



6 Essential Tips for Improving Patient Retention Rates

At the core of healthcare providers and organizations are the patients they serve. Discover tips to improve patient retention rates and ensure your patients are informed, engaged, and well-cared for.

Introduction

Patients are the foundation of healthcare. In turn, a healthcare organization must provide consistent, quality care to those patients to keep their foundation strong. Patient retention is the effort healthcare organizations make to ensure patients keep coming back to them for as long as they need medical care.

Fortunately, many services a healthcare organization provides to acquire patients can also be used to retain them. Good reviews, reminders of services, staff follow-ups, and personalized services are just a few things that many patients look for when choosing a healthcare provider and often cite as a reason for staying with them.

Patient retention rates measure a practice's ability to retain patients over a specific period and can be calculated through a particular formula:

- Set a fixed time frame.
- Figure how many clients the practice gained during that period.
- Calculate the total number of patients at the end of the period minus new customers acquired during the period and divide the total number of customers at the start of the period.

Patients also benefit from staying with the same providers. With consistent wellness visits, their provider team can deliver improved preventive care. Building a lasting, trusting relationship also means patients are more likely to adhere to clinical recommendations and clinical care management protocol.



Patient Retention: Impacting the Bottom Line

Retaining a patient drives the profitability of that patient because patients bring in more revenue over time, making resources you put into acquiring and maintaining that patient. Therefore, it is more cost-effective to retain a patient than to acquire a new one. Studies have also shown that the higher the retention rate, the more significantly your overall profit increases.

One study found that a five-point increase in overall hospital rating (based on Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey data) leads to, on average, a 1% increase in profit margin. However, in terms of smaller, private practices, the average lifetime value of a patient is between \$12,000 and \$15,000, with average patient attrition rates around 17%. This means that for your practice to grow, you must make up for the 17% of lost patients before you can start counting positive gains.

The “value” of a patient is measured through monetary costs, and patient experience (PX) weighs into value. Patient experience (PX) is directly connected to the patient retention rate because patients leave when they have a bad experience and stay when they have great experiences. A study by the Beryl Institute showed that people share good and bad healthcare experiences in at least 7 of every ten healthcare encounters, suggesting that PX has the potential to increase loyalty

as well as deter people from visiting a healthcare provider.

There are many ways to work to retain patients proactively and positively impact patient care as well as your bottom line.

Tip 1: Prioritize Active Listening and Clear Communication

In healthcare, active listening is an essential part of patient engagement. Active listening requires the listener to be fully present during a patient encounter. It eases anxiety for patients, earns trust, reduces misunderstandings, and improves health outcomes overall. The Beryl Institute’s research found that the essential aspect of a patient’s experience is that providers listen to them, with 71% saying this is “extremely important.” In addition, care providers who communicate clearly and treat patients courteously and with respect were rated by 95% as extremely or very important.



Clear communication through language access is also crucial for patient retention, especially in places with high immigrant populations. Language access includes implementing effective communication in doctors' offices and hospitals and in clinical trials.

Translations are critical for clinical trial applications, including patient questionnaires and informed consent documents. However, direct translations rarely communicate all the nuances a term or phrase means to a native speaker. With localization, a hospital, medical practice, health insurance provider, or other healthcare-related business can customize its products, services, and internet presence to reflect differences in distinct markets.

Localization includes taking into consideration local dialects, cultural sensitivities, local medication labeling protocols, regional variations in terminology and will ensure that clinical trial translation will communicate information clearly to everyone involved in the process. For example, jargon and unnecessary "legalese" that you can't or won't be understood can make potential participants feel unwelcome – and might even steer them away from participation.

Tip 2: Survey Existing Patients

Communicating with existing patients can involve regularly gathering feedback to improve the patient experience and increase patient retention rates. Surveys help point out service gaps you may be unaware of and can lead to solutions for addressing them. Surveys also demonstrate to patients that you value their opinions and the quality of your services.

Of course, you must ask the right questions to find the answers you need. Acquiring detailed insights into your patients' experiences through surveying is the best bet for targeting improvements. Survey data can help an organization pinpoint key patient pain points and understand which stakeholders will be important in implementing practice improvement.

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), there are several best practices to keep in mind when developing patient surveys. They include:

- Keep questions brief and easy to understand.
- Have an open-ended question - allow patients to express themselves.
- Allow for anonymity. Patients may feel more comfortable giving feedback if they do not need to use their names.

Tip 3: Implement Forms of Personalization

Personalized health care recognizes patients as individuals with unique health histories and circumstances. Providers who deliver successful personalization are rewarded with more personal patient connections, longer relationships, and increased revenue.

How can personalized care and marketing influence retention and satisfaction?

Consumers are most interested in personalized products and services that benefit health, such as personalized preventative health plans based on behavior. Of course, speaking to customers in their preferred language is also a form of personalization - it means acknowledging that patients' health is important no matter their background or native language.

Health care is patient care, and patients are satisfied with care when they feel valued. But that value can only be felt with open and successful communication. Your current and potential patients will always have choices regarding healthcare. Not only do you need to be the best choice when patients are making a healthcare decision, but you must continue to do so when patients are exposed to your competitors.

Tip 4: Consider Creating a Loyalty Program

A patient loyalty program is a great way to stay competitive while investing in the long-term future of your organization. Loyalty programs are designed to encourage regular patients to stick with you and are explicitly used with patients who have visited your organization at least once. The main goals of a loyalty program include:

- Patient retention
- Stimulating repeat visits
- Increasing your average revenue per appointment
- Widening your range of services available
- Raising brand awareness and loyalty
- Keeping in touch with patients

Loyalty programs anticipate needs and enhance care delivery to increase patient retention. When patients are rewarded for using your system or services, they're more likely to use them again. Patients in loyalty programs engage with health systems more, and not just when they're sick. If you include rewards like discounts on gym memberships or healthy food at local grocery stores, they'll think about your system positively when they tap into those benefits.

Tip 5: Accommodate LEP Patients

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau data from 2018, around 64 million Americans speak a language other than English at home, with about 25 million people reporting limited English proficiency (LEP). In the US, LEP individuals have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English, which presents obstacles to accessing and receiving care in an English-dominant healthcare system. As a result, LEP patients are at risk for experiencing health care disparities when accessing health care and perceive poorer patient-physician interaction relative to people who primarily speak English.

Using languages that local participants can easily understand puts people at ease. Health disparities due to language barriers are reduced when care is provided by clinicians who provide language support. For example, studies demonstrate that LEP patients with language-supported organizations report receiving more education about their care, have fewer unasked questions, and have better medication adherence and fewer emergency room visits.

Localizing Communications and Healthcare Portals

Healthcare portals are the ultimate communication stations to link healthcare organizations with their patients. They give patients immediate access to their healthcare records without engaging a clinician or administrator and enable patients to communicate with providers and payers to help manage their care. In addition, patients can schedule appointments, receive after-visit summaries through portals, and receive care instructions and education materials. Localizing portals is another opportunity to engage patients and keep them investing in their health successfully.

MotionPoint provides healthcare industry-specific translation services for your multimedia assets, including websites, complex healthcare portals, and documents. MotionPoint successfully completes regular independent assessments to ensure they comply with HIPAA Privacy and Security rules. This includes audits to demonstrate their practices are fully HIPAA-compliant. MotionPoint also implements a security program that provides flexible and comprehensive security controls to support customers in various industries, including healthcare services.

Conclusion

In healthcare, translation services are essential for providing accurate and competent care. An innovative translation company can help you find opportunities to serve patients with limited English proficiency successfully. MotionPoint provides services to serve your multilingual customers, meet regulatory requirements, and gain a competitive edge. MotionPoint's industry-leading approaches can support your healthcare translation and localization needs.



MotionPoint Corporation

info@motionpoint.com

www.motionpoint.com