

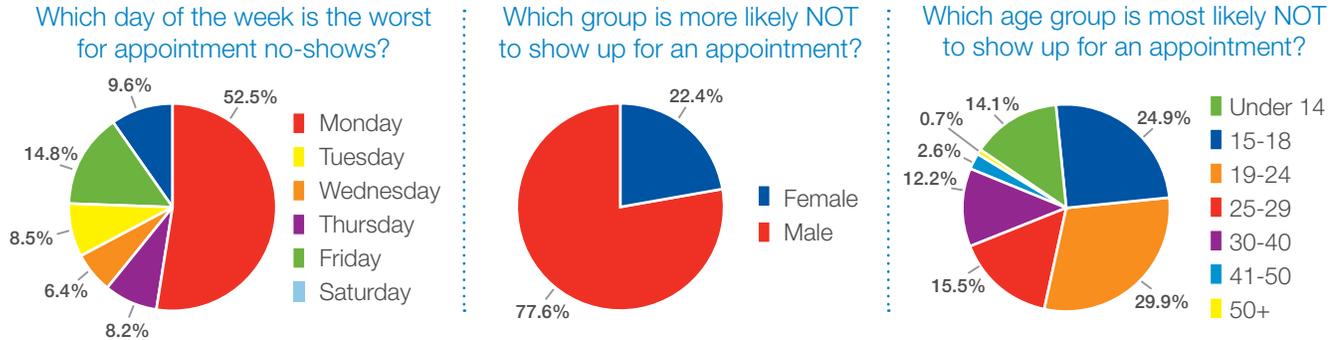
Research Report: Online Engagement Tools Improve Patient Communications

2010 North American Dental Practice Survey Findings

Advances in technology have led to more sophisticated patient engagement tools that give practices the means to engage and activate patients in entirely new ways. One of the biggest problems for practices is ensuring that patients attend scheduled appointments, thus keeping their treatment on track. While technology can be applied to activate many positive patient behaviors, it is very well suited for the task of reminding patients of appointments and helping practices obtain confirmation of the patients' intent to attend. The benefits of utilizing technology for appointment-related messages translate directly to the bottom line, helping practices retain the revenue associated with each appointment.

Imagine being able to reduce appointment no-shows by having an informed insight into patient trends and the means to send ‘just-in-time’ reminders. This paper presents some very clear trends around appointment no-shows, based on findings from a 2010 survey sponsored by TeleVox Software, Inc. of more than 9,000 dentists and orthodontists from across the United States.

In this survey more than 50 percent of respondents confirmed that Mondays are the worst days for missed appointments, more than three quarters of appointments are missed by men, and nearly half of missed appointments are in the 14-25 age group.

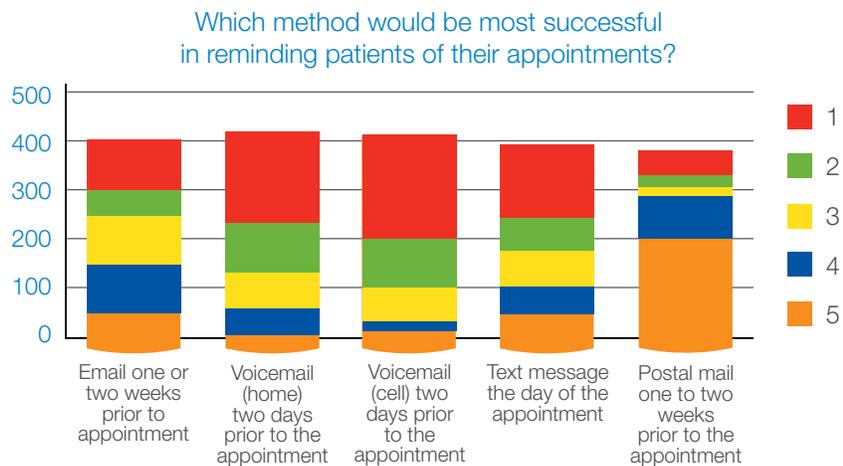


With this knowledge and insight, practices can take proactive steps to minimize missed appointments by, for example, booking more appointments for women on a Monday than men or increasing the number of reminders. In the case of the 14-25 age group, engaging with them via text messaging might be most effective.

Connecting With Patients Through Digital Notification

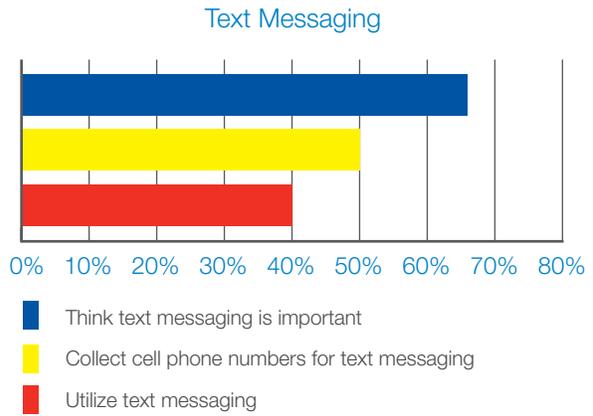
Seventy-five percent of practices recognize the importance of connecting with patients in multiple ways to remind them to attend appointments on time. They are increasingly focused on digital notifications to do this – primarily through voicemail, email and text messaging. However, that number would jump to 90 percent of practices seeing value in digital notifications if it were made easy. Practices see the correlation between the age of patients not showing up for appointments and the low use and deployment of email and text messages for this same age group.

Consider text messaging specifically. Practices report that patients aged 15-30 are the most likely to miss appointments. Nielsen reports that consumers in this same age range are also the most rigorous users of text messaging, sending and receiving more text messages than phone calls¹. However, while 46 percent of practices are considering using text messaging to reach out to their patients with appointment reminders and other messages, only 40 percent of practices are actually utilizing text messaging in this way currently.



It is also interesting that while practices invest much time and resources into capturing patient mailing addresses, very few actually use them for appointment reminders. Instead:

- 66 percent of practices report text messaging as one of the most important means of ensuring patients keep, and arrive on time to, appointments.
- Less than 50 percent of practices say they are actively collecting cell phone numbers for text messaging.
- 40 percent of practices currently use text messaging to remind patients of upcoming appointments.



Technology Improves Patient Engagement

There is significant opportunity for practices to connect with patients and market their services via social media. More than 80 percent of practices are not currently marketing new products and services.

Survey respondents indicated, however, that they would leverage email, text messaging and Facebook as their top three choices to market their practices and services over mail or Twitter. Similarly, while 95 percent of practices have websites, only half have Facebook fan pages – an important means to drive patient referrals.

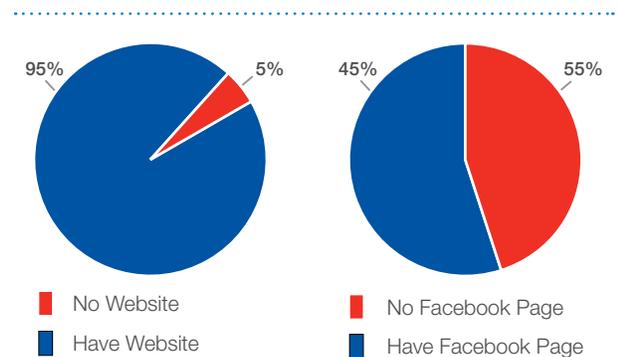
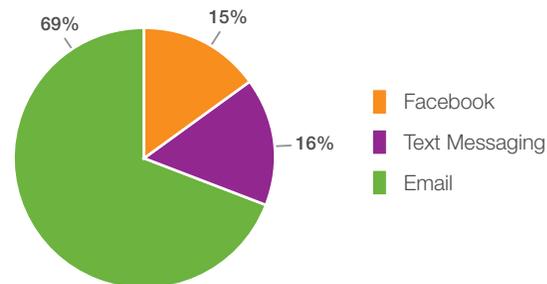
The cost to a practice of an empty seat doesn't only involve revenue loss from the missed appointment; there is also the cost of re-scheduling. Automated appointment systems reduce appointment "no-shows" by an average of 25 percent. At \$80 per visit, a 500 patient-per-month practice with a 25 percent average no-show rate will retain nearly \$15,000 in revenue each year by automating the confirmation process.

Portal-based practice management tools provide simple access to patient data and an easy means to send email and SMS texts. Reporting features show real-time pictures of which patients have confirmed their appointments and who needs extra communication. These tools significantly reduce the cost of managing patient reminders.

TeleVox's Engagement Communications portal also features quality HTML emails that link to the practices' websites, outbound email communications that integrate with Facebook and Twitter pages, and promotional tools that help drive traffic to particular web pages to promote new products and services or provide expert advice on dental care.

In addition, the TeleVox portal allows practices to choose from a set of creative email and e-newsletter templates, which promote new products and services, patient-to-patient promotions, oral health reminders and interpractice promotions. The email templates have been created by a team of industry experts, so customers are assured that the style and content will maximize audience engagement.

Which would be most useful to market new products and services to patients?



Conclusion

These advances in technology and communications mean that patients are reachable almost anywhere. Patient communications tools are giving practices the means to engage and activate patients in entirely new ways. Combined, they help increase patient loyalty, encourage patients to follow treatment paths, help them attend appointments on time, pay their bills promptly and even encourage them to refer their friends. These tools solve many of the challenges practices are experiencing and offer patient engagement and business growth opportunities.

About T.LINK[®]EC

T.LINK EC is the latest release of the most powerful online patient engagement system in the industry. With easy-to-navigate precision, T.LINK EC allows you to positively impact your business through proactive engagement with patients, potential patients and referring doctors. T.LINK EC moves people to action and enables your business to perform better through increased patient retention, reduced no-shows, improved patient care, increased referrals and more. T.LINK EC offers powerful tools that make it easy for you to find new patients, market your practice, connect with your patients and engage your patients.