

How to Successfully Implement a Digital Wayfinding Solution

Digital wayfinding solutions are a proven way to minimize the risk of late or missed appointments and to provide an enhanced experience for patients and their families. Today's wayfinding solutions for healthcare use location technologies to provide the same type of user experience and directional instructions as we are all used to getting in our cars from Google Maps, Waze and others. With these capabilities, patients can see themselves walking about the hospital via a "blue dot" moving on a map, just as they are used to watching their car move on a geographic map as they drive about the city. They can also use QR codes to be guided to their destination. This reduces patient anxiety as they move with confidence throughout the hospital. Below are some of our suggested best practices for successfully implementing a wayfinding solution.

1. Look at the bigger picture

Don't think about implementing a wayfinding solution as a stand-alone system. Ideally, a digital wayfinding solution should be part of a healthcare system's Patient Experience Strategy. The benefits of this holistic approach are that it allows for a seamless patient experience, and it identifies how existing (and future) systems and processes can work together to enhance patient experience. For example, when integrated with an EHR/scheduling system, a wayfinding solution can be launched directly from an SMS reminder (sent from the EHR/scheduling system) which can provide patients with information regarding the fastest way to get to an upcoming appointment.

2. Understand Technology Options

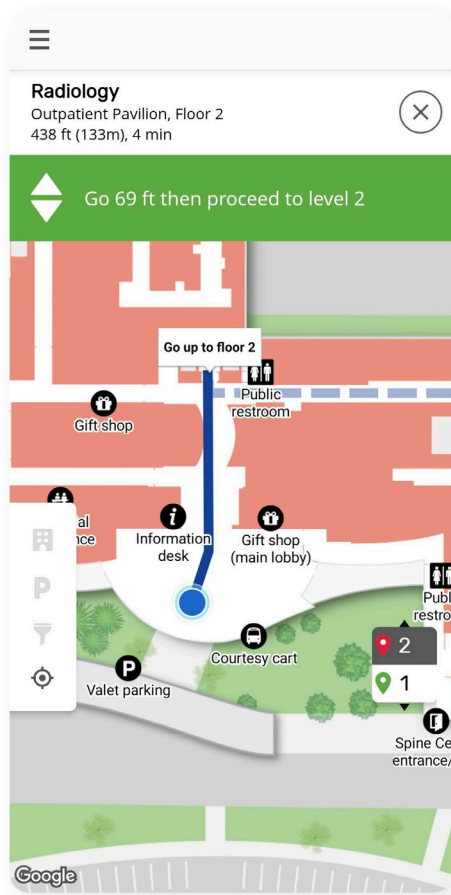
One of the most confusing parts of selecting a wayfinding solution is that there are so many different technology solutions that enable wayfinding capability. Take the time to determine if and how to leverage existing investments in technology. For example, existing wi-fi access points or RTLS infrastructure can be used to supplement location coverage, reducing the amount of new hardware needed. There are also options which don't require location technologies, such as a QR code-based digital wayfinding solution.



Digital wayfinding solutions can provide step-by-step navigation across the campus, including parking areas.

3. Consider Timing

Take into account when you want to go live with mobile wayfinding. For example, when you need a quick deployment to align with opening a new facility, we might recommend unique solutions to suit your needs. For example, we may recommend deploying a QR Code wayfinding system, while also having a long-term plan to deploy a real-time location system using BLE beacons.



4. Put Yourself in Your Patients' Shoes

If you want patients to use the wayfinding solution, make it easy for them. They need to be able to easily access the wayfinding solution and be certain that the location information is accurate. Test the wayfinding solution as if it would be your first time in the facility: be sure the locations in the system are labeled the way patients would search for them, and see what happens when you follow the wayfinding directions. If applicable, take advantage of patient advisory boards and don't be afraid to ask randomly selected patients for assistance testing the solution. Their feedback will bring the most value!

EMR/EHR integration enables patients to launch wayfinding to their specific appointment location.

5. Create a Governance Structure

To ensure ongoing success of the initiative, create a proper governance structure. Make sure an executive steering committee is in place that includes members from various parts of the organization, including engineering, patient experience, facilities, process improvement, and marketing. And don't forget to set aside time for change management meetings to discuss and approve any necessary changes to the system or policies impacted by the implementation of the wayfinding solution.

6. Account for System Upkeep

When planning for a wayfinding solution, account for system maintenance, which includes updating maps, points of interests (POIs), and routes, as well as replacing batteries in beacons. Without a concentrated focus on system upkeep, the system will provide inaccurate information, which will result in patients not trusting the app and quickly abandoning its use. Further, “account for system upkeep” needs to include specific roles and task assignments which are budgeted and resourced appropriately.

7. Track the System Adoption

Hand in hand with system upkeep comes system audits. Verify regularly if the system is working properly and that user adoption increases. This can be accomplished by reviewing the number of downloads and users sessions, looking at search and navigational destination data, and monitoring user ratings and reviews in the applicable app stores. If there are any red flags, act quickly to fix the issues.

8. Measure and Share Success

It is critical to continually evaluate how the use of a digital wayfinding solution impacts patient experience and operational efficiencies. In addition to the standard patient satisfaction indexes, such as Press-Ganey, there may also be value in using embedded patient feedback capabilities in the mobile wayfinding application itself, or by training greeters to ask for feedback when patients are departing. On the operational side, review data related to on-time visits and an overall volume of patient visits to see if there is a correlation between the use of a wayfinding solution and patient throughput. Finally, if patients are willing to share, don't forget to include their testimonials on your website, social media, or newsletter to further promote the system.