

## Communications Plan

Client: Customer Experience

Audience: Internal employees, all levels

Draft: Updated 11/17/15 – **Not for routing**

*“Anyone can get anything anytime. Everything is a commodity.  
If you give people what they expect, you don’t give them anything.”*  
– [Ken Schmidt](#), former Communications Director, Harley Davidson

### Situation analysis

Premera defines Customer Experience as the sum total of a customer’s engagement with us over time – which starts with overarching awareness and perception, continues through their initial interactions (buying a plan), to their ongoing experience with us (using their plan). Customer experience has the potential to drive loyalty and competitive preference; if we employ similar strategies with employees, it can even improve employee engagement.

Compared to its competitors, Premera has been largely known throughout the region for excellent customer service; it’s been a competitive advantage. Despite that, and despite the Blue brand’s good reputation as a health plan provider, the reputation research we conducted earlier this year states that non-customers don’t make distinctions between one Blue plan and another. Collectively, we’re part of a low-trust industry, traditionally confusing, costly, and fragmented. The Affordable Care Act changed the rules, diversifying and in many ways leveling the playing field. It put more power into the hands of consumers with access to resources and information, and set standards for exchange-based plans.

Enter a laser-focus on customer experience. At the Fall 2014 P&O, President & CEO Jeff Roe introduced a new Formula for Success (Strength + Change = Opportunity). Customer Experience is one of three key focus areas identified as an opportunity for continued, ongoing success. We’re currently establishing an ‘experience’ baseline using customer advocacy scores which includes a senior leadership goal, and a new purpose statement and customer-focused values will be announced on December 1, 2015.

To better understand what our customers care about and contribute to an overall improved experience, we’re listening to them, mapping their journey with us, and gaining clarity on what’s most important to them through focus groups, surveys, and other information gathering. We’re also listening to employees who directly touch the customer, sharing their stories, hosting a resource-based employee-focused portal, and creating internal awareness campaigns (customer resolution, customer in the room, design principles, among others). We’re working to “harness the voice of the customer” to change the way we work to be more customer-centric.

All that said, customer experience is a hot topic in every industry, particularly healthcare. What makes us different? The work we do every day has the capacity to make a positive difference in the lives of our members. Empathetic individuals who, in part, just happen to work here, care deeply about making a difference. And many of us have a desire to make healthcare better for everyone.

This is why it’s also critical that we empower and care for our employees. As we ask them to exemplify passion for our customers, we must enable them to put themselves in the shoes of our customers, moving away from our command and control environment to a flatter hierarchy and greater servant leadership. Culture drives experience, and creating a culture of empowerment and collaboration will enable us to better serve our customers.

***“If you take care of your employees, they’ll take care of your customers.” – Richard Branson***

To date, communications have focused on creating awareness for customer advocacy and experience, examples of what passion for our customers looks like, tools and resources, and to a lesser degree, stated expectations. Employees have been tasked with being more innovative, to experiment and work differently and always put our customer's needs first. For this to happen, we need to better identify and explain our expectations, model and reward desired behavior, provide concrete examples, develop goals and performance measures, and remove barriers that truly empower employees.

## **Business objectives**

### ***Improve customers' lives by being the most customer-obsessed health plan on the planet – simple, affordable, hassle-free, trusted***

- *Embed the customers' voice in everything we do (ubiquitous, actionable).*
- *Create a customer-obsessed culture (empower, reward, mentor, model the way; empower employees to make customer focused decisions and provide a platform to voice concerns).*
- *Continuously improve the customer experience (simple, easy, caring).\**
- *Support the patient experience (partner with providers, use customer ratings, provider agreements, personalization, resource).*
- NOTE: Advocacy scores were approved in 2014 as the primary measurement of customer experience success

## **Communications objectives**

- Bridge gaps between employee understanding and the embodiment of customer experience
- Build awareness to connect advocacy with everyday work, even for those who don't directly touch the customer
- Immerse employees in customer experience work at every level, to understand, support and drive improvements; unify work to date with work to come
- Engage and empower employees to adopt key behaviors – customer passion, exceptional execution, and experiment and innovate
- Model the way: Use plain language, be transparent, explain rationale, show don't tell

## **Communications strategies**

- Provide employees with the tools and information they need to make customer-focused decisions, and better integrate what they do with what our customers want / voice of the customer
- Illustrate customer passion, examples of working differently (key behaviors), using all available communications tools (editorial calendar: iHub stories / Spotlights / Snapshots; reader boards; email messages; surveys; meeting tool kit; executive and employee blogs; other tools as determined); highlight high level projects and connect dots (e.g., Constellation / Premerapedia);
- Partner with Strategic Development (roll out, reputation management), Human Resources (new hire onboarding, performance measures), Operations (empowerment) Lean (linkages to continuous improvement), and other key stakeholders on implementation, change management, and adoption
- Encourage collaboration and use of collaboration tools for cross-functional conversation
- Develop and implement themes to enhance storytelling and create "muscle-memory"
- Use "human-voiced" tone and aim for jargon-free

## **Challenges**

- This is a major cultural shift; we have to make it OK for employees to take risks, and systems and processes need to be change to support this.
- We're by nature a risk-averse company, yet a customer-focused approach requires some risk taking.

- We do great customer service. How do we not minimize the work already being done and expand on what's possible?
- We say we listen to our customers and we're making changes, yet we have a number of requests to "fix what's broken" – and according to one executive, some of these have needed attention for ten years – and yet, key changes have not been made.
- As a Lean shop, sometimes we rely too much on process and not enough on right action. We excel at solving immediate problems, but don't always address the root cause.
- We have traditionally been slow to change.

### **Key messages**

Customer Experience messaging will be embedded in much of our work and communications. It's up to all of us to create an environment where an exemplary customer experience can flourish. One way to do this is to provide examples of where we're doing great work, and how we're doing it.

- Execute: We listen, we use data to better serve our customers and customer feedback to influence business decisions, we're continually improving our products, processes and systems
- Experiment and innovate: We're working differently; we fail fast and learn; you're empowered
- Customer obsession: We're listening; we're advocates for our customers; we have the capacity to make a difference in the lives of others; everything we do has an impact on our customers
- Simplicity: We're making it easier for our customers
- Costs: We're making a difference for our customers around cost, helping ensure they get the care they need, not what they don't, and when they need it, with transparency around costs
- Employees: We heard you. We're fixing things (with examples). (They're customers, too.)

### **Tactics**

- iHub stories: editorial calendar includes bi-weekly or monthly stories (see editorial calendar); current focus areas include work-in-progress and case studies featuring other companies
- iHub Snapshots: weekly focus on a customer service story highlighting an employee
- Roll out new statement of purpose and values (in partnership with Strategic Development)
- Ongoing blog posts
- Email: Ongoing messages from Curtis emphasizing key focus areas/ CX goals
- Customer Experience portal: tools and resources
- Collaboration: Use community, team and department sites, e.g., Admins (meeting tool kit), Operations Customer Experience (CSR shared tips site)
- Training and development: TBD

Questions:

- *Visuals / video / infographics?*
- *Gamification tools?*

### **How we'll measure success**

- Improved advocacy scores
- Greater engagement (online participation, growing numbers of examples, quality of examples, customer feedback, flatter organization... other?)
- Employee and customer surveys
- *Embed in performance reviews (we must go beyond reviews; reviews are meaningless without paving the way for employees to do this; we're not there)*

### **Timeline**

- Already underway – regular, ongoing cadence of communications tactics
- 2016

- Empowerment (be bold!)
- Unify messaging
- Performance management
- Employee awards
- Advocacy scores
- See editorial calendar for currently scheduled articles; ongoing review and development

**Resources:**

As customer experience grows as a discipline, research is ongoing and reports are numerous. A few key resources:

[What is Customer Experience](#) (Beyond Philosophy)

[The Truth About Customer Experience](#) (Harvard Business Review)