



7 Member Engagement Strategies for Health Plans

How Omnichannel Communications Make Members, and Health Plans, Healthier

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Why are so many health plans investigating member engagement strategies?

Google “customer engagement,” and you’ll get over 400 million hits. **Forbes says**, “Customer engagement is the direct route to every important business objective,” and a perusal of C-Suite-focused publications and websites shows that across industries, business leaders, and particularly those in the healthcare sector, agree.

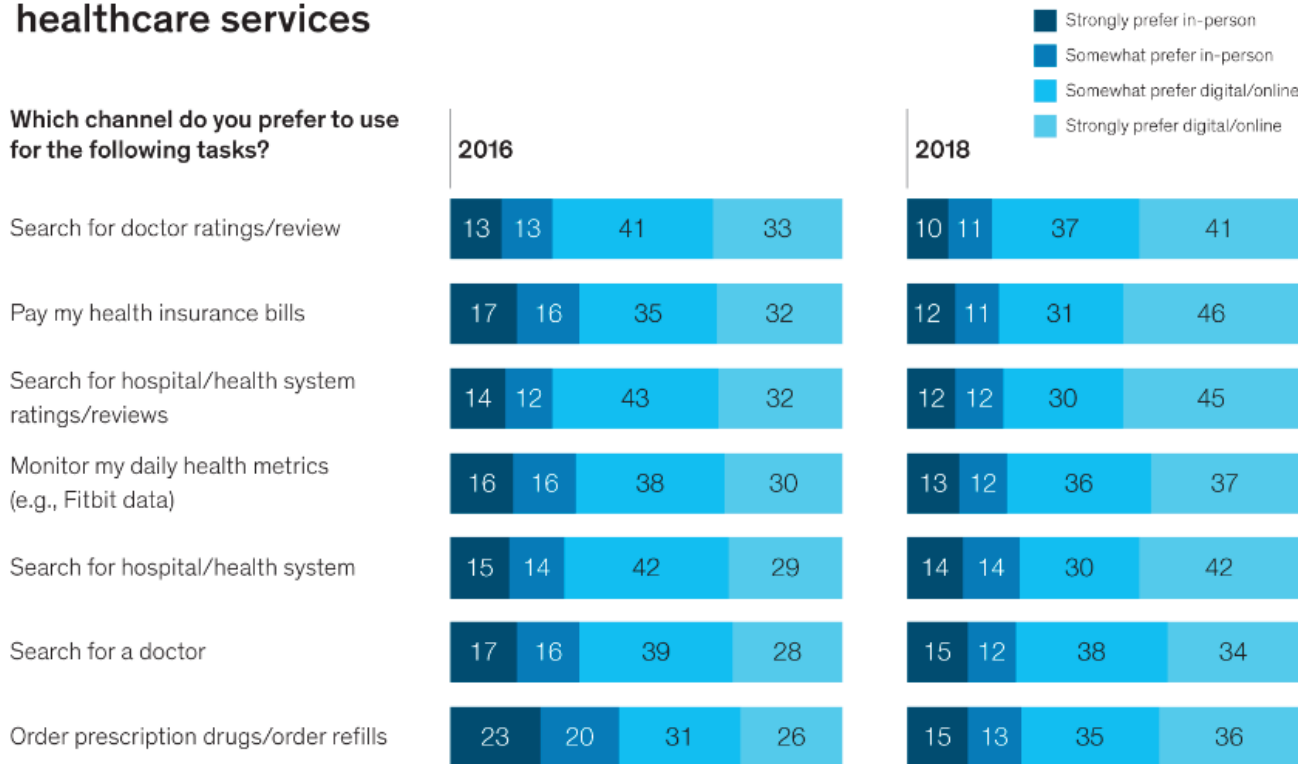


Two of the primary healthcare business objectives being targeted with member engagement strategies are efficiency and member retention.

These two objectives could be seen as being in conflict with one another; efficiency demands reducing high-cost customer-facing operations such as call centers, while retention demands a high-touch, high satisfaction customer experience. Luckily, digital communication rides to the rescue, resolving the conflict, and opening new opportunities to accomplish both goals.

There is a deep, multigenerational, and growing demand from health plan consumers for more and improved digital interaction with payers. **Gartner predicts that** “by 2020, a customer will manage 85% of the relationship with an enterprise without interacting with a human.” **Cognizant surveyed** health plan members in 2018 and found that “Compared with 2016, digital adoption has increased across all channels and all ages, and members want still more digital capabilities from payers.” **This chart from McKinsey** shows the shift in preference for digital channels for key activities over just the last two years:

A growing number of consumers prefer digital channels for healthcare services



Source: McKinsey's 2016 and 2018 Consumer Health Insights Surveys.

One of the key member engagement strategies for health plans is clear: give your members options in accomplishing tasks, connecting with you, and satisfying their information needs. This is a concept called omnichannel communications.

Make Member Engagement Strategies Omnichannel

Health plans adopting this new approach are doing so in response to customers' experiences with digital native companies like Amazon. They've been taught, "to expect best-in-class digital and live-person channels, content tailored to their interests, and a seamless journey focused on their individual needs," according to **McKinsey**, which also advises healthcare payers to "act now to keep up with rising consumer expectations."

The data shows that members with a self-serve mentality will flock to digital channels, provided their needs are met.

70%

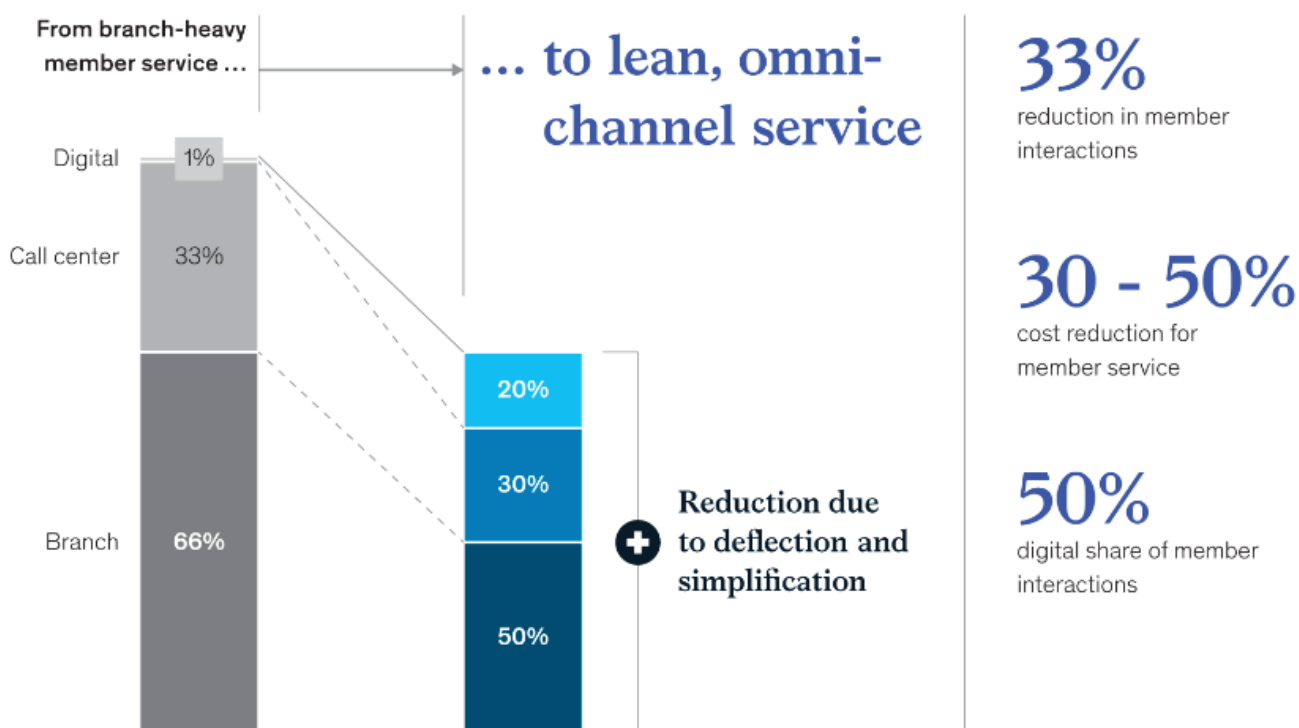
members that somewhat or strongly prefer digital channels for healthcare services



For health plans looking to streamline member communications without impacting service levels, omnichannel is the answer. Health insurers can be reassured that investments in engagement-supporting digital channels will benefit them in operational cost reduction, as this **chart from McKinsey** shows:

The business impact of omnichannel

German payer example



The potential upside is jaw-dropping. **McKinsey estimates** that “Digital can have a significant positive impact on payor economics... on average, payors would save roughly 10% to 15% of their SG&A costs—\$15 billion to \$25 billion industry-wide.”

Make It Count

Decreasing the load on call centers by offloading member interactions to digital isn't just a matter of "if you build it, they will click." It also requires a retooling and repurposing of existing channels, so they effectively deliver the service level members expect and play their part within your constellation of channels. An excellent example is transactional communications, i.e., statements, EOBs, etc.

ChiefMarketer.com estimates that transactional communications are viewed by 97% of your existing customers for an average of 2-5 minutes at a time. That's a level of engagement it's near impossible to achieve for general informational or promotional content in any channel. This makes adding health content to transactional communications one of the smartest member engagement strategies for payers, but one that demands a thoughtful approach.

97%

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We discussed this strategy in a recent white paper, **Next-gen Engagement: Using Transactional Touchpoints to Reach Members When They're Already Listening.**

To get the benefit of a member's captive attention with a transactional communication piece, the health information you provide needs to be relevant. **HIT Consultant describes** the Holy Grail of healthcare engagement as "Realizing results by delivering the right information, at the right time, in the right way." Above all, any health information delivered to a member in a transactional communication must be personalized.

Make It Personal

We're not at the point yet of genome-specific healthcare, but can there be any doubt that's where medicine is heading? Personalization is a healthcare trend with implications far beyond the contents of a communication, but it's clear the most engaging health-related communications are designed for an audience of one.

Cisco, in their [Customer Experience in 2020 report](#), cites hyperpersonalization as a top trend to watch, defining it as, "individualized products and services, each curated based on every single person's needs and preferences." [McKinsey states](#) that "Using personalization techniques pioneered by other industries, health insurers can drive higher engagement and better support the needs of their members."



Ranked

#2

in hyperpersonalization
in *Technology Trends
Defining the Future of
Customer Experience*



Data management company **Redpoint Global** identifies member engagement strategies that health plans need to focus on to support a personalized experience, including:

- Unifying member data from across the organization into a single customer view.
- Allowing members to engage through multiple online and offline touchpoints.
- Connecting all their internal technologies to a unified solution to future-proof their infrastructure.
- Delivering a member experience that is on par with leading retailers.

With the right data, channels, and a personalized approach in mind, how can health plans use member engagement strategies to improve outcomes and lower costs?

Make It Relevant

McKinsey foresees a future for health plans that shifts from “a traditional member engagement approach, such as care/disease management or nontargeted outreach campaigns, to personalized engagements sent in response to an individual’s signals...By empowering members to make higher-value care decisions, next-generation member engagement tools can improve clinical outcomes, enhance member experience, and reduce near-term medical costs.”

McKinsey even predicts a potential reduction in U.S. medical costs from digital interventions by as much as \$175 billion to \$220 billion annually.



**\$175 -
\$220
billion**

potential annual
reduction in U.S.
medical costs from
digital interventions



McKinsey recommends three components to each personalized health interaction: the insight/solution, the message, and the channel.

- **The insight/solution.** For instance, the estimated cost of a procedure or drive/wait time and/or the solution the member needs (such as a telemedicine visit or appointment scheduling).
- **The message.** Personalizing the message for each member (such as emphasizing a procedure's risks versus its cost or convenience) strongly influences whether a member ignores or responds to the support offered.
- **The channel.** Choosing the most appropriate channel or channels—email, text message, reminder alert in a web portal, outbound call from a nurse, etc.—to deliver messages is critical.

Even with all the forethought, personalization, and best intentions in the world, a digital interaction is a pale imitation of an actual person. Health plans can go a long way in making their digital communications more personable by addressing issues that lead to member confusion and frustration.

Make It Clear

The advent of electronic prescriptions has decreased one of the most long-standing irritants in healthcare – physician’s illegible handwriting. But the legibility issue hasn’t been resolved quite yet.

Content software company, **VisibleThread conducted analysis of 30 U.S. healthcare providers**. The results show that:

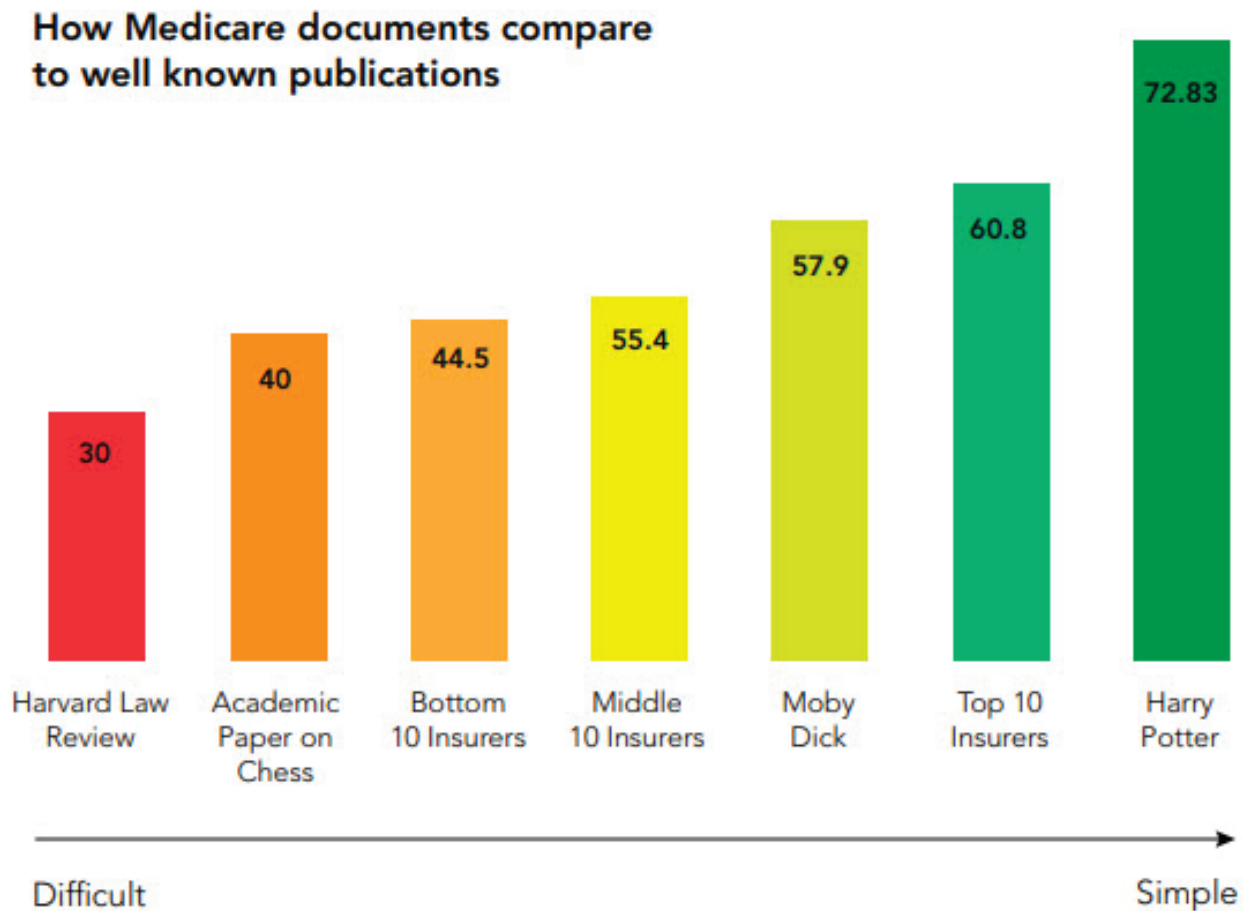
- Only 6 out of 30 insurers have an acceptable complex word density
- 56.6% of insurance companies communicate in an academic tone with excessive use of passive voice
- Long sentences are at 2x the recommended level
- 66% of insurers produce content more difficult to read than Moby Dick
- 86.6% of insurers surveyed are not communicating effectively with those 65 and older

86.6%

insurers not using
plain language to
communicate with
Medicare audience



The news gets worse. The analysis also found that many Medicare documents were closer to academic papers than popular fiction in complexity:



This disconnect is especially true for the current Medicare generation that is already operating in a digital world that is not second nature. **Visible Thread cautions**, “Communicating in plain language is one of the most critical ways to build trust. But 86.6% of insurers are using complicated language, long sentences, passive voice and complex word density to communicate with Medicare’s audience.”

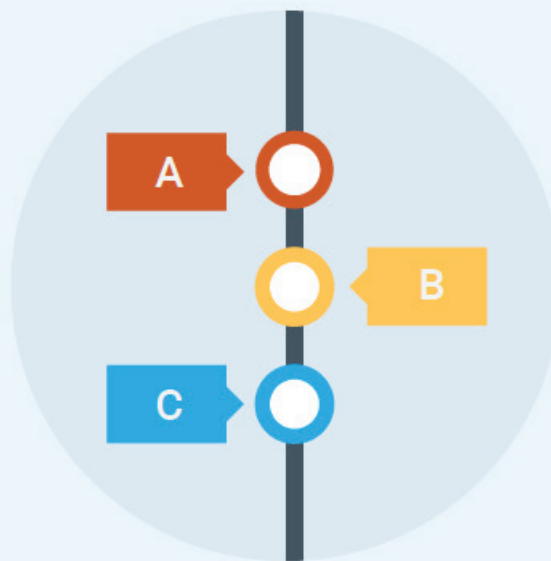
Make It Colorful

Word choice and sentence length aren't the only tools available to help make member communications more engaging and less confusing. Design and the use of color can highlight the most important information, help the member navigate complex subject matter, and prioritize actions to be taken. New York Times bestselling author **Neil Patel recommends:**

- **Use contrasting colors** to highlight navigation or separate sections
- **Using grayed-out or dull colors** to indicate un-preferred or disabled actions
- **Use symbols in combination with colors.** They are versatile, simple, and should be clear and understandable.
- **Use positive and negative colors;** red and green are so deeply wired into our subconscious that no other two colors share such opposing meanings.
- **Use bright, warm colors for attention and alerts**

78%

Likelihood people
will remember
words and
phrases in color



Make It Human

All of these digital member engagement strategies have a common, and paradoxical, purpose: be more human. Give members options in how they connect with you; treat them like an individual, not a number; empower them with information to take control of their health; speak to them in language they can understand; and respect their time with communications that are easy to navigate.

The upside for both health plans and members is clear. More streamlined member communications, a shift to more cost-effective digital channels, and the potential for healthier, more engaged customers.

- Offer members options in how they connect with you
- Treat them like an individual, not a number
- Speak to them in language they can understand
- Use digital channels to deliver a more human experience



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Paving the way to a seamless solution for member engagement. Supporting organizations as they navigate through the evolving healthcare industry.

CLARITY SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS, INC.

92 Wall St, Ste 1, Madison, CT 06443

www.clarityssi.com

contactus@clarityssi.com

203.453.3999

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