

A close-up photograph of a man with a beard and a young boy with glasses looking at a tablet. The man is pointing at the screen, and the boy is smiling. They are in a room with a large green plant in the background.

Level up your healthcare marketing:

How to target the right audiences & improve performance



In today's fiercely competitive healthcare landscape, it's easy for brands to lose sight of a simple truth: Behind every data point is a real person making real healthcare decisions. It means that connecting with the right audiences affects more than your ROI — it directly impacts patients' healthcare, access to services, and treatment outcomes.

As consumer expectations for healthcare organizations continue to rise, they are facing greater pressure to deliver increased engagement and conversion (45%), according to a [report from Adobe](#). Organizations are challenged to deliver real-time personalization (31%) and to optimize content for different segments, audiences, and geographic regions (31%). These demands are further compounded by the growing complexity of compliance and privacy regulations, with 41% of organizations reporting that data privacy laws make it difficult to personalize the customer experience.

As a result, achieving the healthcare marketing trifecta — reaching an audience quickly, compliantly, and with confidence — has become harder than ever. While campaigns can easily deliver reach and scale, many brands and agencies struggle with precision targeting. Failing to pinpoint the right audience often leads to disappointing campaign performance, missed audience opportunities, and wasted media spend.

This approach results in mixed campaign messaging that diminishes audience trust and creates business risks from non-compliant data. However, by shifting to an audience built on real healthcare intelligence, you can move beyond the guesswork and enable faster activation, deliver more relevant messaging, and execute better-performing campaigns that resonate with brands and patients alike.

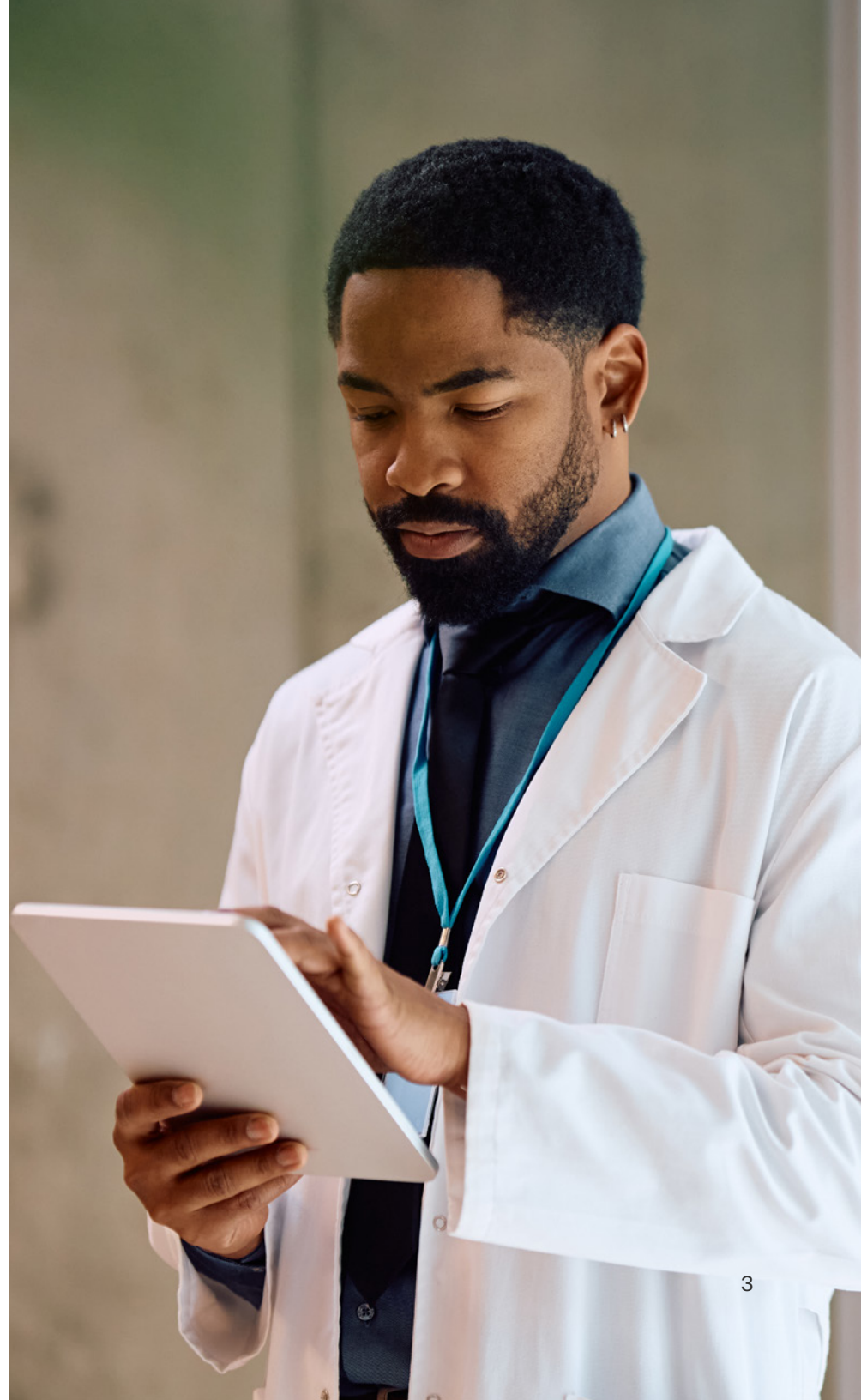


What is a digital audience?

In healthcare marketing, a digital audience refers to a custom segment built from compliant, privacy-safe data. Brands and advertising agencies use these digital audiences across channels to power more precise, measurable campaigns.

Why “the right healthcare audience” may not mean what you think

For healthcare brands, defining the “right” digital audience is rarely as straightforward as it sounds. The “right” audience doesn’t mean that all other audiences are wrong. It just means they may not be a good fit for your brand or your goals.



It could be that the audience is too general to target a brand's desired audience with relevant messaging. For example, let's say you're a new diabetes drug brand, and your target is adults between the ages of 30 and 50. That's a broad target across a group that ranges from the newly diagnosed to those actively seeking medical treatment.

Targeting is a struggle that Megan Sullivan, Definitive Healthcare Audience Activation and Agency Partnerships Lead, says she sees frequently with her company's healthcare clients.

"There's a tremendous amount of healthcare audience data available," she says. "You need a partner to parse through the data and provide precision targeting. Media and marketing are so expensive that you want to make sure you're targeting the right folks so that they can take action—ask their doctor, do some research, or download information. All of those engagements support the marketing of that brand."

But defining the right audience is only the first step. The audience must also work seamlessly across every platform and channel in

a healthcare brand's media plan. Otherwise, when an audience becomes fragmented by multiple vendors or lists, it becomes harder for a brand to achieve consistent reporting and stronger results. "The benefit is efficiency," Sullivan says. "You can track the performance of one audience across different channels. You can test and see the KPIs against the activation."

Performance, Sullivan explains, is the clearest indicator of whether you're targeting and optimizing the right digital audience.

"The first proxy is audience quality," she says. "Everyone is using performance measurement tools to show whether they're reaching the audience quality, meaning the amount of impressions served on a campaign. They'll know early on whether that audience quality index is being met, and they can optimize from there."

In the end, your "right" digital audience is the one that delivers measurable engagement, relevance, and outcomes and is aligned with your goals.



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Megan Sullivan

Audience Activation and
Agency Partnerships Lead,
Definitive Healthcare

3 best practices to build a compliant, high-performing digital audience

Healthcare brands operate in a league of their own. While basic audience building and traditional segmentation strategies may work for other industries, they simply aren't enough when privacy regulations, among other forces, are constantly evolving.

To build a digital audience effectively, healthcare brands must dig deep into layers of healthcare data to find the exact audiences that align with their brand objectives. This can feel like looking for a needle in a haystack, whether you're trying to reach a small patient population with a rare disease or, on the provider side, zero in on specialty and affiliations, prescribing behavior, or clinical and claims data. And across all of it, compliance and privacy are a must.

Healthcare is an industry estimated to be worth \$4 trillion. Consumers have more options than before for how they access, receive, and think about care. As demand for treatments and products continues to grow,

particularly as populations age and increase in size, the competitive pressure on brands to reach patients and healthcare professionals with precision has intensified.

"They are faced with trying to reach the right patients at scale and having to prove return on investment for their marketing campaigns, which are under tighter budgets and tremendous scrutiny," says Sullivan. "All the while, they have to stay compliant with HIPAA and privacy regulations, which are also dramatically changing."

The good news? The data needed to build your right digital audience already exists. When leveraged correctly, it can unlock more precise targeting and improved campaign performance. These three best practices will show you how to build a compliant, high-performing digital audience. Together, they provide a scalable strategic framework for precision targeting.



Define healthcare buyers using real-world physician affiliation and consumer behavior signals

■ Why it matters

Relying on surface-level audience data often results in a loss of meaningful engagement. Healthcare buying decisions are complex, multi-stakeholder, and highly regulated. Without a clear view of who influences decisions—and where they practice, refer, or treat—campaigns remain broad, inefficient, and difficult to personalize.

It's the same issue when working with consumer data and signals, Sullivan says. "With generalized targeting, you may not be reaching the audience that you need to take action and talk to their doctor. It becomes challenging because generic data doesn't perform in reaching your quality audience. You need to leverage the data to support the consumer's needs."

■ The outcome

When you align on who matters, why they matter, and how to engage them using privacy-safe data, you'll have a clearer understanding of which messaging, channels, and campaigns will resonate and drive measurable impact.

■ Quantity & quality from Definitive Healthcare

500+

health attributes,
including clinical interest,
social determinants of health
(SDOH), life stages, insurance
coverage, and more.



Segment audiences by provider care delivery, commercial role, and market dynamics

■ Why it matters

“Healthcare decision-makers” is not an audience. A hospital CFO and a medtech VP of Sales care about entirely different problems and solutions. By dividing broad audiences into defined subgroups with segmentation, you enable personalization and distinct messaging aligned with each audience’s specific needs, journey stage, and priorities.

■ The outcome

By building effective segments with deterministic and probabilistic methods, you’ll develop more relevant messaging, better engagement, and higher ROI without sacrificing scale or risking compliance issues.

“Segmentation is an opportunity for brands to model out what the audience looks like. By using a practice location or a specialty to segment who the ideal audience would be for a specific brand, you can target them and activate across the entire omnichannel marketing ecosystem,” Sullivan says.

■ Quantity & quality from Definitive Healthcare

3 million

healthcare providers
that can be segmented by
registered specialty, claims-
based specialty, affiliation,
and more.



Ensure the use of HIPAA-compliant consumer data

■ Why it matters

The critical data used to build your digital audience is often based on personally identifiable information (PII), such as demographics, prescriptions, or medical histories. PII must adhere to HIPAA and applicable federal and state privacy regulations. Working with a partner like Definitive Healthcare takes away a brand's risk of handling sensitive first-party data internally and ensures compliance through zero-knowledge methodologies and de-identified audiences.

■ The outcome

By building a digital audience using privacy-safe, first-party data, you'll protect patient trust, reduce regulatory risks, and instill confidence in your campaign's performance.

"You want to be able to access de-identified, tokenized, HIPAA-compliant data on different markets across the country," Sullivan says. "Coming to a company like Definitive Healthcare that can deliver privacy-safe audiences is critical in terms of healthcare marketing."

■ Quantity & quality from Definitive Healthcare

225 million

consumer records
that are HIPAA-compliant and
adhere to the highest standards
of privacy and security.



The importance of a trusted and transparent data partner

Data is the cornerstone of building an effective digital audience. That's why trust and transparency are essential factors when working with a data partner, especially in healthcare, where the stakes are simply too high and large volumes of consumer and provider data must be handled in strict compliance with HIPAA regulations.

"The biggest challenge is the evolving landscape," says Sullivan. "The healthcare goalpost keeps getting moved. You want to work with a partner that can keep up with all the changes."

At Definitive Healthcare, our Digital Audiences solution helps you reach the most relevant patients and healthcare professionals with HIPAA-compliant, precisely targeted audiences built on trusted healthcare intelligence.

We offer both HCP and DTC audiences across therapeutic interests, patient journey progress, treatment history, and demographic-based criteria. Segments are built using deterministic and probabilistic methods and are tailored to your campaign goals, whether that's building awareness, driving conversions, or supporting adherence.



Find your healthcare audience with data you can trust, and intelligence designed to deliver measurable performance. [Learn more](#) about how the Definitive Healthcare Digital Audiences solution can help you make smarter, faster, and more strategic audience decisions. →



Healthcare is complex. We make it make sense.

Founded in 2011, Definitive Healthcare is a global organization with offices in the U.S., Sweden, and India. We work with every industry that touches healthcare, from life sciences and providers to software & IT, consulting, financial services, medical supply, construction, staffing, and more. Our data delivers trusted intelligence on healthcare organizations, clinicians, claims, consumers, and experts—giving you the context you need to make smarter decisions and drive real impact in healthcare.

[Learn more](#)



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