

It's Time to Be a Healthy Influence

Building a consumer-driven culture is the new imperative

By Alex Y. Chang

Today's Environment

In an increasingly consumer-driven healthcare marketplace, insurers are finding that a focus on consumer engagement is essential to success. A number of trends are converging to require deeper consumer involvement:

- Employers' growing use of high-deductible, consumer-directed health plans and incentives is compelling consumers to engage.
- The huge number of baby boomers, soon to become Medicare beneficiaries, will bring different attitudes about treatment, prevention and lifestyle choices.
- Consumers' sensitivities to the cost of health insurance will bring expectations with their purchase, just as in other industries.

As consumers actively engage in making their own healthcare decisions, they will also come to expect the sorts of personalized experiences that they have enjoyed with the retail and banking industries.

For insurers, this is both an opportunity and a challenge. How do you attract, retain and influence consumers in this era of new expectations? How do you provide a personalized approach to healthcare and become a trusted partner in wellness?

Point B's Perspective

We believe that it's urgent—not optional—for insurers to play a more influential role in their members' health.

While there's plenty of buzz about customer-centered care, walking the talk is easier said than done. But the need is great, and so are the rewards; there is no better way to distinguish your brand, attract new consumers, and build loyalty among your existing members.

Personalizing: deeper than marketing slogans

Personalization is the process of delivering targeted, contextualized experiences based on understanding the consumer's expectations—demonstrating that you know them and being proactive in meeting their needs. Meeting such expectations might include making coverage easy to use, personalizing care support, and rewarding healthy behavior in meaningful ways.

The biggest challenges in personalization come up in “last-mile delivery”—the interactions between insurers and consumers in areas where new levels of interaction and trust are needed. Insurers can lead the way by thinking in terms of “earning the right” to speak to the customer: How do consumers prefer to be reached? What are the right actions to engage them in? Do you have their trust in this aspect of personalization? Consumer research and testing may be useful to determine which personalization applications are best handled by the insurer or another healthcare partner; collaboration and data sharing among partners are often key to successfully engaging consumers. How can you and your partners engage more effectively and efficiently to meet consumer needs and expectations?

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Partnering for wellness: building relationships

With advances in technology and medical knowledge, consumers can have increasing control over their health and well-being. Insurers can help enable healthy, informed, and cost-conscious actions that become the foundation for long-term relationships.

Consumer action toward productive health behaviors occurs in a series of stages that move from awareness and understanding to decision making and action. Insurers can target interventions at any stage in this process to play a valued role in guiding actions that improve healthy behaviors. For instance, insurers can help increase awareness, facilitate understanding and simplify decision making. Such interventions may include partnering with trusted figures to deliver communications, programs and clinical interventions; offering new online tools that enable members to assess their personal health; and rewarding healthy behaviors and outcomes.

Using business drivers to evaluate efforts

Every effort to personalize and partner will have unique costs and benefits, based on your organization and its business objectives. We suggest evaluating those efforts against five key business drivers:

- 1. Higher customer acquisition.** How effectively is your organization able to focus on members, identify influencers, analyze behavior and build relationships with members? Concerns may include acquiring members at lower cost, acquiring as many members as possible, and acquiring them through new channels.
- 2. Customer service success.** Success is about achieving customer satisfaction while balancing costs. Think about your time to first response, time to resolution, and the availability of information based on your customers' preferred channels.
- 3. Medical management scale.** Supporting members' wellness goals includes scaling the approach, processes and technologies to address the needs of the

sickest and riskiest patients while continuing to provide education, resources, healthy opportunities to all.

4. Appropriate care utilization. What are your approaches to encouraging and ensuring that diagnostics and therapeutic interventions are necessary and delivered at the right setting and cost? This driver directly supports cost of care and quality outcomes.

5. Higher customer retention. Will your efforts help fulfill the needs of existing members and keep them from opting out to take a risk with a new product?

Once you've evaluated how well your initiatives score, consider the feasibility of implementing them: How easy and how valuable will it be to get them done?

Thinking forward to 2020

Technology will continue to affect major healthcare changes in the next five years. As you get closer to consumers, it pays to keep two trends in mind:

First, the concept of loyalty—aligning rewards with healthy behaviors—will become increasingly prevalent in healthcare. Retailers leverage loyalty programs to increase retention; healthcare insurers will do so, too.

Second, a coming tsunami of sensor-based biometrics has the potential to create tremendous value in productive analytics, health interventions and care. Consumers show interest in and willingness to share health data, presenting insurers with opportunities to know them better, improve engagement and build retention. But consumers must feel confident that their privacy and security concerns over the use of their personal data are being addressed.

The Bottom Line

Cultivating a consumer-centric culture is essential for insurers that want to successfully lead. Develop a clear vision of the opportunity. Evaluate the operational and technology challenges and plan a roadmap for execution. Use incentives and accountability to ensure that everyone has skin in the game. And measure your performance. Your members will reward *you* for it.