Shake up the status quo – health care, meet customer relationship management

Insights and real-world examples to help your organization get ahead of health care’s consumerism curve
The rise of consumer-driven technologies and the information economy means consumers across industries have access to more information about products and services than ever before. To maintain a competitive edge, companies are proactively engaging consumers by tracking their behaviors and preferences to deliver a more personalized experience. The health care industry, however, has lagged. Health care organizations have yet to fully leverage available technology to offer consumers a more personalized, engaging experience.

The rise of consumerism in health care has coincided with several other industrywide trends, such as the shift to value-based care (VBC) and an increase in health care provider consolidation. In this transitional era, leading health care organizations are working to improve care quality and the consumer experience, all while dealing with declining reimbursements. Under these pressures, health care leaders must be judicious with their organization’s investments and improvement efforts. Now is an opportune time for health care organizations to invest in strategies and solutions that help providers deliver more engaging, high quality, affordable care to consumers. With no shortage of solutions and strategies available, leaders should prioritize those with a proven track record — customer relationship management (CRM) is such a strategy. With the right CRM solution in place, health care leaders can redefine the health care consumer experience status quo.

CRM is an enterprisewide approach for managing consumer interactions, supported by technologies. A robust CRM strategy seeks to optimize and nurture relationships in an effort to enhance consumer experiences, improve population health, reduce costs and improve the work life of health care providers – leading to increased trust and consumer loyalty.

This whitepaper dives deeper into key industry shifts facing today’s health care leaders and offers insights into how a CRM strategy can help organizations thrive in this changing industry.

Three trends reshaping health care

The rise of VBC, provider consolidation and consumerism are reshaping the health care industry, and health care leaders must prioritize improvement efforts that address these forces collectively.

Here are brief breakdowns of each trend.

1. VBC: Although the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) brought VBC to the forefront of the health care lexicon, the term is conceptually linked to the decades-long history of health care quality improvement efforts. In a study published in the journal *Current Reviews in Musculoskeletal Medicine* in 2012, researchers made the case that “current health care quality improvement infrastructure is a product of a century-long experience of cumulative efforts.”1

The shift away from fee-for-service (FFS) models has been slower than initially anticipated – partly due to political uncertainty – but the transition will continue to persist as the health care system is tasked to care for older consumer populations amid rising rates of chronic conditions. In this environment, improving care quality and reducing costs are poised to remain simultaneous priorities for health care leaders.

2. Consolidation: Partnerships and merger and acquisition (M&A) transactions among health care organizations have risen steadily in recent years, with 50 transactions announced in the first half of 2018 alone, according to a Kaufman Hall analysis published in July.2

According to a 2016 Healthcare Financial Management Association report, the rate of M&A activity among hospitals and health systems is largely driven by the rise of VBC and its corresponding emphasis on population health management.3

As a result, the number of services provided to consumers is diversifying, and organizations are becoming responsible for individuals’ care across their lifetime. Organizations can no longer afford to look at relationships with patients as episodic. Rather, they’ll need to build a long-term relationship with that person that spans across their health journey.

3. Health care consumerism: Consumers today have access to more information about the quality and cost of their care than ever before. The availability of information has coincided
with proliferation of high-deductible health plans, meaning consumers have a greater financial stake. In this environment, health care organizations must prioritize efforts to improve the consumer experience and maintain a competitive edge. According to Deloitte’s 2016 survey of more than 1,700 health care consumers, consumers “want to be heard, understood and given clear directions through a personalized health care experience.”

With health care consumers becoming more savvy in an era largely defined by the rise of VBC and increased consolidations, organizations are looking for strategies to improve care quality, meet consumer expectations and develop long-term relationships with patients. CRM technology can help support these strategies.

In health care, CRM’s reach stretches far beyond marketing data and can comprise information on an individual’s medical history, demographics and financial status. This technology can be particularly useful in preventive care efforts, where knowing and understanding your patient as a person is valuable. By not focusing on a particular condition, and instead influencing behaviors to maintain health and well-being, organizations can address the prevalence of chronic conditions and the overall cost of care. A robust CRM solution can initiate outreach for individuals identified to be at higher risk for developing specific conditions.

David Harse, vice president and general manager in consumer engagement for leading health information technology company Cerner, said health care organizations are working to not only attract consumers, but retain them through care tailored to their individual needs. David said CRM solutions can help health care organizations take a more consumer-centric approach to care.

“Consumers are looking for a more personalized experience … and CRM is going to be able to provide that,” David said, adding that CRM enables care teams to provide more personal outreach and better engage consumers in their care.

**Health care, meet CRM**

CRM has been alive and well in industries outside of health care for decades. The technology enables organizations to store various types of customer information in one central location, which empowers companies to better understand and quickly respond to shifting consumer desires. Implementation of CRM technology has been associated with significant return on investment. According to a 2014 report from the information technology research firm Nucleus Research, CRM pays back companies $8.71 for every dollar spent on implementation and adoption.

Susan Collins, a vice president focused on strategic partnerships for the cloud-computing company Salesforce, which has operated in the CRM space for nearly 20 years, said CRM technology in the past was primarily used to provide the salesperson with personal information about the potential customer to enhance the likelihood of a sale. She said the technology has since expanded well beyond its early use and can now be better defined as technology that enables companies to better understand all stakeholders.

Susan described how CRM influences her experience as a frequent customer to Marriott Hotels. Based on previous interactions with Susan, Marriott has documented certain aspects important to her experience. So, when she checks into a Marriott, she is certain there won’t be down pillows in her room, because she has an allergy. This example is one of many that demonstrates how CRM makes a difference in industries outside of health care.

In health care, CRM can help organizations meet consumers’ expectations they have come to know and expect because of the standards being set...
by other industries. As a result, health care needs to adopt the same tools used by companies that are leading the way in providing personalized consumer experiences. This technology can facilitate deeper, more personalized interactions with consumers by providing clinicians access to all pertinent consumer information. This flow of information is especially useful in supporting population health initiatives.

“It can be extremely helpful to have a deep understanding of not only the clinical situation with which consumers might present, but also a broader social context of what’s going on in [consumers’] lives,” Susan said. For population health initiatives, she said it’s important to know if a consumer has a family or economic situation impairing their ability to remain adherent to the formed care plan.

In an interview, Ray Herschman, vice president of population health accountable care strategy for Cerner, said that although health care is a late adopter of CRM technology, many organizations are now embracing consumer-centric approaches to care.

“With [more health care consumers] shopping with their own pocketbooks, I think a lot of organizations are thinking about how to create a better experience and more brand loyalty,” Ray said.

What does an effective CRM system for health care look like?

CRM systems comprise a suite of solutions and services that engage with customers throughout their experience with an organization. The technology has evolved beyond a sales tool and now extends through marketing, customer service and retention efforts. In health care, CRM can support care delivery and provider network management, among other uses.

A successful CRM strategy in health care is clinically-informed and spans across an organization. The system’s technology should leverage the longitudinal health record, cloud-based computing and analytics to support a more engaged, targeted care experience for consumers. The most effective solutions can support numerous operations within an organization, including call centers, provider network management and consumer-provider interactions. The system should also be capable of facilitating communications across multiple channels, (including email, direct mail, text, online chat, video, portal and phone, among other means of communications) compiling the information and making it visible to those in the organization who are interacting with consumers.

Collectively, such a solution can yield substantial benefits for a health system or health plan. Linda Stutz, vice president in care management services with Cerner, said, “CRM can provide providers and payers with a superior depiction of the social determinants contributing to a consumer’s health, accounting for everything from a consumer’s specific geographic location to his or her personal preferences and financial status.” Ultimately, according to Linda, “A CRM system can contribute to improved consumer outcomes because it enables clinicians to account for the many external factors that contribute to consumer health.”

CRM can also help improve the clinician experience by supporting the mission of delivering high quality, effective care. CRM can facilitate outreach efforts to ensure consumers meet scheduled appointments and receive the care they need in a timely fashion, facilitating better outcomes and easing the burden on clinicians.

“Clinicians today are bombarded by all types of requirements around improving quality, improving the consumer experience and decreasing costs,” Linda said, adding that CRM can help providers manage outreach, engaging consumers and ensuring clinicians see the right individuals at the right time, which supports more efficient, higher quality care.

Effective outreach can make a major difference in health care consumer engagement, which can in turn improve outcomes and lower costs. For example, more engaged health care consumers are more likely to adhere directly to recommended medication usage. Poor medication adherence is a costly and dangerous issue plaguing the U.S. health care system. Research published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* in 2012 suggests medication non-adherence causes nearly 125,000
deaths and 10 percent of hospitalizations, ultimately costing the U.S. health care system upwards of $100 billion annually. Simply texting health care consumers has been shown to improve medication adherence among those with chronic illness by nearly 20 percent, according to research published in JAMA Internal Medicine.

The bottom line: More engaged health care consumers experience better outcomes, and CRM can help facilitate superior consumer engagement.

According to Linda, CRM can also empower health care leaders to rethink their organization’s approach to connecting with consumers externally by breaking down information silos between the clinical and marketing components of an organization. Linda said she likes to refer to health care CRM as the “know me” database.

“It’s got everything. It’s got the clinical information, along with the marketing information, social determinants, consumer preferences, geography, all those types of things,” Linda said, adding that CRM changes the way health care organizations can connect with consumers, be it through text messages or the consumer portal. All these interactions are tracked, and information gathered in this tracking process can help inform future communications and outreach.

No need to reinvent the wheel – Three tips for CRM adoption

Investing in and implementing new technology can be nerve-wracking for leaders of even the most sophisticated health care organizations. However, organizations looking to bring an enterprisewide CRM solution to their organization are not without resources.

Here are three tips for a successful CRM adoption:

1. Establish clear goals and measure results: Across all industries, leaders need to establish attainable goals they hope to achieve with CRM prior to its implementation. Identifying specific

pain points within the organization can help solidify CRM goals. Prior to launching such initiatives, leaders need to establish baseline measures to facilitate accurate assessments of CRM’s impact and gain consensus on quantifiable outcomes they can measure themselves against.

2. Pay attention to early adopters: Health care organizations that are relatively naïve to CRM technology should look to the experiences of early CRM adopters to inform their own implementations. Industry conferences are one great place to see early-adopter case studies and garner CRM information from various vendors.

“I think it’s worth some time to review other health systems’ experiences – you don’t need to reinvent the wheel,” Susan said. “A good place to start if you’re completely unfamiliar [with CRM] might be your conference of choice.”

3. Rely on analyst insights: Health care leaders looking for immediate, objective insights can review reports from market analysts to get a better idea of which CRM vendor is right for their organization.

“One specific example of such a source is the Forrester Wave report, which contains evaluations of software vendors written for a professional audience.

It’s time to break the consumer experience status quo

Health care providers’ central mission has always been to provide effective care to consumers, but the investment in technologies to support these efforts has lagged. Perhaps it’s a result of the health care industry as a whole being a slow adopter of technology when compared to other industries.
For the past several years, organizations have had to focus on investing and implementing core technologies, like the electronic health record (EHR). But as the industry is rapidly changing, and the role of providers is spurring consumers to become active participants in their care, consumer engagement technologies are becoming top of mind.

“It’s hard to defend the status quo,” Ray said. For instance, the simple experience of a consumer calling to schedule an appointment and communicating with an individual who knows helpful information regarding consumer preferences and care history represents a major shift in the industry. Yet, when we call our favorite retailer, airline or internet service provider a personalized experience is expected if they want to keep our business.

“I think a lot of people are trying to completely rethink consumer access and what that experience entails,” Ray said.

Together, Cerner and Salesforce are looking to transform the consumer experience in health care to integrate Salesforce’s CRM solutions with Cerner’s big data platform, HealtheIntent®, to bring a clinically-informed CRM platform to health care – one that offers longitudinal consumer data, which compiles disparate data from EHRs, payers and other sources into one centralized location.

“The power of what we’re doing here is in the longitudinal data... the source of truth within the CRM tool,” David said. “It enables clinicians to continually refine consumer profiles and understand the steps [and healthy behaviors] an individual is taking or not taking.”

In the era of VBC, health care consumerism and consolidation, it is important for forward-looking health care leaders to ensure their organization is optimized for success with the right CRM technology on hand.

To learn more about the offering Cerner and Salesforce are collaborating on, click here.
About Salesforce

Rapid advancements in healthcare and an uncertain landscape compel organizations to rethink how they use technology in every aspect of their business, and seek new ways to take information from data to insight. Salesforce helps healthcare organizations make insights actionable with an agile, intelligent, and scalable platform that brings people and systems together.

Contact us for more info

www.salesforce.com
1.800.667.6389
Salesforce Tower
415 Mission Street, 3rd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

About Cerner

We’re continuously building on our foundation of intelligent solutions for the health care industry. Our technologies connect people and systems, and our wide range of services support the clinical, financial and operational needs of organizations of every size.

Contact us for more info

populationhealth@cerner.com
816.221.1024
cerner.com/CRM
2800 Rockcreek Pkwy.
Kansas City, MO 64117