

SHSMD26 CONNECTIONS

Health Care Marketing, Strategy & Communications

American Hospital Association Conference
September 27-29 ⚓ Baltimore

Digital Experience Is Care Experience. How Health Systems Can Redesign the Front Door

- **Patrick Soto**, Managing Partner, ab+a advertising
- **Francis Forte**, Executive Director Marketing & Communications



Francis Forte

Executive Director Marketing & Communications



Francis E. Forte, MBA, is the Executive Director, Marketing and Communications at Nicklaus Children's Health System, the top-ranked children's health system in South Florida.

With 25+ years in strategic marketing and corporate communications, she leads enterprise marketing campaigns, advises senior leaders on executive messaging, directs crisis and issues communications, and oversees social and multimedia storytelling.

In 2025, her team generated \$111M+ in earned media value and 8M+ social video views while supporting system expansion and access initiatives. She holds an MBA and BBA from Florida International University.



Patrick Soto

Managing Partner, ab+a advertising



Patrick started his career in Washington D.C., working in Political Advertising, leveraging data and human tendencies to get politicians elected.

15 years ago, he joined ab+a advertising to build a healthcare agency that focused on the greater good. Leveraging an enthusiasm for problem solving, human connection, technology and creativity to amplify our client's impact.

Patrick is passionate about all thing's music. And for this presentation, I hope you are too...



advertising



Learning Objectives

- Evaluate your organization's digital front door as a core component of care delivery.
- Recognize the experience and access signals that matter most to today's healthcare consumers.
- Apply a practical prioritization framework to define one high-impact, 60–90 day improvement opportunity.

The Truth



74%

of consumers expect healthcare digital experiences to match those of retail and travel brands

Healthcare is evaluated against every other consumer experience

Digital Access ≠ Optional

50%

Patients that experienced
Scheduling Friction
took their care elsewhere

*Access to Care: The Digital Imperative;
Perficient 2025*

80%

Patients switching providers cited
“ease of navigation” (including
digital/online services & support.)
as the **reason for leaving**.

*The difference between loyalty and leaving;
Accenture 2024*

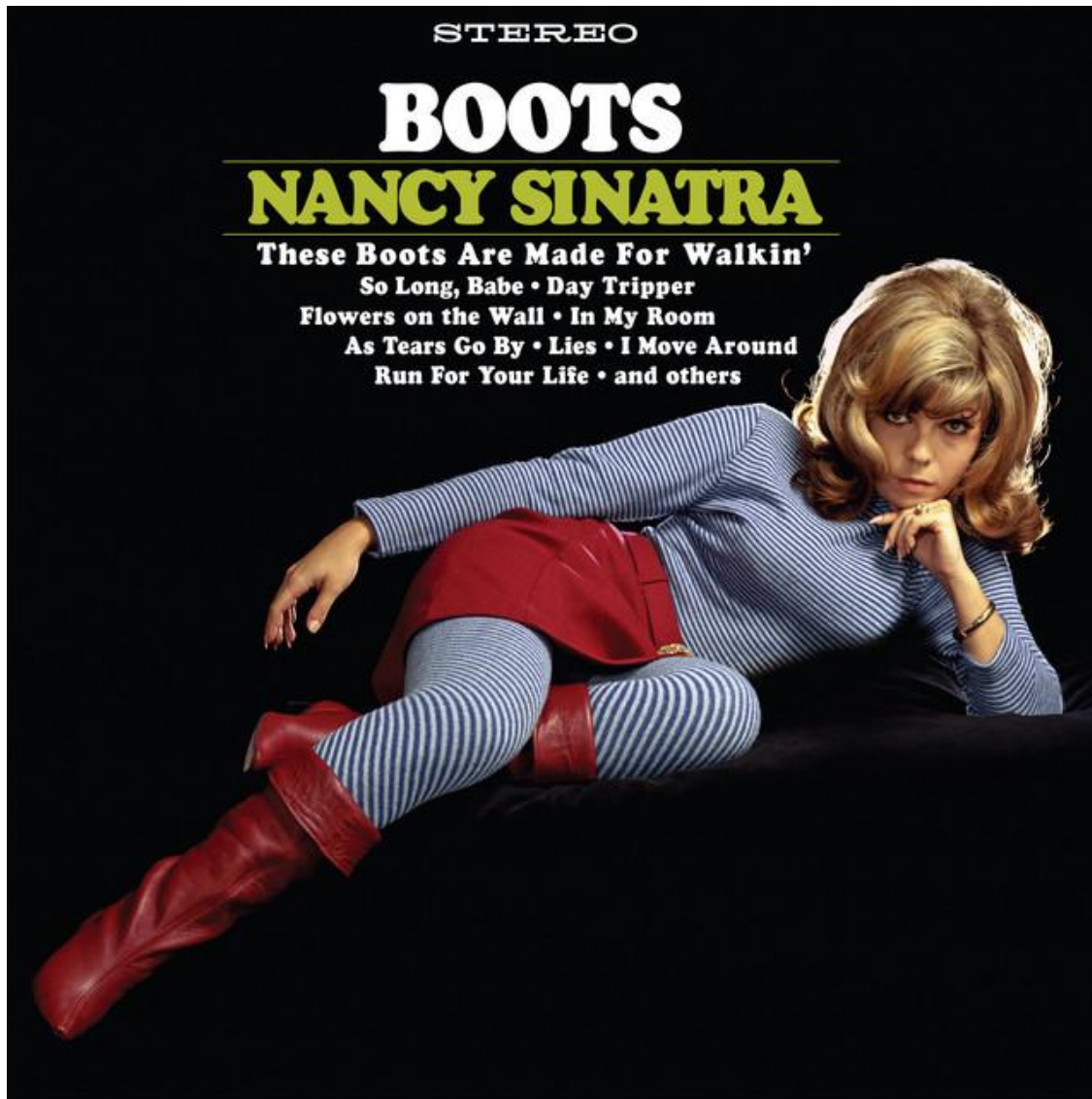
The Front Door Isn't A Website. It's a System.



Experience ecosystems matter more than isolated touchpoints

2X

End-to-end journey performance is over 2x more predictive of satisfaction than individual touchpoints

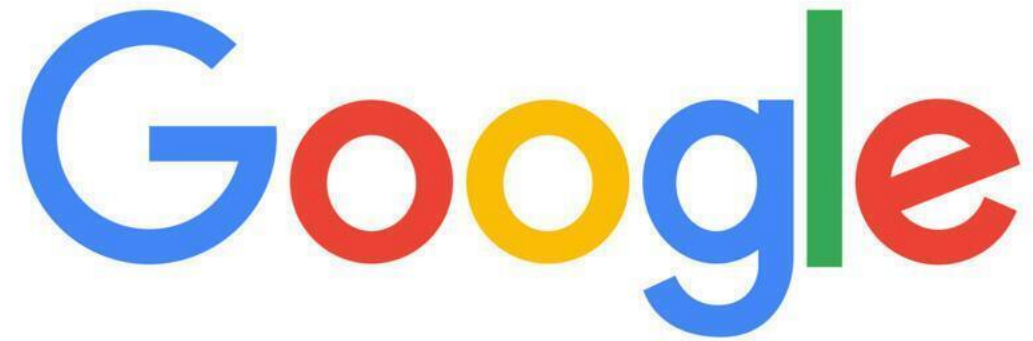


**Walking Through
the Digital Front Door**

The Audit

Trust Signals

Search & Discovery



A health system with a good digital front door



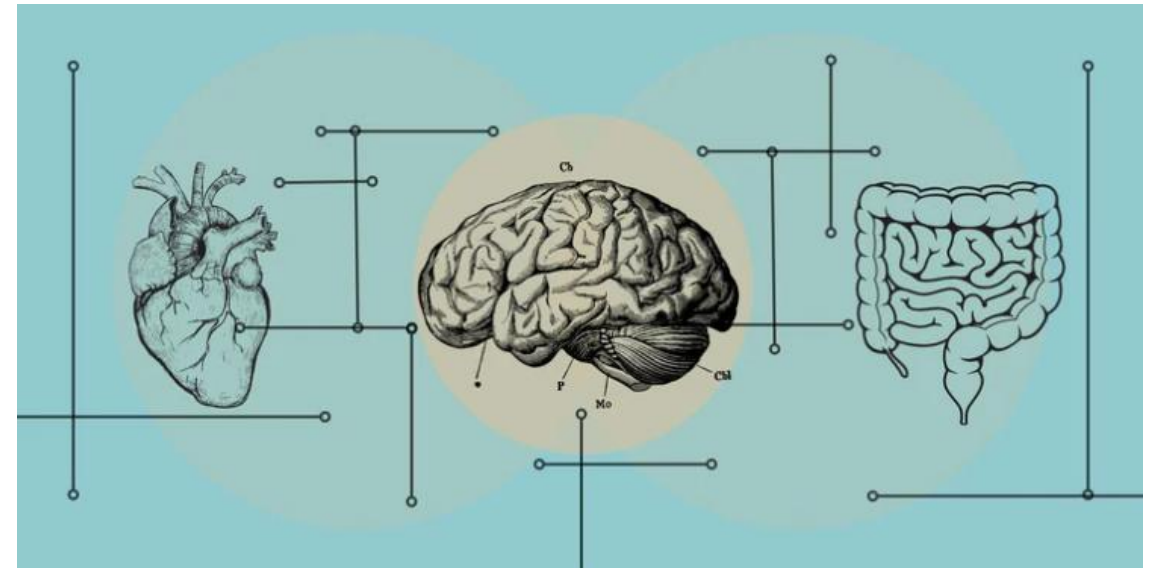
Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

Build Trust

Every Interaction Speaks To

- My kid needs a doctor.
- Can you help me?
- Can I trust you?
- How hard is this going to be?
- How quickly can I get in?



It Starts With Humans

95%

of purchasing decisions happen **subconsciously**, driven largely by **emotion**. [Harvard Business Review, 3 Myths What Consumers Want](#)

#1

Trust is the #1 driver of healthcare brand choice, influencing how consumers choose an organization, recommend it, and return for care. [NRC Health - Aligning Brand and Eperience to Build Consumer and Patient Trust in Healthcare, 2024](#)

85%

of consumers factor **perceived emotional safety + confidence + trust** in the brand, into their healthcare decisions. [Press Ganey - Healthcare Comnsumer Experience](#)

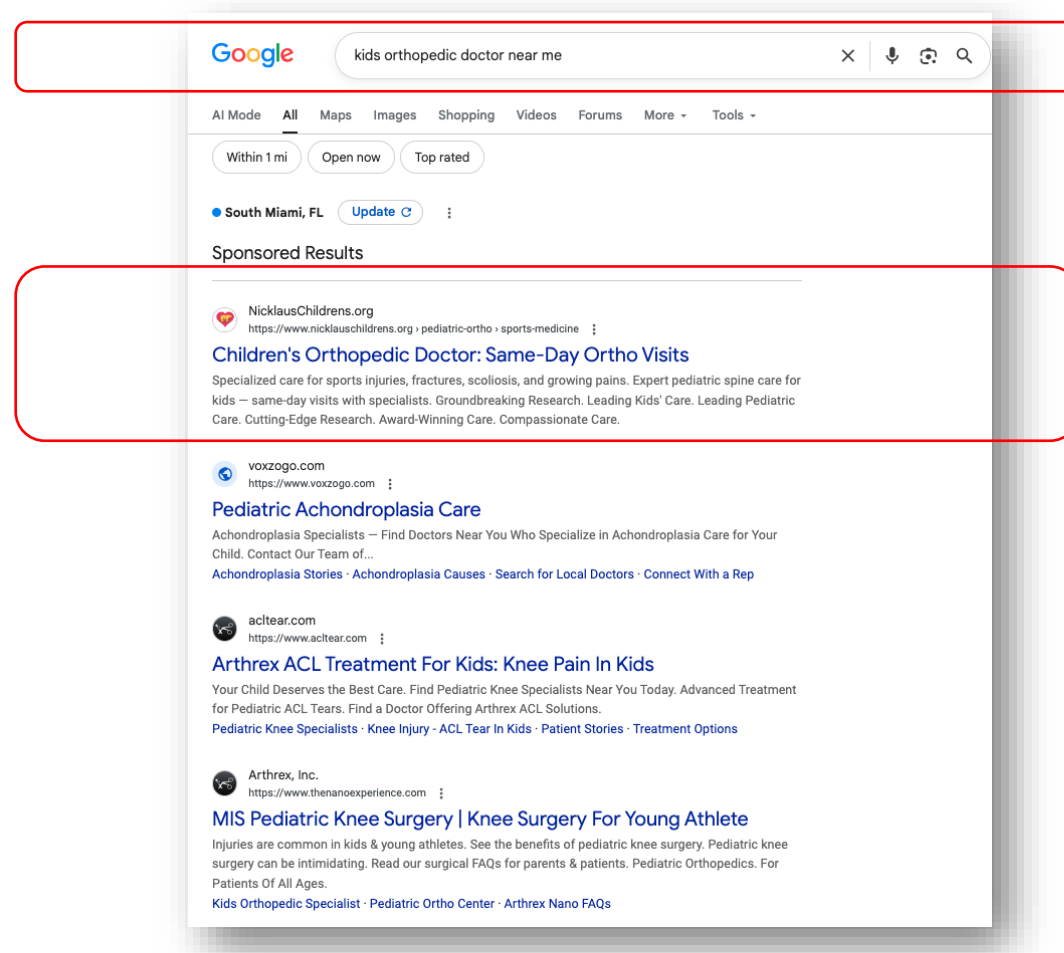


*Source

“We’re Here When You Need Us”



- Search
- Social
- Referral
- Content
- Reviews



A Spike In Opportunity



- Late July: AI-enabled search tracker surfaced a spike in "sports physical near me" searches across Broward and Miami-Dade counties
- Signal pinpointed: mobile searches, parents of middle and high schoolers, within 5 miles of school campuses
- Timing: weeks before the school district's official registration push



79%

of children are healthy

**Parents aren't worried. They are optimistic.
We met them there.**

Targeting The Opportunity with AI

- Cross-referenced intent signals against existing patient records.
 - Identified which zip codes were lapsed patients vs. new families.
 - 47 schools ranked by conversion likelihood.
 - Matched targeting to locations with same-day scheduling availability.



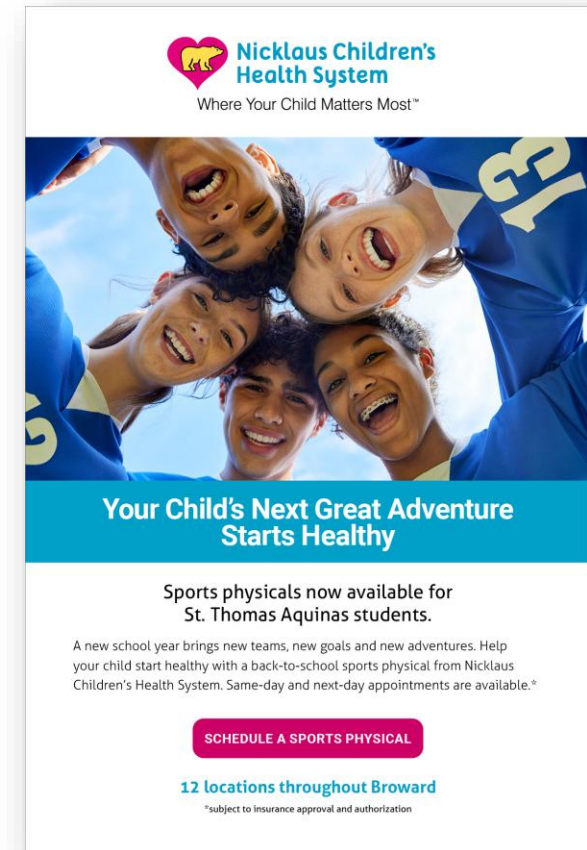
**Not our AI Agent*

Delivering Trust Signals

- Copywriter/Nurse Collab:

"Healthy kids don't come to us because they're sick. They come because they want to play."

- 47 geo-personalized headlines
- Aligned geo-targeted Nicklaus location closest to parent/patient
- Every variant stayed within the human-approved creative frame



St. Thomas Aquinas High School got a different message than Coral Springs Middle School



Trust Signals

If someone needs one of your priority services tonight, how confident are you that they'll understand why to trust you?

Experience Velocity

(Scheduling Pathways)

Speed is interpreted as respect

72%

of healthcare consumers say speed of response significantly influences how respected they feel by a provider

64%

of consumers associate fast service with higher-quality care and greater trust

Source: Accenture, 2024 Health Consumer Experience Survey; PwC, Future of Customer Experience (2024)

Audit Your Systems



Call
Abandonment Rate

Specialties'
Avg. Days to Appointment

2024

2.77%

24

(Ranging 17 -54)

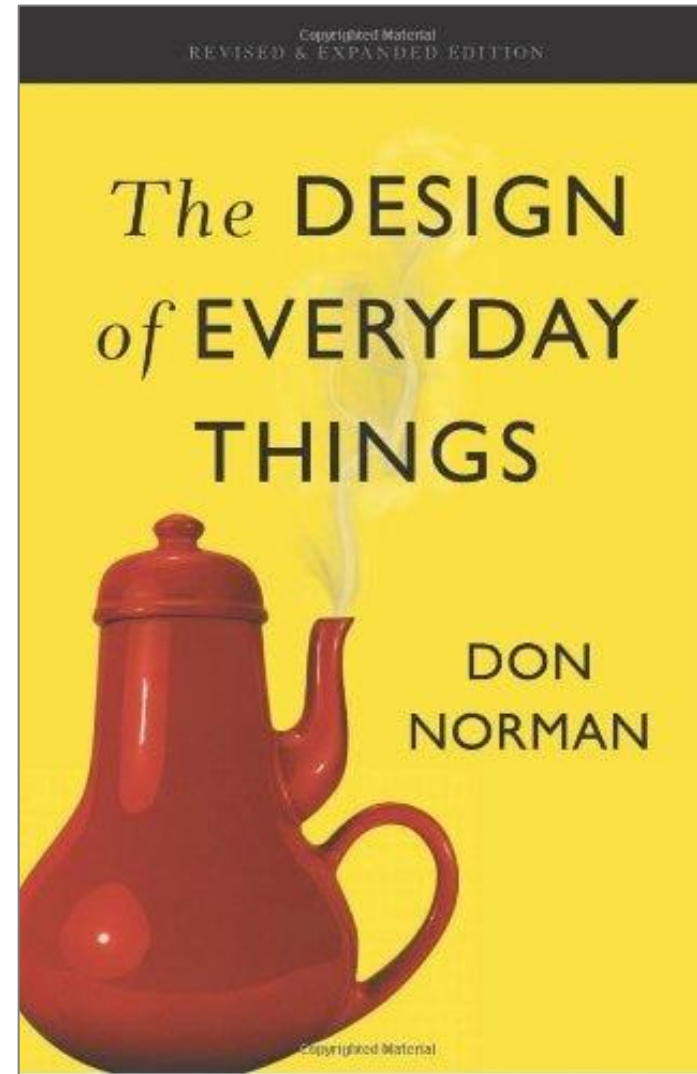
Today

1.65%

**Same Day/Next Day
or
Same Week**

Human Center Design

Intuitive next steps based on design



Ease of Engagement

- **Scheduling team briefed** on campaign messaging before the first ad launched
- **Same-day appointment slots pre-blocked** across all 12 Broward and 30 Miami-Dade county locations
- Monitoring Campaign
 - Week 1: surge detected at location in Pembroke Pines
 - Response: campaign paused to that zip code for 48-hours while access caught up

Your Child's
Next Great Adventure
Starts Healthy



SCHEDULE A SPORTS PHYSICAL

Hammocks Middle School



Nicklaus Children's
Health System

Where Your Child Matters Most™

The Value of Flow

- Every ad linked to a scheduling page pre-loaded with school district, service type, and nearest location
- Same-day and next-day slots available at all 12 locations
- Average time from ad click to confirmed appointment: **under 4 minutes**



- 
- **47%** YOY growth in pediatric sports physicals
 - **62%** were patients new to the Nicklaus Children's
 - **100%** were schedule through online same day, next day scheduling
 - **Trust** was built during a positive health experience
 - **\$18M** downstream revenue...so far



Experience Velocity

Once they decide they want you, how easy is it to actually get care?

Journey Continuity

(Brand Follow Up)

Delivering Your Brand Promise

- **Clinical Expertise**
- **Human Connection**
- **Operational Consistency**
- **Authenticity**



The Invisible Drain



Primary + Secondary Market
Referral Leakage Rate

2024 70%

Today 52%



Its Not Just About Physical Access



Continuity of Care Is Digitally

92%

Of digital-first care users believe the **quality of care is equal to or better** than what they received from a traditional provider experience.

[Access to Care: The Digital Imperative; Perficient 2025](#)

Situation Analysis

- Two retiring cardiac surgeons
- Growing level of referral leakage
- Avg. days to appointment kept growing
- YOY- Loss in volume and decrease in revenue.
- Eroding institutional trust that had been built over decades.

“

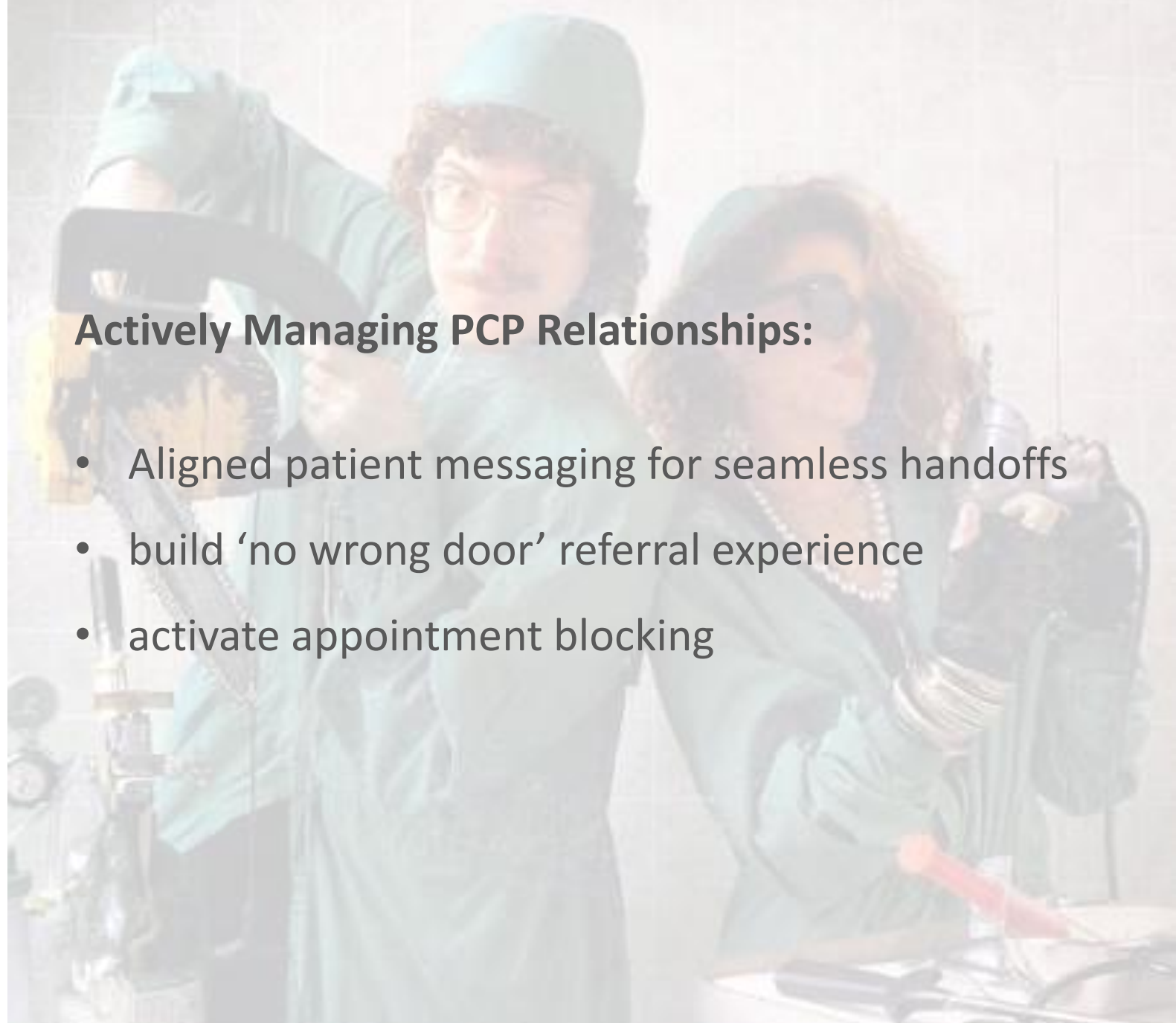
We didn't need more demand. We needed to stop losing the demand we already had. The call center didn't just answer calls. It showed us where the growth engine was overheating.

”

Referral Leakage **Working Heuristic**

Actively Managing PCP Relationships:

- Aligned patient messaging for seamless handoffs
- build 'no wrong door' referral experience
- activate appointment blocking





Results

+15%

Patient Volume Pacing
YOY

-21%

Referral Leakage Reduction

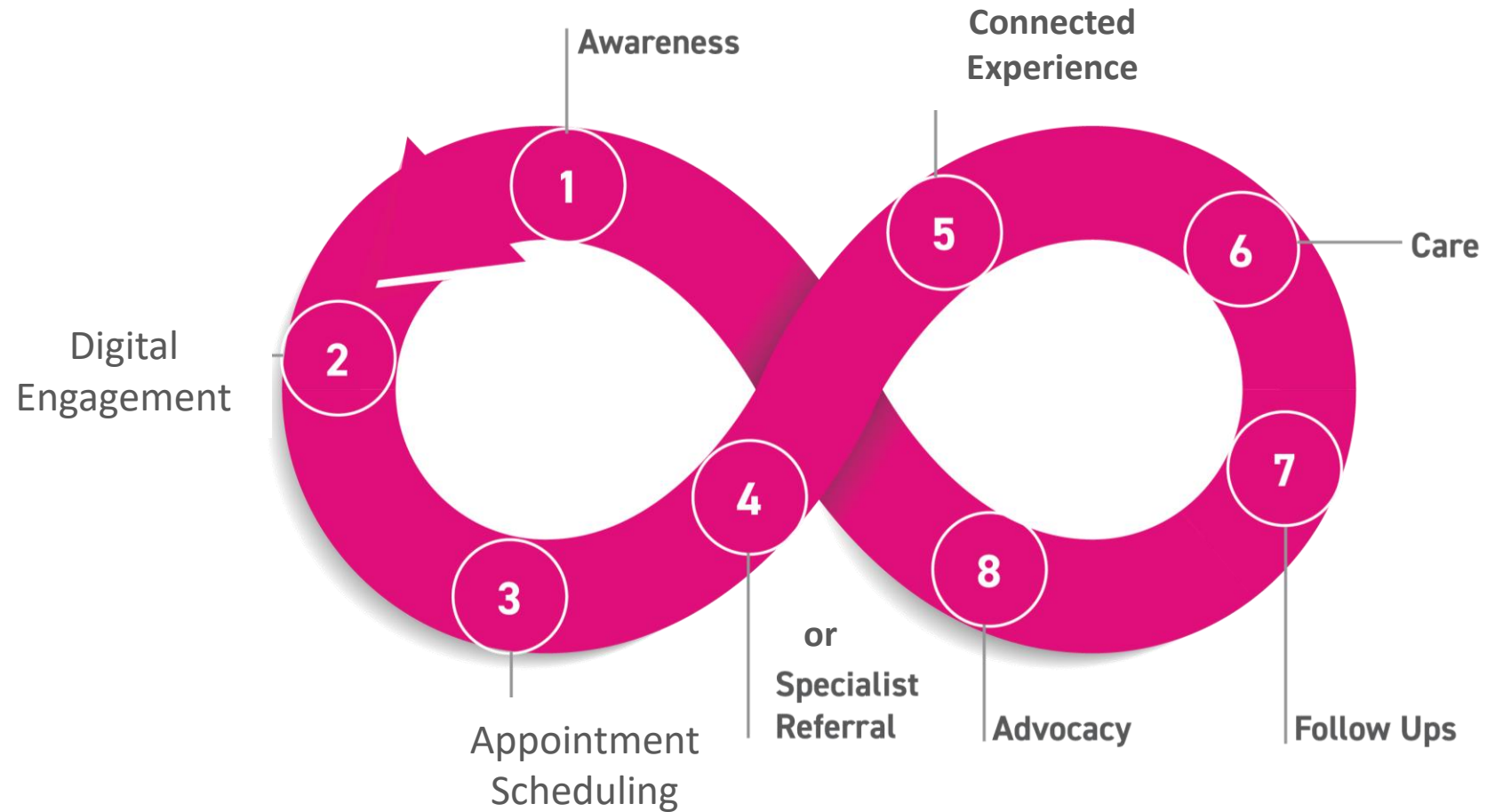
-14

Appointment lag days*

4.4

Patient rating; trust scores

Continuity in Moments That Matter



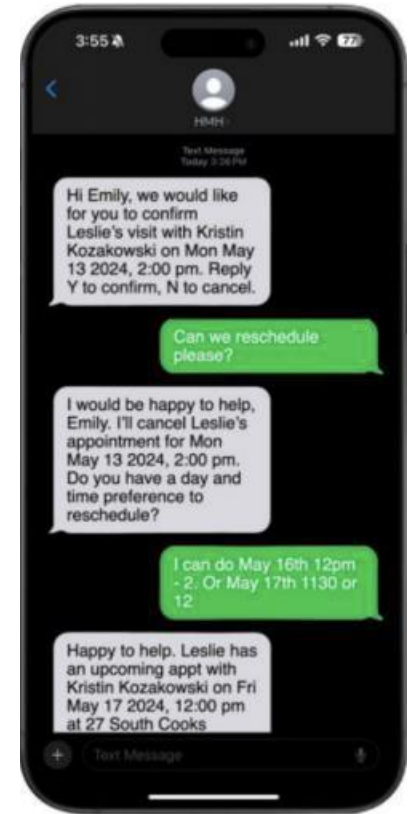
Digital Micro Moments

We built content trees with dynamic content linked to emotional triggers

“Looking forward to your visit” not “Don’t forget to check-in.”

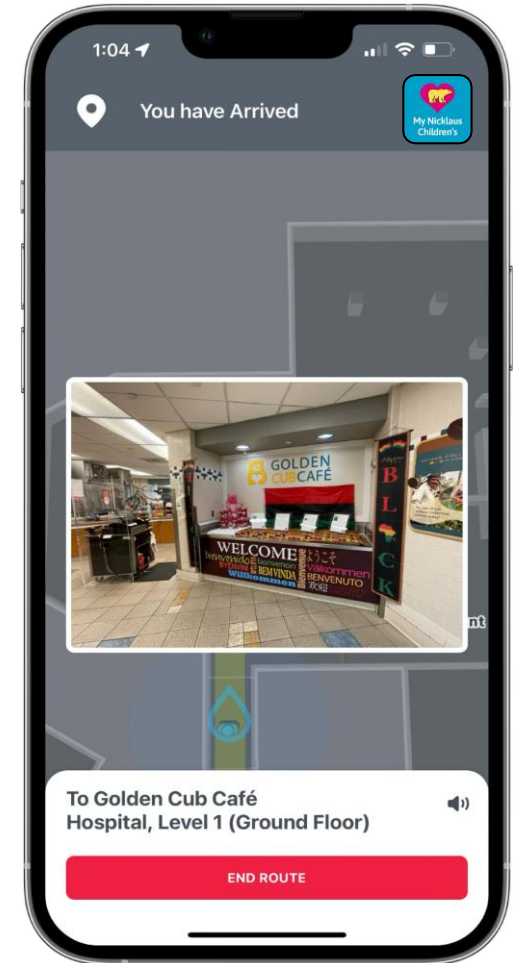
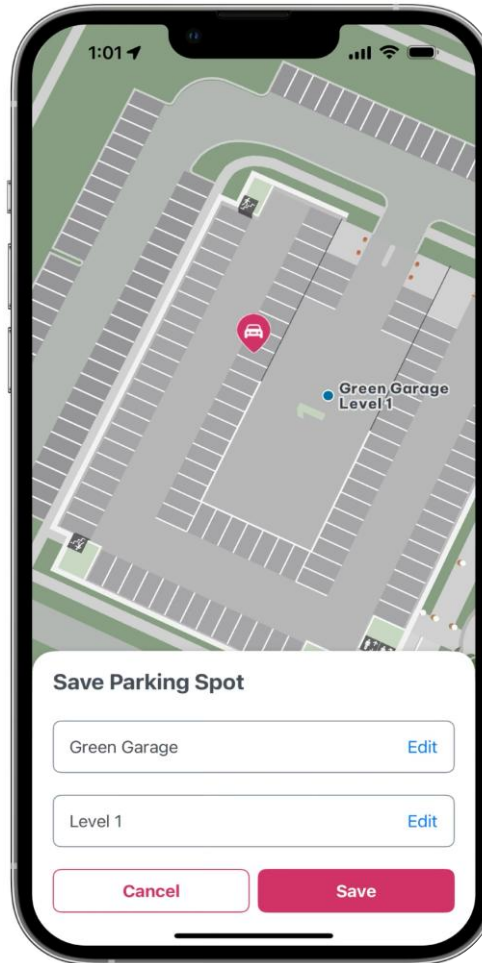
“Let’s get you ready to go home.”
not “Here are your discharge documents”

‘We’re here for you,’ not, ‘Your visit is complete.’



Digital Can Elevate Empathy

Empathy through customized actions in the app.

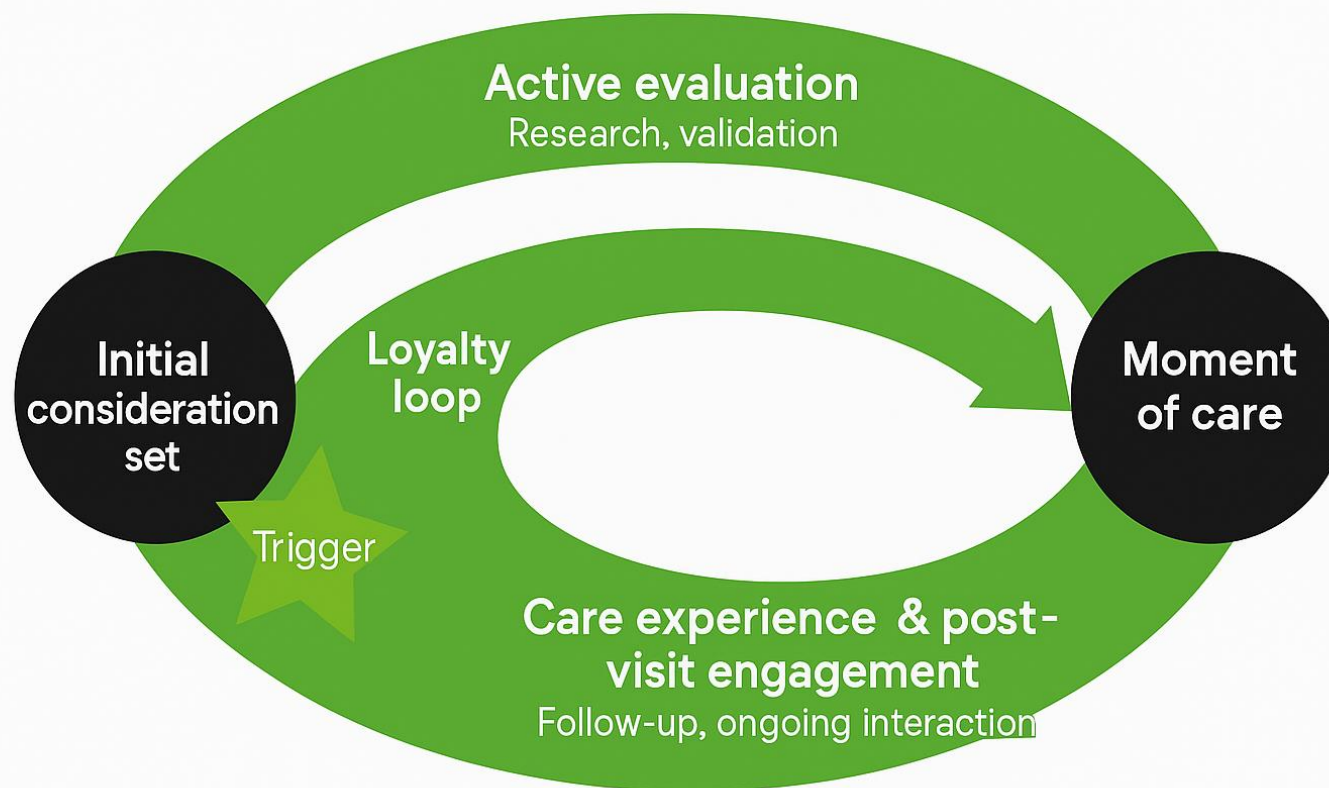


Loyalty Habit Loop

Brand Affinity

62%

In PSA



Loyalty Increase the LTV of your consumers



Continuity

Once they've raised their hand, how confident are you that your system keeps them from falling through the cracks?

Trust creates demand.

Access determines opportunity.

Brand **Continuity** delivers growth.

Together they are the door. And the door is the care.

Three Key Take-Aways

1. Growth is rarely lost in the marketing. Its often lost in between departments.
2. The Digital Front Door is a system not a website.
3. The Door is the Care.

Impact of Our Audit



+15%

Patient Volume Pacing
YOY

-21%

Referral Leakage Reduction

- 40%

Call Abandonment

-14

Appointment lag days

+\$18MM

Ortho Campaign Revenue

Action 60-90 Day Sprint

A Political Playbook

60-90 Day Sprint

impact × feasibility × readiness

- **Your Lowest Score – That's your project!**
- **Pick a metric your CFO will accept.**
 - **i.e.: Call Abandonment % - Referral Leakage % - Days-to appointment**
- **Identify the opportunity within that channel where you can deliver on moving the needle.**

K.I.S.S. Principle



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Questions?

- Please be sure to complete the session evaluation on the mobile app!