
Self-scheduling: Attracting the Coming Wave of Patients

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The generations known as “Baby Boomers” and “Gen Xers” constitute the majority of your patients today; however, it’s necessary for you to be thinking about the coming wave of Millennials and Gen Zers.

While addressing the needs of the new generations may concern you, the automation these patients demand not only benefits them, but can also prove advantageous to your practice. The next wave of patients craves consistent, effortless and efficient interactions.

While there are many ways to make headway towards this goal, one of the simplest is self-scheduling. Self-scheduling is available through many practice management systems but can also be accomplished by contracting with a third-party vendor.

Self-scheduling benefits patients by providing easy access, around the clock. In addition to a patient satisfier, however, the activity also provides several advantages for your practice. First, self-scheduling requires no one to pay to answer the phone, identify the patient and/or schedule the appointment. While there may be some manual intervention required on the back-end, particularly surrounding the registration process, the time expended is less than handling a patient calling to schedule an appointment over the telephone. While the solution may not require as much staffing, it typically won’t result in cutting several (or even one) employees.

The hidden – but more powerful – benefit is the drop in the no-show rate. In working with many practices that have adopted self-scheduling, my experience demonstrates a remarkable 50% drop in no-shows for patients who self-schedule.

If you’d like to attempt self-scheduling, but are worried about opening a flood gate, engage with a solution that keeps you in control. For example, release slots only for established patients; restrict the number available per day; and/or control the timeframe for advanced notification. Most importantly, do not install a system that fails to integrate slot releases. That is, if the appointments that you have made available via self-scheduling do not fill, then they need to convert to a slot available for any patient.

Ease the throttle forward after you gain comfort with the solution; most practices find that their biggest hurdle to self-scheduling is getting out of their own way.

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