Kaiser Permanente Goes Mobile with Health Care

Implements SMS Reminder System and Sees a 30% Cost Savings Per Appointment

Overview

Founded in 1945, Kaiser Permanente is the nation's largest not-for-profit health plan, serving more than 8.6 million members, with headquarters in Oakland, California it comprises Kaiser and all its subsidiary medical groups. At Kaiser, *physicians* are responsible for medical decisions and care means developing and refining medical practices to help ensure that it's delivered in the most *efficient* and *effective* manner possible.

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Problem

Facing heavy communications infrastructure costs in an industry where fiscal budget weight should lean more on the delivery of health care and professional staffing, Kaiser was faced with making a bold move to cut costs on communication infrastructure. They knew they had to target one of the most cost sensitive areas of their business: patient communication. The Health Care giant was challenged with picking a solutions path that would both have the potential for a *national rollout* and have a considerably *short development* and *implementation cycle*.

Solution

mobileStorm's mobile marketing platform promised to offer a solution that would tackle cost containment through a pilot program to demonstrate that patient reminders would be the ideal and most impactful are where SMS alerts could make a difference for Kaiser. Research showed that the highest receptivity to SMS traffic among Kaiser's patient demographic would be in the 13 to 44 age range. The Kaiser team, led by Nardo Manaloto, agreed to engage in the pilot with mobileStorm for patient appointment and outreach campaigns. The pilot would have to:

- Deliver efficient and cost effective paperless reminders to subscribed customer base

- Continually allow for customers to opt-out or into the appointment reminder database.

- Allow for contact numbers to be screened through carrier queries to distinguish (e.g.) between "work" and "mobile" phone numbers.

- Build on Kaiser's existing reputation for dedicated and efficient patient care

To hit these goals, mobileStorm designed and developed an end user SMS platform solution for Kaiser that allowed for the creation and management of:

- General appointment reminders
  (e.g. schedule office visits)

- Specific treatment reminders
  (e.g. mammograms)

- Specific notification of completed lab results
  (e.g. "your lab results are ready")

For brand integrity, mobileStorm would setup a vanity short code; "KAISER" for all of their patients to interact with. All messaging would be MMA compliant with a outsourced mobileStorm help center to address all opt-in / -out issues. In Addition, mobileStorm would integrate with Kaiser's system called AARS (or the Automated Appointment Reminder System). Automated messages would be sent to patients a day before their appointment. Also, everyone would receive a personalized message (e.g. *Kaiser Appt Alert ##Firstname## - ##Date## @ ##Time## w/ Dr. ##ProviderLastname##. Call 888-888-8888 to cancel. TXT STOP 2 end or TXT HELP*").

On October 1st of 2008 mobileStorm executed a one-month SMS based appointment reminder and patient outreach pilot. Taking 87,950 cell phone numbers from Kaiser's patient database, mobileStorm launched a carrier query (number verification) outreach. Many phone numbers either weren't cell phone numbers or were invalid altogether. Of those, mobileStorm sent 32,864 appointment reminders. Daily, Kaiser pushed patient info to the mobileStorm system. The mobileStorm platform categorized patients into targets depending on their appointment times and automatically scheduled messages to go out at a Kaiser-designated time.

Conclusion

By the end of the pilot, Kaiser lost 1.8 percent of their user group, which opted out, or asked not to receive future text reminders. The program showed an improvement of 0.73 percent fewer "no-shows" for appointments or 1,837 fewer "no-shows". The outreach program had a High success rate of 95.65% (active + unsubscribed). In addition, Kaiser was able to contain communication infrastructure costs at a staggering rate. The one-month pilot proved that by using SMS appointment reminders Kaiser was able to save $150 per appointment (their no-show cost), which equated to a total *cost savings of over $275,000* at just a single clinic.

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