

Maximizing Digital Investments to Improve Care and the Consumer Journey

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Technology is changing consumer preferences and reshaping consumer journeys across every industry. The personalized interactions, real-time updates and digital services transforming consumer experiences in industries like retail and banking are quickly becoming the expectation in healthcare.

[Huron's research into the healthcare consumer market](#) validates that consumers are increasingly looking for virtual care and digital tools to take a more proactive approach to their healthcare. More than half of consumers say they are willing to switch providers for better virtual care offerings, and 55% are interested in mobile apps for their healthcare needs.

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As competition grows and patient loyalty softens, the stakes are higher than ever for healthcare organizations to embrace new innovations and [redesign care models](#) that foster seamless care experiences and improve patient outcomes.

Improving the consumer journey and experience is among [healthcare leaders' top organizational priorities](#), and planned investments in digital tools, data and analytics indicate that leaders understand that technology will play a key role. However, many consumer strategies are still challenged by siloed point-solution technology and disjointed digital interactions.

A modern consumer journey in healthcare should focus on providing top-quality care enabled by technology and seamless digital experiences. This approach requires leaders to shift their thinking beyond digital front door solutions and look at the entire consumer care journey from beginning to end.

Understanding the patient populations an organization serves and developing a clear strategy to reach them in new ways will be critical for making strategic digital investments to deliver the care and experience consumers need — and expect — from their healthcare.

Start With Intended Outcomes

As demand for digital healthcare accelerates, healthcare leaders should have a clear vision of the outcomes they want to achieve before investing in digital solutions. Without a clear purpose, technology investments can quickly become point solutions that not only pull people away from a seamless experience but lead to poor results.

The focus should be on the experience and outcomes that organizations want to achieve rather than the technology. Consider questions like these: What is the purpose of introducing a tool into this interaction? What experience are we trying to create? What organizational goals does this help us accomplish?

Visioning exercises that involve a diverse group of stakeholders will help leaders align on outcomes and measures of success and plan for barriers and accelerators that may impact progress. An assessment of an organization's current digital assets and applications can reveal where there may be technology gaps, but leaders should also consider operational, people and cultural barriers that could impede progress.

These strategic conversations and planning exercises provide the groundwork to build a holistic strategy and road map and can help leaders identify the appropriate tools and technology needed to reach their end goal. Leaders who approach the visioning process with a mindset of where they want their organization to go versus where they're headed will enable opportunities for innovation and growth.

Develop a Deeper Understanding of Consumers

To generate better outcomes and improve consumers' care experiences, consumer strategies must include an awareness of an organization's patient populations and the [social factors](#) affecting their health.

Huron's research finds that [distinct consumer segments](#) exist based on how individuals consume healthcare. Understanding the size and makeup of the specific segments in an organization's total market can provide valuable information about consumer preferences and attitudes, revealing opportunities to improve engagement and evolve the consumer journey to reflect how individuals in the organization's market want healthcare delivered.

Flexible models will be essential because what enables a positive consumer experience will not be the same for every segment. Providers must also develop approaches that proactively involve patients and their families to maintain loyalty and keep patients within their system.

Full visibility into patients' healthcare journeys and the rise of wearable health devices enable providers to help consumers manage their health more effectively and recommend preventive health measures. Optimizing patient portals will continue to be important as these platforms remain a core avenue for providers to deepen communication with patients and engage consumers in their care.

Leveraging consumer knowledge to build strategies and make smart investments will give leaders an advantage in an increasingly competitive market and position themselves for growth.

Elevate Core Technology Strategy

Investments in new technology will be essential to transforming the overall care experience, but organizations should not lose sight of their current tools.

Population health capabilities for electronic health records (EHR) have evolved rapidly, providing a powerful tool to support organizations' social determinants of health (SDOH) initiatives and the broader need to improve patient outcomes in a value-driven landscape. Customer relationship management (CRM) systems provide the infrastructure to support patient and consumer engagement and communication, creating timelier, relevant interactions.

The strategic opportunity for organizations is to unite these core platforms to meet consumers where they are and get ahead of patient needs. To understand their full potential, organizations

should be evaluating the capabilities of their current tools and how they can pair with emerging technology to support consumers' care journeys and advance organizational initiatives.

For example, leading organizations are using data collected from EHR systems to derive insights using predictive and prescriptive analytics, then leveraging virtual care and digital tools to intervene and prevent potential health issues. This level of integration presents a significant opportunity to improve patient health and change how consumers experience care.

In the desired future state, consumers should interact with one technology entry point, supported by the back-end interoperability of all systems.

Organizations that can figure out how to seamlessly integrate core and emerging technology and leverage consumer data to build consumer-centric care models will not only have the ability to transform the consumer journey and experience but fundamentally change the foundation of care delivery.

Key Takeaways

Technology will continue to play a key role in improving care and the consumer experience. To get lasting value from digital investments, leaders should:

Think differently.

Understand how consumers want to consume healthcare, what drives those decisions and what factors influence their care experiences.

Plan differently.

Approach digital investments with a clear purpose and strategy.

Act differently.

Leverage consumer data and digital tools to build flexible care models that proactively engage consumers and enable seamless care delivery.



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