

How to Create High Levels of Efficiency in Your Physical Therapy Practice

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Do you wish you had a better way of staying on top of details in your physical therapy practice? If so, you're not alone. Physical therapy practice management involves many complex moving parts like patient scheduling, care tracking, communication, payment processing, marketing, and much more.

Improving physical therapy efficiency necessitates using innovations within patient interactions; resolving communication gaps; streamlining payment collections; and adopting new ways of marketing your practice. Below, we discuss how to boost production levels and improve patient satisfaction by targeting these four critical areas.

Why Now Is the Time to Focus on Boosting Efficiency in Your Physical Therapy Practice

As the modern world introduces more advanced technology daily, patients' expectations grow more demanding. You're always looking for ways to improve how your office runs, so why is it so important to focus on efficiency right now?

Patients Expect Incredible Care

When attending physical therapy, patients expect extremely high-quality care. From the moment they enter your office, you want to impress them with:

- Quick and attentive front desk staff members
- An easy check-in process
- Incredible physical therapist care
- A complete understanding of their diagnosis by all team members working directly with them
- Easy checkout and payment
- Convenient communication methods
- Easy scheduling for future appointments

Patients need these experiences, and they may choose a different office if you cannot provide them.

Your Backend System Should Match Treatment Enhancement Technologies

Treatment technologies for physical therapy patients make huge strides each year. For example, in 2012, Ekso Bionics released the first robotic exoskeleton approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for injured spinal cord patients. The Ekso GT is a brace that allows paraplegic patients to walk and move around again.

Dr. Blessen Eapen from the Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center states that this suit helps patients enjoy the immediate ability to move around and offers long-term benefits. The increased movement enablement is a huge stride in paraplegic physical therapy. The founder of SoldierStrong, Chris Meek, believes in the suit's capabilities so much that he

donates Ekso suits to veterans and other organizations in need.

The latest Ekso update even includes different challenge levels that allow therapists or patients to control movements, steps, speeds, and balancing abilities. As the technology evolves, physical therapy practices can customize their treatments to match each patient's unique needs.

Another great example would be blood flow restriction (BFR) rehabilitation. Patients frequently suffer muscle strength losses after a surgery or injury due to the inability to move pain-free. BFR rehabilitation involves applying a tourniquet cuff to the patient's extremity so they can improve muscle strength by lifting only half of the recommended weight needed to prevent atrophy.

Enormous technological advancements, like the ones above, display the future of the physical therapy industry. Even if you don't have robots, your practice still offers high-quality and technologically advanced treatment, so your backend system should function with the same rigor.

Patients Want Fast, Mobile, and Convenient Communication Methods

Your patients need to be able to manage their healthcare scheduling and communication during their

busy lives. Prioritizing efficiency in your practice with patient care apps improves satisfaction by allowing patients to manage anything related to their health in moments on their mobile devices.

If a patient has a quick question or needs to change an appointment, they can do so instantly, depending on the communication technology used by your physical therapy practice.

Expand Your Practice with Efficient Marketing Techniques

Marketing a physical therapy practice might feel challenging. How can you advertise your services to the right groups of people without seeming too “salesy” or unauthentic?

One solution is to integrate marketing techniques into regular email communication methods to effectively maintain current patients and find new ones.

Boosting Efficiency Step 1: Prioritize Innovation

Prioritizing innovation is the first step to improving efficiency in your physical therapy practice. Many offices rely on outdated techniques and platforms, never considering the growth opportunities. So, how can you launch your practice toward the future and prioritize innovation?

Opt for Accessible Patient-Facing Technology

First, you need to find a platform that your physical therapy patients want to use. Providing complicated software with hard-to-read data and confusing medical jargon won't improve anything. Instead, seek options that offer:

- Easy-to-read content that anyone without medical experience can understand
- Accessible download methods (for example, don't pick something that only works on Android)
- Convenient account setup

- Progress timelines, engaging charts, and other visuals that make numbers easier to consume

Choose a Platform that Highlights Patient Needs

When patients log in to their health portal, they should be able to find educational information about their treatment. For example, suppose a patient must complete a specific exercise three times a day. They might want visuals on how to complete the activity, tips for improving their form, information on symptoms to watch out for, and more.

Offering convenient online therapy information motivates people to heal faster. For example, video therapy programs can triple patient satisfaction.

Keep Your Team on Top of Tech Onboarding

While you want to choose a platform that's easy to use, some patients might still have trouble. Your physical therapist and front desk teams will end up teaching patients how to download apps, create accounts, and use the software.

Tech onboarding might sound intimidating, so ensure you select a product that makes setup a breeze. Choose a platform everyone can use, from middle schoolers to elderly patients.

Introduce New Treatment Technologies Whenever Possible

Prioritizing innovation means introducing technological enhancements to all different aspects of your office, including the internal platform and the external equipment you provide to patients.

You might not always have the resources to purchase modern machinery or medical tools consistently. You can free up some room in your budget by prioritizing efficiency across other office functions.

When your practice has extra funds, consider introducing new treatment technologies to improve care satisfaction rates and attract new patients. For example, introducing paraplegic treatments like the Ekso GT could attract patients from around the nation to your office. You could also adopt new treatment methods, like BFR rehabilitation, without investing as much.

Boosting Efficiency Step 2: Streamline Communication Methods

Communication is everything when it comes to boosting efficiency in your physical therapy practice. You can achieve incredible results by using a robust patient portal platform service, in combination with our tips below.

Identify Communication Gaps

Before deciding how to improve your office's communication, you need to understand the issues you're currently facing. Consider the following questions:

- How can patients create an appointment? Do they have to call, or can they do so online?
- What happens if a patient needs to ask their therapist a direct question?
- How does your team internally communicate about patient care?
- Do patients have the opportunity to leave feedback on their experience?
- Can patients view information regarding their care online so they don't have to call?
- Does your front desk staff frequently have long hold times?
- Are your team members overwhelmed?

Offer Easy Patient-to-Team Communication Channels

Consider using technology to establish appropriate patient-to-team communication channels. In today's environment patients may prefer options for direct messaging in addition to phone calls. Reducing phone calls

from patients can free up your front desk staff, cut down hold times, increase patient satisfaction, and reduce overall team stress.

Two-way texting allows patients to receive updates, schedule appointments, and ask their doctors questions in just a few clicks. Rather than playing phone tag, you can rely on automatic personalized messages, missed call reminders, and more. In short, find a solution that allows you to use two-way texting to:

- Confirm appointments
- Send scheduling reminders
- Answer medical questions
- Follow up on missed calls
- Send patients happy birthday texts

Make Everything Mobile

The above features are excellent, but only if patients can access them from their mobile devices.

When you make the experience mobile, your patients can find the information they need anytime, and your team can operate even when they're away from the office.

Offer Dashboards

Dashboards are visual landing pages that show patients everything they need to know in one convenient place. Dashboards are not direct communication tools, though they can prevent patients from needing to contact your office for unnecessary reasons.

For example, if patients cannot remember their next appointment, they can easily log in to the dashboard and find the most critical information immediately.

Dashboards work on the internal side as well. Your team can rely on unified patient profiles rather than managing scattered folders of patients' treatment history paperwork. Some software offer profiles that have the capacity to

show your team vital information like past patient calls, payment statuses, treatment timelines, birthdays, appointment notes, and personalized preferences.

Manage Follow-up Appointments and Reminders

Often the biggest communication issue in physical therapy offices is scheduling. Try sending automated appointment scheduling forms and reminders rather than waiting on patients to call you to set up an appointment. Stay ahead of communication before your team becomes overwhelmed with calls.

Allow Patients to Leave Reviews

Reviews are another great way to foster communication within your physical therapy practice. Offering a method for patients to leave reviews can help you learn:

- How to improve your practice
- Which areas your team can work on
- How to boost patient satisfaction
- What your office does well

Reviews also help patients feel heard and understood. Sometimes, your practice might get caught up in the stress of day-to-day work and forget your team's true value: helping people.

Boosting Efficiency Step 3: Collect Payments Easily

Physical therapy offices need to focus on providing excellent medical care while still managing the challenges of running a business. Your patients pay for your team's services, so finding an efficient way to collect these payments can help everything run smoothly. You can use our tips below to transform your standardized payment process into an effortless experience.

Add More Payment Options

Offering more payment options can speed up the checkout process and improve patient satisfaction by reducing

unnecessary friction. Consider finding a platform that allows patients to pay via:

- Debit card
- Credit card
- Mobile wallets
- Check
- Cash

Offer In-Person and Online Payment Routes

You can also try offering more flexible transaction methods when improving payment efficiency in your physical therapy practice. Rather than only requiring in-person payments, consider offering options to pay online.

Also, consider ways to request payments via text, letting patients respond to direct invoice messages with their payment information. Allowing payment by text enables offices to send charges and collect payments in seconds.

Personalize Expense Invoices

When charging patients online rather than in the office, you still want to provide the personalized experience they would receive from your friendly front desk staff. Try to include personable requests, customized messages regarding their payment totals, and thank you responses.

Many platforms that offer online payments also include templates for the above messaging. With these communication platforms, you can simply write the message once, and the software will replace your placeholder text with the patient's name, expenses, and more.

Keep All Payment Information Secure

When offering any form of online payment, security is critical. The Payments Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) requires firewall protection over cardholder data, unique passwords, zero cardholder data storage, encryption tool usage, regular anti-virus updates, risk management strategies, access authentication and restrictions,

user activity tracking, security testing, employee training, and more to protect paying consumers. If you don't meet these legal requirements, your business could face penalty fines.

Since your physical therapy office is a medical practice, any third-party service you pick needs to comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1966 (HIPAA). You can typically review a platform's HIPAA compliance on its website or by speaking with a representative.

Consolidate Office Processing Systems

Disjointed office platforms kill efficiency. When your team has to juggle dozens of different websites, everything takes longer, your patients become frustrated, and your practice wastes time. When selecting a payment system, consider consolidating what you already use.

For example, try an all-in-one platform that can replace everything rather than adding an online option to what you already use. Your staff and patients can become familiar with these platforms, streamlining your office's processes.

Gain Deeper Payment History Insights

A massive stack of receipt stubs won't offer you any business-related insights. To improve your efficiency, you need to keep track of all past payments, any owed dues, and future expenses.

Innovative online payment processing systems allow you to view payment history information in a convenient dashboard. Use this data to understand your office's operations and stay ahead of your budget and expenses.

Boosting Efficiency Step 4: Expand Your Practice with Integrated Marketing

Our final tip for boosting efficiency in your physical therapy practice is to

integrate marketing into your priorities. Typically, medical offices do not allocate many resources to expanding and finding new patients. With the right strategy, you don't need to change how you operate to foster a healthy cycle of new and returning patients.

Utilize Mass Email Techniques

Email marketing is an excellent way to keep your current patients returning while reaching new potential groups. Try sending out:

- Email reminders
- Office newsletters
- Monthly updates
- Fun blog articles
- Tips and tricks for physical therapy health and goals
- Holiday and birthday wishes
- Anything related to your patients' interests to remind them to schedule their next visit

When they see the beautiful customized email, easy appointment scheduling, and other tech features you offer, they'll feel more inclined to choose your group over an outdated office.

Start with Customizable Templates

Sending emails doesn't have to be complicated. With many online services, you can begin with templates and customize them to include information unique to your practice or your patients.

For example, some online platforms allow you to send automated birthday messages from templates. You can also automate different email schedules, so you never have to worry about forgetting. Try setting up:

- Monthly announcement emails
- Appointment reminders
- Billing notifications
- COVID-19 updates

Speak to Patients on Their Preferred Channels

Many people prefer talking through text messages or other instant messaging

systems rather than phone calls. By reaching patients with an email, you prove to them how easy it will be to communicate throughout your time together.

Rather than cold-calling a patient while they're busy at work, you can send a friendly message to their inbox where they can view it at their convenience.

How to Choose the Right Technology for Your Practice

To complete the four steps above, you might need to adopt new technology platforms for your practice. You should select something that can work for your office long-term and meets patient and team needs. With so many options, how can you find what will work best for you?

Think about What Your Patients Need Most

First, you should consider what your patients need most. Do you often receive complaints about long phone waits, or are payment options your biggest issue? Try making a few bullet points that state precisely what you wish to achieve with your new systems.

For example, your plan might sound like this:

- Unify all communication channels into one platform
- Offer patient-to-doctor instant messaging
- Combine all patient touch points into one system
- Offer dashboard for patients, providers, and team members to view all information at a glance
- Streamline the scheduling process with online signups
- Introduce new payment methods
- Get ahead on collecting past owed payments
- Retain current patients with better email updates

Find Something That's Easy for Everyone to Use

As you narrow down your choices, you also need to find a system that everyone in your office can use. We recommend picking a platform that someone at a middle-school level could easily pick up and understand. You might have patients or team members who struggle with complicated technology, so avoid complex software with challenging user interfaces.

Pick a Platform with Multiple Capabilities

The fewer tools your team uses, the more you can boost efficiency in your physical therapy practice. Signing up for five different services that all serve different purposes will only create confusion and inefficiency on the back end. You should find a platform that performs multiple functions and potentially eliminates the need for some of your current systems.

Ensure That It Can Handle Your User Load

Certain tools can only handle a limited number of users. If you pick an app with such restrictions, you should ensure that your projected patient and team load will not exceed the limit.

Ideally, you might want to find a platform with larger capabilities. Limited services often have longer loading times and unexpected expenses. Choose something that can handle many users at once.

Consider Your Budget

You should also consider your budget. Think about how much money you can save when improving efficiency and use that as a guide when budgeting for a new service. You need systems that reduce your overall spending, not increase it.

Think about Your Future Goals

Finally, you should think about the future goals for your practice:

- Do you want to expand and reach more patients?
- Should you focus on retaining the patients you have?
- Do you want to improve patient satisfaction reviews?
- Do you need to catch up on outstanding patient payments?

Regardless of your goals, pick a platform that will exceed your needs now and help you reach your long-term objectives.

Create Happier Patients and Reduce Team Stress with Powerful, but Simple Technological Improvements!

Any physical therapy practice can run like a well-oiled machine with a few technical tweaks, resulting in happier patients and less-stressed team members. After you have done your research, decide on a platform that helps you do just that. Remember to look for integrated tools for scheduling, communication, payments, marketing, digital forms, reviews, and customer insights.

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