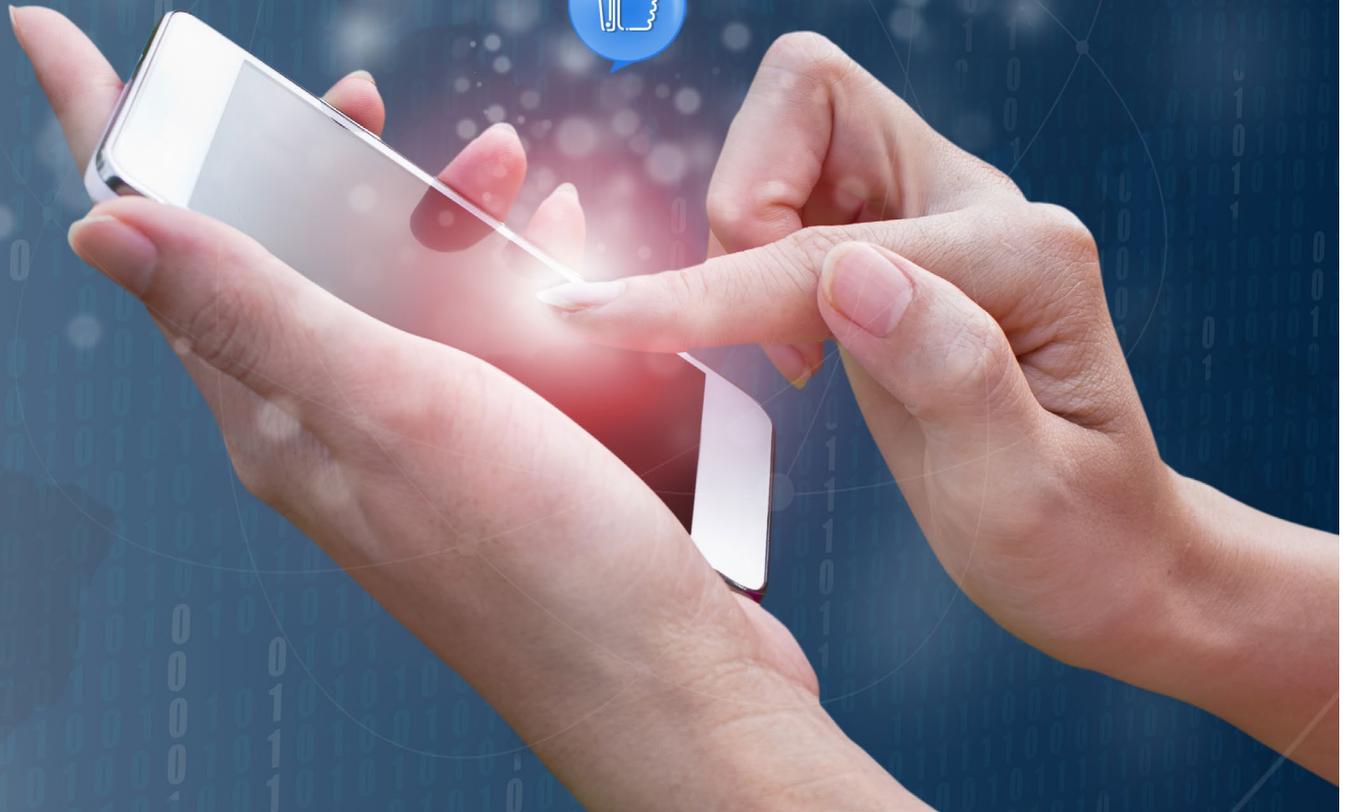


**EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS**

**RESILIENCY + RECOVERY**



## **CREATING THE DIGITAL EXPERIENCE HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS CRAVE**

Marketing moves center stage

# CREATING THE DIGITAL EXPERIENCE HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS CRAVE

## Marketing moves center stage

With consumers demanding mobile experiences that simplify their health care journey, a unique opportunity exists for marketing professionals to take the lead in designing approaches that give health systems a competitive advantage. The pandemic put a spotlight on high-quality mobile digital experiences. Now health systems need to bring all the elements together to create frictionless, hassle-free consumer interactions, and that requires collaboration among multiple departments to identify elements and infrastructures that will appeal to a digital-savvy public for the long term. An optimal digital strategy is no longer a “nice to have” — it is central to future positioning, especially when 50% of consumers say that a bad digital experience can ruin the entire experience with a provider (Accenture 2020 Digital Health Consumer Survey).

In conjunction with the 2021 Society for Health Care Strategy & Market Development (SHSMD) Connections annual conference, marketing and strategy executives gathered in San Antonio this fall to discuss current challenges to designing mobile/digital strategies and to define future best practices. These hospital and health system leaders explored current challenges to designing and implementing digital strategies and defined best practices, revealing valuable insights for the future. ●

### KEY FINDINGS

To create the optimal digital consumer experience, participating executives agreed that a consumer focus, a strategic approach and an innovative mindset with openness to change, collaboration and a focus on integrating various modalities are required.

- 1 Consumer focus** | Consumers are looking for efficient, customizable experiences. Understand the expectations and special needs of different segments and consider both digital and non-digital engagement solutions.
- 2 Innovative, strategic approaches** | Organizations can build internal momentum for creative, innovative approaches to a unique consumer experience by aligning strategies with identified consumer needs. Leverage change-management principles to push beyond the status quo.
- 3 Collaboration and partnership** | Maintain close alignment with information technology (IT) to be able to integrate a digital strategy into IT plans. Collaborate with front-line users and key stakeholders to ensure an effective rollout, implementation and to establish trust.
- 4 Technical solution integration** | Know what digital solutions are available to ensure the integration of data and technical solutions to support a seamless digital consumer experience across the electronic health record (EHR), applications and platforms.

## PARTICIPANTS



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MODERATOR: DIANE WEBER, RN, MHA, SHSMD

To what extent are you directly leading the digital consumer strategy for your organization?

**SUMMARY:** Marketing executives already were responsible for digital channels and key communications. They were also well-positioned to take a leadership role in key digital initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. The demand for digital solutions was accentuated as social distancing guidelines were put in place, which dramatically disrupted how health care is delivered and received. More consumers became aware of and comfortable with telehealth and other digital health channels because of the convenience and safety that they provide. These leaders quickly responded to the increased demand for digital health tools and continue to innovate to provide care where and when consumers need it.



Being in charge of the website and other digital spaces, my team and I were already recognized for owning this space, and as communicators we brought the lens of brand strategy and experience to how we approached our COVID-19 communications.

**CHRISTINE ALBERT, MPP, APR**  
LCMC Health



Our marketing team lives in this space; digital strategy is in the nature of what we do.

**LISA HENRY, MHA**  
Mary Washington Healthcare



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**MODERATOR:** Considering the human side of the digital consumer experience, what do you think consumers are looking for?

| SUMMARY |

Efficient and engaging communication is important for the organization's strategy. Marketers must continue to champion for the consumer, whose needs are ever-evolving. As technology solutions are developed, marketers must ensure that they're not using technology for the sake of using technology, but to provide a better consumer experience.

Some consumers prefer texting over phone calls and online scheduling for their visits. COVID-19 has taken consumer expectation for digital care or engagement to a whole new level. Consumers want a seamless and highly customized experience, such as those created by companies like Amazon or Alaska Airlines. Other industries have already accomplished solutions to these challenges and can be used as models for future development. Even so, not all health care consumers are able nor want to engage using digital means.

**WILLIAM CUMMINS** (*Family Health West*): Consumers want the information when they want it. For example, they would like easy access to appointment setting or information about providers. Customers also may prefer sufficient texting to be engaging, but not annoyingly so.

**BOBBY BEEMAN** (*Olympic Medical Center*): It is so easy for consumers to interact with websites and phones, and there's so much that can be accomplished digitally. If they can access bank accounts at the tips of their fingers, why can't they access their health records?

**JOSHUA TITUS** (*Gozio Health*): We are approaching

an age of disconnect or nonengaged interaction where customers want something right this instant. Just like Amazon, where you don't have to physically go somewhere, you can access a product or service within seconds. The goal is to try and meet them where they are.

**TERRI FLOOD** (*Wayne HealthCare*): As we consider the needs of the older adult population, especially in a rural community, we recognize that many of our consumers prefer to interact by making a phone call to schedule an appointment rather than scheduling online. To balance consumer expectations, we engage with older adults about how to use mobile devices to enhance their health care experience.

**ANNA MESSICK** (*Piedmont HealthCare*): Our older community is trying to learn how to use our latest technology from our staff. However, difficulties arise when patients are selective in wanting to work with certain staff, especially when select staff need more training and experience on the latest technology themselves.

**PATRICK MOODY** (*Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital*): We are focusing on reaching patients but at our organization we have to keep in mind that a significant percentage of our website visitors are job seekers; we also have physicians, fitness center members and donors accessing our site, each of whom represent an important constituency.

**MODERATOR:** What collaborations and partnerships are critical to the success of digital strategies?

| SUMMARY |

Marketing and strategy executives emphasized the importance of building close partnerships with IT to achieve ongoing goals and progress. Beyond IT, collaboration across the organization helps all stakeholders understand consumer needs to develop appropriate solutions. To get buy-in, executives involve key

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vested people, including those who have pre-existing biases about the goals, objectives or solutions.

**KILEY SKADBURG** (*The Iowa Clinic*): Whatever the digital solution, IT can contribute in ways other departments can't, providing unique value by moving things along faster.

**HEIDI APPERSON** (*Kirby Medical Center*): It is important to get buy-in and to establish communication with front-desk workers because they are the front line at the hospital. It may be easy for chiefs to make decisions, but more difficult to get buy-in from those with their feet on the ground. All those who are vested should be involved in the decision. Collaboration and being open to communication are key.

**LISA HENRY**: I want to hug our IT team for all they do for us.

**KILEY SKADBURG**: We rolled out our digital solutions five years ago and realized that we have to have the right people in the room — someone from

IT, operations, the call center, etc. — to develop a plan that appeals to senior leaders. It can't just be marketing; it has to be a strong cohort of everyone.

**MODERATOR**: Talk about your digital technology solutions. What is needed to create the optimal consumer experience?

**| SUMMARY |**

The No. 1 barrier to an optimal experience is the integration of various digital solutions, formulating strategies for amending disconnected systems. Some applications do not sync well with the health system's EHR. Advances in IT, data gathering and analytics are making it possible to creatively use consumer data to deliver a customized consumer experience. Health systems are beginning to tap into consumer data for a real-time pulse of consumer preferences when redesigning the consumer experience.

**KILEY SKADBURG**: In health care, we have so

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many different systems — imaging, scheduling and EHR, for example, and yet it seems impossible to connect them. What seems to be challenging is figuring out how to extrapolate the data on the back end to put things together in a meaningful way for the consumer.

**TERRI FLOOD:** Our outpatient clinics have a different EHR from that of our hospital. We're in the process of selecting a new EHR to increase clinical integration across the system while streamlining patient care to improve the digital experience.

**LISA HENRY:** Achieving an optimal digital experience might mean taking different paths for different customers. The highly customizable experience is what people are looking for, yet they prefer their own way of doing things that could be more complex. The ques-

**“We are approaching an age of disconnect or nonengaged interaction where customers want something right this instant. Just like Amazon, where you don't have to physically go somewhere, you can access a product or service within seconds. The goal is to try and meet them where they are.”**

— Joshua Titus—  
Gozio Health

tion is: How do we start resourcing that level of customization? If we have a highly functional call center, then how do we develop a robust call center?

**BARB KRAGOR** (*Gozio Health*): Integration and understanding what everyone else is doing will help converge solutions and prevent any wasting of resources. Someone might be more invested in their app, some might not know it exists, while others value it more.

**BOBBY BEEMAN:** What I think we see quite a bit of in our industry is the implementation of apps or digital solutions that are more desirable and even useful for one area of operation, but it's not a solution that will work well for another area. We choose digital tools in silos, which can often result in a lack of interoperability.



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**TERRI FLOOD:** Keeping all the challenges and behavioral changes at the forefront, trust is what comes to mind as to how we will improve processes for care transitions and integrate technology, data and information exchanges.

Our organization is optimizing technology to improve patient care and organizational operations to meet the consumer expectations. The success of Amazon and other platforms underscores the need for integration.

**LISA HENRY:** Many different applications for digital solutions are available now, and it will not bankrupt your organization to invest in them.

**JOSHUA TITUS:** Hundreds of hospitals say that these are their problems and the differentiating objective in health care is a holistic experience.

**SAMAH LATEEF** (*University Health*): With so much data, it is hard to know all the sources and their potential use. Senior leaders don't necessarily focus on the data and their potential, but they do look at key performance measures, such as revenue generation, which can be challenging. Even so, fine-tuning the data is important.

**MODERATOR:** What will it take to create a more frictionless and hassle-free digital experience so that patients can interact with your health system?

## I SUMMARY I

Marketing and strategy executives are ready to change the narrative for people to adapt to technology to optimize digital engagement. Marketers are persisting with efforts to improve digital engagement, avoid mediocrity and be less accepting of "it can't be done." Instead, they encourage a culture of innovation and creativity where the mindset is on consumer convenience and close collabo-

ration with a focus on integrated solutions. Leveraging change-management principles will help establish trust.

**LISA HENRY:** Humans are the biggest barrier to change; the heaviest lift is convincing others. Other industries have figured this out and proven digital engagement to be successful and have managed the risks.

**SAMAH LATEEF:** Avoid Band-Aid fixes that yield small solutions with operational issues. Small solutions tend to occur when there is resistance to change. Sometimes it works and other times it doesn't.

**LISA HENRY:** Technology is not always necessary; it doesn't change everything. Even with technology, you often still have problems with convenience and functionality. An EHR doesn't give you everything you need; you still have to develop ideas of convenience.

**SAMAH LATEEF:** We've been asking for years to do open scheduling. People don't want to have to call. The pandemic forced it to happen because of the need for vaccine scheduling. We can't do much with customer experience behind the scenes. Multiple systems need to be tied together.

**WILLIAM CUMMINS:** Don't forget the low-tech solutions that can make a difference. Our hospital's Google review score used to be 2.8. We didn't have many reviews and we looked at ways to improve this. When the COVID-19 vaccine became available, our organization initiated a vaccine clinic and hosted a one-day clinic where we engaged 120 people by the hour. We gave each a business card asking them to leave a review. This drove our Google review score up to 4.9. We administered 7,000 vaccines and only had a 7% to 8% rate of reviews, but they are all positive. Now we have more reviews than others in the area. It was a pivotal point for the organization. ●

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**Gozio Health** offers an end-to-end, customizable mobile platform exclusively for hospitals and health systems that helps anticipate consumers' needs, engage them in their care and strengthen their overall care experience. The extensible solution provides a hand-holding experience at each stage of the patient journey — from the home to the parking lot to the point of care — and allows hospitals to push out important consumer notifications, further strengthening provider-patient relationships. Popular patient engagement features include patented wayfinding with turn-by-turn navigation, virtual visits, physician directories, appointment scheduling, access to electronic health records, urgent care and emergency department wait times, online bill pay and extensive analytic capabilities.

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