

Connecting Patients and Health Care Providers

Written by Babu S

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In the ever changing world of internet based services, a new doctor appointment portal is slowly but surely making heads turn. HelpingDoc, founded by Amit Bansal in 2011 is a doctor appointment portal providing a gateway for healthcare providers to connect to their patients. Users can book appointments online and reminders will be sent as SMS for both the patient and the doctor. Patients are also able to review the doctor's performance and give feedback. For them it very much improves their chance to get easy access a doctor in their own locality.

The success of HelpingDoc can be estimated from the fact that the website observes more than 1 Lakh visits in a month with around 4000 doctors listed on the site. HelpingDoc intends to enable a digital platform to enhance the healthcare visibility and convenience via internet mobile and telephone and also reduces the waiting time.

An Overview of the Indian Healthcare Segment:

In India, the doctor to patient ratio is one of the lowest in the world. Technology can help in improving efficiencies in the sector. The efficiencies can be brought in several ways - exposing hidden supply of doctors, filling unutilized time slots, self and remote health management, and pre and post consultation patient engagement.

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According to Amit Bansal, the founder of HelpingDoc, "The online healthcare industry in India is still in a nascent stage, and has the potential to grow rapidly over the next 3-5 years. The team at HelpingDoc has a strong vision and is likely to develop the platform into a key player in this nascent industry. Helping Doc has the ability to be well-positioned for growth in this market".

Business Model of HelpingDoc:

HelpingDoc works and operates on a SaaS (Software as a Service) based subscription model for Doctors. The doctors pay a flat annual fee to avail the HelpingDoc services. The service is completely free for the patients although they have to pay the doctor's fee on their visit as usual.

Investment and Funding:

HelpingDoc has been seed funded by the founders Amit Bansal, Dr. Hemant Singhal, Julian Hall and Srinivas Gattamneni. Recently the UK based founding member team raised INR 10 Cr as Series A funding from Senior Marketing Systems (SMS), Singapore.

Marketing Strategies Adopted by HelpingDoc-

HelpingDoc adopts the standard online, social media and email marketing as its multi pillared marketing strategy. In the words of Amit Bansal, the founder of the HelpingDoc, "There is a pent up demand from the patients for such services. The venture has been able to tap some of this need through the standard online, social media and email marketing. In addition, radio and print campaigns and below the line activities through corporate and pharmacies helped to spread the awareness about the services."

Technology is also being used for the marketing and promotion of the website as a new age marketing tool. "With the Andriod APP and Geo-Tagging options, patients can track the doctors registered with us" reveals Amit. Using an innovative strategy to use media as their marketing tool, HelpingDoc highlights the key features of the company such as Healthcare provider searching and sorting doctor's validated profile allowing for proactive promotions via media.

Challenges and Roadblocks:

The initial challenge faced by HelpingDoc was to bring medical practitioners on a free platform and make them believe in the model and services. Initially, the challenge was to convince the doctors to get listed on the portal. We had to ensure that we had a critical mass of doctors reveals Amit. Once the portal built on a successful network, Doctors began choosing HelpingDoc as the website helped them enhance their online presence and get more patients each day.

On the challenges faced by the industry at large, Amit believes that apart from the usual start-up challenges, the industry poses few unique challenges such as difficulties in accessing the usual busy doctors, a greater need to instill confidence and trust amongst the patients, fragmented industry value chain and lack of mature business models.

Role of Technology in Indian Healthcare Segment:

“As the mobile phones and service providers come up innovations like 3G and 4 G services, smart phones will be accessible to all. Through options like Andriod APP and Geo-Tagging, patients can easily track the doctors registered with HelpingDoc” explains Amit. The main differentiator for the company is the real time approach to a panel of doctors, which is not possible in the other existing services in the market which provides just lists.

The Road Ahead:

As part of its future plans HelpingDoc plans to grow beyond the Delhi-NCR area into other major cities of the country. The portal has its eyes on expanding in pother metropolitan cities including Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata over the next two years. The portal also plans to increase the database of its affiliated doctors and physicians to a count of over 20,000 in the next couple of years.