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INSIDE:
**Knighthead Life: From Foundation to Forward Momentum**

# From Foundation to Forward Momentum

## How **Knighthead Life** Is Turning Early MYGA Success into a Next-Generation FIA Strategy

Momentum in annuities is earned. Sustaining it while expanding into new products is where most companies get tested. Knighthead Life has managed both, using its first year in the MYGA market to build a foundation and its entry into FIAs to show where it is headed.

"We've been very clear from the beginning. This is about building an institution," says **Edward Massaro**, CEO of Knighthead Insurance Group and Knighthead Life. "We are in the retirement services business, making long-term promises to clients. That requires a deliberate approach."

### Getting the First Year Right

Knighthead Life did not treat year one as a race for premium. The priority was establishing credibility with advisors and distribution partners.

"The goal early on was advocacy over volume," says **Michael Brandriet**, Chief Distribution Officer at Knighthead Life. "We wanted partners to feel supported and know they had access to us."

That focus influenced everything from distribution strategy to operations. The company partnered selectively with Independent Marketing Organizations, choosing partners who value service and long-term alignment. At the same time, it invested in its own administrative platform to control the experience from submission through issue.

"If there is a question, people can reach us and get answers quickly," Brandriet says. "That accessibility builds confidence."

Massaro is quick to point out that strong rates alone do not create staying power.

"You have to be competitive, but it isn't just about rates," he says. "Advisors also want consistency, a strong balance sheet, and confidence that you will be there for the life of the product."

That combination helped Knighthead Life gain traction quickly while positioning itself as more than just another new entrant.

### Expanding With Intention

The move into fixed indexed annuities was never a pivot. It was the next step.

"We always planned to offer a full suite of retirement solutions," Massaro says. "The sequencing mattered. We wanted to establish the foundation first and then expand."

Launching with MYGAs provided the opportunity to build relationships and refine internal processes. Only after that groundwork was in place did the company launch FIAs.

"This is a long-term business," Massaro says. "We wanted to make sure we could deliver the same level of experience across a more sophisticated product set."

That confidence is backed by the broader capabilities and experience of Knighthead Insurance Group, which has offered and reinsured indexed products internationally for a decade.

"We have been managing this type of risk for a long time," he says. "Since 2014, we've been selling fixed indexed annuities to international clients," Massaro says. "We are focused on delivering an experience that matches our expertise."

### A Different Approach to FIA Design

The FIA market offers no shortage of choice. Knighthead Life entered with a clear point of view on what needed to change.

"One of the biggest challenges we heard from advisors was product complexity," Brandriet says. "It has become harder to explain how some of these products work."

Chartline FIA and Chartline Bonus FIA were built to address that issue directly. Instead of layering on features, the product's design centers on clarity, transparency, and outcomes that can hold up over time.

"We wanted to create something advisors could clearly explain and clients could easily understand," Brandriet says.

The products rely on well-known indices and avoid structures that require heavy explanation. They also include guaranteed accumulation features that define a baseline outcome.

"With our 10-year Chartline, clients know they will have a specific level of accumulation," Brandriet says. "That clarity makes a difference in conversations."

Transparency carries through to how the products are structured.

"If you want a higher cap, you can see how that is supported," he says. "We are not hiding trade-offs. That helps advisors set expectations upfront."

Massaro views that discipline as essential.

"You have to offer something you can maintain," he says. "The focus is long-term consistency, not short-term positioning."

## Making It Easier to Do Business

Knighthead Life has placed as much emphasis on execution as it has on product design.

"We made the decision to control our administration," Brandriet says. "That allows us to respond quickly and maintain a consistent experience."

Pictured from left to right: **Kyle Ryan**, Chief Operating Officer, **Corey Liebman**, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Actuary, **Amy Pramer**, Chief Marketing Officer, **Edward P. Massaro**, Chief Executive Officer, **Michael Brandriet**, Chief Distribution Officer, **Joe Evangelista**, General Counsel

Owning that process reduces friction and gives the company more control over outcomes when questions or issues arise.

"It comes down to speed, accuracy, and communication," he says. "That is what people remember."

Knighthead Life has taken a similarly focused approach to distribution, favoring depth over breadth.

"We are building real partnerships," Brandriet says. "We want to work alongside our distribution, not compete with them."

That alignment has created early momentum and laid the groundwork for expanding the FIA lineup.

## Growth With Guardrails

Growth in annuities can come quickly. Managing that growth requires restraint.

"We understand the liabilities we are taking on and make sure we have the assets and capital to support them," Massaro says.

That mindset is shaped by the experience of Knighthead Insurance Group across asset management and reinsurance. It influences how products are priced and how capital is deployed.

"You cannot assume today's environment will last," he says. "You have to build with resilience."

That includes setting rates and structures that can hold up over time.

"When we design a product, we are doing it with the expectation that we can support it over the full duration of a client's needs," Massaro says.

For advisors, that consistency matters as much as the initial illustration.

## A More Informed Buyer

The client sitting across from advisors today looks different than they did even a few years ago.

"Clients are doing their own research," Brandriet says. "They are comparing options and asking more detailed questions."

That shift changes how products need to be positioned.

"They are not just being sold an annuity. They are choosing one," he says.

Clarity and transparency become more than product features. They become essential to earning trust.

## Building for What Comes Next

Knighthead Life is a small but growing player in the US market, and it is using that position to stay focused as it scales.

"This is about creating a durable platform," Massaro says. "We are building something that can serve clients and partners for decades."

That includes expanding beyond accumulation products over time and continuing to invest in infrastructure, distribution, and capabilities.

For Brandriet, success is measured in relationships.

"We want to be a company that people choose to do business with," he says. "That comes from delivering a strong experience and standing behind what we offer."

It also comes down to the people behind the company.

"We are building a team of talent that understands the importance of this work," Brandriet says. "Helping clients manage retirement risk is meaningful and we want people who take pride in that."

## Turning Early Success Into Long-Term Strategy

Knighthead Life's first year established credibility. Its expansion into FIAs shows how that foundation will be used.

The company is not trying to outpace the market. It is working to build something that lasts within it.

For advisors, that distinction matters. It signals a partner focused on consistency, clarity, and long-term alignment rather than short-term momentum.

And that is what turns early success into something more durable. •

To learn more about Chartline & Chartline Bonus FIAs, visit **knightheadlife.com**.

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