

Digital Front Door

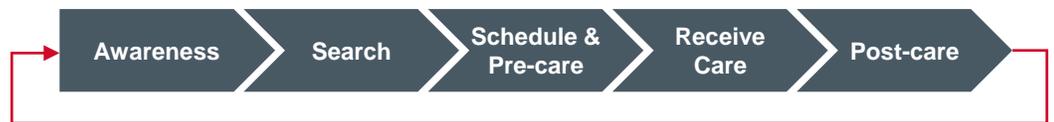
Educational briefing for non-IT executives

Executive summary

Seamless digital interactions are the norm in our daily lives, and patients demand the same experience when it comes to health care. Those expectations may seem daunting, but a digital front door is a win-win strategy for both patients and providers. It can expand access, drive patient activation, improve operational efficiency, and lower costs—all while satisfying patients.

What is a digital front door?

A digital front door is a strategy for engaging and empowering patients at every major touchpoint of their care journey. That journey begins long before they decide to receive care and continues after they return home from a hospital or clinic. A successful digital front door strategy leverages technology to improve the patient experience across the entire care continuum, starting with their awareness of your organisation and continuing through post-care disease management and prevention.



How is a digital front door different from a patient portal?

An effective digital front door strategy doesn't depend on any single product, and it isn't as simple as building a patient portal or having a mobile app. A successful digital front door relies on organising internal stakeholders and processes to support a multichannel, comprehensive digital patient experience. This may include a patient portal, but it's more about leveraging technology broadly to enable greater access, improve care efficiency, and provide a frictionless experience for your patients. Your strategy should also consider how disparate digital access points will operate together.

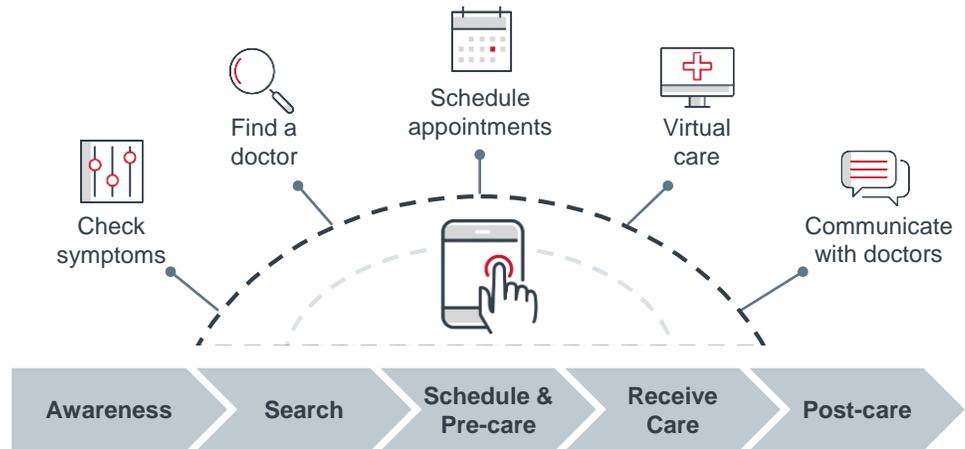
The case for a digital front door

- 1 Patients want greater access to and control over their data.** Today's global consumers aren't satisfied with the status quo and want readily available access to health information and services. Easing access allows patients to become more informed and active participants in their own health care.
- 2 Patient activation is tied to better health outcomes.** Activated patients are more likely to proactively address gaps in care, access appropriate care settings, prepare for appointments, and follow treatment plans. These self-management behaviours are correlated with improved clinical outcomes.¹
- 3 Expanded digital access streamlines care delivery and lowers costs.** Digital tools confer a range of operational and financial benefits across the care continuum. With the right digital tools, health care organisations can:
 - Steer patients to appropriate acuity settings to avoid unnecessary costs
 - Offer immediate ways to engage with clinicians to provide more timely care
 - Provide new channels for access to relieve clinicians' capacity constraints

1) Studies have shown that highly activated patients are more likely to have measures such as body mass index, blood pressure, and cholesterol in the normal range.

Source: Hibbard J, Greene J, "What The Evidence Shows About Patient Activation: Better Health Outcomes and Care Experiences; Fewer Data on Costs," Health Affairs, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/pdf/10.1377/hlthaff.2012.1061>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis

Applications of the digital front door across the care continuum



The digital front door in action



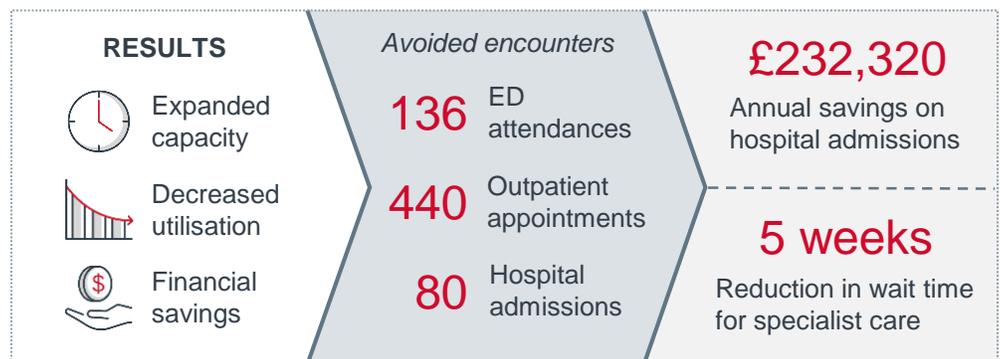
CASE
EXAMPLE

East Surrey Hospital

NHS Hospital, 611 beds • Surrey, England, UK

The inflammatory bowel disease service at East Surrey Hospital was experiencing long wait times for outpatient care due to strained staff capacity. The service adopted the Patients Know Best web-based portal, which allows patients to access their medical record and communicate directly with their care team. Messages are triaged by trained administrative staff, allowing clinicians to focus on complex cases.

The service reported positive results a year after the initial implementation. Most significantly, patients received immediate care when needed; the time to obtain advice decreased from **more than six weeks to within 48 hours**.



Five action items to get started

- 1. Establish strategic objectives.** Define your organisation's strategic objectives and consider how a digital front door will help you achieve them.
- 2. Define and track metrics.** Establish measurable goals tied to strategic objectives and track progress against goals throughout the process.
- 3. Gather patient input.** Regularly engage end users to understand what patients value and use when it comes to the digital experience.
- 4. Consider partnerships.** Determine the level of investment needed to support these capabilities and whether it makes sense to build or buy.
- 5. Ensure back-end support.** Make sure the right people, processes, and back-end technology are in place to support your front-end solution.

Source: "Closing the digital gap: Shaping the future of UK healthcare," Deloitte, June 2019, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/life-sciences-health-care/deloitte-uk-life-sciences-health-care-closing-the-digital-gap.pdf>; Advisory Board interviews and analysis.

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