



Whitepaper

Crafting a Seamless Patient Experience in Contact Centers

with Tech-driven Transformations



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Introduction

Imagine yourself in the middle of a basketball game. While trying to sink a three-pointer for your team, your opponent tries to block your shot, sending you crashing to the court. You feel an intense pain in your side, wondering if you've just taken a hit that might bench you for the season.

At the local sports clinic, the medical team confirms that you've sprained your rib, a setback that requires careful attention. After spending hours at the clinic, you're patched up and ready to recover. The physician advises you to follow up with your primary care physician in two weeks, assuring you that you'll be contacted.

Fast forward four weeks, and you're still waiting for the call. Frustration builds as you repeatedly dial the clinic where the primary care physician practices, owned by the same organization that runs the sports clinic. Each attempt sends you into a maze of automated messages, leaving you on hold for what feels like an eternity.

Recalling that the sports clinic has an app, you eagerly grab your phone. Navigating through the options - you pick the type of visit, choose a convenient time, and provide a reason. However, the app becomes unresponsive, not allowing you to finalize the process. Despite multiple attempts neither the phone call nor the mobile app can secure an appointment that should have been a straightforward part of your care.

Weeks later your ribs have healed naturally and you're back on court. But you've sworn off the sports clinic, vowing never to return, causing you to rate them a zero on the patient satisfaction survey.

Regrettably, this scenario mirrors the real-life experiences of patients across various domains. And the heart of the issue often lies in the contact center which contributes to poor user satisfaction and potential adverse outcomes.

In this Whitepaper, we'll delve into the need to embrace a patient-centric healthcare contact ecosystem, and how it can help redefine the patient experience.

The Patient Experience (PX) Revolution in Healthcare

Much has changed in the patient experience domain ever since the pandemic. Most notably it has opened the floodgates of digital channels and tried to connect patients and healthcare providers at a scale and speed, never imagined before. However, these digital channels are just a part of a multifaceted healthcare ecosystem, that leaves patients to navigate a complex system.

So, what exactly do your patients expect and how can healthcare providers connect the various pieces? Let's find out.

What do your Patients Expect?

Imagine in the above-outlined basketball scenario, instead of a sprained rib, you experienced heart palpitations after an intense game. And the health clinic failed to follow up with you after you were discharged. The stakes here would have been much higher.

The scenario explains that PX is not a tough code to crack. Patients expect prompt, seamless, and quality service without the friction of navigating complex systems. Influenced by experiences in other industries, patients expect an easy digitally-driven experience where they can receive the care, transparency, and guidance they need from the providers they trust.

Longer wait times, access issues, and short-staffed units bring delays in responsiveness and lead to patients not feeling listened to, communicated to, or treated with respect.

According to research by The Beryl Institute - Three-quarters of Americans surveyed have not had a positive patient experience in the past three months and 60% have had an outright negative experience.

Here is a general trend in patient's expectations from healthcare providers:

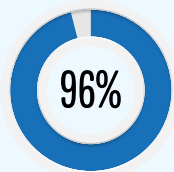


Patients have Higher Standards for Interaction

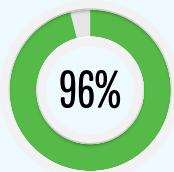
According to a report by Talkdesk, 84% of patients expressed the need for their issues to be resolved quickly and accurately. In comparison, 78% considered it important to be able to engage with the healthcare systems on a channel of their choice.

Further, 58% admitted that their customer service expectations are higher than a year ago.

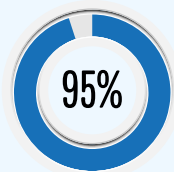
A Forbes report outlined that the top factors in a good patient experience were healthcare providers who:



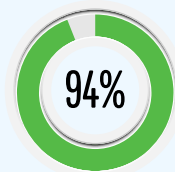
Listen



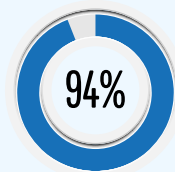
Communicate clearly



Provide a clear plan of care



Take their pain seriously



Treat them with respect



Patients value Personalized Care

44% of respondents in a survey conducted by Accenture reported that they expect healthcare providers to focus on empathy.

According to a recent Salesforce survey, 83% of healthcare consumers say it is important that providers know them personally beyond their medical records, and 68% expect engagement in real-time.





Patients rate Positive Digital Communication as Crucial

A survey conducted by Accenture found that 50% of healthcare consumers believed that a single bad digital experience could ruin their complete experience with a healthcare provider. Additionally, 39% of healthcare consumers surveyed said that positive digital interactions have a big impact on the overall patient experience.

A growing number of healthcare consumers are choosing their providers based on digital capabilities according to Accenture.



Prompt Responsiveness has a big Impact on Patient Experience

A report by PatientPop found that 43% of patients labeled long wait times as the most frustrating aspect of attending healthcare appointments. Further, 30% have walked out of an appointment and 20% have switched providers due to long wait times.

Prioritization of PX by Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare providers have realized that patient care workflows, systems, and patient communications are often disconnected, leading to confusing and frustrating patient journeys. Thus, arises the need for healthcare providers to unify their digital patient and in-person experiences to support empathetic care that will help them earn and keep their patient's trust. And it takes many parts seamlessly working together to make that happen.

The Beryl Institute pointed out in its report that nearly two-thirds of healthcare providers are prioritizing improving patient experience. Moreover, 63.8% of healthcare organizations say that improving the PX by addressing quality, safety, and service is a top priority for them.

Healthcare professionals are slowly embracing technologies to improve patient experience. A Deloitte report highlighted that the intent to use remote monitoring of patients has increased among professionals.

Further, more and more healthcare organizations are moving towards seamless technology adoption that can help create a seamless patient journey as about 57% of patients expect automated notifications via text, voice, or email to schedule appointments according to Deloitte.



Principles for a Patient-Centric Strategy

Patient-centric care is the practice of caring for patients in a way that is meaningful and valuable to the patient. It is responsive to and respectful of individual patient preferences, needs, and values and keeps them informed and involved in their care.

What are the core principles that define a patient-centric healthcare organization? Broadly there are three fundamentals required of a modern healthcare contact center as elaborated below:



Personalization driven by Technology

Just like in any other industry such as retail, travel, and hospitality, healthcare organizations need to recognize their consumers at an individual level, across a full spectrum of engagement touchpoints and channels, exhibiting a deeper personal understanding.

Examples of personal understanding include an expectation that a healthcare provider proactively contacts the patient at the right time and with the right context. To achieve this, organizations need to be equipped with the right technology.

And the personalization principle needs to be carried on with a balanced combination of technology and in-person assistance. Because a consumer expects more than the ability to use an electronic health records portal to look at a blood test result they don't understand; they expect to be informed they are OK and what they should focus on.

A survey by Redpoint Global points out that a majority of consumers (around 60%) would choose a healthcare provider based on how well they understand their consumers. While 39% reported that a personal understanding was an expectation they had when engaging with their provider.



Omnichannel Communication Strategies

To deliver consistent and relevant communication that matches their in-person experiences, healthcare consumers prefer using digital channels (online messaging, text, virtual appointments, etc) to communicate with healthcare providers.

Now to provide seamless service in the communication channel that your patient prefers, incorporating omnichannel capabilities is a must. This should include outbound features allowing you to send appointment and missed-appointment reminders in the patient's preferred channel and post-care follow-ups making sure that patients come in to get the service they need even during restricted hours.



Comprehensive Patient Data Management

Delivering a unified patient experience supported by digital capabilities requires a deep understanding of the patient's needs and interactions. While the healthcare contact center holds this data, it must be able to effectively curate, analyze, and deliver insights to continually improve PX.

Data in a Healthcare Contact Center



Patient feedback and insights



Consumer data and analytics



Interaction analytics

Access to patient engagement data analytics can help healthcare providers understand the patient's preferences and needs and help them tailor future engagements or recommend the next best actions. AI technology can play a big part in ensuring this via speech and sentiment analytics, helping train patient representatives for improvement.



To meet this expectation, a 2020 Gartner report explored why healthcare organizations need to adopt a consumer engagement strategy in a digital-first environment.

Why Executing a Patient-Centric Journey is Easier said than Done?

A good experience remains the key demand of patients from healthcare contact centers. Throughout their entire healthcare journey, patients want to know they are more than just a number. They want personalized care and above all expect their healthcare providers to know their story.

However, most healthcare providers fail to fulfill these expectations. Why? Let's find out



Fragmented Data Systems

Traditionally, healthcare organizations use many patient portals or data systems (including service channels and support centers) that are not always seamlessly interlinked or synchronized across the patient journey. Such siloed systems leave patients guessing on how to navigate the system or many times suffer the risk of receiving conflicting information. Siloed and disconnected IT stacks among providers can increase patient dissatisfaction and poorer healthcare outcomes, also shooting up IT support and costs.



Limited Interoperability

The lack of interoperability among different systems and platforms poses a significant challenge in creating a unified patient-centric experience. When patients find themselves stuck between multiple incompatible systems, it hinders the seamless flow of information and communication between patients and healthcare providers. This limitation compromises the efficiency of a patient's healthcare journey.



Workflow Bottlenecks

Disconnected and complex workflows within healthcare organizations can hamper a patient-centric experience. Unclear communications and offline data management can lead to medical errors or damaged patient confidence. Without integrated platforms for data sharing, there remains the challenge of getting the right information to the right people promptly.



Data Security Concerns

Given the sensitive nature of healthcare data, providers face the challenge of maintaining robust security measures. If the patient has to go through the arduous process of establishing their identity by answering security questions every time they call in, it doesn't make up for a great healthcare experience. Further, there is the challenge of striking a balance between personalized care and data accessibility that can prove tricky without the right technologies at your disposal.



Resistance to Technological Adoption

The healthcare industry is known traditionally for its slow adoption of new technologies. Healthcare staff and providers are generally hesitant to embrace new tools and systems due to their concerns about the learning curve, disruptions to established workflows, or a lack of confidence in the efficacy of these technologies.

But what's the way out of this labyrinth of challenges hovering over healthcare organizations? The answer lies in a tech-driven modern healthcare contact center.



How the Right Technology can make your Healthcare Contact Center Strategy Smarter?

Having understood the various challenges plaguing the healthcare industry, it's time to move on to a way out. While it is common knowledge across industries that any future transformations would be led by technology, the healthcare industry has often struggled to keep pace with constant changes on the tech front. All the while staff is burdened with disconnected systems and workflows that pull their attention away from patients, leading to a poor patient experience.

The solution for this lies in empowering healthcare providers with up-to-date technological capabilities, helping improve staff and patient experience via a better integration of data and technology. Technology that is deeply integrated with the EMR/EHR (EPIC, Cerner, Aetna, etc.), CMR, and other administrative systems will empower the staff with patient context while addressing their needs in real-time.



CTI Connectors

As with any customer-service-focused industry, healthcare facilities can benefit from a solution that improves the productivity and performance of caregivers and ensures that patients' needs are consistently met. With CTI, small manual tasks that eat away at an agent's productivity like filling prescriptions or logging calls from patients to clinics can be improved. For example, one-click call controls simplify call transfers, and automatic call logging reduces after-call work.

Integration of CTI Connector with EHR/ EMR applications like EPIC, Cerner, and Aetna, helps streamline patient care and enhance operational efficiency. This seamless synergy between CTI and EMR/EHR ensures a streamlined approach to patient engagement by enabling one-click access to patient information during calls, facilitating quicker responses by screen-popping patient profiles during live calls, and eliminating the need for unnecessary screen toggles.



Unified Agent Workspaces

Serving as a centralized hub for healthcare professionals, a unified agent desktop offers a comprehensive view of patient information through integration with prominent EMR/EHR applications like EPIC, Cerner, and Aetna. This seamless integration ensures that healthcare providers can access real-time patient data, allowing caregivers to know their patients and their interaction journey before they utter a hello, thus adding a personalized touch to their service.

Benefits of NovelVox Agent Accelerator



Unification of information saved at different places



Reduces time spent on training agents on different systems



Saves agents from unnecessary screen switches



Ready access to information reduces call handling time



Optimized agent workspaces for personalized experiences



Ready-made templates to go live faster

Integrating seamlessly with EMR/EHR applications, ticketing, bespoke applications, and other internal databases, the unified agent desktop solution offers a single glass pane view of all data and services and prevents caregivers from switching between pages or applications to fetch patient information.



Omnichannel Platform

In today's time and age, patient engagement strategies need to account for differences in individual preferences for communication channels. Patients expect caregivers to be available on their preferred channels - email, text, digital messaging, social channels, and more. Seamlessly integrating your healthcare contact center with an omnichannel platform can salvage the situation.

With an integrated omnichannel strategy, caregivers can have an integrated view of interactions received from all interaction channels and electronic health records (EHRs), making it easier to deliver consistent and connected experiences to patients. This enables agents to grasp a quick context of patient interactions from all the connected channels, helping agents resume interactions from where they were last left off. Furthermore, the integration of outbound and inbound communication channels via an omnichannel platform helps healthcare providers expand their capabilities to cater to more patients with a consistent quality of service.



Conversational AI Chatbots

From delivering quick medical assistance to patients in times of emergency to predicting risks and diagnosing patients by analyzing symptoms, Conversational AI chatbots have a huge scope in the healthcare sector.

According to Juniper Research, Healthcare AI chatbots will represent 10% of all chatbot interactions across key verticals such as healthcare, banking, eCommerce, and social media by 2024.

Conversational chatbots significantly boost patient experience and increase retention by answering their questions on time, assisting in booking appointments, and eliminating the stress of waiting in long queues to hear from a caregiver. They can generate personalized responses that are tailored to the patient's exact interests and preferences, or detect and respond appropriately to sarcasm and humor. Further, pre-integrated with EMR/ EHR applications, Conversational AI chatbots can invoke functions to manage appointments, prescriptions, referrals, and more. Giving patients the ability to use a conversational interface to get common questions answered and take basic actions that are reflected in the EHR, CRM, or other systems helps keep staff focused on more complex conversations, improving productivity.



Self-service Patient Portals

Expanding self-service capabilities is key to a better patient experience. With self-service patient-centric portals, it's easier to assist patients with secure and convenient access to personal healthcare information, 24/7. An intuitive self-service portal can help patients to schedule visits, and access billing, and insurance information.

NovelVox Visual IVR: Key Features



Interactive
visual
overlay



Self-service
capability



Seamless
escalation to
live agent



No download
or installation
required



Works well
with existing
infrastructure



Infibot chatbot
to automate
query resolution

Further, self-service IVR applications can connect patients with requested assistance within a shorter timeframe. Visual IVR can help them go a notch higher by equipping them with an interactive virtual overlay leading to a better self-service experience. Also, the integration of a patient portal with CRM can help agents get access to the holistic history of the patient and eliminate the need to make repetitive data entries in different systems. Such integrations help healthcare providers reduce data management costs and prevent contact centers from storing duplicate information.

Future Trends and Predictions for Healthcare Contact Centers

The healthcare landscape is evolving and contact centers stand at the forefront of this change, adapting to changing patient expectations, responding to technological trends, and streamlining the operational processes. Gazing into the future it becomes obvious that healthcare contact centers will witness a transformative shift fueled by innovative technologies.



Emerging Technologies will simplify Healthcare Processes

The Healthcare industry is often painted as a conservative and slow-to-adopt industry when it comes to technology. But, with the massive growth of AI-driven technologies and digitization of healthcare workflows, we might witness a shift in this trend towards technology adoption. With telehealth and remote care having come a long way, AI-driven healthcare processes are bound to become less complicated and more efficient. While the traditional role of the healthcare contact center may not disappear, it is destined to evolve in response to these technological advancements.



Integration with Clinical and Administrative Systems becomes a Necessity

It's a known fact that integration in contact centers simplifies processes and boosts operational efficiency. Soon, technology that is integrated with EHR, CMR and other third-party applications, internal knowledge bases, and administrative systems will become

not just an added advantage but an absolute necessity. From equipping healthcare agents with comprehensive patient data to delivering personalized and efficient care, the system integration would streamline patient care processes and elevate the quality of patient care.



The Role of Healthcare Agents will not Disappear but Evolve

With GenAI-powered contact centers, the role of agents will most likely change. Most preferably, all incoming requests will be first handled by some form of an automated system which would be a short conversation to authenticate the patient, understand their issue, and kick off a resolution process. But this does not mean the elimination of the need for an agent. Rather healthcare contact centers would come to rely more heavily on highly-trained agents who can handle complex and empathy-needing conversations. Further, as bots may require occasional assistance in understanding a query, agents can steer the conversation back on track.

Conclusion

Digital behaviors are radically changing the way patients expect to interact with healthcare providers. These changed expectations have motivated providers to rapidly reimagine patient experience (PX) as one that adeptly balances digital and in-person interactions.

Patient-centricity demands a holistic strategy embracing personalization, omnichannel communication, and comprehensive data management. The urgency of healthcare professionals to prioritize patient experience is further catalyzed by the adoption of innovative technology.

Thus, the key to success in this scenario lies in adopting technology that aligns with patient expectations. By empowering healthcare contact centers with cutting-edge solutions, the industry can step forth into an era where patient experiences are not just improved but truly centered around the individuals they aim to serve.

