

The End of Dry-Erase

How digital signage creates a smarter patient experience

By Stan Swiderski



With a record number of new patients coming into the system each year, a positive patient experience is becoming a higher priority to healthcare organizations. "Twenty years ago, administrators were more focused on patient outcomes than the patient experience," said Stan Swiderski, the National Account Manager in Healthcare for NEC. "Now, they need to focus on both."

It's a change in mindset. Name recognition, mindful branding and patient communication are all points of consideration as organizations engage with patients in new and productive ways. "Patients are approaching healthcare as they would other commercial experiences, like a shopping center or airport,"

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– STAN SWIDERSKI, NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER HEALTHCARE NEC

The new patient experience

Patient engagement can be broken down into three broad priorities: access to patient data, patient-provider communication and patient satisfaction. These three domains acknowledge an era-defining truth. Technology has rapidly changed not only how we provide healthcare but also how we experience it.

As such, organizations are looking to technology – messaging platforms, phone apps and digital displays – to meet patients where they are. Solutions, he said, that make for "faster, easier and friendlier interactions."

Digital signage, he argued, provides a particularly poignant solution to address patient engagement because of its unique opportunity to enter any space in the healthcare landscape: the waiting room, hallway, operating suite, hospital cafeteria, donor wall, teaching center and perhaps most importantly, the patient room.

In the patient room

Consider a long-used staple of the patient room: the dry-erase white board. When a nurse would admit a patient to the hospital, the nurse would fill the board with the patient's information. Updates would follow with Post-it notes and erasures. "Throughout the patient stay," Swiderski said, "you would hope the various notes were up-to-date – or at the very least, legible."

Enter the digital white board solution: an electronic display that connects to the patient's EHR and automatically populates with relevant information to the patient, such as his or her physician and medications and the nurse on call. Updates are posted in real time and accessible not only in the patient's room but also at the nurse's cart or provider's workstation. Furthermore, the board's information can be translated into any language to accommodate patients and their visitors.

As Swiderski found with pilot studies, adding this interface can positively increase communication between providers and the patient while reducing repetitive conversations. Since changes are updated instantly, "everyone gets to be on the same page. Everyone stays informed."

Improving the experience, improving outcomes

And while it's true that patient engagement is itself a return on investment, few hospitals can afford any investment without clear financial advantages. The growing value of patient engagement is reflected by the CMS-required HCAHPS survey (an abbreviation for the Hospital Consumer Assessment in Healthcare Provider and Systems survey). With positive scores, organizations can get up to 2 percent reimbursement on Medicare spending. That's a considerable percentage when, as Swiderski pointed out, 10,000 baby boomers are retiring each day.

He also raised the concern of fall risk. An estimated 700,000 people in the U.S. fall in a hospital each year, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. And more than a third of those falls can be prevented. Interfaces, such as the digital white board, can connect to the hospital bed to notify a nurse if the patient moves. This not only leads to more efficient workflows but also to shorter patient stays.

Clean, clear, consistent

"In the end, you want to reduce visual clutter," Swiderski said, on the power of digital signage to create a smarter, more satisfied patient experience.

Organizations should look for a "robust solution that has clean design, clear display and a consistent model. That means 24/7 access with minimal human impact."

Furthermore, he encouraged organizations to look for solutions that are easy to implement, update or change to fit the needs of their patients. "Ultimately, you need to concern yourself with the patient's life, not the displays around them," he said.

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A greater impact

Patients consume healthcare when they are at their most vulnerable. As Amy Schwartz, a leading healthcare technology designer, noted, healthcare design must move beyond ease of use toward being visually appropriate and meaningful. "I want usability to be the norm and great design to be delightful – design that doesn't make you feel sick," she said.

"We live in a digital world," Swiderski affirmed, "a digital experience where we can adapt technology to meet the patient." Hospitals can ease the mind of patients, their families and staff alike by implementing solutions that make spaces within the hospital – including the patient room – more connected, clear and comforting.

To learn more about how you can integrate digital display solutions that make an impact, visit <http://healthcare.necdisplay.com>

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