BEYOND THE CONTACT CENTER: HOW AN ORGANIZATIONAL REDESIGN HELPED A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IMPROVE PATIENT ACCESS

Overview

About four million calls annually flowed through the contact center for a large healthcare system. Unfortunately, many of these calls were repeats from frustrated patients. The healthcare system knew it needed to improve scheduling and communication for its 800,000 patients but didn't know where to start. Change fatigue, leadership shifts, and financial struggles amplified the issue.

After partnering with Pixel Health, the healthcare system had the technology roadmap and operational blueprints it needed to move forward with a strategic shift in its consumer strategy. With Pixel Health's support through every stage of the journey, the healthcare system solidified the foundations and implemented a successful patient access pilot project that it can scale across its organization.

The Situation: Too Many Missed Connections

A New England-based not-for-profit healthcare system was losing patients due to unreturned appointment requests, long hold times, and missed phone calls. Ineffective appointment scheduling processes frustrated patients, delayed care, and led to duplicative messages to referred providers. Providers estimated 50% of messages received from the contact center were not needed or useful.

The healthcare system approached Pixel Health to evaluate its contact center. However, to truly improve patient access, the healthcare system would need to overhaul other areas as well.

To make an impact on patient access, the healthcare system recognized it needed to establish a clear vision, followed by a governance structure to support the execution of recommended tactics. Those tactics centered on digital self-service, referral management, and patient engagement.

The Solution: Lay the Foundation for Long-Term Success

To deliver practical, long-term solutions, Pixel Health assembled a team of consulting, technology, and innovation experts. Working side by side with the healthcare system, the Pixel Health team developed and implemented a strategic plan as well as provided education and guidance. Together, these elements, as part of a larger enterprise framework, laid the groundwork for long-term success.

Our Solution Included the Following:

01 **Promoted strategic alignment and organizational positioning:**

Pixel Health first facilitated a vision session with cross-functional healthcare leadership. As an outcome of the session, the group established a unified governance structure for assessing, designing, implementing, and adopting a comprehensive patient access initiative. The resulting artifacts included a technology roadmap and detailed recommendations for refining, implementing, and adopting core capabilities.

02 **Refined the contact center structure:**

To support scalable, sustainable growth, Pixel Health identified gaps in the contact center's existing technology as well as its workflows. With that knowledge, we recommended contact center automation, leveraging conversational Artificial Intelligence (AI) to streamline appointment scheduling processes.

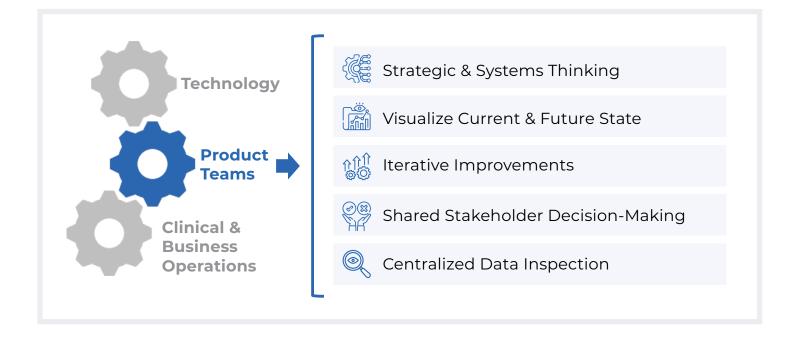**03** **Focused on an intentional service model:**

Pixel Health created a self-service digital front door, standardized processes, expanded CRM functionality, and ultimately improved the contact center's service model. A tactical team addressed contact center and patient portal messages. They introduced automation to streamline prescription refills and AI-based pathways for smart sorting and scheduling optimization.

04 **Restructured healthcare delivery, clinical, and business operation workflows:**

To eliminate duplicative phone calls and reduce the number of referrals lost to follow up, Pixel Health provided a playbook on how to consolidate and standardize provider templates and scheduling rules. An ambulatory capacity management team was also centralized and launched to balance provider resources with patient demand.

05 **Delivered a technology roadmap:**

To promote accountability and sustainability, Pixel Health developed a 12-month technology roadmap that included recommendations for the underlying architecture, self-service options, and automation.

Technology

Product Teams

Clinical & Business Operations

- Strategic & Systems Thinking
- Visualize Current & Future State
- Iterative Improvements
- Shared Stakeholder Decision-Making
- Centralized Data Inspection

Results: Streamlined Processes & Across-the-Board Improvements

The healthcare system tested the new patient access initiative with a pilot project. Focusing on mammography screenings, the healthcare system assessed the effectiveness of automated outreach, scheduling coordination, and capacity management, among other metrics.

First-year results showed an 8% increase in screenings compared to the prior year. Given this improvement, the healthcare system expanded the patient access strategy to primary care. Looking ahead, the healthcare system plans to implement the strategy across the entire health system.

Conclusion

The healthcare system was willing to review and revise its processes at a foundational level to improve patient access. As a result, Pixel Health not only presented operational best practices and technology solutions to strengthen one critical patient access point—the contact center—but also strategies and a plan to resolve the root causes of the healthcare system's challenges.

By addressing patient access from the ground up, Pixel Health developed a sustainable and scalable model that the healthcare system can use long-term to improve customer service and patient care.

Early Results Show Marked Improvements, Including:

Lower contact center abandonment rates

Lower average speed to answer

Increased # of appointments scheduled

Improved patient and provider satisfaction

Improved patient outreach

More care gaps closed

Fewer process redundancies

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