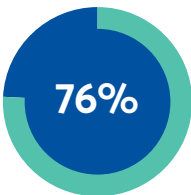


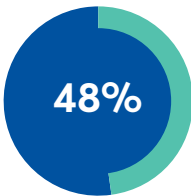
# READY TO BRIDGE GAPS IN THE EMPLOYEE HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE?

## How Virtual Care and Personalized Advocacy Drive Better Outcomes

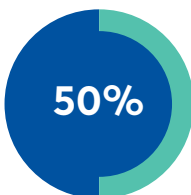
### Are your employees getting it?



of employees do not understand components of their benefits



of employees do not understand their healthcare benefits



of employees say they can't access their benefits in the way they prefer

Sources: SHRM.org, Aflac

For many employers, traditional healthcare engagement strategies haven't achieved better health outcomes for employees and their dependents nor significantly more efficient use of costly resources. Survey data indicates employees are frustrated and confused by the options available to them, so they make suboptimal use of those resources—or don't use them at all. Meanwhile, many employers continue to experience benefit cost increases at a pace exceeding their long-term growth in profitability.

"The burden of healthcare navigation through our complex systems falls on the shoulders of consumers who are not fully equipped to handle it," said Umair Khan, vice president of solutions marketing for Accolade.

Pursuing the same approaches to confront the challenge, even with greater vigor, is an exercise in futility. That's why a different framework for achieving progress is gaining traction. Forward-looking employers are embracing a holistic understanding of the barriers to employee engagement and ways to overcome them, leading to smarter and more economical utilization of a broad range of healthcare services.

### Employees need help

A recent web seminar sponsored by Accolade and Teladoc Health and hosted by Employee Benefit News outlined how personalized advocacy integrated with virtual care can deliver better outcomes. To frame the issue, webinar attendees were offered the following insights on employee perspectives, based on Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) research:

- **76%** of employees don't understand components of their benefits
- **48%** of employees don't understand their healthcare benefits
- **50%** of employees report they can't access their benefits in a way they prefer

"Offering amazing benefit options doesn't necessarily translate into employees understanding and utilizing them," noted Ope Oluwole, vice

**“Pulling in data science and analytics allows us to customize messages and get them to the right people at the right time.”**

— Ope Oluwole, vice president of member engagement, Teladoc Health

president of member engagement for Teladoc Health. One reason, she explained, is that in a world increasingly dominated by smartphones, “we’ve been conditioned to expect things to be easier, faster, better and seamless.”

People are less inclined to segment their information consumption and task execution mechanism preferences, whether it’s hailing a ride, ordering groceries or even making healthcare-related transactions. The latter include searching for a physician, scheduling appointments, viewing test results, filling a prescription, paying a bill and accessing care conveniently.

### Convenience and efficiency

In today’s world, generic health-related messages are inadequate. The convenience and efficiency consumers have come to expect for services outside the healthcare arena dovetails with what they want—and don’t always receive—from providers: to be heard, to not feel rushed, and to receive clear explanations of their diagnoses and the steps they need to take to resolve issues.

Meanwhile, healthcare providers themselves are often frustrated by their inability to spend as much time with patients as they would like. Many spend more time dealing with patient records than interacting directly with patients.

The good news is that information technology advances have opened the door to address these challenges. “Pulling in data science and analytics allows us to customize messages and get them to the right people at the right time,” Oluwole said.

Combining engagement science and surround sound communication tactics shifts behavior, she added.

### Surround sound communication

Oluwole described surround sound communication in the healthcare context as an information clutter-shattering system that addresses three basic member needs:

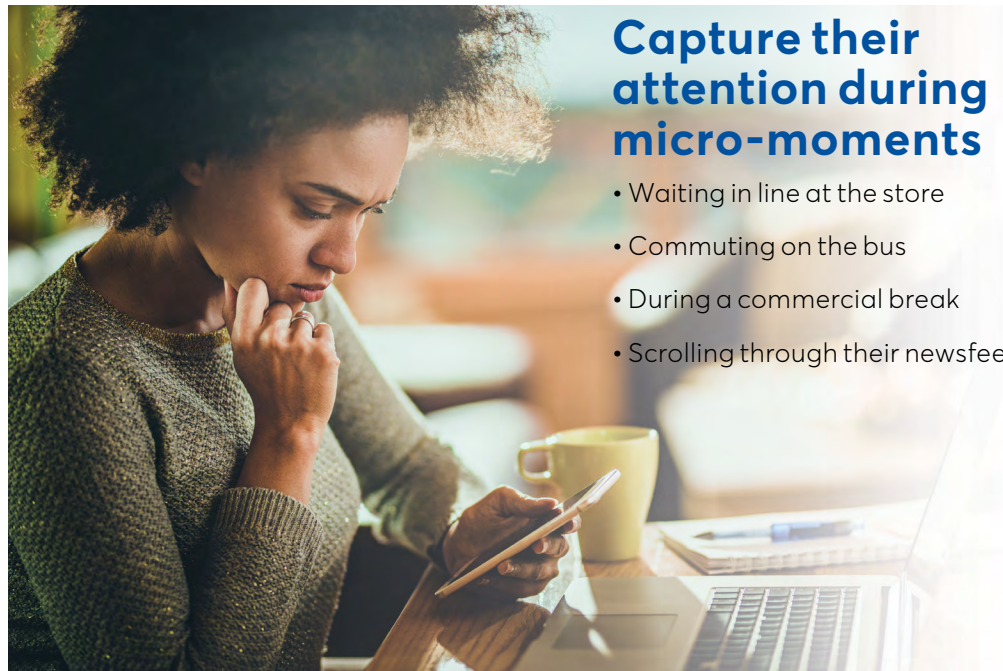
- 1. Eligibility awareness** — Understanding all their available benefits
- 2. Top-of-mind awareness** — Remembering that they have access to a service that can help during moments of need
- 3. Resolution confidence** — Feeling confident that a positive outcome will result from taking a particular action, whether it’s seeking an answer to a health question or receiving a medical service

The surround sound messaging system deploys various tactics and tools to meet each information need. “Delivering the right message at the right time with precision is critical,” Khan said. “There’s only a narrow window of time to influence the behavior of a member.”

Those “micro-moments,” as Teladoc Health calls them, happen when people are either receptive to a particular message or are seeking answers to questions in a moment

**"We seek to deliver a personalized advocacy experience where people do what technology can't do alone."**

— Umair Khan, vice president of solutions marketing, Accolade



## Capture their attention during micro-moments

- Waiting in line at the store
- Commuting on the bus
- During a commercial break
- Scrolling through their newsfeed

of need. These might occur when they're waiting in line at the grocery store, during a television show commercial break, while riding a bus to work or scrolling through their newsfeed.

A simple example of making messages timely is linking them to seasonality of common ailments, like talking about flu vaccinations at the beginning of the flu season. More sophisticated messaging can be far more targeted. Predictive modeling, for example, can use known facts about employees to generate messages that might resonate with their specific needs.

### Alternatives to surgery?

For example, a scheduled surgery, depending upon its nature, could prompt a targeted message describing possible non-surgical alternative remedies. The goal is to educate employees about all of their options. Similarly, life events such as the birth of a new baby might trigger messages about resources to help fatigued and stressed-out new parents. It operates on the same principle as an e-tailer's "if you bought X, you might also like Y" messages.

"Customizing the messaging to those members in the right way is a very powerful way of breaking through," Oluwole said.

Even employees' physical location, as detected by smartphones, can be leveraged to customize health-related messages. For example, employees who travel out of town frequently might be receptive to a message about the availability of virtual care services.

Employees' internet searches can also be harnessed to build awareness about health services available to them. Teladoc Health, for example, uses thousands of health-related keywords in its advertising strategy to target people searching for specific



phrases. An employee's eligibility for the service might not have been top-of-mind when beginning the search, but a trigger could lead to utilization of Teladoc Health's virtual care services in lieu of a visit to the emergency room.

### Personalized advocacy

Technology can be a powerful driver of employee engagement, but it cannot address all of the health questions and needs employees have. "You need to add people into that experience," Khan said. "We seek to deliver a personalized advocacy experience where people do what technology can't do alone." That includes:

- Providing independent and personalized clinical assistance
- Guiding people to the right care
- Resolving issues for simple healthcare transactions
- Removing barriers to care
- Uncovering deeper health needs

When employees' attention is focused on the need and opportunity to take advantage of appropriate, efficient and economical health services, a smooth handoff to virtual care services is the logical next step. And virtual care, "is no longer this bolt-on service," Oluwole said. "It's actually core to getting employees to the very best next step for them, which might be being seen by a primary care physician or mental health professional or receiving an expert medical opinion on a challenging diagnosis or treatment plan."

Teladoc Health provides a comprehensive suite of clinical services along the continuum of care, including general medical, dermatology, behavioral health and expert medical opinions. Its professionals can perform certain medical services virtually and serve as a bridge connecting members with appropriate care when an in-person visit is indicated.

Behavioral health services, however, often are more easily rendered virtually than in-person, according to Oluwole. "Compared to someone who needs eyedrops, it's a very different mindset," she said. While fading, a stigma remains for some about needing behavioral health services. For them, the prospect of traveling to a physical office for a face-to-face visit with a mental health professional can be daunting. "Virtual care can provide the confidential 'safe place' for people to explore their possible need for these services," Oluwole said.

### Persistence required

Nevertheless, engaging employees to focus on their care needs and act upon them, whether in the behavioral health realm or any other, is no slam dunk. When it comes to breaking through the information clutter and changing longstanding patterns of interaction with the healthcare system, persistence is key.

Even when messages are appropriate and timely, several (sometimes even more than a dozen), may be required to prompt a desired response. But compared to the alternative, Teladoc Health's member-customized surround sound messaging strategy stands out. The company performed an analysis that found surround sound produced a service utilization rate for one client four times higher than another that used its own in-house communications resources exclusively.

Cranking up the surround sound volume in conjunction with the seamless integration of Accolade's personalized advocacy and Teladoc Health's virtual care service suite creates outcomes that "shine brightly" and light the path employers can follow to achieve their highest aspirations for their health and benefits strategy, Khan said.

One such employer is Lowe's Home Improvement, which has used Teladoc Health and Accolade since 2015. Together, personalized advocacy and virtual care drove significant results, including increased associate satisfaction:

- 7,250 referrals from Accolade to Teladoc Health since 2015
- 2,881 total visits with Teladoc Health since 2015
- 24% of total visits that Teladoc Health has incurred came from Accolade since 2015
- \$2m+ total savings for Lowe's in 2018 \*
- Increased employee satisfaction

To learn more about what it takes to build a consumer-centric healthcare experience using the combined power of virtual care and personalized advocacy, [click HERE to listen to the webinar in its entirety.](#)

\*This figure is reflective of all 2018 Lowe's visits. Accolade helped contribute to approximately half of the organization's savings.