

Wellmark

A Passionate Commitment to Helping People Thrive

Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield is a mutual insurance company owned by policyholders. For 85 years, team members have been devoted to serving the communities of Iowa and South Dakota. They are committed to making health care better and working diligently to deliver value to their members. Wellmark invests in its employees to ensure that they have the resources and support to provide the best possible service.

To create an environment in which their people could thrive at work, in 2017 Wellmark partnered with StandOut®, powered by ADP®, to incorporate a strengths-based approach that would increase engagement. The StandOut approach is founded on the belief that each individual's greatest opportunity for growth and success lies in understanding personal strengths and applying them at work. Wellmark saw the fit: StandOut's focus on each individual's personal growth made it natural for team leaders to fulfill Wellmark's passionate commitment to supporting and developing employees.



**85
Years**

*Serving Iowa &
South Dakota*

1,900

**Team
Members**



**Best of the Best
Top Employer**

*HISPANIC Network Magazine, Black EOE
Journal, DIVERSEability Magazine, and
Professional WOMAN's Magazine*



**4-4.5
Star**

**Health
Plans**

*Rating from National
Committee for Quality
Assurance, for quality and
performance measures*

THE CHALLENGE

Build engagement to drive business outcomes

Why did Wellmark invest in increasing engagement as a priority? Because they felt strongly that it was the right thing to do for their people. They were committed to creating an environment in which people feel a sense of connection and can bring their best to work every day — the hypothesis being that this investment would also result in enhanced business outcomes, including higher levels of productivity, lower levels of attrition (and its associated costs), and overall higher levels of human capital efficiency. In short, Wellmark wanted to satisfy both head and heart — putting in place solutions that both helped people feel better about their work *and* delivered better results for the business.

THE SOLUTION

Leverage StandOut to tap into individual strengths

Wellmark designed a program focused on three areas:

1. Help people see their own strengths — and the strengths of others

The StandOut Assessment showed people their Top 2 Strength Roles, capturing what energizes them at work and what they look like when they show up at their best. These insights helped people not just as **individual contributors** but also at the level of the **team**. Team members learned how they could work best with each other and volunteer their strengths. **Team leaders** explored their unique strengths as leaders, helping them show up more genuinely and communicate more effectively with team members.


StandOut was deployed by leveraging both training (classroom or virtual instruction) and technology that could be accessed by desktop or smartphone apps. The key was to meet people where they were and ensure that they could access this highly personalized learning in the flow of their work.

2. Establish a ritual to increase connection and collaboration on teams

StandOut data demonstrates that one of the key factors in creating engagement is frequency of communication with one's team leader. Wellmark deployed StandOut's Check-In ritual, enabling team leaders to connect with team members every week. These conversations were informed by digital strengths coaching for both team members and team leaders based on their unique strengths and Check-In trends. These Check-Ins helped ensure that employees felt heard, supported in using their strengths, and clear about the focus of their work.

3. Build a partnership between HR and team leaders

Building a healthy culture can only be accomplished by HR in partnership with the team leader — the person closest to both the employee and the work. To empower team leaders, Wellmark provided StandOut's training on strengths-based leadership. They also gave leaders access to the Engagement Pulse tool. Deployed every three months, this simple eight-question survey painted an ongoing picture of the experience of the team, with results instantly made available both to HR and to each team leader. The leaders received customized digital coaching based on their strengths and the specific results of their teams, enabling them to take action immediately. HR received data helping identify which teams may need support and which teams were thriving. The data generated by StandOut allowed both leaders and HR to shift focus away from *reacting* to engagement survey results toward *proactively driving* engagement.



“I’ve had some really amazing conversations with my leader, who I’ve known for many, many years. Just continuing to understand more about myself. She can understand me better and lead me better... When everybody is doing that, 1,900 people are doing that, you’ve got a workforce that’s engaged and focused and excited. They’re bringing their best selves to work every day.”

Christopher White

Employee
Experience Manager

THE RESULTS

A people-centric approach drives business outcomes

After over six years of their journey with StandOut, employees across Wellmark [openly speak](#) of how much they appreciate the opportunity to play to their strengths at work and how StandOut contributes to their engagement. Team leaders have appreciated how StandOut's guidance has helped them to understand and engage with their people in a way that is genuine and yields stronger, more fruitful relationships at work.

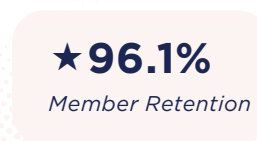
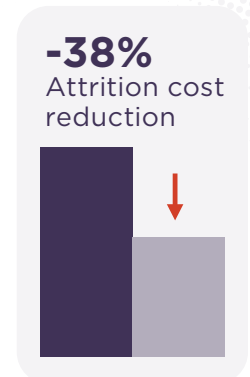
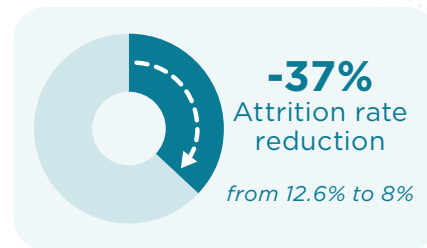


In conjunction with other important Wellmark initiatives, including recognition, compensation, and learning and development programs, StandOut has helped to produce the desired impact in business results. A financial impact study conducted alongside this case study shows that Wellmark's people-centric approach has manifested in improving key business metrics — demonstrating that when you elevate people, you elevate results. Over the two-year period from 2021–23, Wellmark saw tremendous growth in numerous important metrics. The key was a 12% increase in engagement levels, which contributed to:

- **37%** reduction in attrition rate
- **38%** lower attrition cost
- **7%** increase in productivity per person
- **96%** member retention
- **15%** improvement in HCROI

In short, Wellmark saw their people-centered initiatives, including StandOut, demonstrate a marked impact both on how people felt about their work and on the financial performance of the company.

StandOut was at the center of Wellmark's employee experience strategy predicated on the individual, the leader, and the team. We are proud to be part of how Wellmark's team has brought this strategy to life, creating an environment in which each and every employee at Wellmark shows up every day to create a better health care experience.



"At Wellmark, we have really big, audacious goals about where we're going as a company... Every employee, every team member here at Wellmark really believes that they come to work because they want to make a difference. They're attracted to the mission of making health care better. So how do we use more of our strengths? How do we understand them and how do we apply them? And how do you continue to grow? For me, it starts with the individual."

Marci Chickering

Chief HR Officer

StandOut.