



WHITE PAPER

Align before you sign

Capturing the full value of patient experience surveys

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Every year, more hospitals and health systems are adding Chief Experience Officers (CXOs) to their leadership teams, and with good reason. CXOs bring a unique focus and skill set that's been missing from efforts to adopt a value-based business model for healthcare.

Their mission is to define the optimal patient experience, lead their organizations to deliver that experience, and measure the results across all care settings. The work demands continuous improvement of patient care, population-health management, and cost efficiency.

For CXOs, the key to a successful patient experience improvement program is to capture the full value of patient feedback. In other words, Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) scores and compliance mandates are important, but CXOs must dig deeper into their patient feedback data to find the insights that drive improvements in patient-centered healthcare.

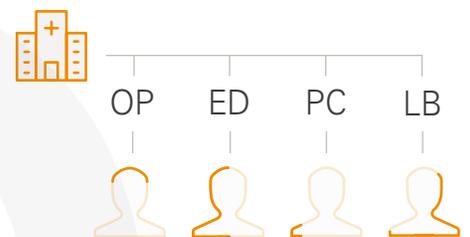
Prerequisites for success

For CXOs to improve the patient experience, merely compliance-oriented feedback data is not enough. They need actionable information from their patients, provided in a timely manner. This is best achieved with a real-time feedback platform. Immediate insights from patient comments enable CXOs to improve processes, inspire behavioral change among staff, and, if necessary, engage in service recovery when things go wrong.

Additionally, CXOs need visibility into the longitudinal experience of each patient—critical information about every interaction a patient has with an organization—from the initial admission through discharge and beyond. CXOs can use the data-points collected from every interaction to give patients the best experience possible, safeguarding their loyalty the next time they seek care.

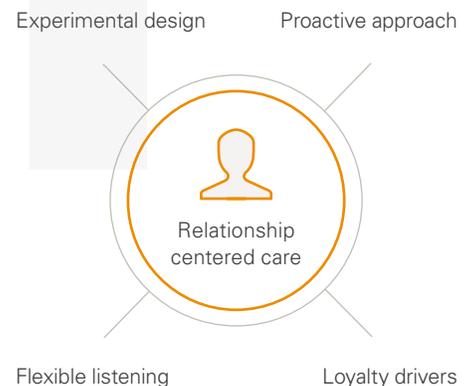
We need to think differently.

TODAY



Today, healthcare organizations tend to be structured in a silo'd effect. Each department may only have bits and pieces about each patient, but no one is sharing information, making it impossible to understand the whole person.

TOMORROW



Healthcare organizations will only see success if they get a more holistic impression, putting the patient at the center of their focus.

A CXO's Checklist

SIX THINGS TO EXPECT FROM YOUR PATIENT EXPERIENCE VENDOR

01 Relevance

It's time to move beyond compliance—and toward continuous improvement.

You work hard to gain organizational buy-in and roll out new initiatives to improve the patient experience. Your patient experience partner should keep pace, updating its surveying solutions to gauge the impact of new initiatives and deliver real-time, meaningful feedback.

Traditional means of collecting feedback from patients yield small and out-of-date samples that often elicit skepticism from clinicians. Real-time feedback, by contrast, consistently delivers highly reliable data that you can use to engage clinicians and staff to improve processes at your organization. In fact, NRC Health research has found that 73% of patients prefer to give their feedback within a few days of the episode of care—with 29% saying they'd report back within a few minutes, if they could. Over time, enabling this kind of response will have an appreciable impact on patient loyalty and satisfaction.

02 Quality

Insist on survey quality and value

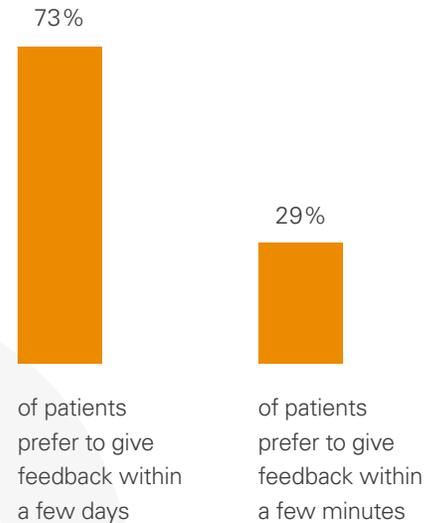
Data intelligence. Does your patient experience partner employ multiple survey-delivery modes to obtain the highest possible percentage of returns? Does it have the ability to efficiently consolidate large volumes of responses into a clear view of next best actions? To ensure the validity and the usability of your patient feedback, you must be able to answer "yes" to these questions.

Granularity. Does your patient experience partner have the capability to analyze and report on patient experience data at a granular level, providing you with meaningful context and actionable results?

Consider: Do your surveys ask patients if they're aware of new services your organization has rolled out? Or whether there was anything they hoped to discuss with their physician that wasn't covered? Or if they had any confusion around price and billing? Or if they liked the new style of gowns you're piloting?

This level of specificity is critical for mapping out the care journey for each patient in your facility. Without it, planning and deploying interventions can be challenging.

After an episode of care, patients prefer to give their feedback while the experience is still fresh.



AFTER A HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE DO YOU WANT THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK TO THE DOCTOR OR HOSPITAL USING A SURVEY?



03 Speed

Accelerate response time

Mailed surveys can take six weeks or more to complete—far too long for you to remedy missteps in the patient experience. Even worse, survey lag time can come with clinical consequences, too. Long response times increase the potential for readmits, or in the most extreme cases, serious post-discharge complications.

Real service recovery requires a proactive approach. Your patient-outreach program should support communications via phone call, SMS, or IVR to gain feedback within 24–72 hours of discharge. That gives your service team the opportunity to apologize, address the problem, or even facilitate a life-saving intervention.

Shortening the feedback loop ensures higher reimbursements, improved patient loyalty, and better patient outcomes.

“Oftentimes, if you just look at the patient in front of you, you might be able to manage the ‘What’s the matter?’ question, but you really can’t finish the ‘What matters to you?’ question. We’re moving to think about care as much more broad than prescribing a medication. It’s about how to keep someone well and vital.”

-Maureen Bisognano, President and CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement

04 Transparency

Meet demand for increased transparency

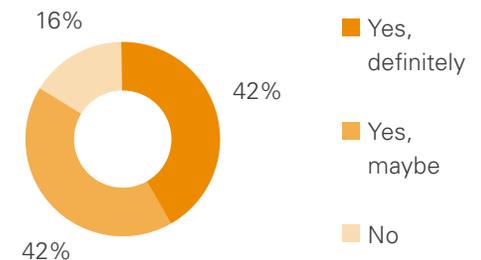
The rise of the Internet and social media has created a higher expectation of transparency among tech-savvy consumers. On one hand, data from patient experience surveys is mandated by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for validation, analysis, and publication on its Hospital Compare website. On the other hand, your organization may want to publish survey data to share internally with providers, as well as externally on the organization’s websites and provider-profile pages.

With that being said, publishing patient ratings and reviews requires access to raw survey data about your healthcare facilities and providers. If your patient-feedback contract limits your ability to access, publish, and share your paid-for survey data with other vendors or partners, your data is not truly yours to use. A high-value survey provider should not only enable use of survey data, CAHPS or other, but also convert raw data into star ratings that you can publish. This could include ratings at provider and service-line levels, and roll up to provide facility-level ratings as well as patient responses. This gives providers a quick, authentic view

Real-time empowers you to understand and act on an experience while it still matters.



IF YOU WERE TO LEAVE A HOSPITAL OR DOCTOR NEGATIVE FEEDBACK, WOULD YOU EXPECT SOMEONE FROM THEIR TEAM TO FOLLOW UP WITH YOU?



84% of patients expect you to follow up with them if they have a bad experience. **Service recovery** is extremely important!

of performance: verified feedback from verified patients. Your survey provider should offload the burden of delivering these ratings, so you can focus on the bigger picture.

05 Value

Trusted partner advantage. Just as it's important that your patient-feedback contract is aligned with healthcare system goals, your patient experience partner needs to be proactive, responsive, and flexible. They need to take a personalized approach to service, and evolve in step with your organization's needs.

Goal-setting. Your improvement advisor should bring informed guidance and practical ideas to the table, help you leverage your data to identify key areas for improvement, and assist you in setting realistic goals for improvement on your timetable—not theirs.

On-site guidance. The best improvement partners understand that true change happens on the front lines. That's why they'll visit your facility in person, to take in a first-hand experience of its culture, processes, and people. What they learn on the floor will inform a genuine understanding of your organization.

Access and connection. A strong customer-success team delivers more than just solutions. They also connect you with peer institutions and authoritative research, so you can further hone your improvement strategy.

Continuous innovation. The healthcare industry does not reward stagnation. Emerging competitive threats, changing customer preferences, and regulatory shifts all put pressure on healthcare organizations to stay ahead of the curve. Your patient-feedback vendor should be a partner in your organization's evolution, giving you access to cutting-edge products and procedures to meet tomorrow's challenges.

To an organization trying to connect more deeply with its customers, a well-designed community panel could be the key. Panel members are recruited from groups of patients who provide real-time feedback regarding their recent healthcare visit. This opt-in mechanism ensures that panels will attract participants who are eager to give feedback—giving you a dedicated group of advisors who will lend invaluable insight to your operations.

06 Accountability

Clear deliverables and fair terms

It's worth your while to make a careful, rather than cursory, review of contract payment terms and conditions. Look for a clear definition of deliverables, with an itemized breakdown of costs. Even if it seems trivial, if you have a question it should be answered to your satisfaction. Your vendor's willingness to engage in

Why Focus on transparency?

1 of 3

say that looking at online reviews is their first step when searching for a new doctor

45%

of reviewers look at online reviews before scheduling an appointment

77%

of consumers begin their healthcare search online

reasonable negotiation of terms speaks volumes about the kind of service you can expect once you've signed on the dotted line.

Read the fine print around survey costs. Some contracts charge a flat fee to conduct a survey, regardless of the number fielded or returns received. Others charge a flat fee for their service, plus additional fees for all surveys fielded, and all returned, at a per-survey unit cost.

Make sure your contract defines the account services that will be included in your fee, and the services that incur additional charges. Onsite visits from teams and development of custom reports may be a priority for you, but they may not be included in your contract.

Your contract should also describe the deliverable—your feedback report. What data will be reported, at what level of detail, and how will the data be presented?

A trusted partner is not just a survey vendor. So take the time to thoroughly vet them. Ask their customer references the same probing questions you are asking yourself. Do their comments suggest that you've found a trusted partner? Is this vendor well-equipped to help you manage the difficult work of organizational change? Will they not only bring you reliable patient data, but help you understand how to use it? If you want to pursue authentic transformation at your facility, you can't afford to settle for anything less.

Conclusion

More and more health systems are recognizing the need to evolve beyond compliance-oriented feedback in their patient experience initiatives. They know their ability to compete depends on it. So they'll continue to add CXOs to their leadership teams, optimize data collection, and hunt for new ways to generate an improved patient experience—the new standard for forward-thinking healthcare organizations.

To ensure that your organization doesn't fall behind, stay in step with this next phase of evolution in the healthcare industry. Follow a proactive strategy to secure the healthcare consumers of the future. And find a partner you can trust to help you develop and execute it.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU SIGN:

When looking for the perfect partner to gather your patient experience feedback, consider the following questions:

- Has my current patient experience feedback provider delivered on its contractual obligations?
- What elements of the survey need to be updated or improved?
- Has my partner provided a roadmap to make needed improvements?
- If not, is my partner prepared to remedy the situation?
- Am I **capturing the full value** of my investment in this service?



Human understanding

For more than 35 years, NRC Health has been committed to achieving human understanding. We enable healthcare organizations to know the people they care for with greater clarity, immediacy, and depth. Our partners are able to illuminate and improve the key moments that define an experience and build trust. Guided by our uniquely empathic heritage, proprietary methods, skilled associates, and holistic approach, we help our partners design experiences that exceed expectations, inspire loyalty, and improve well-being among patients, residents, physicians, nurses, and staff.



**NRC Health helps healthcare organizations
better understand the people they care for and
design experiences that inspire loyalty.**

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