ATHENS
People, Powered.



CASE STUDY

SELF-INSURED GROUP

SIZE: 200 Member Companies

OVERVIEW

The Self-Insured Group (SIG) consists of over 200 individual small business members, each ranging from 10-150 employees. The group faced several challenges in effectively administering their workers' compensation program, including a lack of flexibility, specialized expertise, high administrative costs, and excessive claim staff turnover which led to poor claims management, a lack of quality customer service, which all resulted in financial strains for the Self-Insured Group.

After a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, Athens partnered with the SIG and promptly began addressing their challenges and providing solutions customized to the groups' specific needs. Once Athens and the SIG started working together, positive results began almost immediately. These included: improved efficiency, reduced costs, and the enhancement of the overall claims management process for their member companies.

GOALS

1

IMPROVE CLAIMS MANAGEMENT EFFICIENCY THROUGH CONSISTENT, RELIABLE STAFFING.

2

REDUCE TOTAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS PROCESS.

3

ENHANCE MEMBER SATISFACTION THROUGH STREAMLINED PROCESSES AND BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE.

CHALLENGES

The Self-Insured Group faced several challenges in their relationship with their Third-Party Administrator (TPA) which led them to explore TPA alternatives. These challenges included:

- **A one size fits all approach:** The SIG had struggled with their TPA's lack of expertise in managing self-insurance groups and their inability to customize the program to meet the Self-Insured Group's needs and interests.

- **High turnover in claims staff:** Prior to partnering with Athens, the Self-Insured Group experienced a consistently high rate of turnover of their claims staff as well as senior management at their TPA, which led to a lack of consistency and dissatisfaction with the way claims were handled. Oftentimes their members wouldn't know who their examiner was, resulting in delays, miscommunications, and frustration throughout the workers' compensation claims process. Further, as a result of turnover, the client was left with no point of contact to troubleshoot ongoing grievances.

  The lack of continuity in handling claims created a negative impact on the overall claims experience and hindered the efficient resolution of workers' compensation claims. The Self-Insured Group recognized the importance of a reliable and dedicated third-party administrator that could provide stability, flexibility, expertise, and consistent service to improve the claims management process for their members.

- **Inflated total costs:** The costs associated with managing workers' compensation claims were significantly higher than average, impacting the financial viability of the Self-Insured Group. In addition to significant overpayments on their files due to continuing to pay after employees returned to work, the client was responsible for the cost of claim reviews for each of their locations, a service that is traditionally included in standard workers' compensation administration fees.

A major source of frustration for the Self-Insured Group were claims not being closed in a timely manner. Lengthy open claims not only caused delays in the resolution process but also increased costs. Prolonged claims also placed a burden on the injured workers, affecting their ability to return to work and impeding their recovery process. It became evident to the Self-Insured Group that streamlining the claims management process and improving the efficiency of claim closure was vital to reducing costs and minimizing the impact on both the injured workers and the organization.





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ATHENS SOLUTIONS

Athens' initial primary goal upon contracting with the Self-Insured Group was to ensure a seamless transition, which is crucial when switching to a new TPA. For each client, Athens provides an Implementation Specialist whose responsibility is to ensure program satisfaction from the onset. The Athens Implementation Team provides a detailed plan for the transition of clients, tailored to their needs and expectations.

- **Athens solution to a lack of specialized expertise:** Athens Administrators offers all clients the ability to create their program around customized solutions. For the Self-Insured Group, this plan included comprehensive training through webinars focused on member portal training, ensuring that staff and stakeholders from all locations were equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the new claims system. Additionally, Athens went above and beyond by arranging personalized in-person meetings and Q&A sessions, ensuring that the group's unique requirements and concerns were addressed.

- **Athens solution to an inefficient process:** Athens conducted a comprehensive review of the Self-Insured Group's existing claims management processes and identified areas for improvement. Athens implemented streamlined workflows, standardized procedures, and established clear communication channels to enhance efficiency and reduce delays. As part of the comprehensive approach, Athens also offers return-to-work meetings directly with their examiners, fostering a more direct and personalized communication channel that accelerates the claims resolution process.

  Athens' commitment to leveraging technology allows for streamlined processes, improved data management, and efficient communication, ultimately leading to quicker claim resolution and better service delivery. This proactive and technology-driven approach underscores Athens' dedication to optimizing the entire claims management experience for the Self-Insured Group.

- **Athens solution to inflated total cost:** High administrative costs are partially the result of historic claims that have not been closed. Through a thorough analysis of the Self-Insured Group's program, Athens aligned their services with the clients' specific goals, preferences, and compliance requirements, ensuring a customized approach that maximizes efficiency and improves overall administrative costs. Athens goes above and beyond by including claims reviews and reporting tools at no additional cost to the client. Within nine months, Athens Administrators reduced the open indemnity claim count by 66 claims, which amounts to an almost 20% reduction. As a result of this significant cost savings, Athens approached the client about reducing their claims staff effectively helping the Self-Insured Group cut down on overhead expenses by minimizing the need for excessive claims staff. This streamlined approach substantially improved the group's financial efficiency and empowered Athens to strategically reallocate resources to other key programs.

AFTER ONLY 9 MONTHS ATHENS
REDUCED OPEN CLAIMS
INVENTORY BY

20%

- **Athens solution to high turnover in claims staff:** Athens Administrators prioritizes their people; creating a nurturing environment where employees can thrive, resulting in reduced staff turnover. As a result of Athens commitment to being "People, Powered" the average tenure of a Claims Examiner at Athens Administrators is 9.8 years, compared to an industry standard of 1-2 years. Athens offers extensive in-house training programs that empower employees to develop their skills and advance in their careers within the Athens family. Athens provides employees with a comprehensive benefits package and fosters a supportive culture that promotes work-life balance and employee well-being. Their commitment to employee satisfaction and professional growth has earned them recognition as the #1 Best Place to Work in the San Francisco Bay Area by the San Francisco Business Journal.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The partnership between the Self-Insured Group and Athens resulted in significant improvements and benefits, including:

- **Enhanced claims management efficiency:** The implementation of Athens' specialized expertise and technology solutions led to faster and more accurate claims processing. This reduced the time taken to resolve claims, resulting in improved member experience.

- **Cost savings:** High performing staff and streamlined processes resulted in the Self-Insured Group achieving substantial cost savings in administrative expenses. The reduction in total costs allowed the Self-Insured Group to allocate financial resources to other strategic initiatives.

- **Improved member satisfaction:** The streamlined processes, enhanced accuracy, and responsive customer service provided by Athens resulted in higher member satisfaction levels. Members experienced improved communication, faster claims resolution, a better understanding of the status of their claims, and a smoother overall experience. The relationship between the Self- Insured Group and Athens extends beyond a mere vendor-client dynamic; it is a true partnership. The Self-Insured Group counts on Athens as a trusted partner to support their growth and expansion efforts by providing expert guidance, specialized services, and innovative solutions.



Athens' understanding of the SIG's needs and their proactive approach allows them to collaborate closely, strategize together, and identify opportunities to attract and onboard new members to the network. Through this partnership, the Self- Insured Group and Athens have worked hand in hand, leveraging each other's strengths to drive success, foster industry connections, and enhance the overall value proposition for their growing program.

CONCLUSION

Through Athens' customized solutions, specialized expertise, and seamless technology integration, the Self-Insured Group not only achieved enhanced efficiency and reduced costs but also experienced improved overall satisfaction. Athens stood out by actively listening to their concerns and ensuring they had access to senior management through an open-door policy, establishing a strong foundation of collaboration. This successful transition to a new workers' compensation third-party administrator enabled the group to concentrate on their core business. The culmination of member satisfaction, robust results, and significant cost savings is a testament to Athens' commitment to excellence in claims management and program optimization.

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