

Get Smart!

How Carriers Can Use Artificial Intelligence and Innovative Technology to Improve Customer Experience

By Eastbridge Consulting Group



It might seem counterintuitive: use machines to connect better with people? It's the classic high-tech or high-touch debate. But smart carriers are finding it's not a matter of "or" but rather "and" — using artificial intelligence and digital innovation to create stronger personal connections through better customer experiences.

Employers of all sizes and across industries expect the carriers they work with to provide technology solutions that make life easier for them and their employees. An overwhelming 96% say online administration capabilities are important, according to Eastbridge's most recent "MarketVision™—The Employer Viewpoint®" Report. Critical online services employers want when selecting a carrier include the ability to file claims, change coverages and check claims status.

Here are five ways carriers are using technology to create a better customer experience:

1

Faster responses to RFPs and evidence of insurability. A strong majority of carriers using APIs say it's a market differentiator, according to Eastbridge's recent "Application Programming Interface and Artificial Intelligence Carrier Practices" Frontline™ Report. Some carriers consider APIs to be table stakes in the market, but most say it makes them easier to do business with due to faster, more efficient processes and broader, deeper connections and integrations. Verifying evidence of insurability and providing quotes are two of the top uses of APIs for carriers already on board with this technology. Other uses include rating, demographic changes, product rules and rates, absence management, deduction data, billing and policy set up.

2

Easier enrollment. Some carriers are using APIs to simplify the enrollment process by expanding data transfer capabilities with platform partners, streamlining the application and evidence of insurability processes, and developing better decision-support technology. Online enrollments also can provide better data and reporting accuracy, offer enrollment ease and accessibility for both employers and employees, and often are more cost-effective overall.

3

Stronger participation. Carriers we surveyed for the new "Enrollment and Technology Funding Practices of Voluntary Carriers" Spotlight™ Report expect online enrollments will continue to evolve into a more interactive, customized and educational experience that will increase participation, benefits understanding and overall satisfaction. Employees will benefit from interactive and easy-to-use decision support tools, calculators, videos and product materials. Some carriers agree online self-enrollments — paired with the right decision support tools, videos or virtual benefit counselors — can help drive participation and education results approaching those of in-person enrollments.

4

Expanded online portals. Carriers are actively updating and expanding their online service capabilities for all customer groups, according to the "Online Services of Voluntary Carriers" Spotlight™ Report. Expect to see more self-service options such as claims filing and status updates, billing changes, online payments, employee-level contact for life-event changes, online chat capabilities and two-way texting. Carriers also are adding access to more detailed information including billing and payment history, reporting and analytics, additional product lines, and claims and benefits information. Several carriers are emphasizing user experience and safety by updating the appearance, navigation and security of their portals.

5

Better claims processes: Carriers increasingly are using artificial intelligence and machine learning to process or pay claims and integrate claims across product lines, according to the most recent “Claims Integration and Automation Practices of Voluntary Carriers” Spotlight™ Report. Most carriers using AI for claims say the technology has improved their claims filing and payment processes through faster turnaround times, greater accuracy and better efficiency for claims examiners.

It's also worth noting that only a few carriers say their customers interact directly with their AI systems to get information or support, and all offer human assistance by giving customers the ability to transfer from a virtual assistant to a live representative by phone or online. The key takeaway here is artificial intelligence, expanded data transfer capabilities and better portal tools will continue to grow and improve the customer experience — but they'll never completely replace the need for personal connections.



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Eastbridge is the source for research, experience, and advice for companies competing in the voluntary space and for those wishing to enter. For over 25 years, they have built the industry's leading data warehouse and industry-specific consulting practice. Today, 20 of the 25 largest voluntary/worksite carriers are both consulting and research clients of Eastbridge.

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New year – new high score. In January, the WFSS reached its highest value since tracking began in June 2022. Three dimensions measuring working Americans' perceptions of their financial well-being also saw new peaks: ability to help others financially, confidence in meeting longer-term goals, and likelihood to reach retirement goals. Compared to January 2024, the WFSS increased 1.8 points, with all dimensions up from the previous year.

Workforce Financial
Stability ScoreSM

58.4

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