
How Smart Communication Strategies Drive Efficiency and Savings



Effective communication is the cornerstone of any successful organisation, and in healthcare, its importance cannot be overstated. Inefficient communication can lead to substantial financial losses and compromised patient care. In fact, U.S. hospitals reportedly waste between €10.2 and €11.3 billion (\$11 and \$12 billion) annually due to communication inefficiencies, according to studies from the Ponemon Institute and the University of Maryland. However, with the adoption of intelligent communication strategies, healthcare providers can significantly enhance both cost management and operational performance, creating a more responsive and patient-centred environment that directly impacts patient outcomes and the financial bottom line.

Intelligent Communication: A Solution for Cost Efficiency

Investing in intelligent communication technologies is essential for mitigating inefficiencies in healthcare settings. These tools ensure that critical information is disseminated effectively and efficiently among healthcare professionals. Cooper University Health Care, a leading academic health system in South Jersey, provides a prime example of how effective communication can directly improve cost efficiency. Under the guidance of Dr Michael Kirchhoff, Chief Innovation Officer and Patient Safety Officer, Cooper recognised the importance of empowering staff to report potential medical errors.

To this end, Cooper implemented a programme that leverages advanced communication tools to acknowledge and act on these reports. This initiative, which is part of Cooper's High-Reliability Organisation journey, fosters a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. It enhances patient safety and energises team members, thereby reducing staff turnover and increasing engagement. Medical errors are estimated to cost the U.S. healthcare system approximately €15.9 billion (\$17.1 billion) annually, and by proactively addressing these issues through effective communication, Cooper can minimise errors and drive cost efficiency.

Real-Time Communication for Operational Efficiency

Communication inefficiencies often lead to the underutilisation of resources and inflated costs. One major area where this can be observed is operating room schedule management. A leading academic medical centre faced challenges with last-minute changes to its operating room schedules, which led to substantial underutilisation of these critical facilities. The financial impact of every minute of unused operating room time is significant, costing roughly €6.72 (\$7.25) per minute or €403 (\$435) per hour. If multiplied across a year, the resulting cost can exceed €3.5 million (\$3.8 million) due to underused resources.

To address this, the centre adopted a real-time communication platform to inform its 24,000 team members about surgery schedule changes across its 100 locations. This platform enabled the delivery of hyper-personalised messages, ensuring only relevant staff received critical updates and allowing them to respond quickly to changes. By reducing digital noise and optimising the staff's response to dynamic situations, the centre saved €185,486 (\$200,000) over two years while significantly improving patient services. This demonstrates that intelligent communication is not just about cost-cutting but also about creating a responsive and efficient environment that benefits both staff and patients.

Ensuring Compliance Through Targeted Campaigns

Compliance with internal policies is essential in maintaining a safe and efficient healthcare environment. However, ensuring such compliance among thousands of team members can be a daunting challenge. Wellstar Health System in Georgia faced a similar hurdle with its flu vaccine policy. Two weeks before a critical compliance deadline, only 54% of Wellstar's 25,000 team members were compliant with the policy, posing a significant risk of staff shortages and potential financial strain.

In response, Wellstar leveraged an intelligent communication platform that used employee data and behavioural insights to create hyper-personalised campaigns. These campaigns were targeted and delivered through the most effective channels on desktop computers or mobile apps. By reaching the right people at the right time, Wellstar was able to raise compliance rates to 99% within just two weeks. This not only prevented the potential loss of up to 1,000 staff members but also avoided €463,715 (\$500,000) in labour costs required to hire temporary workers. Furthermore, ensuring compliance meant operational continuity, thereby maintaining the quality of care provided to their patients.

Intelligent internal communication strategies are crucial for healthcare organisations aiming to optimise costs, improve patient outcomes and enhance the overall quality of care. From reducing medical errors and improving resource utilisation to ensuring policy compliance, these communication tools provide a holistic solution to many longstanding inefficiencies in the healthcare sector. By adopting advanced communication platforms, hospitals can streamline information flow, mitigate risks and foster a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

In the future, the role of intelligent communication will become even more critical. Not only do these strategies recoup financial losses and create operational efficiencies, but they also contribute to creating a more resilient and patient-centred healthcare environment. By embracing these technologies, healthcare providers can build a more proactive, responsive and efficient system that benefits both staff and patients, ultimately paving the way for sustainable improvements in the quality of care.

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