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FIELD GUIDE TO

Communication With Frontline Employees in Healthcare

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Foreword

Internal Communications With Frontline Healthcare Workers is Mission-Critical

As an internal communications professional at a healthcare organization, you know that your role has undergone a significant shift over the last year. Once, your mission was to broadcast important internal messages to the workforce to engage and retain frontline workers. Today, these messages can be a matter of life-or-death for your frontline staff and their patients, as new information about the public health crisis requires rapid — sometimes immediate — changes in policy and procedures. The disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have proven that internal communications are a lifeline across a healthcare organization, and successful communicators need modern tools to do the job.

Hospital systems around the country have made significant structural changes to support the digitization of records and improve both face-to-face and online interactions between clinicians and patients. However, the global pandemic has revealed how frontline healthcare workers have been left behind in this digital transformation. Because most frontline workers don't sit at desks with convenient or private access to computers, and may not even have email addresses, it is difficult to reach them with timely, important messages. They need up-to-date, reliable information that will help them, and others, stay safe while treating COVID-19 patients. If internal communicators are unable to provide critical information in a timely manner, employees may be forced to look for this information at outside sources that could put your entire organization at risk.

The healthcare organization's deskless employees are the outward representation of your brand. They are putting their own health and safety at risk, working long hours and caring for patients. They are drowning in paperwork and are inundated with "important" messages. The last thing you want is for your internal messages to be seen as more work — or worse — ignored completely. Reliable information has been the most valuable weapon in the fight against COVID-19, and as an internal communicator, it's your mission to ensure that frontline workers can access it when they need it most.

This Field Guide identifies some of the frontline employees in the healthcare industry, who are hardest to reach using traditional tools, such as email, and explores why it's never been more important to engage them. Additionally, we have included success stories from real healthcare organizations that came to theEMPLOYEEapp with the same challenge; they were looking for a better way to communicate with their important frontline and deskless employees.

I hope you find this eBook useful, as you plan your employee communications and engagement strategies. And, I hope to meet you at one of our upcoming events and conferences that explore the close relationship between communications and healthcare.

All the best,

Doug Pierce
COO
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Workers in the Wild

Frontline healthcare employees are difficult to reach, but need to be informed despite that challenge, so they can provide the highest quality patient care.

While healthcare organizations are focused on doing whatever it takes to deliver high-quality patient care and protecting their staff from COVID-19 to the best of their ability, they have also reached a breaking point. Many hospitals are overwhelmed or operating at near capacity; doctors' offices are flooded with patients needing COVID-19 tests and vaccines, and policies are changing daily as more information comes in. The "new normal" includes PPE and vaccine supply shortages, staff concerns about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, increased burnout, and abrupt changes in policies and procedures in an effort to cope with the virus. As a result, frontline worker burnout (which was already a problem prior to the pandemic) is a real threat.

Keeping healthcare workers informed, inspired, supported, and engaged is critical to surviving this crisis and recovering once we get to the other side. It's also important for organizations to learn from the last year and make sure they are better prepared for the next crisis, whatever it may be.

Who are Frontline Workers?

Frontline workers are the people who drive your organization's patient experience; not all of them have medical or nursing degrees. They are literally the face of your healthcare enterprise. And, over the past year, they have reminded the world how important they are as we deal with a global public health crisis. Meanwhile, they are suffering from burnout, caused by the hectic pace of treating patients and concerns about their own health and the health of their families. They are also feeling increasingly defeated by the public's ongoing refusal to wear masks, social distance, and do their part to stop the spread of the virus.

Today's frontline healthcare employees are multi-generationally diverse, operating at different levels of experience and technical proficiency; however, there is one thing that brings them together: their level of commitment and passion for delivering the best quality care to patients.

Most of these employees are, by the very nature of their job descriptions, not working at a desk on a regular basis. This is significant because, of the estimated 2.7 billion deskless workers around the world, healthcare workers make up nearly 150 million of them.[1] What healthcare workers need from communicators right now are messages that deliver important information, as well as support resources to help combat the many new challenges they're experiencing on a daily basis.

This Field Guide identifies some of the common deskless employee roles in healthcare and explores some of the challenges of reaching these valued employees. It also provides tips on how best to communicate with them.

It's never been a more crucial time to keep frontline staff informed and up-to-date on the latest safety procedures and COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Most face-to-face communication between employees, human resources, and

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management has been replaced by tools, such as email and corporate intranets. However, frontline workers don't spend their day behind a desk, which puts them at risk of missing important safety messages. In fact, many do not even have a corporate email account. This presents a growing dilemma for those charged with communicating with frontline employees. How can you get important information to them in a timely way?

How can HR, communications, and senior leadership make sure frontline employees feel safe, informed, and included in the company culture? Further, how do you encourage these employees to take the required action, such as following safety protocols or signing up to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

To answer these questions, let's explore some of the frontline employees often seen in a hospital or clinical setting.

40% of caregivers in the U.S. are hesitant about being vaccinated for COVID-19.

Source: Jarrad Phillips Cate & Hancock survey, December 2020

Frontline Employee #1:
THE PHYSICIAN

Why they're hard to reach: On average, physicians work 51 hours a week and see 20 patients a day. Almost 25% of their time is taken up with nonclinical paperwork.[4] The workload and demands on their time are just some of the causes that lead to physician burnout—a phenomenon that the Harvard Global Health Institute calls a "public health crisis."[5]

How to best communicate: When it comes to engaging with physicians, these employees prefer to lead by example because these employees are highly experienced and tenured. This makes getting internal buy-in from physicians incredibly important to ensure they are on board with initiatives and encourage their staff to follow

The Physician

Average Age: 51[3]

Average Hours Worked: 51 hours per week

Number of Patients Seen: 20 per day

Daily tasks that include nonclinical paperwork: 25%

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Frontline Employee #2:
THE NURSE

Why they're hard to reach: Like physicians, nurses are at the forefront of patient care, work long hours and are required to complete voluminous paperwork. However, they typically see more patients per day than physicians, especially in hospital settings. Nursing burnout and high turnover rates are common across the U.S., with a national turnover rate of 16.8 percent.[8] Nurses come and go in hospitals and then there are home care and traveling nurses who comprise remote staff. No wonder it can be a challenge to stay on top of who is and isn't working for your organization.

How to best communicate: Though the average age of today's nurse is 50 years old, it's important to recognize the generationally diverse makeup of the nursing field. There are still plenty of Baby Boomers working as nurses, as well as Gen Xers, Millennials, and even Gen Z nurses who are just starting their careers. Engaging and motivating so many generations can be challenging. Nevertheless, there is a common thread among nurses. Research shows that equity, fairness and encouraging a work-life balance are important messages when communicating with nursing teams.[9]

The Nurse

Average Age: 50[7]

Average Hours Worked: 46 hours per week

Number of Patients Seen: 20+ per day

Total percent of all U.S. hospitals with an RN vacancy rate higher than 7.5 percent: 55%

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Frontline Employee #3:

THE NON-CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL

Why they're hard to reach: Because nonclinical roles are so vast and can cover so many different areas of healthcare, these frontline employees fall into many different categories and departments, making it difficult to communicate across all the areas they touch. Roles include receptionists, patient care coordinators, schedulers, foodservice, medical interpreters—any healthcare staff member who interacts with patients but does not provide clinical care. An estimated 42% of the healthcare workforce is made up of these non-clinical frontline employees. These jobs are becoming increasingly difficult to fill. In fact, 61% of medical management leaders said that they struggle to recruit nonclinical staff.[10]

How to best communicate: As often as possible. This is a group that needs information to successfully implement practice changes with patients, but they often feel overlooked. A 2019 survey conducted by the Medical Group Management Association reveals that 40% of non-clinical workforce said "communication" was the most important factor in building a positive corporate culture.[11]

The Non-Clinical Professional

Typical Job Titles: Patient Care Coordinator, Patient Navigator, Scheduler, Patient Advocate

Average Hours Worked: 60 hours per week

Important Skills: Teamwork, Customer Service, Ability to think fast in an emergency

Total percent of healthcare workforce: 44%

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Deskless Teams Need Modern Tools

Now that we have identified some of the most commonly-seen frontline workers in healthcare, let's examine why traditional internal communications tools don't work for them.

Reaching frontline workers has always been challenging for healthcare organizations, but as the pandemic has illustrated, it's vital to provide them timely access to important data and policy updates to keep them safe.

Email is a dominant tool for internal communications professionals. However, many frontline employees are overwhelmed by the volume of email in their inbox—if they are able to receive email at all. This presents a significant challenge for HR and communications professionals, who are tasked with getting important information and messages to their staff. Almost 61% of employees admit to skipping over internal emails. It's difficult to help improve employee work satisfaction and workplace culture if the main communications channel for doing so is email, which doesn't align with the needs of frontline workers. And the majority of frontline employees don't have corporate email addresses at all, forcing them to rely on the cascade of communication from their manager.

Corporate Intranets were built as an internal communications vehicle and a knowledge repository. But, maintenance is costly and often not accessible to staff who do not use a desktop computer or have reliable access to the Internet. Most corporate intranets are not regularly updated and lack a search function, forcing employees to waste time hunting for the information or documents they need. And, the user experience of most intranets on a mobile device is sub-standard, difficult, and, in many instances, not even an option given firewalls and other security obstacles.

Frontline workers shouldn't be excluded from important company news, alerts, and information just because they don't spend their day behind a computer with regular and convenient access to the company intranet. And, by the nature of their job, they should have easy and instantaneous access to the important safety information they need, as well as answers to the questions they (and their patients) have. Frontline worker buy-in and adherence are vital for organizations to develop better safety approaches and to avoid staffing deficiencies and disengagement.

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Meeting Frontline Employees Where They Are

Since email and intranets aren't cutting it in healthcare, what's the best way for communications and HR leaders to reach these groups? For one, it must be a method that allows for a dialogue instead of a one-sided conversation. Essentially, an effective employee communications method must address what Gartner calls an operational challenge: "Internal communication is often treated as a one-way publishing exercise (due to mounting frustration with email and aging Intranets), rather than an opportunity to have a continuous dialogue among and with employees."[13]

Mobile devices are becoming the dominant form of communication across the world. In the U.S., the majority of consumers own at least one smartphone. In 2017, 67.3% of the U.S. population used a smartphone. By the end of 2021 the U.S. will have a 72.7% smartphone penetration rate.[14] This trend, combined with the drawbacks of outmoded communication methods, affirms that a mobile app is the right tool for the job. One that is customized for healthcare organizations, enabling access to messages, documents, and more at any time, from anywhere, but also keeps information secure and confidential.

DID YOU KNOW?

ONLY 13%
of employees use the corporate intranet daily.

31%
never use it.

Source: Prescient Digital Media

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Mission-Critical Importance of a Mobile Communications App

Avera Health provides high-quality care at more than 300 locations across South Dakota, including 34 hospitals and 200 clinics. With 20,000 employees and physicians, Avera is the state's largest private employer.

Avera Health's small, but dedicated internal communications team relied heavily on email communications and various other channels, including a corporate intranet, printed and e-newsletters aimed at specific audiences, and their daily departmental meetings. The communications team, led by Jen McKeown, recognized that these tools weren't consistently reaching three core audiences for internal messages: non-clinical employees, executives, and physicians.

The App: Avera Link

In 2018, McKeown conducted a thorough internal audience analysis to understand where the communication gaps were happening. Through this audit, she learned that one key challenge with Avera's corporate intranet was that, due to a security firewall, employees could only access it at work from a desktop computer. That left a large population of employees who had no access to information about payroll and benefits, safety procedures, and other important information.

McKeown and her communications team decided that a mobile app was the right solution to fill communications gaps across the company. An overwhelming majority of employees at Avera were already smartphone owners who used mobile apps in their everyday lives. McKeown turned to theEMPLOYEEapp to create a customized, branded mobile app, which the company named Avera Link. The app serves as a centralized, always-on platform where their three core audiences (and other stakeholders) can quickly and easily access and search for the information they need when it's convenient for them — whether at work or at home.

"A mobile app was the obvious choice for improving communication and increasing engagement across our large, distributed employee base," said McKeown. "It is easy for my team to populate the app with approved content and segment internal messages based on the audience."

The app was put to its first test later that year during a potential active shooter incident at one of Avera's health campuses. Luckily, no one was hurt, the gunman was quickly taken into custody, and employees were able to stay safe by following the hospital's lockdown procedures, which were readily available on the app.

Then, in 2019, Avera Link became the primary employee communications hub after three large tornadoes touched down in Sioux Falls, causing extreme damage to the area, including some of Avera's locations. The natural disaster knocked Avera's intranet and public website offline. At that moment, the mobile app became an essential communications tool that kept employees informed and aware of where the greatest danger was located, and how to respond. After the tornadoes passed through, McKeown's team posted a video of a press conference on the app, showcasing how Avera planned to rebuild after the storms.

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These incidents turned out to be training for what followed in 2020, when Avera faced the biggest challenge of all: a global pandemic that was spreading rapidly within the community. The COVID-19 pandemic is when Avera's mobile app became a lifeline for its entire staff, along with patients and other healthcare organizations in the region.

Mobile App Becomes Primary 'Source of Truth'

Early in the pandemic, the communications team's biggest challenge was sharing accurate information about COVID-19 itself. New data about how the virus was spread, its potential severity, and how to diagnose and treat it was constantly evolving. This meant that the communications team had to update clinical guidelines and safety procedures each time a new piece of information came in. Minimizing employees' exposure to the deadly virus was paramount, and transparency with staff was a top priority for the communications team. To facilitate these goals, the communications team and other stakeholders at Avera formed a COVID response team.

"It was important to have a strategy, so our employees felt safe and informed at work. Our top goals were to share reliable information as soon as we had it, and to ensure that our workers could make the right decisions based on that information to ensure the best patient outcomes," McKeown said.

> " In a situation of this magnitude, what our employees needed the most were reliable sources of truth. There was so much information coming in daily about COVID that it was overwhelming for our staff. We knew that some of these truth sources needed to be mobile-friendly because some of our employees were forced to be furloughed or were working remotely due to COVID. That **made our decision to launch a mobile app almost two years before seem almost prophetic.**"
>
> — Jen McKeown, Head of Internal Communications, Avera Health

Thanks to the Avera Link mobile app, employees across the entire organization, including frontline workers and those working remotely due to precautions, were able to access the latest updates to safety protocols and receive vital information about PPE, infection rates in the state, and more via the mobile app.

Because previous experiences had taught the team that the intranet was not the best source for staff beyond the corporate firewall, the Avera Link app became the primary method of information sharing. For example, the internal newsletter for physicians and hospital leaders, called the Green Line, became a digital asset that was pushed out via the mobile app.

"A very high percentage of our leaders at Avera signed up for the mobile app," McKeown said. "Around half of all leaders at Avera have their own profiles set up on the app, so we can send them targeted information."

The Avera mobile app became the central hub for all things COVID-19, including:

- Dedicated COVID-19 folders in which documents could be updated or swapped out in real time as new data came in, reducing confusion for medical staff
- A two-way COVID-19 inbox, accessible from the corporate intranet and the mobile app, that allowed staff to ask questions and share feedback — through which employees sent more than 4,000 messages
- Information about COVID-19 town hall remote calls that replaced daily "stand-up meetings" for staff, which were no longer possible
- COVID-19 daily news updates and articles, with push notifications, that alerted staff when new information was available
- Central repository for frontline workers where more than 70 clinical guideline documents were housed and helped staff understand how to diagnose and treat COVID patients — access to these guidelines via the mobile app saved lives
- Data-based predictions on when a COVID-19 surge would hit the region, so frontline managers could plan and schedule accordingly
- Information on COVID-19 restrictions, such as where staff could and could not travel, and other mitigation strategies to help them stay safe when they're at home
- Messages of inspiration and support for staff, including a frontline worker appreciation initiative, daily prayers, and resources for mental health support
- Video messages for medical staff members from Avera's CEO and Chief Medical Officer to engage, inform, and encourage the staff
- Promotion of Avera's COVID Hotline, a place to refer patients who'd been screened for COVID symptoms for more resources on drive-thru testing facilities, isolation protocols, and more — 27,000 calls crossed this hotline in 2020
- Shared information on Avera's telemedicine program, so frontline workers could stay informed on care options that minimized exposure to COVID while staying connected to high-risk patients
- Target content and messages to specific user groups (e.g., physicians, nurses, supervisors, non-clinical staff, etc.)
- Promotion of an internal support program for healthcare workers with COVID symptoms
- Mini-surveys, pushed out via the mobile app, to collect feedback from employees on the quality and quantity of internal information-sharing — this allowed the communications team to make adjustments to the strategy as needed

Avera Link proved itself to be such a valuable resource for employees and patients that McKeown opened up the app to allow public access to certain documents and messages for other healthcare and community organizations in the region.

"It's crucial to have at least some of your internal communications channels available via mobile, because you never know when your staff is going to have access to anything but their cell phones in an emergency," she said.

Rolling Out a Communications Mobile App During a Global Health Crisis

Margaret Mary Health (MMH) is a not-for-profit, critical access hospital located in Batesville, Indiana. The hospital employs 850 team members across 12 locations, and serves more than 65,000 patients. The team at MMH was all too aware that their internal communications methods were outdated. They had email, an intranet, and various newsletters, but they were all housed in different locations, and not all team members had access to each channel.

To make it easier for employees to access internal messages, MMH needed a channel that was more centralized. And, with a team that was increasingly growing and becoming more diverse, with more employees working remotely, a mobile app was a clear choice to help solve their problems.

"When we were looking for an app, we were looking at improving internal communications and making sure that employees felt communicated to and empowered," explained Adam Fischmer, marketing specialist at MMH.

Knowing that employees were going to be at the center of any new tool, they surveyed their team to learn what they would want to see in an app, and what would make them want to use it.

"Ultimately, employees are who we're doing this for. We want everyone to be informed. And we want everybody to receive the same message as everyone else," said Fischmer.

After reviewing many potential solutions, MMH turned to theEMPLOYEEapp for help with a customized and branded mobile app. The plan was to roll out the app in phases, starting with managers and supervisors in early March 2020.

But, COVID-19 changed MMH's sense of urgency and accelerated the pace of the rollout. By mid-March, the United States was beginning to shut down and the need to move up the timeline of their rollout became very clear. While a methodical, phased rollout was the plan, Fischmer and the team determined they needed to get the app out to everyone quickly, and they set aside their original content strategy to focus primarily on COVID-19 communication.

The App: MMH Connect

A mobile communications app was an easy, cost-effective way to take their communication strategy to the next level. Branded as MMH Connect, the customized app allowed them to:

- Create a centralized repository for documents, workplace resources, and other on-the-job information
- Target content and messages to specific user groups (e.g., physicians, nurses, supervisors, non-clinical staff, etc.)
- Increase engagement across the organization with the ability to like and comment, and because multimedia content was easier to share.
- Improve team morale by having employees feel more connected to one another and the organization.
- Consolidate traditional communication tools by creating a go-to resource that houses all employee resources.

"The fact that we could target the content and get it to specific groups was a huge deal for us," said Fischmer. "And, the fact that we can hand over some of the permissions to managers means they can make the app their own. We're really excited about that."

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With MMH Connect, communicators could share pandemic-specific content that their employees needed to stay safe and be effective in their jobs. This included daily video updates from their CEO and senior management team, daily graphs on COVID-19 cases at the hospital, information on policy changes, and quotes and words of encouragement.

Outside of pandemic-related news, MMH Connect became the go-to channel for sharing all regular employee communications. This includes weekly video updates from leadership, patient testimonials, benefits, discounts, new team member announcements, the cafe menu, meeting recordings, and more.

> " The biggest lesson of 2020 has to be the fact that people during the pandemic are just hungry for any information and the most accurate information. People in the healthcare industry were understanding that this was a fluid situation. Things were going to be changing all the time. It was a new disease. So, the thing for us was, we needed to have a unified, cohesive message that everybody could share. Because you have everybody in our organization getting questions from their friends, their family of what's going on."
>
> — Adam Fishmer, Marketing Specialist, Margaret Mary Health

MMH employees were incredibly receptive to the mobile app. Most employees were already familiar with using apps in their daily lives. They latched on because it was easy to use, the content was targeted (and therefore relevant) to them, and the app's push notifications clearly indicated when there was an important update or action they needed to take.

Launching an App During a Public Health Crisis: Results

Launching a new tool during a global pandemic may sound daunting, but the MMH team knew the importance of reaching all workers and stakeholders, including their board of directors, with critical information and updates. As a result of the strategy to put the employee experience first, the team has seen some great wins in their first year of using the app, such as:

• 96% of staff have registered for the app
• Positive feedback from employees, who go out of their way to tell the team in charge of the app that they like the content and look forward to daily updates
• A level playing field for all workers, including team members without access to a computer or corporate email address

The MMH app has opened up the future of communication at the company to allow them to continue to improve targeted content, give them a way to easily poll all employees for feedback, and the ability to enable two-way communication. The team plans to begin an "Ask the CEO" series where any employee can ask any question to the CEO that he will answer through the app to increase trust and transparency.

UHS Reaches Essential Healthcare Employees During COVID-19 Crisis

United Health Services (UHS) is the largest, comprehensive healthcare system and leading private employer in the greater-Binghamton, New York region. With more than 60 locations, the system is composed of providers and supporting organizations serving a population of over 600,000 people.

UHS partnered with theEMPLOYEEapp in 2019. Less than a year after having the mobile communications tool, their communications strategy was put to the test as the COVID-19 pandemic began to sweep across the United States.

"As a healthcare organization, we [were] on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. We launched our app for employees a little less than a year ago, but it has never been as important to our organization as it is now," said Steven Perlin, Internal and External Communications Manager at UHS.

UHS, as a large healthcare organization serving populations in New York, had providers and nurses dealing with COVID-19 daily, and senior leaders, managers, and admin all behind the scenes, working to keep their community safe and informed. In an unprecedented situation, they were constantly having to update and change policies and it was critical that these changes be communicated to their teams quickly.

The App: UHS Connection

With most of their non-hospital locations closed, elective procedures canceled, and the staff reduced to only essential employees, UHS didn't want to lose the line of communication with their staff who were temporarily at home. These employees had no access to the corporate intranet, which was originally going to be a hub for COVID-19 information. The team quickly realized that the app was the best way to reach their entire staff.

"The app became one of the most important ways we were able to communicate with all of our 6,000 plus employees to keep them up to date, whether they were at home in quarantine, on the front lines, or in an office," said Perlin.

And the UHS Connection app became the one-stop-shop for all COVID-19 related information. The app housed clinical instructions, restrictions, policy and procedure changes, scenarios for almost every COVID-19 situation you could think of, HR information, and more. Through UHS Connection, employees even received letters from their President and CEO, thanking staff and preparing them for what was coming, as well as showcasing videos about the different, new programs going on at UHS — like their "Daily COVID-19 Task Force" report and their "Nursing Connections" report.

In addition to all the critical information, they also posed uplifting and motivational stories about their team and the local community all working together to fight the novel coronavirus.

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"The app became our lifeline to the employees who were home and here working every day. We have had more and more people sign up and tell us how happy they were to be able to get these updates right on their phone. In this time of extreme uncertainty, we were able to bring information right to the people who needed it, which wouldn't have been possible without UHS Connection and theEMPLOYEEapp."

— Steven Perlin, Communications Manager, UHS

UHS switched from a rarely-used collaboration tool to theEMPLOYEEapp, which met their employees' need to access critical information and allowed the internal communications team to reach employees where they were from the frontline, to the office, and their homes.

Since COVID-19 communications started being shared on the platform in the U.S., Perlin said that he has seen a 10x increase in post views.
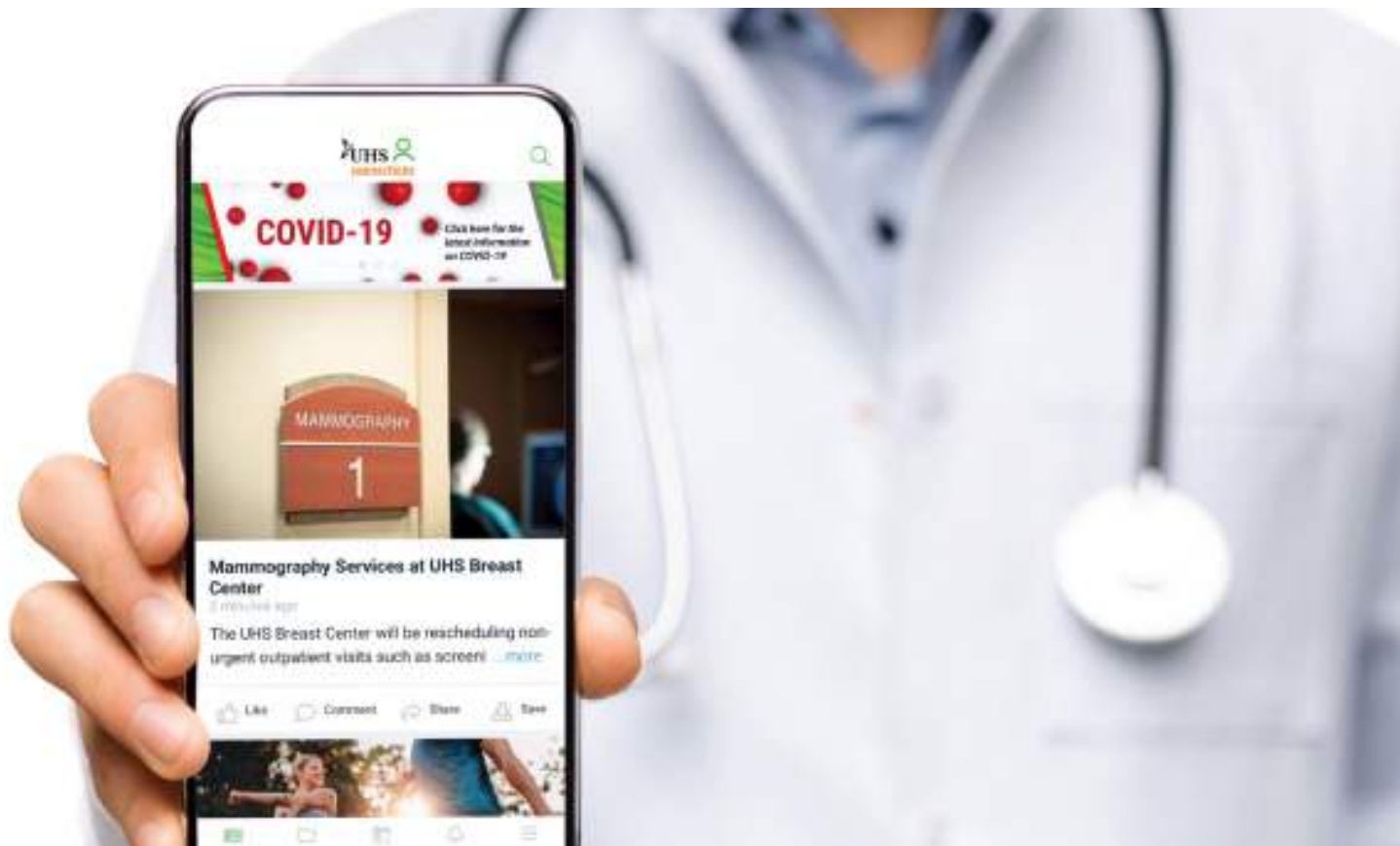
Mobile App: Buy, Build, or Something In-Between

We have examined some of the barriers that keep frontline workers from being highly engaged, and how some healthcare organizations have addressed this problem. We've reviewed the shortcomings of traditional technology tools such as email and Intranets. Now, let's take a deeper dive into mobile apps. Many healthcare organizations are looking to apps to get information to and engage their primarily deskless/frontline employees. But they may struggle with how to determine which features and capabilities matter the most.

The first question when it comes to deploying an internal communications app is whether to build your own or outsource to a solution provider. In many organizations, it is often the IT department that makes the decision on whether to buy an off-the-shelf app or build one that is completely customized from scratch. There are pros and cons to both, and several varying degrees of options in between.

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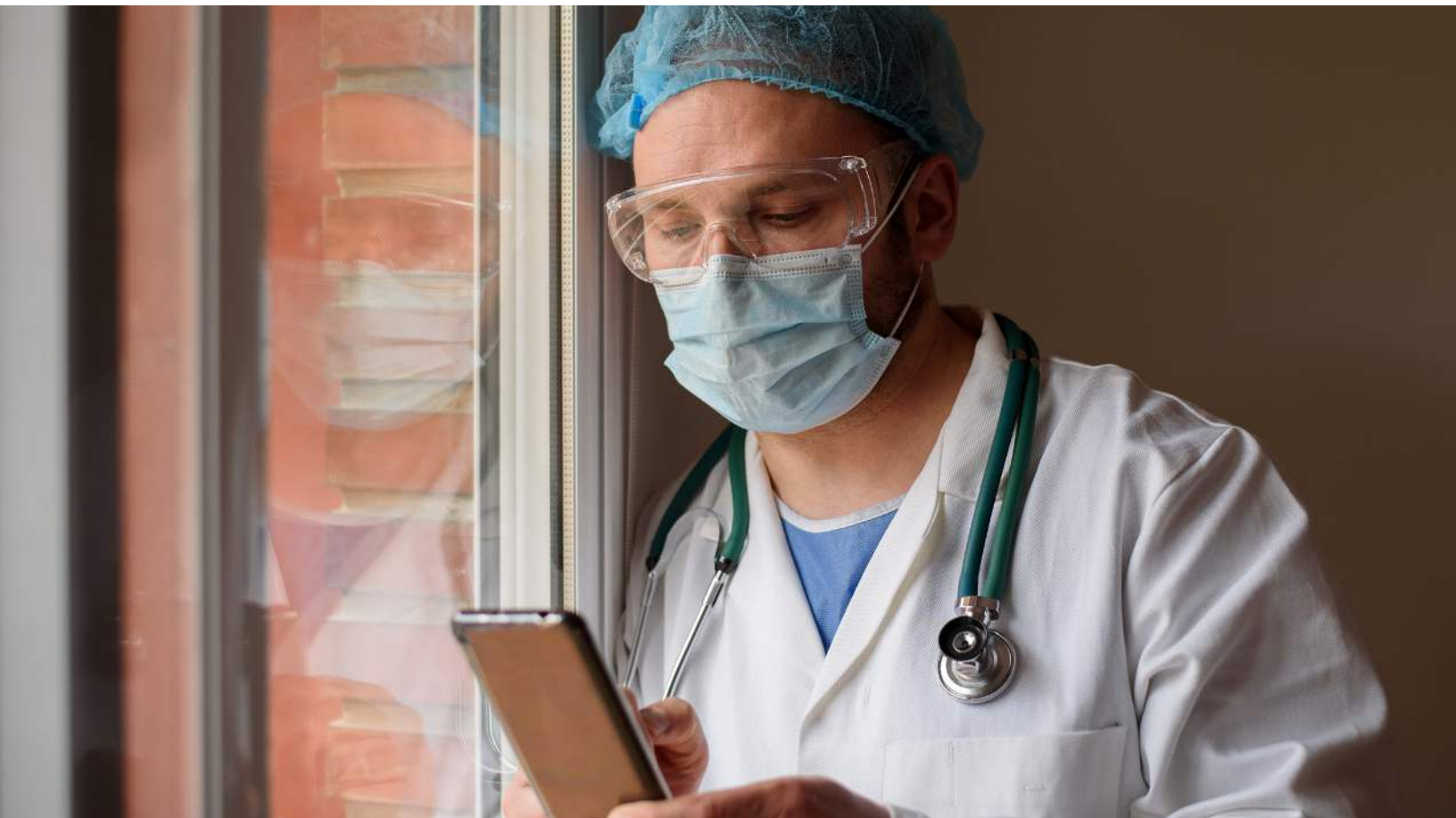
Building your own employee engagement mobile app might seem appealing at first, because you will be in complete control over what the product will look like and how it will function. This path can also be timeconsuming and costly. It is estimated that a typical in-house build of a mobile app can take 12-18 months, and can require hundreds of thousands of dollars to develop.[16] And this is to just complete the build. But what happens after? What happens when the next version of the Apple and Android operating systems are launched? Will the same resources still be available? This is precisely the challenge that gave rise to the software industry and cloud-based software solutions.

If your healthcare organization doesn't employ its own mobile development team, it may be faster and more cost-effective to bring in a technology partner. There are various and off-the-shelf solutions now available for employee communications and engagement. Working with a developer doesn't mean you'll automatically relinquish control over features, functionality, and the user experience. Rather, there are solutions that allow you to use their proprietary platform as a starting point, and then customize features, capabilities, and analytics depending on your organization's unique needs.

To help you get started, here are key functions and best practices to consider:

- Turn-key app solutions that easily and securely integrates with any employee database and the major single sign-on providers, making for an easy and rapid deployment.
- Customizable in branding so the app has a look and feel that is consistent with your healthcare organization.
- Flexibility in content, including the ability to upload video and audio files, all document and file types, the ability to link to outside resources, portals, and other apps.
- Available on any mobile or web-enabled device (including desktop computers) and with or without an Internet connection.
- The ability to segment and target content and messages for different audiences (e.g. clinical vs. non-clinical staff, different locations, etc.).
- Easy for employees to use and interact with—a familiar app experience, especially for those who are not tech-savvy.
- The ability to add content from other communicationo channels (e.g. corporate Intranet) quickly and easily in case of an emergency.

Ideally, your mobile app (or any other new technology solution) should make employee communications seamless for everyone. Engagement is about being timely, targeted and relevant - sending the right information to the right employees at the right time.The right mobile app solution can help you achieve this. It should be an intuitive platform that is easy for your team to maintain and add new content to, but that's also secure, so your employees feel safe using it.

HR and internal communications teams must be able to deliver information to various groups of employees, including different practice areas and locations based on how your organization's employee database is structured. And finally, a successful mobile app should provide you with the important analytics and data to measure success, show ROI to senior leadership, and demonstrate the importance of communications and your newly-found way of engaging with employees to the business success of your organization.

About theEMPLOYEEapp

theEMPLOYEEapp® is a customized mobile application created to help corporate communicators and HR leaders connect to their frontline and office workers. theEMPLOYEEapp's mobile solution allows organizations across every industry sector to achieve their employee engagement objectives, reduce employee turnover, and create a more inclusive culture for all workers, including the estimated 2.7 billion workers worldwide who are deskless and do not use a corporate email address. For more information, visit theemployeeapp.com or follow us on LinkedIn.

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