

How tracking and analyzing calls can grow your practice

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Do not underestimate the power of the “ring”!

The power of online and [social marketing](#) is undeniable. Yet, the “old-fashioned” notion of picking up the phone and engaging with a practice is not history. In one of the most comprehensive reports of its kind in recent years, Forrester Consulting looked at the continued impact of calls and the “phone consumer” on one’s business. They surveyed more than 200 marketing decision-makers and found that:

- **Content/“Calls to Action” that prompt customers to pick up the phone are associated with elevated engagement.** The marketing minds surveyed reported that both online and offline channels and efforts are more productive when encouraging calls in content.
- **Phone calls bolster conversions.** Of those surveyed, 60% said that this method of communication was associated with nearly a third faster “conversion” to customer or, in your case, patient.
- **Calls were also associated with higher “spend.”** On average, those who engaged with organizations via phone spent 28% more on goods and services than those

who did not.

- **More than half of marketers also noted that these call prompts and follow-throughs were also associated with a 28% higher retention rate**, a nod to feeding into and fueling patient loyalty¹.

Do not underestimate phone calls in the “all-things-virtual” realm

Supporting optimal, responsive, credible, and trusted communication is vital in health care. Research in the *Journal of Patient Experience* explored the importance of such quality for both emergent and nonemergent patients². It is equally critical to prioritize staff education and training on this front.

Be sure to conduct regular “refreshers” on phone etiquette and elements like triaging calls. If anything, the abundance of research related to the continued impact of that intersection between calls and marketing or promoting your practice’s brand underscores the criticality of cultivating and grooming phone strategies.

Of course, qualitative or anecdotal feedback about characteristics like phone etiquette and responsiveness has its limitations. This is where an intentional or strategic call-tracking program comes into play.

Listen up! Call tracking, defined

At its core, tracking this type of communication is considered a performance marketing technique³. It fundamentally involves tying or tracking back certain phone numbers to specific sources of ads or other communications – the platform, organization, or party that led to their reaching out to you in the first place.

Not surprisingly, there is an abundance of call tracking software and analytics to choose from, and techniques may include what is dubbed “Dynamic Number Insertion⁴.” This is simply a fancy way of saying that a specific or unique phone number may be assigned to and associated with a specific marketing initiative, effort, or strategy.

For instance, you could assign a number to account for call volume and other data related to your Yelp reviews. This dynamic approach to inserting and linking numbers to specific channels or efforts allows you or your practice management to see at a glance how well different channels are working (or not).

Of course, tracking does not have to be complicated or sophisticated in any way. By training your staff regularly, you can also prioritize that they consistently ask where new callers or patients may come from or ensure that any follow-up communications solicit such information. Awareness is more than half of the battle.

The metrics

The Economist has dubbed data as the new oil, with the multi-billion dollar data economy unseating this commodity as today's most valuable resource⁵. Data has so much power *as long as you use it and know how to use it*. As it relates to call tracking, you can make the data work for your practice by leveraging it as **smart, meaningful, and valuable intelligence**.

Broadly, the key indicators to watch and consistently monitor for are similar to those in the digital or online world. They include:

- **Volume**- which is akin to website traffic performance markers like total visits and unique visitors. Software and processes are such that you may segment the traffic to clearly monitor how well a specific strategy or promo is resonating – be it a free exam for new patients or the rollout of your new and improved presence on Instagram or YouTube.
- **Conversion rates**- what good are calls with queries that represent an action prompted by your “Call to Action” if they do not translate to foot traffic? Conversion rates for phone tracking are not dissimilar from analyzing this metric regarding one's digital content and presence. This indicator simply refers to converting the query (be it calling or a visitor to your site) to a “paying consumer.” This helps fuel a better understanding of the effect or tangible return on one's investment in certain marketing tactics or strategies. It can also provide clues into needs from a call training and resources perspective, especially if the rate on this front is lagging.
- **Time per call** or duration can also indicate call and service quality. While time is most certainly of the essence in health care, a multitude of seconds-long calls may indicate disinterest, lack of engagement, or the need for better training and more education on your practice, its amenities, and capabilities. Understanding this metric also aids in comprehending the actual cost of certain efforts that transcend the monetary.
- **Caller origin** or the caller's location acknowledges all-important demographic insights. It can provide helpful information about changing demographics within the communities or regions that you serve. You can pull from this information pattern

that can then be used to craft campaigns or content that speaks specifically to certain areas or locaters.

What gets tracked gets fixed

Practice intelligence courtesy of the breadcrumbs left behind by call tracking and analyses can be harnessed to **guide the smartest adjustments to existing marketing and communications strategies** and to **craft the most profitable efforts in the future.**

And health care demands that type of human touch supported by voice-to-voice communication. So, phone calls are a source of patient acquisition and retention and are here to stay. By making the most of this well-established form of communication and all the valuable data associated with it, your practice too will not only be sustained but *thrive* well into the future.

References

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About the author



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