



WHITE PAPER

Healthcare Marketing Trends 2019

Engagement, personalization top list of strategies

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INTRODUCTION

FIVE TRUTHS THAT WILL SHAPE HEALTHCARE IN 2019



Using the word “shift” to describe the current healthcare market dramatically understates the sweeping changes happening across the continuum of care. From patients to providers to payers, everything about healthcare is changing — and it’s happening so rapidly that in many cases, managing the pace of change is extraordinarily difficult.

Healthcare continues to be a huge player in the U.S. economy. By 2026, total healthcare spending is expected to reach about **\$5.7 trillion**, according to the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS).

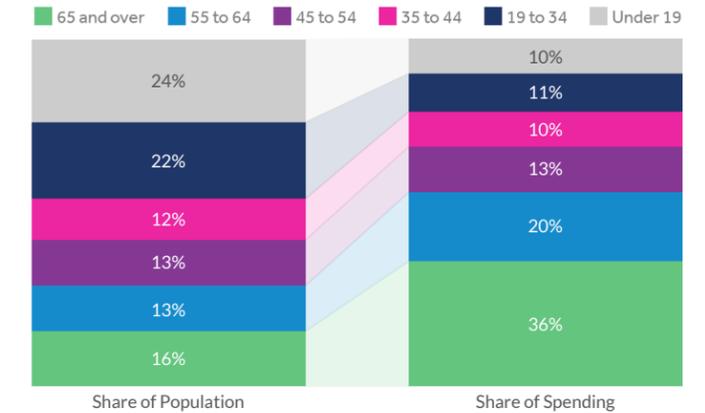
Healthcare branding and marketing will continue to be priorities. Intense competition between providers for patients and physicians and staff is not abating. Coupled with increased consumer awareness about healthcare costs, providers and healthcare systems will need to work harder and smarter to attract and retain patients.

Still, some trends have emerged that likely will carry the market through 2019 and beyond. Here are five things we know to be true about the healthcare market in the coming year:

1. In some instances, change will be rapid (think emerging technology), but in others a slow pace of change will rule (implementing regulatory changes, for example). It will be incumbent on providers, payers and patients to manage and balance this pace to best address their needs.
2. The U.S. population is aging and as people live longer, they are using more healthcare services. According to a [Kaiser Family Foundation analysis](#) of Medical Expenditure Panel Survey results, people age 55 and older account for more than half of total health spending.
3. There will be a continued shift from the fee-for-service (or sick care) model to value-based or wellness-focused treatment. Engagement focused on driving behavior change and improving health outcomes will remain top of mind for healthcare organizations.
4. Technology will continue to evolve and offer unprecedented opportunities to connect with consumers. Already more than [95% of Americans own a cellphone](#) and more than 5 billion people own cellphones worldwide, [according to GSMA data](#) and that number is projected to rise dramatically. For healthcare providers, leveraging technology to build and cultivate relationships with patients will be key to modifying health behaviors.
5. Regulatory agencies will have to become swifter in the way they evaluate new healthcare facilities, procedures and emerging technology.

These underlying truths will influence the changes in healthcare during the coming year and beyond. And as the marketplace evolves, so will the way providers communicate with their patients.

Share of total health spending by age group (2016)



While there are people with high spending at all ages, overall, people age 55 and over made up 29% of the population but accounted for 56% of all health spending in 2016. In contrast, people under age 35 made up 46% of the population but accounted for less than a quarter of health spending.

Source: [Kaiser Family Foundation Analysis of Medical Expenditure Panel Survey](#)

Total healthcare spending grew an average of 4.6 percent in 2017, reaching almost \$3.5 trillion, according to the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS). CMS estimates that U.S. healthcare spending will reach about \$5.7 trillion by 2026.

EVOLUTION OF HEALTHCARE AND ENGAGEMENT

DIGITAL EXPECTATIONS

A Changing Healthcare Model

The flurry of mergers and acquisitions in healthcare does not seem to be abating. As organizations are integrated or consolidated, there are the obvious requirements for branding changes — new logo, messaging, promotional materials. Beyond these surface-level changes will be a need for a more nuanced look at the way messaging and other communications are crafted.

As providers venture into insurance plans, they are looking for opportunities to reduce healthcare costs and encourage more preventative care and wellness. In some cases, these moves include retail or consumer-focused experiences. It's a move intended to have patients view their healthcare as a journey and encourage them to take that journey toward long-term wellness with a trusted partner.

For example, as payers become providers and providers become payers, traditional methods and language for communicating with members and patients will be blurred. Communicating with members is different than communicating with **patients**.

The challenge, then, for marketers is to understand the differences in a member journey versus a patient journey.

“The marketing continuum of awareness to acquisition to experience to loyalty is very different for both sets of these customers. Each takes a diverse mix of brand, direct and content marketing, as well as customized customer experiences. For hospitals tackling the ‘business of insurance’, selling and retaining health plan members is very different from traditional hospital-patient marketing,” writes Lindsay Resnick of Wunderman Health in [“Managed Healthcare Executive”](#).

“Similarly,” Wunderman adds, “As insurers acquire or launch provider organizations, whether retail primary care, urgent care clinics or hospital service centers, marketing

challenges such as service-line marketing, physician engagement and community-based branding require new approaches.”

A Push Toward Engagement

Ultimately, the endgame of patient engagement is improved health outcomes to lower costs. The road to get there is rough, though, and requires a great deal of dedication, relationship building and sometimes cajoling to help patients reach their health goals.

Additional benefits of patient engagement are many, however. They include:

- Improved patient acquisition and retention
- Stronger brand awareness
- Lower administrative costs
- Competitive advantage

How a provider or healthcare system markets to a patient can influence their engagement. Marketing can reinforce whether a patient feels valued and important. Actively engaging with patients throughout their healthcare journeys ultimately will impact whether that patient feels trust and loyalty.

In a 2017 blog post titled, [“Enabling Healthcare Consumerism”](#), McKinsey & Company emphasizes the need for guiding patients to information to help them make informed care decisions:

“To effectively guide consumers, payers and providers should be prepared to heighten consumer awareness by giving them the right information at the right time at each stop along the consumer-decision journey. However, guiding consumers is more than simply making high-quality information available; thus, the second step in guidance is to ensure that consumers can easily connect with the information they need.”

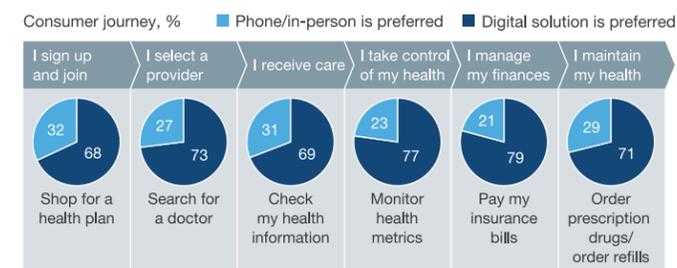
2019’s patient experience is focused on digital as a tool to provide accurate, useful, appropriate and interesting information to patients. Most healthcare marketers believe digital will be their most important marketing channel for the foreseeable future. It’s critical that providers provide clear, concise, accurate, meaningful and accessible information so patients feel empowered to become partners in their care.

Arming patients with necessary information is only the first step in engaging them, however. Patients have to want to modify their behavior, it has to be easy for them to engage in their own care and they need to feel supported. There’s an opportunity for providers to make a difference in each of these areas.

Digital tools can make it much simpler for patients to navigate the system — everything from making or canceling appointments to managing prescriptions or filing healthcare claims can be done online so patients can save time and frustration. Most of the McKinsey survey respondents said they preferred digital solutions to phone/in-person solutions for many healthcare interactions.

About 70 % of Consumers Prefer Digital Healthcare Solutions

Respondents who prefer digital solutions to phone/in-person solutions for their health needs.



Source: [McKinsey 2017 Consumer Health Insights Survey](#)



CRAFTING A PERSONALIZED HEALTHCARE JOURNEY

SOCIAL MEDIA'S ROLE IN ENGAGING PATIENTS



Let's be candid. Healthcare's drive toward being patient-centric could move faster. The healthcare system has not caught up with an ongoing want and need by patients for an anticipatory, personalized experience.

Such customized experiences are available in almost every part of their lives. Websites routinely show them ads for new shoes that fit their personal style. Articles are recommended that they "may" be interested in based on browsing history. Stores send emails that suggest new products or services to fit their current — or anticipated — needs. They want and expect buying decisions to be made easier by marketers who present exactly what the individual needs. Or in some cases, offering what they don't know that they need — yet.

According to Accenture Interactive's [Personalization Pulse Check](#), consumers have a positive attitude towards personalized offerings and services. They want to be recognized, offered relevant recommendations and be remembered.

In ["Marketing's Holy Grail: Digital Personalization at Scale"](#), McKinsey & Company wrote, "Done right, personalization enhances customers' lives and increases engagement and loyalty by delivering messages that are tuned to and even anticipate what customers really want."

This kind of customized experience isn't beneficial for the patient only. It goes a long way toward building loyalty to a provider, and it makes good business sense. Patients increasingly have more choices about providers. Finding a way to connect and to build an emotional connection through marketing and actions will influence whether they will continue as your patients or move on to another provider that will provide the experience they demand.

While other industries are leading the way, it's not a question of **whether** this needs to happen in healthcare. It's a question of **when** it will happen.

Meeting patients where they are in their health journey is vital. Admittedly, most millennials probably don't need stroke or heart attack prevention information, but they may have a parent or grandparent with these issues. Although the population is aging and the most healthcare usage is by adults age 55 or older, creating emotional connections with younger patients can inspire long-lasting loyalty.

Social media is the key to connecting with generations of all ages. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), almost 70% of all Americans use social media to connect, learn or be entertained. Commonly considered a young person's medium, social media is becoming more and more popular with older adults.

Very little related to health is taboo anymore, thanks to social media. Gone are the days of whispering about the "Big C." Instead, today you can find millions of online resources about cancer education, support and fundraising. On social media, there will be pleas for walk or run participants or prayers for friends with chronic or critical health issues. Social media has taken the filters off of people's willingness to share personal information. Still, providers are lagging in using social media channels to connect with patients. The need will only increase as iGen and millennial members age.

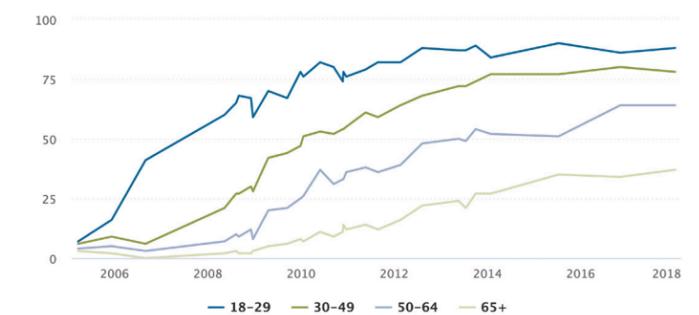
Social media can be tricky to navigate for a company. Pay attention to privacy first and foremost but also to the tone you convey. Offer value in your posts. Colorful, uplifting, value-added content will make people more likely to be interested. People want information that feeds their knowledge base and helps them make informed decisions about their health.

Listen to find out what current patients and even former patients are saying about your organization. It can be tempting to stay silent in these situations. If you choose to

respond, do so in a way that reflects the tone you want your company to have: polite, conversational or formal? Be careful not to respond in a way that can be construed as defensive or that can open you up to risk.

People go to social media for interaction and conversation. If you are going to connect and build a relationship, make sure your message is appropriate for the conversation.

Percent of U.S. adults who use at least one social media site by age



Source: [Pew Research Center](#)

WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THAT DATA?

There are vast quantities of healthcare data that providers, payers and companies are eager to leverage to impact health. While there are abundant ways to gather health data – wearables, surveys, behavior and electronic health records – the healthcare market is still struggling with how to integrate that data to create a more meaningful experience for each patient.

The important work of analyzing and synthesizing data continues and even as new sources of data emerge, there will be the unenviable task of trying to integrate that data with the rest.

What's a marketer to do? Focus on the available information – the information that you have access to right now – to create a personalized healthcare journey for your patients. What percentage of your patients own fitness trackers or smartwatches? Are they using them? Are a high percentage of your patients diagnosed with diabetes? Examining available data provides a deeper understanding of patient preferences, which you can use to influence behavior.

This is where healthcare marketing is headed: engaging with patients, anticipating needs and helping them navigate their journey to a healthy life.

