



Consumerism in Health Care – Shaping Your Talent Strategy to Match

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For those of us working in health care, consumerism is now a regular topic for discussion and debate at the water cooler. Over the years, patients have become increasingly prepared to interact with health care providers as savvy consumers rather than passive patients. Armed with more information and options for care than ever before, patients now expect more value, convenience, and immediacy from their health care providers. These expectations have largely been shaped by the interactions patients have as consumers of goods and services from other industries. Whether it's shopping, transportation, or entertainment, almost everything you need can be obtained by the push of a button or a command to your voice activated assistant.



At InveniasPartners, we regularly ask our clients about the emerging issues they face. One of the challenges frequently discussed is how to meet the growing demands and consumer-like preferences of patients. Oftentimes, health care executives are quick to share a roster of initiatives such as the adoption of new strategies such as expanding into retail health clinics, launching telemedicine programs, or partnering with technology companies to further innovate the delivery of care. But how well is the people strategy being advanced? Do the organization's talent resources compliment the strategic direction in which they are heading? Are care teams able to relate to the emerging profile of patient as consumer? As talent experts, this is where we step in with advice and counsel. Often, it is only through probing conversations that clients start to fully consider how the shift toward consumerism is impacting the organizational talent strategy.

A Talent Strategy to Match

In a recent blog post titled "[Guiding Principles for a People Strategy](#)," my colleague Joe Fournier commented on how a well-defined talent strategy begins with a **talent blueprint** that is tied to a clearly articulated business strategy. From my experience, health care leaders are quite good at the business strategy piece, enthusiastically painting the vision of where they see the organization in the future. On the contrary, understanding how to achieve that vision through the development and the cultivation of talent, seems to be a bit more elusive. While the rise of consumerism is just one of the many challenges facing health care organizations, it is important to align business strategy with talent strategy when driving operations to be more consumer-centric. Success will depend on fully integrating a consumer-focused approach in to critical systems such scheduling, billing and quality assessments.

As your team begins 2019, I encourage you to review (or create!) the talent blueprint and employ a talent strategy that will help meet the evolving preferences of today's health care consumer. An insight, tip and best practice to keep in mind:

- **New Leadership Roles Dedicated to the Consumer**- Seeing the writing on the wall, leading health care enterprises have appointed talented executives to lead the design, development, and implementation of consumer oriented, value driven solutions focused on improving patient care, experience, and engagement. Examples include Jefferson Health, a system that was early to add a [Chief Digital Officer](#) and EVP of Technology Innovation and Consumer Experience and Intermountain Healthcare, which hired their first ever [Chief Consumer Officer](#) by recruiting an executive from Disney.
- **Welcome the Nontraditional Health Care Executive**- Health care operates with unique traits as an industry, yet it is finally catching up to other sectors that long ago shifted their business models to answer the growing demands of consumers. There is a key difference vs. industries such as technology, retail or hospitality: the stakes in health care are much higher and the tolerance for error is far lower. Because of this equation, I am firm believer that clinical talent and proven leaders with strong health care operations experience will always be required and in demand. Yet search committees generally have a broad mandate to consider the best talent available in the market. Recruiting talented candidates from outside of health care to supplement existing care teams can be beneficial and help accelerate the transformation that leading organizations seek.

- **Treat Candidates Like Well-Informed Consumers** - When thinking about talent, keep in mind that consumerism in health care extends beyond patients. It has begun to impact everyone involved in the industry, including prospective candidates. Just as the health care consumer has changed, so have the expectations of top health care talent. Like the modern-day consumer, candidates expect an increased level of service, transparency regarding the process and candid feedback. Be prepared to act quickly and decisively – top talent doesn't sit around waiting for a response or offer.

Consumers Over Competitors

Evolving from an online book seller to a retailing giant to a media producer reflects continuous, strategic transformation. As an emerging, major player in health care, Amazon's new joint venture is focused on consumer access to health care. Speaking at the Economic Club of Washington late last year, Chairman, CEO and President Jeff Bezos offered that "the No. 1 thing that has made us successful by far is obsessive compulsive focus on the customer as opposed to obsession over the competitor." It's a ringing endorsement that consumer-centric health care is here to stay.

Today, many health systems are working diligently to incorporate consumer-focused thinking into delivering the safest and best care to their patients. As traditional providers continue to evolve, so will the profile of successful health care leaders. With this in mind, I encourage you to begin a conversation about how a catalyst hire with deep consumer credentials can impact patient care. Furthermore, explore how diverse teams can propel the organization forward toward transformation. If you are looking to build distinction in your own career, consider volunteering to drive initiatives that activate a consumer-centric environment.

Just like savvy consumers shopping for a favorite brand, top candidates expect a more personalized experience as they consider new opportunities. So, the recruitment process is a good place to adopt a consumer-centric approach. How does the position align with the talent blueprint? Does the leadership profile call for traditional skills and talents or welcome disruptive experiences ready to spark transformation? Are slow, antiquated recruiting processes the norm or is the approach nimble, pro-active and inclusive?

Make a new year's resolution to consider a more holistic approach to talent acquisition in 2019. Drop me a note at coopers@inveniaspartners.com if we can help your efforts.

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