



4 Essentials for a Successful Advocacy Strategy

Through work with leading U.S. corporations and millions of consumers, Accolade deeply understands the benefits of personalized advocacy. Here, we define the four essential qualities employers must consider when building their strategy.

Employers are exploring a range of strategies to shrink the sky-high healthcare costs that all too often fall on their employees.¹

Unsurprisingly, they have struggled to find a simple solution. Even population health management, which many employers laud as the next big movement, can face the same pitfalls as traditional disease management models.

For a population health strategy to make a real impact on the experience and costs of employee healthcare, it needs to empower individuals and providers to make the best decisions at the best time. It must be proactive, personalized and connected — which requires a new approach.

¹ Tozzi, J. and Tracer, Z. (2018, June 26). Sky-High Deductibles Broke the U.S. Health Insurance System.

1. Address the whole person and the whole population

To keep your employee population as healthy as possible, outreach efforts need to focus on everyone, not only the sickest, highest-cost few. Nearly two-thirds of an employer's high-cost population this year weren't categorized as such last year. One-third of them were likely even considered low-risk.²

Taking a whole-person approach requires a deeper understanding than what you see in medical claims data from your carrier. It also means you need to get to know people beyond their conditions.

What drives them to make certain healthcare decisions?

Do they know how to find an in-network provider?

What is their emotional state?

What about their financial situation?

Do they have a reliable social support system?

Do they feel overwhelmed with caregiving responsibilities?

Are they ashamed to ask for help?

The list of competing priorities and emotions goes on and on. Understanding those emotions — and paying attention to the needs of the whole person — can help someone comply with a provider's treatment plan and ongoing care guidance.

For instance, a diabetic patient may not understand why her doctor changed her medications to twice the daily dosage, which she is embarrassed to admit she can't afford to pay out of pocket. This can lead her to stop following the prescribed course of action. In the short term, this takes a toll on her mental well-being and physical comfort — and in the long term, it could land her in the ER, driving up high-cost claims for both her and her employer.

Learning life context and applying it to individual circumstances builds trust and keeps people coming back to their trusted advisors for guidance. Over time, they know where to go with health and benefits questions and begin making better healthcare decisions.

To [learn more](#), contact inquiries@accolade.com

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2. Accolade and EBN. 2016. Why a whole-listic approach can bend the healthcare cost curve. Retrieved from <http://info.accolade.com/bend-healthcare-cost-curve.html>.

2. Connect employees with an independent team of advocates

Everyone deserves a care team they can trust — and employers have an opportunity to introduce a whole-person experience that supplements the patient-provider relationship in important ways while protecting an employee's privacy.

In a world where providers do not have time to get to know the whole patient, personalized health advocates are the independent, trusted and consistent voice to care coordination. They offer unbiased guidance and put an employee's unique needs front and center to remove any barriers to their care. They provide continuity before, during and after care as people transition across healthcare settings or providers, which eases tension, anxiety and confusion.

An independent team of nurses, doctors and clinical specialists ensures access to the right care, at the right time and in the right setting.

The healthcare system is complex and people are busy in their jobs and in their lives. When they know they have one point of contact for all health and benefits questions, they can get the information they need — when and how they need it.

A personalized relationship that reaches individuals on their terms is key to influencing decisions and empowering people to engage in their health.



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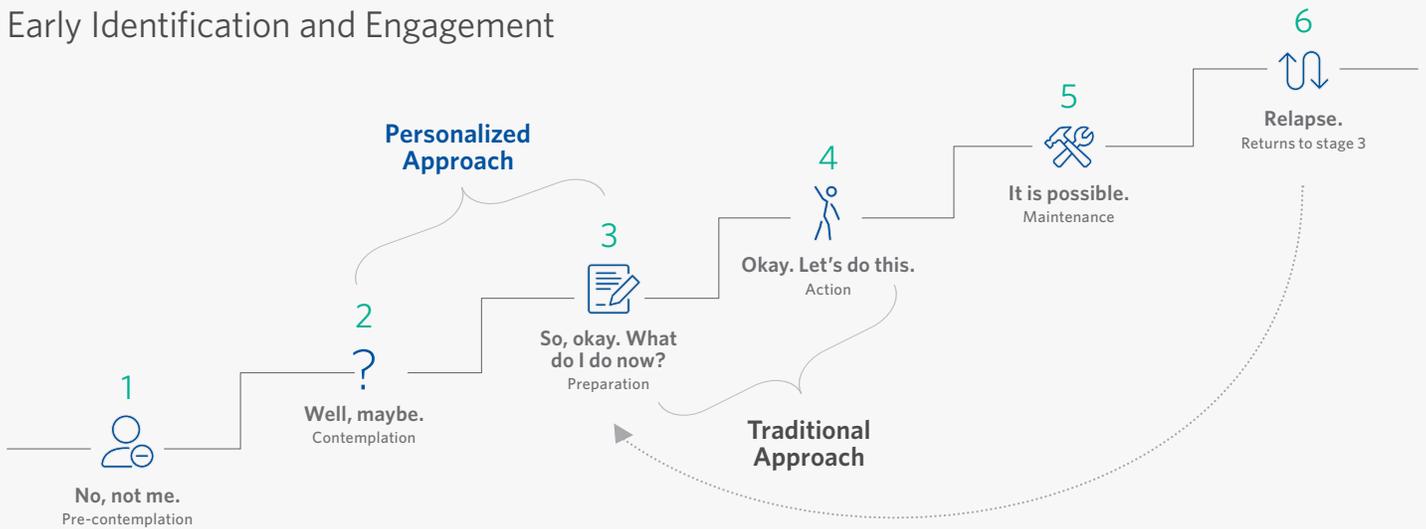
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3. Engage early and often

When you're optimizing for the whole population, it's critical to recognize that everyone is in different stages of the healthcare experience. Traditional approaches spend time engaging people only once they have gotten sick, planned their course of care or started treatment.

Successful population health strategies, on the other hand, get in front of decisions before a health event becomes a crisis — which is when the right decisions at the right time make a tremendous difference in a patient's care, outcomes and costs.

Early Identification and Engagement



People are the best predictors of their future healthcare needs, so every interaction they have with a clinical advisor can identify a health need - whether they're looking for a new doctor, asking about a claim, or simply requesting a new ID card.

Behavioral health is an area where it is especially important to reach people early. Those with a behavioral health diagnosis have two to three times higher overall medical spend than those without.³ Unfortunately, stigma around mental health can prevent many people from seeking care. When they have access to a health specialist who encourages them to see depression as an illness that requires treatment, it greatly impacts their willingness to get help. Getting someone into treatment early for their condition not only improves their emotional well-being, but it also increases their ability to take care of their physical conditions.

Connecting early to meet employees wherever they are in the process promotes better use of the healthcare system. While other approaches meet people once they need care, personalized advocacy prepares people for good decisions and good health before that need arises. The result is a decrease in medical admittances, inpatient days and ER usage.

3. Melek, S. P., Norris, D. T., and Paulus, J. April 2014. Economic Impact of Integrated Medical-Behavioral Healthcare Implications for Psychiatry. Retrieved from <https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Practice/Professional-Topics/Integrated-Care/Milliman-Report-Economic-Impact-Integrated-Implications-Psychiatry.pdf>

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4. Combine rich data with human support

It takes more than compassionate advocacy and coaching to empower your employees to make better healthcare decisions. The ideal solution applies machine learning to a rich set of personal health data to precisely segment populations and engage the right people at the right time.

This combination of intelligent technology and trusted human support is the critical — and often missing — key to a successful advocacy program.

An advanced platform should aggregate and analyze personal health data, extract valuable insights and recommendations, and build whole-person data profiles that differentiate the individual within a specific population. When your independent clinical support team has access to a comprehensive, 360-degree view of an individual, they can uncover unmet health needs even before a patient actively seeks care, preventing them from becoming high-risk patients.

Intelligent data can help determine when patients need to see a nurse, enroll in a case management program, work on modifying their behaviors and much more.

And because technology alone won't reveal a person's growing anxiety about their healthcare concerns, compassionate listening from a trained health advisor plays a vital role in discovering contextual or behavioral barriers to care.

With every interaction fueled by data science, the platform gets smarter and delivers highly personalized healthcare recommendations — and employees get a more effective experience every time.

Need help building the right strategy for your employees? We're here to help you evaluate your advocacy options when you're ready.

Set up a [free advocacy evaluation](#) with our team of experts at inquiries@accolade.com

Personalized Advocacy: Integrated Care Every Step Of The Way

Now you need to bring everything together into a holistic clinical program that spans every member — and every risk level — to effectively engage people early. A whole-population, whole-person approach moves employers away from reactive, condition-focused care and toward an integrated model that puts the individual at the center.

Want to learn how Accolade blends all these ingredients into a highly personalized advocacy solution that engages your entire population?

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