



How to Make **Patient Experiences** Your **Differentiation:**  
**A GUIDE**

# 1



Today, the healthcare industry is more competitive than ever before. With an increasing number of healthcare providers, consolidated healthcare organizations, a growing number of patients, and increasing healthcare costs, make it a tough crowd to beat out.

82% of patients say that customer service is the most important factor when they are choosing a healthcare provider. If your practice is providing poor patient experience, you can expect to lose 8 out of 10 of your patients. That's why healthcare organizations focus on improving patient experiences.

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The healthcare industry is undergoing unprecedented changes. Gone are the days when healthcare was centered around institutions. Today, healthcare is all about being patient-centric.

You are probably reading this ebook because you understand the importance of patient experience, and you are eager to improve upon this. .

Healthcare outcomes are just as important as healthcare experiences. The advent of patient satisfaction score-based federal reimbursement programs, the stronger effect of social proof spread through social media, and the importance of brand loyalty and trust, have meant that healthcare organizations have changed which metrics they measure their success by.

**Differentiate or Perish!**  
Differentiation is the process of making your product or service unique. It's important to differentiate yourself from your competitors because without it your business is one of the many faceless businesses out there. For medical businesses, there is one key element that can help you differentiate from your competitors – delivering improved patient experiences.

Today, the most important metric is patient experience.



# 2 Patient Experience Improvement Tips



Healthcare organizations are focusing their investments to improve patient experiences. A recent survey by the Deloitte-Scottsdale Institute survey found that 92% of health systems cited consumer satisfaction and engagement as a top goal of their investments<sup>2</sup>.

It is another reason why improving patient experiences should be your healthcare business' focus as well. If you don't, you'll be left behind. But just because everyone is working on patient experience improvement, doesn't mean that you can't do it better.

Through days of research, internal discussions, and real-life case studies, we at BraveLabs have come up with 7 (+1 bonus) tips that can help you deliver excellent patient experiences and differentiate your service from your competition.



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# 3 Increase better healthcare outcomes



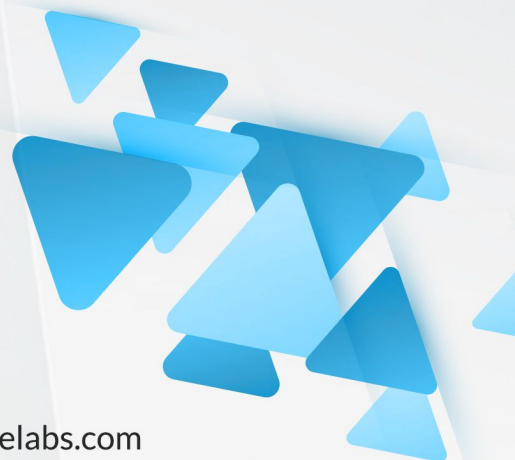
Many healthcare providers think when trying to improve patient experiences that the outcome of the healthcare journey doesn't matter. That is not true. One of the first ways to improve the patient experience is by providing better healthcare outcomes. A patient is happier with their healthcare experience if they have a better outcome. But quite a few factors (namely; safety, time taken, efficiency) that improve the quality of care also lead to higher patient experiences<sup>3</sup>.

When patients are coming to your hospital or practice, to feel better, make sure that their expectations are being met. Sometimes these expectations can be unrealistic, so it is your responsibility as their provider to inform them about realistic expectations (don't forget to explain why their expectations were unrealistic).

There is something more that you need to know. As improving experiences and quality of care share the same factors, when you start improving patient experiences you start improving the quality of care and thus, healthcare outcomes.

Improving patient experiences and patient healthcare outcomes is a self-fulfilling cycle, the more you focus on one the more the other improves. While many healthcare providers may think that these improvements in healthcare outcomes may just be a mental bias of patients, research has shown that higher patient experience leads to objective improvement in healthcare outcomes<sup>4</sup>.

“ **One of the first ways to improve the patient experience is by providing better healthcare outcomes.** ”





# 4 Improve Communication Channels



How often do you communicate with your patients? Maybe 4-5 times a year. Each time that they visit your healthcare business, how long are you spending with them? Maybe a few minutes each visit. With such a short time spent with each patient, you can't rely on your in-person visits to be the sole channel of communication.

Digital communication has meant that communication channels between customers and businesses have never been better. Ordered some food? You can track the location of your delivery. Bought some service online? You have chatbots and customer service professionals waiting to help you right on the website.

But the healthcare industry isn't there yet.



**70% of patients say they will choose medical providers who send emails or text messages when it's time for preventive or follow-up care.**

A different survey found that over half the patients (57%) wanted healthcare providers to send them an automated text, voice, or email reminders to encourage them to take preventive actions<sup>6</sup>. Another survey from Accenture found that patients say that providers who listen to them, explain their conditions to them, and practices with well-coordinated communication are the three most important factors when it comes to having good experiences. Having a medical provider who explains to them was more than twice as important as affordability, which many providers consider to be a huge sticking point<sup>7</sup>.

Communication proves to be one of the biggest pitfalls for healthcare businesses when it comes to patient experiences. Healthcare businesses are failing to communicate properly, and patients want increased communication from their providers.

# Build-in transparency



Talking about affordability, the US health-care system has gained quite a lot of notoriety for its exorbitant costs and opaque pricing. Everyone has either experienced or heard about someone who experienced healthcare costs that were a burden on them. Frustratingly, these costs are not explained. That's why frustrations with costs are one of the biggest issues that bring down patient experiences.

But despite this being a known pain point, very few healthcare organizations address these issues. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of patients have stated that transparency about the cost of healthcare services is very important or critically important to their overall satisfaction<sup>8</sup>. With 77% of patients stating that healthcare costs remain unpredictable, it shows that healthcare organizations are not taking the time to provide transparency<sup>9</sup>.

While many think that this impetus from the patients to have greater cost transparency is only seen in the younger age groups, that's quickly beginning to change. Nearly 1/5th of seniors surveyed and over 1/5th of baby boomers also want healthcare costs to be more transparent, especially before treatment. 41% of millennials also want greater cost transparency in the health-care industry<sup>10</sup>. All of these figures have shot much higher after the pandemic.

By providing costs before and after surgery, and other healthcare processes, medical professionals can help patients handle their financial responsibilities. With 80% of patients wanting their medical providers to help them manage their finances, focusing on this alone can set your medical practice well above the competition<sup>11</sup>.

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# Upgrade customer service processes



Today's patients are customers first. They want experiences that are reminiscent of what they have in other industries. So when patients today interact with healthcare businesses and medical practices, only to deal with archaic processes their experience is affected negatively.

Compare the above process to this upgraded one; the patient finds your business online, they visit your website, they click on 'schedule an appointment', they choose from the available dates, and once the appointment is confirmed your administrative staff adds it to the calendar.

## **81% of patients want to schedule their appointments online and very few medical businesses are catering to those needs**

Take for example just the simple task of booking an appointment. For most medical practices this is how it would play out; a patient first finds information about your healthcare business, they then try to find the phone number for your practice, then call your practice or business and schedule an appointment, your administrative staff looks through your calendar and then gives them a date, and then after some back and forth they decide on an appointment time.

Which one would you prefer when it comes to booking appointments?

81% of patients want to schedule their appointments online and very few medical businesses are catering to those needs<sup>12</sup>. Over two thirds of patients in a different survey stated that they would rather choose a healthcare provider who offers the ability to book, change, or cancel appointments online<sup>13</sup>.

This is not true for scheduling but other customer service processes as well, like billing, collections, appointment confirmations, follow-ups, and more. The more you cater to what the patients want, the easier it is to differentiate your medical business from others.



# Develop a patient experience strategy

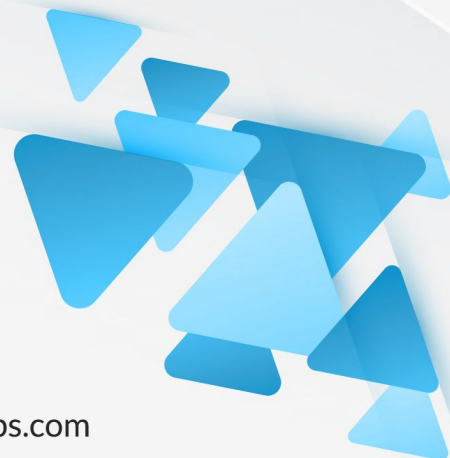


Having an overall goal to improve the patient experiences that you deliver is great but it doesn't help your medical business achieve that goal. A strategy helps you achieve those goals by breaking them down into smaller milestones and gives your healthcare business proper processes that need to be followed to achieve those goals.

“ **A strategy helps you achieve those goals by breaking them down into smaller milestones** ”

Developing a strategy is often a time-consuming task that requires expertise and research. You may choose to offload this work to a healthcare marketing agency or any other firm that can help build a strategy. While this will of course cost more than making a strategy yourself, you should also consider the amount of time that you would save by outsourcing these tasks. Consider your hourly rate of income and then determine whether offloading this work is financially feasible for your business or not.

Remember that a great strategic planning process needs to be as brief as possible while still containing all the relevant details for the big picture. When making a patient experience strategy, think about where you want to be, how would you want to achieve that, and what steps you can take to make it happen with the least amount of resources.





# 8 Provide tools to make the patient journey convenient



Customers always value convenience. Through the introduction of modern technology and tools, you can significantly improve the convenience that your patients experience when they go through the healthcare journey with your hospital or practice. .

Just having an online web presence for your business is one of the best ways that you can improve convenience as it becomes much easier for patients to find you and contact you. It's no surprise that nearly 6 out of every 10 Gen Y patients would choose a medical practitioner who has an online presence<sup>14</sup>.

Other tools include building a patient portal for your customers so that it is easier for them to access, update and share their healthcare information with you and other providers. 78% of patients have said they would use a secure online method to access their medical histories and share information with their doctor<sup>15</sup>.

Patient portals are one of the most frequently used tools by patients to make their healthcare journeys more convenient. As long as the healthcare business or practice provides the facility, patients will use them. 83.3% of patients who have used patient portals have used them to access test results<sup>16</sup>.

“ **6 out of every 10 Gen Y patients would choose a medical practitioner who has an online presence** ”

# 9 Polish up on engagement programs

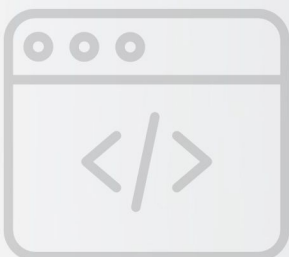
Have you ever had the experience of buying something like a subscription or something similar and then being frustrated when you can't reach your service provider? How annoying is it to chase down the business to whom you are trying to give money for their service? For patients, whose service provider affects their health, it is extremely frustrating.

“ **7 out of 10 patients want healthcare businesses to make recommendations about preventive tests and screenings** ”

Patients value communication with their healthcare providers. That's why you need to ensure that your healthcare business is doing the best it can with engagement programs. Keep in mind, that engagement doesn't start at the appointment and it doesn't end when the patient finishes their healthcare journey. Engagement is a far more comprehensive process.

From outreach programs that spread awareness about medical conditions and diseases to personalized email reminders to patients for their tests, appointments, and more, engagement allows you to have a channel of communication with your patients. 7 out of 10 patients want healthcare businesses to make recommendations about preventive tests and screenings for their profile<sup>17</sup>.

It also improves one of the biggest sources of revenue leaks in the healthcare industry – lost referrals. Regardless of what kind of engagement you are focusing on, it is vital for delivering great patient experiences to have at least two or more engagement channels. Emails, text messages, newsletters, and even social media platforms are viable tools that healthcare professionals should take advantage of to have better engagement with their patients.





# 10 Learn from their experiences – Surveys

Perhaps the most important tip that you can take away from this ebook is the fact that you need to keep learning. Without learning what you are doing right or wrong, it is hard to make effective changes that help you improve. Make learning from patients, iterating, and improving a continuous process in your healthcare business. But how do you do this for patient experiences in your healthcare business? The answer is simple – comprehensive surveys.

Now we are not going to talk about patient satisfaction surveys like the HCAHPS survey though that is a good starting point. Your surveys need to be specific to what you are trying to achieve in your healthcare process. Asking a patient about your social media presence when you are trying to improve the transparency around the billing process isn't going to lead to much.

The use of customer management systems and survey tools can help your healthcare business to easily start surveying and understanding the needs and wants of your patients. With this insight, you can begin to make insight-based changes that help you deliver improved patient experiences.



# 1 Patient Experience Drawbacks

Starting to deliver improved patient experiences at your healthcare organization can be a relatively straightforward task. But this doesn't mean that aren't several issues when it comes to improving experiences.

One of the biggest struggles that medical businesses have when it comes to improving experiences, is finding enough capital to start making the changes needed. From introducing automated services and tools to having a digital presence, all of these changes need significant upfront expenditure to be implemented properly.

Lack of proper strategy and experience is also another factor that can bring down any experience improvement programs. While the changes as a whole seem intuitive, the minutiae can get confusing.

With many medical care providers not having enough time, patient experience improvement strategies can also suffer from a lack of time investment and manpower.

Each and every medical practice is different, and each one can face its own unique struggles when trying to deliver better patient experiences. In all cases, medical practices need to calculate the cost-benefit analysis of delivering better experiences for their own practice.





# Conclusion




Healthcare is changing. Patients are customers and want to be treated in the same way as they would be in a different customer service environment. By inculcating empathy, transparency, and information sharing into healthcare processes, healthcare businesses and practitioners can find success in this new era of healthcare while improving the quality of care that patients are seeing.

While many in the industry have denigrated this newfound focus on the customer experience aspects of healthcare, the truth is that healthcare is not comprised of just the technical aspects of care (diagnosis and treatment). Similarly, quality of care is not dependent on just these technical aspects.

That's why today delivering improved patient experiences can set your healthcare business apart and above the competition.

We wrote this ebook intending to help healthcare business owners and practitioners of all sizes to improve the patient experiences that are being delivered. . This is not only to help healthcare businesses succeed and thrive but to also help patients receive the level of healthcare experience that they deserve.

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