



Consumer-centric front office uses data,
outreach to engage members

As new requirements wash over our health care marketplace, we are reminded of how far behind we are regarding consumerism when compared to other industries. Under the Affordable Care Act, health plans have been striving for a business model that shifts away from being employer-centered and puts consumers at the center of their organizations. To truly become a “consumer-oriented” organization, payers must design and build effective consumer-centric front-office structures that will help them grow and retain membership, manage costs and improve the member experience, according to Lori Stevens, senior vice president, Payer Solutions, Optum.

“Consumer centricity has an impact on every aspect of a plan — it is a journey and not a destination,” Stevens said in a recent Optum Perspectives webinar, “Building a Consumer-centric Front Office.” “As we start this journey, one of the interesting concepts is that there is no single application or business process that suddenly makes a plan more consumer-centric.”

However, payers can start by placing more emphasis on consumer engagement, knowing that this effort will also help with their plans’ other primary front-office priorities of channel optimization and business process transformation. Prioritizing consumer engagement efforts allows plans to:

- Develop and execute against a consumer strategy
- Provide personalized tools and services that drive positive behavior decisions and lead to cost-effective decisions
- Evolve business-to-business infrastructure to support emerging market demands

Stevens noted that to fully realize these goals, plans need better data. “Consumers expect real-time experiences though legacy systems, and disparate data hinder payers’ ability to deliver upon these new consumer expectations,” she told webinar attendees. “Data is a key capability and aggregation, and use of that data in a consumer-centric world is a key priority of payers moving forward.”

Expert presenters

Lori Stevens, Senior Vice President, Payer Solutions, Optum

Herschel Reich, Vice President, Actuarial Consulting, Optum

Clay Heinz, Vice President, Business Development, Optum

“Big data” can help plans with consumer goals

“Big data” is a collection of high-volume, high-velocity and high-variety information assets that demand cost-effective, innovative forms of information processing for enhanced insight and decision-making. If rendered actionable, big data can help plans implement the four key elements of consumer-centric solutions, according to Herschel Reich, vice president, Actuarial Consulting, Optum.

As Reich explained, these elements are:

- **Personalization.** Health care is intensely personal. Payers need to close the information gap between buyers and sellers and act more like leading retailers and financial firms in their ability to understand and meet unique customer needs and preferences.
- **Seamlessness.** Payers need to ensure efficient consumer experience — information and access need to be in real time, and care and service needs to be readily available.
- **Simplification.** Ease of use and comprehension are built on the backbone of the data. Payers need to make it easy for consumers to interact with the health care system.
- **Transparency.** Transparency goes beyond making health care costs, quality ratings and other information readily accessible; it involves building consumer trust that plans will be an appropriate shepherd of the data.

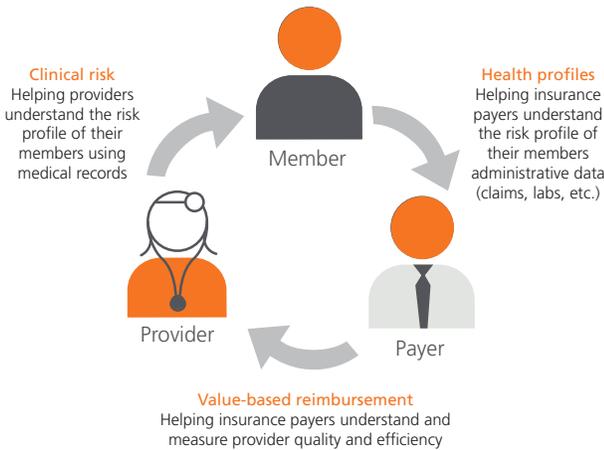
Reich illustrated how big data applications can transform the health care space. For example, he stated that by using enhanced data that is available beyond claims, companies can improve their prediction of health care spending. Further, plans can pair their knowledge of who might be more likely to use services in a

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— Lori Stevens
Senior Vice President, Payer Solutions, Optum

Figure 1

Use cases in health care



preventative, wellness or care management setting with actionable data. “Using big data is not a far-fetched, futuristic approach,” Reich said. “It is being explored today by companies looking at predictive risk factors or markers for chronic disease.”

Advanced analytics and sophisticated data tools also can help companies with market segmentation, customer service/staffing models and network analytics. “Companies are using big data applications to create a single point of view or a single source of truth, across platforms and products, to guide all customer interactions,” he added.

Consumer centricity prompts more efficient staffing

Shifting the front office’s focus to consumers — and the unique staffing demands imposed by the significant seasonality of the consumer sales period — creates great opportunity to drive efficiency in your operations, Clay Heinz, vice president, business development, Optum, told webinar attendees. He remarked that these seasonal demands place more emphasis on operational scalability, as there is little opportunity to accumulate tenure in your front-office organization.

Additionally, supporting multiple business segments has a tendency to create multiple communication “queues”. He remarked that with a blended model, a consolidated selling season can reduce staffing requirements by up to 40 percent and better meet member needs. “There is an opportunity to cross-train phone representatives to accommodate both [Medicare and ACA] product lines,” he said. “There could be a 40-percent staff reduction if you are willing to invest the time into quality representatives and train them on supporting multiple business segments. Where that becomes really relevant is the slow season,” he continued.

Along with seasonal demands comes a slow period. For sales, this is the Q2/Q3 time frame and for service operations, just the opposite. During the off-season, he explained, these well-trained sales staff (who are well-versed in all of the plans) can help consumers

Figure 2

Health care contact center operations

Seasonal requirements demand scalable contact center solutions

Recruitment	<p>Recruiting the right employee for the right form of member engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online profiling tools • Proper licensing
Training	<p>Scalable training solutions to meet seasonal demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer Certification • Quick curriculum development for real-time adjustments due to regulation updates or communications
Compliance	<p>Constant watch on the changing regulations while still close to operations</p>
Performance	<p>Clear visibility into key performance indicators create a performance-based culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the marketplace drive changes in KPIs • Align incentives throughout the operation



navigate their plans' particulars and understand their options, which enhances the consumer experience. "That proactive activity drives retention, reduces inbound inquiries throughout the year and drives loyalty within the membership base," he commented.

One consumer engagement strategy that Optum has had success with this year is training call center representatives to reach out to members who have not paid their premiums. "Using that seasonal workforce to reach out [enabled] the plan to retain membership and drive upwards of a 96-percent retention rate on members who had signed up during the open enrollment period. We blended some educational messaging to create an 'onboarding' concept and also leveraged a dynamic HRA to coarsely asses the risk."

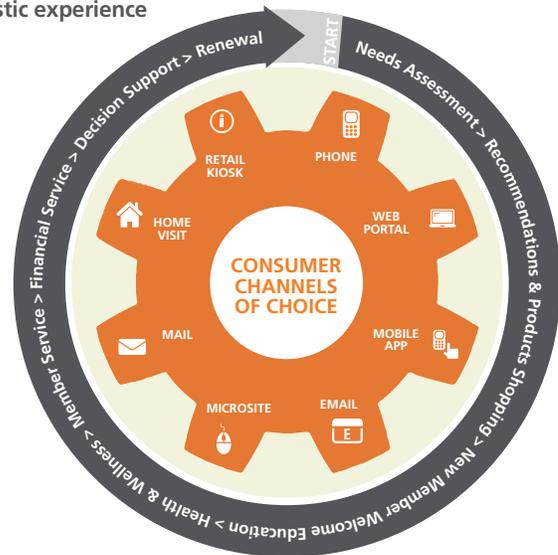
Ensuring that contact center solutions are scalable during all seasons requires a "deep dive into operations," Heinz said. Plans must take a closer look at recruitment, training, compliance and performance indicators in order to operate a successful health care contact center.

Channel of choice is crucial to engagement success

Plans seeking a consumer-centric front office also should recognize that if they are not using the consumer's "channel of choice" — including web, email, phone, text, click-to-call or click-to-chat channels — to communicate with that member, they are not optimizing their outreach efforts. In other words, Heinz said, "consumers are more likely to buy and more likely to leverage medical management programs" if plans are communicating with them via the channels they prefer. Channel of choice "is becoming table stakes," he said. If you are not able to engage multiple channels in your front office, there is an opportunity to do so either through outsourcing or in upgrading your communication platform."

Heinz concluded that plans need to look at consumers in a holistic manner. "I am amazed by how much time and energy is spent with consumers during the sales process that is rarely parlayed into how you engage those consumers once they've made that purchase. There is an immediate opportunity to parlay pre-sales information into post-sales engagement, leveraging some of the big data applications." He also described the ideal member value chain, which is only possible through a holistic consumer experience.

Figure 3
Holistic experience



"Just as seasonality has impacted our business and places significant demands on our operations, we also find ourselves in a cycle with our members, where they can select a new brand year after year," Heinz said. Stressing that a front-office focus on the consumer is good business, he asserted that engaging consumers, though better analytics, responsive call centers and meaningful, well-placed outreach, is "critical to drive loyalty and retention proactively and reactively throughout that member lifetime."

How Optum can help

Optum assists our clients in effectively targeting, acquiring, retaining and maximizing the right customer relationships through integrated technology platforms, services and consulting solutions. With proven methodologies, customizable tools and experienced professionals, we provide insights in the following areas:

- Analysis and evaluation to optimize new markets and new channels
- Transformation of business processes to drive data integration and improved workflow efficiencies
- Consumer engagement and retention through personalization and member support

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