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A Guide to Selecting the Right Technology Partner for Your EHR

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Introduction:
Partnering for Patient Engagement

Today nearly every healthcare practice relies on an electronic health record (EHR) solution for patient management. In recent years, EHR vendors have looked to expand their product offerings by incorporating more patient engagement features.

Faced with the decision to either build in-house or partner with a patient engagement software company, many EHR vendors are going the partnership route to offer a superior product at a much lower cost with a much faster implementation timeline. That said, initiating conversations with prospective patient engagement technology partners can be a tedious and frustrating process.

With numerous vendors to choose from, how are you supposed to decide which is the best fit for your EHR? The truth is, not all patient portals are created equally, and some patient engagement companies offer better, more consumer-centric experiences than others. However, choosing the right technology partner is essential to successfully enhance your system's patient engagement capabilities.

>> This guide highlights the key qualities you need to look for in a patient engagement technology partner for your EHR, with tips to help you form a successful partnership that checks off every box.
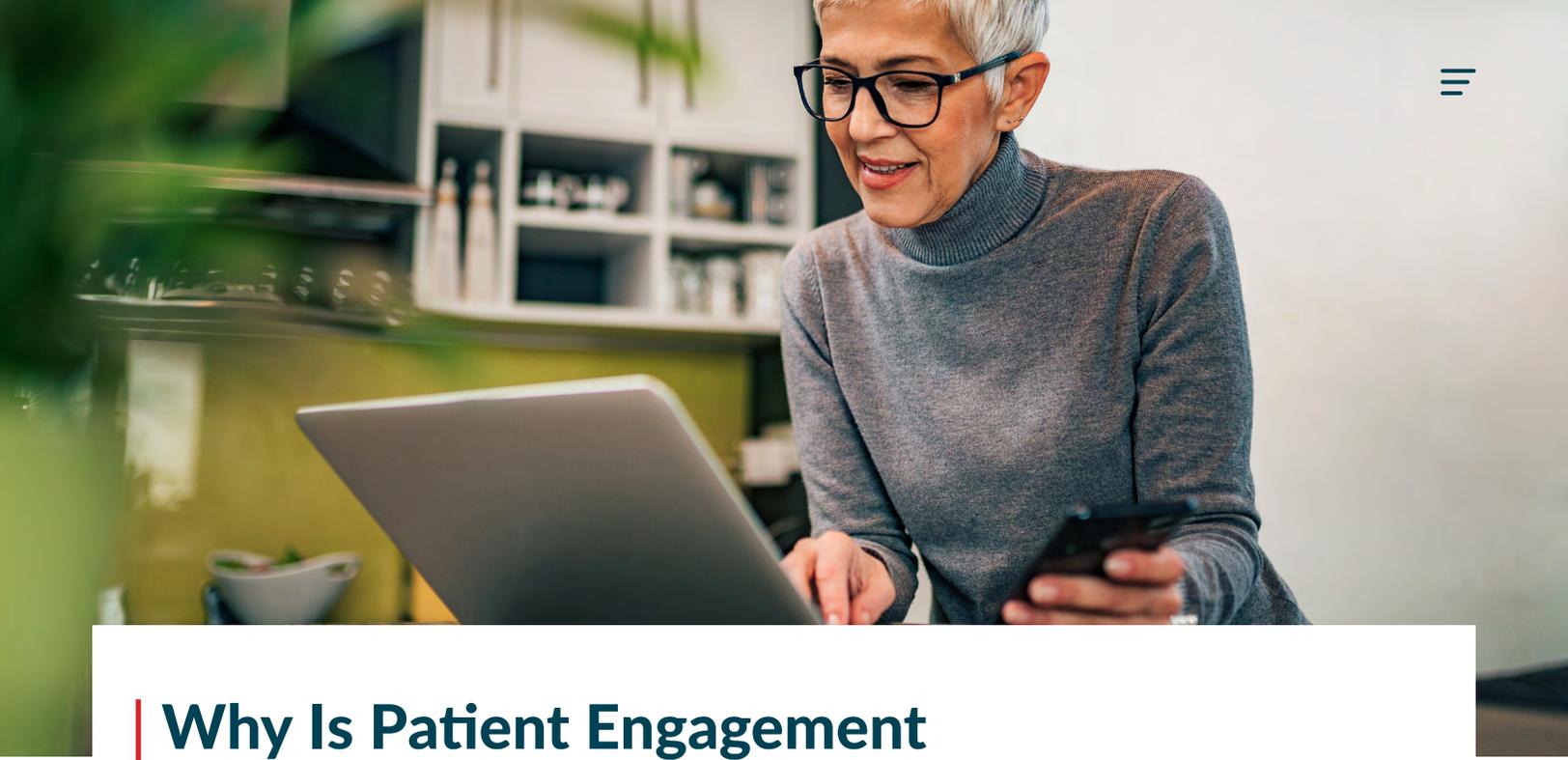
Why Is Patient Engagement Important for EHR Vendors?

Modern consumers have different expectations for digital capabilities, ease of access, convenience, and transparency. Industries—from banking to retail to healthcare—have experienced new challenges and growing pains amid evolving consumer preferences.

The rise of healthcare consumerism has been truly transformative, placing more pressure on practices to offer a convenient, engaging experience for patients before, during, and after office visits. Many healthcare practices are looking to their EHR providers to offer these solutions, which puts a spotlight on the call for EHR vendors to better equip providers with the tools they need.

For EHR vendors, this is a major cause for concern because failing to accommodate provider needs may have significant implications. When healthcare practices are unhappy with the patient engagement solutions offered by their EHR vendors, they're more likely to look to other software companies that specialize in these technologies. In fact, a survey of independent healthcare practices revealed that a quarter of respondents are looking to switch patient engagement technology vendors.

Missing the mark with patient engagement features can cause EHR vendors to experience increased client churn, low Net Promoter Scores (NPS), and a slew of product enhancement and support requests—all which can negatively impact their business' success and profitability.

What to Look for When Searching for an EHR Partner

Knowing what features and services to look for in a patient engagement software company is half the battle. Here are some of the key offerings to look for:

Discernable Difference in Product Quality and Capabilities

When you partner with a patient engagement vendor, their technology needs to be superior to what your EHR product currently offers. Wondering how you can tell a good product from a great one? Consider which patient engagement features and functions your current solution is lacking to help narrow down the must-haves.

To help you get started, keep an eye out for overall simplicity, a user-friendly interface, a cohesive platform of patient engagement solutions, and integrations with other tools. Each of these will help protect against end-user churn and prevent providers from looking for a more convenient, comprehensive, integrated solution. Consider the cost as well—is the product superior AND cost-effective?

If so, that's an automatic win that will enable you to expand and enhance your EHR product without increasing any of the associated costs, resources, or manpower.

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## Commitment to Ongoing Product Research and Development

One of the biggest benefits to partnering for patient engagement is the ability to continuously evolve and improve capabilities over time to best meet the needs of patients and providers alike. Continuous product research and development is essential for adapting to consumer preferences, but it's also something most EHR vendors do not have the experience, bandwidth, or budget to accomplish on their own.

At a minimum, solid patient engagement solutions need at least one enhancement a year. However, the best patient engagement partners make product updates several times per year to ensure they're always offering the features that providers and patients want and expect in modern digital tools. By partnering with a vendor that is committed to ongoing R&D, you can reap all of the benefits with none of the cost.

Newfound Opportunity for Ongoing, Increased Revenue Potential

Partnering enables EHR vendors to offer patient engagement solutions to their customers—healthcare practices—at an additional cost. If the technology partner you choose offers patient engagement solutions that extend beyond just a patient portal, the long-term revenue potential also increases significantly. Look for a patient engagement vendor that offers the features and capabilities your product needs to remain competitive and explore new revenue streams.

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Seamless Implementation and Integration Processes

Without the right support, implementing and integrating new patient engagement tools with your EHR will likely be incredibly costly, time-consuming, and resource-draining. Choosing a patient engagement technology vendor that offers seamless integration, implementation, and support will allow you to use less internal resources and ensure the process goes smoothly and efficiently. This will enable you to go to market much more quickly and get your enhanced EHR in front of healthcare practices that much faster.

Dedication to the Success of Both EHR Vendors and Practices

When you're evaluating patient engagement software companies, make it a priority to find one that shows dedication to the success of both EHR vendors and their customers.. Technology partners who build their products with the success of both their customer and the end user in mind are more likely to hit the nail on the head in terms of product features and enhancements.

In considering the customer's customer (the patient), as well as their own (the EHR vendor), a technology partner can provide sales enablement to help EHR vendors better sell products. This also indicates a higher level of ongoing support to assist healthcare practices with the adoption of a patient portal and other digital tools that drive engagement.

Why It's Important to Look Beyond the Patient Portal

Most EHR vendors are looking to a technology partner for their patient portal, seeking to accommodate the 90 percent of healthcare practices that offer one today. But the patient portal is only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to helping healthcare practices engage patients.

In addition to patient portals, which function as a sort of "digital front door" for practices, there are several other patient engagement solutions that can be incredibly beneficial for providers and ultimately their patients. Examples of other patient engagement software capabilities include:

Online Appointment Scheduling

The modern healthcare consumer places significant value on online appointment scheduling when choosing a healthcare practice. Sixty-eight percent of healthcare consumers said they are more likely to choose a provider that offers the option to book, change, or cancel appointments online. Providing this feature will help practices using your EHR schedule more appointments and work more efficiently.

The result for you? A satisfied customer who sticks with your product and spreads the word to their healthcare colleagues who are looking for a new EHR solution.

68 percent

of healthcare consumers said they are more likely to choose a provider that offers the option to book, change, or cancel appointments online.
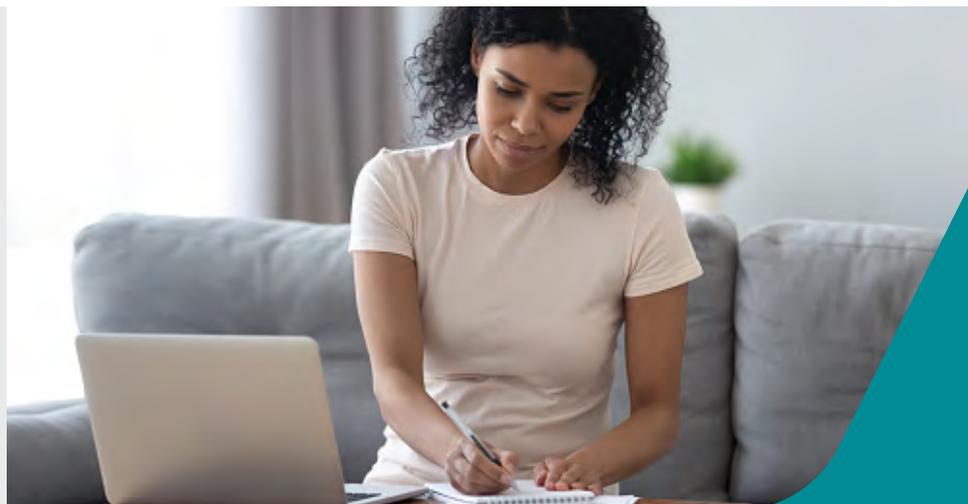
Convenient Reminders and Notifications

Seventy percent of healthcare patients said they are more likely to choose a practice that offers appointment reminders and notifications for follow-up care via a preferred digital channel like text message or email. By choosing to partner with a patient engagement technology vendor that offers automated reminders and notifications, you can appeal to healthcare practice staff looking to reduce the number of no-show appointments and eliminate manual phone call reminders.

Efficient Patient Intake and Registration

Nobody wants to fill out a stack of paper forms, end users included. Patient engagement partners that offer digitized intake and registration capabilities offer a convenient, efficient alternative to patients filling out endless paper forms and practice staff completing time-intensive and error-prone data entry. In times like a pandemic, an added bonus is a patient engagement partner that provides the means for safe, contactless check-in.

Both your customers and their patients will appreciate the option to submit and collect forms online, which cuts down on waiting room backlogs and introduces workflow efficiencies. With up to 30 percent of patients claiming they've left a healthcare practice's office before being seen due to a long wait time, enabling a faster intake process is a clear benefit for providers.

70 percent

of healthcare patients said they are more likely to choose a practice that offers appointment reminders and notifications for follow-up care via a preferred digital channel like text message or email.

30 percent

of patients claim they've left a healthcare practice's office before being seen due to a long wait time.

☑ Automated Patient Surveys

Studies show that 86 percent of top-performing providers send patient satisfaction surveys after every visit. You can help your providers gain insight into their patients' functional status and understand what their experience was like by incorporating the automated delivery of patient-reported outcomes and satisfaction surveys into your enhanced EHR product. Some tools even enable providers to create automated events triggered by a patient's survey responses.

Comprehensive Population Health Management

In the era of value-based care, population health management is something that many providers are lacking. In fact, 70 percent of healthcare providers said they lack a digital solution that allows for automated interventions across various patient populations. Choosing a patient engagement partner that offers a population health solution for healthcare practices will only better enable you to attract new customers—and aid in improving the health of entire populations in the process!

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Selecting a Technology Partner: Key Questions to Ask

When comparing different patient engagement vendors and weighing your partnership options, make it a point to ask the following questions:

- **What's your current technology stack like?**

- **Is your product a true cloud-based solution?**

- **Do you offer features beyond the patient portal?**

- **Can you scale adequately as our business grows?**

- **Do you have a multi-tenant database structure?**

- **How do you ensure the integrity of patient data?**

- **How will you separate my data from others?**

- **What are your service-level agreements?**

- **Does your team handle the integration process?**

- **Is your product compliant with regulatory requirements?**

- **What differentiators make your product unique?**

- **Can I expect economies of scale when using your product?**

Tips for Forming a Successful EHR Partnership

Once you've chosen a patient engagement vendor to work with, you'll begin the process of forming a successful partnership. Keep these tips in mind when doing so to work together as efficiently and effectively as possible:

- **Ensure consistent, reliable communication between both teams.** To work together in building a successful partnership, it's important to ensure consistent and reliable communication between your team members and those at the patient engagement software company that you choose. This will help keep things on track, enable seamless collaboration, and streamline the initial implementation and integration processes.

- **Take the time to fully understand the solutions you purchase.** The better you understand the patient engagement solutions that you purchase, the better your partnership (and your upgraded product) will be. Learn about the different features—as well as any potential limitations—to make sure you choose the best partner for your product and maintain a successful partnership over time.

- **Train staff as needed to use new patient engagement features.** Your information technology (IT) team, sales team, and leadership team are all staff members who should have a comprehensive understanding of how to use the patient engagement features you're incorporating. This will help you better sell your enhanced product, enable greater support if you need it, and ensure your company leaders recognize their return on investment.

- **Take advantage of all the patient engagement solutions offered.** Offering a patient portal is great, but the best partners have the ability to provide several additional benefits via a range of patient engagement tools. When partnering with a patient engagement company, make sure you take advantage of all the different tools they offer. This will help both your business and the healthcare practices you serve be more successful in your efforts to improve engagement.

Improving Patient Engagement with the Right Partner

Building on your EHR's patient engagement capabilities can benefit your business in multiple ways, from helping you stand out next to competitors to increasing your revenue—but selecting the right technology partner for EHR enhancement is key.

The solutions on InteliChart's Healthy Outcomes platform work in unison to orchestrate a holistic approach to engagement that results in a healthier, happier patient. With a robust patient portal at its core, Healthy Outcomes also provides solutions for online scheduling, digital intake and check-in, patient surveys and reviews, reminders and recalls, population health, and telehealth—all with a single API integration. Healthy Outcomes is the trusted patient engagement platform for more than 30 market-leading EHR solutions—will yours be next?

InteliChart's Healthy Outcomes platform provides solutions that improve patient engagement and lead to better patient outcomes—all through a single API connection.

Want to see how Healthy Outcomes can enhance your EHR? Reach out to schedule a demo and learn more.

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