

CASE STUDY

How BCG Digital Ventures launched a digital pain program to improve employee well-being and optimize healthcare costs



BCG
Digital
Ventures

Industry:

Business strategy consulting

Location:

Headquarters in Boston, MA

About BCG Digital Ventures

BCG Digital Ventures (BCGDV) is the corporate innovation and digital business building arm of Boston Consulting Group. The organization invents, launches, scales, and invests in industry-changing new businesses with the world's most influential companies. BCGDV's diverse, multidisciplinary team of entrepreneurs, operators, and investors work cross-functionally, rapidly moving from idea to market in less than 12 months. Founded in 2014, the organization has 11 Innovation Centers and satellite locations around the world.

Supporting busy employees with digital programs during the COVID-19 pandemic

BCG Digital Ventures (BCGDV) collaborates with some of the world's most influential companies to create and launch innovative businesses.

Employees are dedicated, creative - and very busy. That dedication didn't change when employees started working from home in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March, but they did trade comfortable working environments for sedentary work at kitchen tables, couches, and home offices.

When Fern Health presented a program opportunity in the spring and summer of 2020, BCGDV decided to take advantage of the chance to use digital programs to support employees working from home.

BCG Digital Ventures incubated Fern Health, and Fern Health fittingly offered a solution to address chronic pain in their own employee population. Knowing that employees were moving less and working from less-than-ergonomic environments, BCGDV hypothesized that high rates of persistent musculoskeletal (MSK) problems were likely, and wanted to provide a solution that employees could easily fit into their busy schedules from home.



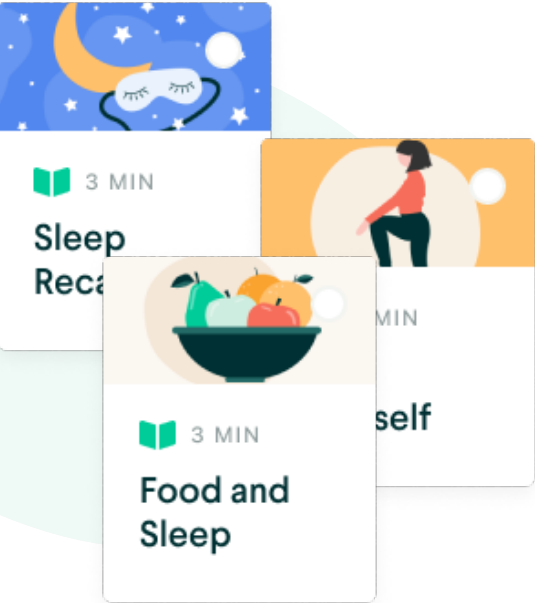
Fern Health provided a digital solution for chronic pain that addressed the physical and emotional drivers of pain.

Fern Health’s chronic pain program provided a convenient solution for BCG Digital Ventures employees. Plus, Fern Health is designed to address the physical, emotional, and social aspects of chronic pain, all of which were exacerbated for BCGDV employees working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each BCGDV employee who enrolled received a personalized pain program that included:

Pain Neuroscience Education (PNE)

The program, practices, and activities that Fern Health members engage in are designed to reconceptualize pain as a sensory output of the brain rather than solely a physical challenge.

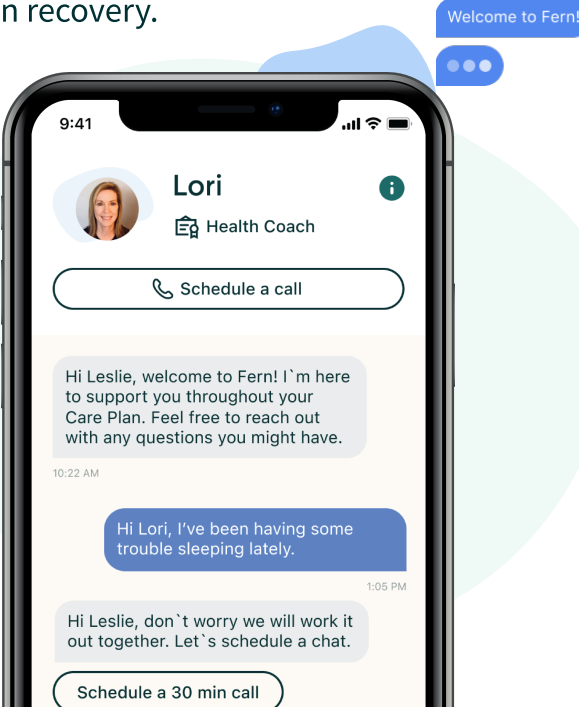


Emphasis on Movement, Sleep, and Nutrition

Chronic pain often increases feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness that can interfere with every aspect of a person’s life. Fern Health’s program helps members make manageable lifestyle changes that support whole-person recovery.

1:1 Pain Coaching

Fern Health Pain Coaches are board certified in health coaching and pain management to help members overcome barriers to recovery and set meaningful, personalized goals that drive engagement.



A pain-free implementation process

As BCG Digital Ventures has a digitally-savvy, distributed workforce, digital communication channels were chosen as the best way to reach employees about the program.

Fern Health provided a suite of digital promotion materials, including emails, messages for BCGDV's messaging system Slack, and presentations for company-wide meetings. Thanks to this coordinated approach, employee enrollment into the Fern program began within minutes after BCGDV's first announcement.

The BCGDV team appreciated that Fern Health took the lead on developing materials and guiding communication strategy, based on input around employee preferences.

Communications timeline



“The Fern team made it easy on us by taking control of all communications, planning documents, and scheduling calls when needed,” said Madison Dakovich, Senior People Development Specialist at BCG Digital Ventures.

“We were never worried about anything falling through the cracks with how organized the Fern team was.”

Stress from working from home during the pandemic contributed to high scores in depression, anxiety, and functional disability

Right away, the Fern program helped BCGDV's HR teams uncover insights into their employee population (no personally-identifiable information is shared with employers). For example, stress was impacting employees both physically and mentally, more employees were living with chronic pain than the BCGDV team expected, and symptoms were impacting their functioning.

Fern's clinical intake assessment identified several challenges BCG employees were dealing with:

Just **9%** met physical activity guidelines (>150 minutes of moderate activity per week)

30% of participants had moderate to severe functional disability because of their chronic musculoskeletal pain

24% screened positive for depression, and 21% screened positive for anxiety

Even though the average age of participants was 38, the Fern Health intake process showed that 30% of participants had moderate to severe functional disability because of their chronic pain. Functional disability refers to how much pain interferes with daily life activities, like working, socializing, and grocery shopping. In other words, chronic pain was having a significant impact on daily life for BCG Digital Ventures employees. And on average, Fern Health members from BCGDV had been living with chronic pain for eight years.

The Fern Health team shared these insights with BCGDV midway through the program. While maintaining individual's privacy, regular aggregate reporting gives clients full transparency into the program as it's running.

“Our team especially appreciated how frequently we received reports from Fern Health,” said Dakovich. **“The reports were well organized, and the Fern team always took time to interpret each data point with us. It was helpful to see the demographics as it painted a picture of what population from our company was going through the program.”**

Fern Health drove high satisfaction, decreased pain, and lower healthcare spend for BCGDV

After eight weeks in the Fern Health program, participants saw meaningful improvements in pain, depression, and anxiety symptoms, as well as increases in function.

After completing the program, Fern Health participants were also 67% less likely to consider surgery for their pain in the future.

For BCGDV, Fern's results translated into a 4:1 projected ROI based on reduction in healthcare utilization.



Decreased Pain and Improved Function

- **34%** average improvement in function
- **38%** average reduction in pain intensity (above clinically meaningful threshold)



Reduced Depression and Anxiety

- **62%** average reduction in depression symptoms
- **61%** average reduction in anxiety symptoms



Reduced Healthcare Spend

- **75%** average reduction in surgery intent
- **4:1** ROI

While overall numbers and reports are useful, the individual member experience is crucial in any employee health program, too. Direct feedback from Fern Health members helps put a statistic like “34% average improvement in function” into context.

“Yesterday was a really good day pain-wise,” a Fern Health member said. “I was running around all day doing stuff and actually paused a couple times and thought, my back doesn’t hurt!”

Between news of the pandemic and transitioning to a work-from-home environment, BCG Digital Ventures employees were under stress – and experiencing significant levels of chronic pain. Fern Health provided BCGDV with a convenient, effective way to address the physical, emotional and social sides of pain, and improve quality of life for employees.



“One of the most helpful insights from Fern was understanding just how many individuals from our company were suffering from back pain,” said Dakovich. “Once the program finished, it was amazing to see the results for our employees.”

Ready to address chronic pain at your workplace?

REACH OUT TO sales@fernhealth.com TO LEARN MORE.