

8 Tips to Creating a Better Online Member Experience

Putting up any member portal and expecting members to use it is a fast track to failure – and lost business. The online experience is often the key deciding factor on whether members become engaged with your technology (and by extension your organization). Your portal must provide more than information or access to forms. It must deliver an experience that is seamless and aligned with how, where and why members want use it.

Do you have what it takes to fully engage members with your digital solutions?



1. Think mobile from the start.

When payers decide to launch a new portal, many (if not most) think of building the desktop version first, then adding a mobile version later when they have the resources available. Five years ago that may have been a valid strategy. But today, the prolific use of smartphones, tablets and phablets has made that way of thinking obsolete.

Build in mobile capabilities from the beginning, to deliver a far better experience to all your members, creating higher levels of customer satisfaction that boosts retention – and future member acquisition.



2. Provide broad functionality.

It is easy to get caught up in thinking you will start small to get the portal launched and then build capabilities as you go. Yet if members go onto the portal and don't find value, they are unlikely to come back – even if the capabilities expand later.

Create a rich experience from the start so that on the first encounter your members are more likely to make your portal a go-to resource.



3. Include mobile specific functionality.

With a little creativity you can offer any number of value-added benefits.

If a member is searching for a provider while away from home, the mobile device's GPS can be used by the portal to find physicians or hospitals in the plan within a 10 mile radius of their current location. It can also provide directions.

The phone's camera can be used to photograph and upload a receipt for instant payment from the member's flex account rather than waiting for a reimbursement later.



4. Incorporate responsive design.

Responsive design puts an end to the debate on whether to develop a fully-functional mobile site because it is focused on delivering the best user experience based on the size of the screen the member is using rather than the type of device.

Rather than creating separate desktop, smartphone, tablet and other versions of your portal, a better option is responsive design.



5. Start from small screens and work up.

Payers have started with a desktop version of their portal, then attempted to squeeze it down to fit onto tablets and smartphones – usually removing functionality as they go.

Begin with the smallest screen size your members are using - build your full member experience to suit it. Working from small to large will ensure every member has a quality experience no matter how they choose to access your portal.



6. Design for a seamless user experience.

When members click a link from your website to go to your portal, they shouldn't feel as though they've moved from the earth to the moon. Instead, your portal should appear to be just another page on your website,

with the same branding, graphics, organization, color scheme, terminology.

Think of members as consumers who use self-service portals from retailers, financial services companies, travel companies and other businesses in their daily lives. And design with those portals in mind.



7. Customize content delivery by member type.

The more you can personalize what members see immediately, rather than making them hunt through irrelevant information to find what they need, the better their experience will be.

Customize the content delivered to mobile devices based on member persona/type, demographics, eligibility and other factors such as compliance with federal or state regulations.



8. Ensure third party applications are also seamless.

Many payers incorporate third-party applications, such as pharmacy or wellness information, to add functionality to their portals. You can't control what third party vendors deliver, but you can control which ones you choose.

Be careful that vendors' applications support the mobile environment to the same standards as your portal.

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