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Improving the Patient and Provider Experience: The Systems Behind the Smiles

AT A GLANCE

Not too long ago, we spoke of front-office versus back-office.

The front-office dealt directly with customers. The back-office played crucial but supporting roles behind the scenes.

Increasingly—and especially in healthcare—these layers are merging. Back-office systems are becoming front-office systems, as customers— especially younger ones—prefer mobile apps over human interaction. These trends dictate complete transparency of any systems directly or indirectly affecting your customer's journey.

Healthcare is full of complex systems. Your customers—*members*, *patients*, *providers*, *and partners*—increasingly call the shots. Our challenge is to design, manage, and improve our systems so we can maximize their smiles.

KEY CHALLENGES

Healthcare payers and providers have many different challenges. However, when it comes to the systems behind the smiles, all face four key challenges:

- 1 Improving collaboration
- 2 Sharing data
- 3 Managing risk
- 4 All while improving member and provider experience

SOLUTION

In response these challenges and requirements, health plans are increasingly turning to modern Business Process Management (BPM) to quickly and easily create powerful software applications that can tie together systems and help deliver a unified—and overwhelmingly positive—customer experience.





Our Challenge

You may have heard the phrase, "The Systems Behind The Smiles." Popular in the hospitality industry, Systems Behind the Smiles are the web of systems and processes front-line workers need to put organizational ideals into practice, and as a result, extend fantastic service that results in customer smiles.

The phrase comes from a book 1 —Customers For Life: How to Turn that One-Time Buyer into a Lifetime Customer. While certainly not intended for the healthcare industry, we can learn a great deal from it.

For example, consider this nugget, taken from the chapter, titled Systems, Not Smiles:

"What's needed in restaurants, car dealerships, department stores, and every place else is systems—not just smiles—that guarantee good service. Every business is composed of systems. Those systems must work together to create a process that is efficient and responsive to a customer's wants."

Not too long ago, we spoke of front-office versus back-office. The former dealt directly with customers. The latter played crucial but supporting roles.

Increasingly—and especially in healthcare—these layers are merging. Back-office systems are becoming front-office systems, as customers—especially younger ones—prefer mobile apps over human interaction. Even when front-office staff interact directly with customers, they interact with back-office systems. These trends dictate complete transparency of any systems directly or indirectly affecting your customer's journey. To meet evolving customer expectations, it is becoming more and more important to mold your back-office processes to these journeys.

Healthcare is full of complicated systems, and customers—members, patients, providers, and partners—increasingly call the shots. Our challenge is to design, manage, and improve the systems so we can maximize their smiles.

Systems

Health plan customers are demanding more collaboration with everyone involved in their care. The more payment shifts from volume to value, the more it rewards collaboration across healthcare providers and payers.

Meanwhile, cost pressures require elimination of redundancy, rework, and mistakes, all of which require even more collaboration and coordination. Sharing data is a challenge: failure to take advantage of new sources of data about patients and events surrounding their care is a massive missed opportunity.

Of course, along with these pressures and opportunities comes risk. Risk includes real and perceived threats of breaches of patient data, increased amounts of bad data, and changing consumer preferences (what do health plan customers "really" want?).



Smiles

The sum total of these systems and processes must be aligned to support improved member and provider experience. This represents "The Systems Behind The Smiles."

There is no magic bullet (i.e. technology) we can place in front of healthcare customers to magically transform their experiences with the healthcare system. In fact, 40-60 percent of customer dissatisfaction is due to systems, not smiles. No matter how personable or well-trained front-line customer service representatives are, the systems they rely on can (and often do) determine the outcome of customer experiences.

For a health payer, customers range from insurance plan members, who sometimes become patients, to health providers and provider organizations dealing with those members and patients. Meeting these customer experience challenges requires mastery of complex, dynamic, and mission-critical patient data management processes. Requirements include access to multiple systems of record (care management, claims, recruiting, member services, and compliance), while ensuring standardized cross-functional workflows, as well as data governance and quality assurance. What's more, the systems put into place to share data, encourage collaboration, and manage risks so that all involved can simply count on them working right the first time...and every time thereafter.

The Solution

In response these challenges and requirements, health plans are increasingly turning to modern Business Process Management (BPM) to quickly and easily create powerful software applications that address their unique needs.

Integrated

The first requirement for new applications that directly or indirectly influence customer experience is integration with existing legacy infrastructure.

Health payer systems include a wide variety of information applications:

- Portals
- Customer handling
- Provider and member intake
- Quoting and underwriting
- Contract and provider network management
- Credentialing and membership management
- Benefit plan management
- Claims processing
- Clinical systems



Wil van der Aalst, one of the foremost BPM researchers today, has written, "BPM systems are often the 'spider in the web' connecting different technologies." BPM is becoming that spider due to a host of back-end data adaptors. When done well, BPM enables mobile and desktop apps not only to access potentially hundreds of outside data sources, but connect—or unify— them all as well.

Cross Functional

The second requirement is ensuring new application workflows are cross-functional.

Workflows must bridge multiple traditional data and workflow silos. In other words, not only must data be accessible across payer IT systems, access must also be guided along consistent workflows that support efficient work. BPM apps rely on sophisticated data-integration technology to access data from across different functional systems and areas, and then coordinate user workflows while accessing that data. It is this process-aware data virtualization that allows BPM to essentially de-fragment previously fragmented data and workflow. In short, BPM unifies process plus data for contextual awareness, more informed decisions, and data-driven results.

Role Specific

The third requirement is to create role-specific mobile and desktop user interfaces and workflows.

While health IT systems usually have some form of role-based security, they often still give users access to too much data and too many options. BPM allows each step of user workflow to expose the relevant data and task initiation options. This reduces time for a new user to master application workflows and dramatically increase productivity.

Stream News...Trigger Tasks...Customize Reports

Finally, healthcare's "Systems Behind the Smiles" must:



- Keep everyone up-to-date regarding peripheral but potentially relevant information (e.g., new health plan products and services).
- Automatically trigger the right automated workflows (e.g., when a physician applies to join the provider network).
- Provide complete system transparency, so the status of tasks are visible and none can unnecessarily languish (e.g., a list of pending physician credentialing tasks).

A BPM platform accomplishes all three requirements.

Secure activity streams and news feeds provide context, keeping users aware of important events and information outside of their workflows, as well as facilitating occasional—but necessary—unstructured collaboration. Business rules—designed by analysts, not programmers—use arriving events to trigger and guide workflows. And at a moment's notice, a user or supervisor can pull up a report listing all outstanding tasks, how long they have been waiting, and who is responsible.

Business Process Management's Systems Behind the Smiles

Modern Business Process Management unifies health plan front- and back-office functions to provide a complete, transparent view of all data and tasks relevant to a customer's journey. It aligns the systems with the smiles.

Business Process Management is being used, for example, to:

- Improve management of provider networks
- Ensure more accurate data
- Guarantee more timely processing
- Enable greater efficiency due to:
- Automated task assignment
- Calendaring
- Task tracking
- Cross-functional (cross-departmental) hand-offs.

And, a Modern BPM platform with a lowcode approach to app creation and role-specific user-interfaces and workflows makes it easier than it's ever been. When you have the ability to roll out new products and services more quickly, the result is improved provider information, more effective medical spending, and—perhaps most importantly—more informed members making better decisions.

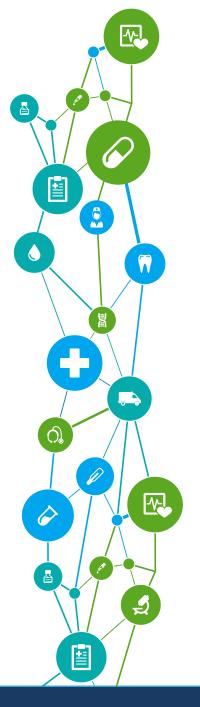
Transform Technology from a Problem to a Solution

Those systems in place that were designed to solve your point problems? They've unintentionally spawned a much bigger issue.

Instead of front-line employees having to switch back and forth among multiple applications, BPM provides a single, unified experience...one focused on solving a customer's problem.

Instead of front-line employees having limited (or no) access to relevant transaction history, that information can be delivered through immediate, custom reports.

And, perhaps most important of all, instead of employees facing customers alone, they can network and collaborate with relevant staff and experts, and as a result, reduce time to resolution, improve customer experience, and reduce costs.



What is Business Process Management in Healthcare?

Business Process Management, relatively new to healthcare, is a way to marry process and data and quickly create health apps with great workflow.

Instead of using writing computer programming code, such as C# or Java, draw processes in a process modeler. Draw the forms you want to appear at certain steps in the workflow. Pop-up some dialog boxes to connect your mobile health app to healthcare data and to customize business logic. Then launch for native mobile apps that can run on multiple mobile platforms without having to test every single instance.

BPM's Third Way

Traditional health and payer IT has had to choose between two evils for creating new software and compensating for old software.

First, there is the choice of buying software someone else has created to solve what is considered standard problems versus using traditional programming methods to create your own solution.

Second is the choice between ripping-and-replacing healthcare enterprise-wide systems versus adding even more isolated silos of data and workflow.

Today, that choice is not necessary. Modern BPM is a genuine alternative and escape from both of these false choices.

Low-code software development has been around for years outside of healthcare. It's just taken this long for it to diffuse into healthcare, where it's perhaps most needed!

Today in healthcare, either we use existing, packaged software which may or may not fit out workflows and rarely fully addresses our challenges, or we write healthcare software from scratch ourselves.



In the first case, we are dependent on someone else, who may or may not understand (or even care) about our workflow, not to mention keeping that software up to date. In the second instance, let's call a spade a spade: you often get stuck with a mess. Healthcare organizations typically don't have full time mobile programmers. If you hire someone to create an app, it's expensive to create and then even more expensive to maintain.

Instead, consider the third alternative: the right BPM infrastructure. Imagine you can draw your workflows and automatically turn them into cross-platform—but still native—mobile applications. Imagine the time from health plan product idea to health plan app becoming days...not months...or years.

Modern BPM offers an alternative to choosing between replacing legacy health plan systems and continual addition of stopgap applications that each address an isolated problem (and also create new silos of data and process).

BPM allows you to keep the systems you already have—with all their important historical data remaining intact. Add new systems to keep up with new customer requirements in a way that increases speed to market with new health plan products, maximizes flexibility after implementation, and provides complete transparency of health plan data and processes.

Modern Business Process Management really is a new way to escape health payer IT dilemmas of the past:

- Don't buy software that doesn't fit.
- Don't write your own software from scratch.
- Don't add more siloed applications.

Do create powerful, unified, cross-functional applications with integrated access to workflows, as well as legacy and new data sources.



BPM: Healthcare's Systems Behind the Smiles

If we were to update that original quote behind "The Systems Behind The Smiles," it might go something like this.

"What's needed in hospitals, clinics, health plans, and every place else in healthcare are systems—not just smiles—that guarantee good service. Every healthcare organization is composed of systems. Those systems must work together to create a process that is efficient and responsive to a healthcare customer's wants. And what better software to create efficient and responsive processes than modern Business Process Management?"

REFERENCES

- 1. Customers For Life: How to Turn that One-Time Buyer into a Lifetime Customer, Carl Sewell, Paul B. Brown, Doubleday, 1990.
- 2. Business Process Management: A Comprehensive Survey, Wil van der Aalst, ISRN Software Engineering, Volume 2013 (2013).

Appian

Appian delivers an enterprise platform for digital transformation in healthcare that enables payers and providers to bridge core systems, enhance member experience, and significantly improve patient outcomes. Powered by industry leading Business Process Management (BPM) and Case Management capabilities, Appian's low-code approach can radically accelerate the time it

takes to build and deploy powerful, modern applications, on-premises or in the cloud. The world's most innovative organizations use Appian to revolutionize their customer experiences, transform their business operations, and master global risk and compliance.

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