

# The Time for Reference-Based Pricing is Now

Debunking Myths and Revealing New Opportunities



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## Debunking Myths and Revealing New Opportunities

### A more effective approach to cost control

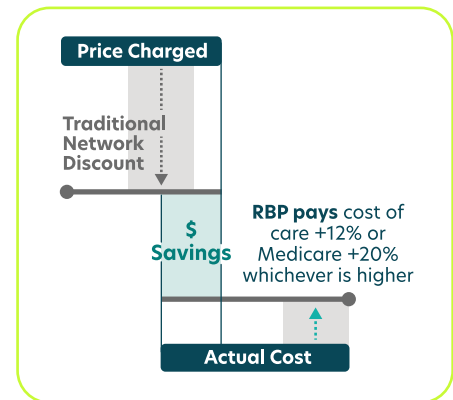
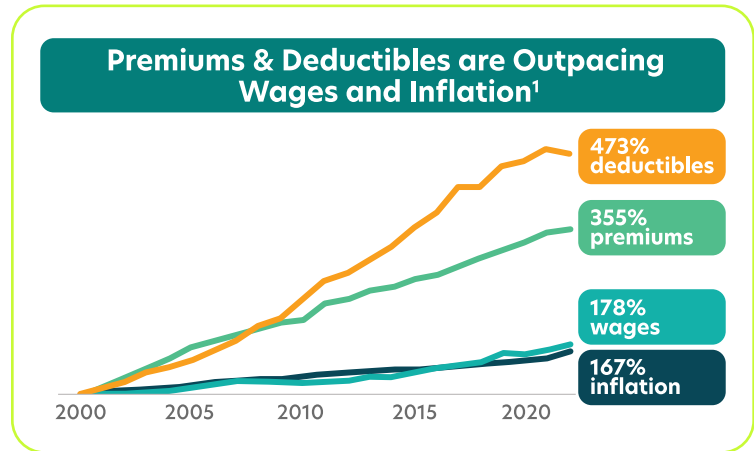
As employers look for solutions that deliver meaningful, sustainable healthcare savings, reference-based pricing (RBP) has emerged as a powerful – and often misunderstood – strategy. When implemented correctly, RBP offers a fundamentally different way to approach healthcare pricing, with proven results that traditional network-based models struggle to match.

### How RBP works

RBP delivers savings to self-funded employer plans by basing reimbursement payments to providers on objective, data-driven benchmarks such as provider-reported costs and Medicare – not arbitrary, negotiated rates. Claims are audited, repriced and paid in a fair and consistent manner.

This approach helps reduce wide pricing inconsistencies across facilities and addresses significant variation between commercial-employer payments and Medicare rates, giving employers greater control and predictability in how they pay for care.

The results over time have been consistent and compelling. Employers using RBP typically achieve first-year and ongoing savings of 15-30% compared to traditional carrier models. This is consistent with our experience at Imagine360, where we have seen many clients realize even greater impact.



To learn more how RBP drives cost savings see our **RBP guide**

### Employers aren't just surviving – they're thriving

With 15-30% in annual savings, RBP plans give employers the flexibility to reinvest in meaningful benefit enhancements, including:

- ✱ No annual premium increases
- ✱ Higher 401(k) contributions
- ✱ On-site primary care
- ✱ Reductions in deductible levels
- ✱ Additional benefits (e.g., life insurance, wellness programs)

References:

1. KFF Employer Health Benefits Survey

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## Debunking Myths and Revealing New Opportunities

RBP is widely recognized for its ability to deliver meaningful savings. Yet outdated misconceptions persist – often making it difficult to see the full picture.

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**Myth 1: “RBP leads to balance bills.”**

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**Myth 2: “RBP limits patient access to care.”**

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**Myth 3: “RBP is too complicated to implement.”**

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**Myth 4: “Employees will be confused or overwhelmed.”**

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The following pages examine these common perceptions – comparing myth to reality and providing examples of how Imagine360’s RBP solution turns these long-held assumptions into areas of strength.

### Why now?

- ✦ **Finance leaders want cost control that is structural** – tied to objective benchmarks, not dependent on carrier negotiations.
- ✦ **Employers are demanding greater transparency** into what was paid, why it was paid and how it compares to a clear baseline.
- ✦ **Employees face growing financial strain** – 36% report stress from medical bills and 44% skip or delay recommended care<sup>1</sup>.

#### References:

1. 2026 Healthcare Cost Survey by Imagine360 & Pollfish

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## Debunking Myths and Revealing New Opportunities

### Myth #1: RBP leads to balance bills.

Perception

>20% balance bill rate

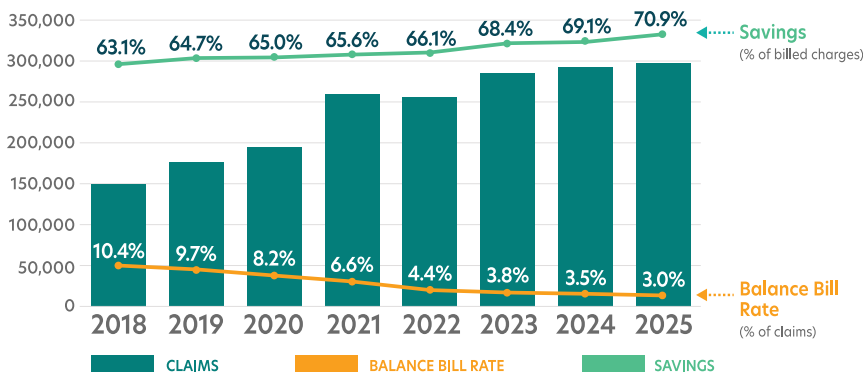
Imagine360 Reality

**3% balance bill rate<sup>1</sup>**

A common concern with RBP plans is the risk of balance billing disputes. Much of this perception is rooted in early RBP implementations and market narratives that no longer reflect how modern RBP programs work.

The difference lies in how RBP is designed and supported. Imagine360 combines years of RBP experience with enhanced provider communication and advanced data and analytics to proactively identify and address potential issues – resulting in consistently low balance bill rates and meaningful savings.

#### Imagine360 RBP Experience for Facility Claims by Year<sup>2</sup>



Imagine360 clients benefit from programs designed to actively support members when billing questions or disputes come up. In contrast, many traditional network-based plans have never considered this a priority and often leave members to navigate billing issues on their own.

### A Real Member Story

“The representatives at Imagine360 were so great and put my mind at ease instantly. We had a different (insurance) company when I first joined, and I used them for the last surgery – ended up with the nickel and diming on the billing. But this time around, it was painless by comparison.”



#### References:

1. Imagine360 member experience 2025
2. Imagine360 member experience by calendar year

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## Debunking Myths and Revealing New Opportunities

### Myth #2: RBP limits patient access to care.

#### Perception

10-12% denial rates

#### Imagine360 Reality

**98% of members see doctor of their choice<sup>1</sup>**

RBP is an open-access model that allows members to seek care from a broad range of providers, rather than limiting choice through a contracted provider network. Some assume access to care may be affected in the absence of a traditional network structure. However, in practice, access concerns are minimal when RBP is implemented with the right support. Experience shows that 98% of Imagine360 members see doctors of their choice<sup>1</sup>.

Imagine360 works proactively with providers and health systems to address potential concerns and support engagement.



### Aligning access before care begins

**Advocates & steerage:** If members need guidance, they can use self-service tools or call Imagine360 concierge navigation advocates for support.

**Contracted network wrappers:** Many clients use a hybrid approach that includes open access with RBP and contracted networks where appropriate. [Our network options](#) include our own Partners Direct Health and Imagine Health, as well as access to third-party networks.

### Supporting access at the point of care

At Imagine360, we offer established tools and services to support members if provider questions arise at the point of care.



**Single patient contracts** to deliver access on an individual basis



**Virtual cash cards** to secure payment in advance to ease any concerns



**QR code on ID cards** that link to a site with responses to common questions

References:

1. Imagine360 member experience 2024 - 2025

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## Debunking Myths and Revealing New Opportunities

### Myth #3: RBP is too complicated to implement.

#### Perception

Added complexity creates additional workload for HR

#### Imagine360 Reality

**Support is provided so HR can focus on other priorities**

Some HR leaders worry that implementing a new plan like RBP will create added work, particularly in the early stages. That's why clear communication and education from the outset are critical. With alignment on a communication plan, the right rollout and ongoing support, the transition is often just as seamless – if not better – than the current plan experience.

### Keys to successful implementation:



#### Leadership Buy-In

Senior leadership visibly **supports the change** through clear, consistent communication (e.g., announcements, town halls, meetings).



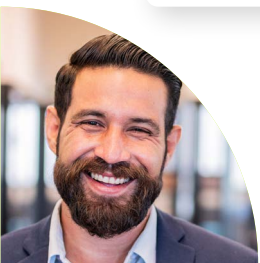
#### HR Education & Support

**Equip HR teams with tools and confidence** to answer employee questions and communicate effectively.



#### Member Education

A clear education plan **boosts members' confidence** in the new plan and **supports overall satisfaction**.



### Ongoing dedicated HR support

From implementation and Open Enrollment through ongoing education, our dedicated support representatives help HR teams stay focused on their priorities.

- \* Host virtual office hours
- \* Triage and resolve inquiries
- \* Provide warm handoffs to specialized support

### In our clients' own words

"Member support has led to less time needed from HR dealing with day-to-day plan administration, allowing our team to focus on other areas of importance."

– **Client, HR Director**

"With our previous provider, when there were employee issues or concerns, we really didn't have great support. But with Imagine360, the support has been great."

– **Client, CEO**

**Hear directly** from a client HR leader on their experience.

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### Myth #4: Employees will be confused or overwhelmed.

#### Perception

Confusion will lead to employee dissatisfaction

#### Imagine360 Reality

**98% member satisfaction<sup>1</sup>**

RBP works best when members feel informed and supported. Comprehensive, ongoing education and a single point of contact help ensure members always know where to turn, reducing confusion and anxiety along the way.

### We engage with employees throughout their healthcare journey:

#### Onboarding and pre-launch



- Processes, tools and resources to support HR through the transition

#### Benefits enrollment



- On-demand educational content
- Open enrollment email series & landing page

#### Welcoming new members



- Clear, core materials (plan info, flyers, FAQs)
- Coordinated welcome email campaign

#### Ongoing care management



- Monthly preventive care outreach
- URAC- & ACA-accredited programs

### A single point of support

Members have one number to call and a dedicated, cross-functional team supporting them every step of the way.

### In our members' own words

"Any time I come to them with an issue, the response time is quick, efficient and effective. They make medical issues easy to tackle."

"Their ongoing support shows how important it is to have someone in your corner, fighting for your financial well-being."

"Such a friendly staff that knows the importance of having every detail complete so people can feel confident."

**Hear directly** from other Imagine360 members.

References:

1. Imagine360 member service surveys



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Change doesn't need to be scary – with the right approach and the right partner.

### Reality through our clients' experience

Balance Bills	Access	HR Administration	Member Experience
<b>3%</b> balance bills	<b>98%</b> of members see doctor of their choice	<b>90%</b> annual client retention	<b>98%</b> member satisfaction
Backed by nearly <b>2 decades</b> of RBP experience and <b>30M+</b> member months of data	<b>Hybrid approach to access</b> , combining contracted physician network and regional contracts	<b>&gt;155 RBP clients converted</b> when another company did not deliver on client expectations	<b>A single health plan partner</b> with continued investment in both people and technology



**Performance guarantees** available related to savings, access and member services.

### Imagine360 client success stories

#### Morgan Automotive

65+ locations across Florida

- \$5M year one savings (25%)
- Free single coverage offered to all employees
- Expanded benefits including diabetes support and acupuncture

#### Signature HealthCARE

Post-acute care

- \$11M year one savings (41%)
- 20% reduction in employee premiums and deductibles
- Invested savings in daycare, rideshare, tuition relief, etc.

#### ML Holdings

6 operating companies

- 19% lower costs
- No increases in employee premiums and deductibles
- Enhanced 401(k) match using plan savings

See **Success Stories** for more client results.

**Imagine360 didn't just adopt RBP – we invented it.**

Contact us **online** or via email ([info@imagine360.com](mailto:info@imagine360.com)) to schedule an opportunity assessment.