

## CASE STUDY

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# Disease Management Under The Microscope

Since the mid 1990s, insurance payors and large employers have sought to improve overall profitability by reducing costs associated with the treatment of member's/employee's chronic diseases (primarily heart disease, diabetes and COPD). The various Disease Management and Wellness programs developed for that purpose were all founded on the same simple premise – members/employees who could be helped to carefully manage their diseases would require less expensive medical treatment than those who did not approach their diseases with the same care. As the industry nears the twenty year mark, Disease Management and Wellness programs (that have typically been provided to members/employees at no charge) are under the microscope to determine whether the initiatives are generating sufficient ROI.

One obstacle to success has been members/employees reluctance to actively engage in the process. Programs have struggled to enroll eligible members/employees in sufficient numbers and then have struggled to retain enrollees who have tended to opt out after only a short time. Looking for a solution to the engagement challenge, two Disease Management industry leaders turned to an unlikely source – a sales training company – ASLAN.

## It's Not Easy to Sign People Up for a Free Program

A recent McKinsey report on disease management programs highlighted five critical drivers of success – the first, size.<sup>1</sup> When ASLAN consultants sat down with one Disease Management leader, it became quickly apparent that efforts to grow the plan population were being hampered by an inability to enroll eligible members. Of the total eligible, only 34% were choosing to enroll when the program was presented.

Marc Lamson, Senior Consultant on the project, explains the problem. “On the initial few calls, members have a high level of emotional skepticism. They interpret the caller as a telemarketer instead of an experienced healthcare professional who can help improve their quality of life. Initial assessments can be a problem as well – members often feel as if they are answering a 32-question interrogation instead of having a conversation with a real person. Without the appropriate training and support, enrollment specialists and health coaches are often unable to overcome the emotional barriers that prevent members from enrolling.”

## Getting Them Signed Up Is Just the Beginning

If you're operating a gym, you're not really too concerned with whether members work out three times a week or never – as long as they pay their monthly membership fees. Disease Management programs operate with a completely different model. Sure

enrollment is critical – if members won't sign up for the program, there's no opportunity for improvement. But signing up is just the beginning. If members fail to see the value in the program, they will quickly determine that the time and effort required to participate are not worthwhile and they will opt out having failed to realize any health benefit from their participation.

That was the challenge that drove another Disease Management leader to approach ASLAN. While they were realizing a good degree of success in initially enrolling members (10,000+) in their program, they knew that their inability to retain a sufficient number of those enrollees past 180 days was severely hampering their ability to deliver on their promise to improve members' health and reduce overall costs of care.

## Teaching Health Coaches To Sell Their Free Program

In order to address the enrollment and retention challenges of its Disease Management partners, ASLAN put together a program to equip health coaches and their managers with a set of skills that would improve the effectiveness of their telephone interactions. ASLAN...

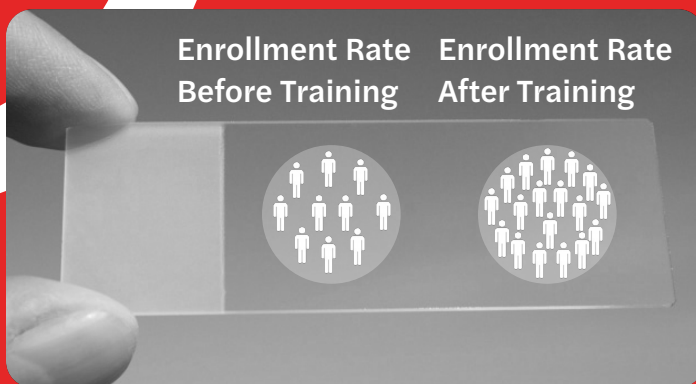
- Helped health coaches identify the top 3-5 emotional objections to enrolling in a program and equipped them to respond to each.
- Worked with leadership to develop a new introduction to calls that improved engagement rates on the initial 2-3 calls.

- Partnered with leadership to change assessments from interrogation-style to being more natural and conversational and worked with health coaches to improve communication skills.
- Equipped health coaches with a process to bridge from one call to the next, increasing the likelihood that members would accept future calls from health coaches (who had previously found it challenging to get members on the phone after the first calls).
- Trained and certified supervisors to coach and reinforce the skills that were taught to health coaches.

## Improved Conversations Translates Into Healthier ROI

Within twelve months of training, things had changed. Armed with their new “sales” skills, health coaches were better able to engage with members on initial calls. Enrollment rates nearly doubled going from 34% to 62%. Once enrolled, members found the new approach more beneficial and more enjoyable. They were increasingly receptive to health coaches’ calls and 180 day retention rates climbed by over 40%.

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## Enrollment Rates Double After Training

Since 1996, ASLAN has been helping companies improve the quality of their customer service interactions and as a result improve customer experience. Whether with individual consumers or B2B customers, those improvements have driven two key measures – increased top line revenue as customers are helped to identify additional product/solution needs and improved margin as CSRs are equipped to more effectively defend price. ASLAN’s customer service solutions have been used by industry leaders like American Home Shield, Williams Sonoma, Nautilus, Harland, Deluxe, FedEx, AAA and many more.

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