

How to Use Patient Data to Boost Acquisition and Retention Numbers

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By Gary Druckenmiller Jr.

Consider these three statistics: Acquiring a new patient is six to seven times costlier than retaining an existing one.¹ A five percent increase in patient retention produces a 25 percent increase in profit.² Additionally, the volume of healthcare data is expected to grow to 25,000 petabytes by 2020.³

Together, these statistics paint a broad picture of the current healthcare landscape—and the keys to organizational growth. Due to the high cost of patient acquisition, healthcare organizations need to be more strategic and targeted in their efforts. They need to align patient marketing campaigns and initiatives with organizational goals, in particular identifying high-value service lines and high-value commercial payers.

Because of the potential for return on investment (ROI), organizations need to focus on connecting with patients on a deep level and being more proactive in communication and outreach regarding the services they need to improve their unique long-term health goals.

Finally, as health information professionals know all too well, there's an incredible amount of data produced by the healthcare sector. While there are regulations governing much of this data, with proper care taken and technology in place health systems can leverage it to provide better patient care that inspires lifelong relationships.

This article will outline four best practices for developing actionable patient data to influence organizational growth.

Leverage Technology to Better Understand Patient Data

It wasn't that long ago that patient records were file folders full of paper. With the advent of electronic health records (EHRs) those papers are now digital files. It's been a revolutionary transformation, but many organizations still have patient data in multiple different databases and no central technology platform to gather, store, and analyze this information for the purposes of marketing or business development.

There are five technologies available now that are critical to effective healthcare marketing: EHRs, healthcare customer relationship management systems, content management systems (CMS), marketing automation, and call centers, whether they be in-house or outsourced.

Each one of these technologies plays an important role in understanding patients, engaging them effectively, and enabling the smarter growth strategies necessary to boost revenue in the current healthcare marketplace.

Implementing and integrating these technologies requires a shift across an organization to a more data-driven culture that works to build a comprehensive database, and an investment in cross-departmental collaboration.

Build Complete Customer Profiles

It can be argued that the most reliable data available to hospitals and health systems is the data they collect on patients. Through implementation of guidelines that yield consistent customer and patient data, and an integrated technology platform to support that initiative, health organizations can build up a customer database that can be used to engage more effectively with patients.

With the integration of third-party consumer data, which may include demographic, psychographic, and geographic data, organizations have an even more complete picture of the communities they serve. However, even more importantly,

representatives of the hospital, whether they be within the marketing department or contracted partners such as call center agents, have greater insight into a customer's past interactions, interests, and current health needs.

With connected technology platforms, interactions with patients can be more informed and effective. Let's walk through an example: A customer contacts the call center to express interest in an upcoming wellness seminar. The agent asks for a few identifying details and pulls up a detailed caller profile. They see that this caller was previously targeted with a pre-diabetic campaign. Using this information, the agent further personalizes the discussion. The agent asks if the caller is willing to answer a few health-related questions to see if they qualify for a new pre-diabetes program.

With this level of visibility into an individual customer, the agent re-engages a potential customer while demonstrating care for the individual and the organization's efficiency.

Develop Target Audiences with Propensity Models

Within a healthcare customer relationship management system, multiple data sets from disparate sources (patient demographic data, select clinical data, and third-party consumer data) are brought together to fuel advanced segmentation and clinical modeling.

In particular, propensity models, an analytical tool that derives insights from patterns and relationships within multiple data sets, help marketing teams hone in on the best targets for patient outreach. The tool also helps build smarter patient acquisition and retention campaigns by offering directional insights on the most effective channels and messages for those targeted audiences.

Consider how this can be used to drive patient acquisition for bariatric care to manage weight, such as gastric bypass surgery and recovery. For example: An analysis of data from past bariatric patients reveals the priority targets for this initiative are living in middle-density population urban environments and ages 55-65. Further analysis shows the outreach channels, lead times, and type(s) of content that resonate with this particular model. Together, these insights provide a framework for a precision marketing patient acquisition campaign.

A separate propensity model could be built to identify existing patients with propensity for bariatric care. Using a combination of clinical data and consumer data, marketers create an existing patient segment for the bariatric campaign and engage those customers with relevant and personalized messaging concerning their health and well-being.

Through these data-driven efforts, marketers optimize resources and deliver return on investment.

Use Data to Map the Patient Journey

Today's healthcare consumers seek out and engage with hospitals and health systems across many digital platforms, including email, social media, websites, and mobile apps, and even more traditional channels, such as direct mail and the call center. Modern marketing campaigns need to not only utilize multiple channels, but also draw connections across those interactions.

In order to optimize these engagements, marketing teams need a centralized software system to collect and make sense of all of the customer's interactions with the organization to develop a streamlined, continuous patient journey.

A patient journey map outlines all of the patient touch points—when and how they interact with marketers, physicians, administrators, and more—during each stage of the care journey, from awareness to ongoing care/proactive health. Healthcare marketers create journey maps to detail how a customer interacts with the organization and develop a blueprint for engaging patients throughout their care journeys. It also ensures every step in the journey has a clear next action.

By analyzing campaign data, marketers create more strategic opportunities, identify gaps in engagement, and proactively communicate with individual patients in an ongoing effort to create patients for life.

Dig Into the Data Gold Mine

With growing volumes of data, healthcare organizations need to not only get a handle on patient data, they need to use it to inform their growth strategy. Patients are demanding more personalized, convenient, and effective service, not just from providers, but also from healthcare organizations as a whole.

The healthcare marketplace is a shifting space and HIM professionals are sitting on a data gold mine. By aligning with marketing, HIM professionals can play an integral role in driving patient acquisition and retention to reach organization-wide growth goals, while also providing enhanced, personalized patient care. With the implementation and integration of technology platforms and analytics capabilities, HIM professionals and their healthcare organizations can realize the full potential of data.

Notes

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