

How data can improve your patient acquisition and retention strategy

Learn to identify, segment, and
engage patients for maximum growth

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Introduction

Provider organizations dedicate considerable resources to the strategy and process of attracting new patients while retaining existing ones. Both goals—acquisition and retention—are vital components of an effective healthcare marketing strategy.

The most successful providers leverage a combination of traditional and digital marketing strategies, including online advertising, social media marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO), to distinguish themselves from their competitors and engage prospective and current patients alike. In addition, these successful providers use the latest market data on referral patterns, procedure and diagnosis claims, provider affiliations, and other relevant intelligence to inform their marketing strategy.

In this whitepaper, we'll highlight the value of a well-balanced approach to patient acquisition and retention, and show you how to leverage the right data to sharpen your strategy.

The report is divided into three parts:

-  **Part I:** Balancing patient acquisition and retention
-  **Part II:** Developing a data-driven strategy
-  **Part III:** Online reputation management

Part I: Balancing patient acquisition and retention

Providers need patients—that much is simple. The trickier part is determining which goal deserves the higher priority: Acquisition or retention?

Looking beyond the healthcare world, around 44% of companies say they prioritize customer acquisition, with only 18% dedicating more effort to retention.¹

In almost every case, a provider—whether an independent practice, physician group, hospital, or care network—should explore strategies for both acquisition and retention. The ideal balance of efforts will depend on a provider's specific goals, resources, and market conditions.

The value of patient acquisition



Acquisition brings new patients, leading to higher revenue and potential business growth, but it comes with higher costs. On average, acquisition is estimated to be about 5x more expensive than retention,¹ although digital marketing has made the process considerably more cost-effective than it was when marketing was dominated by print media, television, and radio.

Revenue and growth opportunities aren't the only benefits of boosting acquisition. Bringing in new patients is also a great way to keep up with evolving patient needs, preferences, and demographic shifts. In other words, new patients are an excellent source of data that can be repurposed for future acquisition and retention efforts.

Generally speaking, less-established providers will need to dedicate more money and effort to acquisition to build an operationally sufficient patient base. Growth remains a priority for most well-established providers—usually aligned with specific service lines or facilities—but it's often more financially efficient to focus resources on retention.

The value of patient retention

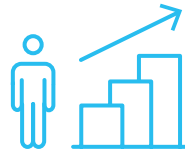


Patient retention is key to maximizing the lifetime value of each patient. Retaining patients ensures that your initial marketing investment pays off over time. To quantify that value, a study published in the *Group Practice Journal* found that a lifetime patient is potentially worth upwards of \$200,000.² Engaged patients are also more likely to refer your practice to family and friends, bringing in new patients at no additional cost.

Effective retention strategies can drive a 25%–95% increase in profits by improving retention by just 5%,³ according to a study published in the Harvard Business Review.

They can even improve patient outcomes, fostering long-term satisfaction and loyalty.

Improving retention by just 5% can drive a 25–95% increase in profits!



Your current, highly engaged patients are also better prospects than new patients. Existing customers have a 60–70% probability of returning to your practice for additional services, as opposed to 5–20% for new patients.¹

For healthcare providers seeking to boost patient retention, all-payor claims data can provide valuable insights into patient journeys and outcomes, empowering you to make data-driven decisions that can enhance care, improve satisfaction, and ultimately drive sustainable growth for your organization.

Part II: Developing a data-driven strategy

Modern marketing is dominated by digital channels, with estimates placing digital ad spending between 55% and 72% of total marketing budgets.⁴ As consumers increasingly turn to online channels to discuss, research, and engage with providers, providers must leverage those channels—including search engines, social media, online reviews, and other platforms—to reach potential patients.



Social media, mobile devices, and streaming services will be the primary landscape for your patient marketing strategy, and can also be a valuable source of consumer information. All your potential patients' online interactions leave trails that you can follow and analyze at scale to develop a better understanding of consumer behavior, preferences, and demographics.

Pairing consumer market insights with other forms of commercial healthcare data, such as social determinants of health (SDOH) can help you identify market opportunities and craft targeted campaigns that resonate with specific patient segments.

Ultimately, a data-driven strategy will ensure your resources are invested where they will deliver the highest return, optimizing both patient acquisition and long-term retention.

In this section, we'll outline four steps for using data to improve your patient marketing strategy:

1. Analyze market opportunities

Understanding your target audience and their unmet needs is the foundation of an effective patient acquisition strategy. Start by analyzing demographic data and identifying gaps in healthcare services within your community.

Patient demand models and other population insights are great places to start when considering your options. Here are some examples of opportunities you can find with the right consumer data:

- **Service line expansion:** Demand models, wait-time data, and demographic insights can highlight openings for new specialty services.
- **Brand differentiation:** Study competitor strengths, weaknesses, and referral patterns to differentiate your offerings.
- **Targeted preventive care:** Use data on high-risk populations and diagnosis claims to build care programs tailored to specific underserved patient groups.

2. Segment and target your audience

Once you have a grasp on the opportunities available to your organization, you can begin to segment the ideal audience for outreach. Segmentation allows you to focus resources on the patients most likely to engage with your services and tailor your messaging to their specific needs.

Market research suggests that personalized outreach can improve engagement results by as much as 40%.⁵ Data-driven audience segmentation based on demographics, behaviors, and clinical interest can dramatically improve conversion rates and reduce unnecessary marketing spend.

EXAMPLE SEGMENTATION APPROACHES

- **Demographic:** Segment audiences by age or gender to reach the most relevant patients for targeted wellness programs, screening initiatives, or preventive care drives. Use income and location data to target patients for high-end or specialty services, or to identify those within a certain range of your facility.
- **Behavioral:** Leverage anonymized third-party data appointment history, and preventive care utilization to segment patients overdue for routine care and screenings. Patients who routinely engage with condition-specific content may be great targets for educational resources or other messaging surrounding their condition of interest.

- **Health interest:** Identify the patients most interested in specific conditions, may need specific procedures, or interact with certain services using clinical and health interest attributes.



WHAT ABOUT EHR DATA?

Electronic health records (EHRs) can be decent sources of complementary information, but the quality of the data within varies widely from provider to provider. Healthcare professionals may have their own shorthand or approach to record-keeping, making analysis difficult, and most EHR datasets lack critical data points that can inform better marketing.

EHR data is most useful when correlated with demographic insights and healthcare market data. Pairing the subjective information from EHRs with objective patient data on technology usage, life stage, and healthcare utilization can provide a richer, more effective approach to targeting.

By segmenting and targeting your audience, you can create highly targeted campaigns that resonate deeply with your consumers, improve patient engagement, and ultimately lead to better health outcomes.

3. Build personalized campaigns

Patients increasingly expect personalized experiences that put them in control of their care. With your audience segmented, it's considerably easier to build campaigns around their unique needs, challenges, and preferences.

Analysis from McKinsey and Company found that over 80% of consumers prefer to buy from organizations that can deliver a personalized experience.⁵ Since your marketing will give prospective patients a first impression of your organization, it's crucial that any messaging reflects a commitment to personalized, patient-focused care.

EXAMPLES OF PERSONALIZATION ACROSS MARKETING CHANNELS:

- **Email marketing:** Personalize subject lines, offers, and content based on engagement data, demographics, and interests.
- **Social media marketing:** Tailor posts, ads, and shared content to patient segments based on demographics and behavior. Consider leveraging partnerships with healthcare influencers and opinion leaders who have reach

within high-value segments.

- **Mobile marketing:** Utilize SMS tools for personalized appointment reminders and health tips to keep existing patients engaged.

Compliant patient and consumer analytics can be invaluable for campaign targeting and activation.

4. Hyper-target and remarket

As your marketing campaigns get underway, you can begin to collect data on messaging performance and consumer engagement. This data allows you to further personalize messaging and “hyper-target” even more specific audiences.

Consumers who have already interacted with your organization but have not yet scheduled an appointment or completed a care cycle are key targets for remarketing.

TACTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL REMARKETING

- **Propensity models:** Leverage consumer propensity models that determine the streaming services, social media apps, and out-of-home channels consumers are most likely to use. You can use these insights to hyper-target patients on specific platforms or within your target geographic area.
- **Email:** Patients who’ve shown interest by subscribing to newsletters or downloading resources can be nurtured with targeted emails. Personalized email content, such as appointment reminders, health tips, or exclusive offers, can encourage them to schedule a visit or follow through on previous interactions.
- **Social media:** For patients who follow your social media accounts or engage with your content, retarget them with ads or updates based on their previous activity. This could include reminders about services they’ve shown interest in or new offerings they may find valuable.
- **Customized patient outreach:** By appending social determinants of health (SDOH) data and health interest scores to your remarketing efforts, you can personalize your campaigns further. For example, if a patient has shown interest in preventive care but hasn’t scheduled a follow-up, targeted content like health assessments or procedure discounts can be used to re-engage them.

Part III: Online reputation management

Reputation management is a necessary function of any business strategy, but it plays a special role in patient acquisition and retention. Healthcare consumers, including patients, their caregivers, and loved ones, are often not only highly selective of their care, but also willing to speak out about particularly positive or negative experiences.

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To provide a sense of scope: An estimated 7% of Google's daily searches relate to healthcare, which equates to more than 1 billion searches every day, according to Google Health Vice President David Feinberg, M.D.⁶

Modern consumers want the best healthcare experience possible, and they have more options—and more information—to scrutinize than ever before.

As mentioned in Part I, your current patients are powerful influencers in the decision-making process of their peers. Online review and testimonial platforms give your patients direct access to hundreds of reviews, which can be a hindrance or a boon to your patient acquisition strategy, depending on the kind of experience you can consistently provide.

Positive reviews build trust, establish credibility, and drive new patient inquiries at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising. Negative reviews can dissuade prospective patients and even encourage current patients to seek care elsewhere.

A lifetime patient is highly valuable, so it's almost always financially sensible to invest in efforts that keep patients engaged, happy, and willing to sing your organization's praises.

Tactics for boosting online reputation

- 1 Claim and optimize online profiles**

Ensure that you claim and manage your profiles on key platforms like Google My Business, Healthgrades, Yelp, and RateMDs. Keep your information updated, including your practice hours, services, and contact details, so potential patients can easily find accurate information. Monitor mentions and reviews regularly using tools like Google Alerts or designated reputation management software to address concerns quickly.
- 2 Encourage positive patient reviews**

Ask satisfied patients to leave positive reviews on popular review sites and social media. A proactive approach to gathering reviews can help build a strong online reputation. To make it easier, provide QR codes, links or follow-up emails with review requests.
- 3 Respond to reviews professionally**

Whether positive or negative, responding to reviews shows that you value patient feedback and care about their experiences. Acknowledge positive reviews with gratitude and address negative ones—even those that are blatantly false or misinforming—politely, offering to resolve the issue offline. A professional, empathetic tone can turn a negative experience into an opportunity for growth.
- 4 Highlight patient testimonials**

Showcase positive patient testimonials directly on your website. These serve as trust signals for potential patients. In an increasingly visual world, well-produced video testimonials can be especially engaging.
- 5 Create quality content**

Publish articles, blog posts, or videos on your practice's website to establish yourself as a thought leader in your specialty. Prospective patients looking for educational material will see you as more credible, and current patients will be encouraged to continue engaging with your organization between visits.

As a member of a medical practice or other provider organization, your patient acquisition and retention strategy should start with your organization's strengths. The factors that differentiate you from your competitors are most likely to keep prospective and current patients engaged.



Conclusion

To succeed as a provider in today's competitive healthcare landscape, patient acquisition and retention must be central to your marketing strategy. Acquiring new patients drives immediate revenue, while retaining them maximizes lifetime value and improves long-term health outcomes.

A comprehensive strategy that examines all possible market opportunities, activates specific patient segments with personalized messaging, and follows up engagement with remarketing will help your practice stay relevant, grow, and provide exceptional care to the patients who can benefit most from it. Ongoing online reputation management can help you further align your brand to the needs and expectations of your target audience.

Any patient marketing strategy will be considerably more effective when guided by the analysis of a robust, up-to-date dataset. Claims data, population data, reference and affiliation data, SDOH, and other key insights can be manually acquired with a lot of time and effort, or purchased from a vendor.

That's where Definitive Healthcare comes in. Our healthcare commercial intelligence fills in the data gaps in your patient acquisition and retention strategy, helping you confidently plan growth initiatives, optimize service lines, and deliver the right care to the right patients.

Population Intelligence from Definitive Healthcare helps providers and organizations within healthcare drive stronger performance by empowering their marketing and digital advertising efforts with comprehensive patient and consumer analytics.

With data on more than 250 million consumers, Population Intelligence enables you to target, message, and engage high-value audiences in the right channels, at the right time.



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You can get access to more than 500+ health attributes that

use machine learning to assess a consumer's interest in a certain conditions or therapeutic areas. Population Intelligence also provides pre-built fields, so you can quickly target the most common consumer personas and maximize your ROMI.

For another perspective on the healthcare landscape, Definitive Healthcare's Market Intelligence provides healthcare provider organizations with dynamic market analytics to inform initiatives that drive growth. Leveraging robust claims and consumer datasets, our interactive analytics and data visualizations make it easy to analyze volumes and trends from many perspectives—including diagnosis, procedure, service line, provider, unique patients, and geography—via a front-end platform and your internal systems.

Book a demo to see how Population Intelligence and Market Intelligence can transform your approach to patient marketing.

Endnotes:

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About Definitive Healthcare

At Definitive Healthcare, our passion is to transform data, analytics, and expertise into healthcare commercial intelligence. We help clients uncover the right markets, opportunities, and people, so they can shape tomorrow's healthcare industry. Our SaaS products and solutions create the path to commercial success in the healthcare market so companies can identify where to go next.

Our healthcare commercial intelligence goes beyond raw data. Definitive Healthcare combines numerous datasets with proprietary data science methodologies to provide answers to your critical questions about your ideal patients, competitors, market conditions, and more—all available via our online platform or integrated within your existing workflow. By incorporating our insights, analytics, and visualization tools into your patient acquisition and retention strategies, you can position your organization for sustainable growth while delivering better outcomes for your patients.

For more information, visit definitivehc.com.