

CASE STUDY

# Building a 5-star experience, from end to end

How digital transparency strengthened consumer trust and deepened engagement between physicians and patients at Health First.



# The client

For more than three decades, the integrated delivery network, Health First, has served the Central Florida community, as hospitals, clinics, and specialty care. Today, they continue to deliver on their promise of exceptional care, guided by their core values: integrity, compassion, accountability, respect, and excellence.

As patients increasingly turn to online sources to choose their care, Health First saw an opportunity to elevate their brand reputation. To strengthen patient trust and deliver a modern experience, their organization made transparency—a commitment to sharing verified patient reviews and authentic provider information—a cornerstone of their marketing strategy. This approach ensures patients have access to authentic, verified information, while giving providers an active role in shaping the narrative.

## Health First at a glance

4

Acute care hospitals

480+

Medical group providers

852

Beds

9,000+

Active associates

95,000+

Health plan members

# The challenge

Patients increasingly rely on ratings and reviews to choose providers, yet Health First's brand experience efforts had primarily focused on maintaining the accuracy of their listings. In a market where reputation drives consumer choice, transparency—i.e., giving patients a clear, honest view of others' care experiences—has become a competitive advantage.

From the beginning, Health First wanted to tell their own story—a strongly positive one. This was a leading point in early presentations and became foundational to the initiative—owning the narrative rather than letting external sources define it.

This shift in thinking didn't end with technology. It demanded a cultural transformation—moving from a marketing-owned process to a provider-driven model that built trust and drove engagement across the system.



# Getting buy-in and building a provider-driven model

The initial obstacle was getting providers to embrace the initiative. For many, the idea of posting patient comments online felt risky. “There’s no doubt, publicly posted feedback feels uncomfortable, embarrassing, and even threatening,” explains Dr. Laird. “Most of us have never been put in that position before. But embracing feedback, validating it, and learning from it is where success lies in this digital age.”

Concerns surfaced quickly. How would reviews be vetted? Would negative comments damage their reputation? Would the process be fair? “One of the biggest challenges we faced was ensuring this didn’t feel like a top-down mandate,” says Jessica Powell, Health First’s Director of Customer Insights, Office of Experience. “We wanted providers to feel ownership from day one.”

Success depended on collaboration. The team needed to reframe transparency as a powerful way to fortify, not threaten, providers’ online reputation, attract and earn credibility with prospective patients, and fuel growth. And providers needed to see they’d have a voice in the process.

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We wanted providers to feel ownership from day one. If they didn’t trust the process, the program would never succeed.

**Jessica Powell**

Director of Customer Insights,  
Office of Experience  
Health First

# The solution

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Little in life is more important than the quality and experience of healthcare services for our loved ones. Feedback transparency fundamentally helps us fulfill our core values of integrity, compassion, accountability, respect, and excellence.

**Jessica Powell**

Director of Customer  
Insights, Office of Experience  
Health First

To meet these challenges head-on, Health First partnered with Press Ganey to launch a technology solution that publishes verified patient reviews on their website's physician directory.

The first step was securing executive sponsorship. The Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Tim Laird, became the transparency program's most visible advocate, signaling to physicians and staff alike that sharing authentic patient feedback matters. Having such a high-level champion that understood the providers' perspective helped drive momentum.

Next, Health First organized a medical director team comprised of 10 MD and APP leaders to commit as early adopters. These providers were instrumental in signaling buy-in among peers and shaping the design and rollout of the program. Their advocacy ensured that transparency was embraced at the clinical leadership level, creating a strong foundation for success.

To sustain that foundation after going live, Health First created an appeal review team of nominated providers—emerging physician leaders dedicated to fairness and integrity. This team met monthly to review appeals—which decreased after the go-live date—offering clear and consistent standards to every case.

To maintain neutrality and consistency, Health First established a dedicated transparency inbox and developed templated communications for all provider interactions—removing any ambiguity around how feedback was reviewed and addressed.

Technology helped bring that consistency to life. By integrating Press Ganey's transparency solution with Epic's MyChart platform—used by Health First as its provider directory—verified patient comments now flow seamlessly into MyChart profiles and then back to Health First's website. This symbiotic connection enhanced the in-app experience for patients, strengthened providers' reputation in a highly visible interface, and minimized manual intervention, reducing errors, and creating a frictionless experience for patients and staff alike.

Finally, the initiative united the experience and marketing teams around shared vision: to make transparency a true driver of trust and engagement across the system.

Behind the scenes, Health First adhered to best practices that ensured credibility: publishing all relevant comments, maintaining strict privacy standards, and applying a provider-led appeal process to safeguard fairness. Health First also learned that technology alone isn't enough. The evolving nature of AI-driven search results means that syndication and reputation management strategies will continue to be important moving forward. Transparency is no longer optional. Today, it shines bright as a foundation for digital trust in an era where patients expect both authenticity and convenience.



# The process

The early days of implementation were marked by caution. Providers were curious but hesitant, waiting to see how the process would unfold. That skepticism began to fade as the program and its safeguards proved their value. “The governance structure was key,” Powell explains. “Providers knew their voices mattered, and that made all the difference.” Dr. Laird emphasizes the importance of integrity in the appeals process: “Comment appeals have to be handled in a very patient-centric manner or you risk blowing up the integrity of the review process and destroying patient trust—which could be unrecoverable. Above all, we have to guard against even the perception that our transparency isn’t real.”

They refined criteria, offered feedback, and even conducted chart reviews when more context was needed. After a year, Health First rotated in a new set of nominated providers to keep perspectives fresh.

As reviews went live, engagement deepened. Providers began to see the value in—and embrace—transparency. They began logging in to check their profiles, reviewing patient comments, and even suggesting updates to ensure accuracy. What started as a compliance exercise quickly became a source of pride.

Health First reinforced provider engagement by making transparency meaningful. They shared positive patient comments through branded recognition cards—sometimes with a personal note from the CEO—and encouraged providers to review their own profiles and scorecards in advance. What began as a compliance exercise evolved into active participation, with providers suggesting updates and embracing feedback as a source of pride.

Transparency was no longer seen as a risk. Instead, it became a symbol of empowerment and avenue for distinction.





# Results

Health First's transparency initiative produced results that went far beyond numbers. In its first year, the program processed more than 30,612 patient reviews, giving patients and providers a clear, authentic view of the care experience. Today, 98% of their providers in the system have reviews published on their profile, and all average between four and five stars—8% having achieved a perfect 5-star rating across all reviews.

The most significant outcome was cultural. What began as cautious optimism evolved into full-scale advocacy. Providers who once worried about transparency now see it as a source of pride. "Once they saw the data and understood the process, they became advocates," says Powell. Transparency also shattered a common myth: that online reviews are overwhelmingly negative. Health First's data told a different story, one where most feedback was positive, and in the safe environment the team created, even critical comments became opportunities for improvement.

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**Jessica Powell**

Director of Customer Insights,  
Office of Experience  
Health First



# Future outlook

Health First is already planning the next phase of its transparency journey. While their organization is exploring transparency for diagnostic services, the immediate priority is campaigns and review publishing for providers. Diagnostics remains in the curiosity and exploration phase for now.

The team recognized that the program would continue to evolve and that receiving feedback through reviews can be challenging. With this understanding, they actively engaged providers throughout the process and explored strategies to foster a culture of safety for both patients and providers. Powell's advice for other organizations is simple: Start with leadership buy-in and make the process a dialogue.

Dr. Laird offers his parting advice for other executives: "If you are in a service profession, the feedback is already out there and may not be of the highest quality or from verified customers. Embracing transparency and learning from it is essential for success."

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