement and then measure and then redesign and optimize, and so it keeps going.

Annette King:

So, I think it's always the speed of decisions and the clarity of the business results that the clients are looking for. Having been in a number of C-suite roles myself and my business partners have been the same, we're able to talk to practitioners about how to champion the idea inside their organization, how to build the business case to get going. And I suppose for incumbents, they've also got to look at their internal processes around decision-making, around procurement, around speed of contract, speed of payment.

Annette King:

So, I guess it's a speed thing is really the big difference between incumbents and insurtechs. and both need to come together for mutual benefit to do that. But look, the size of the prize is enormous. Start with a differentiated proposition to the client, then look at how you deliver that. And then just keep optimizing that based on the data.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**And I guess if I flip the coin and given yourself, you've been on both sides and you've now got, I guess, a maturer startup than many others do. For other smaller startups or individuals that are thinking of getting into the startup space out of impatience with the partners, what other advice would you give to them?**

Annette King:

That's a great question. I think being really clear the opportunity you're helping to create or solve, so revenue opportunity or a pain point or cost savings, be adept at pivoting to where the clients see the most need. And I guess on a personal level, seeking out a mentor is also very helpful because you've got to be ultra-resilient. There are a lot of knock-backs, delays, challenges as well as the amazing outcomes.

Annette King:

So, at a personal level, you've got to keep up your energy and keep focused. And having a mentor I think, or a coach, or just a friend to help keep spurring you on in the dim days, is helpful.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**That's fantastic advice, Annette. And I think, I've underscored the last point around resilience, which has taken on a new meeting in the COVID scenario that we're in. So, I think both personally and professionally, I think a lot of that's required to drive a startup successfully.**

**Angat Sandhu:**

**The final vein of discussion was around actuaries and the role that they can play. So maybe two questions. One is, could you give us a bit of color around what role have actuaries played in Galileo? And conscious to yourself, obviously you're an actuary. And then secondly, how do you see more actuaries getting more involved in this space?**

Annette King:

Yeah, well, I'm the only actuary at the Galileo team. It's a tech company, so nearly all the staff are tech people, code cutters and business analysts. But I think that the actuarial training gives us, as a profession, really great insights to how things operate. We seem to understand the total picture that enables us to also see where the opportunities are for improvement. It could be client, it could be revenue, it could be cost savings or efficiency. And I think that actuarial control cycle, I spoke about it in the innovation cycle, but actually it is the actuarial control cycle. Innovation, you get up, you ideate, you come up with a design, you implement that design, you measure the outcomes. And you feed those insights back into redesign and improvement.

Annette King:

And it's effectively the actuarial control cycle, but it's used in innovation. And when you're using speedy tech, you can do that cycle in a week as opposed to months or years. So, I think the actuaries have got a really good skillset, grounding and understand where the opportunities are for improvement. And we can understand the sustainability, the finances, the customer is really important. And I think there are lots of opportunities for more actuaries to get involved in insurtech.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**I loved how you brought it back to the control cycle. I think that will make a lot of the university professors very, very proud and excited. But I concur, I feel that one understanding that the technicalities of the business helps clearly in ensuring that the fundamentals are designed in the right way. But many a time also in engaging with the partners, I think, you can bring a degree of credibility that you do understand the mechanics and how money is made and how customer obligations are met.**

**Angat Sandhu:**

**I guess, any final pieces of advice, Annette, you would give to some of the younger actuaries that are starting or earlier in their career, around how to get more involved in this space, take a differentiated path. Any final words of wisdom?**

Annette King:

Yeah. I mean, I think there are lots of meetup groups. There are lots of webinars. There are lots of interconnections, whether it's data analytics or design or the financial sustainability of products and propositions. For me, you always start with the end client and the proposition in mind, and then you build back from that. And it's got to be obviously financially sustainable and so forth.

Annette King:

But there are lots of different things that the Actuaries Institute brings to our members in webinars, podcasts, seminars. And then there are other meetups and groups, both in Australia and all around the world that really bring the thought leadership to the table. And there's just a lot of opportunity. We're at an inflection point in technology, in the cost of data, in business models changing to ecosystems now. And so, the opportunity to build the future is really there, and I think actuaries are very well placed to play a key role in doing that.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**Annette, thank you so much. Always a pleasure. Keep flying the actuarial flag high, and we wish Galileo Platforms all the best in solving the many challenges it's started on. Thank you.**

Annette King:

Thank you so much, Angat.

**Angat Sandhu:**

**Great. So, listeners, hope you enjoyed that insightful discussion, I know I got a lot out of it. You can find out more about Galileo Platforms by visiting their website on galileoplatforms.com. To listen more through Actuaries Institute podcasts, visit the podcast section on Actuaries Digital. And as always, please write your questions and comments, and we'd love to hear from you. Thanks.**