



BANNER HEALTH | CASE STUDY

Leveraging the Buoy API for a digital care journey

How accessible and personalized navigation to care has increased patient loyalty, improved utilization of services, and built trust for Banner Health



About

- Large nonprofit health system spanning 6 states
- 50,000 employees
- >1 million members

Challenges

- Wanted to create a seamless healthcare navigation experience
- Needed to contain costs and avoid providing unnecessary care
- Wanted to strengthen patient loyalty

Solution

- Buoy API

Results

- Successful creation and ongoing management of an integrated healthcare navigation platform that connects consumers to right care
- 200,000 interviews started through Buoy API in 12-month period
- 75.5% interview completion rate
- Increased patient trust and engagement

Banner Health is tackling one of the most daunting challenges in healthcare: connecting patients to the right care at the right time. Banner partnered with Buoy Health to build a digital health navigation platform that invites patients to access Banner's services with a friendly "doctor-next-door" experience. The goal? To boost engagement, improve outcomes, and contain costs.

Before working with Buoy, Banner's consumer digital experience team had been searching for a vendor that could help solve key problems around accessing care. "Most people love interacting with their physicians," said Christopher Stallings, Senior Director of Consumer Digital at Banner. "But before they can do that, they have to decide what type of appointment they need, find a convenient time for that appointment, schedule it, and then potentially deal with delays and payment issues."

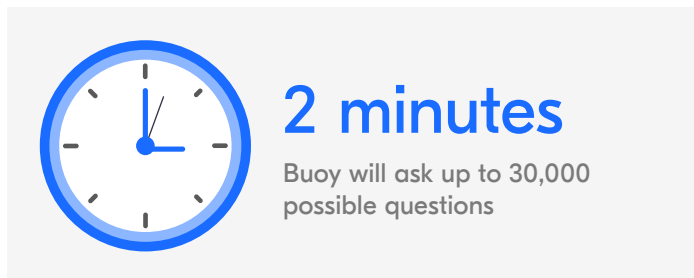
Stallings wanted to give patients a way to find, schedule, and plan for care that felt like a conversation with a trusted doctor. He added, "We wanted it to be easy for caregivers to make appointments for loved ones, while keeping up with their own health needs, too."

When Stallings and his team found Buoy, an AI-driven healthcare navigation platform, they realized it was a perfect fit for their needs. They conducted user testing across several vendors and saw that Buoy's symptom checker interview resulted in the strongest engagement with consumers. "Buoy's interview isn't simply about telling people where to go when they have a health concern," said Stallings. "It builds credibility, so people trust and act upon the information they receive."

"With Buoy's API, we were able to perfect the process of accessing care."

—Christopher Stallings, Senior Director,
Consumer Digital, Banner Health

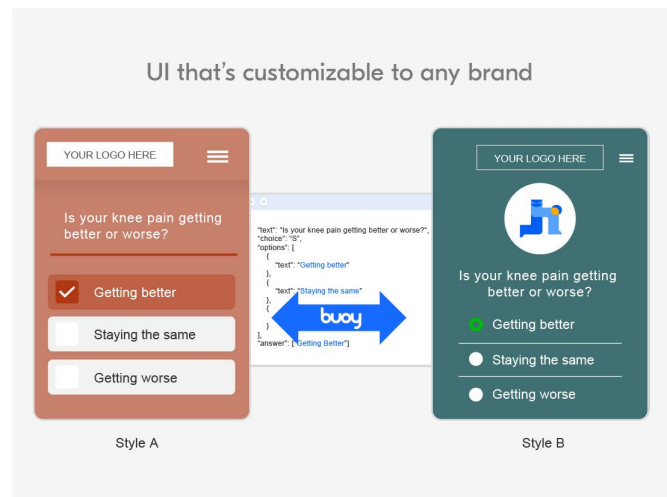
Stallings described Buoy's interview as having the "Goldilocks effect." Based on what he'd observed, if an AI interview was too short, the user didn't believe the results. If it took too long, the user disengaged. Buoy's interview takes about two minutes total and resembles the dynamic and nuanced experience of chatting with a doctor. As the interview unfolds, its underlying AI is analyzing thousands of real world datapoints drawn from the same medical literature studied by physicians. "That is one of the fantastic things about Buoy," said Stallings. "It allows us to build trust with consumers and connect them to the care they need. That's a big deal."



Integrating Buoy's API into Banner's scheduling functionality produces a unified experience

With dedicated technical guidance from Buoy, Banner's developers integrated the API into their web and mobile applications. "The Buoy team is very flexible and easy to work with," said Dee Kingbay, a business analyst at Banner. On the technical side, Ryan Case, the mobile team lead for Banner's development group, reported that the API was thoroughly documented and straightforward to implement. His team especially appreciated Buoy's use of a sandbox environment. "It made a big difference to have a period of quality assurance so we could proactively see and correct any issues before pushing live updates," he said.

The Buoy API also provides exceptional flexibility. For example, Banner was able to customize their Buoy user interface to align with their company branding. "We control the user interface, which is the virtual access point for all our customers and partners," said Stallings. And with Buoy's symptom checking interview integrated into Banner's scheduling functionality, the credibility of the initial interview extends all the way through the Banner ecosystem. "We didn't want customers to navigate through different sites," said Stallings. "We wanted the accessibility of that initial appointment to carry through the entire experience, all the way to paying a bill."



The team is already looking ahead to more integrations. "Buoy's API has extraordinary long-term value for us. Eventually we want people to be able to save their Buoy conversations in their EHRs and share them with their physicians," said Stallings. "That way, when they go to appointments, they won't have to repeat conversations they already had online."

Buoy's API is also driving patient satisfaction and engagement with Banner Health services. Consumers are now more confident about when and where to seek appointments. "Healthcare is hard to understand," said Stallings. "Patients don't know whether they should schedule a primary care visit or go right to urgent care, for example. They want reassurance that they are taking the appropriate steps."

After all, as Stallings pointed out, a trip to the doctor can be expensive and time-consuming. And when people seek care that isn't clinically necessary — say, emergency room care when telehealth would have sufficed — the cost goes up. "We can provide general guidance for situations that may be appropriate for emergency care, but we can't touch on the nuances. That's where Buoy comes in. The experience is personalized to each user with specific education and recommendations for accessing Banner services." This kind of customized information enables patients to pursue the right level of care with confidence, while simultaneously helping Banner contain costs.



75%

rate of interview completion by Banner consumers over the 12 months following the launch of Buoy's API (think: 200,000 interviews completed)

Over the twelve months following the launch of Buoy's API, Banner consumers started 200,000 interviews with a 75 percent completion rate. This points to an overwhelmingly positive user experience. Stallings and his team are also seeing people come back to Buoy's API again and again. Through regular email communication with its population, Banner directs people to the Buoy interview to help them identify the care they need – ultimately bringing them back into the system. The Buoy interview has been so successful at reengaging patients that Banner now provides a link to Buoy in every customer outreach email.

A shared vision for appropriate, seamless care

Banner and Buoy have been able to make significant progress toward their shared vision of empowering patients to get the right care. "Buoy is an incredible company to partner with," said Stallings. "Whenever we have an idea about where we are heading, we are often perfectly aligned with Buoy." Stallings explained that Banner worked with Buoy to create the API and is anticipating future collaborations on its functionality.

Buoy has also been able to flex with Banner as things change. During the pandemic, Buoy incorporated questions about COVID-19 symptoms into the initial interview to address patient concerns. "Buoy's responsiveness in creating COVID-19 protocol within the API was instrumental in making sure that we got it out quickly," said Trevor Johnson, a scrum master within Banner's development team. "And it was done well, recognizing that most consumers wanted to start with COVID concerns during the thick of the pandemic."

Banner was so impressed by Buoy that they've since become an investor in the company. "Buoy is doing great work," said Stallings, "and we want to be an enduring partner."

Clinically-trained AI. All in one API.

