



Jim Weiss is among the most influential leaders in health care, whose pioneering firm solves some of the toughest challenges we face today.

Here are key take-aways from his conversation with Ken Banta about the challenges we face in encouraging people to take COVID-19 vaccination:

1. Business involvement in their communities is important, helpful and welcome.
2. Leaders should become good health citizens, since health is a driver of productivity.
3. Consistent leadership ‘from the top’ is essential to drive vaccination encouragement, but ‘bottom up’ and ‘adoption in the middle’ is important, too.
4. Dialogues that respect the concerns of the community are more likely to be effective, especially when communities have fears.

When you look at COVID-19 vaccination in the U.S., on one hand, it looks like the war is nearly won, but on the other hand we still face vaccination hesitancy and resistance. Why is that important to overcome?

This is what we experienced with flu over the years. This not the first time we've seen vaccine hesitancy and there are a lot of commonalities between this one and the others. The noise on social media confuses people, but people are asking the same questions they've raised before. Lessons learned from our experiences with hesitancy about other vaccines help us communicate about COVID-19 vaccination now.

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Is there a role a business can play in their communities? Or is that best left to local communities to do? Can business leaders help? Or do they hinder things by getting involved?

Business involvement in their communities is always helpful.

Businesses being involved in their communities is always helpful. When I was at Genentech, we were involved with South San Francisco, in programs to support the local economy and to support terrific housing, schooling and other community benefits to help in our recruiting. Those things support a business itself.

It's good to be a great corporate citizen and, also, a great health citizen. Today, among our clients, we promote the idea of health citizenship, since productivity is paramount and there's nothing more important than health. Health, of course, starts with prevention and wellness, which is where vaccines fit. If we can prevent a disease, we don't need to spend all the time, money and resources treating it or fixing the problems it causes.

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For that reason, vaccinations are a great way for businesses to get involved in their community to help make their community healthier. So, yes, businesses being involved is really important.

What is a good route to follow in terms of mobilizing a campaign in an organization? Through the top leaders? Through HR? What have you seen work best?

If the business has an employee or business resource group, that is a good place to start. HR can manage it, but it must be a campaign that you live on a daily basis, not something you post on a website as a once-and-done. The best programs are the ones that are consistent and driven from the bottom-up, the top-down and adopted in the middle.

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What you describe is easy to imagine in urban areas, with big companies and large populations. What about rural areas where businesses are small? What can those companies do?

There are several things those companies can do.

First, tailor the conversation and the dialogue appropriately. Second, promote access to broadband to get people connected with accurate, good information. Third, bring people together in dialogue and put people forward who have experience that the community respects. This could be a pastor, a farmer or someone who had a good vaccine experience. Tell the story in an authentic way, have dialogue and answer questions without finger-pointing, criticizing and being negative.

Keep in mind: these dialogues are with people who are probably more scared than skeptical.

They're not crazy for asking these questions. And that's all they're doing. Let them ask, let's give them the answers and let them make their own grown-up choices.

The quality of the dialogue is important. Be open, talk at a level people can understand and don't "pontificate 'from on high' as scientists who know better." Keep in mind that these dialogues are with people who are probably more scared than skeptical. They are concerned, and rightfully so. They know that some innovations don't work. They're not crazy for asking

these questions. And that's all they're doing. Let them ask, let's get them the answers and let them make their own grown-up choices.

Quality dialogues are especially important in Black and Latino communities. Their history with health care is well-documented and, even today, Black mothers and their babies have higher rate of mortality



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and morbidity. Many have a sense that if they use the healthcare system in any way, they will not get good care. People also have fears if they are undocumented.

The hesitancy of Black and Latino communities is understandable, which is why we listen to them well, including on social media and in market research and focus groups. We want to know what people talk about in chat rooms and forums. What are their questions? Their objections? When you know that, you can have dialogues, which are always better than lectures. Dialogues are also better than testimonials because those can be staged and mechanical. We've seen some very good town halls with doctors, patients, CEOs and community leaders. The audience listens to them in different ways and having a multi-disciplinary panel of stakeholders is more likely to reach more of the audience.

Is there anything else you would say to this audience of, essentially, CEOs and their C-suite peers?

I'll say this again: there's really, again, nothing more important than your health. The work we do, our productivity, collaboration, integration, and interactions can't happen unless we're healthy first. The pandemic taught us that. Our mission is to empower people to take advantage of this new post-pandemic digital reality, get information and act on it. It's a doable exercise to put health at the top of your agenda – including making health equity part of diversity and inclusion – and make your people healthier.

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Jim Weiss

Jim Weiss is one of the most influential people in healthcare. He leads [Real Chemistry](#), a global health innovation company solving the industry's most significant engagement and commercialization challenges. Jim is a pioneer in the application of analytics, data and precision targeting having learned to follow the data to get to the right outcome. He is an action-oriented driver to improve diversity and inclusion and advance health equity to make the world a healthier place for all. Jim and his wife Audra founded the [W2O Center for Social Commerce](#) at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

Real Chemistry

Real Chemistry is a global health innovation company making the world a healthier place by empowering patients to access the right treatment at the right time at the right value, equitably and cost-effectively. Its patient-centric approach uses data and proprietary technologies to solve today's biggest healthcare challenges, including speeding clinical trial awareness and enrollment, expanding product lifecycles, and shortening the revenue curve. Real Chemistry is advancing transformation at the intersection of consumerization, personalization and digitization impacting healthcare today.

Real Chemistry and Vaccine Confidence

Real Chemistry has partnered with the [Ad Council](#) and [Black Coalition Against COVID](#) to amplify messages and drive vaccine initiatives among healthcare professionals and communities at large, with a specific focus on the Black community. In the UK and EU, its work with [The Vaccine Confidence Project](#) continues and further exploration of supporting efforts of the WHO. Our core work is focused on ongoing analytics and insights to help understand the barriers to vaccine uptake from behavioral, social, and geographical perspectives.

Real Chemistry's vaccine confidence materials (videos, infographic, research) are here:
<https://www.realchemistry.com/article/vaccine-confidence-report>



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