Simple Steps to Ensure a Successful Mobile Strategy: A Case Study from Piedmont Healthcare

Location: Atlanta metro and across Georgia
Type: Care, Ambulatory, and Clinically Integrated Network
Facilities: Eight hospitals and more than 150 ambulatory locations

Introduction

Piedmont Healthcare developed a mobile strategy that set out to capitalize on the growing reliance on smartphones for retrieving online information and directions. Their top priority was to improve patients' experience with a mobile platform that provided information to enable users to navigate and access the entire system. This would include guidance to any location, physician or service in the Piedmont system, act as an extension of their lobby, and guide patients and visitors with less anxiety. Most importantly, the app would help them provide high quality, patient-centered care fondly known as "The Piedmont Way."

Challenge

Piedmont has seen rapid growth both through acquisition and new construction over the past several years that has broadened their reach throughout the Atlanta market and across Georgia. While this growth has allowed them to better serve their patients, it inherently adds layers of complexities in navigating the physical landscape, as well as the patient journey.

"Wayfinding is a hot topic across the industry, and lots of different health systems are trying to figure out what to do with it. [...] The real work is to sit down and think about every location a patient would go, and determine the right path to take them to their destination."

Katie Logan, Vice President of Experience
Piedmont Healthcare

Piedmont understands that patients want easy access to the health system's locations and services. Patients want an experience that is easily navigable when on any campus, is personalized, and has a retail look and feel. Patients have also come to expect the level customer service in healthcare that they receive in other industries, such as retail or hospitality. According to the 2015 McKinsey Consumer Health Insights survey, consumers have similar expectations for customer service — including delivering on expectations, making life easier and offering value — in health care as in other buying choices.[1]

Crystal Vasquez, DNP, MS, MBA, RN, director, solution innovation at AHA Health Forum, sees this as a positive development. "Consumers want hospitals to provide great customer service just like they do at the Apple store", Dr. Vasquez said. "Consumers are driving the business. We can't assume that we know better," she added.[2]

"Providing stress-free, safe guidance to the hospital is a top priority for improving patient experience at Piedmont," noted Matt Gove, chief consumer officer at Piedmont. "We want to capitalize on the growing reliance on smartphones for retrieving online information and directions. By employing Gozio's powerful, innovative technology, our patients and families will feel confident in arriving at their destination anywhere in the Piedmont system."
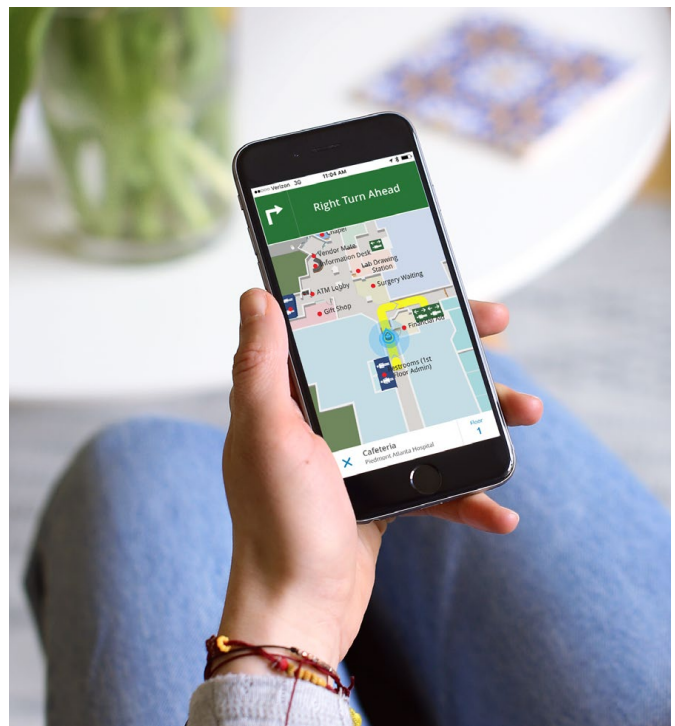
Solution

With a keen understanding of drivers of consumerism in healthcare: access, choice and experience, Piedmont partnered with Gozio Health to develop the "Piedmont Now" app. The app provides innovative wayfinding technology, along with a host of features that consolidate Piedmont's consumer touch points under one app, helping them achieve their overall mobile strategy and creating a robust mobile platform.

Mobile wayfinding technology is a means of improving patient engagement by solving the real-world problem of providing step-by-step directions to any destination in the hospital system. Piedmont visitors receive navigation with not only driving directions, and reminders of their parking location, but also turn-by-turn assistance in locating hospital services such as surgery registration or admissions, and other amenities such as the cafeteria, pharmacy, or gift shop.
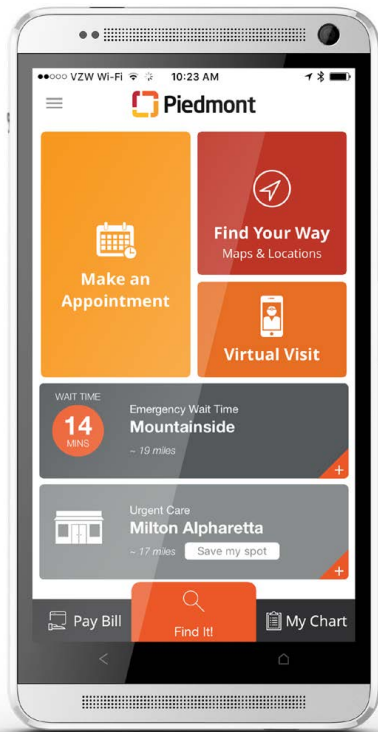
To address additional patient access improvements beyond wayfinding, Piedmont enhanced the mobile platform with features such as urgent care and emergency department wait times, find-a-doctor directory, virtual visits, and seamless appointment scheduling. In addition, the app helps patients access their MyChart patient portal account and other features like 'Pay My Bill.' The resulting app, Piedmont Now, demonstrates several best practices of hospital mobile platforms providing a one-stop, robust user experience, equipped with real time analytics to enable continuous improvements.

Adoption

To ensure the successful adoption of their new app, the patient experience team identified and defined three key components:
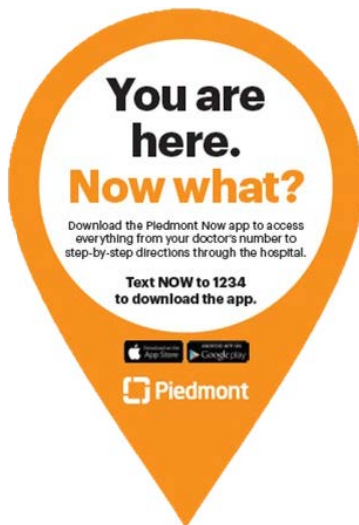
1. **Engagement:** Recognizing the development of a mobile wayfinding platform required a cross-functional effort with insights and expertise from leadership, marketing, patient experience, facilities and IT. Piedmont included as many in the implementation process as possible, at all levels of the organization. Throughout this process they asked questions, listened to concerns and identified Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to ensure accuracy in the patient journey.

2. **Excitement:** The patient experience team generated excitement throughout the pre-launch process both in-person and through internal communications. They also demonstrated the benefit mobile wayfinding brings to patients as well as employees by driving operational efficiencies.

3. **Ownership:** Beginning with buy-in from Piedmont leadership with "Executive Roadshows," the patient experience team gained understanding of organizational pain points, generated interest and gathered recommendations for the mobile platform. Knowing that engaged employees would become the best champions and promoters of the app for patients and visitors, the patient experience team involved all staff early in the process to give them a sense ownership in the end-product.

Piedmont made the decision to stagger the launch over nine months and to roll out the app to "Staff Only" prior to a public launch. Some Pre and Post Launch tactics were put in place:

Pre-Launch Staff Rollout

✓ Incorporated feedback from Piedmont Advisors (a group of patients that offer feedback and suggestions), focus groups and employee forums

✔ Developed entity teams of key wayfinding SME's including both clinical and non-clinical champions at each hospital

✔ Held kick-off meetings at each hospital to discuss process and generate excitement

✔ Conducted facility walkthroughs with SME's to consult on wayfinding challenges; began to develop a sense of local ownership

✔ Sent out employee emails and newsletters generating "buzz"

✔ Conducted User Acceptance Testing with expanded entity teams; engaged over 70 employees from across the system

✔ Created a dedicated Intranet Page with:
— Home page banner
— Links to email/newsletter communications
— General information
— Promo video featuring indoor wayfinding
— Informational toolkit and flyers
— Contest Information, including standings and winners
— Forum for employee feedback

After engaging the employee population through an internal launch, several tactics were executed to publically market the app and engage consumers.

Post-Launch Public Rollout

✔ Enabled a short code that allowed users to text a keyword and receive a link to the app download page; text back info was included on all marketing collateral

✔ Included links to the app download page in appointment reminders, newsletters, onsite Wi-Fi connection success page and on the Piedmont website
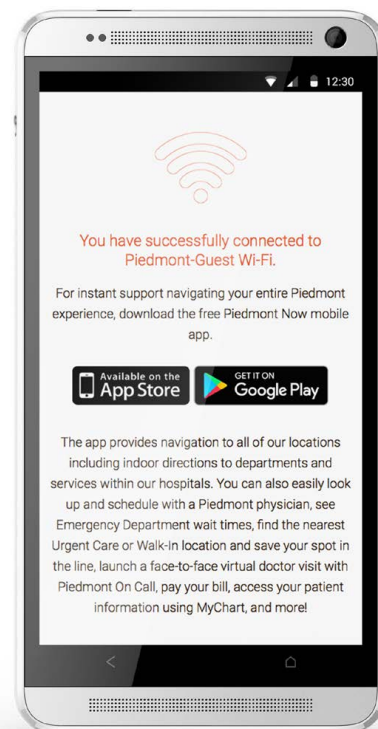
Post-Launch Staff Rollout

✔ Sent all employee email detailing app features and newsletters with reminders

✔ Held employee contests and app scavenger hunts with prizes

✓ Displayed signage, wall clings, banners and flyers at all locations

✓ Ran social media campaigns including video of wayfinding technology

✓ Began incorporating app information in appointment reminders to assist with directions and wayfinding

Results

Early engagement and feedback from the executive team, staff focus groups, and patients provided the Piedmont patient experience team a strong foundation to develop the "Piedmont Now" app that offered not only wayfinding, but also a comprehensive set of features that consumers wanted and needed.

Rolling the app out to staff first and collecting their feedback proved to be an essential tool for successful patient adoption and providing the "Piedmont Way" experience. Having an engaged and excited staff fostered engaged and excited patients and visitors. It created a sense of organizational ownership and pride, and staff truly believed the app would improve the patient's journey and overall experience.

Feedback from patients and staff alike has been extremely positive indicating the app has made it very simple for them to navigate the health system with all services and amenities at their fingertips.

Conclusion

Consumer engagement is leading how hospitals respond to improvements in patient experience. Patients have come to rely on the convenience of mobile technology, and hospitals must develop mobile platforms that engage with consumers and exceed their expectations.

A comprehensive hospital mobile strategy must address your healthcare organization's needs from all aspects and keep in mind the perspectives of leadership, staff and patients. It is critical to set up a strategic plan not only for app development, but also plan for successful adoption of the technology. Choose a technology partner not only because they deliver the best product and technology fit, but also one that assists with building your long-term strategy to ensure your patient and organizational needs will always be met.

1. Hospitals and Health Networks, Consumer Engagement: Leading the way to innovation in health care (August 2017).
2. Hospitals and Health Networks, Consumer Engagement: Leading the way to innovation in health care (August 2017).

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