



Powerful Mobile Solutions. Better Engagement.

10 Ways to Use Text Messaging to Improve Patient and Staff Engagement

Healthcare organizations are addressing patient challenges by leveraging mobile technologies to improve efficiencies, communication, and staff morale, ultimately enhancing patient engagement. This eBook offers 10 best practices for using text messaging to improve patient engagement across all care aspects.



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Healthcare organizations are facing numerous patient challenges. There's increased competition for patients, greater pressure to maintain and grow patient volume, elevated importance on delivering a great patient experience that can translate to higher satisfaction and positive online reviews, and the need to reduce waste associated with missed appointments and treatments, among others. It's never been more critical to leverage mobile technologies to strengthen efficiencies, communication, optimization, and even staff morale, all of which can translate to better patient engagement and the extensive benefits that come with it.

This eBook shares 10 best practices for using text messaging to achieve patient engagement improvements throughout your enterprise that touch all aspects of the care journey.

It's a mobile-led world, and it's never been more important to use texting in your communications

We'll cut to the chase: The value, effectiveness, and importance of text messaging have never been greater. Organizations that leverage text messaging to its full potential are realizing short- and long-term improvements in their operational, clinical, and financial performance. In a mobile-led world where patient engagement has become an essential strategy, text messaging is a necessity.

Not all texting solutions are the same. Providers need solutions to fit their challenges. At a minimum, a texting platform should be cloud-based, HIPAA-compliant and healthcare-focused; include two-way texting capabilities and Tier 1 connectivity; be easy to use and self-service for this environment of ever-changing, urgent communications; and have the ability to scale across their entire enterprise.



Continue reading “10 Ways to Use Text Messaging to Improve Patient and Staff Engagement”...

Quickly Schedule New Procedures

Organizations should use texts to help ensure optimization of available space on the patient schedule. Text messaging should also be used to drive recall campaigns, such as those for colorectal screenings and annual physicals/wellness visits. Such text messages would provide instructions for how patients can schedule their appointments (e.g., phone call, form, portal). It can also include information on the check-in process and safety measures or a hyperlink to a page on the organization's website that details such information.

More than 97% of phones can access text messaging and the mobile internet. Including hyperlinks is a useful way to engage patients by supplementing information in the text. Including the organization's phone number here is also an effective way to further engage with patients and encourage them to reach out with questions.

Consider that not all outbound phone calls staff members make are answered, but almost every inbound call to an organization during hours of operation is answered. Texting is also a great way to inform patients that they need to call an organization.

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to Manage Recall/Gaps-in-Care Programs

- ✓ Automated recall appointments for efficient scheduling
- ✓ Links to website/portal scheduling
- ✓ Confirmation via conversational texting
- ✓ Automated open slot filling
- ✓ Increase appointments beyond filling gaps
- ✓ Phone number at fingertips for scheduling
- ✓ Confirmation with date and calendar load

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Hi Susan. Records show that it is time for you to schedule your next appointment. Please schedule now using the link: <http://bit.ly/DHSchedule> or by calling us at [877-666-1132](tel:877-666-1132)

Just scheduled using the link! Thanks

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Thank you for scheduling your next appointment. We're confirming your appointment for [06/10/2024](#) at [9 AM](#). We're excited to see you then!

Texting patients is a proven way to reduce cancellations, no-shows, and no-goes. Prior to an appointment, organizations should send a text that reminds patients about their scheduled treatment. The text can also include a reminder or information about the required preparation for the treatment (e.g., fasting), directions to the organization, safety policies, and the organization's phone number if patients have questions. This is also a good time to tell patients that if they are not feeling well, they should reach out to cancel their appointment.

If an organization wants to speak with patients to review these directions, a text can inform patients about this need and then include the phone number from which the organization staff member will be calling, and the time of day patients should expect the call. This will increase the likelihood that patients answer a call from a number they may have otherwise not recognized.

Patients who receive appointment information via text are at least 2x more likely to complete their appointment as scheduled, reminding us once again that we live in a mobile-led world.

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to Optimize Efficiency and Minimize No-Shows

- ✓ Automated appointment reminders, including bringing insurance card and payment
- ✓ Automated appointment reminders with links (e.g., directions to the facility)
- ✓ Provide co-payment information and pre-appointment paperwork
- ✓ Explain arrival procedures for on-time start
- ✓ Links to website/portal with arrival instructions
- ✓ Provide office number to expect call pre-appointment

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Hi John, just a friendly reminder of your upcoming appointment with Mainstreet Health tomorrow at [9:30 AM](#). We're looking forward to seeing you today. Please check in and complete your pre-registration forms at <http://bit.ly/registration>.

Will do! Where are you located?

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Thank you, we're looking forward to seeing you tomorrow. Here's a map to our office: <http://bit.ly?DHMap>.

Providers are using text messaging prior to and after appointments and treatments to positively impact clinical outcomes and patient safety. Improvements in these areas can significantly affect financial performance (e.g., reducing readmissions and associated penalties), patient satisfaction, staff productivity, and satisfaction, Net Promoter Score and CAHPS results, online reviews, and much more.

The topics covered in these text messages may already be covered in patient education materials and/or during discussions with patients and their caregivers. However, these are issues worthy of reminders – critical instructions patients need to know and follow on topics an organization is not likely to call patients about given staff bandwidth and the significant reduction in patients who answer calls and listen to voicemails.

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to **Enhance Patient Safety and Improve Outcomes**

- ✓ Provide preoperative bathing instructions for infection prevention
- ✓ Share steps for colonoscopy prep and post-cataract surgery recovery
- ✓ Reminder text to prepare the home for safe postoperative recovery
- ✓ Postoperative text reminding patients to monitor incisions
- ✓ Post-discharge messages to improve compliance
- ✓ Texts to reduce readmissions

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Hi Amy, it is important to follow all medication and discharge instructions.

If you have any questions and would like a call, please reply "YES" or "NO"

Yes, please!

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Thank you, a nurse will be calling you shortly.

For organizations with telehealth programs, text messaging is the most effective way to communicate with a majority of patients and encourage them to take advantage of virtual services. Nearly all consumers already own mobile phones. Most mobile phones can access the internet and include a camera, and all can receive and interact with text messages. There is little to no learning curve for patients as most know how to use their phone for texting, and most have used videotelephony programs (e.g., Zoom, Doxy.me, Facebook Messenger). There is no need for someone to have wi-fi, a computer, speakers, or even be at home to access telehealth services through their mobile phone.

After scheduling a telehealth appointment, organizations can send a text message that includes the direct hyperlink to initiate the consultation and the time when the patient should click the hyperlink. Once the link in the text is selected, a web browser or default videotelephony app will automatically open and the camera on the phone should activate. This makes telehealth simple for patients and helps further optimize the billable time for telehealth visits

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to **Schedule and Perform Telehealth Appointments**

- ✓ Text to schedule telehealth visit
- ✓ Direct link to telehealth visit/platform
- ✓ Provide reminder of telehealth visit start time
- ✓ Texting can turn the mobile phone into a powerful telehealth tool

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Hello Lsia, just a quick reminder about your Telehealth appointment tomorrow at [10:30 AM](#). Please reply with YES to confirm or NO if you need to reschedule.

Yes

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Thank you! Please use the link to access your Telehealth account for your appointment tomorrow: www.mainstreethealth/Account123. If you have any questions or need assistance, just reply with HELP.

As discussed, using texting for appointment-related messages reduces cancellations and no-shows. Not only can you more effectively identify which patients plan to keep their appointments, but staff also can identify patients who need to cancel or reschedule. That gives staff a chance to fill that appointment slot with other patients.

Organizations can also send well-worded and polite texts reminding patients of their payment responsibility — either upcoming or overdue — and the manner in which they can pay for treatment. Include a link to an online bill pay website, if you offer such a payment mechanism. This approach to securing payment is familiar to most people since many other industries already use texting for payment prompts, including most major credit cards and many banks.

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to Optimize Revenue Cycle Management

- ✓ Communicate co-pays
- ✓ Provide links to payment portals
- ✓ Phone number at fingertips for questions
- ✓ Provide link to balance due
- ✓ Provide link to insurance forms
- ✓ Automated appointment reminders with copy information

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Hello Joe, our records indicate an outstanding balance on your account. Please use the following link: www.patientpaymentlink.com/login to make your payment online, or feel free to call us at [877-666-1132](tel:877-666-1132) to make a payment over the phone. Thank you!

Thank you for the reminder!
I just paid but have a question.

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Thank you! A member of our office will reach out to you shortly. In the meantime, please take a look at our FAQs to see if they address your question: www.mainstreethealth.com/FAQ



Text messages are an effective way to reengage with patients who miss or need to reschedule appointments. As with text messages about scheduling appointments, texts for rescheduling would provide instructions about how patients can reschedule. As noted, the text can put the organization's phone number at their fingertips. These messages can also emphasize the clinical importance of rescheduling.

Leveraging text messaging to communicate about an organization's ability to accommodate patients is a highly efficient and cost-effective means of maximizing revenue.

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to Reclaim Lost Appointments

- ✓ Automated appointment rescheduling
- ✓ Direct/live texts to reschedule
- ✓ Two-way texts to confirm the rescheduled appointment
- ✓ Automated open slot filling
- ✓ Reminder to reduce no-goes
- ✓ Arrival procedures for on-time start

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Hi Maria, just a friendly reminder of your upcoming appointment with Mainstreet Health on [07/28/24](#) at [1:30 PM](#). Please reply YES to confirm or RS to reschedule.

RS. Sorry, I forgot that I won't be able to make it. 😞

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Thank you for letting us know. That is no problem! Please use the link to reschedule your appointment for a time that works better for you: www.maintstreethealth.com/schedule



Broadcasting Important News to Large Audiences

Mass texts are the simplest and most effective way to get timely information to a large group and do so quickly. Mass text messages can touch on a wide range of topics that apply to a single audience or multiple audiences. They can be a single message or part of a series of messages, with each message providing additional information and details.

Mass texts are useful to provide updates on both planned and unplanned developments.

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to Inform Large Audiences on Updates

- ✓ Revised hours of operation
- ✓ Changed staff arrival procedures
- ✓ Updated staff schedules
- ✓ Vendor visits and protocol
- ✓ Links to arrival procedures
- ✓ Modified parking rules and availability

Staff Communication:

MAINSTREETHEALTH: ALL STAFF NOTICE! In light of Hurricane Wilma's emergency alerts, our office will be closed from [Thursday, August 8th](#), to [Saturday, August 10th](#). We're taking this precaution to prioritize everyone's safety.

Please stay safe and heed all necessary precautions during this time.

Patient Communication:

MAINSTREETHEALTH: In light of Hurricane Wilma's emergency alerts, our office will be closed from [Thursday, August 8th](#), to [Saturday, August 10th](#). We're taking this precaution to prioritize everyone's safety. Rest assured, a member of our team will reach out to reschedule all appointments.

Please take necessary precautions and stay safe during this time.



Organizations should use texting to tell staff and vendors who will be coming to the organization about any revisions to policies, procedures, and processes, including those affected by construction. Examples include changes to staff and vendor check-in, parking, and wearing of PPE. Such an effective use of mass texting capability can also serve to remind staff and vendors about the need to avoid traveling to the organization if they are not well.

Organizations can use texting to send direct links to current documents, websites, or portals to access materials.

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to **to Keep Staff and Vendors Informed**

- ✓ Texts sent to specified groups
- ✓ Links to all updated procedures documents
- ✓ Provide delivery and check-in procedures to vendors
- ✓ Share safety procedures with staff and vendors

Staff Communication:

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Quick reminder to review our updated procedures. We kindly ask that you read and electronically sign, acknowledging your review by this [Thursday, 06/15 at 4 PM](#). Thank you: www.maintstreethealth.com/review

Vendor Communication:

MAINSTREETHEALTH: For your upcoming visit, please use LOT B for parking and enter through the side entrance. When you arrive, simply press the call button and one of our team members will assist you promptly. Here's a link to a map of our building to help you find your way: www.maintstreethealth.com/MAP

Thank you, and we look forward to your visit.

Keeping Stakeholders Current on Changes

During these uncertain times, policies and procedures in place one day may need to change for the next. Text messaging is a fast, effective way of keeping stakeholders current on rules and expectations. Mass texting is also valuable when an organization must quickly inform stakeholders of a significant development, such as a natural or manmade disaster that affects operations or travel to an organization.

As the Department of Homeland Security's Ready.gov website notes, "When an emergency occurs, the need to communicate is immediate. ... An important component of the [emergency] preparedness program is the crisis communications plan. A business must be able to respond promptly, accurately, and confidently during an emergency in the hours and days that follow. Many different audiences must be reached with information specific to their interests and needs." In addition, an effective mass communication plan, as a component of an emergency preparedness plan, also allows businesses to track whether critical messages have reached audiences successfully.

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to Manage Critical and Rapidly Changing Information

- ✓ Direct/live (1-to-1) texts
- ✓ Mass/broadcast texts
- ✓ Reminder that not all texts need to be emergency related

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Please stay safe and heed all necessary precautions during this time.

While most text messages sent by organizations will concern safety and business matters, there is another beneficial way to use the technology: providing emotional and inspirational support to staff. Sending uplifting text messages can have a positive impact on mental health, help build loyalty to an organization, and strengthen retention.

We believe the value of supportive text messages can be underestimated, but that is changing as healthcare organizations recognize the importance and value of focusing on staff mental health and wellness. Here are a few examples of texts organizations are sending to help lift the spirits of their team members:

How Our Clients Are Using Text Messages to Boost Staff Morale

- ✓ Recognition and appreciation for individual or team accomplishments
- ✓ Personalized messages on birthdays, work anniversaries, or other special occasions.
- ✓ Ask team for feedback or suggestions
- ✓ Announce that there's cake in the break room

MAINSTREETHEALTH: Join us in the break room today at [9:30 AM](#) for a sweet treat 🍰! Your hard work is appreciated, and we want you to feel special. See you there!



Text messaging is a proven method for engaging patients, enhancing outcomes, improving staff productivity, and strengthening workflow, among other benefits. As text messaging has become the preferred communication method for a growing number of Americans, healthcare organizations should evaluate how they can incorporate two-way text messaging as a communication platform or further expand its existing use.

Texting can also play a key role in addressing the breakdowns in communication throughout a patient journey that results in canceled appointments, poor outcomes, and lost revenue, among other avoidable problems. Adding a single platform with multiple text messaging solutions, like Dialog Health, can help organizations reduce and often eliminate these shortfalls, delivering the efficiencies that contribute to short- and long-term success.

We are here to help. Organizations interested in adding or expanding text messaging should visit the Dialog Health website at dialoghealth.com, text or call (877) 666-1132, or email info@dialoghealth.com.

“I am loving using Dialog Health Texting platform for our pandemic communications with our patients. It is making our lives so much easier. If we had to call every patient to cancel and now reschedule we would never get off the phone. The enhancement in our communications was very helpful. I just wanted to say THANKS!”

- Joanne M. DeAngelis, CPA, Administrator, Long Island

Want to learn more?

Contact Us:



877.666.1132



www.dialoghealth.com



info@dialoghealth.com



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