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A Telehealth Strategy
Framework

for the

Growing Practice

If you have an established medical practice, introducing or boosting telehealth services may be easier than you think. With more people accepting remote medical services, and compliance issues simplifying constantly, there's never been a better time to get involved.

Despite endless opportunities, however, medical practices need to overcome numerous hurdles as they interface with patients online.

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As a telehealth provider, you need to optimize the appointment scheduling processes with intelligent digital tools and deliver quality patient care through tailored virtual appointments.
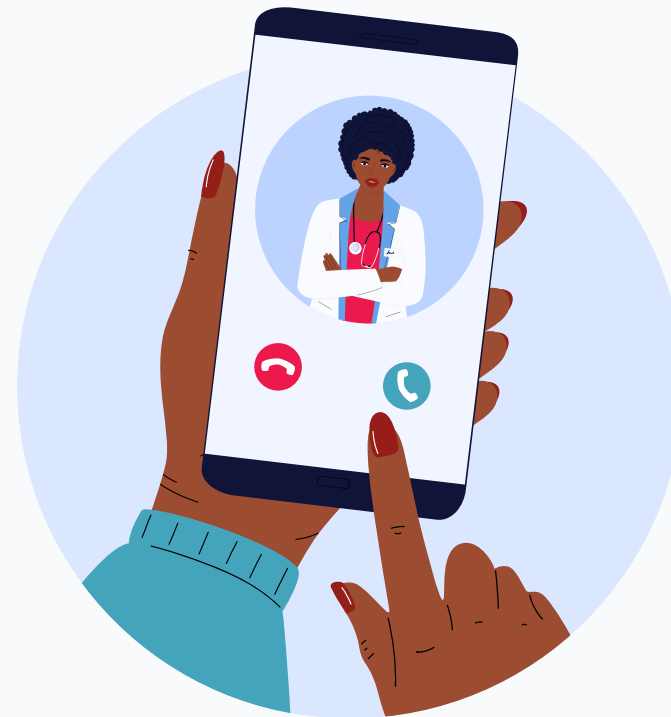
Acquisition and retention of patients are also an issue, as are privacy, security, and the adoption and integration of software services.

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Across age brackets and geographic locations, modern users are ready to embrace new telehealth innovations.

Once you understand the opportunities available, you can market your practice and enjoy the benefits of a sustainable growing business.

From recognizing trends to making plans, from patient recruitment and retention to the adoption of software tools, let's develop a robust framework for your growing medical practice.

04

Understanding trends and opportunities

Telehealth Utilization **38x** higher than before pandemic

More than **3/4** of people are interested in using telehealth

The healthcare industry continues to evolve as it adapts to the changing needs of the population. Enabled by online culture and accelerated through the global pandemic, telemedicine is one of the dominant trends shaping the sector. A growing number of people are showing trust in remote medical services, with *telehealth utilization* stabilizing 38X higher than it was before the pandemic and more than three-quarters of people interested in using these services.

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Growth in the sector has been enabled by three main factors: increased consumer willingness, increased technology capabilities, and positive regulatory changes surrounding access and reimbursement.
Growing awareness and greater access bring forward exciting opportunities, with most healthcare providers benefiting greatly from active participation.

Expanding telehealth services can also have a positive influence on how you manage resources in the real world. For example, you may allow staff to work on a hybrid basis to improve their work-life balance, or move to a smaller building to save money on rent.
Along with benefiting existing service providers, telehealth represents a great investment opportunity for healthcare entrepreneurs and industry startups.

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If you're interested in starting or growing a telemedicine business, the time has never been better. While COVID-19 may have catalyzed the shift toward telemedicine, market acceptance has solidified and broadened since lockdowns ended. With unprecedented access to a growing and incredibly diverse audience, there are endless opportunities for market engagement and capital growth.

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Benefits and opportunity

In microeconomic theory, opportunity cost is the hidden cost associated with an alternative course of action. In the emerging telehealth sector, the opportunity cost associated with not taking action is immense and getting bigger by the day.
The following statistics highlight the real and very significant growth factors that define the modern telehealth market:
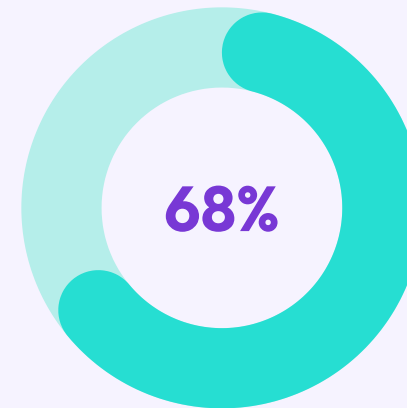
90%

of millennials already book medical appointments online.

Implementing a telehealth platform increases patient recruitment and retention by

81.5%

68%
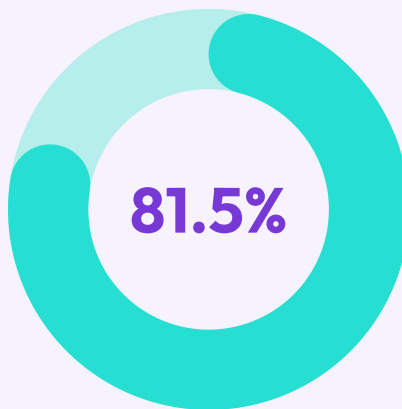
of patients are more likely to choose a medical provider that allows them to manage appointments online.

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Telehealth services save patients over **100 minutes** of their time compared to in-person visits.

Telehealth presents massive opportunities for the medical industry, from significant cost savings to increased revenue, improved patient management, and increased business growth. The following benefits are likely:

Fewer missed appointments

No-shows are a significant problem for medical practices, with physicians losing an average of $200 for each missed appointment.

Reduced business costs

Telehealth makes it easier for businesses to lower costs by reducing their physical footprint, utilizing co-working spaces, and initiating hybrid work arrangements.

Increased revenue opportunities

Technology services make it easier for practices to adopt new medical services. With a wider operational scope, businesses have more opportunities to generate revenue.

Enhanced patient retention

When convenience combines with great service delivery in a telehealth practice, patients are more likely to return and remain loyal over time.

Go-to-market strategy framework

It's important to develop a telehealth strategy that meets your immediate and future needs. You need to review your goals and objectives, research your target market, and implement a well-rounded plan that engages existing patients while reaching out to new people. During this process, which should be iterative and ongoing, it's essential to adopt specific channels and activities based on the details of your medical practice.

Telehealth is not a singular one-way service – it's an open-ended relationship that helps you connect and deliver value across the world.
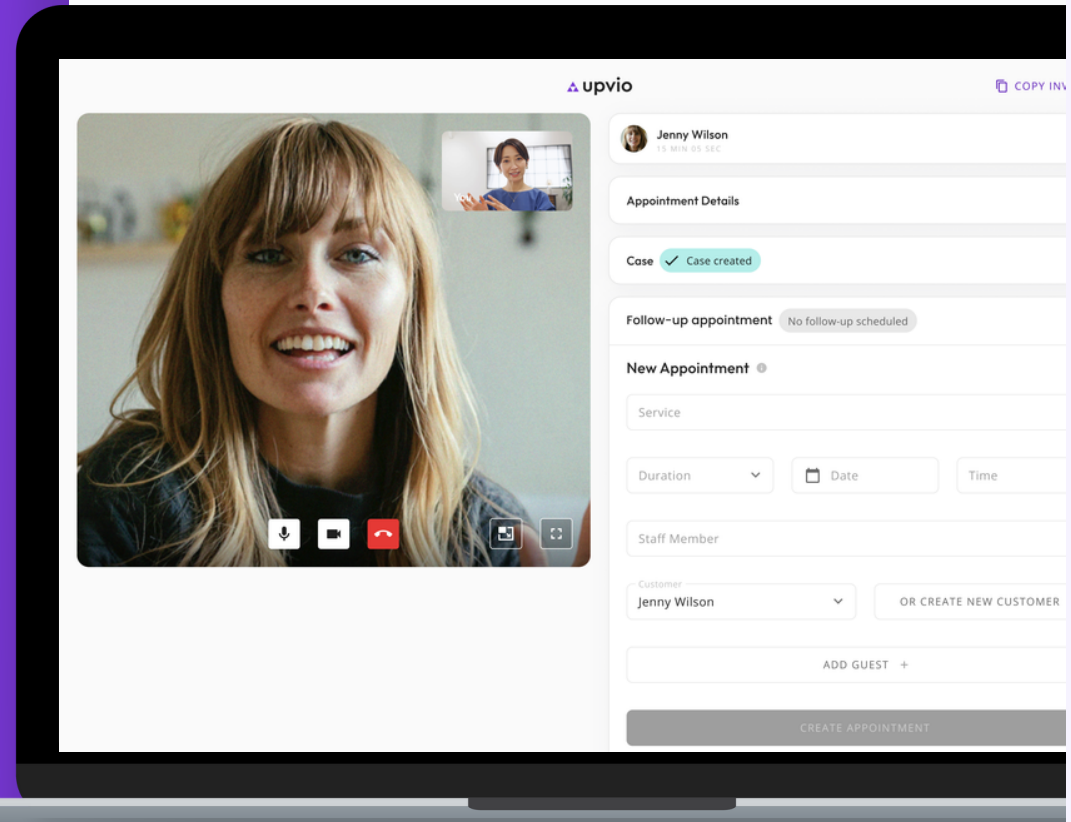
The following high-level framework is a great place to start:

1 **Set clear goals and realistic objectives**

Adopting a go-to-market plan for a telehealth operation can be complex, so it pays to be organized. Every jurisdiction is different, and every medical practice has its own unique priorities. Marketing plans also vary considerably, from abstract strategic overviews to practical guides based on real-world analysis and implementation. From the outset, you need to be clear about your goals, your objectives, your resources, and the timescale you're dealing with.

The following goals are common for medical practices:

Reduce missed appointments

Improve patient management

Lower operating costs

Improve revenue opportunities

Increase operational capacity

Improve patient satisfaction and build loyalty

Expand into new geographic areas

Whatever methods you adopt, it's important to outline everything and adopt a plan that aligns with the size and scope of your unique operation.

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2 Do your research and planning

Once you know what you want, it's time to do your homework and create a detailed plan of attack. The healthcare industry is highly regulated, so it's vital to understand all relevant rules and regulations in your jurisdiction. From licensing and registration to finances and insurance, completing this phase allows you to move forward with clarity and confidence.

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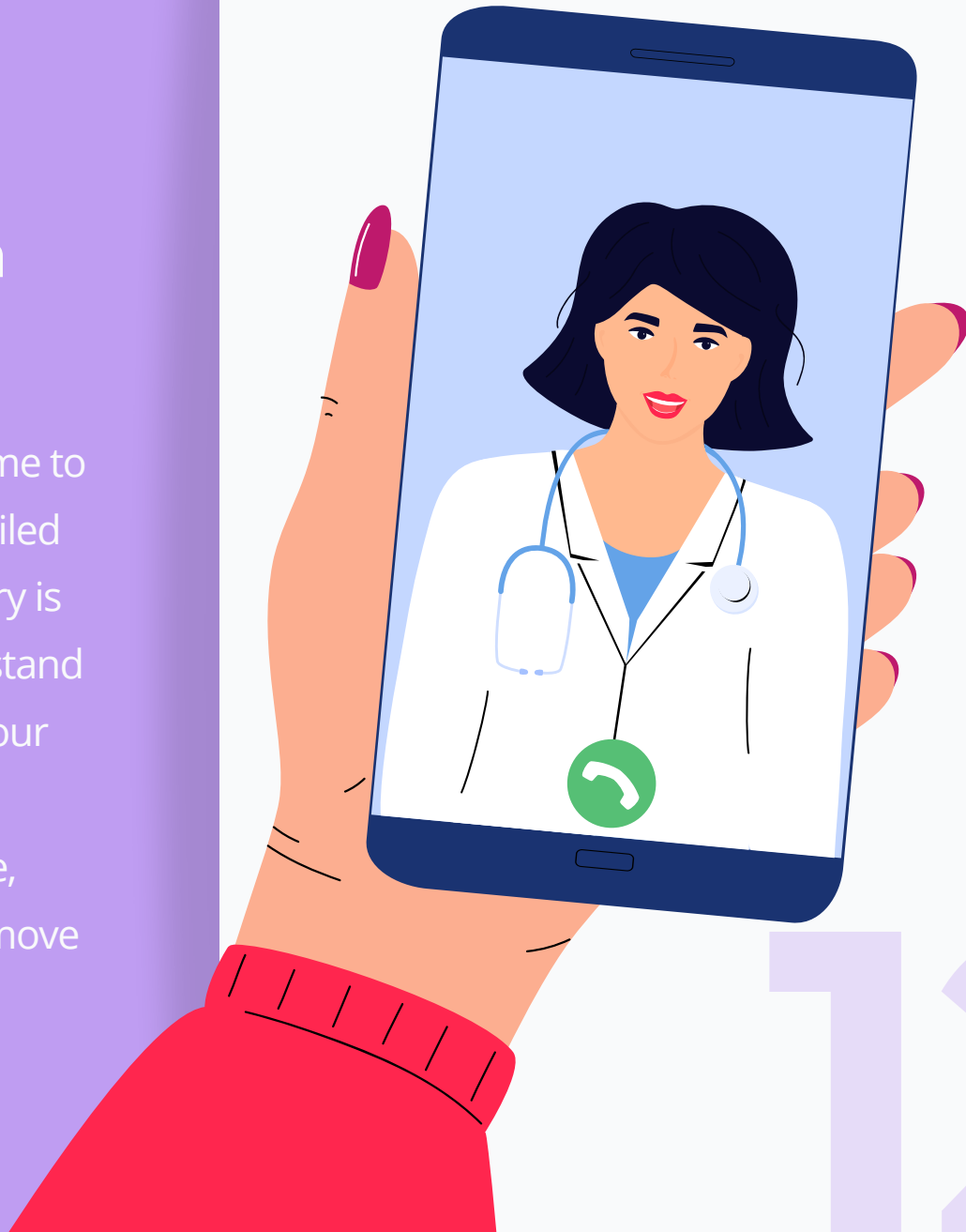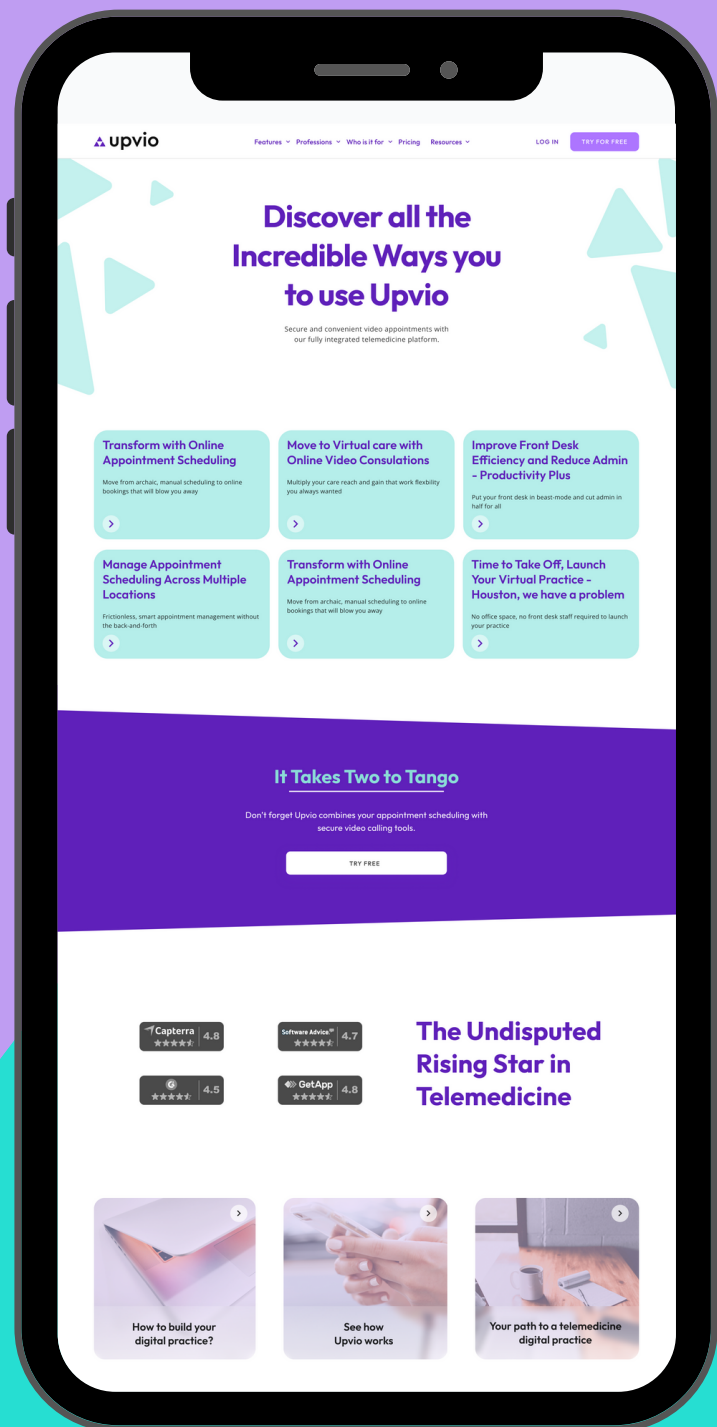
This phase involves numerous expenses, with careful management helping you to streamline operations and avoid surprises. From estimating deployment costs to preparing the platform and managing the business, the following costs are likely:

Hardware and software

Compliance, insurance and legal expenses

Staff training and recruitment

Marketing and reputation management

Website design and development

Website and social media maintenance

Ongoing patient support

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When it comes to marketing, it's important to review medical advertising guidelines to avoid mistakes from the outset. Remember, the details of your plan need to meet the expectations of executives, stakeholders, practitioners, and customers alike. If you want to serve patients across state lines, you need to understand and follow the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact.

Research the wider healthcare industry to see where you fit. Look into existing and potential products and services. And create a working summary for all stakeholders based on their level of investment and engagement.

3 Define your audience and market

At the end of the day, telehealth is about communication and relationships. You need to identify and find your audience, recognize appropriate channels and platforms, tailor your delivery based on demographics, and deliver clear messaging that inspires action. Unlike traditional broadcast advertising, online marketing allows you to tailor your messaging based on the person you're speaking to.

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You can set clear markers based on platforms and keywords, from obvious demographic data to specific medical issues and struggles. If you have a specialty, you can find people who are actively looking for your services. Regardless of your size, location, or specialty, the first separation to make is between existing and new patients:

Engaging your existing patients

If you have an established healthcare operation, the first step is to engage your existing patients. While everyone wants to expand, it's much easier to build value based on existing relationships. Start an education campaign around your telehealth service, not just informing people, but putting specific measures in place to motivate action and inspire trust.

Reaching out to new patients

 While you should always take care of your existing customer base, telehealth services have the ability to deliver value beyond geographic borders. Due to the proliferation of global networks and the acceleration of internet speeds, there are very few practical limits on where you can go. With access to new markets, you can grow your patient list and expand into new medical fields.

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Prepare your messaging and media distribution

Finding an audience is useless if you don't have the right things to say. Good marketing creates a connection between people, with specific channels and platforms used to spread the word. Channels are one-way pipelines like Google Ads and business websites, and platforms are two-sided networks such as Facebook and other forms of social media. Whatever the media, it's important to research your audience to see where they hang out and what motivates them to take action.

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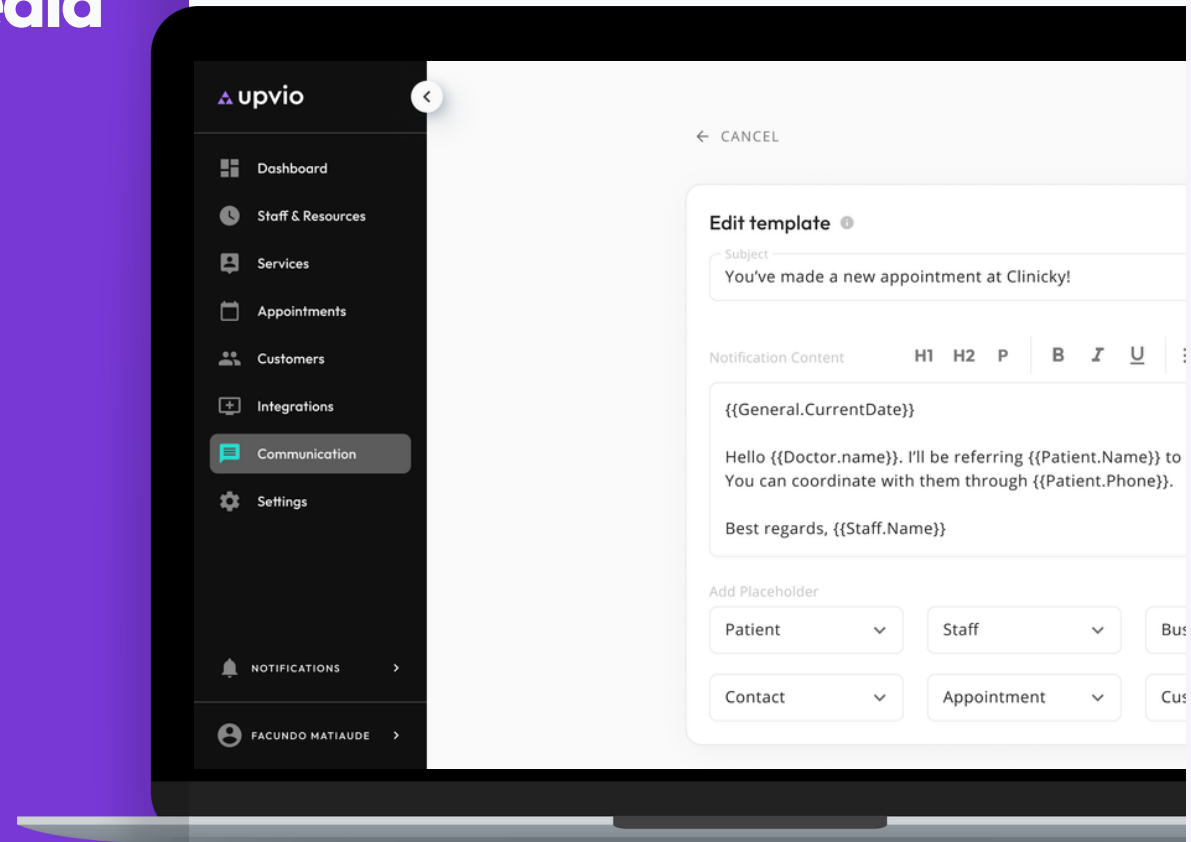
5 Plan your activities and don't forget to analyze

Marketing activities are the specific things you do to communicate and build relationships with your audience. From email marketing messages and appointment reminders to new website features and social media conversations, a marketing activity is the implementation of a message via a specific channel or platform. You can initialize specific activities in different places to improve your results and measure these results over time through detailed metrics.

This is one of the major advantages of online marketing, as you can track, refine, and improve your delivery over time.

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How to market your practice – patient recruitment and retention

It is vital to understand that the implementation of digital health capabilities, such as online scheduling and video consultation, only does half the trick. You need to focus and dedicate energy toward promoting your newly acquired capabilities.

In many ways, marketing a telemedicine practice is similar to marketing any other business. You must formulate a plan, find an audience, and create a message that cuts through.

Building trust is key when promoting your practice.

In other ways, however, the medical sector very much stands alone. Perhaps more than any other industry, success in telemedicine is about establishing trust with your market. Personal health is a very sensitive subject, and the internet presents a cold harsh reality that's far removed from traditional trust-based transactions.

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The medical field has always been based on trust, and digital migration is unlikely to change this fundamental reality. Telehealth involves a significant change in consumer behavior, and service providers need to adjust to make interactions as friendly and seamless as possible. Along with attracting and engaging customers, telehealth marketing is about inspiring trust through quality content, considered design, and sound reputation management. In order to build trust consistently over time, you need to adopt a range of patient recruitment and retention strategies.

The following eight strategies are a great place to start:

1. Build a website
2. Integrate reviews
3. Focus on the customer experience
4. Implement organic and paid marketing
5. Produce high-quality content
6. Research and utilize keywords
7. Test and refine over time
8. Build relationships and grow

1. Build a website

Your website is the first point of contact between your practice and patient base, and it provides an anchor point for all of your marketing activities. Your website needs to look professional, offer accurate and up-to-date information, and add value to your patients. Implementing a mobile-friendly design is important, with more and more patients using phones and tablets to access medical information. Last but not least, your booking page should be embedded into your website for a seamless scheduling experience.

2. Integrate reviews

Patient reviews are fundamental to the telehealth sector. You need to be proactive to get good reviews by sending email requests after sessions and asking for specific types of feedback. It's important to adopt a multi-pronged approach, with testimonials published on your own website and reviews made available on third-party websites.

3. Focus on the customer experience

Telemedicine should always be focused on the needs of the patient. It's important to define the customer journey and ease each person through a funnel with awareness and consideration. From clicking the ad or reading the email to booking and attending the appointment, it's important to deliver a seamless customer journey at every stage.

4. Implement organic and paid marketing

In the world of online marketing, diversification is the key to market impact. While each customer journey should be narrow, casting your net far and wide allows you to reach more people in a quicker timeframe. Organic SEO and paid ads both have a role to play in telehealth, with quality content integral to on-page SEO and smart keywords central to Google ads.

5. Produce high-quality content

Content has been and always will be king on the internet. People make decisions based on information, and search engines rank websites based on relevance and authority. In the medical field, the quality of content you deliver is absolutely crucial. Along with adopting world-class design, you need to consistently produce valuable information and have all content reviewed by a medical professional.

6. Research and utilize keywords

Along with content itself, keywords play a vital role across the telehealth industry. Remember, people find content, and keywords are a huge factor in how search engines rank websites. While it's important to avoid stuffing keywords, they remain the best way to link your products and services to the precise needs of the market. Signs and symptoms are often useful as keywords, as are specific conditions, treatments, medications, and locations.

7. Test and refine over time

As mentioned above, one of the best things about digital marketing is the ability to analyze your results and make changes in real-time. You can measure the reach of certain keywords, track the cost per acquisition, and refine your content and ads based on what works. Google and other platforms offer a variety of sophisticated analysis tools. You just have to learn how to use them.

8. Build relationships and grow

Just like the real world, online success requires clear communication and smart relationship-building strategies. There are lots of ways to build a community around your telehealth service, from email campaigns to social media groups and online-offline integration. Entering mutually beneficial partnerships with related service providers can also be valuable in some cases.

Measure your success

Measuring success in the telehealth sector can be complicated, with businesses often prioritizing very different things. Just like other businesses, however, success is largely based on profits and the ability to sustain those profits over time. While the healthcare sector is somewhat unique and people always need to come first, sustainable financial growth is fundamental to business longevity.

For most operations, success would be defined by positive customer retention, growing market engagement, and wider industry and community reputation. In a general sense, success is measured by the value you create. From profit margins and partnerships to community engagement and respect, how you define this value is completely up to you.

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Software tools to help you succeed

As you might expect, telehealth is driven by innovation and reliant on technology. This sector is large and incredibly diverse, with medical consultations available alongside remote monitoring, non-prescription delivery, health education, provider-provider communication, and more. Before adopting a technology solution, it's important to understand the difference between synchronous and asynchronous modalities.
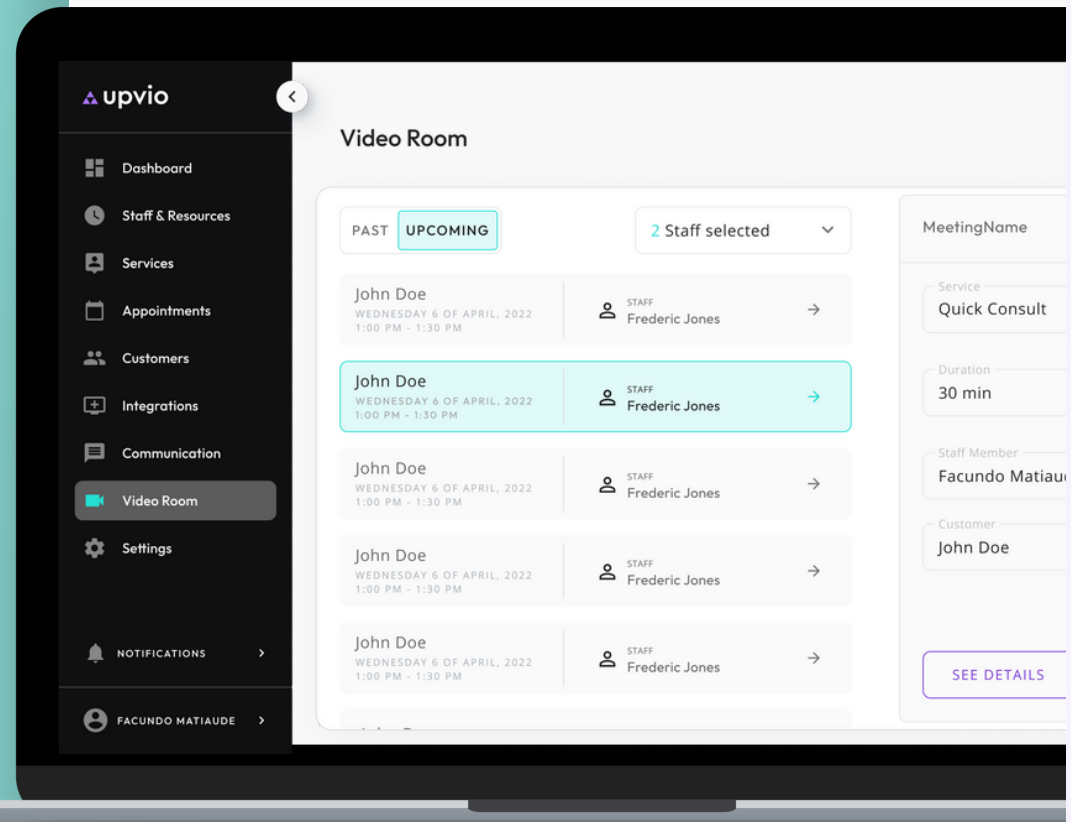
Synchronous

Also known as "real-time", synchronous telehealth involves interactive communication, typically through video-based connectivity. Information is transmitted in both directions at the same time, with the provider benefiting from face-to-face evaluation.

Asynchronous

Also known as "store-and-forward", asynchronous telehealth involves non-real-time communication between parties. Within an asynchronous modality, patient information is forwarded and stored for the provider to review at a later date.

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HIPAA compliance and BAA

Security and compliance are ongoing issues for healthcare providers. As cyber threats continue to evolve, and privacy and security issues get more complex, healthcare organizations are increasingly reliant on third parties. To maintain protected health information (PHI) security and ensure operational compliance, HIPAA-covered entities must have a business associate agreement (BAA) in place with each of these third parties. Relevant partners may include consultants, attorneys, technology providers, or anyone else that performs functions or activities on behalf of a covered entity.

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Video platforms

With most telehealth providers relying heavily on synchronous video-based services, choosing the right platform is crucial. It's important to select a platform that inspires trust in your patients while making your life easier as a practitioner. While each provider is unique, key considerations are likely to include user-friendly design, customization, data integration, security, support, and analytics. Like most things in life, pricing is also likely to factor into your decision.

During a telehealth video conference, you need to build trust and develop rapport through the following elements:

- Identify yourself as a practitioner
- Establish consent with the patient
- Set expectations for the appointment
- Communicate effectively across media

The following features are essential:

- Business associate agreement (BAA) for the technology service
- Access to a virtual waiting room for patient management
- Support for scheduling, messaging, and note taking

Opportunities in the telehealth sector are getting bigger by the day. With online services increasingly normalized, technology solutions widely available, and compliance hurdles easily overcome, industry growth is likely to skyrocket in the coming years. To move forward, it's important to develop and implement a solid plan based on your current and future needs. When you adopt smart marketing practices for patient recruitment and retention and integrate powerful software tools, you can streamline your business model and deliver value where it counts.

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We hope this framework has given you some ideas on how to start your telemedicine journey.

If you'd like more information or want help implementing

these solutions, don't hesitate to get in touch.

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