Transforming Patient Expectations into Great Experiences

The healthcare industry is more competitive than ever. Success comes from treating patients as customers and delivering on the promise of a great experience. According to National Research, ‘It’s not rocket science that when you have a positive, favorable consumer experience with a product or service, you will keep going back for more’. However, as simple as this sounds, healthcare organizations have a hard time getting it right.

No Such Thing as ‘Business as Usual’
It is no longer ‘business as usual’ for healthcare providers. The tough global economy has challenged health systems to continue providing high-quality service in the face of increasing needs for access and declining reimbursements. Hospitals have come a long way in improving the level of care and the quality of the patient experience. These efforts resulted in increased patient satisfaction. But, health systems also realize they need to transform how they approach their patients and treat them as active consumers of healthcare instead of passive recipients of service.

Rise of the Healthcare Consumer
Patients are empowered to demand more from their providers. Online medical information and access to social media make for a curious and more knowledgeable patient who demands a combination of courtesy and efficiency from their care team that mirrors the service they receive from other institutions they do business with. And, although the demand for service continues to rise, patients still expect exemplary outcomes. The disproportion between health care’s current capabilities and the innovation demanded from them can be significantly decreased through forward-looking thinking. Patient centric product design, a decrease in non-value added requirements, an emphasis on patient tolerance and the maximization of current technology will drive this paradigm shift.

According to a study by the National Research Corporation Market Insights Survey, the largest healthcare consumer survey in the U.S., eight percent of patients said their hospital experience was poor enough to not recommend the healthcare facility to family or friends.
Patients are less forgiving of poor service than they once were because the bar keeps rising. With service comparisons now the norm, health systems need to do more than just provide world-class medical care. They must satisfy patients through differentiated experiences that create greater loyalty.

**Blueprint for Success**
The key is to approach patients as customers. This focus forces health system’s capabilities from a purely clinical mentality to one that encompasses customer management and development. Hospitals should concentrate on offering patient-relevant services that deliver unique and differentiating experiences.

**Offering Engaging and Personalized Service**
Know who patients are and connect with them how and when they choose to be communicated with. Today, a large gap exists between the patient interaction and behavior outside of a clinical environment. This gap is one of the largest points of failure in creating effective patient experiences.

According to Accenture, many hospitals have been especially focused on improving efficiency and reducing costs. However, to be effective and successful in the coming years, hospitals need to deliver a more memorable service experience. CRM competencies and better interaction tools will be important to achieving customer-centricity.

**What is Healthcare CRM and Why Does it Matter?**
Healthcare CRM is a broadly used term for a customer relationship management system, or CRM, used in healthcare.

According to Wikipedia, there are two basic types of healthcare CRMs. One is for a healthcare organization to stay in contact with their patients, the other is for a healthcare organization to stay in contact with referring organizations.

**Making Information More Consistent**
Improving consistency means setting patient service expectations to the level where they trust the systems and processes put in place. This approach reduces stress and reassures patients who might otherwise be confused by conflicting information.

**Providing Access Options**
Patients in different demographics have different preferences for receiving and accessing information. Research has shown that younger patients prefer to pull information when they need it while older patients are more interested in having information pushed to them.

Research from Datamonitor estimates the combined investment by the healthcare sector in the major western markets in CRM software will have a CAGR of 9% over the next six years.

Healthcare organizations generate new patients in two different ways. The first is through patient choice. Individuals who are sick, hurt, or need a healthcare provider in some way find one that is suitable to meet their needs. Health systems want to attract new patients while maintaining relationships with existing patients so they use a healthcare CRM to manage ongoing, proactive relationships with the public as well as the internal interaction lifecycle with a patient.

Healthcare organizations also generate patients through referring organizations. If an individual goes to a general practitioner and needs their appendix removed, they might be referred to a general surgeon.
Many hospitals and clinics rely heavily on referrals for patients. Hospitals and clinics use a healthcare CRM to maintain relationships with primary care physicians or other referring healthcare organizations.

**Patients Deserve Better**

Navigating through today’s healthcare system is usually an overwhelming journey for patients, front-end employees, and even clinical staff. Patients need to schedule appointments, refill prescriptions, and speak with hospital staff in a timely manner. Behind the scenes, the hospital staff are simultaneously trying to find convenient ways to optimize patients’ experiences and document patient interactions or protected health information. Implementing a sound infrastructure that combines CRM and telephony technology will not only increase patient satisfaction, communication, and access to appointments, but also optimize clinical readiness and documentation.

![Typical patient-provider interaction process](image)

**Aspect Can Help**

Aspect Healthcare solutions provide the tools to implement an advanced telephony system that enhances care coordination through the data stored in the CRM. Providers are looking for ways to centralize communications and optimize associated processes and staff across even the most remote locations. Aspect Patient Connect enables just this type of patient-focused ecosystem through a purpose-built, unified telephony environment for multi-site healthcare organizations.

But this is only part of the solution. Dynamics CRM provides the core system that gives healthcare providers the ability to manage their relationships with patients/members and the community at large. Clinicians can track all requests from patients/members and measure KPIs to ensure expectations are being met with superior service. This includes a searchable knowledgebase and process-driven support system that allows healthcare professionals information access in one central location.
Working together, Aspect’s Patient Connect puts patients first by improving patient access to scheduling by optimizing hospital staff and available patient appointments. Dynamics CRM works as a system of checks and balances, giving clinicians the information they need to build deeper relationships with their patients while allowing the needs of the patient to be prioritized in an efficient and concise manner.

**Give Your Patients a Better Experience**

There are significant numbers of patients interacting with your health system right now – more to the point, these healthcare consumers are impacting your reputation. The concerning part is that patients deserve a much better patient experience, yet health systems can’t in many cases, define who their existing and potential patients are or even recognize them. This is a huge problem because your success depends on delivering service levels that drive patient loyalty. Today’s patients are different. Period. They are smarter and more powerful than ever before. They have greater expectations of their doctors, clinics and hospitals. The challenge is meeting and then exceeding these expectations to build meaningful patient-provider relationships. The one thing you can count on is that if you aren’t interacting with your patients in a meaningful way, your competitors are. Aspect can help you create experiences your patients deserve and remain loyal too.