

Pete Mutolo – Experience Design Case Study

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Project: Empire Healthcare, Member Portal
Objective: Create a transactional portal site for Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield [BCBS] customers: members, brokers, doctors and group benefit administrators [GBA]
Role: Lead Information Architect, Usability Specialist
Date: Member Portal released 02.2001
Status: Member site fully active; broker, doctor and GBA under development
Artifacts: Content Tree, Wire Frame [Html], and Usability Surveys

Summary: The member portal project was challenging due to the scale and complexity of healthcare issues, not to mention laws governing the distribution of health related information. Our task was to make the member operations more fluid by reducing paperwork and calls to customer service. I researched the issues of Empire members and non-members alike. For the members we devised comprehensive functionality, allowing them to completely control their healthcare coverage from the secure, web interface. They have the ability to get timely information regarding claim status, file claims and forms electronically, and perform routine tasks such as address changes, ID card requests, and changing their primary care physician, all without customer service assistance.

Samples: Empire Healthcare home page - for members there is a login area to access their personal profile, and for non-members, there is a wealth of information about healthcare in general, Empire Healthcare plans and the first question on any potential member's mind, "Is my doctor in your network?"



Empire Healthcare For Your Health page - here members and non-members have access to the same comprehensive wellness information, new treatment information, and family care



Detail:

The purpose of the Empire portal is to provide full support to their customers: members, doctors, brokers and group benefits administrators [GBA]. My involvement was with the Member portal, which was the first phase of the project; providing comprehensive member services, as well as attracting potential members to Empire plans.

Our discovery sessions were conducted with both members and non-members to understand each party's most critical issues. In addition to confirming that healthcare was overwhelming and confusing, we found that most of the problems occur due to a lack of clear information and the inaccessibility of customer service. All of the answers could be found within existing content; it was the need to go through customer service that created the bottleneck. The solution that we devised was a portal where most of the content was available to both members and non-members. Both had immediate access to physician, coverage and wellness information, reserving the membership area for profile maintenance and administration. For members we devised comprehensive functionality, allowing them to completely control their healthcare coverage. From the web interface, they are able to get timely information regarding claim status, file claims and forms electronically, and perform simple tasks such as address changes, ID card requests, and changing their primary care physician, all without customer service assistance.

Throughout the development we conducted several focus group sessions and end-user interviews. Conducting these interviews, I was able to extract information first-hand, studying the user's actions, questions and assumptions. Once each test cycle was complete, together with the HCI team, I compiled the data and made recommendations based on our findings. These sessions highlighted areas of difficulty, including: terminology, interface design, and information design and functionality expectations. The result was a fully tested and explored navigational hierarchy, content tree and information design that ultimately lead to a fluid, transactional web portal for Empire Healthcare.