

NOUS
INFOSYSTEMS

LEVERAGING INTELLECT

**LEVERAGING DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY**

FOR CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

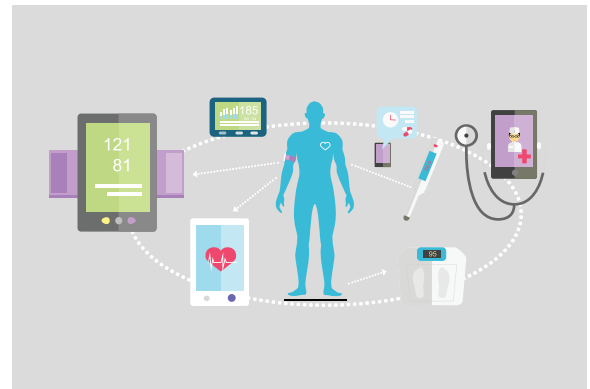
Abstract

Industries such as Banking or Financial Services, Retail, Media & Entertainment, etc have leveraged digital technologies to transform the digital consumer experience and improve consumer engagement. Consumers now expect similar experience and services from the Healthcare Industry as well.

This is having a big impact on the way solutions are provided and applications designed. The overall consumer experience has become more complex and sophisticated. However, there is no consolation for the difficulties Healthcare organizations are going through. Healthcare organizations are being compared with enterprises in other industries on complexities with regulations, criticality, source information, multi-channel access, consolidation of information, etc. Healthcare cannot afford to be left behind in spite of support from Federal and other institutions in the way it engages its constituents namely 'Patients' - as consumers.

Think about the complexities and the overall concerns to all the stake holders including the patients and policy makers, when public health problems like obesity or tobacco-related diseases continue to contribute in large to the overall healthcare costs. Without the right information or engagement with the care providers, many contribute to the already high healthcare costs. With the proliferation of social media and other use of technology, consumers can now join social communities and interact with other people with similar medical conditions and also interact with doctors online to diagnose their health problems and seek out treatments as well.

This white paper tries to discuss different challenges the Healthcare entities are facing, especially in the Payer space and offers certain solutions that they could implement. Though the challenges appear to be more perceived rather than real, they will certainly impact how care is delivered. In fact, analysis has shown, how consumer engagement has played a key role in enhancing healthcare quality, lowering costs, and providing a better experience of care.



Introduction

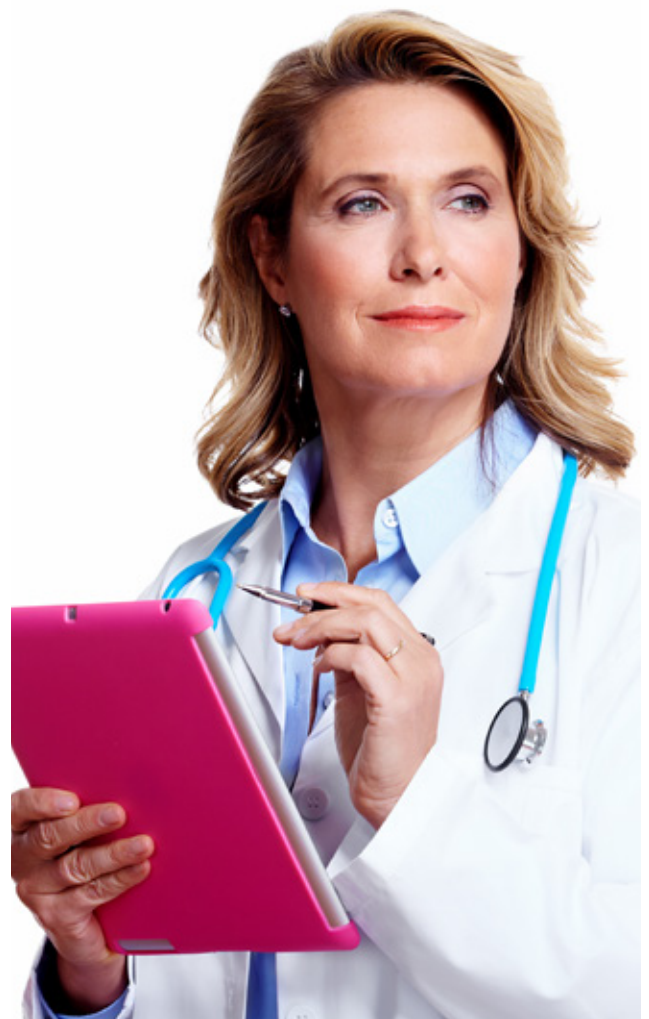
The subject of Consumer engagement in Healthcare has to be approached with a 360 degree view rather than looking at only one or two factors.

Technology has played a key role in keeping Consumer engaged in other Industries

With the advancement in the communication technology and information technology, the subject of Consumer Engagement will never be the same again. Increasing number of people are getting access to information and with proliferation of Social Media, the consumer is not just an individual. Healthcare payers, over the years have built systems that effectively reach out to consumers but to keep up with changing times is difficult and needs additional effort.

For US Healthcare Payers, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) or Affordable Care Act (ACA) passed into law in March 2010, represents the most significant regulatory overhaul of the healthcare system in recent times and brings drastic changes to how things were run.

Emergence of new technologies and standards set by other industries like Retail, Banking and others have forced the Healthcare industry to improve consumer engagement. Let us now examine the different challenges and find out how these can be converted into opportunities.



Challenges or opportunities?

Here are some of the factors affecting consumer engagement in the Healthcare industry over the years.

Health plans have lacked enterprise coordination of communications and had little insight into overall consumer interactions.

In US markets, ACA as a law, opened the doors to many uninsured people through Health Information Exchange (HIX). The demographics of these were not uniform, but diversified and ethnically different.

HIX made competition even more fierce and constant. It required the payers to create a solution that was cost-effective in order to be competitive.

Consumer inclination to Social Media and its involvement in an individual's daily life is considerable. Brand equity is all in the game, causing small players to fade away.

Traditional methods of consumer engagement in the form of portal or Helplines had little scope for improvement.

Consumer behavior changed in terms of multi-channel engagement and expectation of real-time information from all at the point of communication.

Demands on personalization of the information and speed based on the standards set by other industries.

Huge amounts of data generated, but little leverage taken from Business Transaction data or Behavioral Data or Social Data.

Looking at each of these, there lies an opportunity for the Payers to take advantage of the situation. Insurers must provide customers with easily understandable and accessible information on a range of plans in order to help them make informed decisions and also to ensure a high-fidelity experience. Consumers want their healthcare information delivered in real time, in a self-service capacity and in the manner that is most convenient to them.



Communication System



Disparate communication systems leading to lack of co-ordination and little consumer insight

Regulation and Open Markets



No uniform demographics and categorization of consumers

Advent of Social Media



Need for real-time data and formation of consumer opinions

Self-Service Portals



Features need to be advanced and totally engaging

Personalization



Consumer expects information to be personalized and consumer centric

Data Management



Large amount of data to manage, and little leverage from it

(Fig 1: Predominant challenges with consumer engagement)



Technology to enable Payers and serve new customers

According to the Department of Health & Human Service – USA, about 7 million new consumers enrolled into the Health Insurance Marketplaces in 2014. These numbers are expected to grow in the future and is expected to touch \$200 Billion by 2019. As the numbers indicate, there is a big opportunity for the payers to educate and engage this fast growing group of new customers. Managing their portfolio, identifying opportunities and customizing care can be enabled through the latest available tools and technologies.

Providing these new customers with the option to access information and self-serve or provide provisions to complete any tasks through Omni-channel implementation will not just provide convenience but build brand equity as well. Imagine the good will it can generate in this age of social media. The effort undertaken to prepare competitive insurance plans can only make sense if it leads to positive patient experience. They should serve consumers through a complex variety of channels and formats such as social media, mobile, web, paper, email, member portals and the like.



(Fig 2: Multichannel impact in consumer engagement)

The cost factor is not just limited to the competition getting tougher, or regulations like ACA demanding cost-effectiveness, but also due to consumers getting to manage their healthcare costs. Besides, pricing information adds more pressure and needs to be competitive and from a single source of truth. Systems can't operate in silos and provide inconsistent information. Having a cloud-based solution with all channels of communication in sync provides synergy that goes a long distance, since speed is perceived to be quality.

As a large amount of data is generated, employing analytics to analyze the demographic data, business transaction data, behavioral data, social data, and payment data, helps not only in generating insights for future use, but also helps in discerning current trends, overcoming heretofore unknown weaknesses and identifying those aspects of the business that is working well so that it can be leveraged further. As personalization of information comes to the fore, assimilation of all the data and feedback from the individual consumer helps to keep things in sync. Payers should use the potential of analytics and big data to aggregate health data to enable care management,

personalized treatment, decision support for consumers, fraud prevention, waste reduction and other possibilities. Payers should consider building customer experience analytics and service monitoring systems. They should analyze data from past and current customer sentiment, for decision-making around future customer behavior.

The patient portal solutions should not be limited to only providing information but more self-serving and interactive in terms of what tasks consumers can accomplish like payments or comparisons, raising complaints or support tickets, setting up alerts or any reminders, and self-learn without much intervention by the Payers support team. This also helps in setting up a leaner support team.

Use of smart phones and apps have opened up a plethora of challenges and opportunities. All access solutions have to be device-agnostic and should provide real-time information. As increasing number of consumers access applications through mobile devices, solutions have to be quicker, available all the time, and should match or exceed consumer expectations.



Educating members on plans and benefits, and ensuring transparency of provider and procedure/ costs/ quality/ effectiveness not only builds goodwill and loyalty, but also helps in communicating new features and updates. This constant engagement with the consumer helps retain them and becomes first source of information.

Payers should delight customers through timely, intelligent, accurate and emphatic response to queries by transforming the customer response architecture . They should increase the effectiveness of interaction by spreading consumer education. Payers should attract consumers through personalized marketing and consistent messaging across platforms to clearly position offerings and attract consumers in a crowded and cluttered market place.

Benefits are Long-term and Short-term

Having integrated information systems not only saves cost but also helps in maintaining a structured and sustained consumer engagement. This also reduces the cycle time for consumer feedback. The feedback received helps in obtaining actionable insights. Social media and real-time information are key elements and help in increasing brand loyalty and consumer engagement.

This also provides channels and means to communicate new schemes or features and updates that are consistent with market trends. This has the potential to generate more revenue through cross-selling or upgrades.

When the consumer finds more options and freedom to switch due to flexibility and choices, it enables customer retention which otherwise is a big challenge. By lowering administrative costs and focusing on driving quality of care and improved outcomes for its members, insurers can lower premiums and attract new members. Employing new technologies will not only help current engagement but also in locating potential for other lines of business like Care Management and spend analysis, that help in reducing the overall costs for the payers.



Conclusion - Way Forward

Constant monitoring and flexibility to change are the key. Having a strategy at different levels like individual level, program or health service level, organizational level and/or policy level will be the key differentiator. Employing new technologies is not only a differentiator, but a means to survive in a competitive market. The data collected and analyzed, results in a better outcome oriented solution. This balances both Payers and consumers' health goals.

Employing co-ordination through multi-channel communication, results in brand loyalty and makes the systems consumer centric, thus building consumer engagement into multiple payer programs. By developing effective communication and engagement capabilities through new technologies and strategies, payers can address challenges in an efficient manner. Ultimately, Payers who focus on their consumers and offer positive experience will thrive in the transformed health insurance industry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Sundar Raj B V,

Project Manager
Nous Infosystems

From his experience of more than 15 years in providing technology solutions, he has observed and learnt, how the use of technology has made a difference and has brought about dramatic changes in the life of the consumer/customer and all involved stakeholders.



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