

*Case Studies on Customer-Centered Innovation*

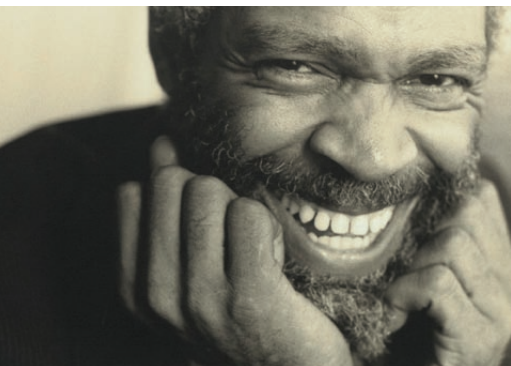
# FOUNDATIONS

## Creating Great Consumer Experiences

### Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield Shifts its Focus to Creating Consumer Value

In an atmosphere of commoditized health plans, rising health care costs, and a shift in payment responsibility from the employer to the consumer, health plans need to change. The more innovative health plan organizations are beginning to evolve their role from just managing the health care transaction to becoming a health and wellness resource to consumers. Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield wanted to be a leader in that evolution.

“Health care plans have always been a two-stage sale,” explains Nick Kompare, director of strategic marketing and innovation at Excellus. “You focused first on the employer and then the employee.”



One of the results of that focus, he says, is that many insurance companies positioned themselves to appeal to employers—as claims processors able to work efficiently to keep costs low while minimizing employee complaints. Now with the consumer more empowered and involved in health care decisions than ever before, Excellus recognized that it needed to shift its focus to the consumer.

Like most service companies, Excellus focused its innovation efforts on product development (the design of the core offerings.) Yet there has been an increased realization that value creation rests more with delivering customer experiences. In other words, enhancing how customers feel when interacting with the company and its offerings at each touch point.

“We needed solid market research to understand what consumers were feeling, and we needed to use that research to help us expand our value proposition and develop a long-term strategy that was rooted in consumer needs,” Nick says.

The strategy Nick envisioned would be a fundamental shift for the company, and he knew he would need buy-in from stakeholders across the organization. Health plans have numerous touch points with consumers and responsibility for those touch points is broadly distributed throughout the organization, making stakeholder buy-in particularly important.

Learn more about Innovare’s Customer-Centered approach to innovation!

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# Engaging the Team and Developing Shared Insights

## Taking an Organizational Learning Approach

Nick and his colleagues decided to work with **Innovare** because of its organizational learning approach and ability to deliver on all of the project's goals.

They wanted to develop a deep understanding of consumer needs, translate those needs into consumer experience goals, and socialize that understanding throughout the company to drive appropriate actions that deliver the right consumer experiences. Last but not least, they needed to articulate a cohesive innovation strategy and achieve management and stakeholder buy-in for implementation.

## Immersing the Organization into Consumer Needs

**Innovare** conducted 36 in-depth **Vocal Insights**<sup>®</sup> interviews with consumers at various life stages, health situations, and lifestyles. These consumers talked at length about what was going on in their daily lives, including the challenges of managing their family's health and wellness, navigating their health plans, and obtaining health care.



When the research was complete, Innovare engaged the broadly based cross-functional Excellus team in a two-day Immersion Workshop. The team included members from marketing, IT,

customer service and others who dealt directly with providers, clinicians, customers, and consumers. The workshop created an “almost like being there” experience for the team. They interacted with the voice of the customer data in a more meaningful and engaging manner than merely reading a report.

“The research was eye-opening,” Nick says. “Even people at Excellus who were reluctant to participate—because they thought they already understood the customer—thought it was compelling.”



## Defining Experience Goals

As a result, the team was able to develop a more robust and insightful set of customer need statements and desired outcomes. At the end of the session the team defined a series of differentiating customer experience goals that became targets for subsequent innovation.

“It was an efficient use of the team's time,” Nick says. “We wouldn't have been able to go forward with it if it was a two-week endeavor. But two days was manageable. We had very positive feedback from the team. Many said it was one of the best experiences they had with team processes.”

“The **Vocal Insights**<sup>®</sup>

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## Delivering the Experiences

Shortly after the immersion session, the Excellus team participated in a two-day Innovare Greenhouse workshop. During the workshop team members applied their new consumer need insights and created a range of innovative business processes, services, and product offerings all designed to deliver the targeted customer experiences.

“The work we did in the workshops really primed the pump for solution development,” Nick says. “It let the content experts do their work in a much more informed environment.”

After the Greenhouse workshop, content experts within Excellus refined the solutions and built a business case for implementation. The core team developed a strategic framework for moving forward. IT got to work on developing detailed requirements and the organization kicked off several development projects to deliver great consumer experiences.

Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield leveraged Innovare's **Vocal Insights**<sup>®</sup> Customer Needs Discovery and Team Immersion process to Focus Their Organization Towards Creating Consumer Experiences