

# Why Personalization Is Key to Consumer-Centric Healthcare

Despite the uncertain competitive and regulatory forces that healthcare payers and providers face, one thing is certain: the movement to consumer-centric healthcare is proceeding at a rapid pace. Consumers are increasingly in charge of their decisions as they begin to recognize the better outcomes that come with it, they pay more out-of-pocket, and they have a number of options fueled by innovation in the industry. The battleground is gaining clarity, as payers and providers compete with one another at each consumer journey stage, from initial engagement, to education, to ongoing dialogue.

Those that create a better experience for consumers – whether as a consumer, member, or patient – will drive higher revenue and better outcomes at lower interaction costs. Innovative customer experiences require a degree of personalized engagement that has been elusive for most healthcare enterprises. This requires a shift in thinking from a focus on broad populations to a focus on individualized consumers each with their own communication preferences, behaviors, and attitudes. The key to gaining this understanding at the individual level resides with data about that consumer.

Here are some other trends that are driving the need for new ways to engage with consumers:

- More than 60 percent of consumers are now always on and readily addressable ([Forrester](#)) – yet the healthcare industry is just starting to use mobile and social channels as effective engagement channels
- 72 percent of CEOs believe the next three years will be more critical to their industry than the last 50 years ([KPMG](#)) – requiring a modernized approach to consumer engagement that is proactive, personalized, and competitively differentiated
- Over the last six years there has been more than [\\$18 billion invested in healthcare technology ventures](#) – creating a digital health network that is fragmented and full of friction.

In addition to data, personalized engagement requires advanced analytics and automation to ensure that consistent and highly relevant messages and offers are delivered in the moment of need regardless of time or channel. This is immensely powerful, as contextually relevant messages result in [6x to 7x higher](#)

conversion rates than generic messaging, and relevant messages leave consumers far less fatigued or frustrated even if they choose not to interact.

We believe that consumer needs, competitive pressures, and technology innovation all point to the answer being yes. To make this consumer focus deliver results, healthcare payers and providers need:

- **Unified customer experiences across channels**

Customers don't limit themselves to a single channel of communications, which means that neither can a healthcare enterprise. Customers don't care what channel they're using or who inside a healthcare company owns that particular channel. If they request notifications on a mobile device, they may not be interested in having those same notifications appear on a desktop, even if they access plan information from both devices.

Healthcare organizations must account for previous interactions with consumers and recognize when the same person visits through multiple channels. From a consumer's perspective, all interactions through any touchpoint are part of one and the same journey. And they want to be treated as individuals no matter where they are. Customer engagement hub technologies now offer consistent delivery of relevant, contextually aware, and hyper-personalized next best actions across all customer journey stages and all enterprise touchpoints. Consumers are now driving engagement, and as they move from anonymous to known states across devices and journey stages, enterprises need greater depth in data and identity resolution capabilities to keep up.

- **Personalized messages for individual customers**

Identity may start with a name, but it's about much more than that. Truly recognizing who a consumer is requires connecting all possible data about them, including basic data such as age, gender, and location, along with current behavior data, preferences, and what they have done in the past. This deep customer understanding is key to creating dynamic customer journeys, that are individualized in real-time and reflect the type of contextual awareness required to drive better outcomes at a lower cost. Take the example of prescription refills. A customer may want reminders sent to them by email, text, or even through a voice call. The messages accompanying the reminder, the time it is sent, and even the channel can all be personalized to an individual consumer. This means not only being able to pull information from different sources, but ensuring that

the information is accurate, timely with the consumer's desired cadence, and consistent across channels. When it's done right, this can drive enhanced engagement and improve patient outcomes.

- **Agile and sophisticated teams that can respond to customers in real time**

In 2015, [32 percent of American consumers](#) used a mobile app for medical, health, or fitness information, and when people move to mobile they expect real-time reactions. The challenge for healthcare marketers is in designing and activating the right customer journeys to make this kind of information timely, relevant, and delivered in the right channel. Consumers expect this experience to be consistent and seamless across websites, mobile, physical locations, IoT devices, and any other touchpoint. By enabling organizations to gain the agility and sophistication they need to communicate in real time with extreme personalization and across any channel or device that the customer wants, customer engagement hub capabilities enable healthcare marketers to create customer-centric programs that build strong relationships across all touchpoints. The best go one step further, connecting all available first- and third-party data at an individual level that enables marketers to predict customer intent and further increase relevance.

Competing on the basis of customer experience requires highly personalized, intelligent delivery of next best actions or offers. Achieving this at a segment-of-one scale is now possible through a combination of advanced analytics – machine learning for predictive models and optimization – that can be delivered in-line to customer journey stages. These analytics will be more precise when based on a foundation of detailed, robust, and connected customer data. Organizations that can combine these capabilities with the ability to easily design and implement dynamic omnichannel journeys from a single point of control will yield consistent and highly personalized brand experiences no matter the moment, channel, or device.

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