

Patient Communication:

What Each Generation Expects



The Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y – these segments of the population differ distinctly in how they approach their health and how they use technology. However, they do share a common desire to be healthy and want consistent communication about their health. The typical practice today sees patients from each of these generations. A big challenge for these practices is acclimating to the different methods of communication each generation prefers or expects.

THE SILENT GENERATION

Members of this generation range in age from late 60s to early 80s. The Silent Generation relies on their primary care doctors for healthcare information and direction. They also regard healthcare advertising as a dependable source. This generation typically prefers personal interaction with their physicians through face-to-face office visits, phone calls and snail mail. They were raised without the availability of what most refer to as modern technology. Those that came along at the end of this generation, however, may have some grasp on technology. This portion of the population is comprised of those who invented most of the technology we use today.

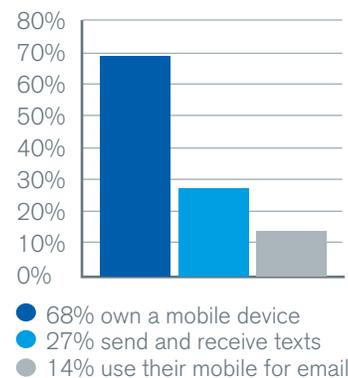
A report¹ from the Pew Research Center shows that 68% of those aged 66 to 74 own a mobile device. 27% use their mobile device to send and receive text messages.

The Silent Generation is increasing their use of email, though not at the same pace as other generations. The Pew report shows that 14% use their mobile device to send and receive email.

ENGAGING THE SILENT GENERATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Given these technology usage statistics, what are the best ways to reach out and engage the Silent Generation? An automated phone call can extend the face-to-face interaction with a physician. Follow-up after a visit to confirm treatment plans and offer support for any questions can quickly and consistently be accomplished through automated messaging. Because this generation pays special attention to healthcare advertising, using on-hold messaging to promote the practice is a valuable opportunity. Members of this generation are very interested in the history of a practice and see credibility in extensive physician knowledge – things that can easily be touted through on-hold advertising.

The Silent Generation



Source: Pew Research Center

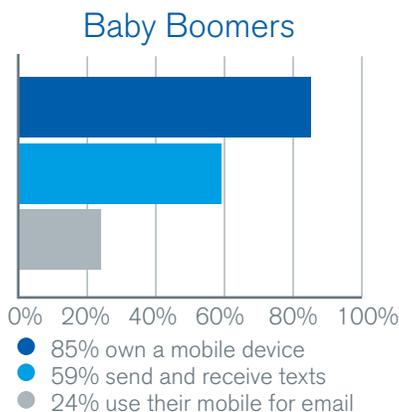
Automated text messages and emails will obviously be more popular with younger generations, but sticking a toe in the water when it comes to the Silent Generation is worth a try, especially given the low cost per interaction.

BABY BOOMERS

Baby Boomers range in age from their early 50s to late 60s. Their need for healthcare is increasing – at a rate more alarming than any other generation. They are more likely to ask questions of their doctors and do extensive online research to equip them for making a decision. Reputation is important so Boomers rely on online reviews and testimonials from friends. They also expect timely and efficient medical care. Baby Boomers are more apt to use other means of communication beyond the face-to-face interaction and are often confident with technology.

According to the Pew report, 85% of Baby Boomers have a mobile device and 59% use them to send and receive text messages. 24% use their mobile devices to send and receive email. Boomers use of digital communication is ever-increasing as it allows them to connect with family, friends and now their physicians in an easier and faster way.

According to the West report *Technology Beyond the Exam Room*, 82% of Boomers say communication from a healthcare professional via text message, email or voicemail is as helpful, if not more helpful, than in-person or phone conversations.



Source: Pew Research Center

ENGAGING THE BABY BOOMERS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

With the amount of research a Boomer will do before and after a doctor visit, it is important for practices to have a resourceful website. Websites cannot be matched in terms of the convenience, attractive appearance and comprehensiveness of information they offer to current and potential patients. Information that can be used to engage patients includes an overview of services and available treatments, links to health information and biographical information about doctors and staff. Online reviews and testimonials from current patients can satisfy the referral needs of Boomers. Practices that are buried deep in search engine rankings or altogether missing from the Internet are losing potential revenue and referrals.

Approximately 50% of the two billion prescriptions filled each year are not taken correctly. It's estimated that 125,000 people with treatable conditions die each year simply because they do not take their medications as prescribed. With the average adult over the age of 55 managing six to eight medications daily, automated between-visit notifications can remind them to fill prescriptions and how and when to take them properly.

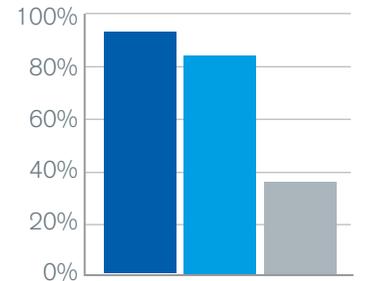
With the heavy mobile device usage among Boomers in sending and receiving text messages and emails, reaching out to them with automated notifications can also satisfy the need Baby Boomers have for prompt and efficient medical care. Appointment reminders, recalls, wellness reminders and after-visit follow-ups can easily and cost effectively be delivered through automated text messages and emails.

GENERATION X

Members of this generation are in their mid-30s to early 50s. They are similar to Baby Boomers in certain aspects of their healthcare. They rely on online reviews and ratings in selecting a provider. They take it a step further and come to their appointments with print-outs of information and a pre-diagnosis. Members of Gen X develop trust over time, but once a provider has fully gained their trust, they tend to be the most loyal patients. Generation X is definitely tech-savvy. They are never too far away from their mobile devices, text messaging and email. They prefer email communication and interaction from their physician over face-to-face interactions.

According to Pew, 92% of Generation X owns a mobile device. 83% use their cell phone to send and receive text messages; 35% to send and receive email.

Generation X



- 92% own a mobile device
- 83% send and receive texts
- 35% use their mobile for email

Source: Pew Research Center

ENGAGING GENERATION X THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

As with the Boomers, an extensive and resourceful website is vital to engaging members of Generation X. They engage in several forms of online media and look for educational videos and expert blogs. These can easily be contained in and linked to from a practice website. Obviously, the best way to directly communicate with Xers is through text message and email, with greater emphasis on texts. There is a significant increase of 30% in the number of Gen Xers who text compared to Boomers. The same types of messages sent to Baby Boomers through these channels are also appropriate for this generation.

GENERATION Y

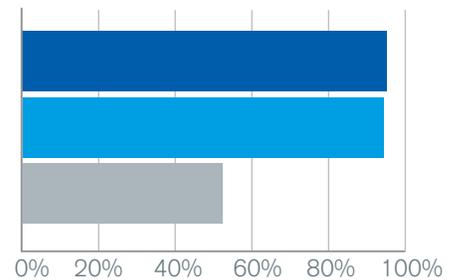
Generation Y is made up of young adults ranging from early 20s to early 30s. The Internet is usually their first source of information for anything healthcare-related. From there, they depend on online reviews from friends and those they connect with through social media. Physician referrals are not as important to members of Gen Y. They also feel that healthcare advertising is irrelevant to their decision-making process. They expect more individualized patient care. They are multi-taskers who can manage a lot of information at once.

Members of Generation Y are significantly more advanced in technology use – many sent their first email before they started school. They have the most experience with and knowledge of technology. They use just about every electronic communication available to them – texting, instant messaging, social media, and email - in any way possible.

The Pew report states that 95% of Gen Y owns a mobile device with a notably high percentage (94%) using their cell to send and receive text messages. 52% use their mobile device to send and receive email.

According to *Technology Beyond the Exam Room*, 46% of Gen Y Americans want personalized information, tailored to their specific needs, from their providers. 11% will ignore or refuse the communication if it is not personalized with their name and information.

Generation Y



- 95% own a mobile device
- 94% send and receive texts
- 52% use their mobile for email

Source: Pew Research Center

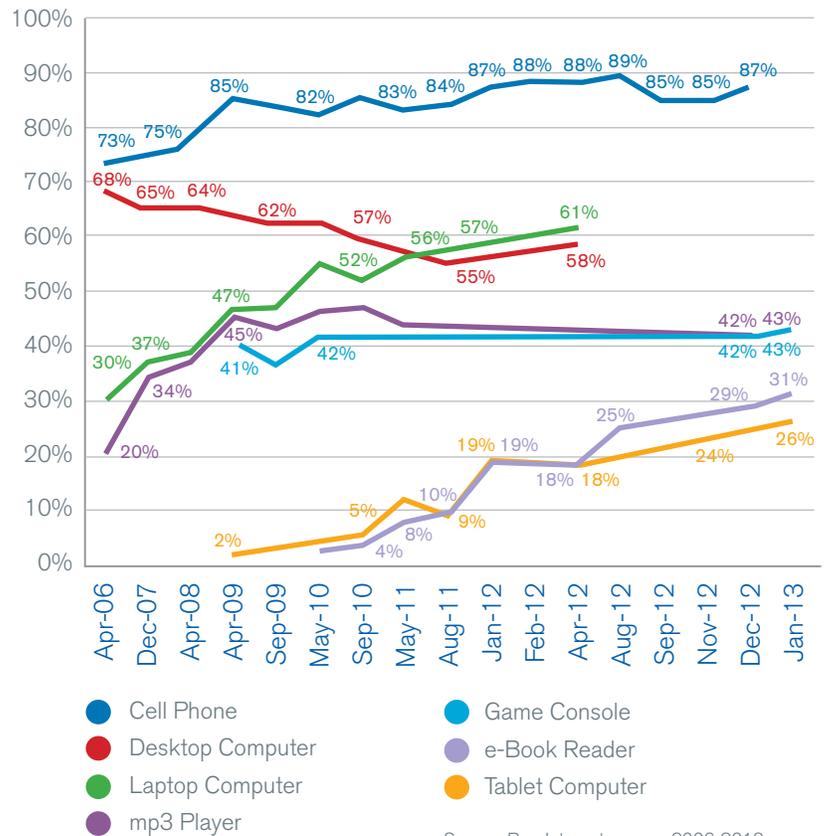
ENGAGING GENERATION Y THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Generation Y expects to be communicated with using not just technology, but the latest technology. The golden engagement opportunity with members of Generation Y is text messaging. They are 24/7 users of the technology.

Even though automated text messaging will be more prolific with this generation, a practice should not dismiss the effectiveness of email. Remember, they are using the same devices that they send and receive text to also send and receive emails. In addition to standard personalized appointment reminders, recalls, wellness reminders, balance notifications and follow-ups, messages should emphasize what you are doing or can do for them on an individual level. The personalization that automated messaging allows fulfills this need. Gen Y also wants convenience. Automated patient balance notifications, with the opportunity to pay during the notification, are ideal for this group.

85% of the U.S. population reports wanting to communicate with their healthcare provider through emails, text messages and voicemails, rather than in-person visits². Bottom line, practices must use a mix of communication mediums to meet the needs of patients from every generation. A strong website is also vital to cultivating new patients and meeting the healthcare needs of current patients. New information about each generation is available almost daily, and a practice must be familiar and flexible with patient communication preferences. Automated messaging can fill in the (generation) gaps before and after the face-to-face visit.

Adult gadget ownership time -
% of American adults 18+ who own each device



Source: Pew Internet surveys 2006-2013

1 <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Generations-and-gadgets.aspx>

2 <http://www.televox.com/downloads/technology-beyond-the-exam-room/>