

Making tomorrow's portal personal

Sharecare cofounder Jeff Arnold didn't grow up harboring entrepreneurial ambitions, though as the fifth of six children, he was always independent. In 1993, he was a college dropout, working as a reseller of Merck products, when a doctor gave him the germ of an idea that would become Quality Diagnostic Services, a cardiac arrhythmia monitoring company. Arnold started it with a \$25,000 loan from his future father-in-law.

When the company sold for \$25 million in 1998, Arnold turned around and got started on WebMD.

"My experience with QDS led to the realization that healthcare needed a homepage," says Arnold. "With WebMD we learned health information is mission critical information that has to be right 100% of the time and that brand matters."

He bought HowStuffWorks for about \$2 million in 2002, getting "really good at search" before selling it to Discovery Communications for \$250 million in 2007.

A meeting with Dr. Mehmet Oz, who wanted to build a website, led to Sharecare's launch in October 2010. More than \$40 million has been raised from investors including Oz, Harpo Studios, Sony Pictures Television and Discovery. Galen Partners and TomorrowVentures recently infused \$14 million.

"The challenge was how would I do WebMD differently 10 years later," Arnold says. "Healthcare needs to become more personal. Instead of one WebMD, we need millions of WebMDs."

Sharecare aims to be "the humble host of healthcare," he says, by letting consumers ask questions that are answered by multiple experts. Users can "friend" each other and share content. There are more than 200 major partners, almost one million questions and hundreds of thousands of answers.

"It didn't matter how good the technology was if you didn't build the patient relationship"

Jeff Arnold

Co-founder, chairman and CEO, Sharecare

2007-2009

Chief of global digital strategy, Discovery Communications

2002-2007

Chairman/CEO, HowStuffWorks

1998-2000

Founder/chair/CEO, WebMD

Experts include healthcare professionals, nonprofits and "knowledge partners," such as Pfizer, Dove, UnitedHealthcare and Weight Watchers. Revenue comes from those partners, which typically have one-year minimum, multimillion dollar contracts for sponsorship rights to answer questions in a given category, and from \$75 per month HCP profile pages.

Sharecare hasn't turned a profit, but revenue was up 300% from 2010 to 2011. Staff has grown from 20 to 110, total site visits hit 12.5 million in December and page views topped 100 million in January.

The strategy is to move consumers from information to action to support through measurable evidence-based programs (available on the site and promoted on Oz's show) like "Transformation Nation," developed with Weight Watchers, which launched in September and has more than one million participants.

"With QDS, we learned it didn't matter how good the technology was if you didn't build the patient relationship because you wouldn't get compliance and without compliance you wouldn't get results and without results doctors wouldn't use you," says Arnold. "If Sharecare doesn't connect with the consumer we're not going to drive engagement, and if we don't drive engagement we're not going to get results."

New 2012 offerings will include: SharecarePro (including CME, e-detailing and research); a "You, the Smart Patient" video library; and online doctor appointment scheduling. Sharecare recently acquired *The Little Blue Book*, whose more than 400,000 physicians will be listed on Sharecare by April (the hope is they'll convert to paid profile pages).

Down-to-earth and personable, Arnold says his dad taught him that while it's nice to be important, it's more important to be nice. He's tried to instill that tenet and the idea that "work doesn't have to feel like a job" into his four kids.

"You have to feel like you're making the right choices and having impact—whatever that impact is for you," he adds. "I don't need to work, and I don't feel like I'm working. The convergence of media, technology and healthcare interests me." — *Tanya Lewis*

An expanded version of this story can be read at mmm-online.com.

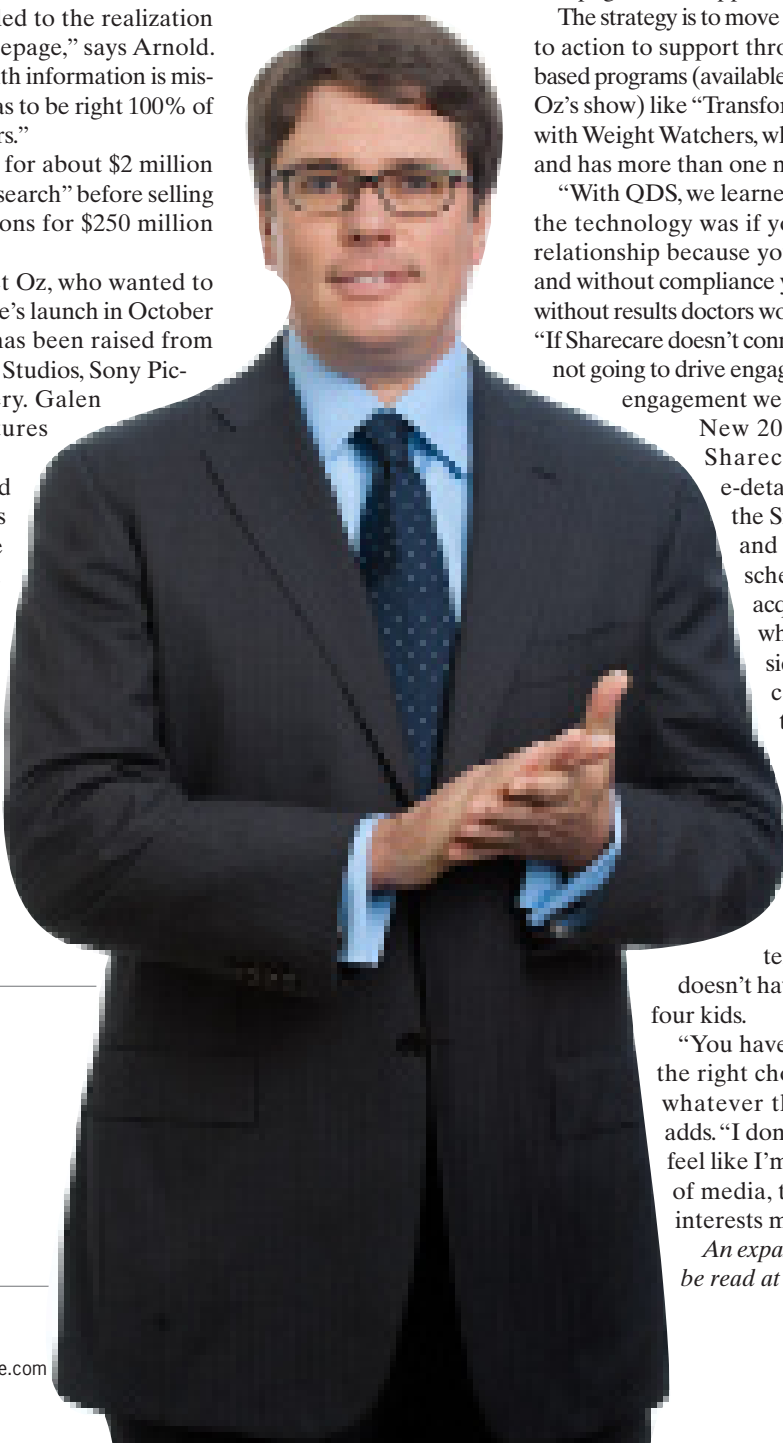


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