

Getting Results with Mix of Consumerism, Wellness

Over the past few years, many in the industry have debated the supposed results and return on investment from wellness and related health care consumerism strategies. But there's no debating the results that Scott Wood, principal and chief executive officer at Scottsdale, Arizona's Benefit Commerce Group, has returned for his client base.

An industry veteran with over 25 years of experience, Wood has developed a truly unique approach to benefits consulting, one that is anchored on his deeply held belief that the only way to reduce health care costs is by changing behavior by creating a health care strategy that instills personal responsibility.

Recently, Wood and the team at Benefit Commerce Group have quantified the results of 33 of their clients that have implemented the firm's best practices strategies, primarily the firm's exclusive Trend Neutralizer program. The inquiry found that these clients have saved over \$55 million, and these are real savings without reducing benefits.

In Wood's approach, he focuses on creating real behavior change from employees — not just cost shifting — and changing how company leadership views employee health and benefits from a business perspective. Over the several years, he has helped CEOs, CFOs and HR managers view their health plans the same as other parts of their operations: with strategy and data-driven decisions.

Wood helps his clients communicate the strategy and the benefits of being good health care consumers to their employees, motivating them to change their behavior.

"Wellness engagement is a process that needs to be expanded year by year. Our programs focus on education, financial incentives and making it easy for employees. Education begins before and during open enrollment and continues throughout the year," Wood explained.

As a result, the firm's clients have saved money, boosted employee morale and taken control of their health plans. Clients' employees have discovered health risks they didn't know they had, embarked on lifestyle changes and succeeded in improving their health.

Wood's other key benefit consulting principles and strategies include running your health plan like your business; assuring corporate/executive endorsement as a part of the strategic plan; implementing a full replacement, properly designed consumer-driven health plan; including incentives that align interests of the employer and employees; and communicating with employees to educate and motivate.

In 2014, Benefit Commerce Group teamed up with Milliman to provide the first *Arizona Employee Benefits Benchmarking Survey* designed for employers with 50 to 3,000 employees.

"Available benchmarking data was national and only based on very large employers. Our market needed data specifically for Arizona mid-market employers to make data-driven decisions, and we have brought that to these employers. We provide this data at no cost to the employers that participate, even if they are not our clients," Wood said.

In its second year, Benefit Commerce Group and Milliman achieved a 40 percent increase in employers participating. With the



Scott M. Wood
President & CEO

Company: Benefit Commerce Group

Headquarters: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Website: www.benefitcommerce.com

Number of Employees: Approx. 35

Nature of Business: Benefit Commerce Group is a game-changing and award-winning benefits consulting firm with decades of experience in developing employee plans that save money.

Key Executives: Johnny Angelone, Principal; Chris Hogan, President; David Spellicy, Vice President, Senior Benefits Consultant; Peter Kuhn, Executive & Marketing Officer

results, Wood and his team have been able to illustrate specifically to clients and prospects how their benefit plan design, funding and contributions compare to their competitors and demonstrate areas where they can become more competitive and save money.

Wood truly is an employee benefits expert — with 30 years of experience inside the health insurance industry and as a business executive. Unlike many of his peers, he continues to learn, adapt and bring new ideas to his clients and insurance companies. He believes that employers want solutions tailored for their own situations, with long-term, sustainable strategies that set a direction for their organizations.

"The key is that wellness is not a one-size-fits-all effort. Both the programs and the incentives for engagement need to be tailored to the specific employer." HC