

An Optimum Patient Recruitment Formula: The Combination of Technology + Empathy

The 83bar platform improves productivity, while maintaining patient-centricity



Featured Industry Experts



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Introduction

Technology is growing at a fast pace in patient recruitment. Completing a symptom survey online is the norm for even the least tech-savvy consumers. In addition, digital tools supported by artificial intelligence (AI) are improving speed and reducing costs to identify qualified candidates for clinical trials.

At the same time, patients still require personal support to access clinical trial information, understand trial parameters, and commit to therapies for successful study completion. Moreover, smaller rare disease groups and trials with tailored therapies require one-on-one management.

The human touch bridges the gap between patients' searches and sponsors' needs.



The Role of Technology: What stakeholders expect for trial recruitment

Patients want to find answers fast to their requests and inquiries. They want options and flexibility for interaction, including online portals, texting, and live chats.

Healthcare providers want to operate within their normal workflow. Unqualified or noncommittal study candidates are a pain point for site coordinators.

Sponsors want to refer ready-to-enroll patients to investigators, which means they need efficient, cost-effective outreach campaigns to deliver results. Yet, technology is not the silver-bullet solution.

When prospective candidates are identified through “mining” of medical records or other sources, the patient information may be incomplete, or the site coordinator may still need to verify a great deal of qualification criteria. From the patients’ viewpoint, many senior-aged consumers prefer personal contact, and may even be suspicious of unsolicited calls about trials.



The Role of Empathy: Why an experienced clinical educator can make a difference

A strong patient recruitment team staffed by clinical education specialists will address barriers to access, education, commitment, and adherence through a different lens than other centers. These skills include:

#1 Empathy

The innate ability to understand the patient's situation is key — their illness or physical limitations, uncertainty or fear, frustrations, and financial impact. Meredyth Glass, director of operations for the 83bar Clinical Contact Center, describes this trait by saying:

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One of the things that I think is special is their clinical background. They have been trained to really listen, to know what questions to ask, and to respond so they're connecting with prospective patients.

”

#2 Communication

Conveying medical information is vital as the clinical education specialist interfaces with patients, caregivers, healthcare providers, site coordinators, and sponsors. They are adept at adjusting to meet each stakeholder's needs.

Evidence indicates a strong relationship between communication skills and the patient's ability to commit to trial protocols. Meredyth explains how this works, "We recognize our clients have serious compliance needs and that a large part of our conversations needs to be scripted. So, our technology allows us to have hundreds or thousands of talking points organized in such a way that the specialists have access to the right talking point at the right time. Together, the patients know that they've been listened to, they feel supported, and the specialists are able to use appropriate approved language."

#3 Connectivity

The image of a call center is somewhat of a misnomer for 83bar. "If you picture a building or warehouse full of operators with headsets, that's not our setup," says Chad Mason, VP of the Clinical Contact Center. "Most of my career has been in healthcare, including a lot of traditional contact centers with thousands of agents scattered across the globe. They're usually handling some kind of customer service-related question or inquiry." Chad continues:

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"Our 83bar operation is different because our specialists are in a distributed at-home network rather than a central office. And our rapid response platform connects agents to patients in minutes, not hours."

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#4 Teamwork

Internally, the 83bar management team works across teams of developers, IT, client service, and contact center agents to measure performance, interpret delivery data, and meet sponsor objectives.

Reaching out to external groups

Externally, there are innovative ways to involve patient advocates, influencers, and ambassadors. As explained by Sue Hrim, Chief Clinical Officer for 83bar, "We engage with advocacy groups in two primary ways: one, outreach and education; and two, training and development. For campaigns, advocates review concepts and copy for real-world interpretation and more personal language on the daily challenges of a disease or treatment. For our training, we use patient advocates to review our clinical education specialists' scripts, develop FAQs, and share their experiences with relevant treatments, procedures, or clinical trials."





Technology + Empathy: How they address the needs of the whole patient

Patient recruitment services increasingly need to support patients using a holistic approach. A strong partner can understand HIPAA requirements, talk patients through trial protocols, work with caregivers, explain diagnostic tests along with the therapy, schedule site interviews, and even coordinate transportation or mail kits to their homes.

“During the pandemic, we saw a sharp increase in phone contacts from consumers who had questions beyond the pill,” recalls Sue. “These included questions about appointment logistics, implications for current medications, and costs. So, we often converse with them on issues like how they coordinate with multiple specialists or the concept of randomization or placebo-control in clinical trials.” Talented clinical education specialists enhance the patient experience while overcoming barriers — including psychological, cognitive, economic, social, and cultural. When a patient is concerned with questions about contraindications and juggling medications, an education specialist with clinical experience can address their

concerns and know how to refer them to a provider.

In these different situations, the education specialist is acting as a knowledgeable concierge sometimes and at other times, an enthusiastic cheerleader.

Meredyth recounts a patient scenario, “Everyone’s telling me they have the newest and greatest treatment, but why are you different?” A person who has a lot of emotional intelligence and a lot of empathy is going to be able to stop the conversation, pick up on that hesitation and address it right then before it has time to fester. And that’s where that empathy really makes a difference.”



What's Next: Further optimization of the tech-enabled empathy formula

Chad sees a continued focus on patient outcomes. “Really understanding what that journey is, and offering not just solutions for the immediate need, but also looking at that long-term need. We always put empathy and personal touch into our service offerings — not just queuing them up for a sale,” Chad says.

Sue envisions, “In the future, we will continue to teach patients to advocate for themselves, leveraging the experiences of patient groups. This means building on the simple tactic of patient-doctor discussion guides to better empower patients to be more than just ‘receivers’ of clinical information or direction.”

The right balance of technology and talent drives cost-efficiency and enhances satisfaction for whole patient success. 83bar is a strong partner for patient recruitment solutions, offering innovative technology along with talented people who understand patient needs. “I would say 83bar combines the talent that has set us apart from our competitors, with highly empathetic clinical education specialists to provide that personal touch and solutions that patients are looking for,” Chad concludes.

Meredyth sums it up, “I think we’re very effective at using technology to solve a number of problems. It allows us to remain compliant for our clients so that all the legal requirements of conversations and marketing discussions are met. This is especially critical in the clinical trial space. In addition, it allows us to support our team in real time with training and coaching. And perhaps most importantly, it allows us to have personalized conversations with patients while meeting our clients’ compliance needs.

Learn more about our Patient Activation Platform at 83bar.com or set up a short call with us today.

Schedule a Call



About 83bar, Inc.

83bar, Inc. manages the patient journey from symptom to solution. It empowers patients with education to help self-advocate and expedite a positive healthcare outcome. The proprietary 4-part LEAN (Locate, Educate, Activate, Navigate) System delivers ready-to-act patients to medical providers, on behalf of our medical device, medical diagnostics, and medical sciences partners. Over the last 5 years, the company has completed over 2 million prospective patient conversations resulting in more than 100,000 successful patient pathway outcomes across more than 20 therapeutic areas and associated diseases. 83bar is a member of the HealthQuest Capital portfolio of companies. To learn more, visit www.83bar.com