

OLIVIER CHATEAU

Redefining social health

The story of Health Union is a human story first. Olivier Chateau, along with co-founder Tim Armand, had a vision to help patients in their day-to-day lives by creating and building content that is relevant to them at the moment that matters the most and in a safe environment where they feel understood and validated. What started with one online health community — Migraine.com — in 2010 has exploded into 34 communities with more coming online all the time with up to 60-plus slated by the end of 2024.

Olivier, who when confronted by a personal health issue while at GSK was frustrated by the lack of consolidated healthcare information from a patient, physician, and research perspective, tapped into his marketing and product director expertise to create vertical condition communities where people had a feeling of belonging. The idea was to also adapt the community to the people — every health condition is different, and so it was important to understand that the type of content and the type of support and the type of validation for each patient population needed to be different.

Olivier has not only created a premier patient-centered company but a company that is also people-centric in terms of the care he provides to employees and partners. He is driven to make sure that his people are inspired to do everything in their power to connect with patients in meaningful and impactful ways.

As this issue was going to press, Olivier and Health Union embarked on the next leg of their journey: an acquisition of WEGO Health, which was founded by fellow 2021 Red Jacket honoree Jack Barrette. This power duo is setting the stage for online communities on steroids.

PV: With the WEGO acquisition news still so fresh, how do you see this impacting Health Union and the industry at large?

CHATEAU: The integration of our teams has been only several weeks old, yet it feels like it's been six or eight months, which is a pretty good sign. My role is to keep building — I like to say bigger must be better, a better organization that is first and foremost and always will be people first. And by people, I mean both the people at Health Union as well as the communities that we serve and now the patient network that we have. The road map remains the same, we now have more people and more opportunities. It also comes with more responsibilities to do the right thing and to keep the momentum.

We have a very interesting opportunity to redefine what we call social health. And by social, I mean all of the interactions as they happen during someone's health journey, not defined just by social media, but a much broader reach.

We also sit on a unique opportunity to continue to bring innovations to patients, as well as execute on what I call the triangle of success, which is defined by bringing products, innovations, and tools that have value for the communities and the patient networks; to the people of Health Union, which is the second part of the triangle; and to our clients and partners, the third piece. We will continue to focus on this mantra — all three components need to realize value.

There will be an acceleration and multiplication of our presence in rare disease, and the role of the WEGO Patient Leader Network is going to be fundamental in helping us identify even more rare conditions. I also think that the WEGO Patient Leader Network will give us a better understanding of some of the conditions that have high levels of comorbidities.

PV: As an entrepreneur, you started Health Union with a clear vision. How has your vision expanded over the past 10 years?

CHATEAU: The way we manage communities has evolved, but the core belief that we can help people in their day-to-day lives by creating and building content that is relevant to them at the moment that matters the most in a safe environment has not changed.

With the scale and the breadth of both the conditions that we cover as well as now this unique 100,00-plus patient leader network that WEGO has created, the opportunities and the responsibilities that are in front of us are just multiplied.

The people who joined the company early on, didn't join for the shine; they joined because they believe in the vision and in helping people. What drives most people at Health Union is that we do meaningful work; we receive a number of thank-you messages for the work we do every day and every week that are unbelievable. What we do is depicted in our current advertising campaign — a

PASSIONATE. VISIONARY.



person going through a screen, half in and half out. We are a digital company, but we want people to know someone is physically here for them and we are having a real human impact.

Over the years, our culture has attracted more and more people who believe in the idea of doing good while doing well. Today, I spend a considerable amount of time making sure that we maintain the culture of the company. As we continue to grow, it's going to be more important to remain focused on the mission.

When we say we are people-first, we actually mean it. We consider every health condition we cover to be the same; we do not differentiate any health condition by people impacted, by the market opportunities, by brands, or number of people impacted — every condition is treated the same. The No. 1 goal and mission that we have is to delight these different communities by providing the content that they're looking for, the support that is required, and the validation so that they can actually live better with their chronic condition. That will always be the cornerstone of everything we do. Now, with the presence of the WEGO Patient Leader Network, all patient leaders will have the same amount of opportunities. Our people buy into this philosophy, knowing they are making a difference.

When we launched the company 11 years ago we made the decision not to be big, but to be good, and to focus on quality and not quantity. Launching more communities is not necessarily a

goal in and of itself; I want to launch them better. I want the impact that we have on people and the quality of life to be greater. The exciting thing for me is to figure out what are the tools that we should create; what are the different support programs that we should have, and so forth.

Most every trend we see today focuses on real patient interactions and creating a real impact. A telemedicine visit is not about 10,000 visits; it's about an interaction between one doctor and one patient. We believe our focus on each patient as a person and doing the right thing for them rather than trying to reach the masses is going to have a tremendous impact on the future.

Another opportunity we are exploring is in the world of clinical and R&D, tapping into both patients and physicians in our communities from a real-world evidence and data aggregation perspective, but always respecting people's privacy. I think there's a huge amount of opportunity by aggregating and identifying data.

A third opportunity that we — the WEGO

Patient Leader Network and Health Union communities — have is to impact the healthcare system beyond working with our partners in pharma and biotech and partnering with health systems, payers, and other healthcare players.

I'm very bullish for the future, for example, the expansion of the digital therapeutics and the role we can play.

I think the problem is sometimes we forget that we have real people in front of us and that health is not like any other condition. We can't Uberize health. We are in the human connection business where technology amplifies the ability to make a difference, but it's not technology first, people second. It's people first, technology second. When people realize this, then there will be dramatic breakthroughs.

PV: As you look to the future, what would you like your legacy to be?

CHATEAU: I don't look at myself as a legacy guy. I

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like to do big things, but I'd like to stay under the radar. I like to say I like to do big things, but I don't want people to know I've done them. I would like to be able to demonstrate that the community model that we built has had an impact on people well beyond the one that we have been able to demonstrate today. I would like to be able to quantify that impact better in terms of quality of life, in terms of access to treatment, in terms of mental health benefits. That would be the greatest thing I could do. I actually think we're not very far from these goals. It's not going to take 10 years.

I think of Health Union as a movement. I don't think of Health Union as a company. We're on a path to help people and to make a big impact. The companies of the future are not going to be defined by their financial success. They will be defined by the values that they have and the impact that they have on people first. People will want to work for and be associated with companies that care about people and that have an impact on people first. The value-based paradigm is quickly going to change, and it's not only going to be important because these companies are going to attract people to come and work for them, but the services they generate will differentiate them. **PV**

*Blazing new trails by...
innovating online
communities*

Olivier Chateau

TITLE: Co-Founder and CEO

COMPANY: Health Union

INDUSTRY AWARDS:

PharmaVOICE 100, 2018, 2009; EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award, 2020

COMPANY AWARDS: Inc.'s Best

Workplaces; Forbes' Best Startup Employers; MM&M's Best Places to Work; Philadelphia Inquirer's Top Workplaces; Philadelphia Business Journal's Best Places to Work

ASSOCIATIONS: Verizon Media

advisory council; Health Union partnerships with Multiple Sclerosis Association of America and Coalition for Headache and Migraine Patients

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