

Healthcare Reform 2011 - One Year On

The world of the Healthcare Customer Contact Center is rapidly changing. Impacted by new communication channels, economic pressures, emerging technologies and fierce competition, Healthcare Customer Contact Centers are in constant flux: striving to find new marketing channels to meet the increasing individual insurance market; striving to cut costs while not sacrificing customer delight or compromising customer loyalty; shifting from a reactive and consultative business model to a proactive and persuasive model that focuses on individual action and responsibility; and of course, increasing revenues while delighting customers with new products and more relevant services.

On March 23, 2011, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) will hit its one-year anniversary, and with that, more of the requirements will go into effect, impacting Medicare, Medicaid and commercial health plans alike. 2011 brings us closer to the onset of Star Ratings-based reimbursements and the implementation of state healthcare exchanges, both of which present tremendous challenges and opportunities alike.

In many ways, however, the big questions for Contact Centers have not changed:

- How do I continue to delight my customers and differentiate my company?
- How do I continue to provide innovative service solutions while cutting costs?
- How do I increase my market share?
- How can I leverage new technologies to drive revenues?
- How can I turn lemons into lemon aid?

As we embark upon the journey of Healthcare Reform implementation, Synergy remains laser focused on the questions that really matter.

Rules of the Road

Below are eight simple rules of the road to help you keep your sanity and remain focused on what matters most to your business:

1) Do not panic:

As difficult as it may be, try to take a pragmatic approach to scaling the impact (positive and negative) and cost (or income potential) of the new law. Hold off on panicking until you actually have something to panic about! Be proactive, and consider your options. What solutions will you need to propel your Healthcare Customer Contact Center into this new era?

2) Do not believe everything you hear:

As we saw demonstrated throughout the extensive lawmaking period, there are people and organizations on all sides of this issue with agendas and vested interests. Proponents and opponents (whether intentionally or through lack of knowledge) have propagated erroneous information about PPACA. Even after the law passed, some of the misinformation continued, and now, as the legislation makes its way through the courts and the 2012 election looms near, the rhetoric will no doubt be with us for a long time. Use your good judgment and common sense to distill the information you hear.

3) Do be cynical:

Don't believe everything you hear, and don't assume this law is all about healthcare! The infamous 1099 requirement has fallen by the wayside, but be sure to look for other hidden impacts (positive and negative).

4) Do not expect immediate answers:

Even one year on, there is still much we do not know about how this legislation will impact us in the next years. The regulations are lengthy and cumbersome, and many implementation guidelines have still not been published. Keep pressing for answers, but understand it is going to take time. In the meanwhile, go with what you know, because not doing anything is not only a huge risk, but a missed opportunity.

5) Do gather information from a variety of credible sources:

Remember the early days of ERISA, COBRA and HIPAA? How about the dreaded DNC list? Customer Contact Center businesses faced the same sort of questions and concerns then as they are facing today. Looking back, it seems hard to believe the Customer Contact Center industry has survived these regulatory challenges, but the reality is, it has flourished, partly due to innovative and intelligent thought leaders who have provided solid interpretation and dynamic strategies. Do seek out these strategic advisors. But in keeping with credo #3, retain your cynicism, and check the facts for yourself. Utilize the myriad information resources available on the internet in conjunction with your trusted advisors.

6) Do not let your opinions get in the way of smart business:

Like it or not, PPACA is the law. Put aside any emotions you may be experiencing and use this moment as an opportunity to innovate and grow.

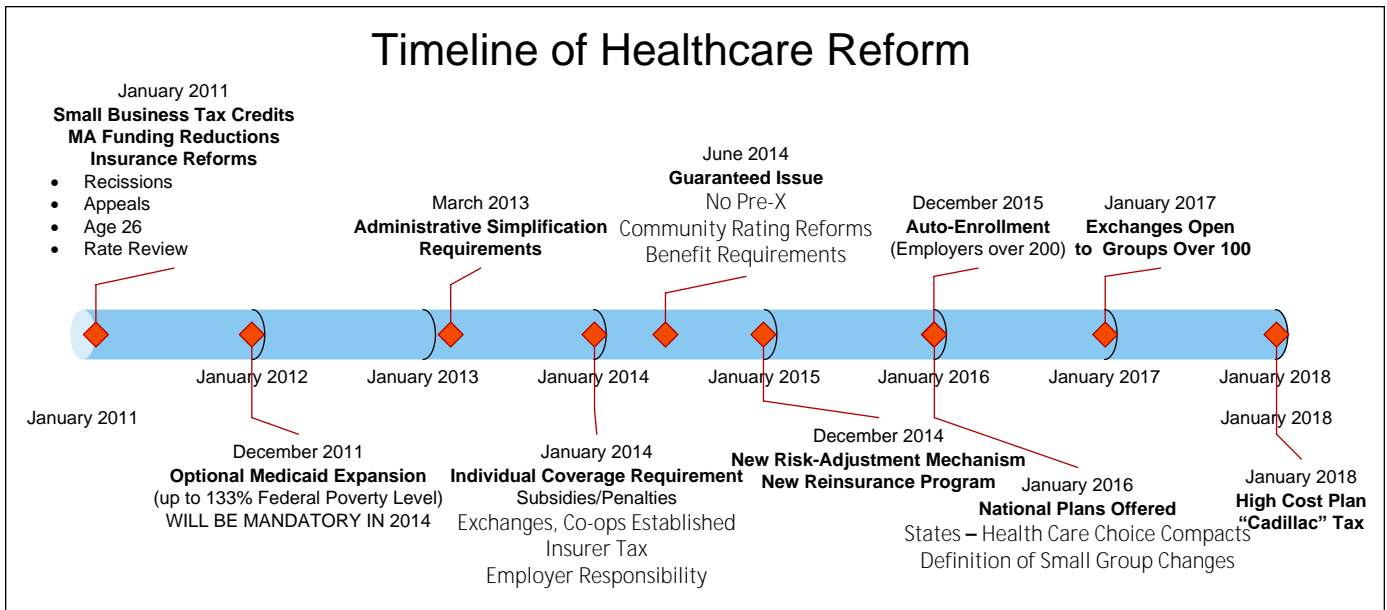
7) Do engage in public comment and discussion:

There are over 20 discussion groups in LinkedIn, including a whitehouse.gov discussion group which is frequented by DHHS and CMS regulators. Use these venues not only to gather information, but to solicit and share insights and opinions. When the DHHS, IRS or CMS solicit public comment, make your voice heard. Differentiate yourself and your business as a subject matter expert and surprise yourself by the never-ending stream of actionable business solutions the marketplace of ideas can inspire.

8) Do wait and see – but do not just wait!

Some stakeholders (states, health plans and providers) will no-doubt choose to hold off on implementing and communicating many specifics about PPACA while the political details are being fought out in congress and the courts. But time marches on, so by no means should planning be put on hold. PPACA has already propelled numerous changes for the Healthcare Customer Contact Center and will necessitate many more. Begin to formulate a project plan. Brainstorm for innovative solutions. You can always make changes later, when more information is known, but if you want to be on the innovative edge, it is critical that you begin your work today.

Timeline of Healthcare Reform

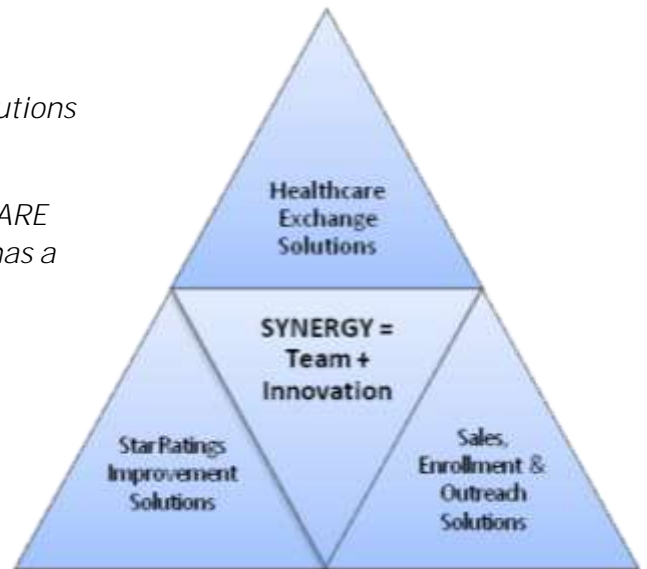


Helpful Healthcare Reform Websites:

- <http://www.healthreform.gov/>
- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/health-care/>
- <http://www.brookings.edu/topics/health-care.aspx>
- <http://www.kff.org/healthreform/upload/8060.pdf>
- http://www.nfib.com/Portals/0/PDF/AllUsers/IssuesElections/healthcare/Healthcare%20Reform%20Law_Timeline%20for%20Small%20Business.pdf

If you are feeling overwhelmed, find out how Synergy Solutions can help you navigate the seas of PPACA.

Whether you are a COMMERCIAL HEALTH PLAN, a MEDICARE PLAN or a MEDICAID/STATE AGENCY, Synergy Solutions has a Healthcare Reform solution for you!



Synergy Solutions, Inc., headquartered in Phoenix, AZ, specializes in providing innovative customer contact solutions to Fortune 500 companies in a variety of industries, including healthcare, insurance, financial services, telecommunication and publishing. Synergy is committed to providing our clients with solutions that solidify and expand customer relationships and elevate the service experience. Through the use of intelligent people and emerging technology, Synergy Solutions is able to delight customers and offer true multi-dimensional customer contact solutions.

Synergy Solutions has facilities in Scottsdale, AZ; Johnson City, NY; Fort Kent, ME; Pensacola, FL; Bemidji, MN; Milbank, SD; and Dallas, TX and a multi-state work at home program, Synergy HomeZone.

For more information about Synergy's expertise in healthcare, contact Lori Fentem at 602.296.1601 or lfentem@callsynergy.com or visit our website: www.synergysolutionsinc.com