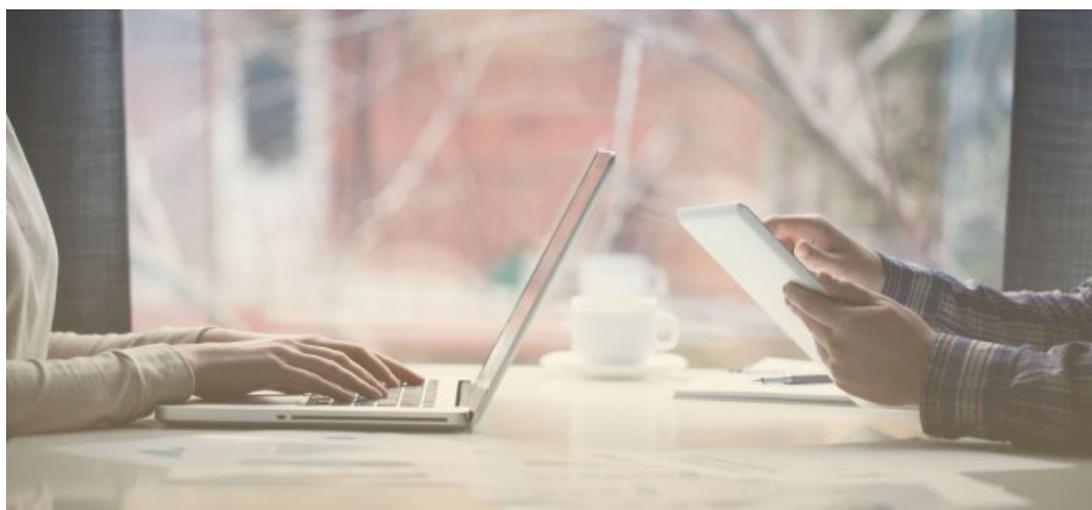


Millennials: From Social Media in Healthcare to Rich Patient Relationships with Cutting-Edge Communications

By VONAGE STAFF

For business leaders, millennials are a source of intrigue, opportunity, and sometimes even apprehension. When it comes to the healthcare industry and its trends, this is no small consideration — and it's not just about social media in healthcare. As Steve Bullock at MediaPost points out, millennials are plugging into "online forums, social media, health apps, wearables ... and want multi-channel access to all their healthcare-related business."



Reaching digital natives goes beyond social media in healthcare — it's about providing more robust and integrated ways to engage with and care for the millennial population.

Millennials' love for dynamic, real-time, interactive digital experiences is changing how healthcare organizations reach them, take care of them, and earn their business and loyalty. This demographic, aged 20 to 35, wields spending power on the scale of \$1.3 trillion — the biggest spend out there, according to Agency Ascend — and they are also the fastest-growing segment of the workforce, according to Inc.

In an age of immediate, personalized interactions, building communications channels that reflect millennials' wants and needs will shape how the healthcare industry builds its own future, influencing how offerings and opportunities evolve over time. Here are some pathways to earning millennials' attention and loyalty, while also keeping digital-first healthcare solutions on the cutting edge of quality and compliance.

Millennials Put in the Healthcare Homework

One of the healthcare trends that's shaping the future of the industry is how millennials use their digital resources to educate themselves as patients before they talk to their doctors. As Bullock reports in his article, 54 percent of millennials have consulted as many as seven information sources for purposes of self-diagnosis.

That's social media in healthcare at work, but the conversation grows even louder when healthcare organizations enter the picture.

Digital natives are already creating a profound impact on healthcare, and millennials are on the leading edge of this change.

Digital Natives Expect Speedy Solutions and DIY Options

Digital solutions are increasingly cloud based, and with the cloud comes the agility of unified communications. This is important in healthcare, an industry in which dynamic, flexible, and speedy person-to-person contact is critical to patient outcomes.

Unified communications solutions are capable of extending far beyond the more familiar elements such as automated routing that cuts down on patient wait time. For example, the patient may benefit from an impromptu telehealth session. In this case, a voice call can evolve into a video conference from whatever device is in play. Healthcare professionals can take the session a further step if necessary, instantly bringing in a second opinion or a companion consultation with the ease of a click, tap, or swipe.

Patient engagement strategies are changing: The digital world is increasingly a self-serve ecosystem, and healthcare is no exception. Take appointment scheduling and records management, for example. Millennials want self-service options that let them skip phone queues — they don't expect to spend time on hold — and they don't want to repeatedly fill out paper forms. Unified communications can satisfy these patients, creating on-screen billing access, pre-visit and symptom-input tools, and do-it-yourself scheduling.

Personalization: Rich Relationships Run on Data

Data in the digital space is on everybody's mind, and when it's put to nuanced, permissions-based uses, patient data helps physicians build insight-rich relationships.

Millennials expect conversational commerce. This means a lot more than relying upon data to simply prompt appointment reminder texts. It's about deeper lines of two-way communication that bring a patient's history and a physician's records together in private, selective, compassionate ways that link every visit — in-person or not — to the spectrum of care the patient has experienced.

Millennials and Beyond: Healthcare Depends on QoS

With the well-being of every patient in play, business communications downtime during physician–patient appointments is simply unacceptable. The good news is that newer solutions in the unified communications space include SD-WAN systems that can ensure

backup communications reliability should a healthcare organization's MPLS or other in-house system experience an interruption.

And since solutions like SD-WAN are cloud based and never need a physical upgrade, they're also economical ways to meet healthcare's critical QoS standards.

Social Media in Healthcare: Embracing the Digital Future

Digital natives are already creating a profound impact on healthcare, and millennials are on the leading edge of this change. But the industry must also keep its eye on the next up-and-coming generation. As Generation Z begins to drive business in the years to come, they will bring billions in their own spending power to the table.

For the healthcare organizations that successfully engage these younger patients, the steps considered here are pathways to the industry's future. Embracing the future of healthcare means the start of a vibrant and healthy digital conversation for every physician and patient.

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE WHITE PAPER: BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS TRANSFORMATION:
BEST IN CLASS COMMUNICATIONS CAN BE A COMPETITIVE EDGE (IDC) »