Ongoing Optimization Converts More Patients

Ochsner Health System continually adjusts its marketing strategies to drive success

Key Goals:
• Attract online viewers
• Convert “hand raisers” (callers who haven’t made an appointment)
• Build patient loyalty

SITUATION
Nonprofit Ochsner Health System has served the New Orleans area for nearly 75 years. Yet even well-established hospitals need to attract and retain new patients. Just as co-founder Alton Ochsner and his partners had to overcome long-standing biases in the New Orleans medical community about opening a multi-specialty clinic, so too must hospitals today overcome the notion that patients will choose them solely because of reputation, longevity, or size. All hospitals — regardless of history or pedigree — must attract consumers and provide excellent care while remaining financially viable for current and future generations. This challenge requires diligent management of limited resources to ensure the best investments.

RESULTS

19K
new patients

11:1
ROI

60%
average call-to-transfer rate
INSIGHTS

Every month, 40 million consumers search online for healthcare provider information, according to comScore, the industry-leading source for web traffic trends. That traffic is predominantly (78%) using third-party search sites. The remainder turns to health insurance company sites, physician and other provider sites, and hospital- or health system-specific sites. The Ochsner team knew consumers were searching for care, and they knew Healthgrades — which received more than 1 million visits a day — was the #1 resource they could rely on to connect patients to information about Ochsner’s physicians and hospitals.

With so many consumers searching for care, Ochsner needed to make finding and selecting its hospitals and physicians easy. Healthgrades offered a patient-acquisition solution: a unique combination of physician search capability and the ability to follow the consumer from initial appointment phone call to encounter. This gave Ochsner a reliable, measurable system for driving patients to its facilities. When asked why her team chose the Healthgrades patient-acquisition solution, Ochsner marketing project leader Sharon O’Regan responded, “It just works.”
One of the key features of the Healthgrades solution is the use of a call center to process consumer inquiries. All calls are routed through a call center that connects consumers to their desired physician. As part of this process, the call center agent captures demographic information, including name and address, that matches these calls to patient encounters and associated revenue. This allows the Healthgrades solution to directly account for the revenue it drives.

STRATEGY AND SOLUTION

Ochsner knew that monetizing the full benefit of online physician search was more involved than simply going live with a webpage. Its team needed a partner to help them design, implement, optimize, and track the program. As the market leader in online physician search, Healthgrades was the clear choice for that partnership.

In addition to supporting Ochsner’s patient-acquisition launch through standard project management protocols, Healthgrades also employed a solution implementation team, call center team, and various other professionals to help keep the launch on track and successful. This included support of ongoing optimization initiatives such as content development for physician profiles, online appointment scheduling, and training.

To maximize patient acquisition and ROI, Ochsner realized it needed to execute effectively in three areas:

1. Enhance physician profiles
2. Engage hand raisers to develop relationships, foster conversion, and increase loyalty
3. Involve physicians in the patient satisfaction feedback effort

Enhance physician profiles

Consumers are looking online for more information than the usual physician name, address, and insurance accepted. Healthgrades studies have found that a consumer’s likelihood of selecting a physician increases when a provider has additional content on their profile. In fact, physicians with a more complete profile — including a photo, care philosophy, and conditions treated — are twice as likely to be selected, and physicians speaking on video about their patient care philosophy have a 110% higher conversion from profile view to phone call. Knowing this, the Ochsner team knew they needed to enhance their physician profiles.

Awards:
America’s 100 Best Hospitals, Healthgrades, 2015
Best Hospitals, U.S. News & World Report, ranked in three specialties, 2016-2017
The marketing team at Ochsner discovered a common challenge that hospitals face: a central repository for physician information did not exist. And with hospital growth, it had been challenging to maintain current data. So in the weeks leading up to launch, the team manually updated and verified physician profiles to ensure the accuracy of the information the public would see when searching for physicians.

To improve buy-in from physicians and staff, data integrity and communication were crucial. Ochsner’s marketing team traveled to every location and met up and down the organization with executives, physicians, and other operators. They communicated the program design, expected benefits, and demonstrated results. They invested significant time up front to convince employees of the value of the Healthgrades solution for driving patient acquisition, as well as to gain ongoing support and participation. To further ensure success, Ochsner staggered the launch, with three separate launches over a nine-month period. It launched with employed and closely aligned physicians first, and branched out from there.

Engage hand raisers to develop relationships, foster conversion, and increase loyalty

To reach out to “hand raisers” — consumers who have called the hospital but have not made an appointment — Ochsner has sent out direct mail. The message highlights the breadth of services and quality of care offered by Ochsner, and also reminds recipients to complete the step of making an appointment. The hospital phone number and a link to the find-a-doctor page are also provided. Ochsner opted to have Healthgrades manage the campaign that triggers the direct-mail pieces. The campaign has been successful, with over 11:1 contribution margin ROI. In the initial year of the campaign, Ochsner has seen several hundred new and incremental patients.

In addition to direct mail to engage would-be patients, Ochsner also deploys “welcome emails” to new patients to develop relationships and build loyalty. Healthgrades also manages this program, which sends an Ochsner-designed welcome email to all new patients who reach the health system through the Healthgrades solution. The email describes the services available at Ochsner and the benefits of using the health system.

Care Delivery Firsts by Ochsner

- First family waiting room
- First intensive-care recovery room
- First to discover link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer
- First surgery in the nation to separate conjoined twins
Involve physicians in the patient satisfaction feedback effort

Feedback from patient surveys provides important benchmarks for determining how well physicians are delivering patient-focused care. The physician star rating will soon be incorporated into Ochsner’s monthly reporting.

In addition to the up-front investment of time with physicians and staff to educate them about the benefits of the Healthgrades solution, Ochsner has standing meetings to listen to calls coming into the call center. This allows for coaching, script changes, and process updates, if necessary.

RESULTS

The Healthgrades solution began showing results almost immediately. In the first week of launch (which included only four days), more than 150 calls were driven by the program. By the fourth week, call volume was up to 550 calls for the first-wave pool of 550 physicians. In addition to boosting call activity, the search-to-call ratio grew from 3% to 5% by the end of the first month, and the call-to-transfer rate averaged 60%. The ongoing optimization initiatives have been very successful as well: The “hand raiser” and welcome email campaigns generated hundreds of new patients and higher than 11:1 contribution margin ROI.

The Healthgrades patient-acquisition program at Ochsner Health System has generated substantial incremental patients and revenue. It has also allowed the hospital team to improve patient-facing processes in an accelerated manner (e.g., creation of online forms for physician updates and physician philosophy-of-care videos). The solution deployment also inspired Ochsner’s entire care delivery network to move toward a more consumer-focused model for patient acquisition. Ochsner credits a great working relationship with its Healthgrades physician support representative and the entire solution implementation team for enabling a successful and productive deployment.

Healthgrades commissioned a study by Stax to identify the information most important to consumers searching for the right physician. These attributes were identified, in order of importance:

1. The doctor’s experience
2. Previous patients’ experiences
3. Quality of care

CONCLUSION

Healthgrades is the market leader in helping consumers search for and find care when and where they need it. Ochsner Health System has realized significant gains by launching the Healthgrades patient-acquisition solution, but also through discoveries made after the launch. When paired with additional Healthgrades solutions and its dedicated professionals, this solution enables hospitals such as Ochsner to achieve their vision of serving a greater share of their communities, both now and into the future.
To learn more about how Healthgrades solutions can engage and align patients and physicians, call 855.665.9276 or visit hospitals.healthgrades.com.
About Healthgrades

We are not simply experts in patient and physician engagement. We actually created customer relationship management for healthcare nearly 25 years ago and continue to move the needle with our tools for patient engagement and physician relationship management. We can help your health system target, connect with, and motivate the patients you want, and show you how to strengthen your physician relationships to keep referrals within your network. Our solutions combine evidence-based, multichannel communications with a business intelligence platform to build relationships, influence behaviors, and improve healthcare utilization — all with a measurable contribution margin for your hospital.

To learn more about how the Healthgrades platform can empower your health system, your physicians, and your patients — so that you can deliver a new and better model of care while improving your top-line growth — call 855.665.9276 or visit hospitals.healthgrades.com.