

## The COVID Opportunity

Isn't it amazing how something you cannot see, feel, taste or touch can be the catalyst for world-wide change and innovation? COVID-19, this "nucleic acid in a protein coat" was and is the accelerant that fanned the flames of innovation and as we will continue to see, great new opportunity.

COVID-19 has caused scientists to accelerate a vaccine that will soon come to market faster than any in history. It has caused manufacturers of everything from automobiles to television sets to reinvent themselves for the purpose of medical equipment production and/or personal protective equipment. It has caused schools to reinvent teaching, how judges oversee the courts, how doctors see patients, how businesses maintain productivity and how families stay in touch.

And while these radical changes have occurred out of necessity, they have also created tremendous opportunity – those that we see today and those that will be developed in the near future. As our lives have changed, we are now beginning to look back and see how **something we had to do** can now be **something we want to continue doing**. Not that we want to totally change the way we do life but we are discovering that the "new normal" may include some of the things we never would have considered "normal" just a few weeks ago.

What does this new normal look like going forward? How does it apply to you and me? Well, it's too early to know how this virus will ultimately change our personal and professional lives but we do know that change has come and life will never be as it was pre-COVID. And just like what happens in every national calamity (remember having your carry-on luggage randomly inspected for all the world to see at your airline gate after 9-11), things will smooth out, we will adjust and embrace the future that comes with change.

Using myself as an example, my customers are in three categories: 1) medical providers; 2) insurance agents and brokers and 3) health insurance company relationships. All 3 categories of my customers have had to radically change the way they do business with **their** customers. Therefore, I will have to adapt my business strategy to help them accomplish their business objectives. I don't know exactly what that will look like a year from now but what I do know is **it's a huge opportunity for me to grow my business** by helping them find a solution to theirs.

In my business, a medical provider's customer is a Medicare beneficiary patient; and an insurance agent's customer is a Medicare beneficiary – in actuality, the same person. Both medical providers and insurance brokers need more customers. COVID has not and will not stop that reality. Conversely, these customers (patients) need medical providers and insurance brokers. COVID has not and will not stop that reality either.

Let's take a step back and think through what we've experienced in the past couple of months. Consumer acceptance of video communication has accelerated by what would have taken years in just

the past couple of months. Why? Because of necessity and acceptance. Video conferencing was available pre-COVID but only those who were inclined toward using that technology were using it. Today, just a couple of months later, it's become the norm – the new normal. Government, medicine, education, retail – all are now dependent on communicating and doing business in a new environment. The customer hasn't changed but the **habits** of the customer has. The customer is still relational, social and a consumer of goods and services. *They embrace relationships maybe now more than ever as social isolation has made the value of relationship far more meaningful.* Have you heard of families and siblings now having a monthly Zoom conference just to stay in touch more? Who could have known that Zoom would become a household word in a six week period that it took Google two years to do the same?

We are on the verge of **expanding** the definition of “face-to-face”. It's kind of like having a physical address and an email address – both are essential in communication and relationship. We now have a new normal in a face-to-face relationship: **video face-to-face**. And that expands our opportunity to those previously reluctant to have a physical face-to-face. Let's call it serendipity – an accidental and fortunate discovery.

Let's take Medicare beneficiaries as an example of how this new normal may be a great way to grow your business. They are the most at-risk demographic to COVID – but they still need medical providers and insurance brokers. They are in some cases, the most in need for transportation, special accommodations and complicated medical regimens. They may live in remote or rural areas – but they still need medical providers and insurance brokers. And medical providers and insurance brokers still need more customers. COVID, ironically, may be the catalyst for both coming together on a larger scale. And the new normal is just the opportunity to bring them together.

Leadership expert and author John Maxwell said it best when he said, “Change is inevitable, growth is optional.” For me, growth is not optional but I believe Maxwell is challenging us to rise above the one thing we can count on – change. Our options of getting in front of customers has increased – not decreased. The positive outcome of COVID has opened up new fertile ground where customers feel more safe, secure and comfortable from their own homes – video face-to-face is an accretive new dynamic. I believe we're on the verge of expanding our markets and helping more people get the products and services they need in a more non-invasive but yet socially acceptable way.

This article is business-focused for the new normal. I realize there is a very personal and tragic side of this disease. Tens of thousands of people in America have lost their lives and hundreds of thousands are grieving because of it. That isn't lost on me and my heart goes out to all of those who are dealing with a new normal in a much different way – the loss of a loved one.

**About the Author:**

***Jim Jones is the Associate Growth Officer for WellMed Medical Management. His passion is to help WellMed providers grow their Medicare patient panels, help insurance agents grow their business and help WellMed patients experience quality, patient-centered healthcare with a focus on wellness and prevention. Jim can be reached at [jjones@wellmed.net](mailto:jjones@wellmed.net).***