



Digital Solutions: A NEW INTERFACE

Digital Solutions Are Changing How Companies Interface With Patients, HCPs, and Other Stakeholders

If you think about the traditional patient engagement where a patient visits his or her HCP, what typically happens? The HCP and patient talk, and the HCP performs procedures and provides advice. The patient then schedules a follow-up appointment. The next appointment comes and the cycle happens all over again. The patient will continue to visit the HCP until optimal health is achieved, or the patient will give up and never go back until something major happens.

These are all balance sheet engagements — points in time that measure progress or regression. A number of organizations are leveraging digital solutions to enhance the relationship between patients and HCPs during the gap in time between visits — the “anytime, anywhere” digital world being created around us. Education content, adherence support, and the capture of behavioral and biometric data are all advantages to engaging with patients at the moments outside of the HCP visit when the patient needs constant support. As we get more advanced with our integration of that external data, we have an opportunity to actually enhance the patient-HCP relationship, matching medical data with behavioral adherence data.

Digital Solutions Can Help to Build the Bridge Between Patients and Brands

Brand teams could significantly benefit from the advances and integration of digital solutions. Again, go back to the traditional model. A patient visits his or her HCP. The HCP diagnoses and prescribes a medication. The patient then must go to the pharmacy to

pick up that prescription. And if refills are required, then it is the patient’s responsibility to remember or start it all over again with the next HCP visit.

As we look at this simplified process, what are the risks to a brand? First, the brand relies on the HCP to have the education to prescribe the first prescription. Second, the brand relies on the patient to stay committed to that specific prescription when alternatives may be introduced at the pharmacy. And if a prior authorization is required, an additional burden is placed on both the patient and HCP to get the prescription filled. Assuming all this goes well, now the brand relies on the patient for ongoing adherence to obtain his or her refills. In all of this, the relationship between a patient and brand is cursory at best. The relationship is with the patient, HCP, and the pharmacy.

With digital solutions, brand teams now have an opportunity to actually build a relationship with a patient. Rather than relying on the HCP to remember everything about the brand and any programs, this content can be pushed to HCPs via their EMR systems at the point of prescription. If programs are available and need enrollment, couldn’t we send the script to the pharmacy while also pushing the instant enrollment to the patient via Web/mobile? Now the brand has an established relationship with that patient that allows for ongoing education and support.

Let’s also try and ease the process between a patient and HCP at the point of prescription. Let’s do a benefit verification right there and either return the costs and/or determine the prior authorization before a patient goes to the pharmacy. And if required, handle it digitally right now rather than the back-and-forth phone calls and faxes. All of this can be done before the first trip to the pharmacy. Even better, remove the trip to the pharmacy from the equation and have the prescription delivered

Organizations are leveraging digital solutions to enhance the relationship between patients and HCPs during the gap in time between visits.

Contributed by



JEREMY SHUBERT
Chief Information Officer, Triplefin

to the patient’s home by transferring patient data.

And for the final piece — adherence. Digital solutions enable that relationship with a patient to be a constant reminder to take and refill those prescriptions at the “moment of interaction.”

I think all of this makes a pretty compelling case for brand teams that struggle with dependency on all other stakeholders in the healthcare ecosystem to be proactive and create their own relationship with the patients, ultimately providing better patient outcomes, which is what we all want.

Digital and Online Solutions Help Enhance the Patient Journey

The key word is enhance. It’s good to keep in perspective that digital solutions can help build relationships, streamline inefficient processes, and “enhance” the patient journey, but digital solutions are not the full solution. People still need to interact with people. Patients will still need to interact with their HCP, pharmacists, insurers, and support services. But if we can be transparent with patients



We need to turn the discussion away from digital solutions, data strategy, or traditional channels and realize that it is all channels of interaction.

The relationship between digital and traditional are not independent with one succeeding over another, but interdependent with both supporting the overall business together.

on their prescription costs before they arrive at the pharmacy, then we have an opportunity to change their experience for the better. If we know in advance that a prior authorization from their HCP is necessary to fill the prescription, then the patient experience can be improved. If we can reach out with reminders to refill a prescription, take the medication, or simply answer some questions that are confusing patients, then we begin to help support the patient journey to achieve positive outcomes. I believe that the real key to leveraging digital solutions is when you can combine it with the right personal engagement that is knowledgeable and empathetic to exactly what that patient is experiencing on their specific patient journey. It's getting the right balance of digital and personal interactions at the exact time the patient needs you most, whether it be the HCP, pharmacist, or brand support services.

The key to leveraging digital solutions is when it is combined with personal engagement that is knowledgeable and empathetic.

Data and Analytics as Part of the Digital Strategies

We can start by saying that if companies are not thinking about data and analytics, then they are already behind. There is a lot of buzz flying around about big data, predictive analytics, and behavioral analytics. It's not an easy or quick solution to how companies can best use the massive amounts, sources, and types of data being collected from all the coming digital solutions. Add to it, that healthcare companies must be extremely diligent in how they protect and use that data. It's not as easy as implementing, say an EMR system, where it is a known solution that's set up, configured, and off and running. Data and analytics combine

art, science, and technology. This is why we are seeing big support from universities to get programs in place that can teach the tools and practices for companies to build data and analytics strategies.

This then gets to the point of how companies should be thinking about their data and analytics. First, data need to be treated and protected as a precious asset to any organization. Security and integrity must be the foundation for how to think about data. Next, companies should spend time mapping out the patient journey and then identify opportunities that their digital solutions may have moments of interaction with patients. It is at these "moments" that the combination of analytics

and digital solutions can have significant impact. This is where the company has the opportunity to either proactively improve the patient journey through sharing the right information or interaction that is personal to that patient or it becomes simply a reactive generic response. The companies that can personalize the experience with the right balance of interaction that maintains Integrity and trust will be the companies that come out on top. And, it can only happen with the combination of data analytics and digital interactions.

Best Practices to Optimize ROI from a Digital Solution

Though it may seem so, there aren't such clear-cut answers. How does your company define ROI? In the traditional sense I can add up all my investments in a digital solution over a period of time and determine how much rev-

enue, cost efficiencies, and ultimately, profit that I gained over some pre-determined timeframe. Do I put a target ROI of 10%, 20%, or 100%? Here's another kicker — I can give you a straight formula for what I determine as a good ROI with the exact same investments in the exact same technologies and hand it to two different companies. I would bet that each would have different results.

Something I heard just recently in an interview made me rethink this very question. We need to turn the discussion away from digital solutions, data strategy, or traditional channels and realize that it is all channels of interaction. The relationship between digital and traditional are not independent with one succeeding over another, but interdependent with both supporting the overall business together.

So what are some best practices to optimize ROI from a digital solution?" It would be to have a strong relationship between the CMO and the CIO of an organization to work together, align on the values the company wants to live by that come across for patients, map out the patient journey for their particular product, and identify all the opportunities for personal and digital interactions with the patient, and use the analytics to drive the values through all channels of interaction. That tight relationship between the CMO and the CIO is what will eventually optimize the ROI because it's not viewed as just a technology investment or just a marketing investment; it's a business strategy investment that overall would drive higher profitability. PV

Triplefin, which operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of H. D. Smith, has been a leading pharmaceutical brand support company for 33 years. Triplefin removes barriers to patient access and adherence with innovative products and services.

▼ For more information, visit triplefin.com.