

A fresh perspective,
a shared vision.
Discover how our board member
sees the future and
what drives us forward

interview with Gert De Winter

- ▶ studies Applied Economics at the University of Antwerp
- ▶ starts his career as a consultant at Accenture
- ▶ makes the switch to Mercator, the Belgian insurer that later merges into Baloise, where he is CIO and responsible for HR
- ▶ rises to CEO of the Belgian branch of Baloise and then of the entire group in the Swiss city of Basel (from 2016 to 2023)
- ▶ 2024: becomes a member of the board of directors of The Ensur Company

THE ENSUR COMPANY

ENSUR

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Interview with Gert De Winter,
member of the board of directors of The Ensur Company

“We make a real difference in the insurance sector”

You could call the place of appointment symbolic. In ‘De Drij Lindekens’ in Schilde, horses used to catch their breath and travellers could go there for a bite and a sip. Now the inn provides a tranquil setting for Gert De Winter to discuss how The Ensur Company delivers added value beyond the daily grind. Halfway through the conversation, the member of the board of directors says: **“We have the perfect answer to today’s challenges.”**

Barely a year ago, you stepped down as CEO at Baloise. At the time, you stated in ‘De Tijd’ that you became ‘completely irrelevant from one day to the next.’ You also mentioned that this was ‘a good thing.’ And yet you have joined the board of directors at The Ensur Company. What drives you?

“What drew me in was the unique positioning of Ensur, driven by the expertise of our team and our focus on the insurance sector. The Ensur Company isn’t just a consultancy, we’re hands-on transformation partners. We bring together people with deep insurance industry experience—individuals who’ve stood in clients’ shoes, which allows us to add value immediately. That’s something you rarely see at generalist consultancies, who often send in young talent that learns on the job at clients’ expense.”



“What attracted me to The Ensur Company, and continues to do so, is our ability to make a real difference in the insurance sector—and beyond. I’ve spent roughly half my career on the consultancy side (at Accenture) and the other half on the insurance side (at Baloise). The opportunity to combine those experiences and contribute strategically to Ensur’s next steps was compelling.”

What specific value do you bring?

“Before joining the board, I met with Reinold Vanhevel and Moustapha Kharbouch to discuss Ensur’s overall strategy, and the M&A strategy in particular. I hope I offered some critical feedback—not because The Ensur Company needed an overhaul, but because I could add some insights from the insurance sector about how C-level leaders perceive projects, programs, and transformations. My goal is to contribute these perspectives and, over the past few months, I hope I’ve started to do that.”

“One takeaway is that many consultants focus exclusively on building relationships at the C-level. However, decisions are often driven by recommendations from mid-level leaders (C minus 1, C minus 2 and even C minus 3). To influence these decisions, consultants must build strong connections at those levels too. This approach aligns perfectly with our unique value proposition: combining strategic thinking with hands-on collaboration.”

► “At The Ensur Company, working isn’t just about ‘doing your thing’—it’s about setting high expectations for one another”

How does The Ensur Company's hands-on approach set them apart?

"Insurers—and businesses in general—don't appreciate transformation partners who flood their offices with inexperienced juniors who still need to learn the trade. That's often the approach of generalist consultancies, but it's not what we do. Our teams consist of seasoned professionals with 10, 20 years of experience in insurance, who understand the products, the technical intricacies, and the challenges customers face. They can quickly connect with clients' teams and become part of their operations. This builds immense trust and sets us apart from the generalists. That's a strength we must never dilute."

What's the company culture like at Ensur? Is it strong?

"Our team is composed of highly experienced professionals, bringing stability and continuity, a well-thought-out strategy, and a sense of calm rooted in our extensive expertise. However, this same maturity means we must put extra effort into fostering a cohesive culture. Fresh graduates are naturally easier to shape and integrate into a company's (sub) culture, whereas seasoned professionals often come with established ways of working and independent mindsets."

"While I don't believe money alone is a motivator, our current compensation and benefits plan encourages employees to transcend their individual expertise and actively contribute to the bigger picture of The Ensur Company. Beyond financial incentives, initiatives like team-building events can play a key role in strengthening the sense of community. As the saying goes: 'The culture of a company is shaped by the people you hire and the ones you don't fire.' At The Ensur Company, working

isn't just about 'doing your thing'—it's about setting high expectations for one another because together, we form the DNA of our organization."

"Our goal is to be more than a collection of exceptionally talented and experienced experts. What unites us is the passion to create meaningful impact for our clients. That same drive to deliver value externally should also inspire pride and purpose internally. Working at The Ensur Company is something we can—and should—celebrate."

► **"There's a real risk that insurers will wake up in the near future and realize they've missed the train of opportunity"**

What trends do you see in the insurance industry?

"A few years ago, the insurance industry was abuzz with innovation—exploring new business models, distribution channels, digital transformation, and collaborations with start-ups. As CEO of the Baloise Group, my colleagues and I worked hard to inject energy and movement into what is traditionally seen as a 'grey mouse' sector. In all modesty, we achieved some success in changing that narrative. There was an undeniable energy and a contagious drive to innovate."

"However, in the past two years—possibly due to the fallout from the pandemic, inflation, and geopolitical tensions—we've witnessed a noticeable shift back to basics. Genuine innovation initiatives

have diminished, and the focus has returned to improving efficiency, cutting costs, and prioritizing the bottom line. It's disappointing to now see the industry retreating entirely into its core focus. If this continues, there's a real risk that insurers will wake up in the near future and realize they've missed the train of opportunity. In other words, it's all about the core business."

"This renewed focus on core operations often involves digitization, platform transformations, and complex data migrations—areas where The Ensur Company is particularly well-positioned. With deep expertise in the insurance industry's core processes and a strong foundation in IT and data, we offer the perfect solutions for these modern challenges."

"Similarly, our compliance business line is well aligned with the increasing regulatory pressures insurers face across multiple levels. Insurers are increasingly overwhelmed by a wave of regulatory reforms, new initiatives, and on-site inspections—ranging from AML and the AI Act to DORA, Value for Money, and Sustainability requirements. This presents a substantial challenge, not only to stay up to date but also to seamlessly integrate these changes into daily operations."

"Additionally, we are active in the Risk Management domain, where we assist clients with establishing robust ERM frameworks, enhancing organizational risk cultures, refining risk appetite statements, and developing technical risk methodologies. Our expertise also extends to supporting clients with temporary upscaling of internal teams, leveraging our deep risk and compliance knowledge to address immediate needs effectively."

► "It's disappointing to now see the industry retreating entirely into its core focus. If this continues, there's a real risk that insurers will wake up in the near future and realize they've missed the train of opportunity"



► “Cyber risk has emerged as a top priority in boardrooms. The insurance sector is on high alert”

How do you see challenges like cybercrime and climate change impacting insurance?

“I believe that geopolitical uncertainties, the pandemic, economic stress, exponential inflation, and logistical disruptions have all contributed to the industry’s current back-to-basics approach. In recent years, cyber risk has emerged as a top priority in boardrooms. The insurance sector is on high alert—both in terms of protecting their own organizations (Are we under attack? How do we defend ourselves?) and assessing risks for customers (Can we and should we insure them?). Yet, insurers continue to struggle with quantifying and insuring cyber risks, as the sheer scale and complexity of these attacks render them almost uninsurable.”

“Climate risks pose an equally daunting challenge, with increasingly unpredictable and severe local weather events. The 2021 floods in Wallonia illustrate this, with damages exceeding €2 billion—far beyond the government’s compensation cap of €500 million. Such events strain the sector’s solidarity and demand innovative solutions, but finding workable answers remains an uphill battle.”

After leaving Baloise, you started studying history and training to become a pilot. Was this about reclaiming lost time?

“Both studying history and becoming a pilot have been childhood dreams of mine. However, I chose to study economics because I believed it offered the best professional opportunities. Since last academic year, I’ve returned to being a student, and honestly, it feels great to collaborate with young students. Interestingly, many of my fellow history students are over 50, and even in their 60s, which leads to fascinating dynamics in group work. Last year, I explored topics like the History of the Islamic World—a subject particularly relevant for understanding today’s complex global landscape.”

“As for my pilot training, progress has been a bit slow due to poor weather—low-hanging clouds, rain, wind—but it’s an immensely enjoyable experience. In some ways, I suppose this studying is a form of compensation. After working intensely for more than 35 years, suddenly having that structure disappear leaves a gap. You need something to fill that space, and for me, staying engaged and active is essential.”

Volunteering was also mentioned on your to-do list.

“I genuinely want to give something back to society, which is why I serve on the Board of Directors for Red Cross Flanders, a large volunteer-driven organization. My focus there is on financial matters, where I aim to create meaningful impact. However, I sometimes find myself missing a more hands-on role—one where I could roll up my sleeves and get directly involved. For now, though, this is how I’m contributing, and it feels like a valuable way to make a difference.”