



ENGAGING EMPLOYEES

How to Build a Strong System-Wide Telehealth Program by First Engaging Your Own Employees

Health systems across the country are implementing telehealth programs to better serve their patients. Often, these health systems launch with urgent care first, before expanding to other use cases such as cardiology, stroke, and behavioral health. To help prepare for a system-wide telehealth implementation, health systems are first introducing virtual care services to their employees. Here are three examples of how American Well health system clients launched telehealth by initially offering virtual care to their employee populations before expanding the service to patients in a system-wide initiative.

Intermountain Healthcare

In February 2016, Intermountain Healthcare, a not-for-profit health system based in Salt Lake City, Utah, began the first phase of its telehealth launch by marketing its telehealth service, Intermountain Connect Care®, to its employees. Intermountain developed this soft launch strategy to:

- Gather feedback from employees
- Improve the patient experience prior to a public launch
- Test marketing strategies

As the largest employer in Utah, Intermountain knew that if its employees used the service and had a good experience, they would be more likely to become word-of-mouth ambassadors for Connect Care and encourage patients outside the system to use the service.

Intermountain used different marketing tactics to build awareness, engagement and utilization among employees, including an employee email, web banners on the company intranet, and a “first visit free” coupon to encourage utilization.

After two months of marketing telehealth to employees, Intermountain expanded its telehealth program to the public. Since its public launch, Intermountain has seen thousands of patients enroll in telehealth and have a visit. The health system also integrated Connect Care with its Cerner EHR, ensuring a streamlined and efficient experience for its providers.

Southwest Medical Associates

Southwest Medical Associates (SMA) is a multi-specialty group based in Las Vegas that is a wholly-owned subsidiary of UnitedHealth Group and Optum. SMA began its telehealth program with a six-month pilot, during which it launched its telehealth service, SMA NowClinic, to 3,000 Nevada UnitedHealth employees, all of whom were eligible for visits with no co-pays.

This pilot served to stress test the system and gather employee comments and feedback for enhancing the program. The initial telehealth offering was launched with minimal advertisements as the team focused on service commitments, staffing the platform, and eliminating any technical issues.

After the initial launch, SMA launched NowClinic to the public and saw incredible results, completing over 5,000 telehealth visits in the first year, with nearly 18,500 enrollments. SMA also surpassed customer satisfaction goals, with 92% of patients giving the NowClinic experience 4 or 5 stars.

Due to the success of its urgent care launch, Southwest Medical has since expanded telehealth to include behavioral health and rheumatology.

UnityPoint Health

UnityPoint Health, a large network of hospitals, clinics and home care services in Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin, originally launched its telehealth service, UnityPoint Health Virtual Care, with another telehealth provider. After seeing poor utilization, UnityPoint partnered with American Well to relaunch the service. The health system decided to first launch to its employees to gain buy-in before expanding.

UnityPoint partnered with American Well’s Engagement Services team to produce a robust, email marketing campaign that included incentives to drive enrollments. In its first two weeks of marketing to employees, UnityPoint drove 1,200 employee enrollments—about 4% of its population. The second email campaign, which included a direct mail component, resulted in an additional 1,000 enrollments.

After building utilization with its employees, UnityPoint felt confident relaunching telehealth to the broader population. Since the public launch, they’ve seen impressive patient utilization, and plan to expand to other use cases in the future.