



Combat a Global Pandemic with Agile Development and Continuous Delivery

Healthfirst is New York's largest not-for-profit health insurer, offering high-quality, affordable plans to fit every life stage. With a mission to reduce health disparities across its member communities, the company takes great care to provide a world-class member experience and ensure easy access to healthcare.

With 1.6 million members* depending on Healthfirst for healthcare, ensuring a seamless and reliable experience across their website and mobile app is essential. To achieve this, Healthfirst's product and engineering teams underwent a digital transformation that would enable them to rapidly iterate and learn from their customers without disrupting the user experience. Healthfirst partnered with Split to catalyze this initiative. As the team ramped up on Split, a global pandemic was on the rise, with COVID-19 cases spreading rapidly in New York, worsening many Healthfirst members' plight, including 1 million Medicaid clients*, already in lack of necessities. To support members in their critical time of need, the team took swift action.

Accelerate mobile-first initiatives to provide virtual healthcare and support to members

Healthfirst's product and engineering teams had been developing new capabilities for their mobile app. They expedited the original launch time frame of July 2020 to April in response to COVID-19. With Split, the team consolidated their agile deployment strategies and 2x the delivery speed from every six weeks to every three weeks. This agile approach also allowed them to quickly pivot their focus onto features that would help members combat the impact of the pandemic.



Leveraging Split with our existing tool stack, we've been able to consolidate our agile deployment strategies to deliver every three weeks from an original 1.5 months.

- Julian Gutierrez Ferrara, Senior Software Engineering Manager at Healthfirst



For fast and easy access to Healthfirst's contact center, the team knew members would need a live agent chat to request help. To minimize exposure and keep people out of hospitals, the team knew members would need 24/7 access to telemedicine for doctors to virtually assess whether their condition required an in-person appointment or a trip to the emergency room. For those severely impacted by the pandemic and now struggling with food and housing insecurity, the team wanted to integrate the mobile app with NowPow, an online directory of over 5,000 organizations offering 20,000 services in New York City and surrounding areas.

Deliver fast, reliable experiences to members in need with feature flags and measurement

With Split, Healthfirst engineers built live agent chat, telemedicine sessions, and the NowPow integration into their mobile app, deploying code to production behind feature flags to keep new features dormant until ready for release. Using Split targeting and data hub, the team gradually released new features to sample populations and monitored feature flag data

in live tail to ensure target users were accessing the new features. Through Split's Segment integration, customer event data flowed directly into Split and was joined with impression data via the platform's data attribution logic to automatically calculate the impact of each feature on the in-app experience.

With Healthfirst's contact center staff newly trained on serving members via chat, the team needed to ensure members were receiving help promptly and that support teams weren't overwhelmed by the volume of chat interactions. To determine whether the new features should be extended to more users, the team closely tracked three metrics within Split: wait times for chat, system performance errors, and customer satisfaction. These metrics guided each phase of the rollout as more and more members were exposed to the new features.

Using Split to rapidly deploy and safely release new features and accurately monitor their impact on the user experience, the Healthfirst team successfully launched their new mobile app features three months earlier than initially planned. By the end of 2020, more than 36,000 members* had accessed the NowPow directory via Healthfirst's mobile app for food and housing services.



Split allowed us to bring new features to our members faster and with less risk. We were able to focus on building new features within our mobile app to support our members through the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of draining resources building an internal feature delivery solution.

- Julian Gutierrez Ferrara



Curious to see how Split can help your team deliver impactful features safer and faster? Get started with a [30-day free trial](#). Invite your teammates to test, explore, and experiment together on all Split has to offer.

*Source:
<https://healthfirst.org/newsroom/healthfirst-to-address-food-insecurity-through-holiday-donations>