

---

FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF DOUG@GETSTRATEGICINS.COM

---

From the Tampa Bay Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/tampabay/news/2022/05/06/strategic-insurance-services-ceo.html>

## Strategic Insurance Services CEO has a view from inside the industry right now

May 6, 2022, 5:00am EDT

Sixteen years ago, Doug Levi had an interview for a financial adviser position he felt didn't go well. So he took his resume and walked down Kennedy Boulevard in Tampa talking to business owners. He wound up at a State Farm office, and as they say the rest is history.

Levi went from working for State Farm for a few years to start his firm, Strategic Insurance Services, in 2006.

He's seen Tampa Bay's exponential growth and is currently experiencing one of the most challenging times for the insurance industry in Florida. Pinellas Park-based Strategic provides business insurance, homeowners insurance, auto insurance, health and life insurance, cyber insurance, and commercial property insurance for St. Petersburg, Tampa, Clearwater and all of Florida.



NOLA LALEYE

Doug Levi, Strategic Insurance Services

**There's a lot of talk right now about property insurance in Florida.**

**What's your take on what's happening with the Legislature?** I've been in the business for 19 years and it's the worst market I've seen. It's incredibly challenging. In the last 90 days, we've seen three carriers go out of business and go into receivership or lose their financial rating. It's a big issue. You're going to see more and more about this. There's a special legislative session from May 23 to 27. When you get to that level, I think it shows how serious it is.

Florida is the most expensive state in the country now for homeowners insurance, \$3,600 a year average premium — not inexpensive. I'm not talking about all the mansions down in South Beach. Years and years of storms have finally caught up. It's hit a lot of the Southeast. What happens in other areas affects us.

**When did you add cyber insurance to your roster?** I have my cyber risk management designation. We started probably in earnest five to seven years ago. My message to clients is this is the new area you need to protect. We do a lot of business insurance, general liability, slip and fall. I tell people the chances of someone coming into your law firm and slipping and falling are slim. But what are the chances of your management system getting hacked?

We had clients just recently who couldn't get into their management system. Hackers locked all their accounts and wanted \$55,000 in bitcoin. They did have a policy and we got our team involved right away. Insurance companies literally have, for lack of a better term, cyber-terrorist negotiators. So depending on how bad the attack is, sometimes they can bring in other high-level people to unlock it. But sometimes they pay the ransom.

This is real stuff. If you don't have a policy, good luck. The bigger issue for most businesses is what happens if they get in and start attacking your clients?

**Are your staffing needs being met?** I'm biased — we have a great team and culture. Most of our team is long-term but you always have people move or leave. There's never a time when you can take your eye off it at all. No doubt it's the most challenging labor market in terms of finding good people. We just started a scholarship fund with St. Petersburg College. "Dream big and make it happen" — that's my motto. So the Dream Big and Make it

Happen Fund is a \$3,500 college fund with SPC and it's going to be specific to the insurance program there.

We think it's important to be involved with the community and give back, but we also think it's going to be a good way to introduce us to the students there from a recruiting standpoint.

The days of posting on LinkedIn and Indeed are hard. Do you open up to remote anywhere in the U.S.? I'm a Florida insurance agent but if you have the right skills and qualifications and you live in Seattle, come on board. There are people doing that. For me, I'm kind of going back and forth. I still like people here in the office but if we found the right person, I'd be willing to consider that.

**Cost of living and salary increases are big topics. How are you approaching it?** We're doing a big analysis right now at the partnership level for the cost of living. We all know we see it every day, inflation is at historic proportions I've never seen in my lifetime. How do we continue to remain competitive and make sure we're attracting great people and compensating very fairly and also being good stewards of the business and ensuring everyone's future? It's a real challenge for business owners right now.

You could get to a scenario where you have to hire a new person and pay them more than an existing team member that's been with you for years. It's a real possibility that happens for business owners.

---

### Closer look

**Name, title:** Doug Levi, CEO or chief encouragement officer

**Education:** Double major, economics and management, Gettysburg College

**Hometown:** Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania

**Currently reading:** "The Leadership Lessons of Jesus"

**Favorite movie:** "Gladiator"

**Hobbies:** Travel, eating out, sports and time with family

**Family:** Wife Amy, daughter Abigail (age 8), son Asher (age 6), and daughter Avery (age 4)