dialpad

Best Practices for Remote Healthcare Communications



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When patients call in, the last thing they want to encounter is an overwhelmed receptionist or to be stuck on hold (aka the top reason for patient dissatisfaction).

That's where a unified communications solution comes in, empowering healthcare workers to respond quickly while reducing the burden on admin staff.

Leading to happier patients.

Keep reading to learn:

1 What is the right unified communications solution for a healthcare organization?

2 The return on investment: what should you consider?

3 8 features to look for in a solution



What is the right unified communications solution for a healthcare organization?

The right unified communications solution will give you a lot more (logical and effective) ways to manage incoming and outgoing calls, with features like:

1. **Contact center**: Deploy contact centers and scale staff anywhere in minutes.
2. **Call routing**: Set up custom routing rules and easily forward calls to a specific party, so patients can reach the right person every time.
3. **Department lines**: Assign operators, set business hours, create a custom greeting and upload hold music.
4. **Device switching**: Move live calls between any of your favorite devices and stay connected on the go.
5. **Company directory**: Quickly search for a coworker and send a message, start a meeting, or hop on a call.
6. **AI**: Transcribe calls, automate note-taking, and capture everything on record,automatically (in Dialpad's case, all in real-time).



Dialpad tip: "Unified communications" is often used interchangeably with "telephony" but the two are not equal. Telephony is solely phone-focused, but today's customers—including your patients—are interacting with businesses through different channels, like texting, chatting, video conferencing, and more. Unified communications as a service ("UCaaS") covers it all.

Why does healthcare need a unified communications solution?

Just like every other workplace affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare offices are figuring out ways to adapt. But the impact is especially larger in an industry where in-office work and in-person patient visits have been the norm forever.

With the push to remote, the new norms are now becoming telemedicine and the hiring of distributed teams for healthcare.

Some stats:

1. **How it started:** According to the CDC, "During the first quarter of 2020, the number of telehealth visits increased by 50%, compared with the same period in 2019."

2. **How it's going**: According to Gartner, "By 2022, 60% of chronic disease pathways will involve remote patient monitoring. By 2022, 30% of all ambulatory encounters will be virtual, up from about 2% at the start of 2020."

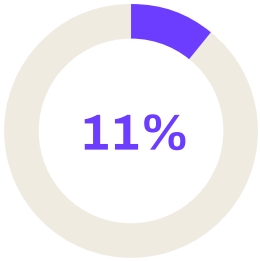
While remote telemedicine is increasing, however, there'll always be an element of healthcare that is in-person as well, so it's important to have a business communications platform that's flexible enough to support both.

Here's what a modern patient care center and internal unified communications system can do for your patients and staff:

- Support the delivery of high-quality clinical care
- Improve patient access and convenience
- Enable healthcare providers to attract and retain top talent as they build a distributed workforce
- Enable healthcare providers to attract and retain patients
- Work from anywhere, with patients who are everywhere

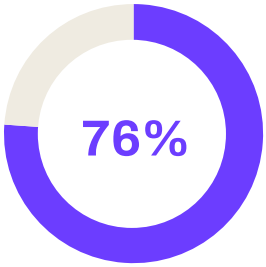
Patient stats

Shift from



use of telehealth in 2019

To



now interested in using telehealth going forward

(Source)

What about ROI?

A quick summary, on a departmental level:

1. **HR:** More efficient processes can mean less staff burnout, reducing staff attrition.
2. **IT:** Set up is fast, easy, and more cost-effective than outsourcing separate vendors for an inbound call center/ patient phone center.
3. **Admin staff:** Cut down patient wait times and increase efficiencies with automated services.
4. **Operations:** Achieve streamlined communication between internal staff and external vendors.
5. **Patient experience:** Increase patient retention and satisfaction.
6. **Legal and security:** A healthcare-ready unified communications solution (like Dialpad) is HIPAA compliant, so you can minimize lengthy approval processes.
7. **Marketing:** Enjoy good reviews from patients and partners. Plus, with all your data in one convenient location, you can easily automate outreach.

A real-life example: CareRev, a healthcare staffing company, enables healthcare professionals to pick up shifts through their mobile app with the help of a unified communications platform —and has reduced missed calls by 90%. Learn how.

8 features to look for in a unified communications solution for healthcare

Selecting a business phone service is hard enough in any scenario, but it's an especially big task for the healthcare industry. We get it.

You need something that can handle all the different types of your communications that go in and out of your office on a daily basis: front office staff to patients and insurance companies, doctors and office managers to staff and medical suppliers—and vice versa.

On top of all that, your phone service also needs to be HIPAA compliant.

So, what exactly do you look for? We've broken it all down here.

1 HIPAA compliance

The most critical requirement of a unified communications solution for anyone in the healthcare industry is compliance with HIPAA, or the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. This law requires healthcare companies to guard the privacy of medical and billing information against data breaches and unauthorized access.

HIPAA doesn't just apply to hospitals, clinics, and healthcare providers either—it also applies to third-party administrators and private vendors who access, collect, or transmit protected health information over the phone.

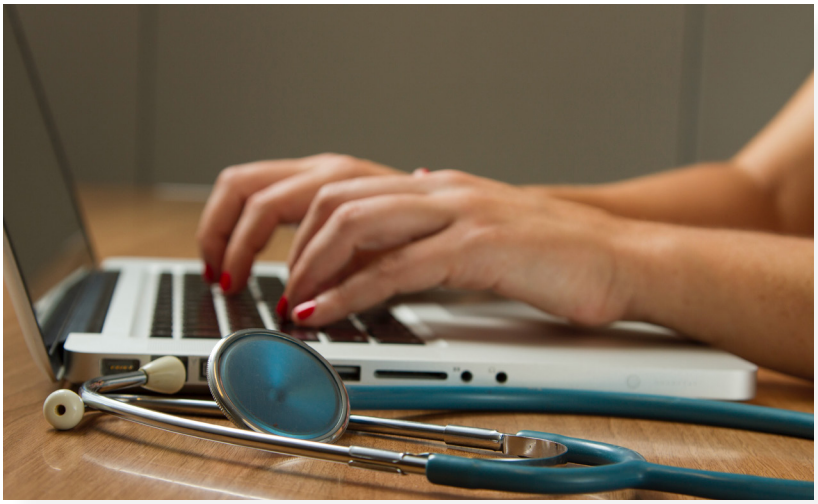
So before anything else, a unified communications service provider must be willing and able to sign a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) per HIPAA regulations. This assures your patients that you take responsibility for the compliance of the video and voice platform. You can learn all about Dialpad's processes on our designated healthcare page, or our HIPAA datasheet.

2 Security and access control

Compliance with HIPAA means that Personal Health Information (PHI) and Electronic Personal Health Information (ePHI) is locked, encrypted, and shielded from unauthorized changes and access. If changes are made, there needs to be an audit trail showing what was changed, when, and by who.

Security is extremely important, especially if you have team members working remotely. A cloud-based unified communications solution is an excellent tool for remote work. But it still needs an audit trail, backup capabilities, breach notifications, and encrypted transmission of voice commands.

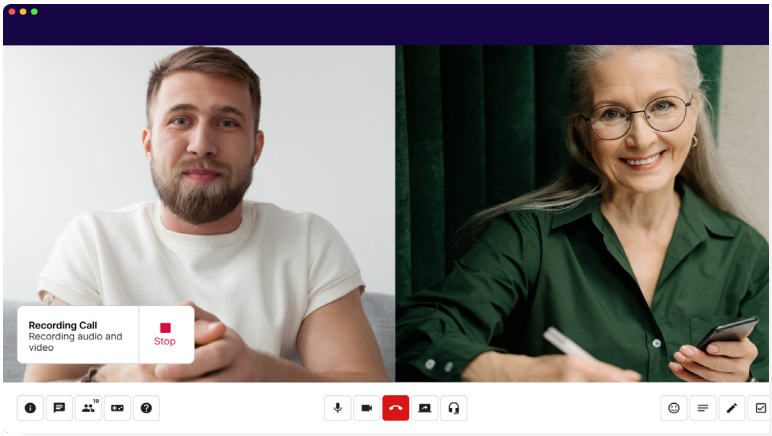
If you're not sure, ask the unified communications service provider you're considering about its security and data management rocess.



3 Call recording and logs

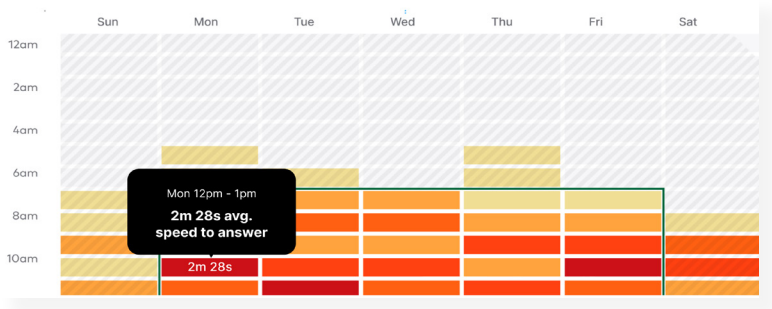
Having call recording and call logs will ensure accountability and information monitoring. A unified communications solution with crystal clear calls helps you retain a record of every patient conversation (for their benefit and also yours).

For example, in Dialpad, you can set up automatic recordings, or toggle recording on and off manually:



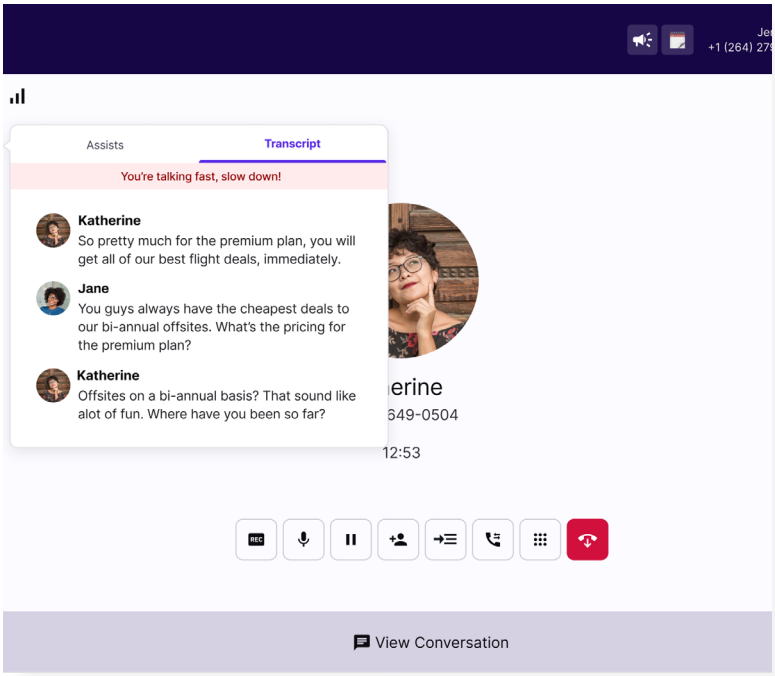
Call recording can be used for training and evaluating staff members on their phone etiquette and knowledge. You can also upload critical conversations to an electronic healthcare record for future reference and compliance purposes.

The right service can help you identify when patients, doctors, hospital staff, and insurance companies call and return the call with a single click. If you track your call volumes and speed of answer patterns, you can staff your offices more effectively too. Heatmaps are useful for this, and here's an example of how they look in Dialpad's Contact Center platform:



4 Real-time transcription

Choose a unified communications service provider that offers call summaries and transcriptions. Patient information is most helpful when it's laid out in a way that can be quickly scanned before and during patient visits.

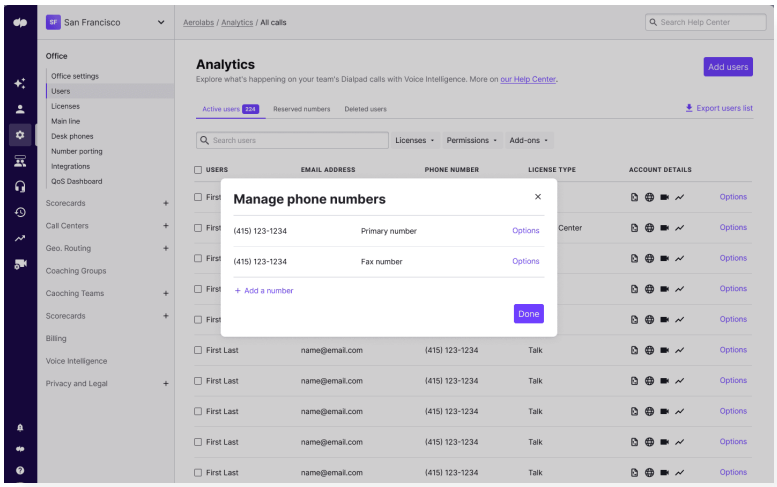


When the transcription is part of the phone service, you can streamline your workflow and provide more personalized care for patients. What's unique about Dialpad's transcription service is that it's done in real time—not after the call, like many competitors. This unlocks capabilities like live coaching and sentiment analysis as the call is happening.

5 Efficiency and ease of use

Moving patients through a provider's office, keeping up with appointment bookings, and handling insurance and billing are challenges many healthcare offices struggle to meet.

Not only should your unified communications system not be an obstacle, but it should also actively help you manage your office with ease. For example, managing users (adding a new employee) and phone numbers should be easy to do yourself in your account online—without having to contact IT every time:

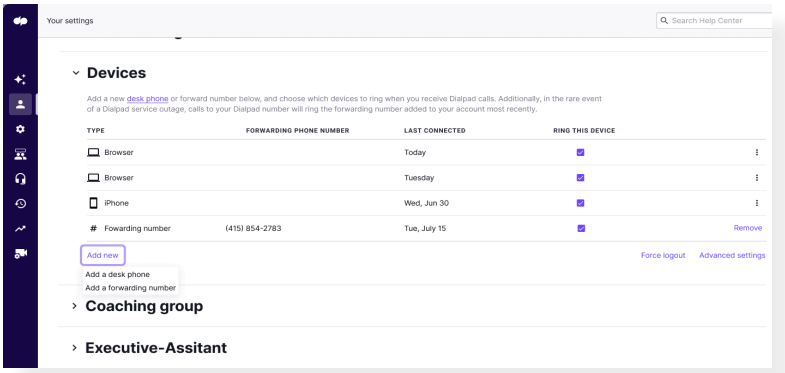


A unified communications solution like Dialpad can also integrate with other important apps in your tech stack, like Lightpoint and Microsoft 365.

6 Call handling

Patients call for appointments, to speak to a doctor, or to ask about billing and insurance. Pharmacies, insurance companies, other providers, and vendors are also on the line.

The right unified communications solution will let you transfer calls with one click to the appropriate person, no matter who they are. Look for easy transfer, call parking, and call forwarding to handle call volumes at their highest:



7 Video calling

As telehealth services continue to grow, video calling is an absolute must. Patients are demanding efficient service and would rather skip driving to the doctor's office unless they absolutely need to.

It's important that patients can join a video appointment easily, from any device.

For example, Dialpad is browser-based, meaning you can send patients a link and they can join the meeting from a browser instead of having to download apps, which is a much better patient experience. (And it's secure because you can require passwords so random people can't join).

Underserved and rural areas especially benefit from video calling.

8 Cloud-based phone service

Unlike a desk phone-focused system, a phone service that's cloud-based gives you the flexibility to take calls from anywhere and the convenience to use your own devices.

You can even make your smartphone HIPAA compliant with a mobile encryption service, encouraging strong passwords and preventing access to sensitive applications and data. Another tip: set up your device to clear all information after a limited number of attempts to access it.

And if you're using a cloud-based phone service, always, always make sure it's updated to the latest version, which will help keep your phones secure.

About Dialpad

Dialpad is the leading Ai-powered Customer Intelligence Platform that's completely changing how the world works together—including healthcare practices like yours. Founded in 2011, more than 30,000 businesses and millions of people worldwide now rely on Dialpad to accelerate their digital transformation. With the help of Dialpad's real-time Ai insights, your office can quickly and easily be transformed to adapt to remote work and care, so you can focus on what matters most: caring for your patients.

Take a product tour