Keeping people healthy is a big job — one that requires a team effort from many players across a growing industry. These days, it’s not just doctors’ offices, hospitals, and insurers working to improve patient care and community wellness. They’re supported by diagnostic centers, telehealth providers, home health workers, device manufacturers, and software developers.

All these players have something else in common: Their jobs depend on fast, seamless, and private information sharing, often made much easier with unified communications in healthcare.

Unified Communications in Healthcare

In many ways, healthcare is like any other industry. To stay ahead of digital disruption, organizations are investing in unified communications services to boost workforce productivity and deliver a better customer experience. They need real-time, mobile, and cloud-based solutions that are easy to use and work from anywhere. And because healthcare is a heavily regulated industry, many organizations seek trusted cloud communication providers that can meet strict compliance requirements.
This is where unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS) comes in handy. With UCaaS, all of an organization's communications features — voice, video, chat, conferencing, and call recording — are centralized in one cloud-based platform. Here are three immediate benefits to UCaaS in healthcare:

1. It Connects Teams

These days, healthcare teams are increasingly mobile — from the roving home health aides who spend their time on the road, to the hospital doctors and nurses who spend their days on their feet. They're also increasingly dispersed. As large health systems continue to bring smaller hospitals and private practices into their networks, most healthcare companies now have staff working across multiple locations.

Wherever these teams are, they need to be able to share information quickly and collaborate on the fly. With UCaaS, they can call or message their co-workers from any device, using the same secure platform and familiar user interface. They can also access business phone features such as call recording, call forwarding, and hands-free dialing. Advanced UCaaS solutions also integrate with popular business applications such as CRM, document sharing tools, and other productivity-boosting platforms.

For example, a healthcare company can easily integrate UCaaS with G Suite productivity apps to make its staff more efficient and collaborative. As a result, the business phone system connects seamlessly with business Gmail and Google Drive accounts, enabling employees to use features such as click-to-call or contact sync, and to automatically log and document communications with colleagues or patients. And because both G Suite and UCaaS are cloud-based platforms, they scale with the business, enabling the company to save on IT support costs and capital expenses.

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2. It Lets Providers Connect with Patients

As healthcare organizations seek to improve the patient experience, it's important to remember bedside manner isn't the only type of communication that matters. Any interaction with the organization has an impact on the patient experience, so those communications need to be seamless.

With UCaaS, healthcare organizations can use virtual receptionists to ensure patient calls go to the right person quickly — and feature custom hold music to entertain and inform patients while they wait. Because a UCaaS platform can forward calls to multiple devices, employees can still communicate with patients when they're out of the office or on the go as well.

Some companies use developer-friendly APIs to automate certain messages and get even more value from a unified communications platform. For example, they can send patients automatic text reminders for appointments and prescription refills.
3. It Optimizes Call Centers

Healthcare organizations used to have more of a "don't call us, we'll call you" mentality, but that doesn't work so well in the digital age. Now, people want to not only call their care providers, they want to text, instant message, and video chat them, too.

Telehealth is a fast-growing trend. To meet the demand for these services, healthcare organizations are scrambling to build call centers to support nurse hotlines, virtual doctor visits, remote patient monitoring teams, and other telemedicine solutions. And more and more of these call centers are cloud-based.

For instance, a company can use its UCaaS and G Suite solutions to build a contact center environment where patients can call, text, email, or chat with agents — and switch back and forth between these features when the conversation calls for a different mode of communication.

Not only does cloud communications enable the multichannel experiences that modern consumers want, it also enables healthcare companies to scale call centers as demand grows. This was a problem for ChartLogic, a leading provider of electronic health records software. The company had an on-premises contact center for sales and customer service, but it couldn't handle the call spikes that sometimes resulted from seasonal sales cycles or big events such as trade shows. After moving its call center communications to the cloud, ChartLogic can now operate efficiently with a limited IT staff. The company has significantly reduced downtime and can scale as needed.

While ChartLogic sells to care providers rather than to patients, considering the rapid growth of telehealth, scalable communication is important in any healthcare environment. So are digital innovation, productivity, and mobility. And that's why, when it comes to healthcare, UCaaS might be just what the doctor ordered.

Contact Vonage Business to learn more about the advantages of unified communications in healthcare.