

Talent and Leadership

**An Interview with John R. Strangfeld,
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Prudential Financial, Inc.**



John R. Strangfeld

EDITORS' NOTE Before John Strangfeld assumed his current post in 2008, he was Vice Chairman with responsibility for Prudential's U.S. businesses. Prior to this, he held a variety of senior investment positions at Prudential Financial, both within the United States and abroad, including six years in London. Strangfeld received a B.S. in Business Administration from Susquehanna University and an M.B.A. from the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia. Strangfeld also holds the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation. He is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Susquehanna University and a member of the Financial Services Forum, The Financial Services Roundtable, and the Business Roundtable.

COMPANY BRIEF With over 135 years of life insurance and asset management expertise, Prudential Financial, Inc. (www.prudential.com) is a financial services leader with operations in the United States, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. The company is focused on helping its 50 million individual and institutional customers grow and protect their wealth. Prudential businesses offer a variety of products and services, including life insurance, annuities, retirement-related services, mutual funds, and investment management.

Prudential is headquartered in Newark and is one of the leading employers in the city. What advantages does Newark offer?

We opened our doors for business in Newark 136 years ago and the city has remained our headquarters ever since. One-quarter of our U.S. workforce is based in Newark.

Newark has all the ingredients of a center for economic commerce. It's just 20 minutes from New York City and is easily accessible from many major highways and rail lines. It also boasts the busiest airport in the region with Newark Liberty International and the third busiest port in the country in terms of volume. And Newark is home to several leading universities and premier cultural venues – the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Newark Museum, and Prudential Center among them.

How have public/private partnerships progressed in Newark and how critical is this relationship to affecting real change in the city?

Corporations play a large role in – and should bear a large responsibility for – the revitalization of cities. You can't just exist in a city where you operate; you have to make a positive difference in the community. That's why Prudential continues to be at the forefront in forging a public/private partnership with Newark and leveraging our resources to address the city's potential.

Through social investments, sponsorships, and grants, Prudential and The Prudential Foundation have helped fund the construction of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, two new hotels – the first in Newark in nearly 40 years – and, most recently, Teachers' Village, which will feature new state-of-the-art educational space for the expansion/relocation of three local charter schools, modern apartment buildings, and retail space. Our foundation is a major supporter of nonprofit organizations focused on improving educational outcomes for children and transforming neighborhoods into thriving economically diverse communities. These public/private partnerships are helping to make Newark a cultural destination as well as an economic one.

A major part of Prudential's culture centers on community and corporate citizenship. Would you highlight the importance of

this work to the company and the key areas that you focus on in regard to your support in Newark?

Prudential has always viewed itself as a member of every community where our employees live and work, and we have the same responsibilities as other citizens. This commitment to our neighbors is integral to our culture.

Being a good corporate citizen is not only an important part of who we are; it's also an important factor in how we measure our success. Customers expect to do business with a good corporate citizen. Employees expect to work for a company that supports their civic involvement. Community leaders expect their business neighbors to be deeply committed to their shared cities.

And we are deeply committed to Newark. In 2011, The Prudential Foundation provided nearly \$9 million in grants supporting education, economic development, and civic infrastructure programs and efforts focused on Newark. In addition, we currently have more than \$60 million in investments in the city through our Social Investments Program.

Meeting our stakeholders' expectations by doing good works together strengthens Prudential and its communities for a more sustainable future.

What needs to be done to implement true education reform and are the right steps being taken in this regard?

Pushing for higher standards in our schools is paramount to improving outcomes for all students. Expanding access to quality education and driving resources, training, and innovative programs at the classroom level are key steps to implementing education reform. We are proud to be collaborating with businesses, nonprofits, schools, and the city to ensure students have the chance to learn and acquire the skills needed to succeed in higher education and the workforce.

Through our foundation, we're making grants that support educational leadership, youth development, and parental support and advocacy in nonprofits like The Newark Trust for Education, an independent local education fund that mobilizes money, people, and organizations to support quality public schools for Newark children. We're proud of our role in charter school financing, too. Through our Social Investment Program, we've provided more than \$140 million in investments to charter schools throughout the country. So we're making progress, but there's more to do.

Would you highlight the quality of your workforce and the ability to attract top talent to Prudential?

Financial services is a people business and a trust business, not a numbers business. We don't have patents like pharmaceutical or consumer goods companies. Customers come to us because they have confidence in the abilities of our people. That's why we're so focused on talent and leadership.

The quality of our company and the way we do business is a reflection of the skills, character, integrity, diversity, and teamwork of our employees. Talent management isn't just about the processes and tools; it's about embedding a talent mindset in the organization and implementing a culture of "leadership" rather than building an organization of "leaders".

That's the kind of company people want to work for and that's the kind of company we are. When you join Prudential, you become part of a growing, dynamic company that values and supports its talent through challenging work and a focus on development. The better we do this, the greater our ability to attract top talent and the more distance we put between ourselves and the competition. ●