

Executive INSIGHTS

10+1 Questions with Colleen Van Ham, UnitedHealthcare of Illinois

*Colleen Van Ham is the President and CEO of UnitedHealthcare of Illinois.
She answered our 10+1 questions via phone conversation.*

1. UnitedHealthcare has put a lot of focus on helping consumers take a more active role in their health. Tell us about that.

Helping consumers actively manage their health is the mission for UnitedHealthcare – helping people live healthier lives and helping to make the health system work better for everyone. We invest more than \$3 billion annually on data, technology, and innovation toward this mission.

One example is our UnitedHealthcare Motion® program, which is included in many of the plans we offer. It's based on using a

wearable device, such as an Apple Watch, to track daily walking steps and work toward a specific goal. Each person aims to reach a "FIT" goal, which is an acronym. *Frequency* is how many times a person exercises or walks. *Intensity* is the number of steps taken within a certain period. *Tenacity* is how many steps a person takes during a full day. Goals are set for each individual and the person has financial incentives to work toward them – money in their



UnitedHealthcare®

health reimbursement or health savings account. The program integrates with a variety of devices. I mentioned Apple Watch, which we recently added, and Fitbit, Samsung and Garmin are also integrated.

A second program we offer is called Real Appeal®. It's a 52-week online weight loss program that uses personal coaches and offers convenient tracking tools that motivate people to adopt healthier behaviors. The program comes with a personal coach, a tracking app, nutritional information, and exercise videos. It engages the individual weekly and the personal coach helps with weight loss through small

changes in nutrition and exercise. The program has helped 100,000 people lose a total of more than 1.5 million pounds and control Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. This has led to 16% savings on medical expenses for people who have completed the program. People are using and liking this type of engagement – 82% of enrollees in the Real Appeal program attended at least four coaching sessions.

One more thing we're doing with technology is

expanding our coverage of telehealth visits. We include them in our plans today and beginning July 1, there will be no charge to the UnitedHealthcare consumer. It's an example of using technology to simplify access to health care.

2. What else do you want people to know about UnitedHealthcare?

We are driving change and moving past being known as just an "insurance carrier." We're invested in helping people live healthier lives and helping them be more of an active participant in the day-to-day management of their health care. It's a very privileged and sensitive place to be, so we're honored to serve there.

UnitedHealthcare and our sister company, Optum®, manage one of the world's largest data repositories and it's a top priority to protect that data. There are laws in place to protect the consumers' data and we take them very seriously. We're also trying to bring that data, in real time, to a few key places. One is to the physician's office, right at the moment a patient is talking with the clinician. We want to be helpful in that moment so the physician or nurse can see, for example, that the patient missed an annual exam or a follow-up blood test. Then they can raise the issue and talk about next steps right there. We supply that data to help spark that important personal conversation.

3. What characteristics do you look for when hiring?

We have been hiring recently based on our continued growth. Our first focus is to look for people who match our corporate values and the fundamentals of how we conduct business on an everyday basis. We look for integrity, compassion, a focus on relationships, and bringing new ideas for innovation. Second, we focus on diversity of ideas and talent to complement the strong people already on our team.

Even as we continue to advance our focus on technology and digital innovation, relationships

remain a top priority. Our employees demonstrate a respect for relationships and an ability to nurture them. We try to draw out from candidates how they approach specific situations of dealing with, for example, one UnitedHealthcare member on the other end of the phone, or one legislator, or one distribution partner; we want to know how they approach helping each one of those people at that specific point in time.

"We're invested in helping people live healthier lives and helping them be more of an active participant in the day-to-day management of their health care."

One other characteristic I value highly is a sense of humor and an ability to approach certain situations with levity. We're in a complex business that's quite challenging at times. It helps to have someone who can turn a situation around, foster collaboration, diffuse any tension and focus on what we're trying to get done.

4. Same question, but with strategic partnerships.

The initial filter again is corporate values – integrity, compassion, relationships and innovation. Then we look for organizations that can help us improve health care quality, access, affordability, or simplicity. We look also for organizations that are succeeding at taking complex data sets, such as blockchain, and using and organizing them in ways that make navigating health care simpler for consumers, and easier for physicians to treat people. We also want to simplify things for employers, so they can access and offer the best benefits to attract and retain great employees.

For our Motion program, we partnered with Qualcomm on the mechanics of the device integration, so it was a simple process for consumers to start tracking themselves and make it part of their routines. Our members who are Apple users were clamoring for integration with their devices so we partnered with Apple on that. Plus, we set up an incentive program that allows consumers to earn credits toward the purchase of a new Apple watch.

5. Tell us about an experience, or a person, who influenced you?

From a career perspective, I've been very lucky to have great leaders as managers and mentors. They gave me challenges very early on in my career to build my skill set and add to my responsibilities even when I wasn't quite sure I was ready. These people were also highly supportive as I grew my family. I've had two maternity leaves during my 15 years at UnitedHealthcare. I can't speak highly enough of the leaders who encouraged me to focus on the fact that I had a new child and to put 100% of my attention on that child. Then as I returned to work they gave me the flexibility to come back into my role while balancing young children and the ever-increasing demands of this industry.

"I might be working from anywhere on a given day so I equip my backpack to function as a 'Command Control Center' – I can run a small country out of that thing!"

As a working parent, I place the highest degree of importance on maintaining strong relationships. A focus on employee happiness and our team members' ability to have relationships outside of work pays residual benefits inside the walls of our organization. These tie into our core values of compassion and relationships. I give people the high degree of flexibility they need to be successful. In return, the business benefits from caring, committed, successful employees.

From a personal perspective, my parents influenced me. My Dad came from Ireland. He arrived in America with very little and anything he earned, he sent back to family in Ireland. He encountered anti-Irish discrimination in the 1950's. He worked through it, got a higher education, and made sure that he provided for my education and that of my five siblings. Together with my Mom, they instilled a strong work ethic in all of us. I've carried their examples and guidance with me along the way.

6. What setup are you most productive in, your desk? Someplace more informal?

I might be working from anywhere on a given day so I equip my backpack to function as a "Command Control Center" – I can run a small country out of that thing! I do love our office at the Aon Center. We have wonderful views of the lakefront and Millennium Park, and up north to Lincoln Park. I'm a water person so having a view of Lake Michigan fuels my productivity.

I'm always appreciative of the gift Daniel Burnham gave the city when I look south toward the Museum Campus.

I've also done more than my fair share of conference calls from my car, pulled over somewhere in the depths of Lower Wacker Drive. It's a great shortcut, but sometimes not short enough!



Colleen Van Ham's office view at UnitedHealthcare. The lake inspires her productivity.

7. Outside of work, what does your perfect day look like?

It would start the night before with a good night's sleep, ideally eight hours if I can get it. With young kids, it's not highly predictable. As I said, I'm a water person, so the perfect day would be waking up on a beach near the Gulf of Mexico or some other body of water.

I like to start my days with exercise. Then I love time with my family. It could be a kids' soccer or softball game, anything fun outdoors – going for a walk, or heading to the pool or beach. In summer, I'll get in the vegetable garden and do some work. We've been making a point lately to take a family walk after dinner to check out the spring blooms and make a requisite stop at the favorite ice cream shop along the way.

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8. What books, movies, music or other art/entertainment/media are you into?

My kids got me into Star Wars. We've watched all the Star Wars movies at least once and I'm completely giddy with the Jar Jar Binks character. I am aware most people dislike him, but he just makes me laugh.

There are goofy things that I sometimes love... I have no idea why.

I haven't gone to many concerts lately but this summer my husband and I and our close friends are making it a point to see Billy Joel at Wrigley Field. I value

having music in the home and as a part of our kids' lives. Our daughter has been learning to play piano while my husband is refreshing his piano skills. I play violin, so we've been playing together – I won't call them jam sessions because they're not all that jammy. But it's a lot of fun.

The best book I've read recently is *The Circle* by the Chicagoan Dave Eggers. It's about tech and data. It plays out how sharing personal data, along with increasing transparency and using tech as a monitor, can have power to do good, but can also have very serious implications. It raises questions about where all this goes. Some of the things in the book are now actually happening in real life. This book is all fiction – but it has a lot of reality in it. It really gripped me.

9. Everyone in business has setbacks. Tell us about one of yours, and how you got past it.

In my first job out of college, I encountered harassment from a manager. It was thankfully just verbal harassment, but harassment very clearly. I learned about confronting that kind of situation. I confronted the person head on. I communicated what I thought about the situation. Once I had the discussion with the person, he changed his behavior. It taught me very early in my career that the working world was not necessarily perfect, and that as an individual, I definitely had to stand up for myself and make sure I was being treated with respect in the workforce. I've



Colleen's children during a family trip.

carried that with me ever since, especially mentoring and coaching young females who, unfortunately, still encounter some of the same dynamics.

Separately, after graduating from college, while working as a consultant, I went to school at night to get an Interior Design degree. My intent was to focus on hotel design. But the September 11th attacks had just happened when I graduated, so the jobs for someone new in that industry just weren't there. I decided to stay on my path as a consultant in the health and benefits arena. That worked out well, though along the way I had to figure out how to manage my need for creativity. I'm always tinkering with something in terms of home décor, and with kids it became easier – so many arts and crafts and painting. I'm also always available for paint recommendations for friends!

10. Separate from your own, what industry are you watching and learning from?

Tech companies and especially A.I. I'm looking for ways we can take that and help make the health care experience simpler for individuals. Can we use it to remind people to take their medicine, or to ask, "Did you take your medicine?" For asthmatics, can we provide alerts on days that have unfavorable weather conditions? There's a host of ways technology can be applied. But again, we need to figure out the sensitivities, and when

and how to connect people with human beings as opposed to just the technology interface.

I'm also looking at any industry or company that continues to simplify and drive consumer engagement – looking at their ideas and how that translates to our business. 83 million millennials are digital natives. They trust that medium for health care. That's a new dynamic. This applies to employers as well – how to enroll their employees and dependents in benefits quickly and easily. We have a lot of data as a company. We can learn from other companies about how to apply it and use it.

+1: To what one trait would you attribute your career success?

Probably humility. There are high performance metrics we're expected to work toward and those serve as a great motivator. But for me, it still comes back to that attitude of helping one person at a time. One person who needs a doctor. One broker who needs a proposal for their client. Whatever the phone call is from that one person on any given day, I'm going to help as best I can. I want our company to interact with people in a compassionate, respectful, one-on-one relationship.

A bit of humor never hurts either! ➤