



HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY COMMUNICATIONS

Print and digital networks in a time of rapid change

August 2020



Executive Summary

Wide-ranging regulatory and political changes continue to have a significant impact on the healthcare industry. There has never been a greater need — or more requirements — for clear communication between hospitals, health plans and the communities they serve. As a healthcare leader, you must develop a robust network for print and digital communication. As budgets tighten, the most cost-effective solution to meet these needs is to work with an experienced vendor. This white paper outlines the capabilities and competencies a communications vendor should have in three key areas: Content, Process and Security. Each section details specific questions to help you validate a vendor's knowledge and experience, leading to a more confident decision.

As the winds of regulatory and political change sweep across the nation, many in the healthcare industry are bracing for potentially dramatic upheavals.

Over the past several years, healthcare leaders and chief marketing officers (CMOs) have renewed concerns about whether their print and communications vendors will be up to the task of adapting and responding to the scale and scope of these changes.

Some are taking a wait-and-see attitude, crossing their fingers and hoping their vendors have the ability to respond to the expected tidal wave of change and reform. Other executives are taking a more forward-thinking approach, proactively seeking out partners who have proven track records of responding to rapid regulatory and technological changes, while adhering to strict compliance requirements. One approach is to evaluate potential vendors in three key areas: Content, Process and Security.

Content

Health Literacy Drives Behavioral Changes

Recent research on communication conducted by Columbia Medical Review has sought to link clinician behaviors and skills to other important, but less immediate, clinical outcomes, such as patient recall, understanding treatment recommendations and adherence to those recommendations. In these studies, the association of outcomes with clinicians' communication skills was less consistent and less strong than in studies that focused on patient satisfaction.

The most consistent findings suggest that communication needs to adhere to basic principles of information transfer. For successful communication, ensure all healthcare messages:

- Are uncomplicated
- Are specific
- Use some repetition
- Minimize jargon
- Check patient understanding

More Multichannel than Ever

With the proliferation of digital messaging resources, CMOs are more likely to seek out a partnership with a company that can execute communications across multiple channels. To explore broader lines of communications, the Society for Resource Management suggests that CMOs answer how the following communications delivery methods are being used:¹

- Electronic communication
- Webinars
- In-person meetings
- Use of social media
- Intranet posts
- Live hotlines for questions and concerns
- Emails and instant messaging
- Mailings to home addresses

Questions to Ask Your Vendor

When outsourcing copywriting and design of your healthcare communications, be sure to ask these questions:

1. In what ways has the vendor effectively conveyed complex information in simple terms for other healthcare clients?
2. How has the company demonstrated deep understanding of your industry and specific patient populations you serve?



3. What are the company's proven creative and direct response marketing capabilities — across multiple channels — and what competitive advantages will they provide to new acquisition efforts?
4. What is the breadth of healthcare and regulatory experience of your assigned account team?
5. How can the vendor support population health management efforts in the print and online world of today's healthcare consumer?



Process

Reap the Benefits of Efficient Execution

With the variety of financial and quality imperatives facing the healthcare industry, proactive providers are seeking new programs and tools to maximize efficiency, while achieving critical goals. Unfortunately, the Institute of Medicine estimates that \$765 billion of healthcare spending was wasted in 2010, with more than half attributable to unnecessary and inefficiently delivered services, as well as missed prevention opportunities.²

While not all of this waste can be attributed to ineffective or non-existent communication, the data clearly indicates that communication plays a significant role. Today, while there is less spending on print services (as consumers migrate into digital media), print continues to be a critical part of most healthcare organizations' marketing and information mix.

Consider how outsourcing your communications needs can positively impact your business and bottom line by:

1. Reaching stakeholders, patients and healthcare providers with the right messages at the right times
2. Reinforcing consistent brand identity across multiple channels
3. Using technology and project management tools to optimize efficiency and minimize the burden on already overworked staff
4. Ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements
5. Reducing risk by working with vetted partners and signing business associate (BA) agreements for provider organizations

Financial Migration is Imminent

The Affordable Care Act was an enormous paradigm shift for health care CMOs, proving once again that change is a constant in this industry. For both hospital and health plan organizations, maintaining compliance in an ever-changing environment is a full-time and often challenging endeavor. Cost structures and budgets will likely have to evolve to account for:

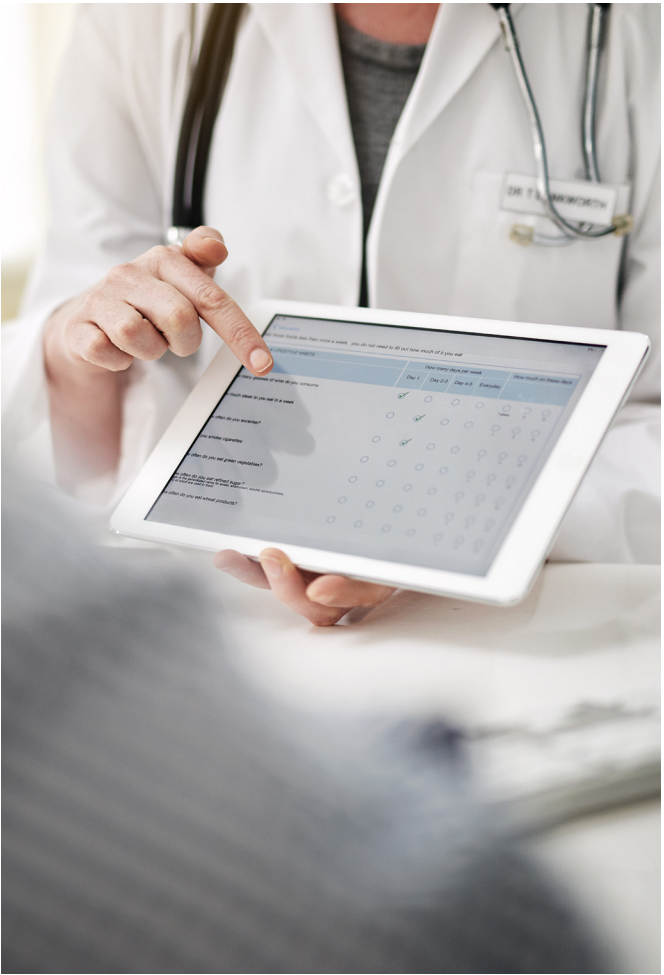
- Financial pressure from structural reform in moving from fee-for-service to value-based care
- Increasing patient financial responsibility
- Wave after wave of more complex and costly regulatory hurdles from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Managing data that is subject to HIPAA compliance across various channels with multiple vendors

As CMOs explore outsourcing options, they may be pleasantly surprised to see the latest advancements in technology. Variable data allows touchpoints to be customized and personalized for a more relevant and impactful experience, while still achieving cost efficiency. Gone are the days of storing preprinted material in inventory, only to see it wasted when the content requires updates due to regulatory or brand changes.

Questions to Ask Your Vendor

The vetting process for an outsourced communications vendor should include questions that address stability and scalability:

1. How long has the company been in business?
2. What are the vendor's print, mail, email, digital and fulfillment capabilities?
3. Can the vendor incorporate variable data into multichannel communications?
4. Can the company provide quality-of-work samples?
5. Are healthcare client references available to be contacted?
6. What are typical project turnaround times?
7. What is the communication process during a project?
8. Are workflow and production efficiencies applied?
9. What type of reports are available?
10. Does the vendor have the data analytics capabilities to align with continuous improvement initiatives?
11. Is the potential partner large enough to scale up to meet unexpectedly high volumes by leveraging a national footprint?



Security

Protect Patients' Information — and Your Organization

Millions of dollars every year are lost to cybercrime and data breaches. And that number is only increasing. “We are seeing a shift in the causes of data breaches in the health care industry, with a significant increase in criminal attacks,” reported Dr. Larry Ponemon, chairman of Ponemon Institute.³ Indeed, more than 41 million patient records were breached in 2019, with a single hacking incident affecting close to 21 million records.⁴ When selecting a print/communications vendor, it is essential to inquire about their ongoing and imbedded privacy and security measures.

The Columbia Medical Review notes that technology is beginning to play an important role in enhancing communication by improving connectivity and facilitating information flow: “While electronic health records and health information exchanges have provided more robust and consistent access to patient information, providers have been slow to change their practice to maximize these opportunities. Improving communication is essential if we are to transform into a value-oriented healthcare system. While there are many structural and cultural barriers to overcome, the good news is that there are patients, care providers, administrators, and entrepreneurs working together to achieve that goal.”⁵



Technology Solutions That Work for You

With this move towards even more digital communication, the need for documented security measures is vital. When evaluating the benefits of outsourcing, CMOs must also ask the right questions to ensure that all of their patient or member data is safe and secure. To ensure their business models don't experience disruptions in communications efforts, CMOs are evaluating companies with the advanced IT infrastructures required to adapt to new patient or member communications mandates — whether in email, online, apps or print.

These leaders are acting now to minimize risk, avoid workflow inefficiencies and even protect revenue for their organizations. In contrast, those who wait are exposing their companies to operational risk and in the worst case scenario, a loss of revenue, reputation and trust.

Questions to Ask Your Vendor

To evaluate a vendor's technology offering, questions should focus on their infrastructure and policies for data security:

- 1. How robust is the vendor's IT infrastructure?
- 2. What best practices can the vendor demonstrate in healthcare IT, including security auditing, SOC II and HITRUST certifications, disaster recovery (DR) and HIPAA compliance?
- 3. What documentation can the vendor provide to ensure compliance with privacy and security concerns?
- 4. What are the vendor's anti-spam and privacy policies?

- 5. What are the vendor's employee security/data policies?
- 6. What physical measures are in place to limit access to sensitive data?

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) opened up a new market for health insurance carriers. For 2020, the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services reports that 11.4 million individuals enrolled in coverage through the health insurance marketplaces created by the ACA.

Make an Informed Choice

As health care industry budgets tighten and demand for clearer communication grows, perhaps the greatest advantage a CMO can have in this competitive environment is to work with the right partner. When qualifying vendors, be sure to ask questions about their industry experience, commitment to quality, options for multichannel fulfillment and IT security measures. Your organization will benefit from a streamlined workflow process and more effective campaign results, improving overall satisfaction and loyalty.

Who is Taylor Healthcare?

Taylor Healthcare is a global communications solutions provider, with powerful and innovative products, services and technologies that connect people to your brand. You'll see our solutions in your mail box, email, retail settings and mobile devices. We help organizations like yours connect with their customers and improve control of budgets and brand — to better compete in the marketplace.



References

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TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Let's discuss your needs and how we can help.
Contact us today to learn more about the many
print and communications solutions available
from Taylor Healthcare.



1725 Roe Crest Drive, North Mankato, MN 56003
800.631.7644 | taylorcommunications.com/healthcare

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