

Reaping the Benefits of Geofencing as a Healthcare Organization



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Consumers are getting savvier about minimizing their healthcare costs — which is good for them, but eats into the profits of healthcare providers. But with rising hospital and emergency room bills alongside tiered insurance reimbursement, consumers are being driven to alternatives, often in the form of outpatient clinics, to avoid the heavy price tag associated with emergency rooms.



Discover the benefits of geofencing APIs and meeting prospective patients where they're at.

In the U.S., the alternatives are trending toward increased outpatient care. For example, according to MEDPAC, Medicare spending on outpatient services rose 107 percent from 2006 to 2016, reaching an estimated \$58 billion. Drugstores and grocery chains are opening walk-in urgent care clinics to meet the increased demand. Additionally, consumers are shopping around for labs that provide routine blood work and other tests, taking into consideration factors such as location, hours of operation, and of course, cost. And for those healthcare providers that want to capture a share of the outpatient clinic market, there are significant benefits to geofencing technology.

Numerous retailers already use geofencing to attract prospects, and understand it may be the key to reaching more patients. Put simply, a geofence is a virtual fence around a physical location, such as a clinic or a competitor's clinic (a practice known as geoconquesting). Geofencing leverages GPS signals to identify where an individual is located, so when a patient with a smartphone enters the fenced area and uses their device, an ad will pop up tailored to the location. Since smartphone proliferation is high, it's a way to reach consumers

through the technology they're already using. Best practices suggest using both geofencing and geoconquesting to locate patient prospects.

The Benefits of Geofencing in Healthcare

According to Search Engine Journal, 80 percent of "near me" searches originate from mobile devices, indicating that geofencing has real potential as a marketing trend. It's an ideal opportunity to reach consumers who are in your neighborhood — and push an ad to them as they near your location.

For healthcare providers, most potential clientele are local, increasing the need for innovative messaging that reaches prospective patients. But this technology can also prove effective with out-of-town prospects looking for a clinic to treat an unexpected illness or minor injuries while on vacation.

Yet another benefit of geofencing for healthcare organizations is the ability to personalize and improve patient satisfaction. Through geofencing APIs, you can receive demographic information that'll enable adds to be most targeted and effective, explains WWD. For example, you might be able to use data gathered from other clinic visits to gauge the reason for a patient's visit. A walk-in clinic may note an uptick in visits shortly before the first day of school, and push ads for sports physicals to the right demographic, such as parents in their 30s and 40s. In other cases, using data from searches can help target the right patients — someone diagnosed with a condition may conduct research on her phone, and providers can push information about the specific condition to her device.

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Other Geofencing Uses

Geofencing doesn't have to be limited to patient prospects in the immediate area or near a competitor. Healthcare providers can also use geofencing to target specific locations. For instance, a chiropractor's office may create a geofence around a gym, advertising the benefits of regular chiropractic care to stay healthy. A walk-in clinic might target prospects visiting a farmer's market — or, perhaps, a fast-food restaurant, according to PM360 — to extol the benefits of regular checkups, a healthy diet, or getting back in shape. But despite the benefits of this outreach, these efforts may be seen as intrusive. Any healthcare organization using geofencing to target prospects that aren't near their location may want to tread lightly and selectively with ads.

Geofencing for Patient Follow-up

Healthcare providers can go one step further and encourage return visits by using geofencing for location-based follow-up. When the patient returns home, the provider can send a text message requesting feedback or reminding the patient to schedule a follow-up visit. This can increase patient satisfaction and encourage them to visit a clinic again, whether it's for another urgent need, a follow-up visit, or general care.

When done carefully, the benefits of geofencing can improve a healthcare provider's patient acquisition considerably. As the popularity of outpatient services increases and consumers search for ways to save money on healthcare, it's critical to discover new ways to reach

them and inform them of your services and expertise. With a combination of geofences around your location, competitor locations, and even related businesses, you'll reach prospective patients who are looking for exactly what you have to offer.