



The End of Business as Usual: Competing on Patient Experience in the Digital Age

How to Align Teams and Technology to Boost Satisfaction, Loyalty and Perceived Value of Care

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In today's fast-changing elective healthcare market, clinics must go beyond clinical outcomes to compete on experience. This white paper outlines two strategic shifts that forward-looking organizations must embrace: rethinking internal collaboration to place patient experience at the center of leadership priorities, and adopting next generation digital tools that support consistent, personalized, and scalable engagement across the entire care journey. From initial contact through long term follow-up, modern patient expectations demand clarity, empathy, and convenience delivered through well-coordinated human and digital touchpoints. Clinics that connect siloed information, align operational and IT teams, and implement technologies like patient engagement platforms are best positioned to strengthen loyalty, improve conversion, and grow sustainably in a market where perceived value defines success.

Importance of Patient Experience in Elective Healthcare

Patient experience is a defining factor in how the quality and value of healthcare are assessed. This is especially true in elective care, where patients choose their provider and often cover the cost themselves. From first contact to final follow-up, every interaction contributes to how the clinic is perceived, both in terms of service and professionalism.

Experience extends well beyond the clinical result. Patients care about how clearly information is communicated, how easily and conveniently they can access care, and how well they are supported throughout the process. When follow-up is timely and personal, patients feel reassured. When it is lacking, even successful treatments can leave room for doubt¹.

A recent study of 617 elective surgery patients found that only 39 percent were fully satisfied with the overall experience of their procedure, even when clinical outcomes were positive. It was the quality of the complete experience, including communication, responsiveness, and personal attention before and after treatment, that most strongly shaped how they perceived their provider².

Patient experience also reaches far beyond the clinical setting. In the same study, 74 percent of patients said they shared their story with friends and 33 percent posted online². A strong experience builds trust and visibility, turning patients into advocates and generating valuable referrals.

In a market where patients have real choice, experience is not just an operational concern. It is a strategic priority. A 2025 survey by Qualtrics found that 61 percent of healthcare consumers would pay more for a better experience³. Clinics that meet this expectation are best positioned to grow by earning patient trust and delivering care with higher perceived value. In the long run, experience is the only differentiator that creates lasting relationships and sustained success.

Adapting the Organization to Compete on Experience in the Digital Age

Delivering a truly elevated patient experience today is increasingly intertwined with digital tools and technology. Patients now expect the same level of convenience and personalization in healthcare that they receive in other industries. They want user-friendly apps for scheduling, meaningful communication, personalized interactions, telemedicine services, and simple access to information. These expectations have become the norm and are reshaping how clinics must operate to stay competitive⁴.

Historically, a Chief Information Officer (CIO) in a healthcare setting was responsible for managing internal IT systems such as electronic health records, infrastructure, and compliance. Patient experience was typically seen as the responsibility of clinic managers or front-line staff. This is changing rapidly. As technology now touches nearly every stage of the patient journey. CIOs are emerging as key players in shaping how care is experienced. Many now sit on executive teams and are tasked with aligning digital investments with clinical and engagement goals⁵. In short, digital strategy has become patient experience strategy.

A Verizon-sponsored report described the post-modern CIO as someone who goes beyond managing infrastructure to focus on patient-centered digital experiences⁶. The pandemic accelerated this shift. By 2021, more than half of healthcare CIOs said patient engagement technology had become their top investment priority⁷. This reflects a deeper mindset shift. Technology that supports patient communication, access, and follow-up is now viewed as essential to growth, reputation, and differentiation.

Yet CIOs cannot lead this shift alone. Successful organizations ensure close collaboration between digital and operational leadership. Clinic managers and operations teams understand the flow of the patient journey. Technology leaders provide the tools. Clinical and non-clinical staff adapt these tools into daily practice. This kind of collaboration ensures that digital platforms meet real needs and function within real workflows.

Larger clinics may formalize this with cross-functional teams or roles like Chief Patient Experience Officer. Others build structured processes that connect IT, operations, and care delivery. Smaller clinics may take a simpler approach by assigning digital responsibility to a practice manager or working closely with a trusted tech partner. Regardless of size, the principle is the same. Patient experience should be reviewed as a leadership priority, guided by journey insights and supported by shared accountability.

Clinics that treat experience this way are positioned not only to deliver better service but to compete more effectively. They build stronger patient relationships, benefit from more referrals, and grow without relying on price reductions. Instead of commoditizing care, they differentiate based on how care is delivered. In doing so, they create value that patients notice, appreciate, and return for.

Turning Technology Into a Competitive Advantage for Patient Experience

Many clinics today attempt to manage the patient journey using CRM systems. While these tools are useful for tracking contact data and sending bulk messages, they offer a limited and outdated approach to experience management. CRM systems function like a radio. They store retrospective, siloed information and broadcast the same message to broad patient groups, regardless of where individuals are in their journey. The communication is one-way, generic, and poorly timed. Everyone hears the same message, but no one knows who is listening, what they need at that moment, or how they respond.

Such tools are no longer enough. Delivering elevated patient experience at scale requires more than optimization. It requires a new kind of technology. Patient engagement platforms represent this next generation. These systems are purpose-built to deliver personalized content across multiple channels, including email, text messages, and messaging apps. They go beyond data management and basic outreach to actively support and guide each patient from first contact through follow-up.

Like Spotify, they are tuned to each individual's needs and preferences, delivering the right message in the right format at the right moment. Integrated with the clinic's website, scheduling systems, and health records, they allow providers to guide every step of the patient journey with precision and relevance. They do not just enhance the experience. They redefine it.

Just as importantly, these platforms make the entire journey measurable. Clinics can track how patients interact with each touchpoint, identify drop-off moments, and adjust communication strategies in real time. These data-driven insights help optimize advertising, refine content, and improve lead conversion. With embedded artificial intelligence, they also support clinics in creating personalized content, building high-performing lead capture pages, and continuously refining each patient's journey based on live feedback. They reduce acquisition costs, enhance the perceived value of care, and enable clinics to deliver empathy at scale. These are no longer support systems operating in the background. Patient engagement platforms are becoming the front line of delivering a differentiated, patient-centered experience.

Conclusion

A growing body of evidence supports this shift in how clinics approach patient experience. Research from the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality confirms that digital engagement tools can measurably strengthen safety, quality, and satisfaction. Patients who feel involved and informed throughout their care are more likely to follow treatment plans, avoid unnecessary visits, and report better experiences⁸.

To remain relevant and thrive in a fast-changing market, clinics must take coordinated action. This means breaking down silos and connecting information across systems, teams, and channels to serve the patient more effectively. Success requires collaboration between IT, clinical providers, and operational leaders to create a seamless experience—one where digital touchpoints and in-person care are fully integrated and mutually reinforcing. When digital and human efforts are aligned, patients experience care that feels empathic, coordinated, and truly centered on their needs.

Sources:

¹ CipherHealth. *The Patient Experience: The Importance of Post-Discharge Follow Up.*

² LaneTerraLever. *Elective Healthcare Modern Patient Insights Report.*

³ Qualtrics. *Three-quarters of customers would pay more for a premium experience.*

⁴ Healthcare IT News. *Pandemic fueled consumer demand for digital front doors.*

⁵ GetWellNetwork. *How Today's Hospital CIO Can Lead Patient Engagement.*

⁶ Verizon. *The Post-Modern CIO: Leadership Beyond IT Infrastructure.*

⁷ Stoltenberg Consulting / CHIME. *2021 Healthcare CIO Report.*

⁸ AHRQ Digital Health Research. *Strengthening Patient Engagement.*

