

## 4 CRITICAL STEPS TO IMPROVE

# Patient Experience (Px) in Regional, Community and Independent Healthcare Facilities

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Developing and maintaining exceptional experiences throughout the continuum of care for each patient journey is challenging in today's world, often more so for smaller facilities with limited resources. The rise of consumerism within healthcare is driving significant changes to what patients define as the minimum level of care. The availability of actionable information coupled with on-demand expectations have added tremendous pressure to provide value beyond healing.

Patients have many choices when selecting healthcare providers and continually grow more discerning in those decisions. Online reviews and commentaries are readily accessible for everything from the caregivers' demeanors to the quality of the cafeteria food. The resulting importance of engagement and consumer satisfaction is higher than ever before. Developing an effective, targeted plan to identify, attract and retain consumers is critical --particularly for regional, community and independent healthcare facilities.

### Keep it Personal

When it comes to healthcare, every aspect of the patient experience is deeply personal --often emotionally charged with concern, anxiety, joy and excitement. Dramatically rising patient copays, deductibles and insurance premiums compound the situation by increasing financial worry and stress levels.

With an emotion-laden environment, outstanding communication and understanding are essential. Each and every person providing care or support has to commit to providing a consumer-focused experience to everyone within the sphere of contact. Mandates to support such a paradigm must be clearly defined, communicated, implemented and measured throughout the entire organization including every touchpoint -- administration, parking, front desk, telephone, website, etc.

- Leadership team defines Px
- Engage all levels of organization to craft and implement solutions (from all touch points)
- Establish measurable goals for performance that incorporate survey data from patients

### Maintain a Strong Community

Regional and independent healthcare facilities are unique in how they function within their respective communities. First responders, nurses and doctors typically live locally often shopping in the same stores as their patients which may or may not deepen the level of engagement. There is great potential to develop and maintain a lively, interactive relationship that is often lacking with larger systems. Integrating sponsorships, event hosting, tours and outreach programs allow facilities to keep patients local while cementing an exemplary reputation for community involvement.

Each hospital's ability to demonstrate deep community ties and strong financial performance also strengthens the starting position for mergers, buyouts and strategic alliances with larger systems. A solid base for negotiation further safeguards the Px as well as the relationship with the hospital.

- Sponsor and/or participate in local activities and organizations
- Develop outreach programs focused on community health issues
- Host events at the facility
- Conduct tours and encourage activity on site

### Embrace Innovation

Technology is constantly evolving and expanding providing quicker access to a greater depth of information at every turn. Utilizing phone apps, websites, email and texting to communicate expands the experience for caregivers and patients alike while increasing the level of collaboration. Each patient has unique circumstances, needs and preferences that are communicated as well as documented in a secure fashion. Further, powerful data and analytics provide insights on key performance indicators such as consumer satisfaction and efficiency.

- Utilize telephone apps such as MyChart for ease of convenience (accessing test results, scheduling appointments, contacting a nurse, reviewing doctor notes, etc.)
- Provide information on care and payment methods via website
- Incorporate email notifications for appointments, availability of test results, prescription refill reminders, etc.
- Survey patients to determine level of consumer satisfaction scores

### Engage & Activate

A patient's level of activation ranges widely from those overwhelmed with a recent diagnosis to healthcare champions who maintain a very healthy lifestyle. The type of engagement needed for each situation also varies widely and requires caregivers to identify an array of health-related characteristics including attitudes, motivators and behaviors. Adjusting communication styles, frequency and format allows for more meaningful engagement with the highest likelihood of success.

- Survey patients to determine level of activation
- Conduct outreach tailored to match level of activation and help