



Taming the Wild World of Patient Recruitment Providers

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How many sponsors have the answer to this question at their fingertips?

What is the average cost per patient enrolled through centralized recruitment strategies for this [molecule, disease, region, or TA]?

If a sponsor cannot answer this, how on earth do they know if:

- They are paying a fair price for recruitment support?
- They know where and how to improve?
- They are even any good at this at all?

The root cause of this enormous blind spot in business intelligence is the diverse and fragmented types of vendors providing “patient recruitment support.”

I like to divide these vendor types into the following three main company types:

1. **Agencies** – Full-service companies that handle everything from creating paper and digital assets to performing outreach through various channels and audiences. They offer end-to-end service coverage, including technology for websites, pre-screeners, and referral management portals. These companies usually work on a project or program level.
2. **Audiences** – Organizations with curated, proprietary audiences built through clinical trial-related or adjacent offerings (e.g., pharmacy, health app, patient community, advocacy group). They can reach out to these audiences for clinical trial opportunities.
3. **Technology** – Platforms offering technologies to find, prescreen, and/or manage the recruitment journey of potential participants. These may be end-to-end platforms (e.g., [ProofPilot](#)) or companies offering point solutions like industry- wide trial finders, EHR matching tech, or standalone referral management platforms.

Then there are the outreach tactics or channels, which include various mediums through which prospective participants can be notified or learn about a trial (e.g., paid search, social media ads, display ads, skywriting, newspapers, email, etc.).

So, What’s the Problem?

The vast majority of sponsors hire one agency at a protocol or program level. This agency pulls together a mix of outreach tactics, taps into a variety of audiences and channels, and uses its own technology stack for websites, pre-screeners, and referral portals. A one-stop shop is attractive for a single study team, but for a world-class development organization, it creates a critical performance weakness.

This model is flawed for two reasons:

1. **Disparate Metrics** – Each agency uses its own technology stack, leading to disparate, siloed metrics. This lack of integration prevents the creation of actionable knowledge or enterprise-wide wisdom. Sponsors also end up paying high prices for technology components like websites and pre-screeners, often because technology is not the core business of these agencies and is not built for scale. Separating these costs from outreach expenses can be challenging, further complicating performance metrics and analysis reporting.

2. **Inconsistent Quality** – Not all agencies excel in every area. Some have strengths in creative design and copy, others in media optimization, database management, or nurse-staffed call centers. This inconsistency makes it difficult to ensure excellence in every component of patient recruitment. Sponsors provide varied technology and service experiences to patients and sites, and accessing the best methods to find patients can require managing numerous MSAs with different pricing models.

There is a Better Way

In consumer sales and marketing, top agencies (e.g., Publicis, Ogilvy) have different core expertise compared to their tech counterparts (e.g., Salesforce, HubSpot, Shopify). Given that the patient recruitment vendor space is over 25 years old, it's time to evolve from this cottage industry approach to a modern, streamlined mix of partner categories:

1. **Outreach** – Ensure access to the best agencies, channels, and audiences in a way that can be fairly measured against one another for optimal patient yield and cost.
2. **End-to-End Technology** – Use scalable, enterprise-level technology to ensure a consistent, high-quality experience reflective of your sponsor brand, with the ability to aggregate sophisticated metrics.

Positioning the technology as the main contractor to coordinate a sponsor's recruitment capability opens up a new way of working that addresses two major issues while giving sponsors the best of both worlds:

- **Leveraging the Best Partners** – Access a wide variety of outreach partners as subcontractors while avoiding the headache of managing numerous RFPs and MSAs.
- **Scalable, Cost-Effective Technology** – Implement a technology stack that delivers a consistent experience for all patients and sites, generates comprehensive metrics across the portfolio, ensures optimal ROI, and creates intelligence for continuous improvement.

With ProofPilot, we are already serving as the enterprise recruitment technology stack for world-class organizations, who can finally answer the question, "What is the average cost per patient enrolled through centralized recruitment strategies for this [molecule, disease, region, or TA]?"

[Contact us](#) to learn more!