



Stephen Sawyer

Managing Consultant

Strategic Benefit Advisors

BA - Mathematics, WSC '06

BA - Economics, WSC '06

Starting off as a Computer Science major, I found that my mathematics and economics classes started to hijack my interests leading to a major election change sophomore year. With an actuarial internship my junior year in Washington, D.C., the stage was set to start a career as an actuarial analyst with the health insurer Aetna. Although my interest in mathematics remained, I found that my skills were better aligned with consulting versus the traditional actuary. I could understand *and* explain the math to someone who didn't.

With a short stop at Hewitt, I've been with my current company (Strategic Benefit Advisors) for 7+ years working as a health and welfare consultant. Combining acquired soft skills with my analytical background, I've had professional success in my industry.

My niche in the office is the financials and Excel modeling. I help large, complicated clients understand their current costs and project their future costs as well. The math that I do isn't particularly complicated or theoretical, but having an analytical background and approach to my work has proven to be invaluable.

The challenge of my work, aside from the volume and deadlines, is managing and "owning" \$836,000,000 of gross medical and prescription drug spend for my primary clients. We need to prepare and present materials for a wide range of audiences from analysts up to CFOs and CEOs. The budgets need to account for market trends, internal mandates and targets, regulatory requirements, business conditions and many other factors – all of which you have to know and understand. Over time my career has become more focused on managing client relationships and teams of people, but having that underlying analytical background is still critical.

The line from mathematics and economics classes to health and welfare consulting isn't a straight or clear one, but without my time at Westfield State I couldn't do the work I do (*in the way I do it*) today.