



# **Consumer-First Care:** **The API-Driven Shift to Modern Patient Access**

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# Introduction:


## Redefining Patient Access in a Changing World

The healthcare industry is at a turning point. Patients expect the same level of convenience in managing their care as they do in other aspects of their lives – whether booking a flight, ordering groceries, or accessing financial services. Yet, healthcare organizations still rely on outdated scheduling models that create unnecessary friction, leading to inefficiencies, delays, and patient frustration. According to a [report](#) by the Patient Access Network Foundation, nearly half (48%) of patients faced logistical barriers to care, including trouble getting appointments.

Despite significant advancements in digital transformation, patients still face long phone queues, voicemail loops, and limited scheduling options when trying to book or modify an appointment. For specialty care, the challenge is even greater – long wait times for appointments, administrative overhead, and complex scheduling workflows that leave both staff and patients frustrated and disengaged. The disconnect between patient expectations and traditional scheduling practices underscores the need for a shift toward consumer-first patient access – one that enables seamless, real-time interactions across platforms. To achieve this, healthcare organizations need more than just digital scheduling, they need open scheduling APIs to remove barriers, automate workflows, and connect patients to the care they need, when they need it.







## THE ROLE OF OPEN SCHEDULING APIs IN CONSUMER-FIRST ACCESS

To meet modern expectations, healthcare organizations must embrace the same digital and consumer-first model that streamlines access for industries like travel and retail. Open scheduling APIs play a critical role in this transformation by creating new access experiences between patients, healthcare organizations, and scheduling systems. APIs improve scheduling access by:

- **Enabling real-time appointment management** across multiple access points.
- **Automating workflows**, reducing manual tasks, errors, and administrative overhead.
- **Enhancing interoperability**, allowing seamless data exchange between scheduling tools, electronic health record (EHR) systems, and any existing patient access platforms.
- **Create new patient experiences**, allowing you to bring your own ideas to life and innovate beyond traditional scheduling constraints.

By eliminating friction in the scheduling process, open scheduling APIs empower patients with self-service options while ensuring providers maintain structured, optimized schedules. Organizations that adopt API-driven scheduling innovations create a scalable, future-ready infrastructure that enhances efficiency and accessibility. The shift toward consumer-first healthcare is strategic and places you at a competitive advantage. As healthcare leaders, you must ask yourselves:

Will we simply keep up with patient expectations, or will we lead the way in shaping a better patient experience?

# Chapter 1:

## Lessons from Consumer-Centric Industries: A Path Forward

Patients today expect the same level of convenience in healthcare that they experience in other industries. Whether booking travel, managing finances, or shopping online, consumers have grown accustomed to seamless, personalized, and on-demand services. Healthcare, however, has been slower to adopt these consumer-first models, often relying on outdated scheduling systems that create barriers to access.

By examining industries that have successfully modernized customer engagement, you can identify strategies to enhance patient access and optimize operations. Open scheduling APIs play a pivotal role in this transformation, enabling healthcare organizations to replicate the seamless, integrated experiences that define other consumer industries.

**75% of patients want to pay their medical bills online.**

Source: J.P. Morgan Healthcare Payments Report



## HOW CONSUMER-FIRST INDUSTRIES HAVE TRANSFORMED ACCESS

Industries that prioritize consumer-first strategies focus on accessibility, transparency, and efficiency. Here's how different sectors have modernized access and what your organization can learn from them:

- **Travel and Hospitality:** Airlines and hotel chains have revolutionized booking with mobile-first platforms, real-time availability, and flexible rescheduling. You can provide the same ease with self-scheduling tools, automated appointment reminders, and API-driven integrations across platforms.
- **Banking and Finance:** The financial sector has eliminated friction in account management by offering secure, 24/7 self-service access across multiple digital touchpoints. You can do the same by integrating scheduling APIs that allow patients to book, modify, and manage their appointments in real time – without relying on phone calls or human intervention.
- **Retail & E-Commerce:** Companies have set the standard for personalized, data-driven interactions, offering real-time inventory visibility, automated recommendations, and seamless transactions. You can follow suit by leveraging API-driven scheduling solutions to provide personalized appointment availability, automated reminders, and intelligent rescheduling options.

These industries demonstrate that digital transformation is not just about automation – it's about creating seamless, omnichannel, and flexible experiences that empower consumers.



## REIMAGINING PATIENT ACCESS: WHAT HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS CAN DO

Healthcare organizations have an opportunity to bridge the gap between traditional scheduling models and modern patient expectations. By leveraging digital, data-driven, and consumer-focused approaches, you can create a more patient-friendly access model that benefits both your patients and staff. Key steps include:

- **Expanding Self-Scheduling Options:** Allow patients to book, modify, or cancel appointments online, anytime, without needing to call.
- **Implementing Real-Time Appointment Booking:** Enable patients to view real-time appointment availability, reducing the need for phone calls and manual intervention while ensuring provider schedules remain optimized.
- **Optimizing Multi-Channel Access:** Provide scheduling options through web portals, mobile apps, chatbots, virtual agents, or text-based solutions to ensure flexibility.

- **Integrating AI and Automation:** Use intelligent scheduling solutions to match patients with the right provider based on specialty, availability, location, and more.

- **Leveraging Open Scheduling APIs for Seamless Integration:** APIs enable healthcare organizations to extend provider preferences and appointment management across existing platforms. This ensures a streamlined experience for both patients and staff while reducing manual tasks and improving workflow efficiency.

Consumer-centric industries have already paved the way, demonstrating that digital convenience and operational efficiency can coexist. Yet, many healthcare organizations hesitate to make the shift – concerned about provider control, integration challenges, and operational disruption. But delaying this transition doesn't just impact patient satisfaction; it creates inefficiencies and puts organizations at a competitive disadvantage. In the next chapter, we will explore these hesitations and how to overcome them.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS:



Patients expect seamless access across industries – healthcare is no exception.



APIs enable organizations to modernize scheduling without disrupting workflows.



*"The future of patient access isn't just automation—it's intelligence. AI-powered voice assistants and chatbots are expanding consumer access points, but without a smart scheduling system and API accessibility, these new digital front doors risk creating operational chaos downstream rather than convenience. True intelligence means looking beyond simple availability in the PM and EMR. It requires understanding the full landscape: the patient's needs, provider expertise, condition complexity, location, insurance coverage, and more. The right appointment isn't just about filling a slot—it's about maximizing everyone's time. When automation is coupled with intelligent scheduling APIs, healthcare leaders can orchestrate a seamless, scalable, and truly patient-centered experience resulting in increased revenue and patient satisfaction."*

**Jeff Gartland** | CEO, Relatient





## Chapter 2:

# Overcoming Hesitation: Why Change Feels Risky

The transition to a consumer-first scheduling model is no longer a question of if, but when. Yet, healthcare organizations hesitate to fully embrace this shift. Why? Concerns around technology integration, provider control, and operational disruption often stall progress, even as industries outside healthcare successfully modernize access and engagement. However, delaying this transition doesn't just impact patient satisfaction – it creates operational inefficiencies, creates more work for your staff, and puts you at a competitive disadvantage.

**On average, 70% of the patients utilizing online self-scheduling are new patients.**

Source: Dash® Quarterly Product Metric Scorecard Report

## UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Despite the clear need for modernization, there are common concerns that slow adoption:

- **Loss of Provider Control:** Your providers may worry that offering broader scheduling access could disrupt clinical workflows, leading to unqualified patient bookings. However, a well-structured scheduling model prioritizes rules-based automation, ensuring the right appointments are booked at the right times while still offering flexibility to patients.
- **System Integration Challenges:** Organizations operate with fragmented legacy systems, and not all EHRs or scheduling platforms can agnostically connect via APIs, creating interoperability and connectivity challenges. However, modernization doesn't require a full system overhaul – incremental improvements can enhance integration capabilities while aligning with broader digital transformation.

- **The Myth That Patients Prefer Phone Scheduling:** While some patients still prefer human interaction, [data](#) shows that most consumers expect self-service options across industries – including healthcare. By offering AI-powered scheduling agents alongside traditional call centers, you can enhance, rather than replace, the human touch.

For healthcare leaders like you, the key to making this shift isn't just about adopting new processes – it's about leveraging the right technology to ensure seamless execution. But technology alone isn't enough – it must be structured around a framework that guarantees patient access is convenient, personalized, coordinated, and efficient. In the next chapter, we will introduce the **Four Pillars of Consumer-First Patient Access**, the foundation for a modern scheduling strategy.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS:



Provider hesitation often stems from concerns over control and integration challenges.



Digital transformation doesn't require a full system overhaul – incremental improvements drive success.



AI-powered virtual agents can enhance, rather than replace, human interaction.



## Chapter 3: The Four Pillars of Consumer-First Patient Access

Despite these challenges, forward-thinking healthcare organizations are proving that modern patient access is achievable through structured, strategic improvements. By aligning with the four foundational pillars of **Convenience, Personalization, Coordination, and Efficiency**, you can eliminate scheduling friction and create a seamless experience for patients, staff, and providers.

These pillars work together to remove barriers to care, automate scheduling workflows, and create a seamless experience that benefits both patients and the organization. APIs also play a critical role in powering each of these pillars, making scheduling seamless and scalable.



## CONVENIENCE – MEETING PATIENTS WHERE THEY ARE

Today's consumers expect the ability to schedule appointments as easily as they book flights or order groceries. To provide this level of convenience, you can:

- **Provide 24/7** scheduling access through web portals, mobile apps, and virtual agents, ensuring patients can book anytime, across multiple touchpoints.
- **Reduce reliance on phone-based scheduling** by replacing appointment request forms – which require phone follow-ups – with real-time, on-demand booking options.
- **Utilize open scheduling APIs to connect third-party platforms** to integrate scheduling via APIs, expanding access points.

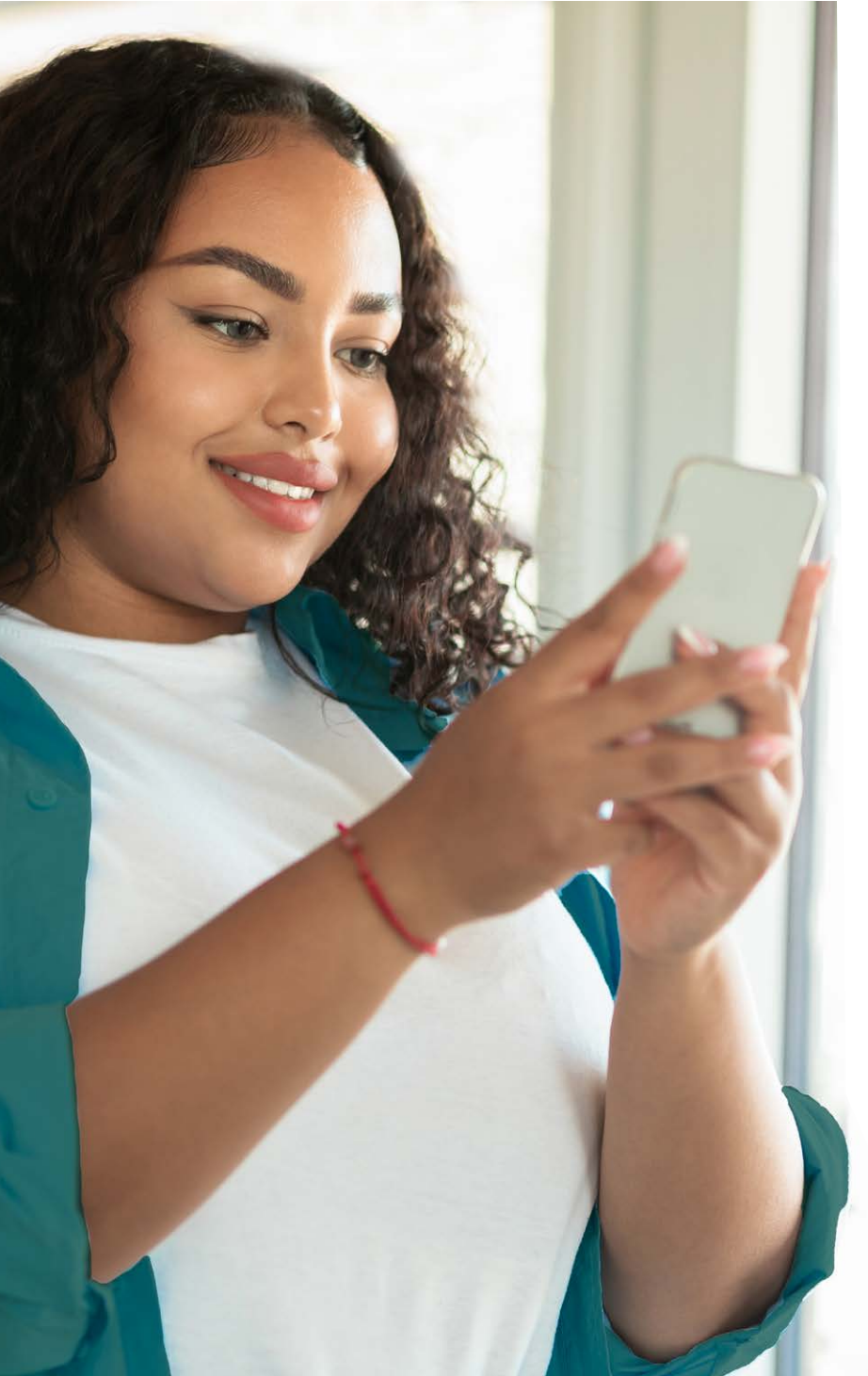
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## PERSONALIZATION – TAILORING ACCESS TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Patients are not one-size-fits-all, and their scheduling experience shouldn't be either. Personalization ensures that access to care aligns with each patient's unique needs and preferences. Key strategies include:

- **Using rules-based logic to match patients** with the right provider, location, appointment type, and more based on their care history and preferences.
- **Allowing patients to schedule follow-ups and recurring visits** based on prior interactions, ensuring continuity of care.
- **Leveraging APIs to integrate patient preferences** into various workflows or existing systems, enabling a seamless and personalized booking experience across multiple touchpoints.





## COORDINATION – CREATING A SEAMLESS CARE JOURNEY

Disconnected scheduling processes create frustration for patients and inefficiencies for staff. A coordinated scheduling model ensures that access is connected across departments, specialties, and systems. This includes:

- **Enabling seamless scheduling** between specialty referrals to prevent gaps in care.
- **Ensuring interoperability** between scheduling systems and provider workflows to maintain continuity across touchpoints.
- **Leveraging API-driven integrations** to support sequential scheduling, allowing patients to book follow-ups, referrals, and multi-step treatments in a single workflow – reducing gaps in care and manual work for staff.

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## EFFICIENCY – AUTOMATING WORKFLOWS TO REDUCE MANUAL WORK

Healthcare staff often spend an unnecessary amount of time manually managing appointments, care coordination, and taking scheduling-related calls. Intelligent automation decreases manual tasks by:

- **Offering online scheduling tools** to streamline patient acquisition and appointment management without staff intervention.
- **Consolidating multi-location and multi-specialty scheduling** to ensure operational efficiency and consistency across the organization.
- **Leverage open scheduling APIs to automate scheduling workflows** by enabling real-time booking, automated patient reminders, and seamless rescheduling – reducing manual coordination and workload for staff.

By integrating these four pillars, you can shift from outdated, fragmented scheduling models to a modern, consumer-first approach that improves access, automates tasks, and enhances the patient experience.

In the next chapter, we will explore real-world examples of how organizations can successfully adopt these strategies and the impact on patient care and efficiency.

# **The Four Pillars of Consumer-First Access**



## **Convenience:**

Giving patients 24/7 digital access to manage appointments.



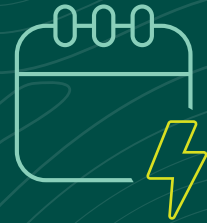
## **Personalization:**

Improving outcomes by tailoring access to patient needs.



## **Coordination:**

Preventing gaps in care with a connected scheduling model.



## **Efficiency:**

Automating workflows to reduce staff burden.



*"The future of patient access depends on interoperability, and APIs are the key to making that a reality. Healthcare Organizations (HCOs) need more than just digital scheduling – they need flexibility, scalability, and the ability to connect across systems without disrupting workflows. Open scheduling APIs allow HCOs to maintain control while enabling patients to create, manage, and prepare for appointments effortlessly, leveraging real-time information, and engaging across multiple digital touchpoints. By leveraging APIs, healthcare can finally remove barriers to access and create experiences that mirrors the best of consumer-first industries."*

**David Dyke** | Chief Product Officer, Relatient

## Chapter 4:

# Bringing Consumer-Centric Scheduling to Life

Consumer-first scheduling is no longer a concept – it's a proven strategy that healthcare organizations are implementing to improve access, reduce manual tasks, and enhance patient satisfaction. By leveraging APIs, automation, and intelligent scheduling tools, you can modernize scheduling without adding extra work or disrupting existing workflows.

This chapter explores how two leading healthcare organizations – a large multi-specialty group and an orthopedic practice - transitioned from outdated scheduling systems to a flexible, API-driven model that optimized the patient experience. Their experience demonstrates the real-world impact of consumer-first access.


### THE CHALLENGE: A FRAGMENTED SCHEDULING EXPERIENCE

- Limited flexibility in appointment scheduling, where patients could only book pre-designated time slots.
- Rigid scheduling systems that restricted availability and required staff intervention.
- Lack of integration between self-scheduling tools and existing provider workflows, resulting in administrative backlogs.
- Large call volumes as staff spent excessive time answering scheduling-related inquiries, delaying patient care and overloading front-office and scheduling teams.

### THE SOLUTION: AN API-DRIVEN SCHEDULING MODEL

- Dynamic appointment availability, allowing patients to book across multiple time slots rather than being restricted to a few predefined options.
- Omnichannel scheduling, where patients could book, reschedule, or cancel appointments through mobile apps, chatbots, websites, and third-party platforms.
- Automated appointment workflows, reducing manual intervention while establishing trust that booked appointments adhere to provider-specific preferences.
- Implementing APIs to enable intelligent call routing and digital automation to handle scheduling-related inquiries.






These transformations demonstrate how APIs and a consumer-first approach to scheduling can remove access barriers, enhance operational efficiency, and improve the patient experience. By adopting a flexible, digital-first strategy, healthcare organizations can create a scalable, consumer-driven experience – without sacrificing quality or accuracy.

In the next chapter, we will look further ahead at the future of patient access and steps you can take to stay ahead in an increasingly digital and patient-centric world.

**Organizations have reduced the workload of three to four full-time call center agents –freeing up thousands of hours annually.**



## Chapter 5:

# The Future of Patient Access: A Vision for Consumer-First Care

As healthcare evolves, patient access is becoming a key differentiator in improving efficiency, outcomes, and satisfaction. Consumer-first care is no longer optional – it's an expectation. Organizations that fail to modernize will struggle with patient acquisition and retention, operational inefficiencies, and mounting costs.

The next wave of patient access will be defined by automation, interoperability, and intelligent, personalized engagement. Healthcare leaders must move beyond traditional scheduling models and adopt digital-first strategies that prioritize convenience, personalization, coordination, and efficiency. Open scheduling APIs, self-service tools, and AI-driven automation are already reshaping patient expectations, allowing them to take greater control of their healthcare journey.

## NEXT STEPS FOR HEALTHCARE LEADERS

To drive meaningful change, organizations should prioritize innovation, scalability, and patient-centered design. The future of patient access will be led by those who:

- **Unify scheduling, engagement, and operations** through a platform-based approach.
- **Leverage AI and real-time data** to optimize provider schedules and reduce no-shows.
- **Expand access past traditional models**, integrating scheduling into digital health platforms and beyond.

However, technology alone is not enough. Success requires a strategy that reduces costs, improves efficiency, and empowers staff. Digital scheduling minimizes administrative burden, allowing teams to focus on high-value patient interactions while maximizing appointment volume.

The question isn't whether patient access will evolve – it already is.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS:



**APIs and automation are transforming patient access by eliminating friction and reducing manual tasks.**



**Consumer-first scheduling is becoming a strong competitive advantage.**

The real question is:  
Will your organization lead the  
change or fall behind?



*"For too long, scheduling has been seen as an administrative burden rather than a strategic advantage. But healthcare organizations that embrace open scheduling APIs and automation are showing what's possible – appointment slots are optimized, scheduling data flows in real time, and staff no longer spend hours managing appointments. The result isn't just greater efficiency – it's a better, more seamless experience for patients and teams alike."*

**Bryant Hoyal** | Vice President of Client Engagement, Relatient



The background of the entire image is a dark teal color with a pattern of light teal, concentric, wavy lines that resemble topographic map contour lines. These lines are irregular and flow across the frame, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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See Dash in Action

[relatient.com](https://relatient.com)