

Unified Communications: Improving Practice Performance



Introduction

Patients today have many choices of healthcare providers, and they have high expectations of their patient experience. How can you stay competitive within a patient-centered healthcare landscape?

With the capability to seamlessly integrate collaboration applications no matter the device or location, unified communications (UC) can improve staff and patient communications and overall practice productivity. Learn how UC can improve your practice performance.

Why Unified Communications, Why Now?

The way we work — and how a practice interacts with its patients — has changed dramatically. Today's unified communications solutions can help you meet the challenges head on. UC addresses the broader scope of business communications by integrating commonly used applications:

VOICE | EMAIL | CHAT/IM | MESSAGING | VIDEO | CONFERENCING | COLLABORATION

Drivers Behind the Demand for UC

VoIP communications are key to your practice, but there is much more that UC can add in terms of collaboration. Here are 3 key categories to consider as you make your customized UC business case:

<u>Technological Requirements</u>	<u>Productivity Needs</u>	<u>Competitive Demands</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mobility- Cloud utilization- Multi-site clinic locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Scheduling coordination- Treatment efficiency- Staff access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Patient satisfaction- PCMH/ACO participation- Provider M&A

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How UC Improves Practice Performance

Now that you understand the commonly used applications that comprise UC and have assessed your specific needs and the business case for your practice, let's explore in more detail how UC can improve practice performance in these three key areas:

1. Patient Engagement

Enabling patients to take a more active role in their overall health and wellness requires practices to offer technology interventions that will allow patients to efficiently participate and collaborate with their providers.

PATIENT PORTALS

- UC can increase patient touch points with patient portals
- Patients can utilize convenient call back or live web chat tools
- Practices can get their patients more engaged in their care
- **Results:** Patients and providers are more engaged

AUTOMATED NOTIFICATIONS

- UC can automate outbound patient notifications and practice announcements
- Practice staff can stop scrambling to get appointment reminder calls completed
- Practices can utilize UC instead of expensive text messaging services
- **Results:** Practices lower abandonment rates and recurring notification costs

BUSINESS CASE SUPPORT

- Enhanced portal features can help achieve the 5% patient engagement threshold (Stage 2 / MU)
- MGMA reports the average cost per physician / day for appointment abandonment is \$411
- Patient attendance rates are equal from automated SMS & voice reminders, but SMS costs often escalate
- A typical group practice could invest over \$3,000 each year for SMS vs utilizing their own UC capabilities

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2. Staff Collaboration

Multi-professional care teams spend at least 25% of their time on communications-based activities. To optimize information exchange and patient treatment, they must collaborate efficiently, effectively and securely.

MULTI-MODAL COLLABORATION

- UC enables staff with multiple tools to improve team access and collaboration efficiency
- Staff can update their availability and preferred notification medium (i.e., text vs. phone call)
- Practices can eliminate the workflow drag of communication waste (i.e., phone tag)
- **Results:** Real-time team collaboration and reduced information exchange latency.

MOBILE UC

- UC keeps staff connected with the same user experience – mobile or desktop
- Physicians enjoy a dual persona: one device – two numbers – work and personal
- Practices can leverage Wi-Fi versus carrier networks for mobile UC usage
- **Results:** Practices keep staff mobile while reducing expensive cellular costs.

BUSINESS CASE SUPPORT

- First attempt voice-only calls fail 85% of the time in healthcare environments
- 90% of staff bring their personal smart devices to work
- 73% send and receive work-related texts
- 1,000 physicians surveyed - 95% frequently use text messages
- The most commonly used platform: unsecure, carrier SMS texting

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3. Practice Workflow

The delivery of patient care involves many processes through which patient treatment passes from initiation to completion. The ability of practices to streamline their operational workflow throughout each patient encounter is critical.

PATIENT SCHEDULING

- UC enables patients to experience efficient appointment scheduling
- Multi-site practices can optimize staff resources with centralized scheduling
- Practices can maximize patient volume with agile scheduling capabilities
- **Results:** Increased practice revenue and patient satisfaction.

CALL MANAGEMENT

- UC enables practices to manage incoming calls to their unique workflow
- Callers are consistently directed to appropriate practice staff
- Practices can decrease phone calls to busy front office staff
- **Results:** Incoming calls evolve from workflow disrupters to business builders.

BUSINESS CASE SUPPORT

- Scheduling difficulty can cost practices new and existing patients
- Centralized scheduling and pre-service steps can increase on-time procedure starts
- The most common first impression of a practice is by a telephone conversation
- Positive phone experiences will affect patient perceptions of the whole practice.

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An Overview of UC Deployment Options

Now that you have further business case justification as to how UC will improve practice performance, it's important to understand and decide the most optimal UC deployment option for your practice.

Onsite

Practice fully own and operates the solution

Cloud

Applications hosted remotely, run either by the UC provider or a hosting partner

Practice consumers the service as a monthly subscription expense

Cloud provider manages the service, relieving IT of most or all network-related tasks

Hybrid

A mixed deployment with some UC elements remaining onsite and others hosted in the cloud

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What to Look for in a UC Partner

- The flexibility to offer and support all three scenarios from a single solution that is easy to deploy, manage and use
- A consistent user experience for staff, patients and allied providers no matter where their UC services resides
- A full suite of applications and capabilities to grow into as collaboration needs evolve
- The ability to offer public and private cloud options (cloud-based solutions)
- The ability to provide an enterprise-grade telephony and UC experience
- Competitive pricing along with quality, reliability, security and user experience
- Flexible licensing that makes it easy to add features, applications and new users – onsite, in the cloud or hybrid – as the practice grows
- A seamlessly integrated UC solution that makes life easier for IT and can be customized to the practice's other systems and applications
- A user experience that is intuitive and simple, requiring minimal training
- A proven brand and reputation in the marketplace

Finding the Best Fit for Your Practice

More and more medical practices are embracing UC to improve collaboration, productivity and overall performance. Step up your business communications and explore all the benefits UC can deliver. Contact us today.