

# 2017 Blog Content Strategy

Offering more in-depth and engaging digital content to social audience

March 2017

# Background: All about blogs

## What is a blog?

### **blog**

[blawg, blog]

#### *NOUN*

a regularly updated website or web page, typically run by an individual or small group, that is written in an informal or conversational style (2 way conversation). Short for “web log”.



## What are some popular blog topics?

- ☐ Health/Wellness
- ☐ Food & Drink
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Fashion
- ☐ Parenting
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Tech



A new blog is created  
**SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD**  
every half a second.

<http://www.wpvirtuoso.com/how-many-blogs-are-on-the-internet/>

# Background: All about blogs

## Consumers & Blogs <sup>(1)</sup>

- 60% of the American internet population will read a blog at least once a month, while 46% read blogs at least once a day.
- Blogs have been rated as the 5th most trusted source for accurate online information.
- Blogs are more influential in shaping opinion than Twitter.
- 81% of US consumers trust advice and information from blogs.
- 70% of consumers learn about a company through articles rather than ads. <sup>(2)</sup>
- 61% of U.S. online consumers have made a purchase based on recommendations from a blog.
- Blogs affect purchase decisions more than Facebook.

85%

percent of relationships customers will manage without talking to a human by 2020. <sup>(4)</sup>



## Blog Readership Demographics <sup>\*(3)</sup>



Average age of blog readers is 41 years old.



40% of blog readers are male, 60% are female.



Most reader education level is college



Income for many blog readers does not exceed 50K




*\*Blog readership may vary for each individual blog*

# Background: All about blogs

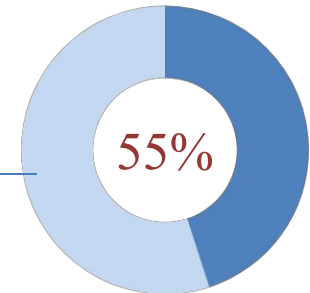
## Business & Blogs <sup>(1)</sup>

- 60% of businesses have a business or company blog.
- 81% of companies consider their blogs "useful," "important," or "critical" and 37% of marketers believe blogs are the most important type of content marketing.

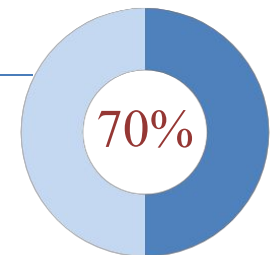
## How can a blog help a business?

- Drive increased traffic to your website. 
- Improve SEO ranking.
- Generate leads. 
- Increase social engagement. 
- Express brand identity
- Build credibility.
- Give a behind-the scenes look.
- Become an industry thought leader.
- Connect with customers on a personal level.

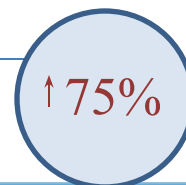
### More Web Traffic <sup>(5)</sup>



### More Leads <sup>(5)</sup>



### Blogging can increase your Twitter reach by <sup>(5)</sup>



# Competitor Analysis

# Competitor Analysis – Overview

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## Evaluation Criteria

The 12 companies selected for this competitor analysis were chosen because their blog performed well in the following categories: Quality of content, design look/feel and mobile-friendliness, consistency of publishing, social sharing activity, and alignment with corporate objectives.

The competitor analysis evaluated the company blogs on the following criteria:

- Mobile friendliness
- Content frequency
- Number of content categories
- Search & subscribe functionality
- Social Channel Promotion
- Social sharing, comments and related article features
- Inclusion of author biographies

**Mobile accounts for 56% of all time spent on the internet.**



Improve SEO by inciting more crawling. The more frequently you publish content, the more your site gets crawled by search engines (Google, Bing).

Blog posts shared on Facebook and Twitter get **149% more** inbound links\* <sup>(5)</sup>

*\*An **inbound link** is a hyperlink back to your site from another Web site.*

# Competitor Analysis – Overview cont.

## Evaluation of blogging best practices

A comprehensive review of all blues plans and industry leaders in the health and wellness industry was conducted to determine the state of company blogging and best practices for creating and maintaining a successful blog presence.

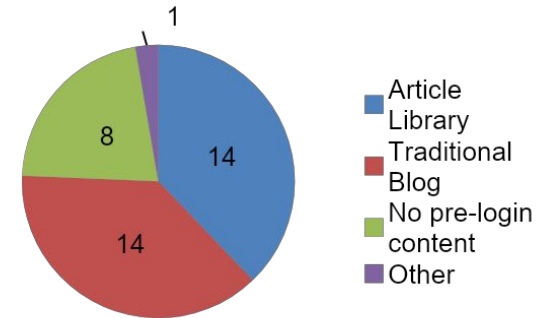
To determine the top blogs to be considered in this evaluation, the following considerations were made:

1. **Blues Plans** – health and wellness content is disseminated a variety of ways throughout the various plans. Plans who distributed their health and wellness content through a traditional blog, as opposed to a (pre or post login) health and wellness library were selected for this review.
2. **Insurance Competitors and Industry Leaders** – companies who stand out as innovators in the health and wellness were used in this comparison. Companies with varying specialties in the industry were included (apparel, devices, food, drink).

### The 12 blogs we reviewed are:

Blues Plans	
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan	A Healthier Michigan
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island	The Rhode Ahead
Capital BlueCross	N/A
Independence Blue Cross	Independence Insights
Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina	N/A
Highmark	Highmark Health

**Blues Plans Health and Wellness Content Breakdown**



*\* A collection of pre-written and accredited health and wellness articles provided by a third party company who offers integrated content solutions for its clients. These content libraries typically live within a main blues plan website and are typically labeled as "health and wellness information."*

Insurance Competitors & Industry Leaders	
Under Armour	Health & Technology Blog
Fitbit	Fitbit Blog
Stonyfield	The Yogurt Dish
Bai	Bai Blog
Kaiser	Kaiser Permanente Share
Oscar	Oscar Blog

# Competitor Analysis – Overview Cont.

## Evaluation Results Recap

- **All** of the company blogs evaluated **were responsive**.
- Company post frequency averaged **bi-weekly**.
- Of the 12 blogs analyzed, the **average number of content categories was 5**.
- **66%** of the blogs reviewed **included a search functionality** on their blog to make searching for articles easier for the users.
- **6 out of 12 companies include a “subscribe” functionality** on their blog which allows readers to get RSS feed updates, updates via email, or subscribe to an email newsletter subscription. 5 of these 6 companies are blues plans.
- **All** of these blogs **have social sharing\*** enabled and a majority of them have **enabled comments** on their articles as well as **offer related articles to the user**.
- **Half of the competitors** evaluated **included detailed author biographies on their blog**. One company include author information but just limited it to name and position title.

### Blues Plans

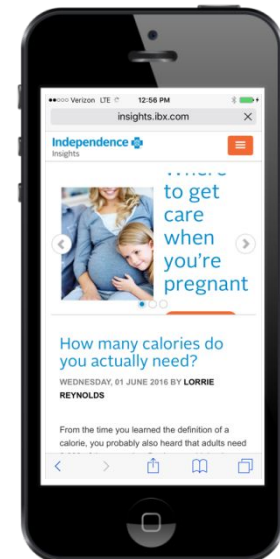
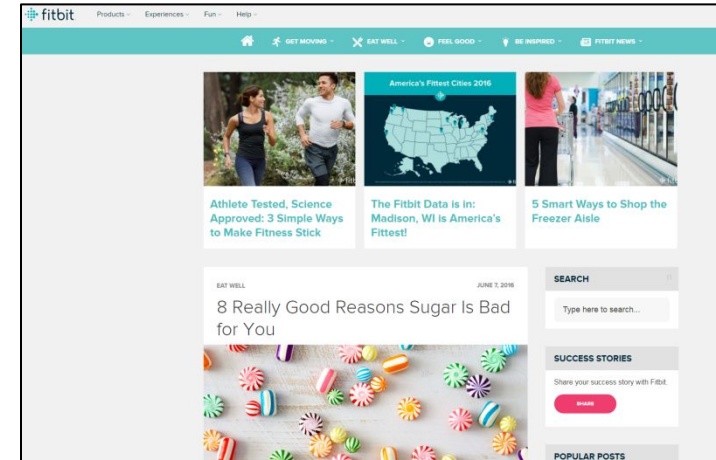
BCBS Michigan, BCBS Rhode Island, Capital BlueCross, IBX, BCBSNC, and Highmark

### Industry Leaders

Under Armour, Fitbit, Stonyfield Organic and Bai

### Insurance Industry

Kaiser Permanente, Oscar



\* Ability to post article to social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) at the click of a button.



# Competitor Analysis: Blog Feature Comparison

Blog Name	Mobile Friendly	Content Frequency	# of Content Categories	Search Functionality	Subscribe Functionality	Social Channel Promo	Social Sharing Enabled	Comments Enabled	Related Articles Enabled	Author Biographies Included	Getting to Blog from Corporate Site
<b>Blues Plans</b>											
A healthier Michigan	Yes	Bi-weekly	5	Yes	Yes	Prominent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Icon in Footer
The Rhode Ahead	Yes	N/A*	5	No	Yes	Minimal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Hero Banner
Capital Blue	Yes	Bi-monthly	5	No	Yes	Prominent	Yes	Yes	Yes	No**	Not intuitive for new user
Independence Insights	Yes	Weekly	4	Yes	Yes	Prominent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Icon in Footer
The BCBSNC Blog	Yes	Daily	7	Yes	Yes	Prominent	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Icon in Footer
Highmark	Yes	Bi-weekly	6	Yes	No	Minimal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Icon in Footer
<b>Industry Leaders</b>											
Under Armour	Yes	2-3/week	3	Yes	No	Minimal	Yes	No	Yes	No	Non existent
Fitbit	Yes	2-3/week	5	Yes	No	Prominent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Icon in Footer
Stonyfield Organic	Yes	Bi-monthly	5	Yes	No	Minimal	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Promo section on homepage
Bai'	Yes	Bi-monthly	7	No	Yes	Minimal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Homepage main menu
<b>Insurance Industry</b>											
Oscar Blog	Yes	Infrequent	3	No	No	Minimal	Yes	No	No	No	Text link in footer
Kaiser Share	Yes	Daily	3	Yes	No	Minimal	Yes	No	Yes	No	Text link, not intuitive for new user.

\*articles are not date stamped

\*article authors and credentials are identified

# Competitor Analysis: Blog Content Topic Comparison

Blog Name	Health and Wellness	Food/Recipe	Fitness	Insurance Education	Community/Sponsorship	Company Culture
A healthier Michigan	✓	✓	✓		✓	
The Rhode Ahead	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Capital Blue	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Independence Insights	✓			✓	✓	
The BCBSNC Blog	✓			✓	✓	✓
Highmark	✓			✓	✓	
Under Armour	✓	✓	✓			
Fitbit	✓	✓	✓			
Stonyfield Organic	✓	✓				
Bai'	✓	✓				✓
Oscar Blog	✓			✓		✓
Kaiser	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Success stories and technology topics were also common among the companies evaluated.

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## Recommendations for CareFirst Blog

# Recommendations: Goals/Objectives

## Current State

Currently, we are communicating Wellness, “Why CareFirst”, Sponsorship, and various product and program information via social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Google+). This information is limited due to restricted character counts and best practices, and also relies heavily on imagery to support the messaging. In addition, “Why CareFirst” content is also being supported through “long form” style posts available through the channel.

Wellness content is also being distributed through a small section on the CareFirst member site. The wellness content on our website is powered by StayWell, a third party vendor. While the content does meet NCQA requirements, it does not come from experts within CareFirst, nor does it have our corporate voice and tone. The content is very clinical and text heavy in nature and isn’t “social friendly” which limits our ability to drive to this wellness content from our social channels and reduces SEO opportunity.

## Goals and Objectives

- Drive deeper relationships with the brand through 2-way communication with readers.
- Build credibility for our brand while increasing brand visibility.
- Promote partnerships with community organizations and sponsorships with local sports teams/entertainment venues through messaging and creative that utilizing storytelling that establishes more trust and loyalty with our brand.
- Generate social media content that resonates better with our audience and results in increased social interactions and growth/reach of our online communities.
- Improve our perception as a top employer in the MD/DC area through content aimed to showcase the value of working for CareFirst.
- Promote the company’s commitment to affecting the long-term health of our community and promoting our integrated approach to health care programs and services (PCMH, TCCI, etc.,)
- Establish CareFirst as a thought leader in the insurance industry (benefit design, health care reform, etc.)
- Increase search engine optimization and traffic to CareFirst.com.

# Recommendations: Target Audience

## What are the key demographics of our target audience

- Male/Female
- Age 26-70
- Income ranges between \$47-160K
- Located in counties surrounding DC as well as Baltimore county and city.
- Relationship Status: Married
- Children – Yes

Blog content will help to change health/wellness behavior of penny pinchers, while reinforcing the behavior of engaged responsible and independent health buffs.

Penny Pinchers

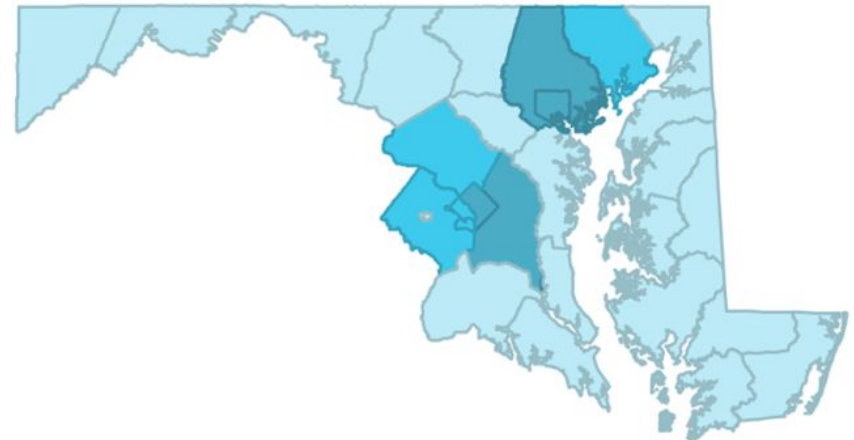
Engaged Responsibles w/o Kids

Engaged Responsibles w/Kids

Independent Health Buffs

## What is the persona of our audience?

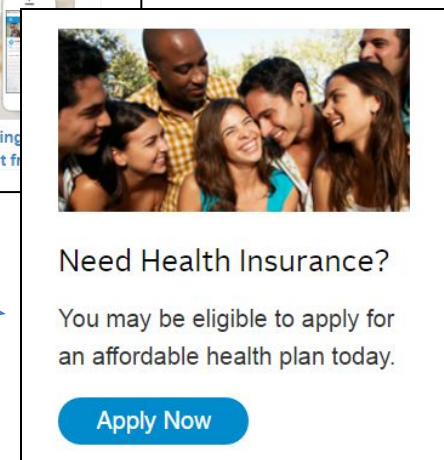
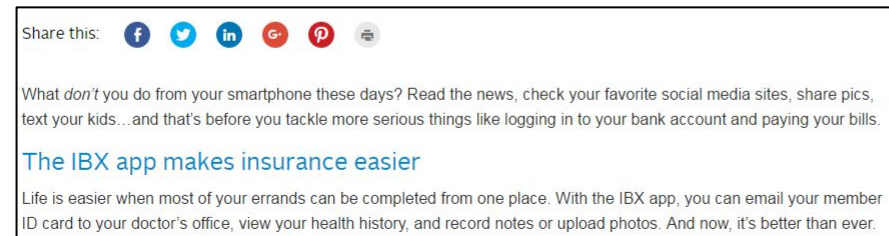
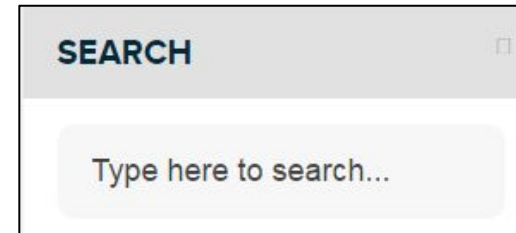
- Healthy, eats well and exercises often
- Family oriented
- Career minded
- Interested in community involvement and charity giving
- Budget conscious
- Receives regular medical checkups



# Recommendations: Blog Functionality Must Haves

## Must Have Blog Features For CareFirst

- ❑ Blog should be responsive.
- ❑ Blog should include search functionality to make content easy for users to find.
- ❑ Blog should prominently promote CareFirst social channels in an effort to increase social media connectivity.
- ❑ Blog should allow for social sharing on all articles to increase inbound links, social engagements and social signals that benefit SEO rankings.
- ❑ Each blog article should recommend similar content (posts) to elicit more page views with readers.
- ❑ Blog should include a “subscribe” functionality.
- ❑ Blog should include social widget of at least one social media feed (preference is Instagram) for social sharing.
- ❑ Blog should include an events calendar.
- ❑ Blog should include place for “advertisement” to be displayed.

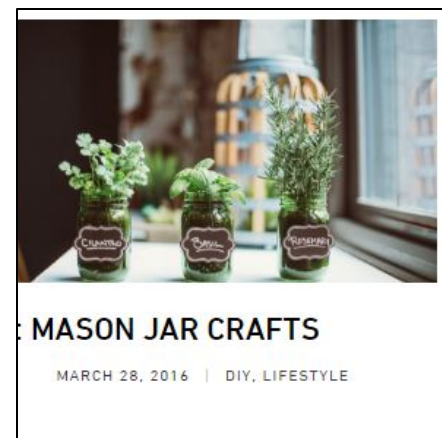
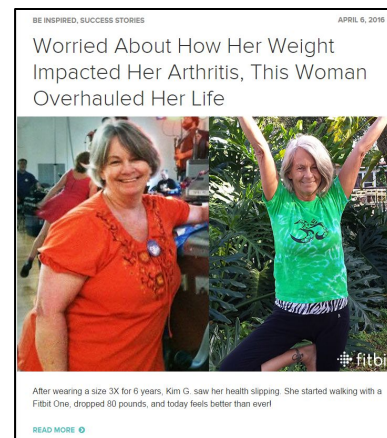
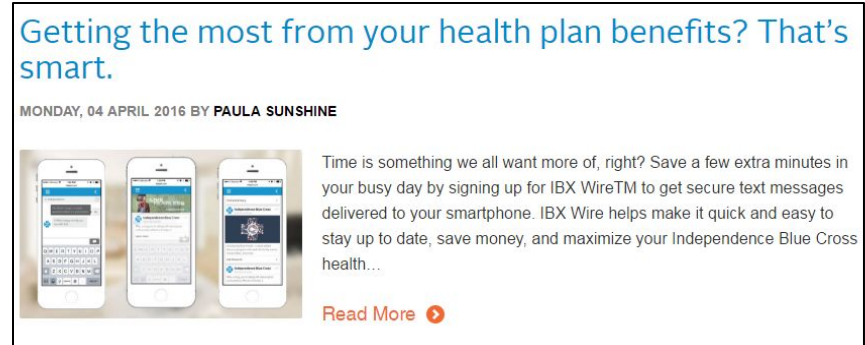


*\*RSS (Rich Site Summary; originally RDF Site Summary; often called Really Simple Syndication) uses a family of standard web **feed** formats to publish frequently updated information: blog entries, news headlines, audio, video.*

# Recommendations: Content Model

## Must Have Blog Features For CareFirst

- Minimum content publishing frequency – at least 1-2 times per week increasing to 2-3 time per week when phase II launches.
- Suggested number of content categories – Maximum of 5
- Must-have Content Themes:
  - Health and Wellness
  - Health Insurance Education
  - Community + Local Sponsorships
  - Jobs and Careers
  - Products, Programs and Industry News
- Recommended content/content types:
  - Video (recipes, fitness, success stories)
  - Podcasts
  - Quizzes
  - Interviews
  - Q&A Sessions
  - Member Information (Mobile App, MyAccount Tips, News, etc.)
  - Giveaways
  - Guest bloggers
  - DIY and how-to content
  - Community Involvement
  - Sponsorship incorporation
  - Messages from the CEO
- Content will be evenly distributed into blog as it will be planned alongside our monthly content calendars/themes.



# Recommendations: Themes and Content

## Blog Categories and Content Recommendations For CareFirst

### PHASE II

Content Category Theme	Health and Wellness	Health Insurance Education	Community + Local Sponsorships (MD, DC, NOVA)	Jobs and Careers	Products, Programs and Industry News
Category Name (concepts)	Healthy Habits Living Healthy	Insurance Info Insurance Advice Inside Insurance	In the Community Community Connections	Working at CareFirst Life at CareFirst	Health Care Innovations Health Care Leadership
Category Description	Content encouraging users and their families to lead healthy lifestyles	Content that educates members on the most effective and efficient ways to use their plan.	Content that showcases our commitment to the communities we serve and our support of local sponsorships in the service area.	Content that showcases the value of CareFirst as employer – told through the use of associate stories.	Content showcasing innovations in product and program offerings that provides quality, cost effective health care services for our members.
Content Category Topics	Wellness tips (financial, mental, social) Fitness inspiration Healthy recipes Nutrition advice Family activities	Managing costs (ways to save, cost tools, etc.) Benefits of My Account Plan education (Blue rewards, Blue365) General Education (glossary terms, Understand EOBS, etc.)	Company-wide community initiatives Associates in the community Sponsorship components (contests, onsite)	Associate spotlights on company culture Careers (job postings, HR events, etc.)	PCMH + TCCI Care Management Technology advancements (video visit, provider directory, etc.) Site of Service Company/industry news (mandates, health reform)
Content Category Post Types	Videos (recipes, fitness) Interviews from CF experts on wellness topics Q&A sessions with CF experts Health/wellness success stories	Ways to save tips My Account + Mobile app tips and tricks How-to videos Benefits of CF programs (ie: Blue rewards) Interviews from CF experts Glossary videos	Event calendar Event promotion Event recap Associates in the community Interviews/QA from sponsors Happenings in the community Success stories related to sponsorships (ie: BRF runners)	Associate Spotlights on benefits, perks, life at CF Behind the scenes with CareFirst	Educational info on value proposition programs Interviews from CF experts, including Chet Success stories from Care Management Ask the expert – provider insights



# Recommendations: Key Stakeholders

## Key Blog Roles and Functions

### □ **Blog Manager**

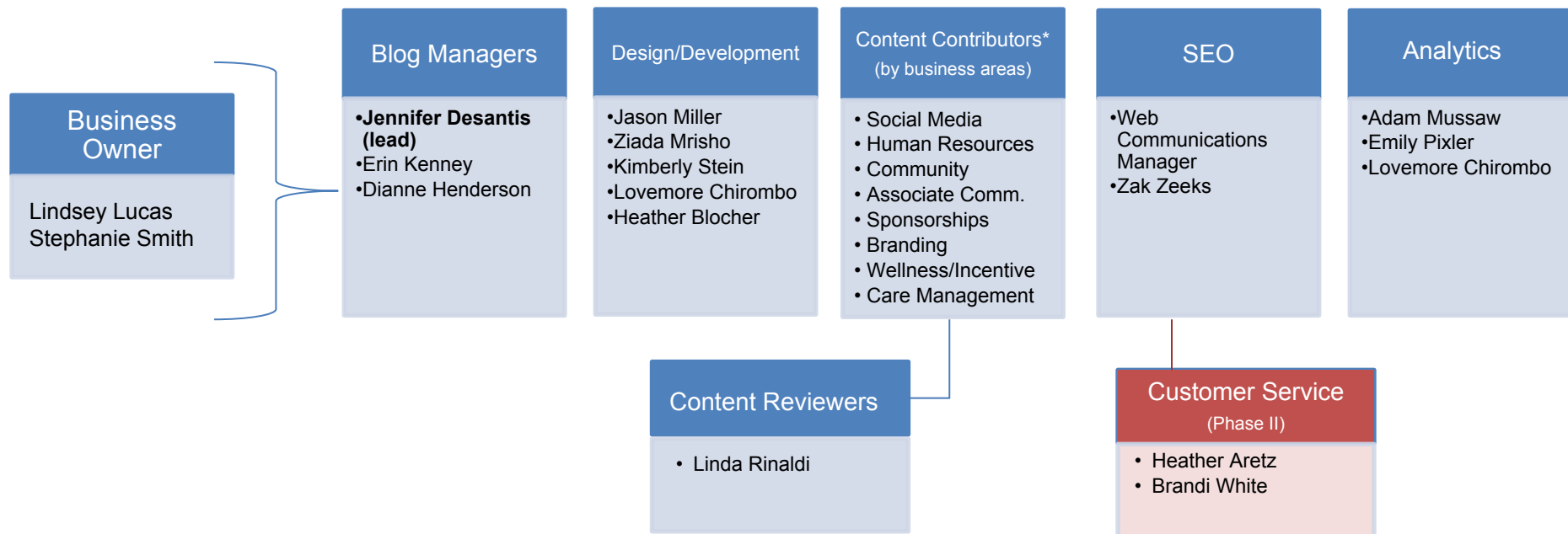
- Strategizes and oversees content projects to ensure consistency in tone and voice and alignment with both social media, strategic marketing and business objectives.
- Determines content calendar and topics
- Distributes content onto blog and across social channels.

### □ **Design/Development** – Brings content to life through user experience.

### □ **Content Contributors** – Contributes content ideas and articles in the form of blog posts. This includes individuals responsible for reviewing, editing and approving content.

### □ **SEO** – Provides best practices for web content and ensures posts are written to generate optimal SEO results. This includes optimization of platform to handle customer service inquiries.

### □ **Analytics** – Defines, tracks and measures success.



\*Content Contributors are subject matter experts who will provide ideas, topics, insight, etc. and are not solely responsible for writing content.

# Recommendations: Implementation Plan

1. Discover – Research and strategy [Completed September 2016]
2. Assemble Team – [Completed September 2016]
  - Identify secondary stakeholders (those not part of discovery stage)
  - Define roles and functions
3. Destination [5 months]
  - Identify platform, development technical requirements (Stephanie)
  - Develop branding and design guidelines (Jason, Heather)
  - Design look and functionality of the blog (Jason, Ziada, Kim)
  - Development of look and functionality of the blog (Jason, Ziada, Kim)
4. Measuring Success [2 months]
  - Identify metrics that should be tracked (Adam, Emily)
  - Implement necessary tracking pixels (Adam, Emily)
  - Develop monthly traffic report template (Adam, Emily)
5. Content Model [3 months]
  - Identify content categories and specific content topics (Dianne/Jenny)
  - Establish a blogging rhythm (recommendations for frequency and when to post)
  - Generate an article bank for launch, 3 months of posts (Jenny, Dianne, Erin)
  - Develop content creation process and establish governance (Jenny)
  - Engage web content (SEO) and Advertising teams to identify keyword recommendations and best practices regarding optimal SEO. ( Vonessa, Zak, Heather)
6. Distribution & Promotion [2 months]
  - Define promotional tactics to get the blog discovered (Dianne)
  - Create a plan to integrate social to distribute content across social channels and engage online communities (Jenny)
7. Optimization [N/A]
  - Expand to phase 2 content categories, topics and stakeholders (Dianne)
  - Create more integration with CareFirst.com (Jenny)
  - Enable comments on all posts (Jenny)
  - Continue to build content library (Jenny, Dianne, Erin)
  - Identify and execute brand ambassador and employee advocate tie ins. (Jenny, Dianne)
  - Add email subscribe functionality and develop e-newsletter to support blog (Jenny)

# Recommendations: Implementation Schedule

## Q3 & Q4 2016 (July – December)

Conduct research and competitor analysis . Develop strategy and implementation plan. [Completed September 2016]  
Identify secondary stakeholders and define roles and function [Completed September 2016]

## Q1 2017 (January, February, March)

Phase	Deliverable	Time frame	Owner	Due Date
Destination	Identify platform and development technical requirements	20 Days	S. Smith – Lead Z. Mrisho – Support J. Miller – Support TOSS - Partner	January 31, 2017  Completed on February 21
Destination	Design look/feel (wireframe, comps)	24-35 Days	J. Miller – Lead Z. Mrisho – Support K. Stein – Support H. Blocher - Partner	April 1
	Tracking needs identified, implementation plan created	TBD	Mussaw – Lead E. Pixler – Support L. Chirombo - Support	April 1
Content Model	Develop content creation process, governance, etc.	30 Days	J. DeSantis – Lead D. Henderson – Support E. Kenney – Support	April 1
	SEO/keyword recommendations and best practices	TBD	V. Schulze – Lead Z. Zeeks – Lead H. Blocher – Partner	April 15

# Recommendations: Implementation Schedule

Q2 2017 (April, May, June)				
Phase	Deliverable	Time frame	Owner	Due Date
Destination	Development of blog design	TBD	J. Miller – Lead L. Chirombo – Support Z. Mrisho – Support K. Stein – Support TOSS - Partner	June 1
	Tracking Implementation	TBD	Mussaw – Lead E. Pixler – Support L. Chirombo - Support	June 15
Content Model	Create plan to integrate blog content across social channels  Develop content bank	TBD	J. DeSantis – Lead D. Henderson – Support E. Kenney – Support  L. Rinaldi – Partner J. Henley - Partner	June 1
Promotion	Develop strategy for discovery/promotion of blog.	TBD	D. Henderson – Lead E. Kenney – Support J. DeSantis – Lead	June 1
Measuring Success	Identify metrics that show be tracked and create monthly reporting template	TBD	Mussaw – Lead E. Pixler – Support	June 15
<b>LAUNCH BLOG</b>			J. Miller – Design Lead J. DeSantis – Content Lead A. Mussaw – Analytics Lead Z. Zeeks– SEO Lead	July 10
Q3 & Q4 2017 (July - December)				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand to phase 2 content categories, topics and stakeholders</li> <li>Create more integration with CareFirst.com</li> <li>Enable comments on all posts and engage Large Group SBU for triage</li> <li>Continue to build content library</li> <li>Identify and execute brand ambassador and employee advocate tie ins.</li> <li>Add email subscribe functionality and develop e-newsletter to support blog</li> </ul>				

# Resources

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1. 45 Reasons to Blog: <http://writtent.com/blog/top-blogging-statistics-45-reasons-to-blog/>
2. Blogging – Powerful Method To Market Your Business and Increase Your Cash Flow: <http://johneengle.com/blogging-market-business-make-money-infographic/>
3. Blog Demographics 2015 Edition: <http://www.joshuakennon.com/blog-demographics-2015-edition-if-life-were-a-game-you-would-be-champions/>
4. 6 Stats You Should Know About Business Blogging in 2015: <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/business-blogging-in-2015#sm.00001p898tr2u0fm4wit9l21l6efq>
5. BLOGGING BY THE NUMBERS [INFOGRAPHIC]: <http://dominiquej.com/blogging-by-the-numbers-infographic/>

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Be sure to follow CareFirst on all of our social media channels:

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[www.carefirst.com/youtube](http://www.carefirst.com/youtube)

[www.carefirst.com/linkedin](http://www.carefirst.com/linkedin)

[www.carefirst.com/google](http://www.carefirst.com/google)

[www.carefirst.com/instagram](http://www.carefirst.com/instagram)

For more information on anything social media related please contact:

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Jennifer DeSantis	Social Media Manager	<a href="mailto:Jennifer.Desantis@carefirst.com">Jennifer.Desantis@carefirst.com</a>	410-998-4458
Dianne Henderson	Social Media Strategist	<a href="mailto:Dianne.Henderson@carefirst.com">Dianne.Henderson@carefirst.com</a>	410-998-4745
Erin Kenney	Social Media Specialist	<a href="mailto:Erin.Kenney@carefirst.com">Erin.Kenney@carefirst.com</a>	410-998-5171