



Leading with Empathy: Transforming Employee Benefits at Optavise

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President at Optavise | Transforming Employee Benefits
with a People-First Approach

About a year and a half ago, I stepped into a new role – one that has given me a new appreciation for what empathy can look like. While I've worked in the insurance industry for three decades, it has only been during this last year and a half as president of Optavise, that I've been able to really observe up close the value of the human connection in what many view as an industry of numbers and "no's."

As background, you should know that the average employer offers 46 different programs on its benefits platform. That's 46 different plans for employees to review and understand. That's 46 decisions for them to make. Not surprisingly, many employees aren't making them and instead are turning to their HR departments for guidance.

Already wearing a million hats, HR managers can quickly become overwhelmed as they try to answer very specific employee questions about their individual plans while also helping them to understand their options and maximize their benefits. Now, multiply this scenario by the 50 to 100 employees in one HR manager's charge.

It's a lot.

It's out of this chaos that Optavise was born. Optavise is a service our clients can offer their employees to take the pain out of the process. Through a 1-800 number, employees can call Optavise and be immediately connected to a *real* person – a benefits expert known as an advocate.

It's not a chat bot.

It's not AI.

It's a live person skilled at getting people answers to why their hospital bill is so high, why their medical plan didn't cover something they thought it would, and which of the 46 programs on their shelf of benefits would be most helpful to them and their families.

I mentioned empathy earlier. It's at the crux of what Optavise is all about. Our advocates are experienced at interacting with people during some of the toughest stuff life can throw one's way. From the first point of contact, our advocates patiently and empathetically guide employees to an answer – no matter how many calls it takes to carriers and providers to get it.

At times, this level of service has meant 80 hours of an advocate's time working to secure a lower cost for a single prescription medication for one individual. At other times, it has meant an advocate researching how an employee could be part of a clinical trial that would get them access to a cost prohibitive medication that otherwise would be unattainable.

Put simply, our advocates chase down answers that HR managers simply don't have the time or capacity to do. We provide the "easy button."

Relentless, compassionate advocacy

On the daily, I get to hear stories of Optavise advocates navigating new employees, new parents, and newly diagnosed through the maze that is our healthcare system and the ins and outs of their insurance plan. I never fail to be moved by the effort and empathy our advocates bring to every single employee interaction.

My own advocate's name is John. Every time I get a medical bill, I run it past him to make sure I'm not overpaying. I have his direct line and know when I call him, he will get me an answer to my question – no matter how long it takes. This is the same level of service all employees get with Optavise. It's our differentiator, our stock in trade.



Personally, I'm loving this season of my professional life where my industry knowledge is intersecting with the opportunity to provide meaningful guidance to people in their most vulnerable moments. Optavise provides relief to employees and the HR departments constantly being asked to do more with less.

It's a true win-win and a side of the insurance industry of which I couldn't be prouder to be a part.