



# Executive INSIGHTS

## 10 Questions with Craig Bartholomew, UnitedHealthcare of Illinois

*Craig Bartholomew is the Executive Director of UnitedHealthcare of Illinois.*



**1. Tell us about your company and where you see the biggest areas for growth in the next 5 years.**

To the outside world, most people know UnitedHealthcare as a health insurance company. But we are much so more than that. UnitedHealthcare is a well-being company. We are a mission-driven organization focused on helping people live healthier lives and helping to make the health care system work better for everyone.

These are extraordinary times in health care. The opportunities to help people live healthier have never been greater. Advanced data and technologies, breakthrough treatments and consumer choice are redefining what can be achieved. We are working to create a system that is connected, aligned and more affordable for all involved - one that delivers high quality care, responsive to the needs of each person and the communities in which they live. We are also partnering with care providers by collaborating in new ways to improve patient care.

**2. What are the most important decisions you make as a leader of your organization?**

UnitedHealthcare is here to serve our members and many times we are working with them during sensitive and critical times in their lives. I use our five core values to guide my decisions and lead our organization by demonstrating these values.

- 1) Integrity – honoring our commitments and never compromising our ethics.
- 2) Compassion – walking in the shoes of people we serve and those with whom we work.
- 3) Relationships – building trust through collaboration in order to take action and find solutions.
- 4) Innovation – learn from experiences of the past and use those insights to invent a better future to make the health care environment work and serve everyone more fairly, productively and consistently.
- 5) Performance – committed to delivering and demonstrating excellence in everything we do.

### 3. What characteristics do you look for when hiring on your team?

We start with people whose experience and actions model our core values. We look for some experience in sales/relationship management roles, the willingness to collaborate and the desire to be part of our team. We value diversity and want people to have different areas of expertise. Individuals develop and achieve greater performance through collaboration and learning from each other. Diversity within the team accelerates learning and performance.

Additionally we look for people who recognize their role within our organization will be to serve others. A person needs to enjoy providing customer service to be successful. In my experience, I have also found a correlation between having a sense of humor and being successful in these roles. Our business is complex and a sense of humor can be helpful in connecting with people and providing explanations in an understandable way or by using analogies.

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### 4. Tell us about an experience, or a person, who influenced you or had a major impact on your career?

I have been very fortunate to have learned from multiple people during my career. Some were direct mentors/managers and many were colleagues. I started my career as an analyst at an employee benefits consulting firm. This was a phenomenal way for me to start my career because in my first six months I was quickly exposed to over 50 different projects of varying topics for different customers. I also received many opportunities to interact with customers as a result of these projects. As I progressed as a consultant, I recognized that consultants who had worked at other organizations such as insurance companies seemed to have greater credibility due to the diversity of their experience. I enjoyed consulting and wanted to leave to get a different experience to make myself better.

When I find people that are very effective at certain skills, I observe and listen so that I can learn from their behavior and train myself how to think differently or see something a different way. Watching other leaders consistently move their team forward by asking questions, encouraging open dialogue, addressing sensitivities and managing conflict in a positive environment is a very good learning opportunity.

Growing up, members of my family gave me good advice as well. My grandfather instilled, “Don’t talk just to talk. It will cause people to listen less.” And my dad gave me this basic and true lesson, “You can’t finish if you don’t

start.” That gem was used around the house any time I procrastinated and at the end of summer vacation every school year.

### 5. What inspires you each day?

The people around me every day inspire me. I have been given many blessings in my life, such as family, friends, education and career opportunities for which I am thankful every day. Each day is an opportunity to make the environment around me a little better. This applies to physical space such as camping and the idea to leave a space clean and better than you found it. I believe this

applies to people we encounter in our lives as well.

There is a children’s book I read to my sons titled, “Have You Filled a Bucket Today?” The book uses a metaphor that relates acts of kindness to filling a bucket and saying or doing mean things to emptying a bucket. The idea is that everything we do either adds to someone’s bucket or takes from

someone’s bucket with the additional concept that when we add to someone’s bucket, we are also adding to our own. I believe each of us has the ability to create our own day to a certain extent. The manner in which we approach people and situations has a direct impact on the outcome. When you approach with positive intent and respect, and then demonstrate honest, direct and balanced communication, you create an environment in which you get these things in return.

### 6. What’s one characteristic you think every leader should have?

Humility. People lead through their actions, how they communicate and the shadow they cast. When a leader possesses humility, he or she is more approachable and genuine which improves communication and performance. In addition, it is important for a leader to recognize that the experience and achievement of the team and the organization is greater than their own. Finally, leaders who demonstrate humility are more likely to inspire others and create loyalty within an organization.

### 7. What’s one thing happening at your company you’re most excited about?

I’m excited about how technology continues to advance and make health care easier to navigate for our members. At UnitedHealthcare, we invest more than \$3 billion annually in data, technology and innovation to help consumers take a more active role in their health. By using technology to help encourage people to pursue healthy behaviors, and to more easily navigate the health system, our goal

is to advance better care management today and set the foundation for better health outcomes in the future.

For example, we offer an application called PreCheck MyScript that is helping physicians prescribe medications for their patients. This technology works with a physician's existing Electronic Medical Record to view real-time medication costs, obtain prior authorization and confirm the medication is covered by their patient's health plan before the patient leaves the exam room. This creates the optimal consumer experience because the medication is ready to be picked up at the pharmacy and may have helped the doctor select a lower-cost drug alternative.

Our digital health resources help employers access and understand health care data, save on premiums and encourage employees to more effectively use their health benefits. An example is our digital onboarding, available to employers with 101 to 3,000 employees at no additional cost, an online process that makes plan enrollment more personalized, and enables people to select relevant clinical, wellness or financial programs such as behavioral health, weight loss, pregnancy support and others. Recent enhancements include year-round enrollment (for new hires or for qualifying life events), expanded support for third-party specialty products, and information about prescription drug coverage.

### 8. Separate from your own, what industry are you watching and learning from, and why?

The future impact of robotics on society will be fascinating and significant. With developments in artificial intelligence and machine learning, robots are able to manage larger complex systems. While the self-driving car is a vision of the future, some retail stores are beginning to use robots for inventory management and to get the store clean and restocked for customers the next day. The ability of robots to perform surgical procedures continues to expand and can lead to improvements in quality of care, shorter recovery time for patients, expansion of access in rural areas and possible cures for diseases. Ideas exist to create micro- and nano-robots made of biodegradable or non-toxic substances that can be introduced within a human body to administer therapeutic treatment in specific

localized areas. I think about how this technology could enable advancements in the treatment of cancer where the disease can be targeted without harm to healthy cells and tissue.

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

The perfect day would be waking up without an alarm clock in Hawaii close enough to the ocean so that waves are the first sound I hear. Over the years, my body seems to get better at predicting when my alarm clock will go off and waking me up prior. Therefore I always treasure days when no alarm clock is necessary.

Next would be a cup of coffee and a morning swim followed by a stroll through the local farmer's market and then creating a menu to cook that evening using the fresh fruits and vegetables. From there it is all about enjoying time with the people I love. The activities can be simple such as taking a

walk, running errands together or finding a snack for lunch. We would cook dinner together because it's just great family time and the kitchen is the room in the house where the best conversations occur. A pleasant ending is playing card games while listening to music and not setting the alarm clock.

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### 10. What are you reading right now?

I just started re-reading a book on my bookshelf which I read almost thirty years ago, “By Way of Deception” by Victor Ostrovsky and Claire Hoy. I have always enjoyed reading mystery and espionage novels and non-fiction accounts of these activities. The book describes a training exercise whereby the teacher points to a random third floor balcony of a residential building and tells the agent that he has six minutes to appear on that balcony with the owner/tenant holding a glass of water. Quick thinking on the fly is impressive! 🚀

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