

Advancing a culture of wellness

Easy-to-use digital triage platform gives essential workers reliable, personalized guidance about COVID-19 and deepens employee engagement

About

- Largest privately held commercial bank in the Northwestern U.S.
- 40 locations in Washington, Oregon and Idaho
- Headquartered in Spokane, WA
- 1,150 employees

Challenges

- Needed to screen 250 essential workers daily for COVID-19 symptoms and exposure
- Difficult to anticipate impact of pandemic on workforce and client communities
- Lack of strategy in addressing risk of COVID-19 legal liability
- Limited employee use of company's online resources

Solution

- Buoy Back With Care™

Results

- Successful implementation of digital triage platform for all essential workers
- Insight into regional COVID-19 trends
- Secure, clinically validated screener limits liability and data privacy risks
- Positive, ongoing engagement with clinically safe digital triage platform

Washington Trust Bank (WTB) is known for its commitment to employees and clients in the Northwestern U.S. When COVID-19 first registered in Washington State, Katy Bruya, senior vice president of human resources, realized the company had to act quickly. “Looking back, we did an excellent job as an employer in our response to the pandemic with the support of Buoy’s online triage solution,” said Bruya. “But initially we faced massive challenges. We had to figure out the scope of the issue, what impact it could have on our communities, and what we needed to do. There were a lot of unknowns.”

Bruya and the WTB executive leadership team designed a COVID-19 strategy that prioritized the health and safety of employees and their families, as well as WTB clients. One key issue was that 250 branch employees at over 40 locations — considered essential workers during the pandemic — needed a reliable way to determine whether it was safe for them to go into work each day.

Buoy provides a foundation of COVID-19 strategy and aligns with company values

In the beginning, WTB was considering a range of solutions, including manual temperature screening at each branch location. “We have 40 locations, so hiring individual temperature screeners wasn’t reasonable,” said Bruya. “We were going through many options, but ultimately we knew the best way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 was to avoid having someone bring it into the workplace.”

Back With Care™, Buoy Health’s return-to-work platform, met their requirements for a safe, clinically validated solution at scale. Built off Buoy Assistant, Buoy’s web-based, AI-powered health assistant, Back With Care™ assesses risk for COVID-19 helps employees navigate to resources their employer has provided to support health and well-being. The platform features

“Buoy’s Back With Care was well-received among our employees. It encouraged the right people to stay at home, which kept our employees and clients safer — saving time, money, and potentially lives.”

- Katy Bruya, Senior Vice President of Human Resources,
Washington Trust Bank

a daily comprehensive tool that relies on the latest guidance from authorities like the CDC and WHO to determine employee eligibility for in-person work and provide navigation to any necessary care resources.

WTB gets a customized implementation with exceptional support

Buoy provided WTB with a customized implementation which included a kit for communicating the solution to employees. Bruya acknowledged that WTB employees had little experience with an at-home health screener and would likely have questions about its use. Buoy helped them pilot the technology with a small group of employees who could inform the broader launch. Buoy then partnered with Bruya and her team to develop messaging to employees around why they were being asked to complete an at-home assessment, and how it benefited everyone.

“Buoy’s team is exceptionally customer-focused,” said Bruya. “They carefully explained the rationale behind certain symptoms that were included in the screening. They listened well and were receptive to our ideas.” For example, one issue that came out of the pilot group was that sometimes employees had a symptom like a headache, yet knew it was not related to COVID-19. So Buoy connected their in-house medical team – the people behind the screening tool’s guidance – with the WTB leadership team to figure out a fix. This led to the addition of custom language at the end of the assessment meant to ensure that employees were attesting honestly to unusual symptoms, while excluding symptoms they’d already discussed with their physician.

“I was really impressed with Buoy’s careful diligence,” said Bruya. “They recognized there’s a balance between what the CDC says and someone’s common sense. I felt that was a major breakthrough for the effectiveness and accuracy of the screening.”

Once they were ready to launch Back With Care™ to all employees, WTB used their intranet and corporate communications portal to notify employees about the platform, as well as providing direct links to the assessment by way of daily texts. After the initial launch, Bruya and her team consulted with Buoy about ongoing communication needs.

One outcome, for example, was the frequency of text notifications. After reviewing usage data, Buoy and WTB decided that it was sufficient for employees to receive a reminder text two days per week instead of daily. “The support we got from Buoy was great,” said Bruya. “They helped us make good decisions about reaching the people we need to reach. I especially loved that they had templates for employee communication. Everybody’s busy, so it was a significant help to have pre-formatted outreach materials that we could modify as needed.”

Buoy empowers employees to use digital resources – and activates shared responsibility

Buoy Back With Care™ has bolstered WTB’s efforts to encourage employees to use more online resources. “Our employees know how to look up their insurance claims history and their deductible year-to-date online,” said Bruya. But the company wanted to empower employees to do more with digital tools. “Introducing an intuitive platform like Back With Care™ has reinforced our employees’ ability to do self-management of symptoms and triage online themselves versus calling a provider or meeting with somebody.”

Bruya and her team also appreciated Buoy’s insight into national COVID-19 trends. Because Buoy has millions of users, they can report potential geographic clusters of cases given certain symptom patterns. “We were really excited about Buoy’s capabilities beyond helping our employees determine whether it was safe to go into work,” said Bruya.

An additional benefit of implementing Buoy Back With Care™ has been connecting employees to their sense of personal responsibility for one another’s well-being. “Buoy has absolutely been a worthwhile investment on several levels. Not only did we give employees the opportunity to accurately self-assess their COVID-19 symptoms, we helped them develop an awareness of their potential impact on others,” said Bruya. “Each employee with symptoms gets a personalized recommendation about whether or not to come into the office, as well as any other necessary next-steps. So they have to look themselves in the eye and say, ‘I have these symptoms that the CDC says could be related to COVID-19. Should I really come onsite and potentially risk the safety of my colleagues?’ Buoy helped our employees make safer decisions that ultimately protected our workforce and our clients.”