



COVID Communication Collapse:

7 Ways Your Patient Engagement Vendor
Missed the Mark During the Pandemic



As the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated in March 2020 and the need for reliable and effective patient-provider communication became more important than ever, did your vendor deliver? Did they come through as promised with all of the additional functionality that patient communication in the COVID world now requires? Or did you have to fight through a communication collapse? Were there some unfortunate holes in your strategy that need to be fixed now before a second wave of COVID rears its head?

Healthcare organizations have expressed these disappointments when reflecting on faults in their patient communication tools while dealing with the COVID pandemic.



1. Their tools don't offer nearly enough self service.

Why it matters:

An ever-changing environment means you need the flexibility to quickly create and adjust messaging without the vendor's help.

Every moment you spend waiting on your vendor's support team to implement the changes you request to messaging is another moment patients are left without the important communication they need.

It's time that simply cannot be wasted.

The ability to not only adjust but also build your own patient messages and manage your own settings empowers you to clearly communicate pre-visit instructions, changes to hours of operation, and other critical details to patients without waiting on your vendor's support team to complete the request.

Ask yourself:

- If I need an adjustment to my current messaging, how long will it take the vendor to implement that for me?
- Will that response time change during future high COVID communication activity?



2. There isn't attentive support and guidance when you DO need it.

Why it matters:

When self-service isn't a reasonable option, experienced guidance and prompt support prevents holes in communication with patients.

Fast-moving situations like COVID-19 present opportunities for vendor support teams to guide and lead provider messaging efforts, based on best practices. Are you left to fend for yourself when it comes to ideas for message content and strategies that will keep patients informed—operating hours, appointment protocols, etc.? In addition to supporting engagement strategies, vendors should actively provide assistance and support for more complex needs that cannot be self-served. Proactive and prompt support has never been more important in provider-patient communication.

Ask yourself:

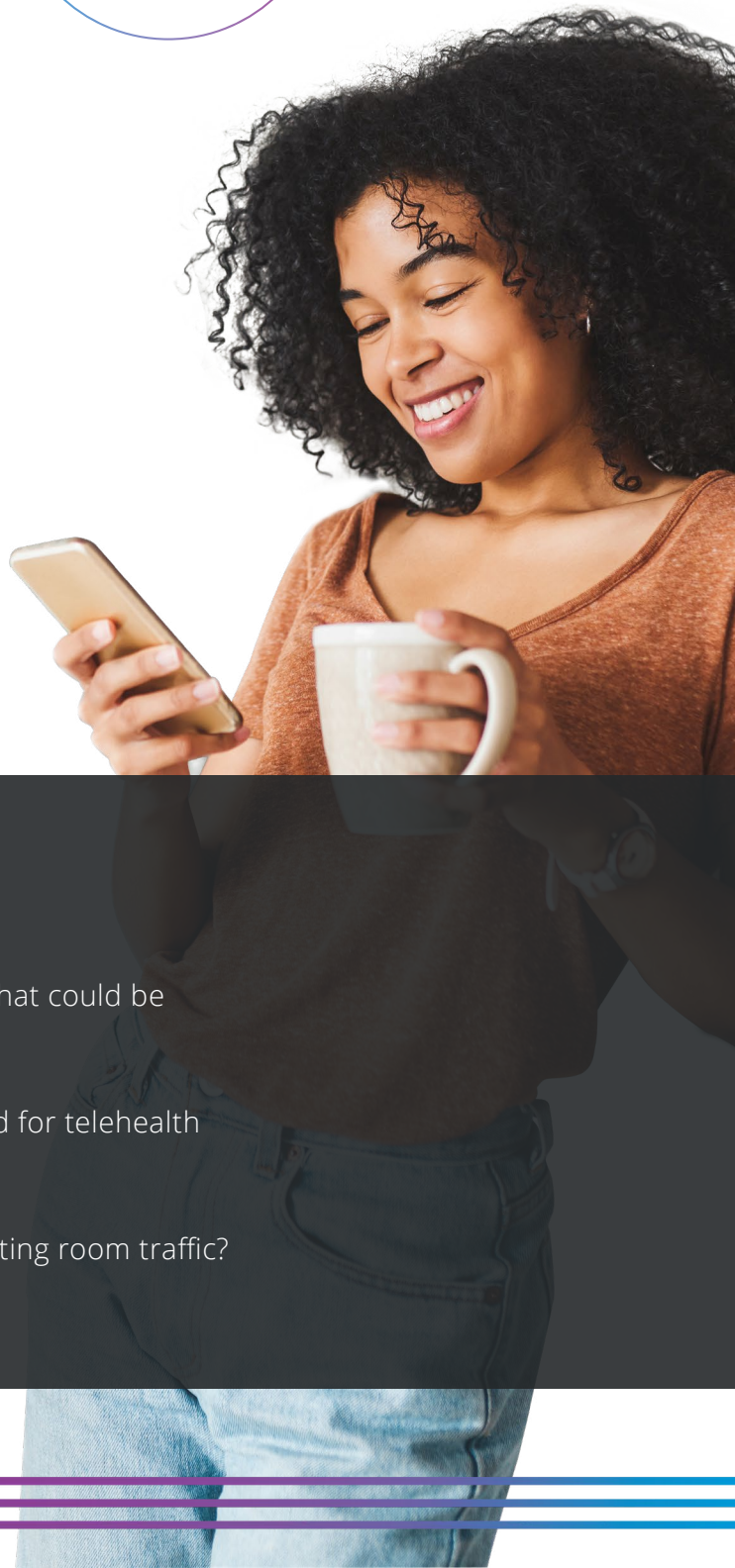
- Is my vendor proactively suggesting effective communication strategies and tactics?
- Can I get dedicated and prompt attention to my account when the need arises?

3. They don't allow patients to text back and forth with providers and staff.

Why it matters:

Two-way texting gives patients a way to connect without tying up phone lines and introduces new opportunities to safely manage appointment flow.

Patient surveys have shown that in addition to wanting to receive texts from providers, up to 75 percent of patients want to be able to send texts to providers. And that includes older generations. Allowing patients to simply text providers and staff provides a convenient way to ask questions and quickly receive answers from the comfort of their own home. When it's time for an appointment, telehealth links can be texted to patients, and if they have a technical problem, they can simply text and get immediate help. Patients who are coming on site for a visit can participate in a COVID-friendly "parking lot waiting room", sending a text from their vehicle to let the staff know they have arrived and receiving a reply from the staff when it's time to see the doctor.



Ask yourself:

- Are patients often calling with routine questions that could be answered more quickly and easily via text?
- Can patients get the immediate support they need for telehealth questions or issues?
- Is my communication tool helping me manage waiting room traffic?



4. They aren't flexible enough to support telehealth visits.

Why it matters:

Telehealth is part of the “new normal” in healthcare delivery, and communication platforms that fail to support telehealth and its associated workflows simply are not feasible going forward.

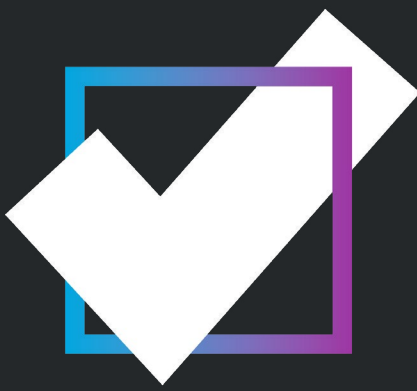
Where past communication tools could get away with limited appointment-specific details in reminders and other pre-visit messages, the rapid adoption of telehealth has made the inclusion of telehealth links and other dynamic information absolutely essential. While many patient communication solutions are enabling this, leading platforms have gone many steps further by offering their own integrated telehealth solutions. For organizations looking to cover patient messaging, telehealth enablement, and numerous other patient-provider interactions without the need for equally numerous vendor partnerships, finding a single end-to-end platform for these engagements is the ideal solution.

74%

of patients are open to virtual visits.

Ask yourself:

- How am I getting telehealth visit links and instructions into patients' hands today?
- Do I need to work with multiple vendors to provide telehealth services?



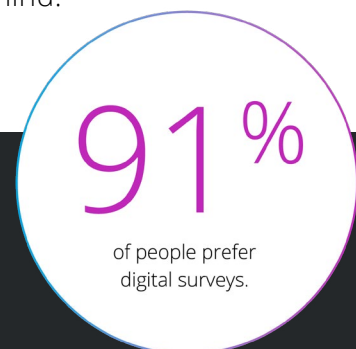
5. There is no ability to survey patients before and after appointments.

Why it matters:

Pre-visit surveys allow you to assess patients in case special precautions are needed, while post-visit surveys are ideal for collecting patient satisfaction data.

Surveying patients ahead of their visit allows them to be pre-screened for fever and other COVID symptoms that may lead to different precautions or protocols for their upcoming

visit, including converting to a telehealth visit if needed. And after the visit? If appointment-related communication, provider interaction, or any other processes have been altered during COVID-19 and need improvement moving forward, post-visit surveys are ideal for capturing that patient feedback while it's fresh on their mind.



Ask yourself:

- Am I currently able to assess patients ahead of their visit?
- How am I gathering data after visits to find opportunities to improve patient satisfaction?

6. The tools don't solve for challenges with patient intake and registration.

Why it matters:

Shifting to touchless intake processes so it can reduce spread of germs and overall waiting room time in the office.

Digital patient intake has emerged as a top area of improvement for healthcare providers since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although many appointments have converted to telehealth, those patients who do need to be seen in the office cannot risk sharing germs via clipboards and other common intake implements. The ideal solution allows patients and caregivers to complete this “paperwork” digitally ahead of their appointment via their computer or mobile device.



51%

of patients prefer a doctor who lets them fill out paperwork online.

Ask yourself:

- Despite other sanitation measures, are patients sharing clipboards to complete forms upon arrival?
- Does my current communication vendor offer a solution for this?





7. Capacity is a major concern for future needs.

Why it matters:

In the rush to get important COVID communication from providers to their patients, organizations should feel secure that messages will be sent in a timely manner.

In the event of future COVID waves and shelter-in-place orders, organizations need communication tools that can deliver those messages in a timely manner without a backlog of messages from their vendor's other clients. Delays in message delivery create frustration for providers and staff while negatively impacting the patient experience. To be prepared for immediate, high-volume patient messaging needs, look toward adopting true cloud-based solutions that allow vendors to easily increase their message delivery capacity as needed.

Ask yourself:

- If another wave of COVID comes, will my patient messages be “stuck in line” behind others?
- What impact will that delay have on my appointment schedules, patient satisfaction, and more?



SR Health by Solutionreach provides health systems with AI-enabled solutions to engage with patients in ways that have measurable impacts on outcomes. By allowing providers to stay connected to patients throughout the care journey, healthcare organizations can optimize health and financial outcomes while creating a better patient experience. Solutionreach is the leader in patient engagement solutions and innovation. The first to send a text message in healthcare, the company now serves over 25,000 customers and facilitates one billion messages a year to 80 million patients in the U.S.

