

LEARN HOW TO TAKE A
CONSUMER-CENTRIC
APPROACH TO
PROMOTING:

Telehealth
Primary Care
Urgent Care
Emergency Care

Marketing
Front-Line
HEALTH SERVICES:

CREATING HORIZONTALLY
INTEGRATED CAMPAIGNS TO GAIN
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

THE ERA OF THE HEALTHCARE CONSUMER IS HERE

2020 WAS THE TIPPING POINT FOR HEALTHCARE MARKETERS.

Organizations not yet embracing a consumer-centric strategy were forced to do so virtually overnight as services like telemedicine and chatbots went from novel to normal. The urgency, time and resources invested in these and other digital systems reflect a paradigm shift from demand-side (provider) to supply-side (patient) strategies that are wholly designed around the consumer's access, preferences, convenience and COVID-19 prevention.

The archetype of this shift is the rapid adoption of virtual care across systems of all sizes and types, as illustrated by these examples:

- Last spring, [Atrium Health](#) implemented a virtual hospital in just 10 days—and by August, they had treated nearly 16,000 patients through the program.
- [Banner Health](#) launched a telehealth platform “out of nowhere” in April, and suddenly the system was hosting thousands of appointments a week.
- A single day in April saw 2,000 virtual care visits for [Spectrum Health](#).

These scenarios would have been unimaginable a year ago, and experts predict [there's no turning back](#) from a consumer-focused, digitally enabled patient experience.

Looking ahead to 2021: The challenge for healthcare business leaders and marketers is balancing this shift with driving high-value revenue that is necessary to fuel an economic recovery.

MOVING FROM CHANNEL MYOPIA TO INTEGRATED MARKETING

For healthcare marketers, this shift raises significant questions about how to engage consumers in the COVID-19 era. [With limited resources](#) and accountability for [driving revenue](#), patient acquisition is paramount. Now, more than ever, the investments marketers make need to add value. However, there's a vestige of pre-COVID-19, supply-side tactics gaining traction in the wake of the pandemic: marketing front-line services as discrete delivery channels.

Accelerated disruption makes it tempting for healthcare marketers to focus the majority of marketing content and campaigns on the most immediate and obvious challenges: COVID-19 vaccine communications, promoting telemedicine, building joint replacement volumes and other siloed campaign efforts. However,

the patient journey is typically not a linear path, and for front line services like emergency room, urgent care, telemedicine and primary care, the average consumer often doesn't understand when and why to choose one over the other.

Consumers choose between these access points for different needs and in different moments. They look for options in different ways. Rather than spotlight the delivery channel, what we know about the consumer journey should drive how health systems structure their marketing plans.

Like counterparts in other industries, the modern healthcare marketer's charge is customer acquisition—an outcome best achieved by positioning the brand as a trusted guide throughout the decision cycle. Healthcare market leaders

understand how to connect consumers to the care they need, when they need it, and with as little friction as possible.

▼
In this white paper, you'll learn how to take a more integrated and effective approach to marketing access care.



WHY IT PAYS TO THINK LIKE A PATIENT

WHILE THE CONSUMER-CENTRIC MINDSET IS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE, IT CAN BE CHALLENGING TO IMPLEMENT WITHOUT BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT THE PLAN AND BUILDING THE CASE FOR LEADERSHIP.

Here are guideposts for generating awareness and affinity for your brand and, by extension, driving volume to the most appropriate channel for care.

ADDRESS THE QUESTION, THEN PROMOTE THE DELIVERY CHANNEL

The first question in a consumer's mind when choosing where to receive care isn't "Who has the best telehealth solution?" or similar queries.

Rather, their decision is typically driven first by an immediate need for a child with an ear infection, the onset of COVID-19 symptoms, a teenager struggling with depression, severe springtime allergies and other "top of funnel" health concerns.

From there, consumers are driven by trust in the provider who has most effectively demonstrated their expertise in that area and provided a seamless path to help. A frictionless journey and clear direction around where and how to access care will be increasingly critical as new entrants—with a more digital-first business model—[alter primary care](#) and other traditional delivery systems.

At the core of addressing questions and problems that keep your audiences up at night is delivering clear and thoughtful content that answers questions, instills trust in your brand, portrays compassion and drives action. For conditions requiring immediate care like COVID-19 symptoms and adolescent depression, website content can address concerns and offer the appropriate connection points. For topics that are more perennial like ear infections and springtime allergies, your blog strategy will likely be the source of that content.



Here are a few examples of health systems addressing common health topics, sharing patient stories and featuring other consumer-centric content with a strategic CTA to take the best next step.

- [How does stress affect the immune system?](#) (University of Maryland Medical System)
- [Immediate care options](#) (Beaufort Memorial)
- [Dermatology and telehealth](#) (Augusta University Health)
- [COVID-19 patient who beat the odds](#) (Methodist Health System)
- [Your top COVID-19 testing questions, answered](#) (Baptist Health)
- [Breast cancer screening recommendations for high-risk women](#) (American Health Imaging)
- [Coping with common food and digestive issues](#) (UK HealthCare)



WHEN YOU CONSIDER YOUR PUSH MARKETING STRATEGIES, THE KEY IS DELIVERING HIGHLY RELEVANT AND ACTIONABLE CONTENT THAT BUILDS BRAND AUTHORITY AND ENCOURAGES A CONSUMER TO CONSIDER THEIR POTENTIAL HEALTHCARE NEEDS.

ENSURE PAID MEDIA STRATEGIES AREN'T AN AFTERTHOUGHT

While content is king, paid media strategies are equally royal. This is particularly true in markets rich with competition and for your most valuable services lines. Building your brand through social media and display campaigns, and capturing demand via paid search is critical to staying ahead in an era of rapid digital evolution and relatively low consumer loyalty.

For ideas to efficiently plan your paid media budget, check out our white paper on [Outsmarting vs Outspending the Competition](#).

Notably, healthcare marketers are challenged with which access point to promote for various searches. It's easy when we consider searches like "urgent care near me," but what about searches for "COVID-19 testing near me"? For these and other condition-specific queries, driving to a website page or blog that clearly outlines the symptoms and appropriate next steps for the consumer is critical, rather than driving consumers to a page promoting solely the access point like you would for the "urgent care near me" search. This can be a tricky strategy to sort

through, but it is exactly why content strategy and paid media strategy need to be well integrated to create successful outcomes and to maximize your marketing efficiency.

When you consider your push marketing strategies—connecting with passive audiences through social media, email marketing and display—the key is delivering highly relevant and actionable content that builds brand authority and encourages a consumer to consider their potential healthcare needs. A blog strategy that's driven by both search trends and organizational priorities is critical to finding success in this space, and approaching it with an agile and nimble mindset is key in this fluid environment.

BE FLEXIBLE TO EVOLVE WITH CONSUMER NEEDS

Another advantage of a patient-first approach to marketing is the sustained relevance of your message. Consider the success of brands like Amazon that prioritize the consumer's trust and long-term value over promoting the channels where individual transactions take place. By focusing on the patient and her needs, you'll be well-positioned for long-term success rather than having to reinvent the wheel with every new delivery channel (or emerging crisis).

A CASE STUDY IN MARKETING FRONT-LINE CARE

HERE'S HOW WE HELPED ONE HEALTH SYSTEM TAKE AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ENGAGING CONSUMERS AND GROWING VOLUME FOR FRONT-LINE HEALTH SERVICES.

THE CHALLENGE: PIVOTING TO MEET EVOLVING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

A southeastern health system serving a tri-county area went into 2020 focused on using digital marketing to drive growth across key service lines like Orthopedics, Vascular, OB-GYN, Oncology and Access Care.

With the pandemic, those plans were upended, to say the least. A nimble approach to shifting campaign priorities and calls-to-action as the situation on the ground evolves has become critical as we work to educate the community on all things COVID-19 and continue to drive revenue for the health system.



THE SOLUTION: TELEHEALTH EXPANSION AND PROMOTION

An integrated digital marketing approach includes paid search, display and social media, email marketing, and retargeting strategies designed to target the right consumers and encourage them to engage with the system for various healthcare concerns. The campaigns originally launched in December 2019, with early indicators of strong success. Throughout 2020, we adapted to evolving needs and have generated a number of key wins across service line and community engagement priorities.

The system offers telehealth through their **Care Anywhere** platform. Like other telehealth solutions, this service allows people in the community to see a board-certified physician from the comfort of their own homes. Even in 2019, growing utilization of Care Anywhere was a priority for the system. As COVID-19 began to unfold, True North Custom worked with the health system to significantly grow app utilization in an effort to support the community's health and well-being.

In the early weeks of the pandemic, True North ramped up our efforts to promote Care Anywhere as a primary care access point for many service lines. Much of the campaign budget previously allocated to driving services like primary care and urgent care and other in-person care became focused on increasing telehealth utilization.

THE RESULTS:

In March and April, Care Anywhere registrants increased by 1,500%, as consumers began to adopt telehealth as a primary source for care. As search volume for telehealth increased, particularly in the early weeks of the pandemic, and as brand searches increased, the cost per lead in paid search decreased from \$12 to \$3. In social efforts, the cost per lead decrease was even more significant—falling from about \$100 to \$3 for March and April.

From May 1 through August 30, we continued to see strong performance. This is evidence that a shift to telehealth for day-to-day health concerns might be here to stay. The cost per lead continues to stay under \$10, and app registrants are significantly growing year over year.

Overall, the total number of new registrants increased 17x in March and April compared to January and February. This is in line with industry trends that we've seen emerge with the COVID-19 pandemic, but certainly indicative of the value of targeted digital campaigns, effective messaging and clear calls to action to inspire consumer engagement.



THE SOLUTION:
COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS

A critical component to the system’s mission throughout the pandemic has been community engagement and thought leadership. Now more than ever before, consumers look to local healthcare providers as a trusted source for information, so we felt it would be an effective use of resources to provide ongoing updates and advice to the community.

True North Custom quickly created a campaign landing page highlighting the system’s response to the pandemic, inviting consumers to sign up for a weekly update email to stay apprised of evolving policies and news.

Top performing content included topics like:

- How COVID-19 affects having a baby
- Think you have COVID-19? Here’s what to do
- Joint replacement in the era of COVID-19
- Mammogram safety during COVID-19

THE RESULTS:

The weekly emails stemming from the campaign have outperformed expectations, too. The average open rate is more than 30% and the average click rate is nearly 4%, with individual emails seeing open rates more than 50% and click rates nearing 10%. Further, the emails have driven more than 1,000 goal actions ranging from primary care appointments to donations and more.

The system’s blog and social media strategy also evolved to address COVID-19, and engagement rates skyrocketed in the early days of the pandemic.

The campaign generated 1,000 leads in just the first 2 weeks, at \$0.72 per lead. As of August 30, it’s generated 2,050 leads at \$1.61 per lead.



THE SOLUTION:
**TRADITIONAL SERVICE LINE
CAMPAIGN PERFORMANCE**

Today, we continue to promote access to the system’s Care Anywhere program, but starting in May, we began to promote specialty services and access care again in an effort to drive growth and provide consumers access to the care they need. The campaigns are performing well, driving significant lead volume from May 1–August 30 for high priority service lines like:

THE RESULTS:

- Access Care (includes primary care, express/urgent care, and telehealth): 3,600 leads
- Orthopedics (specifically targeting joint replacement leads): 110 leads
- Women’s Health: 586 leads
- Vascular: 90 leads
- Oncology: 166 leads





Discover your True North

**WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU ENGAGE PATIENTS
ON THEIR HEALTHCARE JOURNEY.**

LEARN WHY HEALTHCARE MARKETING LEADERS TRUST TRUE NORTH CUSTOM:

“Having an online presence and being front and center has contributed highly to our success. By putting our brand in front of people as a potential solution for what they’re looking for, True North has made and will continue to make a big impact.”

— *Tim Waggoner, Corporate Creative Marketing Director at American Health Imaging*

LET'S CONNECT!

**LET OUR HEALTHCARE DIGITAL STRATEGY EXPERTS
HELP YOU NAVIGATE THESE SHIFTS.**

If you'd like to learn more about how True North Custom can partner with your marketing team, we'd love to connect with you. We work with hospitals and health systems nationwide and serve as a practical and nimble partner willing to utilize a wide variety of tools and skill sets to reach campaign and brand goals and solve challenges.

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