

White Paper

The Precision Playbook: Driving Service Line Growth in a Privacy-first World

A practical guide for healthcare marketers



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The new reality of service line growth

Healthcare marketing is at a critical turning point. Budgets are shrinking, patient behaviors are shifting, and privacy regulations are redefining how marketers engage and convert audiences. For healthcare marketers, this demands a move from broad awareness to precision growth strategies rooted in measurable impact.

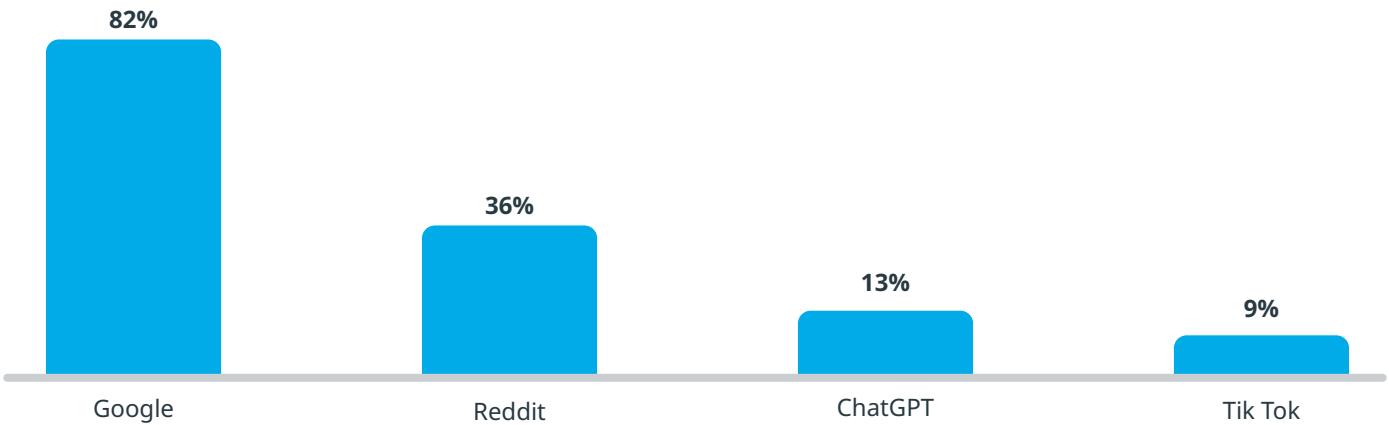
**A sharper focus on a tighter market**

Marketing budgets have dropped from 9.6% of revenue in 2023 to 7.2% in 2024, while 71% of healthcare leaders cite economic headwinds as their top challenge. With over half of marketing spend already going to digital, every dollar must be tied to outcomes. This pressure is accelerating the shift toward service line-level ROI, where growth is most visible and defensible.

**Digital is now the first stop for care**

The patient journey begins and evolves online. Google still dominates, with 70,000 health-related searches every minute and 7% of all queries tied to healthcare. But younger generations are increasingly turning to TikTok, reddit, and ChatGPT for medical information. With 86% of Americans using digital platforms for health research, a strong digital presence now directly impacts patient acquisition.

Most popular platforms for medical advice (By usage rate among Americans)





Instead of consulting a doctor,

1 in 4 Gen Zers

have used TikTok

for medical advice.

Source: [The Intake](#)



Privacy is rewriting the rules of engagement

The 2022 OCR Bulletin placed new limits on how marketers can track conversions and optimize campaigns under HIPAA. Traditional attribution models no longer apply. Leading teams are shifting toward privacy-first frameworks, reframing KPIs, and focusing on compliant strategies that still deliver performance and clarity.



Why service line campaigns matter now

Economic pressure, changing behaviors, and regulatory shifts all point to one clear imperative: marketing must be more intentional and accountable. Service line campaigns align messaging with patient intent, enable smarter budget allocation, and provide clearer performance visibility, making them essential for healthcare marketers navigating today's challenges.



Turning strategy into action for smarter service line growth

This whitepaper delivers proven tactics and a checklist of 16 actions you can take to sharpen your service line growth strategy in a privacy-first world. Whether you're building new campaigns or refining existing ones, this guide helps you execute with confidence, precision, and measurable impact.

OUR EXPERTS



ELISE HORST,
Associate Director,
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Data Innovation

Service line growth tactic #1

Target smarter in a privacy-first era

Reaching patients is more complex than ever. Platforms have restricted health-related targeting, the OCR Bulletin has tightened compliance standards, and patients are more cautious. However, they still expect relevant, personalized messaging. Healthcare marketers must now balance precision with privacy through smarter targeting strategies.

ENGAGE PATIENTS WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

Contextual targeting places ads alongside content patients are actively engaging with, like cancer screening articles or joint replacement videos, without relying on personal data. Partners like Peer39 and Comscore enable privacy-safe, health-specific targeting that drives stronger results: 60% of consumers remember these ads, and 74% prefer ads that match the content they're viewing. For example, a health system could run native ads alongside heart health articles or videos on atrial fibrillation to connect with patients actively seeking information on cardiac care.

TARGET WITH PRECISION WHILE PROTECTING PATIENT PRIVACY

Behavioral targeting enables campaigns to focus on de-identified audiences modeled on healthcare needs, like diagnoses, treatments, or prescriptions, using data from partners such as IQVIA. These privacy-compliant segments help direct budgets toward patients more likely to act, increasing ROI without sacrificing trust. In cardiac surgery, for instance, campaigns could reach patients likely to have late-stage heart failure, atrial fibrillation, or a history of heart attacks with online video ads positioning your system as a leader in advanced surgical care actively seeking information on cardiac care.

RECOMMENDATION:



Make contextual targeting a core pillar of your service line strategy. Even when behavioral data is available, contextual offers a compliant, scalable way to reach patients during high-intent moments.

RECOMMENDATION:



Use behavioral targeting to complement contextual strategies and drive deeper relevance. Partnering with us ensures seamless activation of compliant, performance-driven campaigns.

60% of consumers say they are likely to remember a contextually relevant ad.

74% of consumers say they like to see ads that match the content they are viewing.

Source: [Power of Context - IAS](#)

Service line growth tactic #2

Turn search intent into patient action

Search remains the front door to care and often your only chance to make an impression. But most healthcare strategies still fail to reflect how patients actually search across the care journey. To drive measurable service line growth, marketers must align SEO, paid search, and content strategy with patient needs and intent.

OUR APPROACH FOCUSES ON:

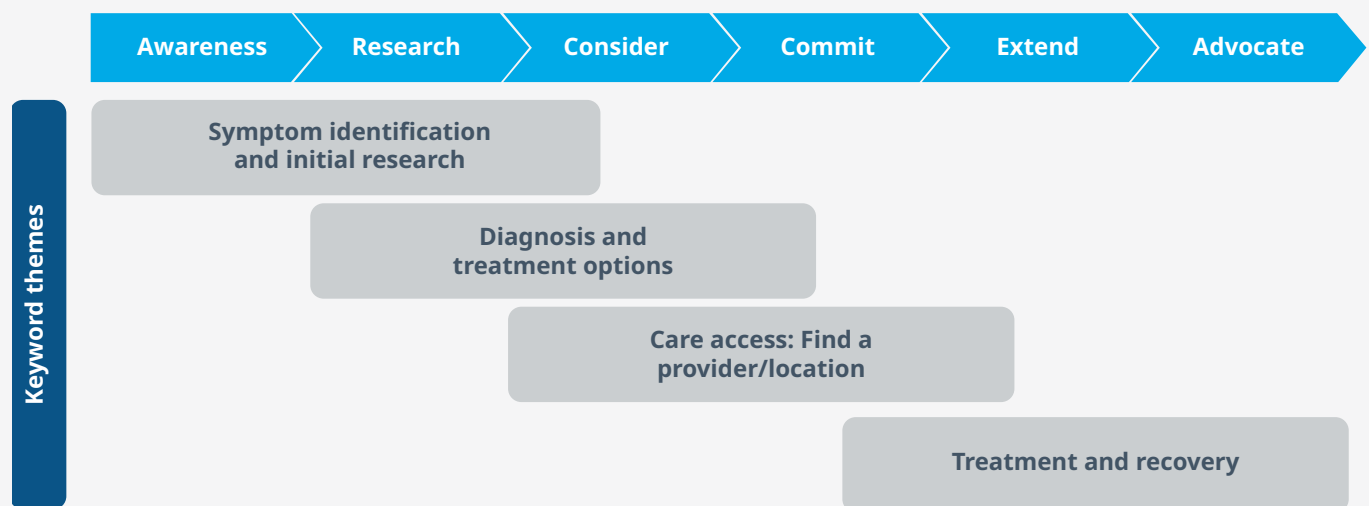
- Benchmarking performance to identify visibility gaps.
- Building personas using behavioral, demographic, and psychographic insights.
- Conducting competitive analysis to surface content and keyword opportunities.
- Mapping high-priority keywords to patient journey stages and service line goals.
- Creating and optimizing content that speaks directly to patient intent.
- Enhancing landing pages for conversion and continuously reporting results.

RECOMMENDATION:



Even with robust paid media programs, a patient-first content and SEO strategy is essential. Owning both paid and organic results maximizes visibility, reduces cost-per-conversion, and strengthens your brand in the moments that matter most.

KEYWORD THEMES BY PATIENT JOURNEY STAGE



Service line growth tactic #3

Engage physicians to strengthen referral volume

While consumer campaigns often take center stage, physicians remain a critical driver of patient volume, especially when consumer marketing plateaus. A referral from a trusted doctor carries major influence, following only insurance coverage and hospital reputation. Building alignment with referring providers can serve as a powerful multiplier for service line growth.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS BEGIN AND END THEIR DAY WITH TECHNOLOGY

3 in 4 physicians start their day on their phone

Computer/iPad (17%)
TV (4%)
Wearable device (1%)

52% of physicians end their day on their phone

Computer/iPad (29%)
TV (16%)
Wearable device (2%)

Source: [Sermo: The Digital Day of an HCP](#)

Physicians are also highly active online: 74% start their day on their phones, 65% spend over an hour online daily, and many check email for nearly an hour each day. That digital behavior creates targeting opportunity. With the right tools, marketers can reach physicians by clinical behavior, specialty, web activity, and affiliations, reinforcing service line campaigns and strengthening referral pipelines.

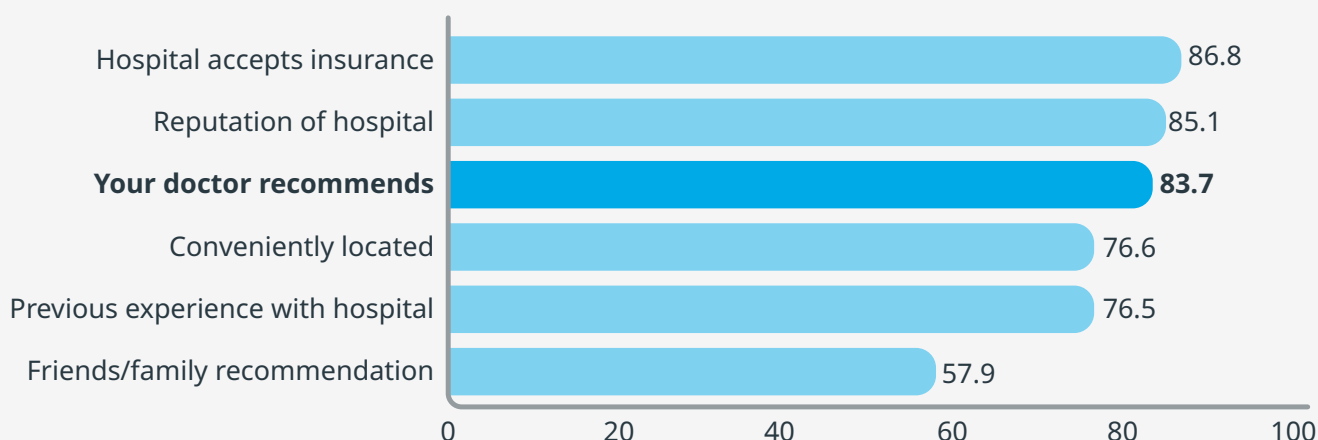
RECOMMENDATION:



Consider physician referrals a core part of your patient acquisition strategy, particularly in specialized service lines where physician expertise is a key part of a patient's decision as to where to get care.

IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICIAN MARKETING

How important would the following factors be to you when selecting a health care facility?



Service line growth tactic #4

Build a privacy-first measurement framework

In today's privacy-first landscape, healthcare marketers must rethink how performance is defined and measured, especially when service line growth is the goal. This is a good opportunity to reset how you're measuring success and re-focus on the KPIs that matter most: leads, patient visits, and appointments.

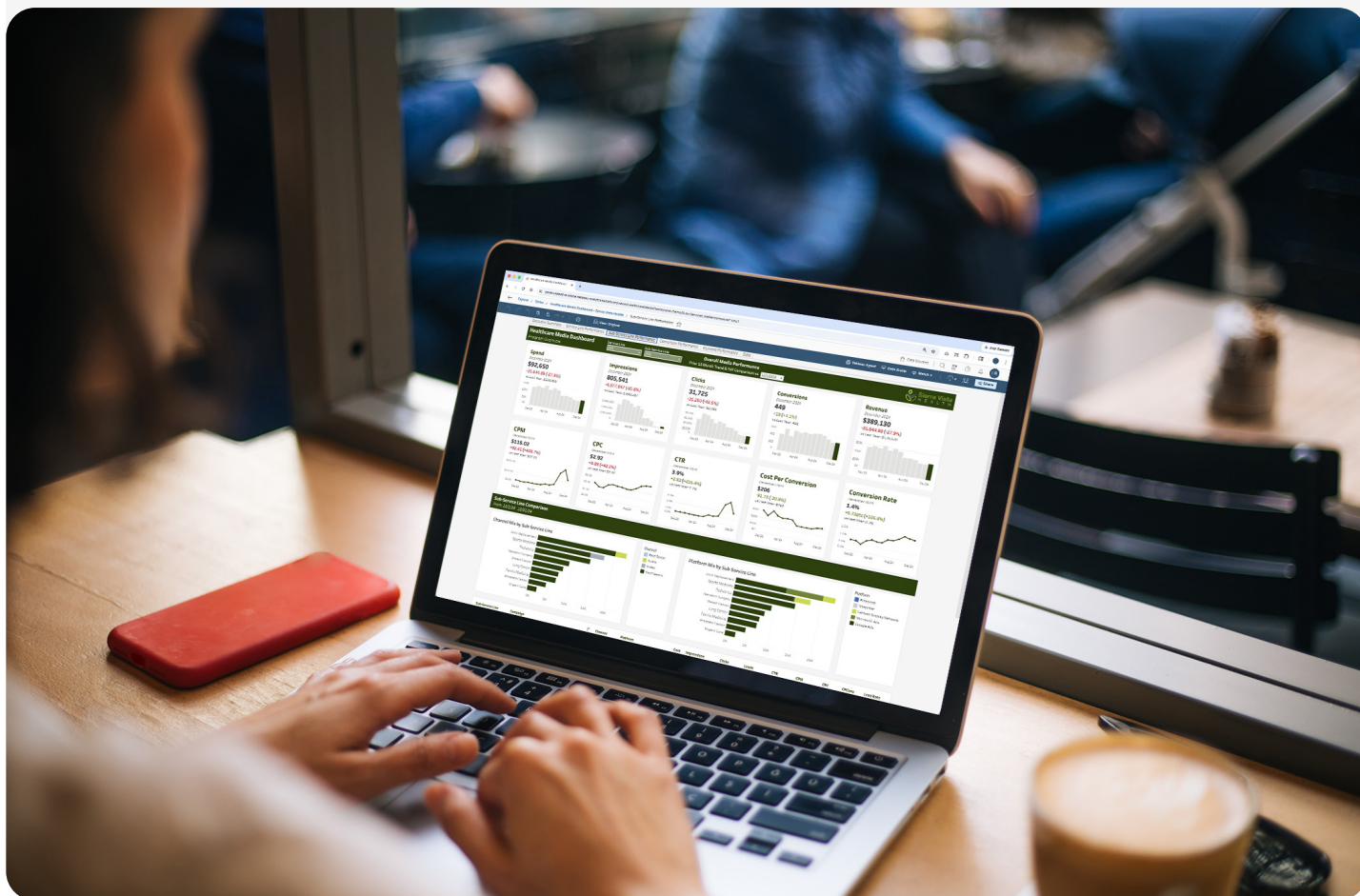
Build a compliance roadmap that outlines short- and long-term priorities, from removing risky platform pixels to onboarding tools that safely measure campaign impact. Web analytics and customer data platforms like Freshpaint, Piwik PRO, and Ours Privacy help restore visibility while aligning with regulatory standards.

Once foundational tools are in place, align your measurement strategy across teams. Ensure UTM governance and CRM discipline so you can consistently match media spend to patient actions by service line. Use platform data, offline insights, and manual inputs to fill visibility gaps and make smarter optimization decisions. Leverage tools like Healthcare Media Dashboard to connect the dots between bottom-of-funnel impact to paid media investment to enable clearer decisions.

RECOMMENDATION:



Take a conservative approach. Only use tracking and targeting solutions backed by a signed BAA and proven HIPAA compliance.



Strategies and focused actions built for impact

Your roadmap to smarter service line growth

In a privacy-first, resource-constrained world, healthcare marketers must do more than adapt. They must lead with precision. Growth depends on strategies that meet patients where they are, align messaging with intent, and prove value at every step.

Use this actionable checklist to align your team, streamline execution, and drive measurable service line performance across targeting, content, physician engagement, and compliant measurement.

TACTIC 1:

TARGET SMARTER IN A PRIVACY-FIRST ERA

Reach high-intent patients with precision and compliance

- Audit all targeting strategies for HIPAA-compliance.
- Leverage contextual targeting to align ads with relevant health content (e.g., knee surgery videos, cancer screening articles).
- Layer in HIPAA-compliant behavioral data from partners like IQVIA to reach modeled audiences using de-identified data.
- Lean into clinical expertise to clearly define target audiences and support more specific approaches to audience targeting.

TACTIC 2:

TURN SEARCH INTENT INTO PATIENT ACTION

Capture demand by aligning content, SEO, and paid search with the patient journey

- Benchmark service line visibility to identify search performance gaps.
- Map high-intent keywords to stages of the patient journey and specific service lines.
- Create and optimize content that answers patient questions and drives conversions.
- Leverage paid search to support growth goals in competitive service lines where organic search alone isn't enough.

TACTIC 3:

ENGAGE PHYSICIANS TO STRENGTHEN REFERRAL VOLUME

Use targeted outreach to align with and influence referring providers

- Target physicians digitally based on clinical behavior, specialty, and organizational affiliations.
- Run digital campaigns that promote specific service line offerings to relevant provider groups.
- Reinforce messaging through provider-focused emails and tools that support referrals.
- Track and connect referral activity to downstream patient volume by service line.

TACTIC 4:

BUILD A PRIVACY-FIRST MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Prove service line performance without compromising compliance

- Revisit KPIs to ensure you're measuring success based on business impact (leads, patient visits, appointments) rather than vanity metrics (impressions, CPM, etc.).
- Deploy privacy-compliant tools to measure metrics that matter (e.g., Freshpaint, Piwik Pro).
- Ensure data discipline across UTM tracking, CRM integration, and offline inputs.
- Leverage tools like Healthcare Media Dashboard to ensure your team and stakeholders have ongoing visibility into media investment and bottom-of-funnel results.



Gain clarity, prove impact, and drive service line growth with healthcare media dashboard

Healthcare Media Dashboard is our HIPAA-compliant performance dashboard built for healthcare marketers. It brings campaign data, patient actions, and service line outcomes together in one place, giving you the clarity to:

- ✓ See what's working across campaigns, channels, and service lines with a 13-month rolling lookback updated daily.
- ✓ Confidently report results with BAA-backed, privacy-safe data and expert insights from monthly and custom reports.
- ✓ Make faster, smarter decisions with role-based views for leadership, marketers, and service line managers.
- ✓ Align stakeholders and optimize spend with healthcare-specific reporting.

Ready to move from guesswork to growth?

Connect with our data experts for a personalized demo of Healthcare Media Dashboard and see how healthcare marketers are turning clarity into confident, data driven growth.

Request your personalized demo today

Learn how Healthcare Media Dashboard helps leading marketers turn clarity into confident, data-driven growth.

[Request a Demo](#)





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