

Outbound Success Story

Interactive Appointment Reminders Lessen No-shows and Cancellations

RWJBarnabas Health enhanced appointment scheduling with a centralized contact center and Avaya Proactive Outreach Manager platform featuring the INI Messenger™ application's multi-option response capabilities.



Background

Large organizations with a lot of operational and logistical pieces can find it difficult to deliver consistent customer contact experiences due to their unique specialties and contact needs. Such was the case with Robert Wood Johnson Health System—now RWJBarnabas Health—which operates multiple acute care hospitals, a children's specialized hospital, and a medical school and cancer institute affiliated with Rutgers University. Read on and discover how INI helped the health system deploy a successful, standardized outbound appointment-reminder solution, and consolidate inbound patient contact.

Challenges

The several independently-operated institutions of RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) used different platforms and processes for scheduling appointments; offering patients, who often had contact with multiple RWJBH divisions, an inconsistent and sometimes confusing experience. Most of the scheduling processes were manual, requiring trained staff spend valuable time calling and faxing patients instead of working on more critical tasks. The manual process also meant patient calls only took place during regular business hours, when staff was on site. Unfortunately, calls on weekdays between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. don't always align with patient availability, which meant too often no real contact was made with patients, leading to too many missed appointments.

In addition to proactive patient outreach issues, the RWJBH divisions each had their own inbound telephone numbers for scheduling appointments. The telephone systems at the different hospitals were not uniform, and because the divisions operated independently, there was no ability to transfer to one of the others when needed. Decision makers determined that the inconsistent inbound and outbound customer experience wasn't working and needed to be addressed.

Issues to Address

- Calls only during open hours
- Multiple phone numbers
- Calling led to staff inefficiency
- Different telephone systems
- No inter-divisional transferring
- No scheduling in some depts.
- Manual processes & procedures

Patient Access Plan

- Uniform scheduling platform
- One inbound contact number
- 24/7 availability
- Standardized call navigation
- Lone scheduling process
- Interactive automated research

Outcomes

- Less staff-initiated manual phone calls
- Pacing balanced outbound calling against inbound call volumes
- Positive feedback from patients
- Fewer missed appointments
- Fewer cancellations
- Less patient confusion
- Improved staff morale
- Greater employee efficiency

Solution

RWJBH developed a strategic Patient Access Plan to address the issues. The plan called for creation of a unified contact center with one inbound telephone number for all the divisions. There would be one number for patients to call, and the contact center would be able to provide a consistent customer experience, regardless of which division the patient needed to schedule an appointment. Of utmost importance, the centralized system would also offer the ability to schedule appointments across the entire health system. RWJBH turned to SPS for recommendations and integration expertise.

SPS recommended the Inisoft Syntelate desktop agent for unified inbound calls and transfers. The system equipped RWJBH call agents with the patient information they would need, regardless of the call type.

For proactive, automated, outreach to patients for appointment confirmations and reminders, RWJBH selected the Avaya Proactive Outreach Manager (POM) platform with INI Messenger™. POM enables outreach via telephone call, text or e-mail, according to the patient's preference, while INI Messenger offers call recipients a greater number of options and interactivity.

While a POM-generated call using only the Avaya standard dialog components can play a message or automatically transfer the call to an agent, RWJBH wanted a more interactive experience. INI Messenger gave patients more action options to choose from, such as noting how they would receive their next reminder, or requesting transfer to a scheduler. INI Messenger, which is Avaya DevConnect compliant, provides the flexibility to offer multiple response options, and captures those responses for measurement. INI Messenger provides valuable data for measuring the success of campaigns and assists in the design of future campaigns.

Results

Adopting Avaya POM automated appointment reminders and confirmation calls has lowered the number of cancellations and missed appointments. Its ability to run both during and outside regular business hours has helped to ensure patient contact is made. Additionally, it has freed up medically trained staff to focus on their craft, rather than making calls and leaving voice messages about upcoming appointments; improving staff morale and work efficiency. INI Messenger's ability to give patients more options to fit their needs and desires has helped RWJBH deliver a patient outreach experience that is smoother and more consistent, while ensuring patients have the ability to personalize options and get access to the information they need. The health system is happy with the results so far and is considering offering patients additional response options and outbound communications for things such as procedure preparation messages and directions to the facility.

By centralizing inbound calls for each of its divisions to one contact center, RWJBH has simplified and smoothed its patient contact experience. The health system has reduced patient confusion about which number to call. The centralized system also enables RWJBH to establish one set of customer engagement processes, and train staff to ensure customers consistently get the very best experience possible.

Implementing INI Messenger, Avaya POM and Syntelate as key proactive outreach components of the overall patient scheduling centralization was the right decision for RWJBH.

Interactive Northwest, Inc. (INI)

was founded in 1992 to provide custom communications solutions built upon leading IVR and telephony platforms. It was one of the first companies to provide combined expertise in network and host connectivity, database integration and telephony networks needed to deploy advanced communication solutions. INI is recognized for its expertise in voice response, speech recognition, CTI, security and SIP. INI's devotion to quality and customer satisfaction is reflected in a track record of

successful implementations in a variety of client environments. INI's software products and services address the complete life cycle of self-service implementations—from solution design and project management to interface development and test, deployment, documentation, training and ongoing support. The company's differentiation lies in areas critical to the success of self-service systems: deep technical expertise in the underlying technologies—networking, operating systems, database integration and computer

telephony; a recognized talent for natural end-user dialog design that leads to a better experience for the caller; and a disciplined, highly-tuned project management process that ensures successful completion of the most complex projects on time and in budget. INI leverages this expertise to create innovative, standards-based tools that augment platform products. In addition, INI has developed several database integration tools and speech-recognition system tuning approaches that speed implementation and ensure the highest possible quality.

