Patient Engagement with Mobile Apps: The Do-It-Yourself Guide

- What makes a great patient engagement app?
- 6 steps to developing an efficient and compelling app use case
- How non-programmers can create and manage a sustainable mobile app portfolio
A growing body of research suggests that people actively involved in their healthcare tend to have **better clinical outcomes** - and may incur lower healthcare costs.

**Mobile engagement**, among other strategies, is proving to be particularly successful in multiple areas, such as wellness and lifestyle management, medication adherence, patient education, etc.

However, with **40,000+** mHealth apps available today, finding a truly efficient patient engagement app is a real challenge. Most apps do little more than provide information; information that is often unreliable. Only **two thirds** of mHealth apps are actually used after being downloaded; few are used more than once, and fewer still demonstrate measurable results.

Whom do patients trust most when it comes to health-related guidance and tools? - Naturally, their healthcare provider!

Offer your patients branded patient engagement apps – **a source of trusted, reliable health advice.**

**Only about 3% of healthcare providers in the U.S. offer branded mobile apps to their patients**

MobiHealthNews.com, 2013

A Golden Opportunity!
Branded Patient Engagement Apps Can Help:

- **Smile icon:** Deliver a **better patient experience** by providing customized, reliable information and guidance any time, anywhere, directly from the healthcare provider.

- **Graph icon:** Improve **healthcare outcomes** by empowering patients to take a more proactive approach to their treatment and wellness.

- **Dollar sign icon:** **Increase reimbursements** by improving KPIs such as 30-day readmission rates, increasing access to condition-specific information, etc.

- **Checkmark icon:** Facilitate compliance with **Meaningful Use Stage 2** patient engagement requirements.

- **Clock icon:** **Reduce staff hours** by providing new interactive communication channels and self-education resources.

- **People icon:** Foster a vibrant **wellness-minded community** around your healthcare brand by encouraging social networking via mobile.

- **Award icon:** Boost your organization’s brand image and **competitive advantage**!

**So, what makes a great patient engagement app?**
The 4 Musts of a Great Patient Engagement App

1. Easy to navigate and user friendly

Less than 50% of mHealth apps are downloaded more than 500 times, 26% are used only once, and almost two thirds of those are abandoned by the 10th use. The most frequent reasons of abandonment – the app is not easy to navigate or does not offer any useful functionality.

Streamlined, user-friendly apps are more likely to capture your patients and stick with them for a long time!

2. Customized to the patient

Patients are diverse, and so are their needs. An older adult may prefer a tablet app that features enlarged text and simplified navigation. While seniors are the likeliest group to use healthcare services and resources, only 18% of them are using smartphones. At the same time, tablet adoption in this age group is growing twice as fast as among younger patients.

A teenager, on the other hand, may be more engaged if you offer a fun, edgy smartphone app featuring gamification or points earned for adhering to medications and regimen.

Identify your target audience and customize your mobile use case!
The 4 Musts of a Great Patient App - continued

3. Providing relevant information and autonomy

A 2012 Deloitte study of U.S. Health Care Consumers revealed that even on the basic level of mobile adoption, users expect health and wellness-related content to come from their most trusted source – their healthcare provider. Your branded patient engagement apps should feature entertaining, condition-specific content; e.g. memory-training tools for seniors, educational games for young asthma patients, etc.

In addition to that, series of studies acknowledge a strong link between the degree of personal control and health outcomes. Mobile apps can provide a variety of tools for empowering patients, such as wellness goals tracking, customized fitness programs, healthy recipes, and more!

**Fostering patient autonomy via mobile apps contributes to a better patient experience!**

4. Superior user experience on multiple mobile platforms

The device market is becoming more fragmented every day. Building apps that perform flawlessly across multiple platforms, while offering rich native app experience on each major platform, is key to the performance and sustainability of your mobile strategy. At the same time, it is important to streamline the look and feel of your branded apps across all devices.

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6 Steps to Developing a Great Patient App Use Case

Successful mobile apps start with compelling use cases. Here are some tips from MobileSmith app strategy experts on how to get started:

1. Do Your Research
   Identify the functions your target demographic will enthusiastically embrace in a native mobile app. Think of the contexts where your patients would most likely use it. Check if there are similar apps out there – what are their user ratings? What’s missing?

2. Start with a Long List!
   Think of your initial wish list of features as a “dump” – put down everything you would ever want in your app! Go nuts; brainstorm with your entire team. Great mobile ideas pop up in discussions among creative, dynamic teams of marketers and line-of-business professionals.

3. Trim it Down
   As soon as your creative power hits the wall, it’s time to whittle your list down to a reasonable size. This is the most important part! Diluted apps are not user-friendly and may confuse your patient. Go through your wish list and identify the top 3 most important functions. Follow this up with 3-4 secondary functions, and shelve the rest for potential future use.

Trimming your use case is important, but so is optimizing it for long term!
6 Steps to a Developing a Great Patient App Use Case – Continued

4. Think of a Multi-App Strategy
   Chances are, you will find that some of your initial ideas are simply too good to be dumped or postponed. That’s how new app use cases are born! You may want to start developing a multi-app strategy even before you build your first app.

5. Think of Versioning Even Before You Start Drawing
   Something you want to consider before you start drawing your wireframes is your app versioning strategy. Mobile real estate is valuable; once your app is downloaded on your patients’ devices, you want it to have staying power and drive continuous engagement. As time goes on, your app should be ready to adjust to new requirements and accommodate the evolving needs of your patients. When your resources are limited, a solid app versioning strategy, put in place from the start, can become a life-saver. MobileSmith experts can help with that!

6. Play With Your Wireframe!
   A wireframe is a drawing of what you want your app to look like – tabs, buttons and all. Draw all of your app pages and transitions; describe all the bells and whistles in as much detail as possible. Then tap through your wireframe and make sure your key user goals can be achieved in less than 4 clicks. Show your wireframes to the person on your team least accustomed to mobile and ask them to tap through it. You may glean a lot of valuable insights!

Now that you have finessed your use case, it’s time to build the app!
In a typical custom app project, after your app use-case was developed and your wireframes were finalized, your mobile project would proceed to mockup, development, and testing – until your app was ready to be submitted to the app stores. This green part would typically take the bulk of your app development budget, while prohibiting any changes past the mockup stage. You wouldn’t get to test your app until it was fully developed.

MobileSmith totally changes the game!
Take Control of your Entire App Project!

With MobileSmith, you can quickly implement your use case without any programming and immediately test your app prototype on your device!

The MobileSmith app development platform empowers marketers and line-of-business to build fully customized, full-featured, native apps for iPhone, iPad, and Android smartphones.

With this process, making changes is easy! You get to test your prototype thoroughly on real devices and collect feedback from your focus group. Once you are 100% satisfied with your app, lock it into production and build for distribution!

No programming required at any stage.
Bullet-Proof Hospital Apps, Ready for Your Patients!

MobileSmith is a powerful DIY app development platform that allows you to own your app project from idea to launch. We also provide a customizable portfolio of ready-to-go patient engagement apps with bullet-proof, polished use-cases.

- Quickly launch a **fully customizable** portfolio of pre-built apps designed to maximize patient engagement and ROI for your organization
- Rapidly re-skin, customize, and deploy apps for **iPhone**, **Android**, and **iPad** – no coding!
- Send apps **over-the-air** for testing, or submit directly to Apple and Android app stores
- Manage each of your apps from a **dedicated CMS** to drive continuous engagement.

Click Here to See and Test the Apps!
Measuring your Apps’ Impact

Last but not least: to prove the value of your apps, don’t forget to set and measure a set of KPI’s.

1. **In-app analytics (Google Analytics or Flurry):**
   - Number of downloads
   - Average time spent in the app
   - Pages most visited
   - User location (permission-based) and device type

2. **Additional Qualitative and Quantitative Metrics:**
   - **Patient Engagement** – how many interactions were registered per patient as a result of the app: total number and percentage
   - **Communication** – how many interactions are now performed via the app as opposed to phone and in-person visits. Can you measure the cost of interaction?
   - **Patient Satisfaction** – how patients’ opinion of/relationship with your hospital has improved as a result of the app
   - **New Patient Acquisition** – percentage of patients whose first interaction occurred as a result of the app awareness or marketing
   - **Social Engagement** - number of social shares, likes, followers, etc.
Gain instant competitive advantage and amaze your patients!

With the MobileSmith platform, you can quickly launch an engaging portfolio of native apps for all major platforms – without waiting for your IT, or hiring costly developers.

Ready to Build your First App?

Contact us for a demo of our Platform, or request a Free Trial!