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**DMEC 30th Anniversary Video  
*Transcript***

Terri L. Rhodes: When DMEC was founded in 1992 by Sharon Kaleta and Marcia Carruthers, the premise was to bring risk management professionals and benefit professionals together to network and talk about how they could manage the disability component of workers' compensation, short-term disability, (00:00:30) and long-term disability. But not just how to manage it, but how to do it in a consistent and integrated way, hence the term 'integrated disability management'.

Frank Alvarez: Absence management professionals today have to be so much more focused on compliance issues than they did 30 years ago. The absence management professional really has to be a compliance specialist too.

Debbie Jacobs: We have several other states that have paid programs, and a lot of these (00:01:00) newer ones actually have built-in job protection whereas the very first ones never had that. So it's come a long way. There's a lot of advancement in how we help employees that have a need for leave or have a need for accommodation to be able to stay at work.

Michelle Jackson: Previously, a compliance issue and something that employers just wanted to make sure they were compliant with. Now leave is really about retaining talent, about (00:01:30) supporting your employees, and about making sure that employees understand the benefits that they have available to them.

Debby Kweller: The day we talk about total absence management, which is comprehensive and refers to employer's policies, procedures, processes that reduce employee absenteeism and maximize productivity.

Karen Raftery: There's no easy button. So after -- over the last 20 or 30 years, it continues to get more complex, and it seems to be (00:02:00) compounding in complexity year over year.

Kimberly Mashburn: Most of the employees coming into the workforce now, it's important to them to have flexibility and more time away from work.

Kevin Curry: What I think has changed over the last 30 years is definitely the complexity. The regulatory environment has changed. We saw significant changes in the late 2000s. We continue to see changes today, but the HR professionals in our industry are resilient. I think they have an energy (00:02:30) around building forward with their programs.

Angie Brown: Well, I hope that we'll see the enactment of a federal paid family and medical leave as the United States is the only industrialized nation without one. It's time for us to keep up with the rest of the world.

Jessica Bolar: It's really become something that is, I wouldn't even say table stakes. It's just an expectation, right, in order to really attract and retain top talent. And it's not only now at this point do you have this, it's like, what (00:03:00) do you have?

Sheila Sokolski: We've really need to move the environment forward so that everyone has access to equal benefits. And that could be through national programs, state programs, and encouraging employers to create programs for their own employees that are going to meet those needs.

Robin Nichols: All what's happening today with vaccine mandates, paid parental leave, all the items that are following around us during the pandemic becomes vital now that we get some good tools (00:03:30) into the hands of all the employers so they know how to react to all the legislation that's coming down the pipeline.

Karen Raftery: Sometimes it takes crisis to really move the mountain to accomplish great things. And I think coming out of Covid, we have a better understanding of mental health, how to handle leaves, and how to challenge ourselves. And not just traditional work environments, but how we can really support our employees in a much more creative way moving forward.

Deshawna Manley: It is a rapidly (00:04:00) growing area of expertise that is always going to need support. But I think there are great things ahead.

Angie Brown: Anybody in the insurance industry or the TPA industry certainly is very familiar with DMEC and what they do to support business.

Kimberly Mashburn: What DMEC provides employers is an opportunity to network with other employers and also gain valuable information about the various types of legislation in states and hear from industry experts like Helen Applewhaite (00:04:30) from the Department of Labor for instance.

Debbie Jacobs: DMEC has been a great partner in helping those professionals. They give them the tools. They give them the education. They've been able to help grow as the industry has been growing. And so it has really come a long way actually in 30 years.

Megan Holstein: DMEC is really the go-to source in our industry for benchmarking information, the latest and greatest, and compliance rules, and just industry needs, and really to get our finger on the pulse of what employers need in order (00:05:00) to solve their absence management and disability pain points.

Jessica Bolar: We're a strong community, and I think that's one of the strongest, best assets that we have, is just really problem solving as a collective. And so I think that's really what DMEC brings to the table for us as an industry and for employers.

Bryon Bass: Looking at policy and plan design benchmarking, which has been something that the professional has been looking for for a number of years. DMEC decided to invest in that particular area, and as a result, (00:05:30) we are all working together, not only from a supplier perspective, but also on the employer's side, so that we can have a comprehensive view of what plans are out there, what policies are out there, what employers are doing and trying to keep ahead of the benefits offerings that are provided in the disability management space.

Kimberly Mashburn: The overall culture of DMEC is to build friendships. I have lifelong friendships from attending DMEC meetings and getting to know the various people who attend DMEC.

Deshawna Manley: Really big fan of DMEC. (00:06:00) I think that all employers should be engaged just because I think that the service that they offer, you don't find anywhere else, and it's so important.

Michelle Jackson: DMEC is a phenomenal organization that I've just met some of my very dear friends in this industry, and I enjoy interacting with them.

Debby Kweller: Keep on doing what you've been doing for 30 years. (00:06:30)

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