

MOOD:MEDIA

HOW TO IMPROVE THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE WITH HEALTHCARE DIGITAL SIGNAGE

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As we mention in the [6 Steps to a Better Patient Experience](#), Healthcare Digital Signage is no longer a trend. Rather, it has become a proven tool that more healthcare providers are leveraging to improve the patient experience and generate powerful results for their practices. In fact, a 2015 study by Arbitron Inc. found that **75% of respondents who saw healthcare-related signage could recall at least one message that they viewed**. Additionally, these respondents also felt that the signage enhanced their overall experience

From family practices and dental offices to large hospital networks and imaging centers, healthcare organizations of all types and sizes can benefit considerably from this technology. When executed properly, digital signage will create new efficiencies, boost your bottom line, help reduce (or eliminate) print costs and present a range of benefits for your patients, family members, visitors and staff.

In this article, we'll explore the various ways that you can utilize digital displays to improve the patient experience and achieve other business goals. We'll also explain how to create and execute an effective signage strategy in order to yield the most from your investment.

CONTENT APPLICATIONS

Content refers to what is displayed on the screens, and healthcare digital signage offers several types of content applications, each with its own unique purpose. The most common applications for healthcare signage content include, but are not limited to:

- + Patient queues
- + Waiting room entertainment
- + Wayfinding and digital directories
- + Brand Enhancement (staff credentials, community involvement)
- + Patient Communications (health tips, Basic reminders, FAQs insurance questions)
- + Promotional content (ancillary services, sponsored products)
- + Cafeteria menu boards
- + Internal communications (staff recognition, training reinforcement)
- + Ambient visuals for aesthetic

The following sections explore the most common and beneficial content applications in greater detail.

APPLICATION 1 PATIENT QUEUES

The use of queues is a great way to help relieve anxiety and keep your patients in the know on their remaining wait time. You'll also reduce, if not eliminate the number of times that patients ask staff for an ETA on when they'll be called back.

You can display the patient queue on an entire screen or on a portion of a screen that is used to drive other types of content, thanks to **digital signage templates**. Templates are standard with most signage software solutions, and they allow you to break your display into multiple content zones so that you can maximize screen space and give your signage a sleek and professional look. For example, many healthcare providers will display the patient queue on the side of a screen that they use to drive entertainment content. If you take this approach, we recommend displaying the queue on each of your waiting room screens in order to maximize visibility.



APPLICATION 2 SHORT-FORM PROGRAMMING

The standard practice when it comes to waiting room entertainment is to show network television to help patients and their family members pass the time. This approach is fine, as long as it doesn't detract from the goal of creating a comfortable waiting room experience. Avoid showing negative news programming or TV shows and movies with violent, inappropriate or controversial subject matter.

Some digital signage providers now offer **short-form programming**, which includes several 2-5-minute clips of popular TV shows and other pre-recorded family-friendly television content. This is an outstanding alternative to network TV programming. With short-form programming you never have to worry about changing the channel, and you'll never see competitor commercials displayed on your screen. Additionally, the segments are just long enough for patients to consume in the relatively brief time that they'll typically be in your waiting room.

APPLICATION 3 WAYFINDING AND DIGITAL DIRECTORIES

Wayfinding isn't just for hospitals - family practices with multiple offices can also use it to ensure that visitors get to the right place as quickly as possible. The last thing you want is a frustrated patient who is late to their appointment because they spent 15 minutes trying to navigate the first floor of your building.

An added benefit of using digital signage for wayfinding is that you can easily update it in the event that you change the internal location of offices. You won't have to take on the cost or inconvenience of printing new signs. You can also use screen space to deliver a welcome message that reinforces your positive brand personality.

APPLICATION 4 HEALTH AND WELLNESS TIPS

Your patients are ultimately coming to you for a cure, but to them, having an educational experience at your practice is truly invaluable. Aim to provide wellness tips, exercise ideas and dietary recommendations that are relevant to the age and health needs of your patients.

Your strategy for this content application should also include reminders about specific services you offer. Family doctors may want to provide seasonal immunization reminders, while dentists may want to drive awareness about teeth whitening and fluoride treatments, for example.

Don't think of education as ways for your patients to cure themselves. Rather, think of it as a way to help your patients and their family members embrace a healthier lifestyle and make healthcare a higher priority. Promotion is never "salesy" when it has genuinely helpful intentions.

APPLICATION 5 PROMOTE OTHER AREAS OF YOUR PRACTICE AND YOUR PARTNERS

Your patients place a lot of stock in convenience, and it's in their best interest and yours to promote other on-site facilities you have that may fulfill their healthcare needs. For example, maybe you have an in-house pharmacy or imaging center - digital signage can be instrumental in ensuring that patients know about these areas of your practice.

On the other hand, if your practice is more focused on a specific set of services, you can use your signage to help promote your partners that offer such secondary levels of care. Doing so will not only provide added value and convenience to your patients, but it will also strengthen your referral network.



APPLICATION 6 CAFETERIA MENU BOARDS

More hospitals are switching from print signage to digital menu boards for the cafeteria to help reduce costs, improve efficiency and enhance the look and feel of their locations. Not only are digital menu boards easier to see and read, but you can update them instantly. If a menu item isn't available one day or if you're adding something new, simply log into your software and apply the change instantly. Additionally, you can schedule different menus to display during different times of day - a strategy known as **dayparting**.

APPLICATION 7 LOBBY AND HALL AESTHETICS

You can always use ambient visuals in the lobby or large hallways to brighten the look and feel of your facility. The use of soft, bright colors can help enhance the calming experience you're aiming to create. You can get highly creative with various screen arrays and digital video walls to make a powerful impression.

APPLICATION 8 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Digital signage is an outstanding medium for effectively communicating with your team throughout the day. You can reinforce federal policies and coding requirements, remind staff about upcoming events, recognize them for a job well done and much more. Ultimately, you'll better position your staff to provide the highest level of care possible while cultivating an inclusive and supportive culture.

Now that we've explored the most common healthcare digital signage applications, let's discuss how you can create an effective strategy for making the most of this solution.

SIGNAGE STRATEGY ESSENTIALS

STEP 1 KNOW YOUR GOALS

In addition to improving the patient experience, each content application has its own smaller objective(s) that may or may not be relevant to your practice. Review the list of applications above and determine which objectives matter the most to the success of your organization. From there, create a vision of exactly what you want your signage to do and balance your strategy accordingly.

STEP 2 KNOW WHERE IT GOES.

Lobbies and waiting rooms aren't the only places where digital signage should be placed. Consider examination rooms as well - anywhere in your facility that your patients and visitors may go is an opportunity to improve their experience in some way. Take a look around - wherever you have static signage today, consider if that space could be better utilized with a digital screen.

STEP 3 SET A REALISTIC BUDGET

There isn't a typical budget for healthcare digital signage, so you're going to need to do some additional research and get quotes. You'll need to factor in the costs of:

- + The **visual media player** (a.k.a., digital signage hardware). It's either purchased at a flat rate or leased for a monthly fee.
- + The **digital signage software** that manages the content displayed on the screens. Software is typically packaged into a monthly service fee.
- + **Content development and management** services (if needed). If you don't already have images and other visual assets, some providers can create content for you. Some can even manage the content on your behalf.
- + **Commercial-grade screens*** come in all shapes and sizes from numerous brands with multiple features. Do your homework here, as this tends to be the largest expense, but it's not an area to cut too many corners.

***Some quick notes on screens** - *Even though the types of screens you use at home can work with digital signage, they're not ideal for use in your practice a number of reasons. For starters, the HD screens you use at home are only designed to work about 4-6 hours a day, while commercial-grade screens are made to run continuously. They're also less prone to "burn in," a condition that frequently happens with consumer screens. Additionally, using a consumer-grade screen in a business application will void any warranty it came with. On the other hand, commercial-grade screens come with robust warranties that cover typical malfunctions from business use. Finally, commercial-grade screens have higher display ratios, resulting in a better picture.*

In order to get the best bang for your buck, you'll want to go with a single provider that can offer all of these components. You won't have to work with several vendors in order to support one solution, enabling you to save time and money in the long run. A credible and trustworthy digital signage provider should also be able to give you an idea of a realistic budget.

STEP 4 START SMALL, THEN SCALE

If you have multiple locations and you're new to the game, it's a good idea to initially implement your digital signage at one or two practices before rolling it out to the rest. Doing so will give you a chance to test and fine-tune your digital signage strategy, while minimizing your upfront investment.

If you only have one location, try implementing a few screens at first and measure their effectiveness over the course of a few months. Experiment with different content applications and get a good feel for what works best with your patients and what doesn't. The testing you do in the beginning will pay dividends down the line.

STEP 5 UPDATE YOUR CONTENT REGULARLY

Updating your content on a regular basis is a vital best practice. Irrelevant or untimely messaging can damage the impression you make on visitors. Additionally, displaying the same exact content month after month can cause your audience to ignore it. Even changing up the color scheme of an evergreen health tip can ensure that the signage still captures the attention of frequent visitors. As a rule of thumb, aim to update your digital signage content **at least once every 4 weeks**, with major changes applied every season.

We hope this article has helped shed light on where to start with your healthcare digital signage strategy. [Contact our experts](#) today to learn more, and they'll be happy to answer any questions you have.

Lastly, if your organization has a regional footprint, be sure to download "[Digital Signage for National and Global Brands](#)." This free eBook goes into greater detail on many of the topics covered here and provides invaluable insights for those looking to implement digital signage at scale.