CONSUMER CO-LAB

TheAcademy + cedar

Four Conclusions on Advancing the Consumer Experience Across Health Systems

Key Takeaways from the Academy–Cedar Consumer Co-Lab

The COVID-19 pandemic had a permanent impact on how consumers communicate with—and assess—their providers. In 2021, Cedar's Healthcare Consumer Study found that:

- 57% of consumers would be more likely to recommend their provider if they had a good digital experience; and,
- 35% of consumers switch their providers because of poor digital experience.

Over the last two years, Leading Health Systems (LHS) in The Academy's community have made it clear that addressing consumerism in healthcare is not a one-time initiative. Instead, it is imperative to ensure patients have access to affordable, high-quality, personalized healthcare.

To help LHS execute their long-term consumer vision, The Academy and Cedar have partnered to launch The Consumer Co-Lab.

> The Consumer Co-Lab is an ongoing collaborative for key health system executives across strategy, operations, finance, digital health, consumer strategy, and marketing to address shared challenges on advancing a "consumer-first" strategy. It facilitates experiential learning and engagement opportunities across the healthcare ecosystem, never losing sight of the key driver of innovation: the patient.

The inaugural Summit took place in October 2022 and will be followed by bi-annual events throughout 2023-2024. Across the October 2022 event, providers shared how they're embracing bold strategies to cultivate consumer loyalty, developing sophisticated data and analytics strategies, and creating comprehensive digital engagement and care delivery models. **The following executive summary outlines four conclusions from cross-functional group discussions on advancing consumer experience.**

Top Challenge Health Systems Face in Cultivating Consumer Loyalty (n = 47)

Pie chart values: 7, 32, 17, 21, 13, 4, 6
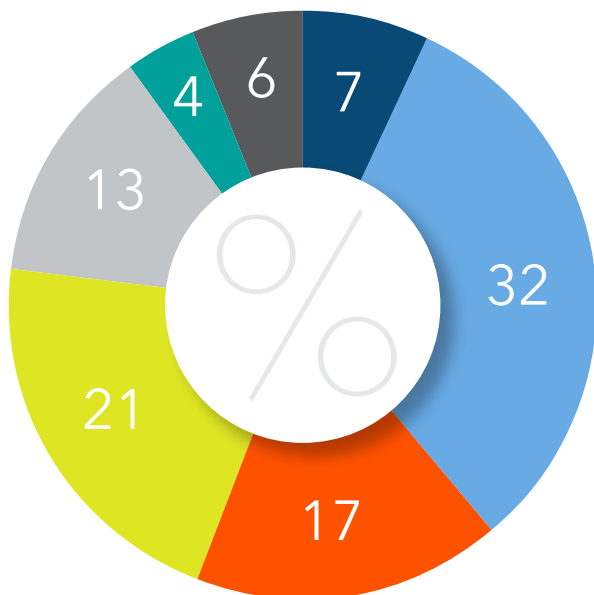
- Agreeing on a measurement approach (both financial and non-financial) that determines ROI
- Creating a comprehensive digital engagement/ transformation roadmap
- Defining scalable, consumer-friendly care models
- Deploying the right technology and/or tolls to enable your consumer engagement strategy (e.g., schedule appointments, process payments, target messaging, etc.)
- Developing sophisticated data & analytics strategies
- Establishing accountability and a governance model for who owns execution
- Other

1. No consumerism efforts are successful without first considering the needs of providers.

Health systems are unique in that they have two sets of customers to delight: patients and providers. The workforce has been battered by the pandemic and its resulting effects. Any improvements to the consumer experience cannot ignore the reality of continued shortages, burnout, and even threats of violence that face our workforce daily. Often, systems don't take into consideration the impact of consumer experience initiatives on staff. If employees are bogged down or disengaged from new and/or onerous tasks, they are unable to deliver a positive experience to patients.

Several health systems shared both the challenges and the approaches they've taken to engage their workforce in consumer experience initiatives:

- **Address any gaps in staffing and compensation, prior to talking about new projects.** Appetite for change will be minimal unless providers feel as though they have the resources and support to deliver.
- **Consider frontloading consumer initiatives that will offload the "annoying" tasks from providers.** Automation of specific processes (e.g., documentation, billing) allows providers to spend more time on patient care. In fact, one health system said that it is a "logical fallacy to assume that changes can't benefit both providers and patients."
- **Demonstrate the benefits of any changes to consumers.** Consumerism should result in greater patient engagement, which can translate into greater adherence to care regimens and improved patient outcomes. Highlighting the connection to providers can result in greater buy-in.

2. The next phase of consumerism is personalization, and likely requires further investment and inspiration from outside of healthcare.

Consumer experience executives have largely mapped out patient journeys, but have yet to personalize those journeys according to individual patient preference. Given the sheer number of variables that determine how a journey is personalized, the efforts require comprehensive, easily accessible data.

While health systems are swimming in data, many organizations are assessing whether they have the right types of data readily available for in-the-moment decisions on personalizing an individual's experience. EMRs, despite their price tags and amount of clinical data housed, are not designed as a repository for consumer preferences, or as a system that can be easily accessed for patient journey design.

Attendees acknowledged how healthcare lags well behind other industries in personalization efforts. Consumers accustomed to bespoke movie recommendations and personalized shopping recommendations may have similar expectations for their healthcare providers.

In fact, only one health system in attendance has been able to start down the road of personalized patient journeys. But the effort has been immense, both in terms of cost and political capital. The system shared that making the required multi-million-dollar investments required diplomacy: "CFOs and Boards are accustomed to investing in hard assets—those that can be offloaded in times of trouble. It is a huge culture shift to show the value of investing in code."

3. Consumerism requires innovation, running counter to traditional health system culture.
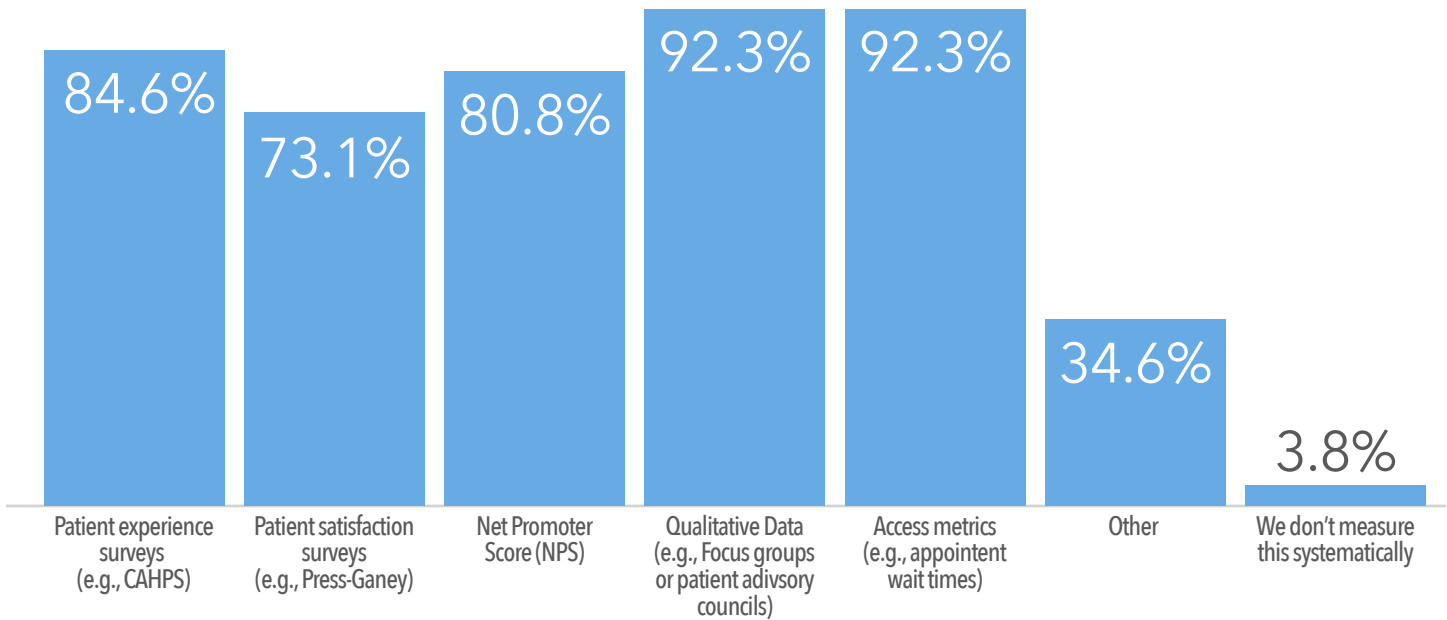
Required shifts in culture aren't limited to executives. Consumer-centricity requires a certain level of innovation and adaptation, running counter to the DNA of health systems which tend to be conservative, risk-averse, and process-driven.

Scaling innovation requires focused effort, out-of-the-box thinking, and a willingness to fail fast, ultimately making operations leaders (with their very full plates) ill-suited for the responsibility. Health systems that have seen success separate the function from day-to-day operations. Innovation has different incentives, contracts, and may even run entirely counter to the business model of the rest of the health system. The function must have the flexibility to disrupt current operations with no incentive to maintain status quo.

4. Measuring the success of consumer initiatives remains difficult without sufficient metrics.

Even the most innovative consumer experiences may be wasted if the impact is insufficiently measured. Healthcare has long suffered from a dearth of actionable, consumer experience metrics, leading systems to rely all too often on Net Promoter Score (NPS). While an easy metric to understand, it lacks diagnostic capabilities. Is it nice to know how many patients would recommend a health system to friends? Absolutely. But what is driving that decision? What really matters across the consumer experience? And more importantly, if patients are unwilling to recommend a health system, what factors are causing those consumers to be detractors?

Patient Journey Effectiveness Metrics Across Leading Health Systems (n = 26)

Patient experience surveys (e.g., CAHPS)	Patient satisfaction surveys (e.g., Press-Ganey)	Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Qualitative Data (e.g., Focus groups or patient adivsory councils)	Access metrics (e.g., appointent wait times)	Other	We don't measure this systematically
84.6%	73.1%	80.8%	92.3%	92.3%	34.6%	3.8%

Many attendees reported a focus on specific performance metrics, starting with a limited number of measures directly related to consumer experience initiatives. For example, improvements to patient billing may mean self-pay cash collection is an appropriate performance indicator. Other systems mentioned an "ease of access" score to gauge the efficacy of their call center.

Regardless, the healthcare industry needs a comprehensive indicator: a principled, consistent way to measure the quality of consumer experience delivered.

Introducing the Healthcare Consumer Score

As part of the inaugural Co-Lab, Cedar introduced the Healthcare Consumer Score (HCS) workshop, a first-of-its-kind measurement system for the consumer experience—specifically for healthcare. The intention of the HCS is to:

1. Effectively benchmark the consumer journey
2. Identify opportunities within an organization to create consumer-grade patient experiences in a competitive marketplace.

Attendees from leading health systems had the opportunity to walk through the healthcare consumer journey, focusing on "Moments" (i.e., key moments along the consumer journey including shopping & research, preparing for care, getting care, paying for care, and getting support) and the subsequent opportunities to interact with a consumer, known as "Touchpoints."

Using the HCS, Co-Lab participants graded each Moment against six proprietary Consumer Experience Principles, considering additional factors like the consumer's emotional baseline going into the Moment. After calculating the scores across moments, attendees were able to plot their own Healthcare Consumer Scores, to more clearly identify their strengths and areas of opportunity.

Interested in learning more about The Academy's Consumer Co-Lab Collaborative?

Learn more [here](.).