

Q&A

The Blueprint for Digital Success in Group Benefits Insurance



Use Case: Transforming Group Benefits Insurance with Digital-First Coretech

Wellfleet and Pacific Life give practical insights for ambitious group benefits insurers.

Group benefits insurers face mounting pressures: slow time-to-market for new products, fragmented systems, and the inability to provide seamless customer (and employer) experiences.

These challenges put a damper on business growth, and create inefficiencies across the insurance lifecycle.

Because of this, digital transformation is no longer optional in the competitive world of group benefits. Traditional processes and technology are riddled with inefficiencies, disjointed systems, and slow response times that leave employers, employees, and insurers frustrated.

EIS revolutionizes the space with its cloud-native, API-driven coretech solutions, empowering insurers to deliver digital-first capabilities at scale. This Q&A highlights two insurers — Wellfleet and Pacific Life — that embraced EIS to overcome these barriers and achieve remarkable results.

In a recent webinar with LIMRA and EIS, these two forward-thinking group benefits insurers shared their stories of becoming digital-first, and how it revolutionized their business and future-

proofed their operations. They achieved increased operational efficiency, greater flexibility, improved speed-to-market, and better customer service.

Below is an abbreviated (& edited slightly for reading clarity) version of the webinar, presented in Q&A format. (Note: Quotes are truthful to the conversation that occurred, but may not be 100% exact. Transcription software and light editing have been used to produce this document — please do not quote individuals without permission. The full webinar can be viewed [here](#).)

Session participants included:

MODERATOR: **Tony Grosso** - Head of Group Benefits Markets, EIS

PANELIST: **Erich Sternberg** - SVP and Head of Employee Benefits Division, Pacific Life

PANELIST: **Erik Gray** - Head of Enrollment Experience, Wellfleet



Table of Contents

Use Case: Transforming Group Benefits Insurance with Digital-First Coretech 1

Wellfleet and Pacific Life give practical insights for ambitious group benefits insurers. 1

Introduction: Digital Transformation in Group Benefits Insurance.....3

Wellfleet’s Digital Journey: Building a Streamlined Workflow3

Pacific Life’s Approach: Reinventing Employee Benefits with a Customer-Centric Model4

Revolutionizing Claims: Event-Driven Architecture for Seamless Customer Experience6

Balancing Automation & Human Empathy in the Digital Insurance Age 8

Operational Excellence: Comparing Legacy and Digital-First Models9

Confidence in Technology: Winning Over Brokers and Clients10

Solving Billing Challenges: Flexible Solutions for a Frustrating Process12

Data Integration: Ensuring a Single Source of Truth Across the Value Chain13

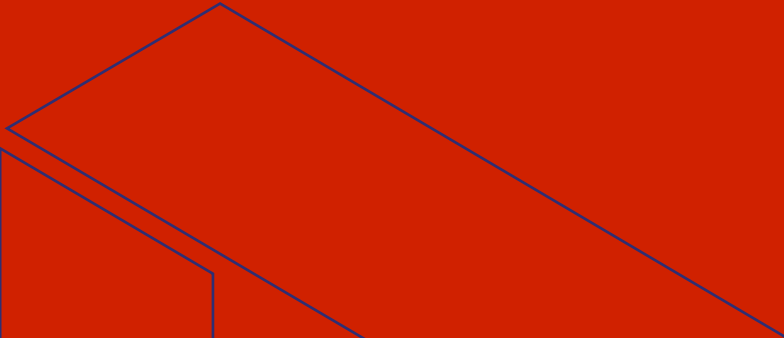
The Broker’s Viewpoint: Technology as a Differentiator14

Addressing Data Challenges: Ensuring Accuracy in a Digital Ecosystem.....20

Future-Proofing Payments: Exploring Consumer Preferences and Digital Options.....22

The Never-Ending Journey: Sustaining Digital Transformation.....23

Ready for Your Own Digital Transformation?25



Introduction: Digital Transformation in Group Benefits Insurance

Tony Grosso, EIS:

Both of our guests today are from pioneer insurers who've chosen the digital path. Starting with Eric from Wellfleet, can you share why your company decided to fully embrace the digital lifecycle — not just on the front-end customer acquisition side, but across your entire value chain from quote to claim? And also, was this choice more challenging by comparison to some of the more traditional insurance technologies and techniques?

Wellfleet's Digital Journey: Building a Streamlined Workflow

Wellfleet's journey highlights how a cloud-native, API-driven core system can redefine the employee benefits experience, delivering flexibility, scalability, and customer-centric workflows in record time.

Erik Gray, Wellfleet:

Well, as a Berkshire Hathaway company, Wellfleet didn't come unprepared when we decided to try our hand at employee benefits. We spent over 25 years administering health and accident benefit plans for thousands of organizations, and had a strong reputation in the industry in that segment. So we wanted to enter the employee benefits market with a differentiator from the traditional insurers in the voluntary benefits business. **We wanted to devise a digital, omnichannel, streamlined quote-to-claim workflow for workplace benefits.**

Emphasizing that employer experience, focusing on employee ease of use, those were both key. If successful, we knew we'd stand out as a customer-centric carrier in an industry

where product-centricity was often the norm. So we had a small agile team at Wellfleet, and **we needed a technology partner to build an open architecture, API-driven digital platform — capable of seamless integration, empowering data fluidity — to create that streamlined workflow.**

We also knew that the platform had to be up and running as soon as possible without sacrificing effectiveness. If you've got a budget, you've got to make sales, you've got to win clients. That meant the system's foundation required the flexibility, scalability, and efficient deployment that was natural to a cloud-native technology. So once our partnership with EIS began, we hit the ground running.

Within 11 months, we deployed and launched our system that we call Lighthouse in support of our four flagship products: accident, critical illness, hospital indemnity, and short-term disability.

We issued our first coverage in December 2020 for a January 1st effective date. Because of our revolutionary approach, much like what you're going to hear from Erich at Pacific Life, we're providing great benefit solutions. It's felt like that from the moment a plan starts in our system, all the way through to the claims and payment processes.

Pacific Life's Approach: Reinventing Employee Benefits with a Customer-Centric Model

Starting with a clean slate, Pacific Life leveraged digital capabilities to build a friction-free, customer-first ecosystem that simplifies processes for brokers, employers, and employees alike.

Tony Grosso:

Now, Erich, how'd your digital journey unfold at Pacific Life?

Erich Sternberg, Pacific Life:

Honestly, there are lots of similarities between our journey and Wellfleet's. You know, we're almost a 160-year-old mutual company at this point. We're one of the top writers of life insurance in the country, a top 10 writer on the annuity side. We do very sophisticated transactions on the institutional side of the business, and we're a global reinsurer as well.

From a business perspective, looking at the US and growth opportunities, employee benefits is a clear opportunity for Pacific Life. The team we brought on realized that pretty quickly. And, like Eric at Wellfleet, we had very high expectations in terms of getting to market quickly, testing and learning along the way, figuring things out. That meant digital was the only option.

We did have the luxury of having no legacy systems, no historic books of business that we had to transform. No processes and procedures that were ingrained and embedded. We had a blank piece of paper in front of us. And frankly, that allowed us to build our new solution the way we felt like it needed to be built to solve all the problems that our industry has seen over many, many decades. You know, all the challenges that all of us had experienced at the legacy carriers we came from.

So we assemble a team that has decades of experience, and really understands that business. A bunch of rock stars, quite honestly, who've come in and been able to design the processes they feel are important from scratch. And design them from the point of view of the customer. They're delivering friction-free, seamless solutions for single data sources tied in with all our critical partners around the industry, to enable us to do something different.

If we had come in with the same products as everybody else, well, I think we all can recognize that our products are at this point pretty commoditized. We wouldn't have stood out. But we've come in and developed what we see as a differentiated customer experience. For example, it allows brokers to get their proposals faster, to implement cases much more quickly, with a ridiculously lower number of errors. We can also simplify the way employers work with us and the way their employees actually engage with us on a claims

basis. So our job is to take all the friction points out there in the industry that have built up over decades, and deliver a solution that's differentiated in the way that it brings our customers along.

It drives our costs lower, makes it easier for the broker, and makes it easier, less expensive for the employer. Ultimately, this creates what we think will be a sustainable competitive advantage over time.

Revolutionizing Claims: Event-Driven Architecture for Seamless Customer Experience

Having an event-driven claims architecture means insurers can greatly improve customer experience by consolidating workflows, automating touchpoints, and creating an intuitive and frictionless claims experience for policyholders.

Tony Grosso:

At a supplemental benefits conference panel recently, someone told a story about a person whose case involved multiple claims because of how medically complex it was. And it was so difficult for the person to initiate all these different claims with different departments at the insurance company, having to repeat the story over and over.

But with both of your companies announcing that you've launched event-based claims processing, where one intake initiates all the different claims on different coverages, claimants won't have to go through ordeals like that. Erik from Wellfleet, could you talk about what that new claims experience is like from your perspective?

Erik Gray:

With a claims system that has event-driven architecture, all the information for that employee is all in one place. Say that we received their initial accident claim but then notice

they have additional coverage with us, like hospital indemnity, and they spent time in the hospital. **We handle that as a single workflow and handle the processing, assessment, and payout as one claims case. We don't have to send them a reminder about their other coverage, and we will make payment for any other applicable coverages the member has available.**

Tony Grosso:

Erich, how does it work at Pacific Life?

Erich Sternberg:

It's a very similar approach. Building digitally allows you to think about all the friction points across the lifecycle of a customer. And this is a space where customers sometimes aren't able to crack the code on how to navigate all the processes and all the procedures they need to get their claims filed and approved, even with a single carrier. They wonder, "What happens when I have four products with a carrier? Do I have to file four claims?" And the answer typically is yes. **We designed the claims interface intuitively, so based on the answers to a few questions from the claimant, we'll know they had an accident, went to the hospital, missed work, and so on. From there, we can manage the whole process in one streamlined fashion, so the customer doesn't need to make multiple phone calls and go through multiple interactions.**

The other nice piece of all this is that we have a live chat function for our customers. Because a lot of people don't want to make a phone call anymore. We have all these different ways to work with customers through our portals and beyond. It's just a really exciting time to think about all the tools we have and be able to take advantage of them without having to spend tens of millions of dollars to reinvent the way we engage with the customer.

Balancing Automation & Human Empathy in the Digital Insurance Age

Digital automation doesn't mean insurers have to lose their human touch. By automating routine tasks, insurance employees can refocus on providing empathetic, personalized support when it's needed.

Tony Grosso:

You know, what you just said about actually having a phone call with somebody — we often talk about digital, and some people might be concerned about losing that human touch. But because you've now been able to automate a lot of processes, carriers don't have to spend as much time on these non-value-added manual tasks. So they could repurpose their teams to deal with customers at a human-to-human level, right?

Erich Sternberg:

So I think the answer is, AI will come in and play a larger role here eventually. But really, we want to engage customers, brokers, and employers in the way they want us to engage with them. We don't want to say, "You have to come to us by chat. You have to call us. You have to email us." We want to be there for them in the way they want us to be there for them in any given moment.

So things that just need a quick answer, like delivering an ID card, thinking about eligibility — there's so much of that that can be done highly automated way. But when it comes to critical events like a disability claim or a life claim, where you're dealing with some of life's most difficult moments, these are times when the customer should always be able to pick up the phone if they want to and talk to an agent. These are things our industry has done extraordinarily well with a ton of empathy for decades, and served our communities extremely well. So I don't think that ever goes away.

Operational Excellence: Comparing Legacy and Digital-First Models

Transitioning from legacy technology to a digital-first platform unlocks agility, precision, and adaptability. This improves an insurer's ability to meet customer needs faster and more effectively.

Tony Grosso:

Following up on that: Both of you have worked at traditional companies throughout your career. So now that you've digitally transformed, could you compare the experience to your past companies and maybe talk about some of the operational differences? Starting with Erik, from Wellfleet, then Erich from Pacific Life.

Erik Gray:

Ultimately, it's the ability to say yes without impacting operations and creating custom processes. It's been an incredible feeling to meet the broker or the employer or the enrollment platform where they are. **With our system operating atop the EIS coretech, we can serve all of our customers' needs in that one system. Because of our platform's seamless integrations and robust processing, employers, brokers, and customers don't have to worry about incompatibilities. With real-time data and the precision end-to-end workflow, we meet customers where they are in their employee benefits journey. We can really customize our plans, and the way that our products are built. We can make updates in our system based on state filing regulations.** And there are a lot of other new federal regulations coming up that our platform can adjust to quickly and then support, so we can issue coverage very quickly. We've seen dramatically increased data speeds from other places I've been and what others are seeing in the industry. All in all, we've made our user experience consistently customer-centric across multiple distribution channels, which was a goal Wellfleet long sought to achieve.

Confidence in Technology: Winning Over Brokers and Clients

In the insurance world, technology is no longer a back-office tool — it's a leading market differentiator. EIS enables insurers to deliver the speed, accuracy, and trust both brokers and clients insist on.

Erik Gray, continued:

As a success story, I was in a face-to-face finalist visit with a prospective client, and they were naming all these different problems that we're used to managing. I told her, "I have two words. Bring it." And the whole panel, they just chuckled. And I said, "I'm serious!" I was that confident in what we've built.

Tony Grosso:

Thinking of this from a broker or carrier perspective, how has technology played a role in those discussions? You know, in finalist meetings and things like that. How is that playing out?

Erik Gray:

Well, for Wellfleet, it builds a lot of confidence. Because the people who've built the technology and the processes around it, they know they can stand behind their work. Then, our sales and operations teams can effectively go out and talk about the billing journey, the claims journey, and the onboarding journey. **And you know what? We haven't encountered a benefits administration platform or HRIS platform or even any old ERP systems that we can't communicate with. We've been able to meet all the data needs, from a technology standpoint, to issue coverage.**

Erich Sternberg:

I think, to a certain degree, we're ahead in the market. **You know, there are some phenomenal platforms that we've jumped on and integrated with very quickly. Full integrations. We're doing stuff in minutes that used to take days and weeks and sometimes even months with legacy technology.** Which is super exciting.

To your question, Tony, Erik, and I have been at both been at other places where we've worked so hard, invested tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars on technology transformations. Made commitments about these transformations to our customers and our brokers — and they just didn't happen. So there's a healthy dose of skepticism across the broker and employer community. They want to be certain that when we say we're delivering things, we are actually delivering things. And what I end up saying a lot of times, when I'm talking to customers, "Look, we don't have a legacy system to fall back on. If this fails, we fail."

Fortunately, because of our coretech foundation, we've been able to hit all of our marks where we've needed and deliver for our customers. That doesn't mean it's always easy. Being digitally native and maintaining this ecosystem that we've built, sometimes it's hard. Now compare that to legacy tech, it's extremely difficult to do that when you're in a legacy environment and trying to evolve and manage through it. Even in the best of circumstances, which is sort of where we are at Pacific Life — because, you know, we're a mutual company, we take a long view on these things. It's not always simple. Then because of that healthy dose of skepticism in the market with customers and brokers about whether we can deliver what we promise, it's kind of like what Erik said: You have to put your money where your mouth is and and let them try it.

Erik Gray:

And you know, Tony, when I see social posts from Pacific Life, and from some of my friends, acquaintances, industry cohorts at Pacific Life, I'm reading them and I can see some people maybe saying to themselves, "Hmm, that's too good to be true." But I read it and I'm thinking, "Yep, yep, that's exactly what we're doing."

Erich Sternberg:

We've all been talking about it for 15 years. And the hard part is, like I said, it's very difficult to do, so you have to pick your shots. So then, as you think about the future, it's about identifying the pressure points for your customers and for your back office, for operations, and figuring out how you balance the investment with the things that give you that competitive advantage over the long haul.

Solving Billing Challenges: Flexible Solutions for a Frustrating Process

With EIS, billing operations go from a bottleneck to a seamless, customer-driven process. Flexibility and real-time integration ensure all stakeholders get the accuracy they need.

Erik Gray:

Absolutely. One of those things would be billing. See, billing has a reputation of having long been anchored in mind-numbing reconciliation processes, multiple bills, clunky billing systems. Clients are faced with a long list of responsibilities, and they don't want to have to be managing these employee benefits and relearning systems and reformatting reports and reconciling different bills. We heard this brought up at the 2024 Benefits Pro Broker Expo in Denver. During a broker's imperative session, they specifically said one of their top pain points was billing. They were frustrated about encountering incorrect information, about important details being omitted if they were receiving a bill, inaccuracies during the billing process, having to reconcile, all that.

So it's a really good feeling — and I'm sure this is the same with Pacific Life — that **we can create a hassle-free billing process. Instead of us telling the client how they're going to be billed, we listen to them and ask, "How do you want to be billed? Let's meet you in your billing journey so we can offer flexible billing options." And they tell us.** So then, our goal is

that on day one of their effective date, they understand the billing process and how they're going to pay Wellfleet.

Erich Sternberg:

I think for us, the benefit administration platforms that we've integrated with, we cede to them the mantle of being the source of truth for billing data. So since we're getting basically real-time information, there's no conversation anymore about what the bill is. Because it's whatever it's coming straight out of the benefits admin platform. That's what we're billing, and we're accepting that as payment, **which means legions of people we don't necessarily have to hire to manage those bills and manage those processes. And that allows us to be more competitive with our pricing. It allows us to hire the best people and allow them to do the most important work.**

Data Integration: Ensuring a Single Source of Truth Across the Value Chain

Clean, unified data helps insurers deliver consistent, real-time experiences while streamlining decision-making and operational efficiency

Tony Grosso:

And that really works like an ecosystem, right? You know, being able to take that data in, in real time, and utilize it, that's a completely different mindset. Which is why I try to explain to people: It's like when you order something from Amazon and that data is going through four different companies in that ecosystem. It's not all Amazon doing all of the work, but it's one piece of data. And Erik, I've heard you talk about this quite a bit in the past. Being able to have one piece of clean data throughout the entire platform, every part of the value chain, right?

Erik Gray:

Right. And that's what we're both talking about here. It's so important that it feels like a new thing for brokers and clients: They're asking about their data, like, "Hey, are you sure you got it?" And we can answer, "Yep. It's here, and it's in the system, and it's never leaving." And just as Erich was saying, like you, now we can hire the best people. We all log into the same system every day. And so we all see the entire lifecycle. Claims isn't wondering what underwriting just did on a master policy that we can all see within the system.

The Broker's Viewpoint: Technology as a Differentiator

For brokers, digital-first carriers like Wellfleet and Pacific Life offer an unprecedented level of ease, speed, and integration, turning technology into a competitive advantage.

Erich Sternberg:

Our team talks to a lot of brokers, and there's probably not a single conversation where we don't talk about our end-to-end process. When we start, the first piece of information we grab comes in with the quote, and that persists throughout the lifecycle of the customer. So for us to implement a case, basically you press a button and mark it as sold in the system. And then we go straight to application, digital confirmation — which is the group app confirmation of the coverage that was selected, pricing, everything. The broker can do all that in our portal. The employer can do all of it in our portal. Then the signature is done, we're ready to implement, and it literally can take minutes if everybody's on their game and ready to go.

Going back to the conversations that happen with brokers, there's hardly any of them where a broker isn't in the middle of filling out a paper group app. And then they hold up the paper and say, "You mean I don't have to fill these out anymore?" And the answer is

no, you don't, because we're taking all the information that you're giving us throughout the quote process. You then you validate that information, press a few buttons, and we're done. Super simplified, super efficient for the customer and for us.

Tony Grosso:

I'm curious to hear more about this from the perspective of the broker community. Have they overall come around to understanding the importance of carrier technology? Erik and Erich, are you seeing a demand for digital capabilities in your finalist meetings, or any other discussions with your broker communities and broker partners?

Erich Sternberg:

I mean, our technology is the only reason for brokers to choose us. We're a company that's been in the voluntary employee benefits market for less than a year at this point. There's no shortage of competition. In a vacuum, there's no reason for a broker to work with anyone outside of the carriers that they've worked with for the past 10 or 15 or 25 years. Unless we have a reason for them to work with us.

As I said before, I don't think anyone in the industry will argue that our products are commodities. We all have basically the same contracts across the board. And, by the way, our pricing is all pretty similar and competitive, too. The same goes for compensation. So at the end of the day, pitching ourselves to brokers, it's all about building a mousetrap that's compelling, that shows how our platform does it differently. That's the only reason we're getting to the table — that and our brand, which is a phenomenal 160-year-old mutual company. We have a fabulous brand, and we have a real and interesting story, one that's different from what so many other insurers are selling.

That's why we're getting to the table, and digital is at the heart and soul of that. Digital is everything we're about. Digital, for us, it's not just a corner of the strategy. It is the strategy. It is the approach — it's the differentiation.

Erik Gray:

It's a way of life. From right when you log in.

Advice for Insurers Embarking on Digital Transformation

Beginning a digital transformation means embracing continuous innovation, collaboration, and adaptability — key lessons from Wellfleet's and Pacific Life's success stories.

Tony Grosso:

The digital lifestyle, right? You know, we've all talked about this — digital transformation is not an endpoint. It's more of a journey that's just never going to end, because the world is always going to change.

So to get into the wrap-up here, we want to give practical advice to the audience on what a digitally transformed life is like and how to think about it. Erich, from Pacific Life, let's start with you — could you talk about the digital journey and how it's not a destination?

Erich Sternberg:

Well, like I said, there's so many competitors in our space, and so there's there's just no space for another legacy carrier that does business the way everyone else has always done it. So we're very focused on our target market. We're super-focused on consumers and groups and employers and brokers that are digitally forward. The ones that understand not just the efficiencies digital transformation can offer to us as a company and to the employer, but also to the broker. So we can simplify everyone's world. For us, you know, we're looking for partners and we're building our ecosystem around solutions — what I would call a broad array of solutions that are going to ultimately go beyond the historical insurance products we deal with. But we see the product ultimately as the customer experience we're delivering, and the efficiency, seamlessness, and simplicity that we can deliver to the consumer. That's it, at the end of the day. That's the product.

Tony Grosso:

Erik, from Wellfleet, bringing it over to you, what are some of the practical takeaways and advice you can provide to the audience here if they're thinking about kickstarting or sustaining a digital transformation? Especially if they're starting by maybe looking at a point solution or one part of the value chain — what are some of the things that they should be starting to think about to really get into that digital lifestyle?

Erik Gray:

So, at Wellfleet, I'll celebrate my fifth anniversary in October. And when I stepped through the door, we immediately fostered a culture of growth that enabled us, as high-performing professionals, to be empowered to deliver on our mission. To create customer-centric insurance solutions. And so we were all able to sit in a room when we started, and express our thoughts from the start and throughout the journey.

In terms of advice, I'd start by saying don't assume everyone knows how to operate with consultants, or with your technology partners, or with agile methodologies or whatever it is you're going to do. We brought everyone together in a room. This platform we have now was created by people from different workplace benefits carriers. And so after the vetting and the contractual processes and all that, we kicked off in January 2020. We took our industry minds, we devised our plan, we wrote hundreds of stories across the value chain. And it was painstaking. I mean, we had to cover objectives, acceptance criteria, benefits, past steps. Funny enough, we're talking about the digital age, but brainstorming this, we were in a large hotel conference room with easels, notepads, sticky notes, moving stuff around, everyone going around and giving their input. And I remember sitting back and I took pictures from each corner of the room, thinking to myself, "What are we doing?" Well, we were getting ready to create something.

I look back on it now, and hearing us talk about it today, hearing Erich Sternberg talk about it, and I gotta say, it's real. Our companies have both made it happen. And the key is to listen and explain things to one another. **Then, you also have to think about the importance of collaboration with a technology provider, so you have access to expertise in innovation.**

Thanks to the team at EIS and everybody involved, we had specialized knowledge and innovation. We were able to be scalable and flexible. We shared our resources. We optimized our investment, and we created the personalized services that we've been talking about, for a great user experience for everybody. **And from a risk mitigation standpoint, the partnership with EIS meant we had shared responsibility and resilience that we could recover from any kind of disruption.** So now, we're in our 20th 12-week program increment, and we continue to evolve and enhance as we go along.

Tony Grosso:

That never-ending journey, it just keeps going.

Erich Sternberg:

Yeah, I think everything Eric's saying is right. This is a world where there are a lot of companies and a lot of technology providers in our space that are looking to push the envelope. Of course, some of the platforms that are out there, they're simply not ready to make the leap that we're looking for. But the platforms that want to integrate, they've jumped on board because they see that it's possible to do this. Because it's not just efficient for us and our clients. It's also efficient for the platforms. So the opportunities out there across the entire industry ecosystem are immense, and it's just a question of finding the right partners and getting it done. At this point, you know, within a year we've integrated with something like ... 50 or 60 different platforms around the industry. That's the underpinning of our business. And it's working really, really well.

Tony Grosso:

Wow. That's ... actually mind-blowing. That's amazing.

Erik Gray:

One more thing I would say is this: Lean into cybersecurity. I have learned so much about information technology security because of this. More than I would've ever thought, because I'm not classically trained in it. But as we connect with partners — like what we did

with EIS, but then also connecting with other trading partners — I've seen how important security is. It's not just, "Hey, you've got an API, you're all set." There's security measures that have to be set up. You've seen in the world lately, when things have fallen down and people are stuck in an airport because some system broke, it's the same risks we have to look out for with our systems. There's a lot to learn, so just keep an open mind

Erich Sternberg:

Especially these days, I think. And also that's another challenge with all of this. Even though our department that built the platform runs like a startup, we're still a startup inside Pacific Life. As insurers, with all the data we've collected, we've got to be really careful about how we do things. The partners we select have to meet a very high standard, and our own security has to be really good. So as a result, there are other areas we're not spending as much money, but we have to put security at the top level in terms of priority at every step. I mean, that's an area where you just can't compromise.

Erik Gray:

And of course, having the right people is key for all this. They're giving suggestions. They're involved in developing what we're going to do next. From all parts of our company, they're involved in the process, even if it comes down to the UAT, the testing. And as we've worked together, it's been just incredible to watch our people build and maintain this.

Erich Sternberg:

Yeah, developing the right use case is super challenging. And you know, we're still a relatively small team of about 130 at this point. But we've hired a phenomenal team, and some of our people that know a whole lot more about every aspect of the business than I ever will. They're the ones that are defining the specs. They're the ones talking to the customers and the brokers and really getting the outside-in feedback and bringing the expertise. They're the ones that know how to get things done. So you've got to trust your team.

Then there's architecture. The architecture of this is so critical, and you've got to get it right upfront. And the legacy stuff is not set up for it. So sometimes it's super challenging, and ... this is just not something you want to redo every five minutes. You've got to get it right. You've got to have the right teams. And so there's a different level of investment and a different level of scrutiny on certain pieces of the business — and how you get things done — than there is with, say, a traditional legacy environment. For sure.

Tony Grosso:

And both of your companies have rock stars as your head of technology and architecture. People that are even from outside of the insurance industry but just really understand what insurers need. You both are thinking like tech companies, and you're bringing in the right level of power from an architecture standpoint.

Addressing Data Challenges: Ensuring Accuracy in a Digital Ecosystem

Modern coretech systems ensure data accuracy and accessibility, mitigating errors and streamlining operations to build trust and enhance the customer journey.

Tony Grosso, continued:

Now, moving on to questions from the audience, we have a good question here about data. What if you have bad data when moving into digital transformation? Has that occurred? And then what happens, how do you how do you navigate it?

Erich Sternberg:

It happens all the time. We can't avoid it. Take the example of all the different benefit administration platforms that both of our companies are integrated with. There's always going to be the employer that keys in the same Social Security number or the same email

address for every single employee. The same birthday. Probably just because something gets copied wrong. **It's inevitable — there's going to be bad data. Again, the solution there is to have great systems that are able to catch some of that stuff for you, and then, ultimately, great people to fix it.** There's no way to avoid it — there's no perfect here.

Erik Gray:

A couple of things come to mind here. One is, the industry has come together, both benefits administration companies and carriers, to create the LIMRA data exchange standards (LDEx). That's helped, because everybody can match up according to those. But there's always going to be bad data. At Wellfleet, we've created a way that we can ingest and translate a lot of it, so we can adapt to that and issue a lot of business.

But there are going to be errors. Somebody is going to leave an @ symbol out of the email address and then you'll get a message saying, "Hey, this isn't right," you know. We also have distinguishable error codes, both of our companies. We don't have some long error code. So we see errors quickly and we're able to translate those back. When it gets into our system, our users can see those readable error codes and communicate that out quickly so it can be dealt with as best you can.

Erich Sternberg:

Ultimately, the good news for us — and I'm guessing for Erik as well — is that we're not scanning thousands of pieces of paper. Everything we do is digital now. So at least we're not having to deal with those errors that come from all the scanning that you see historically. I think we're all working constantly in developing our data ingestion tools, as Eric said, to try to get better and catch everything. But inevitably, there are going to be challenges that'll be painful to reverse.

Future-Proofing Payments: Exploring Consumer Preferences and Digital Options

EIS allows insurers to meet the evolving payment preferences of their customers while maintaining operational efficiency and preparing for a highly digital future.

Tony Grosso:

So, we've talked about being digital from quote to claim, and the next audience question is about electronically paying claims, using things like Venmo or direct deposit. How do you do that? And then if either of your companies do, maybe talk about your evolution and your starting point and where you're looking to go with payments.

Erich Sternberg:

For us at this point, it's still a question of consumer preference at this point. We haven't yet seen demand for anything beyond a traditional check or direct deposit. Our first line of defense is direct deposit. I'm sure we'll look at Venmo and Zelle at the right moment, but as of right now, for what we're doing, we haven't seen much demand for it.

Erik Gray:

I would say that's the same. I mean, we have been asked about Venmo or PayPal a handful of times, or if people can pay premiums with Venmo, but for right now, we're sticking to more traditional payments.

Erich Sternberg:

The banking rules are complicated around these things. But you know, I think if in the future there's strong demand, it's certainly something we'll be looking at. And having our digital platform certainly allows us to do it, and to do it in an efficient way. So it's just a question of when, probably not if, and a matter of prioritization.

The Never-Ending Journey: Sustaining Digital Transformation

Digital transformation isn't a destination, but a journey. EIS provides the flexibility, scalability, and tools insurers need to stay ahead in a constantly evolving market.

Tony Grosso:

So it's not necessarily a technology constraint for you. It's more about market demand, and perhaps some of these regulatory compliance aspects.

Erich Sternberg:

Yeah. Also, all these things take time and resources and money. So just because we're digital doesn't mean everything is easy and we can just snap our fingers and do it. Just like any other place I've been, we have our backlog of all the things we want to do, and we'll get to all of them when it makes sense from a budget and a timeline and a customer perspective. And the customer demand part of it is at the top of the list.

Tony Grosso:

That's actually a really good takeaway. I think we should all understand. Being digital doesn't mean you can just suddenly just snap a finger and do all these amazing things. You still have to go through the traditional prioritization, cost-benefit analysis, and return on investment steps. But once you do, you know that you can deliver it all because of digital.

Erich Sternberg:

And your chances of delivering it are much higher in that environment.

Erik Gray:

On some of our releases, when I go down through a readout and see new things. I think, “We did that? I thought that was on the backlog. This is amazing!” So it’s not pie-in-the-sky stuff that sits there for five years. It goes in the backlog and then it happens and it goes out to production. So we’re still being wowed.

Tony Grosso:

Backlog is a totally different situation than back in the day. Your companies are great examples of ambitious insurers bringing digital insurance into the group and workplace market, into an industry that’s only known manual processes, friction, and pain for so long.

You know what’s clear? Digital transformation is here. It’s real. Companies like Wellfleet and Pacific Life are doing it. So it’s really just a choice at this point. “Do I want to be digital or do I not want to be digital?”

Ready for Your Own Digital Transformation?

The journeys of Wellfleet and Pacific Life demonstrate what's possible with EIS: rapid deployments, scalable platforms, and seamless integrations that empower insurers to differentiate themselves in a crowded marketplace.

By foregoing legacy systems and instead choosing cloud-native, API-first solutions, these insurers could transform their insurance lifecycle — from quote to claim and beyond.

Whether you want to streamline operations, improve customer experience, or future-proof your tech stack, EIS has the solutions and expertise to make it happen.

If you're ready to redefine your digital strategy and revolutionize how you do group benefits, connect with us today to see how we can partner with you for success.

[BOOK A CALL](#)