



How to Measure What Matters in Healthcare Marketing

Martin Mikek, MD | Co-CEO & Co-Founder, Carely Digital

July 2025 Edition 2

Healthcare marketers and clinic owners face a growing challenge: understanding which marketing efforts truly drive patient conversions and revenue. As digital advertising costs rise and privacy rules tighten, it is no longer enough to launch campaigns and hope for results. Patients now rely heavily on online research to choose providers, making it essential to create content that is relevant, valuable, and aligned with what people are actively searching for. Success depends on knowing which messages resonate, which channels perform, and how each interaction contributes to care. Meeting this challenge requires a closed loop marketing system that tracks the full journey from first click to treatment revenue and feeds those insights back into strategy to continuously improve both advertising efficiency and content relevance.

Achieving this level of insight is anything but simple. Healthcare marketers operate in a fragmented data environment shaped by disconnected systems such as electronic health records, CRMs, and web analytics, along with long patient decision cycles and a mix of online and offline touchpoints. Three core challenges stand in the way. First, it is difficult to unify digital and offline traffic data into a single, accurate view. Second, marketers need to attribute not only direct conversions but also the indirect influence of content and campaigns. Third, measuring and capturing data across the entire patient journey, from initial contact to completed treatment, remains a major obstacle. Overcoming these barriers is essential for building a closed loop marketing operation that is both data-driven and focused on sustainable growth.

Challenge 1: Bridging the Gap Between Online and Offline Traffic

One of the most persistent obstacles in healthcare marketing is the disconnect between digital and offline traffic. While a patient's journey may begin online with a search query, social media post, or paid ad, it often continues or concludes offline, through a phone call, a walk-in visit, or a referral from another provider. In fact, the majority of healthcare appointments are still booked via phone, and many patients prefer this channel for its immediacy and personal reassurance.

For marketers, this presents a blind spot. Traditional web analytics capture digital activity, but they fall short once the patient leaves the browser. Without mechanisms in place to track phone calls, form fills, or front-desk interactions, it becomes nearly impossible to evaluate which campaigns or content actually drove the conversion. As a result, high-performing channels may be undervalued, and budget decisions risk being guided by incomplete data.

To accurately measure the efficiency of both paid campaigns and organic content, it is essential to capture and attribute both online and offline bookings. One effective way to do this is through first party analytics. By tracking every interaction with a clinic's website and other content using first party functional cookies, each visitor can be given a unique identifier that does not require extra consent. If the same person later books an appointment by phone or in person, their identity can be linked to their earlier online activity once they click the confirmation email sent after booking.

Call tracking can add another layer of insight. Services like Amazon Web Services offer dynamically assigned phone numbers that can be placed in website pages, ads, or emails. When a patient calls using one of these numbers, the call can be tracked and recorded automatically. This data can then be linked to the campaign or content that triggered the call.

Together, these tools help connect online engagement with offline actions. The result is a clear and complete view of the patient journey across all channels. This also makes it possible to calculate lead acquisition costs accurately and understand which content and campaigns truly drive patient bookings.

Challenge 2: Understanding the Indirect Impact of Content and Campaigns

In healthcare marketing, not every patient conversion happens as a direct result of a single click or ad. Patients often move through a longer and more complex decision journey. They may visit the website multiple times, read an article, watch a video, click on an ad, or interact with an email, all before finally booking an appointment. These touchpoints may not lead to immediate conversions, but they play a critical role in building trust, educating the patient, and guiding their decision.

Traditional last-click attribution models overlook this complexity by giving all the credit to the final touchpoint before conversion. As a result, valuable content and early-stage campaigns often go unrecognized and underfunded, even if they played a key role in shaping the patient's decision.

To fully understand what drives patient acquisition, marketers need to look beyond the final interaction and account for the influence of all touchpoints across the journey. This is where first party analytics combined with multi-touch attribution models becomes essential. By capturing each interaction a visitor has with digital content and assigning value to multiple steps along the way, these models reveal the true contribution of articles, videos, ads, and emails to the final outcome.

With the help of first party data, clinics can build a complete and privacy-compliant picture of how prospective patients engage with content over time. When paired with a well-chosen attribution model, this data helps identify which pieces of content move people forward in their decision process, even if those interactions happen days or weeks before a booking. This leads to better resource allocation, smarter content strategy, and more accurate reporting on what actually works to attract and convert patients.

Challenge 3: Capturing the Full Patient Journey from First Contact to Completed Treatment

Understanding the true impact of marketing in healthcare requires more than tracking a booking. The patient journey does not end with the first appointment. It continues through diagnosis, treatment planning, procedures, and follow-up care. To measure the real return on marketing efforts, clinics need visibility into how a patient entered the system and what happened throughout the course of care.

The only way to achieve this level of insight is by combining data from all treatment-related interactions, typically stored in the clinic's electronic health record system, with data from earlier digital activity. First party analytics can capture pre-visit interactions such as website visits, ad clicks, and content engagement. When this data is integrated with information from the treatment phase, it creates a complete view of the patient journey from first contact to final outcome.

This combined data set allows for a more accurate analysis of how individual campaigns and organic content contribute to actual revenue. Marketers can trace a completed procedure back to earlier touchpoints and see which content or campaigns played a role in the patient's decision process. This not only supports forward-looking attribution but also enables a backwards analysis, where revenue from a specific treatment is mapped to the marketing efforts that influenced it.

By using first party analytics and processing their own data, clinics can move beyond basic lead tracking and evaluate performance based on financial outcomes. This helps identify which channels and messages truly drive value, leading to smarter investment and continuous improvement in marketing strategy.

From Click to Care: Technology That Ties It All Together

Building a closed loop marketing system requires more than strategy. It also depends on having the right tools. Patient engagement platforms with built-in analytics can help clinics connect the full journey from first contact to completed treatment, without needing technical expertise or custom development.

Platforms like Carely make this possible by bringing together data from website interactions, ad campaigns, phone calls, and electronic health records. This unified view helps clinics understand what drives bookings and which efforts lead to revenue.

First party analytics is the key. It allows clinics to track their own data, apply attribution models, and see how each campaign or content piece influences patient decisions. With features like call tracking, real-time reports, and privacy-first design, platforms like Carely give healthcare marketers the insights they need to make better decisions and grow with confidence.

Conclusion

Precise measurement of marketing performance is now essential for healthcare clinics. It allows smarter spending, better patient acquisition, and improved understanding of patient needs. While challenges like long decision cycles, data silos, and strict privacy rules remain, they can be overcome with the right tools and strategies.

By using first party analytics, multi-touch attribution, and unified data tracking, clinics can finally see which campaigns drive real results. This clarity helps justify budgets, improve marketing effectiveness, and ultimately connect more patients with the care they need. It is no longer a luxury to measure marketing performance accurately. It is a critical part of growing a modern healthcare business.

