

Consumer Choice and the Future of Healthcare Service Lines

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As the healthcare industry shifts from volumedriven to value-based care, quality of outcomes – not quantity of services – is defining success. Episodic care that treats consumers only when they're in the hospital is evolving into care across the continuum, emphasizing prevention and wellness. While many factors have contributed to this transformation, consumer choice has had a significant impact on the market and will continue to do so into the future. Healthcare organizations can deliver better outcomes by keeping the consumer top of mind, especially when designing service lines.

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Traditionally, a broad range of services such as emergency medicine or intensive care defined services lines. Today, consumer choice is narrowing the scope of service lines as people demand more customized care (telemedicine, concierge services), niche specializations (pediatric oncology), lifecycle care (geriatric) and holistic care based on population (men's, women's, LGBTQ). To design service lines with longterm viability, healthcare leaders must continue embracing consumer choice. By understanding who

their consumers are, leaders can develop strategies to meet consumer needs today and tomorrow.

Know Your Service Area

When designing future services lines, healthcare leaders must begin by developing deep foundational knowledge of their unique market and the people in it. Understanding both the geographic and demographic makeup of the communities they serve ensures healthcare organizations properly scale and deliver superior care.

Define the Area You Serve

There are several methodologies to carving out a service area: zip codes, regions, landmarks, population size or predominance of a specific care need. Healthcare leaders should choose the method that best complements the organization's goals. For example, an organization aiming to become the best provider for pediatric care might determine its service area by populations of young families.

Get the Data

For service lines to be effective, they must address the individual needs of consumers within the service area. Advanced data and analytics tools can reveal valuable insights into the demographics of a service area, such as age, race, occupation, education, income and disabilities, or environmental factors like frequent flooding, severe storms and extreme heat or cold. Equipped with these insights, healthcare organizations

can better communicate with consumers, personalize their care and anticipate future population health risks. Data also help leaders determine which consumer needs aren't being met, giving them an opportunity to become a provider of choice.

Develop the Strategy

Consumer choice substantially influences purchasing behavior. Armed with data and a deep understanding of their consumers, healthcare leaders can create service lines that account for a wide range of consumer choices, preferences and behaviors. Providing the care consumers want, when and where they need it, at a price they can afford is a strategy for success.

Be Consumer-Centric

Whether rethinking existing service lines or creating new ones, healthcare leaders must put the consumer at the center. Consumers are looking for the same comfort, convenience and customization in their healthcare experiences that they've come to expect from retailers, hotels and other service providers. Models that provide exceptional experiences will increase patient engagement and lead to overall better health outcomes. Healthcare leaders can look to other industries for examples of successful consumer-centric innovations that reduce redundancies, increase personalization and enable consumers to meet individual goals.

Leverage Technology

Technology is critical to determining which service lines to develop or revise. The activation of big data aids organizations in predicting and preparing for the spread of disease or an aging population. The integration of health apps and wearable devices gives consumers more control over monitoring their condition between visits while also relaying important health data back to their providers. Although there are many tools available to achieve these goals, healthcare leaders should prioritize interoperability when making their selection. The interoperability of technology allows providers to centralize data from multiple sources to create a complete picture of a consumer's medical history, which can be used to reduce safety events and develop more effective treatment plans.

Redefine What Success Looks Like

The standards of success for past service lines must change to accommodate future service lines. Though traditional process-based metrics such as adherence to protocol and rate of throughput aren't going away, these are reflective of a fee-for-service environment. In a value-based environment driven by consumer choice, healthcare organizations must incorporate outcomes-based metrics to determine if service lines are truly meeting their intended goals.

Despite the rapid pace of change, healthcare leaders have an opportunity to position their organizations for long-term growth by understanding and embracing consumer choice. With the consumer top of mind, organizations can create transformative service lines that provide better outcomes that drive consumer loyalty.

Key Takeaways

To ensure their service lines meet the needs of the diverse populations they serve and remain successful in the future, healthcare leaders must:

Think differently.

Research your existing and potential consumers to understand what their current and future health needs and preferences are.

Plan differently.

Prioritize comfort, convenience and customization when designing service lines.

Act differently.

Internalize the industry's shift to value-based care and frame success in terms of outcomes.



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