



# AXA EQUITABLE

redefining / standards

## THE MARKET

AXA's business is financial protection. At a time when traditional solutions for retirement, such as defined benefit plans and Social Security, cannot be relied on; when baby boomers worry about outliving their assets; when the array of investment and saving options from which to choose can be dizzying, people want and need advice to help them make choices and plan for their future. They want and need innovative financial products from a company they can trust. Today, 102 million clients worldwide look to AXA for financial protection. They trust AXA's financial professionals to deliver guidance and to provide a full range of products to help meet their insurance, savings, and retirement needs and to help them develop the long-term plans that are essential to attaining financial independence in the 21st century.

In the United States, AXA is represented by AXA Financial Inc., a financial management and advisory group serving millions of individual and institutional clients. Perhaps the best-known AXA Financial company is AXA Equitable Life Insurance Company, a premier



AXA's development has continued apace. In the most severe financial crisis in recent decades, AXA demonstrated its capacity to deliver results by remaining focused on its core business: insurance and asset management. AXA's commitment is to stand by its clients with financial protection and savings solutions.

## HISTORY

Although AXA is a global company, it operates through national affiliates, each bringing its own tradition into the AXA family. A prime example is AXA Equitable Life Insurance Company in the United States, with its rich history of strength and innovation.

Founder Henry Baldwin Hyde took a job with Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York, then America's largest insurer, in 1853. At Mutual, Hyde saw the best and thought he could do better. In spring 1859 he opened an office upstairs from Mutual and hung a banner announcing the arrival of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States.

Hyde began a tradition of product innovation by adapting the tontine, a type of annuity dating back 200 years. In 1868 Equitable introduced four tontine policies that paid guaranteed death benefits and dividends. Between 1869 and 1899 the company's assets grew from \$10.5 million to \$280 million, making Equitable one of the largest and most powerful financial institutions in the world.

Equitable introduced in 1911 the first modern group life insurance

policy. During World War I, Equitable paid death benefits on soldiers killed in battle. After World War II, Equitable was the biggest private lender of farm and residential loans. Its mortgages were tied to whole life policies, which guaranteed the loans and built up funds to pay off the mortgages.

In 1968 Equitable was the first New York company approved to market variable annuities, and in 1976 it pioneered variable life insurance. The company was the first to gain New York state approval for universal life insurance in 1983, and two years later introduced Incentive Life®, a hybrid of universal and variable life products. That same year Equitable became a full-service financial protection company with its acquisition of investment firm Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette (DLJ) and money manager Alliance Capital Management L.P.

French-based AXA Group\* acquired Equitable in 1991 and changed its name to AXA Equitable in 1999. On July 8, 2004, the circle was closed when the MONY Group, the



provider of life insurance, annuities, and other financial products and services that have been helping people meet their goals and fulfill their dreams for more than 150 years.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Today AXA is truly an international company, operating in 57 countries, serving more than 102 million individual and corporate clients, and employing 163,000 people worldwide — impressive numbers, considering that AXA is not yet 30 years old. In 1985 a group of three French insurance companies adopted the name AXA. Within 10 years AXA became the largest French insurer and grew throughout Europe and beyond, into the United States in 1991 and Australia in 1995.



company that founder Henry Hyde left to create the Equitable, became a wholly owned subsidiary of AXA Financial.

## THE PRODUCT

AXA Equitable offers a complete product portfolio of life insurance, annuities, and investments. Carrying on its tradition of innovation, AXA Equitable continues to develop products that provide real protection strategies. In 2010, for example, AXA Equitable introduced Retirement Cornerstone™, a variable deferred annuity that has several ways to generate guaranteed lifetime income. *Guarantees are based on the claims-paying ability of the issuing insurance company.*

Wherever clients are in their lives — starting a family or starting a business, newly wed or

guidance necessary to take control of their finances. Another goal is to foster volunteer efforts to help in partnership with outside organizations, such as Dress for Success. The AXA Equitable Connection seeks to build, for women employees and financial professionals, a community that enhances workplace opportunities for growth and development. To support this initiative, the company launched an iPhone app for women, and a special section of the company's website focuses on the AXA Equitable Connection. In addition, AXA Equitable has partnered with the Global Fund for Women, an organization that helps make grants to women's groups that work to gain freedom from poverty, violence, and discrimination.

## PROMOTION

From 2006 to 2011 AXA Equitable ran an advertising campaign that revolutionized the brand's position by focusing on how people often ignore the importance of planning for their retirement. The campaign tackled this tough issue by using a metaphor for the thing that everyone knows about but doesn't want to talk about: the 800-pound gorilla in the room. The gorilla came to life in advertising, acting as a nudge and reminding people about how important planning for retirement is, all while joking, "But what do I know? I'm just the 800-pound gorilla in the room." The campaign was a fun yet serious cue that people should be proactive, rather than staying up at night worrying about the future. The 800-pound gorilla in the room helped to drive home a fact that resonated with the target audience: in times of financial uncertainty, AXA Equitable's products can offer a guarantee of income for life. The 800-pound gorilla in the room became a loved personality at AXA Equitable, and customers watched to see where this wise gorilla would pop up next, furthering AXA's brand awareness.

**GREEN FOCUS**

Globally, AXA has long been committed to sustainability by reducing its direct impact on the environment and promoting environmental awareness. In the United States, AXA Equitable works with certified paper suppliers and printers and is proud to carry the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) logo on its marketing material, prospectuses, and annual reports. At the same time, the company has redoubled its efforts to encourage its clients to go paperless. In 2010 AXA Equitable launched the "It's EZ Being Green" Sweepstakes to promote electronic delivery of statements and other mailings among clients.

newly retired — AXA Equitable's highly trained professionals work with clients to tailor financial strategies with the products and services needed to help them live, grow, and succeed.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

AXA Equitable is also committed to the women's market and launched the AXA Equitable Connection: *Women, Wealth and Wisdom* — an education and empowerment program. One of the program's primary goals is to connect women consumers to the education, resources, and

## BRAND VALUES

AXA Equitable's strategy for the United States is designed to build on the history and name

recognition of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States while partnering the brand and positioning it globally with AXA.

AXA Equitable's commitment to its customers is reflected in the brand's values: To be attentive, reliable, and available. The company's goal is to make each interaction positive — from clients' calls to the service center to their experiences with the company's financial professionals. Working with AXA Equitable is not about buying a policy; it's about developing a relationship with an experienced, attentive financial pro.

AXA Equitable is dedicated to education as well — for clients as well as students. The AXA Foundation is the philanthropic arm of AXA Equitable, directing the company's philanthropic and volunteer activities and working to improve the quality of life in communities across the country where AXA has a presence. The AXA Foundation's signature program, *AXA Achievement*, provides two resources that help make college possible: access and advice.

\*"AXA Group" refers to AXA, a French holding company for a group of international insurance and financial services companies, together with its direct and indirect consolidated subsidiaries.

## THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT AXA EQUITABLE

- In 1881 Equitable pioneered the practice of paying death claims immediately and without protest — a departure from the industry's typical waiting period. This step reassured beneficiaries that poverty would be averted without delay.
- Equitable in the 1920s became the first company to deliver a claim check by air. The claim was processed in the home office, and a check delivered to the West Coast within three days.
- AXA Equitable's famous policyholders include eight presidents, Babe Ruth, George Burns, J. D. Rockefeller, Walter Chrysler, and W. K. Kellogg.
- AXA Financial's headquarters, 1290 Avenue of the Americas in Manhattan, is home to the world-famous mural *America Today*, by Thomas Hart Benton. Equitable purchased the 10-panel masterpiece in 1981. The mural graces the entrance to "1290," where building tenants, art lovers, and tourists alike can see it.
- French insurance companies are required to invest assets in agriculture. AXA chose to invest in grape growing. AXA Millesimes owns châteaux in Bordeaux and Languedoc, France, as well as vineyards in Portugal and Hungary.
- A number of airlines borrowed money from Equitable after World War II. Equitable played a significant role in the exploits of "the Aviator" himself by lending Howard Hughes \$40 million in 1945 for Trans World Airlines. The much-needed loan is mentioned in the 2004 biopic about Hughes.