



Discover How a Blues Payer Revamped Their Data Strategy To Navigate the Shifting Medicare Advantage Landscape

In a year when Star Ratings fell for many Medicare Advantage (MA) plans¹, this health plan put a key set of capabilities in place that strengthened their responsiveness to a changing MA marketplace.



Moving from 3.5 to 4.0 stars can add up to \$62.5 million in annual quality bonus payments per Medicare Advantage contract.²

Although initially focused on improving Star Ratings, the plan recognized a larger opportunity: strengthening their data strategy to be resilient against potential challenges.



In 2024,
33 million people
were enrolled
in an MA plan,³
representing
51% of the
eligible Medicare
population.



With such a large membership base, retention and growth requires health plans to respond to multiple challenges, all fundamentally centered on data, including:

- Identifying member cohorts, measures and providers to prioritize organization focus
- Reducing provider abrasion with accurate, timely, actionable data
- Predicting bonus payments to forecast available spend for quality improvement interventions
- Understanding drivers that impact the Health Equity Index for members designated as low-income, dually eligible or disabled
- Prioritizing resource allocation based on trends and benchmarking
- Acting on rising utilization rates and reduced reimbursements
- Addressing the evolving regulatory and compliance landscape

¹ [CMS recalculates Medicare Advantage star ratings in major win for insurers](#)

² Based on an average PMPM of a MA plan with 150K members and an average quality bonus of \$417 per enrollee from 2023. Doesn't include contract-specific bid rates, double bonus or cap counties.

³ [Medicare Advantage Enrollment Trends](#)

Abacus Insights and ZS Teamed With This Blues Plan To Deliver a Usable Data Foundation, Strong Enough To Withstand Future Challenges

Initial Situation

Lack of Consistent Methodology for Prioritizing Star Measures

Capabilities Enabled

Ingested, consolidated and standardized data from internal and external sources

Actions

Used insights-ready usable data for analysis and follow-up

Results

Data-driven approach to improve performance

Initial Situation

No Single Source of Truth for Data; Inefficient Processes

Capabilities Enabled

Put in place Insights-Ready Data™, advanced analytics and optimized operations

Actions

Enabled Abacus usable data platform foundation

Results

Holistic, enhanced member views, bringing together HEDIS vendor, Part D, CAHPS and other data, powering analytics and improved MA ops

Initial Situation

Minimum Use of Dashboards To Track and Trend Performance

Capabilities Enabled

Integrated dashboards, including contract level performance overview and detailed measures, provider- and member-level performance

Actions

Tracked and trended performance allowing for resource prioritization

Results

Resources prioritization to focus on measures tracking below expected performance. Targeted specific providers and members for outreach

Initial Situation

Inconsistent Approaches for Identifying Strategic Improvement Opportunities

Capabilities Enabled

Forecasted cut-points to predict performance with more precision

Actions

Developed predicted performance to drive actions and interventions

Results

Insights into quality bonus payments and rebates facilitating development of an organization game plan

Pathway to Improved Performance Accelerated by a Strategic Set of Deliverables

As the U.S. leader in data usability for payers, Abacus worked closely with ZS and the health plan to provide key capabilities:

Usable Data Foundation Led by Abacus

Data Ingestion, Cleansing, Enrichment and Harmonization

CMS public stars data, member to PCP attribution, membership demographics, member enrollment, member-level measure scores

Data Integration Artifacts

Connector dashboard, data integration and use case delivery



Advanced Analytics Led by ZS

Dashboards for MA Measurements

StarZS offering was enhanced to address business requirements

Performance Data Solution

Performance measures at member and contract levels, including a prioritized set of Star measures, applying ZS's advanced data science methods



Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

SOP creation for maintaining and operating measure prioritization

User Training

Supporting user adoption through dashboard training overview and Q&A sessions

Stars Performance Dashboards Delivered Timely, Reliable, Accurate and Complete Insights-Ready Data™

Key Components of the Stars Performance Dashboard



Stars Performance

Summary of current and forecasted contract-level performance



Measure Summary

Comparison of individual measure performance of previous year and YTD



Measure Deep Dive

Measure level Star Ratings trended by month for current and prior measurement year



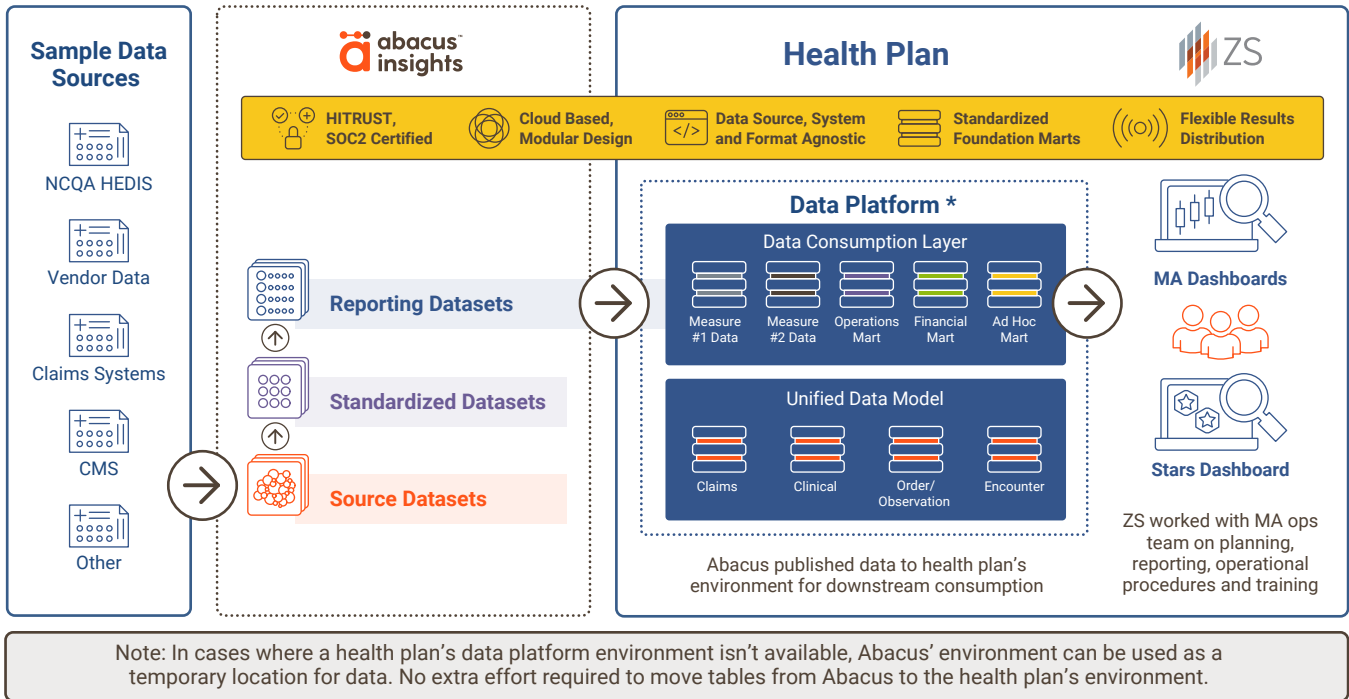
Member Cohorts

Listing of eligible members and compliance status

Marketplace Readiness Accelerated by a Usable Data Foundation

Abacus ingested data in multiple formats from internal and external sources, harmonizing it to meet critical requirements for usability (that is, accurate, complete, timely, relevant, versatile, and use case and application agnostic). Data was made available on-demand through a cloud ecosystem, in all required formats (that is, usable for IT, data experts, business users, members, providers and third-party vendors). Using insights-ready data, ZS applied their deep expertise, designing and implementing change management and a reporting layer that identified relevant KPIs and prioritized measures to drive improvements and track results.

Solution Components



Powering Enduring MA Plan Transformation

Insights-ready data was delivered to business users allowing them to focus on implementing interventions aimed at improving member outcomes and overall Stars performance. These interventions were identified through extensive analysis and implemented via operational model revisions and effective change management.

Accelerating Strategic Results

With the new data environment and operating model in place, confidence in usable, integrated data has become increasingly ingrained at the health plan. With MA plans facing strong headwinds on quality, costs and government scrutiny, this client provided practical lessons for payers, big and small, looking to navigate the evolving MA marketplace.

With insights-ready data, robust reporting and changes to the operations, this plan is well positioned to respond to MA challenges with potential significant financial reward.

About Abacus Insights and ZS



At ZS, we believe the future of healthcare is connected, with providers, health plans, pharma companies and other stakeholders working together. Usable data from Abacus Insights is a key enabler and connector, and we take seriously our role in helping health plans innovate and excel. Partnerships like this one between ZS and Abacus Insights will be increasingly important in a connected health ecosystem. ”

– Pratap Khedkar, Chief Executive Officer, ZS



Uniting the usable data capabilities of Abacus Insights with the performance improvement expertise of ZS has been an exponential accelerator for the payers we serve. As experts in this sector with deep technology and operational experience, we’re offering the building blocks payers need to transform specific areas of their business impacted by the changing healthcare environment. ”

– Minal Patel, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Abacus Insights

Abacus Insights

Abacus Insights is a healthcare industry leader, with the first and only data transformation platform and solutions built specifically for health plans. Focused on data usability, Abacus gives payers a new level of control and flexibility over their data with a robust and flexible platform ecosystems enabling analytics and operational use cases. Managing data for 23 million members, Abacus Insights partners with payers to deliver scalable solutions that drive strategic initiatives, generate cost efficiencies and drive value-driven outcomes for members and key stakeholders.

ZS

ZS is a management consulting and technology firm focused on transforming global healthcare and beyond. We leverage our leading-edge analytics, plus the power of data, science and tech products, to help our clients make more intelligent decisions, deliver innovative solutions and improve outcomes for all. Founded in 1983, ZS has more than 13,000 employees in 35 offices worldwide. To learn more, visit zs.com or follow on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/zs).