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by RingCentral

Choosing the ideal patient Engagement solution:

Four Must-Haves For Healthcare Providers



Industry Changes And Digital Transformation

The US healthcare industry is in the midst of an evolving value-based care focus—and for good reason. Focusing on better patient outcomes as a primary goal only serves to heighten the importance of efficiency. In turn, that focus on efficiency results in happier patients and less costly healthcare—a win-win situation for both patients and providers. Paramount to this pay-for-performance landscape is a need for providers to use modern cloud communications technology. Doing so keeps providers and patients connected and mutually accountable for creating an ideal patient experience.

Healthcare Challenges + Cloud Communications

The healthcare industry depends on fast, seamless communication and collaboration. has a direct impact on critical workflows in the ideal patient experience. Patient scheduling, care coordination, and post-discharge patient engagement are just a few of the areas that shine when healthcare providers are able to unify voice, team messaging, and online meetings. Cloud communication and customer engagement solutions can give providers a competitive advantage. With the cloud, communication and collaboration can become integrated into one solution that works the way patients and providers work—across any device, anytime, anywhere. Most importantly, the flexibility of cloud communication—particularly when it comes to solutions with open platforms—means providers can add new capabilities in minutes, with almost immediate access to the latest innovations.

In the following pages, we'll discuss the four necessary components of a modern cloud communication and customer engagement solution for healthcare providers. In each section, we'll also give you the most important capabilities to look for in order to deliver the ideal patient experience.

Did You Know?

“In the past five years, the number of healthcare companies using cloud services has experienced dramatic growth—from 8% of the market to 71%.”

— ZK Research, [2019 IT Priorities Survey](#)

1 A Unified Communications Platform

Perhaps the most significant obstacle to building the ideal patient experience is the traditional calling-centric communication model. And nowhere in the process does that become more evident than with patient scheduling. Calling-centric systems often lack the key components necessary to make communication between patients and providers seamless. Without capabilities such as cross-device support, flexible call handling, and SMS/MMS*, for example, patient calls can go unanswered. Limited capabilities also mean appointment follow-up is inconsistent, at best. These have serious implications for patients and providers alike.

Unanswered calls mean potential lost revenue for providers, while poor follow-up communication leads to missed appointments, which can jeopardize patient health. A unified communications and patient engagement platform in the cloud provides seamless connections across modes of communication (voice, messaging, online meetings, and video), as well as devices (desktop and mobile devices). Because it's all integrated, patients get to use their devices of choice, and providers get the features they need to ensure that patients reach a person when they call. In addition, capabilities such as automated text messages for appointment reminders dramatically reduce costly no-shows for providers.

What to look for:

- A cloud-based communications and collaboration solution that's easy to manage, reduces cost, flexible, and provides quick access to innovative new features.
- An all-in-one platform that allows your staff to connect with patients using voice, SMS/MMS, video meetings, fax, and team messaging across their digital channel of choice—from anywhere, on any device, at anytime.





2 Real-Time Communications and Collaboration

Efficient, effective, and secure real-time collaboration across all communications channels optimizes the overall patient experience, pre to post-treatment. Providing quality care to patients requires constant and easy access to clinical information. It also requires the ability to effectively and efficiently communicate across dispersed teams to exchange critical information throughout complex care-coordination workflows. Fragmented care coordination translates to longer patient treatment and discharge delays. All of this can be improved by streamlining clinical workflows with the right cloud communications solution. Staff will be better able to reach the right people across the organization at the right time using the most appropriate mode of communication. Optimizing care coordination is paramount to achieving valuebased care incentive milestones.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nurses spend up to 60 minutes a day looking for doctors, clinicians, and other staff members.

— ZK Research, 2019 Healthcare IT Study

What to look for:

The ideal cloud communications solution for healthcare providers offers a consistent user experience across desktop and mobile devices, including:

- Messaging apps with defined teams, dashboards, file sharing, unified presence status across devices, and task assignments that speed up care-team coordination (no more paper or emails)
- Video meetings/conferencing apps with voice, video, screensharing, and chat capabilities
- Advanced routing, queuing, call control, and call-distribution capabilities that direct urgent calls to the right person

3 Engage Patients In Follow-Up

When patients get more involved in their own care, they're more likely to adhere to instructions and ultimately experience a better outcome. Unfortunately, when patients aren't engaged, the results can be devastating—anxiety, stress, longer stays in the hospital, and more frequent readmissions.

Cloud-based communications solutions allow providers to design a patient access center that supports post-discharge engagement. Features such as click-to-chat and click-to-call allow patients to efficiently reach providers to address health questions or scheduling needs, which leads to increased patient engagement, improved access to providers, and shorter time to resolution. Providers can also add automated outbound patient notifications using SMS/MMS* to follow up on patient satisfaction surveys, freeing critical staff time to focus on in-office patients and services.

A Cloud-based communications solution that allows for enhancements to patient portals also make sense for providers. It can reduce avoidable readmissions and keeps patients engaged in, and accountable for their ongoing care requirements.

What to look for:

- A unified communications platform that provides a seamless experience that keeps patients and employees across the healthcare organization connected.
- Communication enabled patient portals that improve patient/provider access
- Automated outbound patient notifications and reminders that can be added via SMS or phone to increase patient attendance rates or follow up on patient satisfaction surveys

4 A Secure And Flexible Platform

Data security is a major challenge for every company—and particularly for healthcare providers. HIPAA regulations mandate the secure transfer of data. Unfortunately, many healthcare professionals use personal devices, send patient data over unsecured channels, and are generally out of compliance.

As a result, provider staff require a single and secure solution that addresses the need to maintain separate personal and business phones without having to use multiple devices. Healthcare providers need a cloud communications platform that supports Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), a “one-device, two-numbers” experience that enables staff to securely use one device for both personal and business.

All care teams using one common communications platform across locations helps ensure that all security and compliance standards are followed. It's important to note, however, that while providers themselves are audited for HIPAA compliance, the SaaS vendors they use aren't. That's why it's also important to find a solution that's HITRUST CSF-certified to protect health information across communication channels in accordance with HIPAA regulations.

A related—and often overlooked—challenge for many providers is the devastation caused by communication outages. Systems outages mean providers are forced to resort to paperbased processes, for example. The lack of access to recent records means providers have no information on prior care, which puts lives at risk. Communication becomes even more critical in such situations. With a communication system that can remain online during an outage, hospitals can build effective solutions to deal with the situation.

In addition to security, providers also require flexible cloud communications and patient engagement solutions that can adapt and grow with their business.

The best solutions offer a robust selection of out-of-the-box integrations to popular business apps (Microsoft 365, GSuite, Salesforce, Box, Okta, and more) and also give customers the option to build their own integrations to customize workflow solutions. Lastly, don't forget to make sure that the system integrates with the most common systems used by healthcare professionals.

What to look for:

- A communication solution that's HITRUST CSF-certified status to meet regulatory requirements defined by HIPAA
- A solution that remains in operation even during Internet outages, with functionality for:
 - emergency calling
 - extension-to-extension dialing
 - inbound and outbound calling
- A communication and patient engagement solution built on an open platform that allows you to utilize out-of-the-box integrations with other business-critical applications for email, CRM, storage, and more
- A solution that also includes a robust set of APIs for custom integrations to healthcare-specific apps

Did you Know?

"Any [cloud-based communications] solution should have a full suite of application programming interfaces (APIs) to enable click-to-talk within clinical applications. Such interfaces enhance the ability of physicians and other clinicians to speak promptly with patients while reviewing critical information."

—ZK Research, Cloud Communications Can Relieve the Pain in Care Coordination, April 2019



CONCLUSION

The value-based healthcare model fails or succeeds based on one guiding principle: place patient needs at the center of all healthcare workflows and the rest—costs, efficiencies, and positive patient outcomes—will follow. Taking it one step further, it's also clear that a true focus on building an ideal patient experience requires much greater levels of communication and engagement between patients and providers than what commonly exists today. The consumerization of technology means patients expect all communication, including with providers, to mirror how they communicate in their personal and work lives. That includes multiple channels (voice, text, video calls) across multiple platforms (mobile phones, laptops and desktops, tablets). And they expect it all to work seamlessly and quickly.

If the experience doesn't meet expectations, the consequences are significant for providers. Missed calls, for example, mean lost patients. Lack of follow up means no-shows. Estimates suggest that no-shows cost the U.S. healthcare system \$150 billion per year, and cost providers an average of \$200 per unused time slot. The consequences can be much worse for patients: higher costs, inconsistent care, and poor outcomes.

With so much on the line, it's no wonder providers need to be so careful about their choices when it comes to communication and patient engagement. Cloud solutions are a no-brainer at this point. On-premises solutions are simply too costly, too inflexible, and too limiting to support modern healthcare communication.

When it comes to evaluating cloud solutions, consider this: seamless patient experiences are driven by seamless technology. Point solutions offer tremendous capabilities, but ultimately carry one overriding concern. If they're not integrated effectively, chances are your patient experience isn't integrated, either.

As you consider the four keys to selecting a communication solution above, consider not only how your solution connects your voice, messaging, and meeting technology but also how these integrate with your contact center solution. And to build an ideal patient experience, look for open platforms that allow your communications technology to be the central hub among your other key business applications.



How Avaya Cloud Office® helps providers create the ideal patient experience

Avaya Cloud Office provides a unified cloud communications and collaboration solution that allows providers to seamlessly collaborate via integrated calling, meeting, messaging, and collaboration including video. Avaya Cloud Office allows staff to work the way they want, giving providers the ability to engage with patients on the channels they prefer. Both patients and providers can connect anywhere, anytime, on any device to streamline and automate workflows, lower costs, and dramatically improve patient engagement and satisfaction. With Avaya Cloud Office's patients can always reach a live person.

Built on a secure, flexible, and open platform, Avaya Cloud Office solutions are HITRUST CSF certified for use in HIPAA compliant environments. With 99.999% reliability, Avaya Cloud Office allows companies to maintain high-level communication services, including emergency calls, outbound, and inbound calling, and extension to extension dialing, in the event of an internet outage. In addition, Avaya Cloud Office integrates with healthcare providers' most important missioncritical apps, with full APIs for customized integrations. With Avaya Cloud Office providers and patients can work as one to connect the ideal patient experience.

*US and Canada Only.

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