

Driving Innovation in Health Care Services

American Specialty Health’s consistent innovation has been one key to its constant growth—along with never losing sight of its clients’ needs.

AMERICAN
SPECIALTY
HEALTH

#3833

2018 INC. 5000
RANKING

46
MILLION

MEMBERS
NATIONWIDE

1,500

NUMBER OF
EMPLOYEES
ACROSS FIVE
OFFICES

94
PERCENT

THREE-YEAR
REVENUE
GROWTH RATE

17
YEARS

AVERAGE TENURE
OF THE SENIOR
LEADERSHIP TEAM

YOU DON'T START a business with just \$4,000 from the second bedroom of your condo and grow it into a half-billion-dollar company without doing a few things right. For George DeVries, co-founder, chairman, and CEO of American Specialty Health Incorporated (ASH), that includes listening to clients and delivering strategic programs that help those clients solve the challenges they are facing.

ASH's clients, which include health plans, employer groups, insurance carriers, and trust funds, appreciate that kind of service. And many have shown it by sticking with the company year after year. Almost all of ASH's early clients, brought on board starting 25 to 30 years ago, are still with the company, and many have significantly expanded their programs with ASH during that time. From its early days as a tiny startup, ASH has grown and evolved to its current standing as a nationwide provider of more than a dozen health management, fitness, and musculoskeletal health programs. Clients stay with ASH because DeVries and his team know their customers intimately, listen to their needs, and approach innovation with an open mind and a refreshing nimbleness.

ASH has been on the Inc. 5000 list of the nation's fastest-growing private companies for nine of the last 10 years. Its most recent uptick is due, in part, to the growth of its new consumer-facing Active&Fit Direct™ fitness program. In just the past year and a half, almost 200 employer group clients, including more than 100 Fortune 500 companies and dozens of health plans have adopted the program, allowing their employees and members to choose from nearly 10,000 participating fitness centers and YMCAs for \$25 per month. Consumers may select any participating fitness center and change fitness centers at any time, and there are no long-term contracts. The program already has more than 155 million eligible members nationwide, making it the nation's largest commercial fitness program in terms of eligible membership and the company's fastest-growing startup product in its 31-year history.

Another external driver that is influencing ASH's value proposition in a big way is the need for non-



pharmaceutical, non-invasive approaches to pain management, especially in light of the nationwide opioid crisis. “Clinicians sometimes turn too quickly to prescription drugs and surgery. There is growing demand for conservative treatment methods,” DeVries says. “Evidence-based practices that can help combat pain include physical therapy, chiropractic, acupuncture, and therapeutic massage—all programs that are in ASH’s wheelhouse.”

By innovating around these areas with technology and creating a pain management ecosystem that supports patients based upon their personal needs, ASH is offering an attractive patient-focused solution. For example, the company recently created a mobile app for lower back pain which allows users to access exercise videos and track their daily activity. The app can also be combined with live coaching from a trained nurse to make it easier for people to get pain management support.

While innovation is a big part of the story, it's not the full story. ASH's consistent growth is also the result of a seasoned team, many of whom have been with the company for more than a decade. “It’s a trusted team of individuals all working together to do something special – to provide thoughtful solutions that improve the quality of health care and inspire consumers to get engaged in their personal health,” DeVries says. “And consumers who are personally engaged in their own health can not only improve their health, they can also help improve the overall health care system. Now, that is something worth innovating for.” ■