YOUR PATIENTS NEED MORE THAN JUST A PORTAL. HERE'S WHY.
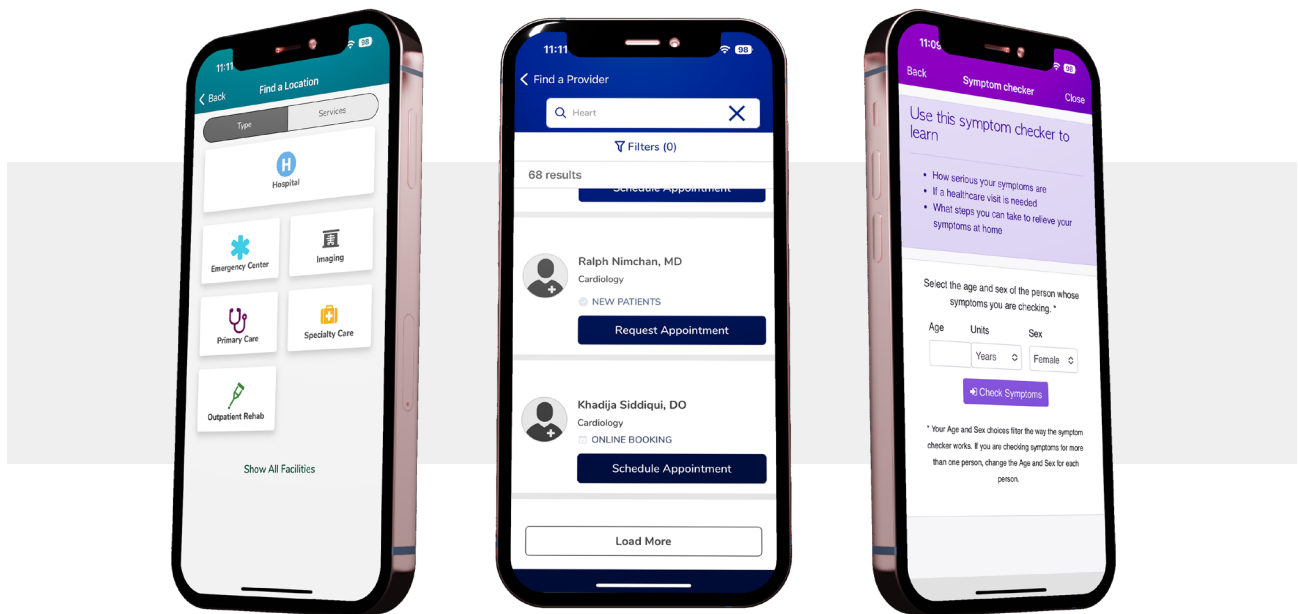
MODEA

DIGITAL CONSULTANCY

Did you know that **60% of consumers** expect their digital healthcare experience to mirror that of retail?

Considering that most every one of those major retail brands offer a proprietary mobile app of some sort for their customers, it's no surprise that healthcare consumers are expecting the same. To stay current and ahead of your competition as a healthcare organization, you have to be focused on digital and providing the right tools that your patients need.

Specifically, you should always be working to improve the digital experience your customers have across their devices, especially mobile.

Meeting the customer where they are, on a device they use, and in a way that seems familiar and seamless is what continues to separate leaders and laggards in the healthcare provider space. Mobile-first strategies, and mobile apps in particular, have become a huge part of those efforts. The mobile app conversation is not a simple one, even if the choices themselves are relatively straightforward: Build your own proprietary mobile app, or use the existing EHR-provided app, like Epic's MyChart.

Hospitals and health systems often seek our guidance on which solution is better. Both approaches have pros and cons. But ultimately, we've found that there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

In fact, choosing which is better for your organization requires you to take a step back and assess several things, including:

1 Unique customer journeys and consumer expectations

2 Organizational goals

3 Budget allocation

4 Leadership commitment

It's why your healthcare organization needs a clear mobile strategy. Specifically, you need to know what mobile experience to offer your customers, and why. And you need a roadmap for your initiative, to ensure alignment among your leadership.

This can seem like a tough mountain to climb when it comes to organizational direction and alignment on what mobile initiatives need to be a priority. But we'll walk you through it all, at a high level, and explain all the options on the table, and what you need to have in place before you make the decision and move internal conversations forward.
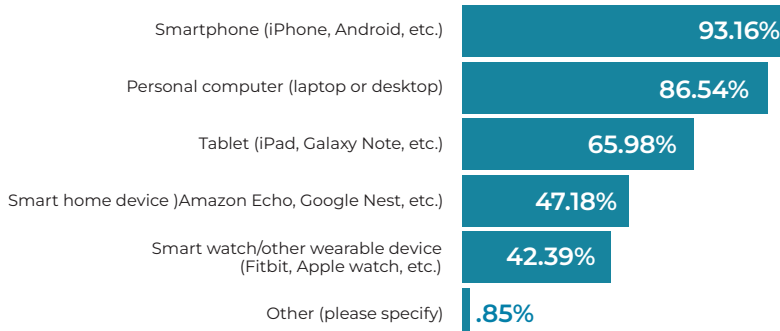
ONE THING IS FOR SURE:

No matter what you decide, making an investment in mobile is essential to be able to compete in today's healthcare marketplace.

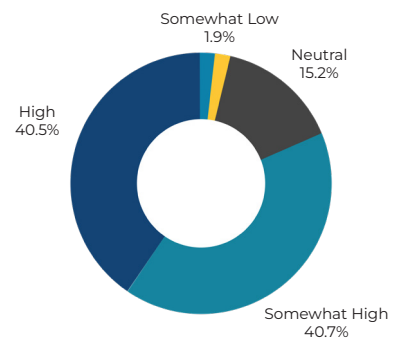What has Modea done with mobile apps? **SEE OUR WORK** ▶

Why Does Mobile Matter So Much for Healthcare Customers?

In 2022, we conducted proprietary research on customers and the digital tools they use. We looked at several digital tools, but we were particularly interested in mobile.

Device Ownership

Device	Percentage
Smartphone (iPhone, Android, etc.)	93.16%
Personal computer (laptop or desktop)	86.54%
Tablet (iPad, Galaxy Note, etc.)	65.98%
Smart home device)Amazon Echo, Google Nest, etc.)	47.18%
Smart watch/other wearable device (Fitbit, Apple watch, etc.)	42.39%
Other (please specify)	.85%

Comfort Level with Mobile

- Somewhat Low 1.9%
- Neutral 15.2%
- High 40.5%
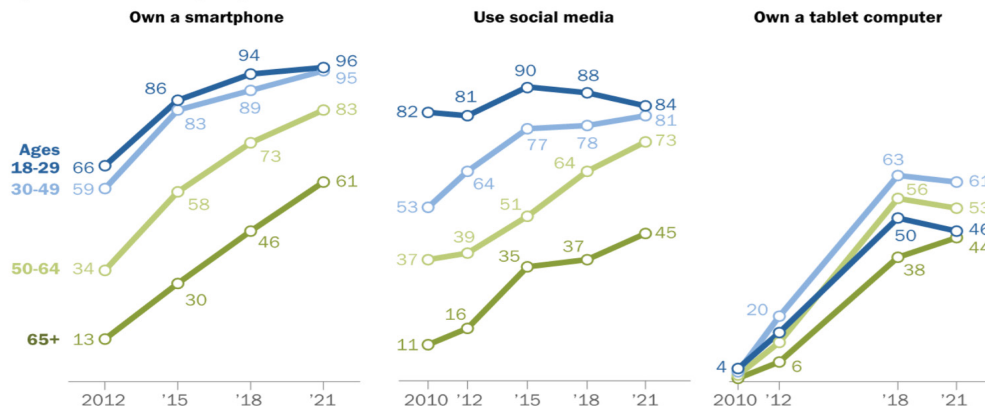- Somewhat High 40.7%

Increase in smartphone usage

Not only has the number of smartphone users **increased by nearly 86%** over the last 7 years, but **all age groups are using mobile devices more.**

For a long time, there was a large divide between the mobile usage of 30-44 year olds and those over 65, with the younger cohort more likely to use mobile devices. But that gap is closing, with **mobile device usage increasing from 46% in 2018 to 61% in 2021 among people 65 and older and continuing to rise in every age group.**

Smartphone ownership and social media use among older adults continue to grow

% of U.S. adults who say they ...

Own a smartphone

	2012	'15	'18	'21
Ages 18-29	66	86	94	96
30-49	59	83	89	95
50-64	34	58	73	83
65+	13	30	46	61

Use social media

	2010	'12	'15	'18	'21
	82	81	90	88	84
	53	64	77	78	81
	37	39	51	64	73
	11	16	35	37	45

Own a tablet computer

|	2010	'12	'18	'21
		20	63	61
			56	53
	4		50	46
		6	38	44

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Increased desire to use mobile devices for healthcare

When it comes to managing their healthcare, our research has found that more than half of smartphone users want to manage their care on their device:

= 64% want to manage their care on their device.
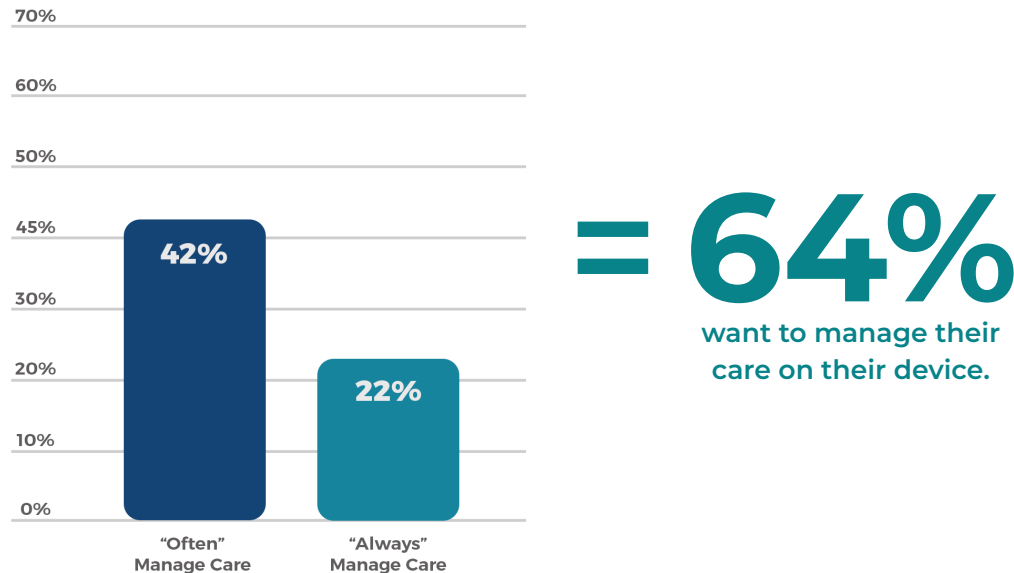
To put this in perspective, there are just over 310 million smartphone users in the U.S. Of those **310 million users,** that means that around 198 million already rely on their mobile devices to access and manage care in some way, or want to.

> And yet, <u>less than half</u> of all healthcare organizations—just 49%—are offering any type of mobile app to customers today.

Healthcare apps likely to be used repeatedly

When it comes to what customers expect from a healthcare app, the top three things people in our survey cited were:

- **Convenience** - How easily does the app fit into their daily lives and make their care management easier and less cumbersome?

- **Security** - Is their data secure?

- **User-friendly design** - Does the app functionality and UX mimic those of popular apps they are used to with personalized features?

In addition, if an app performs to customer expectations, 79% of our survey respondents said they would continue using that app (as opposed to downloading it and using it once or twice). With app creation and usage across all industries continuing to rise, it's important to combat the abandonment and deletion of your app once a customer downloads it (this is where good design and user-experience comes into play). Statista has reported that **around 25% of all apps are only used** once during a 9 year study.

So why is healthcare so far behind with mobile apps?

With such strong data supporting the investment in mobile tools, why is healthcare so far behind?

Shouldn't booking a doctor's appointment or paying a bill be as easy as booking a hotel room, checking your bank balance, or booking a table at your favorite restaurant in town?
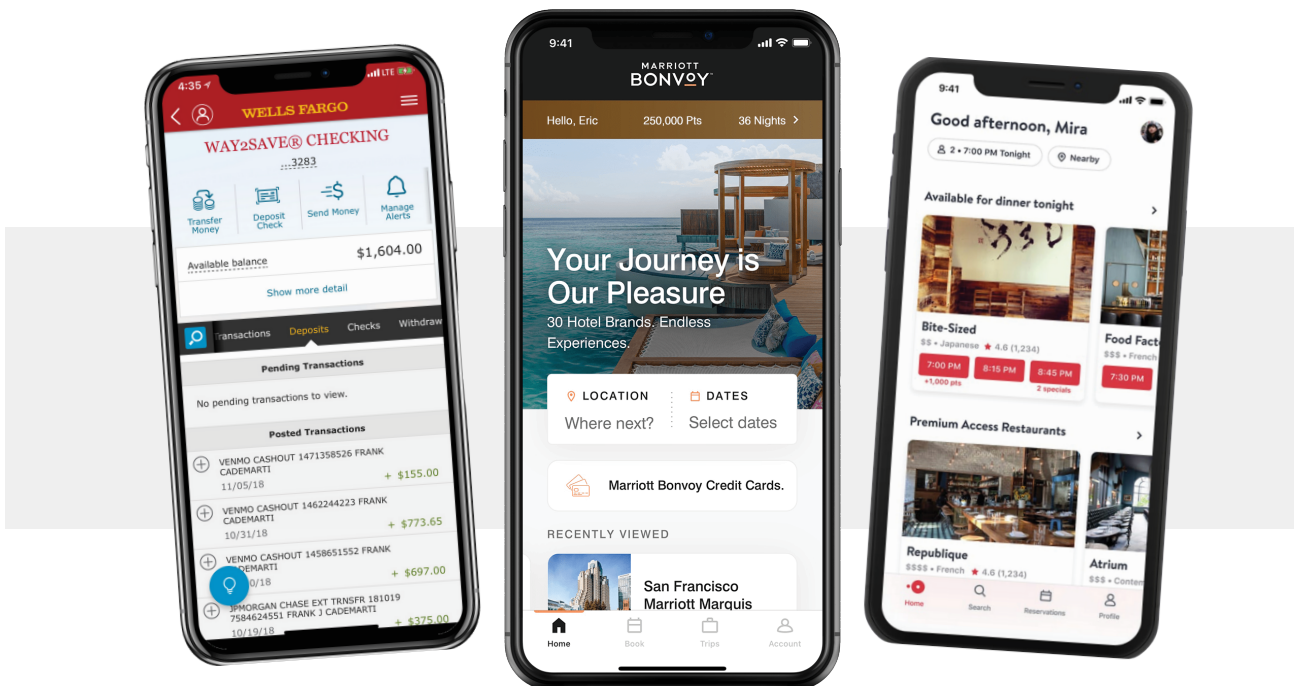
We believe it should be. But we also know the barriers to achieving this. That's why it's helpful to examine the options healthcare organizations currently have, along with the common roadblocks to progress we see every day when it comes to customer-facing mobile applications and deciding which way to go.

So let's dig in.

Option #1: Renting an App

What does it mean for a healthcare organization to "rent" an app?

When we refer to renting an app, we mean using whatever is natively available from your EHR vendor (Epic MyChart, for example) and linking your customers directly out to the login screen to authenticate and interact with whatever is provided by that vendor. This means taking your brand colors and logo and applying it to the standard out-of-the-box mobile application.

A drawback to this approach is that you're unable to truly customize the mobile app experience to what your customers expect and the functionality and interface will stay the same with little to differentiate your brand.
(More later on how to do that.)

Here is an example of three different healthcare organizations' MyChart apps. **Can you tell which brands these are? Neither can the customer.**

Some pros and cons of native apps like MyChart are:

> **Pros to renting an app:**

- No additional budget needed.
- Can be stood up quickly.
- Has many common features patients use.
- Won't consume as many in-house resources and bandwidth.
- Product updates are pushed directly from the EHR vendor.

> **Cons to renting an app:**

- Inability to launch custom features that are unique to your customers or differentiate your brand.
- You do not fully own and manage the product and are subject to updates and technology out of your control.
- You are not delivering on what patients and consumers expect in the growing digital age.

Option #2: Building an App

When a healthcare organization builds an app, it means they are building their own digital asset. **Building your app allows your organization to create a more custom approach,** prioritizing the specific features and experiences you know your customers want and need to improve their care journey.

When the digital customer experience is at the top of the priority list, organizations often go this route. **However, because it is an investment in time and resources, a hospital or health system needs to have internal alignment when it comes to having the right digital tools to support the customer experience.**

Types of apps that fall into this category are:

- **Hybrid** means leveraging MyChart, but customizing it to the extent you can. Software development kits (SDKs) allow you to have some custom interfaces and take advantage of many existing features, including things like test results, prescription refill requests, after-visit summaries, medical histories, and symptom checkers.
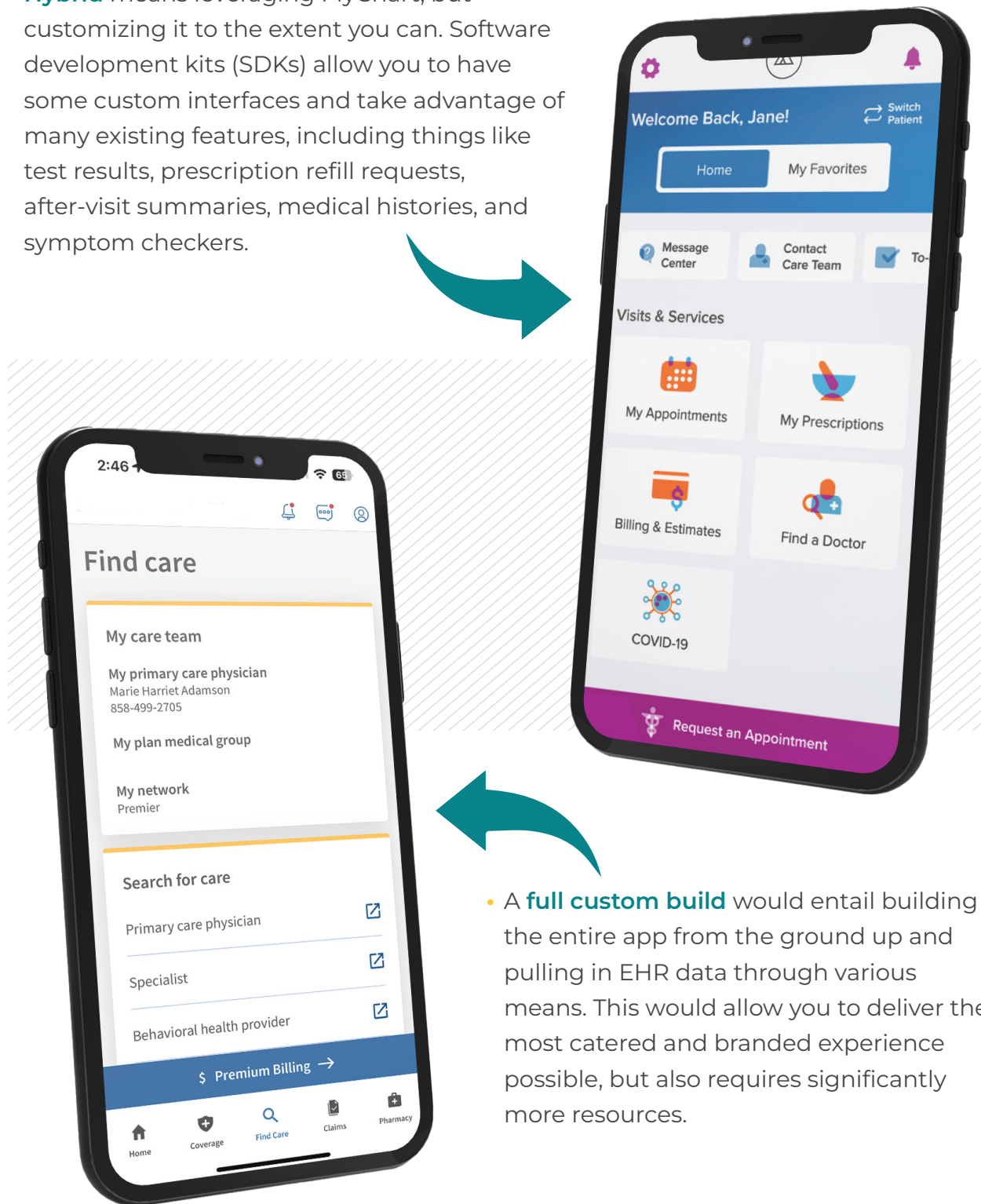
- A **full custom build** would entail building the entire app from the ground up and pulling in EHR data through various means. This would allow you to deliver the most catered and branded experience possible, but also requires significantly more resources.

The pros and cons of building a proprietary app are:

> **Pros to building your own app:**
>
> - You own the product and can treat it like a true digital asset that brings value to every department within the organization while dictating what features are launched.
>
> - You have more robust options to customize the experience to fit your branding and customer expectations.
>
> - You show your patient base that you are investing in digital tools for their benefit.
>
> **Cons of building your own app:**
>
> - Higher up-front costs to design and build your initial mobile app.
>
> - Can tax your internal team and resources if the expertise is not there or team sizes are too small.
>
> - Higher ongoing support costs for maintenance and enhancements.
>
> - Can carry additional costs as certain EHR.
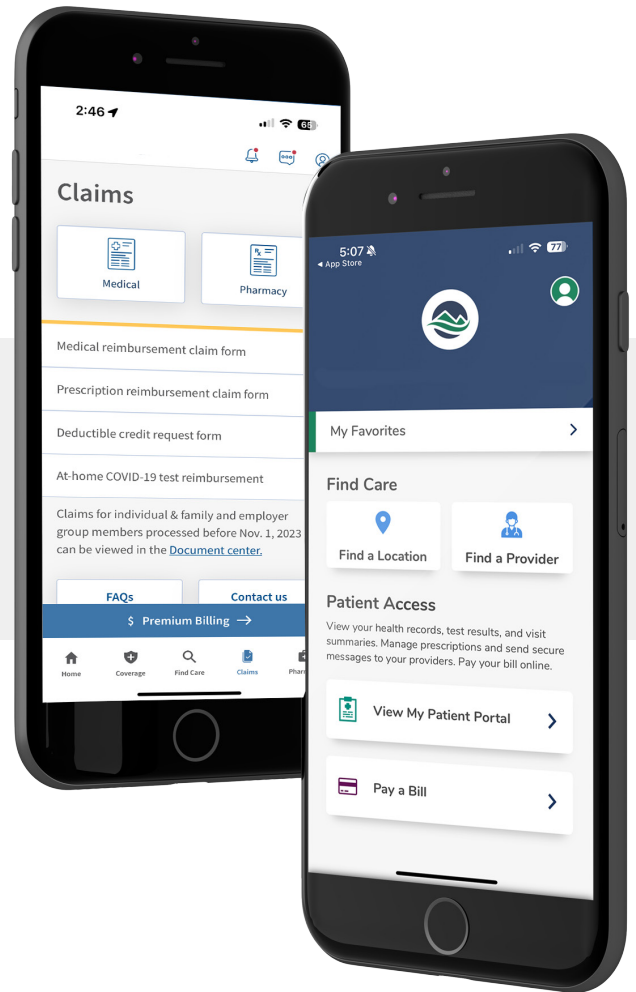
Making the Decision to Build or Buy Starts With Leadership

Now that we understand the options, let's talk about the key factors that go into making the decision.

First and foremost, you shouldn't embark on a mobile app journey without buy-in from your organization's leadership.

Many of today's healthcare organizations have digital-first leadership in place. That is, leaders who understand the importance of investing in the right tools to create a better patient experience. **These leaders often help support more robust funding options, such as capital budgeting, and think long-term when it comes to digital.**

However, some healthcare organizations are still keeping a more traditional mentality when it comes to these tools. **Not all hospitals and health systems have bought into the value of digital investments, beyond the bare minimum.** We often see C-suite stakeholders, such as CIOs and CFOs, not fully invested in the importance of great digital tools and prefer to continue renting what they already have in place.

To know where your organization falls on this continuum, there are 3 questions you need to ask:

How bought into digital are we?

- This means looking at your current tools and direction. Does your organization have a 3 - 5 year "north star" plan that is widely known throughout the organization? Is there opportunity to lead strategic change within, or do you already have backing from the right people to make a case for investing in a tool like a mobile app?

How siloed are our departments?

- Any large digital investment needs alignment from multiple departments, such as marketing, IT, and patient experience. If your organization operates in silos, it becomes much more difficult to get everyone on board. Getting agreement among everyone on the value and approach to getting this moving can be difficult.

Who owns digital investments like this?

- Many organizations still fund digital investment through an operating expense budget, usually coming from marketing. However, IT nearly always has a hand in it as well. This can create confusion around who really "owns" digital as a department. We mentioned capital funding above. When hospitals and health systems view digital investments as true revenue-generating assets for the whole organization and not just a single department, they often look to leverage capital funding.

A great way to approach moving a digital initiative forward is to back the case for a digital asset with data and real-world examples. **Our research and surveys continue hammering home the importance of creating the best digital experience possible** and how, if not done right, you risk losing out on valuable market share as patients are able to quickly find care somewhere else, even if that provider is in another state.

Another tool in your toolbelt can be how you plan to fund the work. Many organizations today are using capital funding to pay for digital assets, such as websites and mobile apps. This is because these tools are no longer solely owned by marketing and their importance and value is seen throughout the organization. You can read more about making a case for capital funding **here.**

> Having a deep dive discussion around these questions can help you better assess where you are, so you can plan for organizational change and alignment.

Let Customer Research Guide You the Rest of the Way.

The next area you need to focus on is customer research.

Having as much dialogue with your patient base as possible is a great start. **We recommend doing deep discovery and research to help you identify the right next steps and really understand what your specific audience and patient groups expect.** It's hard to pick the right solution before you know the pain points, preferences, and trends of your customers.
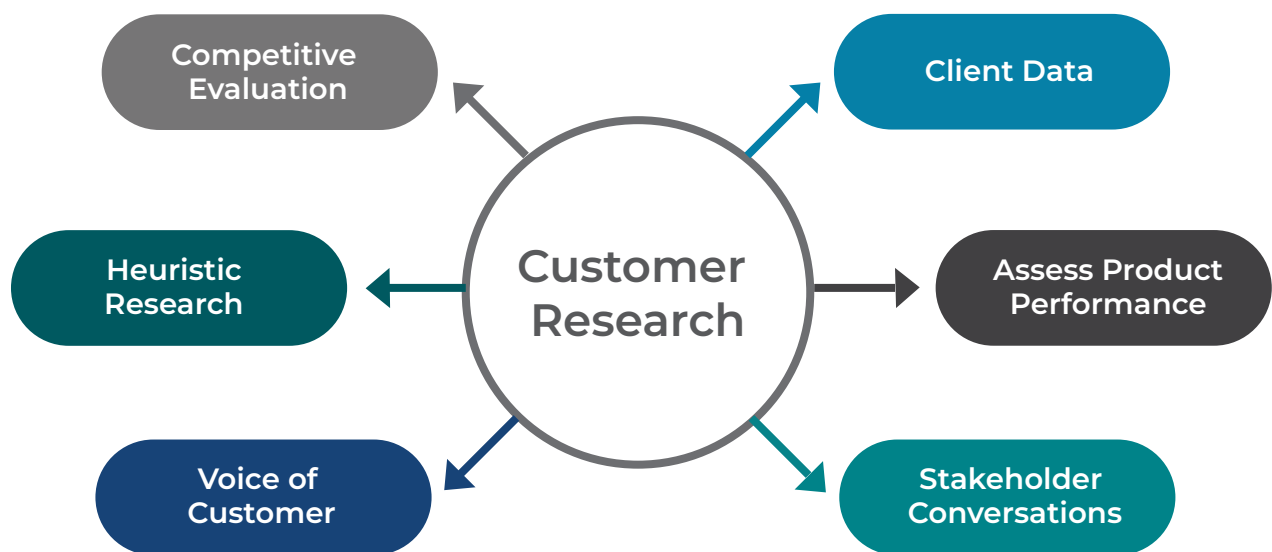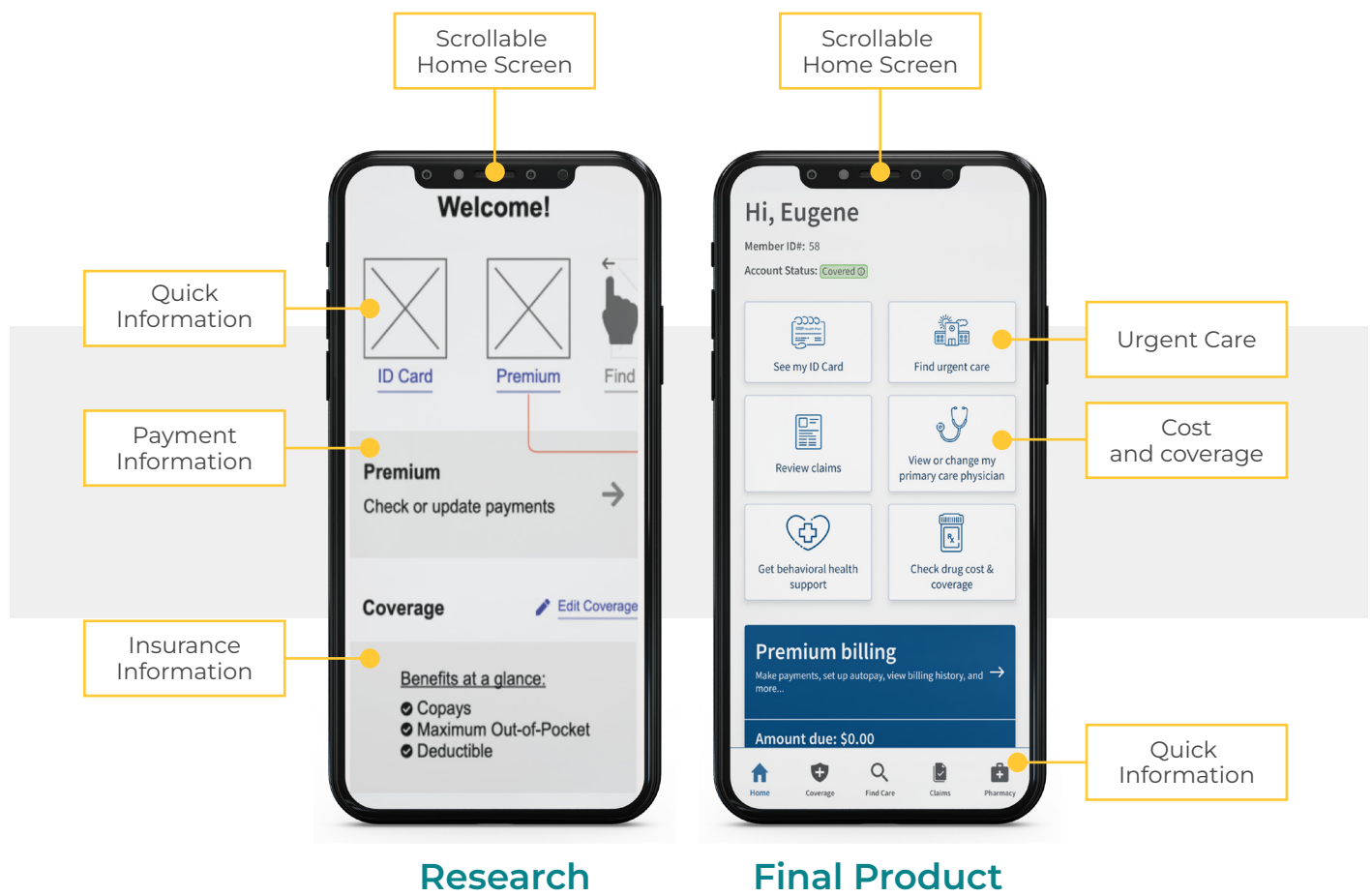
For example, if you serve a largely rural base, you'll likely find that a mobile app would benefit your customers in new ways. Many rural areas still lack reliable broadband internet, and **we know from research that residents in rural communities tend to consume information and communicate through the use of their smartphones more than anything.**
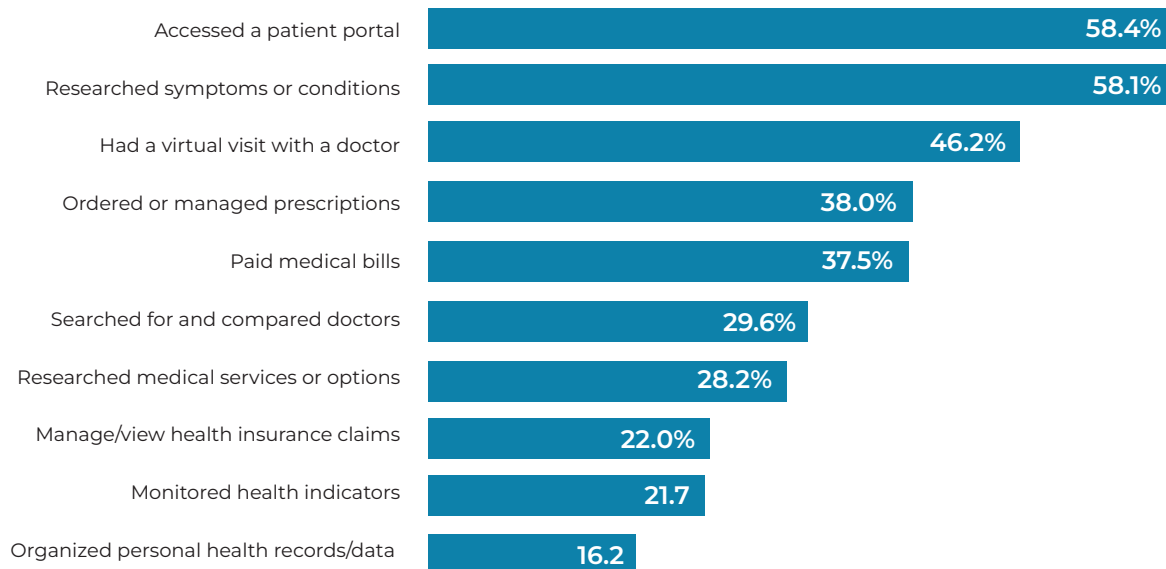
You may also gain insight into the competitive landscape, and learn that adding a mobile app to your digital tool kit is a key way to differentiate your organization from the competition.

Part of your customer research should include creating detailed personas and journeys of the patient base you serve. **This can help you drill down into how they manage their care and what features of a mobile app are most important to them and provide easier access to care.** Our research has shown many of the requested features and how often patients are likely to use them.

The image below illustrates how customer research is used to design and adapt a mobile app, showcasing both the research phase and the final product.

Research **Final Product**

Healthcare Management in the Past Year

Category	Percentage
Accessed a patient portal	58.4%
Researched symptoms or conditions	58.1%
Had a virtual visit with a doctor	46.2%
Ordered or managed prescriptions	38.0%
Paid medical bills	37.5%
Searched for and compared doctors	29.6%
Researched medical services or options	28.2%
Manage/view health insurance claims	22.0%
Monitored health indicators	21.7
Organized personal health records/data	16.2

From these efforts, you can create your list of goals for your organization's app. An example of some of these goals:

- To give families a better experience and deeper connection to your organization and brand by creating the digital conveniences they've come to expect.

- Directing families to prioritize having a medical home, versus over-relying on urgent care and other providers outside of their primary care physician.

- Focusing on communication and access, which aims to reduce family stress and effort of care.

- Supporting operational efficiency by boosting self-scheduling, check-ins, and phone/text conversations.

With your list of goals in hand, you can then run through the pros and cons of building vs. buying an app, and see where the gaps and opportunities are.

Need to Talk it Through? We Can Help.

Hospitals who fully embrace and invest in digital will win in the end. And more than that, the patients will win, because care will be more convenient, more personalized, and more accessible.

How your organization gets there is the big question. We'd love it if every hospital and health system of size in the U.S. was ready to invest in a proprietary app, specifically designed and built for their customer base. But not every organization needs or can manage that. Buying an app may be the most appropriate choice for an organization that hasn't fully embraced digital transformation.

The decisions are important. But the conversations are what get your organization closer to arriving at the right choice for your current and future needs. If you'd like to talk more about building vs. buying an app, we'd be happy to sit down with you.

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