



**A B ▲ R C A** Case Study

# **A Better Way to Grow: Abarca Health's Journey of Rapid, Sustainable Expansion**



# A B R C A

## Industry

Healthcare & Pharmacy  
Benefit Management

## Employees

750+ employees across the  
US and Puerto Rico

## Headquarters

Puerto Rico

**Abarca Health is a rapidly growing pharmacy benefit management (PBM) and healthcare technology company** committed to redefining healthcare with its “Better Way” philosophy. Headquartered in Puerto Rico, the company manages \$8 billion in drug spending for 5.3 million lives, with a team of 750+ employees, half of whom work remotely.



## How one leading PBM leverages Betterworks to support rapid expansion while staying true to its core values.

In the healthcare industry, regulations can be strict, but when it comes to employee growth and experience, Abarca Health likes to shake things up. Their pursuit of a “Better Way” philosophy has driven the company’s exponential growth while fostering a vibrant and passionate company culture.

A rapidly expanding pharmacy benefit management (PBM) and healthcare technology company, Abarca Health is headquartered in Puerto Rico. The team of 750-plus employees, half of whom are remote, manages an impressive \$8 billion in drug spending for 5.3 million lives. Despite being in a heavily regulated industry, Abarca fosters a passionate, young, and flexible culture—largely through a mix of incremental evolution and a values-driven culture.



## All In: leading with culture and values

“We like to do things a little bit differently,” explains Sonymarie Socarrás, senior vice president of strategy to execution at Abarca. “Our culture is lived through our core values. If you ask every Abarcan, ‘What are the things you like most?’ they will always say, ‘It’s the people.’ So we take great care to ensure people align with our values.”

Abarca Health’s culture is enshrined in its value of *All In: Live profoundly committed to building a better way together*. Says Sonymarie, “We’re always looking for a better way. We do a lot of experimenting, which leads to many organizational changes. It’s all part of growing.”

It turns out there has been a whole lot of growth. The PBM has doubled in size over the past four years. But success has brought new challenges.



“As our organization experienced exponential growth,” Sonymarie says, “the need to manage performance effectively became paramount. Rapid expansion demanded scalable processes that could ensure alignment with strategic objectives while maintaining high employee engagement and productivity.”

**Soniemarie Socarrás** | Senior Vice President of Strategy to Execution | Abarca



## Standardization meets flexibility in Betterworks

Sonymarie says Abarca's original performance management solution didn't meet that mark. "We were using BambooHR, which had minimal options to manage the performance and development process," she explains. "There were no connections to goals or feedback. It was very, very basic. "

To support the expanding organization, Abarca Health chose Betterworks, a comprehensive performance platform known for — among other things — strong goals management. "The initial need was to manage goals," Sonymarie recalls, "but Betterworks had this whole performance management module, and our team adopted it." The platform's feedback, calibration, and performance features quickly became indispensable.

"Using Betterworks has helped us to adopt a more agile mindset for feedback and performance management," she explains. Standardization and measurement were also key, as the company seeks to build more structured performance management and goal tracking. "We've been introducing a more objective and metric-driven approach," Sonymarie says. "We're raising the bar in performance to scale our operation and to be able to deliver, and this platform has really revolutionized our performance management approach."



"Betterworks has enabled Abarca to support growth, foster a culture of continuous improvement, and help ensure the well-being and development of our employees."

**Soniemarie Socarrás** | Senior Vice President of Strategy to Execution | Abarca



## Like Family: building a culture of straight talk

Abarca's commitment to growth through culture can be viewed through its values. For example, *Like Family: Care for others' success as deeply as if it were your own* is reflected in its use of Betterworks to foster a culture of honest and constructive feedback.

Using Betterworks has transformed a previously minimal feedback process, Sonymarie says. The company uses scheduled feedback, where managers formally request feedback from at least three peers, collaborators, or other direct reports, and has recently also rolled out anytime feedback. Both are factored into performance reviews and have helped employees to feel more collaborative and empowered. In the last review cycle, every employee received a minimum of three peer feedback reviews. "Our objective with peer feedback is to gather and consider various viewpoints on an employee's performance," Sonymarie says.

Manager conversations are a key feature of Betterworks, allowing Abarca to tailor assessments to its unique culture. "One key feature that set Betterworks apart is its ability to provide full configuration of evaluation templates, aptly named 'Conversations,'" Sonymarie explains. This occurs twice a year during annual and mid-year performance management processes.





## Humble Competence: supporting business growth with individual growth and development

Betterworks will facilitate the implementation of developmental goals at Abarca, a process that will likely be rolled out next year. This will help the company align its culture of continuous learning to the value of *Humble Competence: Deliver what's needed to execute, grounded in humility and driven by purpose*. “Setting developmental goals will provide direction and encourage employees to seek specific learning modules,” Sonymarie says. This system will support individual growth, aligning employee aspirations with organizational priorities.



Abarca has integrated its learning management system with goals, making the process more effective. “Previously, we captured training and development needs with an Excel spreadsheet once a year, which was not very effective,” Sonymarie recalls. Now, employees are empowered to pursue meaningful growth opportunities and track them through Betterworks.

Calibration has also been a game-changer for Abarca, which it began doing for the first time with Betterworks. “We managed to calibrate about 570 people in three weeks, creating a total of 40-plus calibration sessions,” Sonymarie says. “The calibration matrix in Betterworks proved to be very user-friendly.”



## Fire in the Belly: data, reporting, and strategic alignment

Data-driven decisions are central to Abarca's strategy, Sonymarie says: "The ability to generate various types of reports in Betterworks has enabled us to track critical data on goal progress." It also supports performance management and improvement — mapping to their value *Fire in the Belly: Exude contagious passion, positive energy, and unrelenting will to succeed.*

Betterworks analytics deliver valuable insights for executive decision-making. Access to reports following the calibration process has also provided data to prepare and deliver presentations showcasing the results of our Growth Process."

Betterworks' artificial intelligence capabilities have also augmented productivity at Abarca Health. "We have been using AI in Conversations, and people are excited about it," Sonymarie says. For many employees, English is not their first language, so Betterworks assists in simplifying the process, making performance reviews more accessible and efficient."



**Strong and scalable goal tracking and measurement with Betterworks Goals supports growth and encourages continuous improvement**



**100% of annual performance reviews completed incorporating manager and peer feedback and using AI-Assist for Betterworks Conversations**



**Calibrated 550+ employees in three weeks with Betterworks Calibration**



## Off Road: Where will Abarca go next?

Abarca continues to innovate and expand its use of Betterworks, living the value *Off-Road: Expand your comfort zone and explore bold new paths every day*. “We are expanding the use of Conversations to other processes, such as new hire check-ins, to improve onboarding and retention,” Sonymarie explains. This integration ensures meaningful conversations from Day 1 of an employee’s journey.

Looking ahead, Abarca plans to leverage even more of Betterworks’ capabilities. “We’re aiming to utilize as many features as we can,” Sonymarie says, to streamline processes and facilitate better tracking and documentation.

## Shake It Off: Abarca’s journey of continuous improvement

Abarca’s journey with Betterworks has been one of continuous evolution and improvement. “Betterworks has helped us adopt a more agile mindset regarding feedback and performance management,” Sonymarie says.

A commitment to starting with what’s manageable, tailoring solutions for Abarcans, and continually revisiting processes has been key to the company’s success and in the spirit of their value: *Shake It Off: Celebrate often, shrug off stumbles, laugh at yourself, and have fun*.



## Parting thoughts and advice to others



“Betterworks has been instrumental in revolutionizing our approach to performance management,” says Sonymarie. “By leveraging its customizable features, fostering a culture of feedback, and streamlining calibration processes, we’ve successfully navigated through periods of rapid growth while maintaining alignment with our strategic objectives. We have achieved 100% completion of our annual performance assessments since adopting Betterworks. And as we continue to evolve, Betterworks is a cornerstone of our commitment to excellence in performance management.”

Sonymarie’s advice is simple: “Have a plan and introduce Betterworks. It’s straightforward to use, but you want to understand everything there, teach people how to develop goals correctly, and have lots of conversations.”

Through its steadfast commitment to its core values and the strategic implementation of Betterworks, Abarca Health has managed that process and thrived — showcasing the power of a culture-driven approach to performance management.

