

Polite Multi-tasking

Please enjoy the following enlightening excerpts from Geoffrey A. Fowler's recent article in The Washington Post about better customer service:

Employees can handle multiple text conversations at once — but only one call at a time.

The biggest shift in customer service since the 1-800 number is underway. About 20 million businesses now use Facebook Messenger each month to talk with customers.

"We see more and more chatting, texting, social media interactions — and fewer and fewer voice interactions every year," said Jamie Barton, executive vice president of sales and service at AT&T.

It turns out we're nicer on text. No wonder texting businesses leaves many people happier.

LivePerson, a company that makes support software used by 18,000 companies, said that when given the option, 70 percent of people chose a "message us" button over a "call us" button on a company website or app. And it said customer satisfaction rates are 25 percent higher for chatting and messaging than for calling.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2018/08/09/want-better-customer-service-dont-call-text/>

MANAGING PATIENT CALLS



When we survey Healthcare Provider organizations about their most significant pain point, they almost always say "managing incoming and outgoing phone calls." Answering each phone call is impossible, but using voice mail to manage patient communications is extraordinarily inefficient for both the Provider and the patient. With so many of us now using messaging apps to reach out to family, friends, and even businesses, why wouldn't we expect to be able to do the same with our Providers?

And then there's the employee perspective: Frustrated customers can be exceptionally angry and mean over the phone, which is one reason many call centers have high employee turnover rates. Even happy customers explain more during a phone call than needed, resulting in employee inefficiency and fatigue.

Current Patient Experiences

Recent patient satisfaction surveys indicate that 89% of patients do not expect to have their phone calls answered by Providers. Indeed, the healthcare industry suffers from the *highest incidence of unanswered incoming calls* across all industry segments. Also, repeatedly navigating maze-like phone menus to leave another voice mail makes patients feel like no one really wants to help them anyway.

Is It a Technology Issue?

Two major causes of less-than-effective phone call management are antiquated technology and indifference. State-of-the-art VoIP web-based systems are available for those who are interested, and they efficiently transcribe patient voice mails into text and emails, while retaining the audio clip. The most significant offspring of VoIP, however, is the ability to text patients and create a virtual chat experience. Remember that the natural form of communication today is "text messaging." Standard voice mail is an outdated, inefficient sequential technology.

What Do Patients/Consumers Really Care About?

Quite simply, patients want answers and they want them on their timeframe, which is right now! We notice that when texting patients in response to their inquiries, they reply immediately, concisely, and politely. Patients do not embrace leaving a phone message, then exchanging a series of voice mails and phone calls that could have been taken care of through a series of succinct text exchanges. For those Provider-clients that rely on us to be their patient support hotline, we consistently receive praise from patients for prompt and informative texts.

ABT & ABT Affiliate Recent Successes

Outsource Services

ABT MEDICAL, INC:

Orthopedic Physicians Alaska

Founded in 1966, OPA's 14 orthopedic surgeons work with over 40 orthopedic PAs, physical therapists, and other healthcare staff at three clinic locations. OPA offers an on-site surgery center and short-stay assisted living facility. It also provides the only orthopedic injury walk-in clinic in Alaska that is open daily. In 2016, OPA and Anchorage Fracture & Orthopedic Clinic formed OrthoAlaska.

Associates in Psychiatry & Counseling

Located in Elgin, Illinois, the AIPC group enhances the mental health and well-being of clients across the lifespan. With a full team of licensed psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, and clinical counselors, AIPC treats an array of mental disorders and provides its clients with maximum stability and integrated care.

VITAL RECORDS CONTROL:

University of Kentucky HealthCare

UK HealthCare includes four hospitals, over 80 specialized clinics, over 140 outreach programs, and a team of 9,000 physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and healthcare workers. Resources include a Level 1 trauma center and a Level IV neonatal intensive care unit. UK HealthCare is committed to research, education, and clinical care.

USA Medical Center

Located in Mobile, the University of South Alabama Medical Center is a 406-bed acute care facility that serves as the primary teaching hospital for the university's College of Medicine. It is the major referral center for southern Alabama, southern Mississippi, and portions of northwest Florida, offering centers for Level 1 trauma, burns, cardiovascular disease, strokes, and sickle cell disease.

E-Request on the Move

In an earlier newsletter, we stated that the greatest myth in the healthcare industry is that "patients are not digitally capable of ordering, accessing, and viewing their medical records online via the web." There is no economic or age barrier to this consumer dynamic. Providers such as The Carrell Clinic in Dallas, TX, Alabama Orthopaedic Clinic in Mobile, AL, and Associates for Psychiatry & Counseling in Elgin, IL, have all affirmed that patients overwhelmingly prefer to operate on their own timeframe, and in their own space, instead of at the convenience of the Provider.

In both 2013 and 2014, patients who electronically accessed their medical records used this information primarily to monitor their health. Other popular uses were downloading the information to a mobile device or sharing the information with another party, such as a family member or Healthcare Provider. This digital preference trend continues to accelerate today.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II, in a recent speech, outlined an aggressive agenda intended to speed long-standing efforts to reform healthcare by empowering the consumer, improving transparency, encouraging innovation, and challenging vested interests. Azar, speaking before America's Health Insurance Plans meeting in March of this year, laid out his agenda with a focus on four areas of reform. They include:

- *Giving consumers greater control over health information through interoperable and accessible health information technology.*
- *Encouraging transparency from providers and payers.*
- *Using experimental models in Medicare and Medicaid to drive value through the introduction of market forces into healthcare, shifting control from large healthcare systems to the consumer.*
- *Removing government burdens that impede this value-based transformation.*

For independent physicians, each of these four focus areas has important implications....

Having healthcare records in a pocket or purse will open new options for patients, driving healthcare consumerism and empowering consumers to shop for and evaluate healthcare services. With almost every consumer facing significant out-of-pocket expenses associated with any major healthcare event, it is inevitable that healthcare consumers will focus on cost management in healthcare, just as they do in every other aspect of their economic lives. Recognizing this, Azar pragmatically advocates aligning policy with the technological and financial realities of modern healthcare consumption.

According to Azar, unless this technology is in the hands of consumers, "the benefits may never arrive." Further, Azar noted, "[E]mpowering consumers and individuals has been key to the advances of the Information Age."

Supporting healthcare consumerism is seen as a means of controlling and driving down unsustainable healthcare costs, just as consumerism has had the same effects in other market sectors.

EXCERPT: Wilson, T. (2018, July 31). Looking behind the headlines, physicians find good news in the implementation of U.S. healthcare policy. *Physicians News Network*. Retrieved from http://www.physiciansnewsnetwork.com/global1/article_5cfb0882-94df-11e8-9bb7-ff5010c3884f.html