

MARKETING

2022 healthcare marketing trends





Over the past two years, many overwhelmed healthcare practices have pushed aside marketing efforts so they could effectively manage the complexities of the pandemic. Instead of focusing on business growth, practice owners have had to shift resources to address safety protocols, testing and treatment guidelines, and difficult staffing challenges.

As we learn to live with COVID, and its variants and surges, it's time for practices to look ahead to a growth mindset. With experts foreseeing the pandemic's end, now is the opportunity to consider and implement aggressive marketing strategies.

The marketing tactics usually required to attract and retain patients have rapidly evolved over the course of the pandemic. Amid an ever-changing consumer landscape, savvy healthcare practices must keep up to remain competitive and even lead their market.

Read on for five healthcare marketing trends to drive practice growth in 2022.

1. Personalization

Much like healthcare itself, healthcare marketing is personal. Patients want to feel like their healthcare providers understand them, their health, and their specific needs. A one-size-fits-all approach to marketing is no longer sufficient. A recent study by Dassault Systèmes and CITE Research found that 83 percent of consumers expect products and services to adapt to their needs within moments or hours.¹

Healthcare marketers need to personalize the connection with both current and prospective patients. By targeting your marketing outreach to appeal more directly to an individual patient (rather than the masses), you can drive patient loyalty and strengthen the patient-provider relationship. Here are couple of ways to personalize your practice marketing.

Re-engaging patients. Throughout the pandemic, patients have been skipping or deferring care, whether by their own decision or a particular mandate. By March 2021, 55 percent of patients reported missing or canceling a healthcare appointment due to the pandemic.² Additional research indicates that patients have missed nearly 10 million preventive cancer screenings.³ When reaching out to these disengaged patients, personalizing your message tells them you care about their health and are thinking about them — even when they're not coming into the office. A well-timed text message or email can inspire patients to re-engage with your practice and even book their next appointment. In the short term, these strategies can boost appointment volume; in the long run, they drive loyalty, patient retention, and better outcomes.



1 [CES 2020 Survey, CITE Research/Dassault Systèmes](#)
2 [PatientPop patient survey, March 2021](#)
3 [JAMA Oncology](#)

Meeting patient preferences. Do you know how your patients prefer to hear from you? While some like a phone call, most expect an email or text message. PatientPop research⁴ shows that patients overwhelmingly prefer digital communication for five key interactions: scheduling an appointment, filling out registration and other forms, accessing their medical record, paying their bill, and asking a question. By understanding your patients' desires and habits, you can communicate with them in more personal, meaningful ways. For example, sending an appointment reminder via text message to those who prefer text messaging shows you're committed to their personal communication needs.

2. Taking advantage of digital connection trends

Today's consumers are connected to their mobile devices all the time. According to Statista,⁵ nearly half of Americans spend five to six hours a day on their smartphone, presenting an opportunity to meet patients where they already are. Yet, too many healthcare practices don't take advantage of this captive audience.

Using digital technology to connect with prospective and current patients can improve relationships and support a healthy growth strategy. Here are some of the latest ways to engage with patients digitally.

Text messaging: Looking for better patient engagement? Use this powerful, dominant communication tool. People open the average text message within three minutes⁶ of receipt and are 4.5 times more likely to respond to a text message than an email, according to Learn Hub.⁷ If your practice isn't capitalizing on text messaging, you're missing out on a variety of potential benefits:

- **Increased web conversion:** By inviting website visitors to communicate via text directly from your site (known as web-to-text), you're offering them a new, powerful call-to-action. It's quicker and simpler than a phone call (and more satisfying after hours), and more personal than a chatbot.
- **Greater appointment scheduling:** What happens to patients looking for an appointment when your phone lines are tied up or your office is closed? Rather than lose a qualified new patient lead, give website visitors the option to request an appointment via the web-to-text function. This convenient offering eliminates long hold times and frees up your front desk staff.
- **Enhanced interpersonal communication:** Today's patients want simplicity and immediacy. Secure, two-way text messaging offers both. Healthcare practices can quickly connect with patients to answer questions, respond to requests, and confirm appointments.
- **Reduced no-shows via appointment reminders:** According to PatientPop research,⁸ two-thirds of patients (66 percent) prefer text messages when receiving medical appointment reminders. Timely, automated text reminders can help reduce no-shows and last-minute cancellations — and they're more effective than emails, which patients are less likely to read.

4,8 [PatientPop 3rd annual patient perspective survey](#)

5 [Statista](#)

6 [SMS comparison](#)

7 [46 SMS Marketing Statistics Your Customers Wish You Knew, Learn Hub](#)



- **Easier patient payment:** Additional PatientPop survey data shows that half of healthcare consumers prefer digital options to pay their bill. Use text messaging to send each patient a link to a digital invoice. You'll be better positioned to boost your collection rate and reduce your patient obligation days in accounts receivable.

Telehealth: One of the most talked-about healthcare topics since 2020 has been the pandemic's significant and lasting impact on telehealth adoption. Although consumer preference for virtual care varies by age group, research indicates that most consumers who used telehealth in 2021 want to continue using it in 2022 and beyond.⁹ In fact, 83 percent of Millennials (ages 25 to 40) intend to use telehealth in the next 12 months.

Moreover, as patient participation in virtual visits has increased, so has overall patient satisfaction. In PatientPop surveys from August to December 2020, telehealth patient satisfaction rose from 76 percent to 81 percent.¹⁰ For marketing purposes, your practice can promote telehealth as a differentiator to attract new patients who either prefer virtual visits or have obstacles getting to an in-person appointment. For an added competitive advantage, use telehealth to expand office hours, offering patients greater flexibility and opening up additional slots for revenue.

3. Local search engine optimization (SEO)

According to PatientPop, three out of every four people have looked online to learn about a doctor, a dentist, or medical care.¹¹ Getting the right online searchers to find your practice is a critical marketing tactic. Search engine optimization (SEO) is likely part of your current strategy, but it's an always-moving target. In fact, over the past several years, the factors that help determine search result rankings have changed.

9 [US Telehealth Trends 2022, eMarketer](#)
10 [PatientPop patient survey, December 2020](#)
11 [PatientPop 3rd annual patient perspective survey](#)



Online profiles impact your healthcare practice's search performance

One SEO factor that has become increasingly important in recent years is the quality of a business's online directory profiles, like those found on Google or Yelp. For 2021, the top factor impacting a practice's ability to appear in the Google local pack is its Google My Business profile.¹²

If you're not familiar with the Google local pack, it's a valued placement of three results (and a map) located at or near the top of organic search results. This is prime real estate in the Google search world, delivering greater practice visibility and the opportunity for more website traffic — both instrumental for driving practice growth.

The power of your online presence doesn't stop there. In PatientPop research, more than one-third of patients (34.2 percent) said they use third-party websites to form an opinion about a doctor, dentist, or other healthcare provider.¹³ This can include dozens of online business and healthcare directories, including Bing, WebMD, and Vitals. Along with Google, these sites give patients easy access to details about your practice and services. Therefore, each profile needs to be in top shape and ready to appeal to patients.

To get there, first ensure your practice information is accurate and consistent across all directories — this is critical for your contact details and address. This consistency gives search engines the confidence to surface your practice and can help you climb the results ranks. Also, when describing your practice and services, use the words and phrases people use most often when asking questions about your specialty. These keywords will help you connect with more prospective patients. Finally, when choosing your business categories, be as specific as possible (think 'foot and ankle doctor' instead of 'orthopaedist').

4. Reputation management

Online reputation has become the key to attracting new patients online, making it a top marketing priority for practices in 2022. In fact, reviews are the number one online resource for patients looking for a healthcare provider, with 74 percent saying that positive reviews are very or extremely important to their decision.¹⁴ Google remains the number 1 site patients turn to for reviews, followed by your practice website, WebMD, Yelp, and Facebook.

Amid the industry's rise of consumerism, patients expect more from their doctors and look for the best of the best. As such, your practice's Google average star rating can make or break your ability to win over prospective patients.

In 2021, 69 percent of patients said they will not consider a provider with an average star rating lower than 4.0. That's up 59 percent over 2020, with nearly one in five only considering providers with a near-perfect rating: a minimum of 4.5 stars.¹⁵

Practices that request feedback as part of their patient relationship process, monitor their online reputation daily, and respond to negative reviews as needed, will be best-poised for greater success in 2022.



5. Monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs)

You may have an exceptional marketing strategy that's perfect for your target patient base. But if you don't measure your results — and modify plans as needed — you can't validate the efficacy of your efforts. With today's competition, healthcare practice marketers can't afford a set-it-and-forget-it strategy.

The use of data and analytics can help practice marketers confirm the value of their strategic approach. Understanding any practice's return on investment (ROI) requires monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) that best represent new patient gains and improved retention.

Real-time access to marketing performance data is a must in 2022 for any practice looking to maximize their marketing investments. Without timely insights, practices risk wasting time and resources on strategies that simply don't deliver.

Key data and information is best displayed in one place by way of a practice growth dashboard. Practice marketers, owners, partners, and staff can get a daily snapshot of key metrics, such as search result rankings, reputation insights, new appointment volume, website traffic, and much more. Having this at the ready gives your practice a competitive edge; you'll maintain an accurate perception of your marketing performance at any given time, setting the stage for continuous improvement.

Getting started with these 2022 healthcare marketing trends

To take your practice growth to the next level, first assess your healthcare marketing strategy and set clear, measurable goals for the coming year. Whether you want to improve your search result rankings, increase new patient or overall appointment volume, or boost your online reputation, start by focusing on improvements that reveal performance progress and drive long-term growth. Investing in healthcare marketing software can help, too, by offering a seamless way to track and monitor performance throughout the year.

About PatientPop

PatientPop is an industry leader in practice growth technology, helping thousands of providers promote their practice, attract and acquire patients, and retain them for life, for a thriving business. Their integrated platform eases and enhances the patient journey from start to finish, with a streamlined digital workflow that significantly reduces work for providers and staff. PatientPop has been recognized with many industry awards and accolades including The Inc. 500, Deloitte Fast 500, Entrepreneur 360, Consumer World Awards, Capterra Shortlist, G2 Leader, and Silicon Review 50 Fastest Growing Companies. For more information, visit www.patientpop.com.

