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SPECIAL SERIES

BREAKING GROUND

A Spotlight on Six Women in the U.S. Environmental Industry

SUE PECK

THE POWER OF THE PIVOT



After two decades in banking, Sue Peck took a leap into environmental underwriting — and found her most rewarding chapter yet.

Courageous Change Shaped Her Career

After more than 21 years as an environmental subject matter expert in the banking industry, Sue Peck made a significant and rewarding career pivot. She left a long-tenured leadership role in environmental risk management at a global bank to join Allied World, where she established an environmental underwriting presence in the Boston office and now helps clients navigate complex environmental exposures through tailored insurance solutions. It was a move that required courage and ultimately became one of the most rewarding chapters of her career.

Early Career

Sue's path began in Connecticut, inspired by a high school chemistry teacher who recognized her aptitude for science. Coming from a family of engineers and having a working Mom who modeled resilience, she grew up with strong ethics of discipline and follow-through. After earning a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from St. Lawrence University, Sue began her career as a laboratory sample custodian. While Sue valued the experience, she quickly realized that she thrived in roles involving people, as well as technical work. This led to a promotion into sales, an early indication that her strengths bridged science and client engagement.

Environmental Field Work to Banking Risk Management

Relocating to Boston, Sue joined Metcalf & Eddy as a Project Chemist, gaining extensive field and regulatory experience on EPA Superfund Sites. After five years of managing complex field programs, Sue sought a new challenge that aligned with her environmental background but offered a different pace.

Sue transitioned into banking as an Environmental Risk

Analyst, eventually assuming responsibility for building and leading the environmental division at Sovereign Bank (now Santander). Over those 21 years, Sue managed teams in Boston and New York, oversaw environmental due diligence for lending, monitoring the bank's owned/leased properties, and advised on issues ranging from indoor air quality to remediation to environmental insurance. Her credibility grew from her technical expertise, consistency, and ability to connect environmental considerations with broader business objectives within the banking world.

Expanding Her Expertise

While advancing her banking career, Sue pursued another ambitious goal: earning her law degree from New England School of Law through four years of evening coursework. Her legal training enhanced her ability to review contracts, negotiate vendor agreements, and evaluate transactions through environmental, technical, and legal perspectives.

A Strategic Career Pivot

After more than two decades in banking, Sue sought renewed challenge and growth. The spark that once energized her had dimmed. With the encouragement of her husband of 24 years and their two college-aged children, she sensed it was time for a new chapter. A former colleague who moved to the insurance industry introduced an opportunity at Allied World: An Assistant Vice President role focused on building an environmental underwriting presence in Boston. Despite lacking direct underwriting experience, she pursued the role and embraced the transition to a revenue-generating position with clear financial accountability. The pace was faster, the metrics more visible, and the learning curve steep.



The shift required rapid learning and adaptation, but Sue found it energizing. She credits Allied World's management team for taking a chance on her and fostering an environment that supports collaboration and mentorship. Today, she partners closely with colleagues across North America as the Boston environmental team continues to grow. "It is the most rewarding role I have ever had."

Relationships, Resilience, and Leadership

Sue attributes much of her success to a strong foundation provided by her family's values and her own willingness to take on challenges. Early in her career, she earned a reputation for always stepping up and her colleagues jokingly called her "I'll do it Sue". Over time, she learned the importance and power of delegation – an approach that allowed her to develop emerging talent and support colleagues advancing into more senior leadership roles. One notable legacy Sue is proud of is the fact that her former employees now hold senior environmental risk positions throughout regional banks and global corporations.



One of Sue's core strengths is her ability to build and maintain lasting professional relationships. She believes deeply in preserving trust and treating every interaction with respect: "You never know who you will depend on next," she says. "Never burn a bridge." This philosophy has enriched both her career and her life.

Looking Forward

Sue keeps a close eye on emerging environmental and insurance risks, including PFAS exposure, insurance verdicts, and the growing impact of climate-driven events, such as storms, wildfires, and flooding. She sees significant opportunity for the industry to evolve with proactive, informed insurance risk solutions.

Advice for Future Environmental Professionals

Reflecting on her career, Sue encourages others to take thoughtful risks earlier and trust in their capabilities, admitting she wishes she had taken bold risks sooner. "Don't be afraid of the unknown," she advises. "Trust in yourself, your education, and your ability." Her own leap into insurance later in her career proved transformative.

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She encourages professionals, especially women in technical fields, to not measure success by titles or office size, but by impact, personal integrity and continuous growth. Let your success be defined by your accomplishments, how you feel about yourself, and how others respond to you," she says. "Keep learning, work hard, and love what you do."

For Sue Peck, bold change didn't just redirect her career – it reinvigorated it.

Special thanks to Allied World Assurance Company

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