

What's next



Enterprise

5 best practices for healthcare providers: Automating appointment management

A well-implemented and well-supported appointment management solution doesn't just cut no-shows. It can also improve patient adherence, boost patient satisfaction and positively impact your financial performance. If your solution (or vendor) doesn't do the five things I cover, it's time for a change. Not just for your own efficiency and bottom line — but for the health and satisfaction of your patients.

Vance Clipson

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A good appointment management solution – whether your organization calls this kind of technology appointment reminders or something else entirely — leverages [outbound communication](#) integrated with your EHR to make things easier for both you and your patients. For you, it lets you make the most efficient use of your resources: your clinicians’ and administrative staff’s time, your facilities, and your equipment. For your patients, it means they get the care and treatment they need at the optimal time to improve their health and even enhance their experience.

With input from my colleagues, I’ve pulled together five things you and your patients need an appointment management solution to do. If yours isn’t currently delivering in these areas, it could be time to look for an alternative. And if you’d like to learn a bit more about these five “best practices” (plus an additional five!), be sure to download our [new best practice guide](#).

Our top five:

1. **Make it easy for the patient to engage:** Give the patient an easy way to reply to the message — whether to confirm they’ll be there or to let you know they can’t make it

(or to reschedule). Many systems are “one-way-only” or can’t distinguish between people and voicemail, so they play the same message regardless, leaving the patient frustrated and confused.

2. **Treat every patient as an individual:** The more your appointment management solution can learn about patients’ preferences, the more likely your patients will be to engage with it. At the very least, that means contacting them in their preferred channel (e.g., text, voice or email), in the right language and at the right time.
3. **Speak your patients’ language:** Nobody enjoys listening to irrelevant menu options. That’s why the best solutions use conversational interfaces with “Natural Language Understanding.” These systems can understand what the patient says or texts, determine what they mean, and reply intelligently in almost any language.
4. **Don’t just remind — reschedule:** A good appointment management system will also allow the patient to reschedule on the spot. This option makes life easier for the patient and avoids the merry-go-round of following up on missed or canceled appointments. This requires two-way communication with the EHR via an application programming interface (API).
5. **Help patients prep for appointments — and stay informed after:** By using your solution to send prep instructions, you stave off last-minute cancellations or patients arriving unprepared for a procedure or screening. Apply the same technology for other communications, such as discharge instructions, and you’ll improve patient compliance and reduce readmission rates.

If these don’t sound like features available with your appointment management system, it’s time to shop for a new one. Between the increased value of patient satisfaction and experience, the dollars at stake with missed appointments and unprepared patients, and the importance of acquiring and retaining patients with elevated expectations, there’s too much at stake not to.

Tags: [healthcare industry](#), [mobile](#), [patient engagement](#), [proactive engagement](#)

More Information



Check out our new guide

A good appointment management solution doesn’t just cut no-shows. It can also boost patient satisfaction and improve your financial performance. If your solution doesn’t do the things covered here, download our new guide.

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About Vance Clipson

Vance Clipson, senior principal, industry solutions for Nuance Communications, focuses on vertical-specific strategy and marketing with an emphasis on healthcare, financial services and government. Clipson brings 25 years of experience translating industry needs and data into market strategy and programs for Milliman, PacifiCare Health Systems and other organizations.

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