Tellescope

by Founder

Patient Scheduling   Patient Intake   Patient CRM   Clinical Workflow Management

Care Team Coordination   Care Management

Details

Review Date	09/14/2023
Purchase Date	Q1'23
Implementation Time	3 months
Product Still in Use	Yes
Purchase Amount	2k
Intent to Renew	95%
Review Source	Elion

Product Rating

Product Overall		4.0
Use Case Fit		4.0
Ease of Use		3.5
API		4.5
Integrations		N/A
Support		5.0
Value		5.0

About the Reviewer

Purchasing Team   User

Implementation Team   Product Oversight

Reviewer Organization

Virtual-First Provider   Behavioral Health

Reviewer Tech Stack

Apero

Other Products Considered

Acuity Scheduling   Apero   Athenahealth

Summary

- **Product Usage:** Tellescope is used as a main scheduling tool that offers the flexibility of implementing scheduling constraints, secure chat features, and potential addition of video conferencing and customized patient journeys.

- **Strengths:** Tellescope offers a secure and HIPAA-compliant platform with flexibility, clear documentation, good support from co-founders, and fast customization of solutions based on specific client requirements.

- **Weaknesses:** The product's provider setting for availability is non-intuitive and the calendar integration is challenging for providers who want to link a non-HIPAA-compliant external calendar. Occasional minor bugs are encountered.

- **Overall Judgment:** Despite minor bugs and the need for additional training for providers, the decision to choose Tellescope is validated by its cost-effectiveness, specific healthcare focus, strong support, and HIPAA compliance.

So today, we're chatting about Tellescope and how it's used at your company. Before we jump into that, could you give a brief overview of the company and your role there?

Yes, I am a cofounder of a digital healthcare provider that is leveraging Tellescope for powering the infrastructure of our digital platform.

How long have you been using Tellescope?

About a year now.

What caused you to look into purchasing Tellescope?

We were using Calendly for scheduling, but due to issues with HIPAA compliance and meeting our specific care plan and scheduling requirements, we decided to evaluate other scheduling tools. We were already familiar with Tellescope from previous calls, and they offered us a solution at a much lower cost compared to other options. Additionally, Tellescope focuses exclusively on serving digital health providers and provides a secure and HIPAA-compliant platform for us to work with.

What are the problems that the product is solving for you now?

Yeah, Tellescope has an API that's really flexible. This allows us to customize some of our scheduling constraints. For example, we didn't want people to be able to schedule more than four sessions a month, because that's how our care plans are structured. We were having trouble setting that limit on Calendly. Plus, Calendly is more of a consumer product, so people know how to get around its limitations by using URLs and such. Tellescope gave us much more control over the user experience to meet our specific requirements. That was on the scheduling side.

We also liked that Tellescope had other features for us to grow with, for instance, secure chat. We even discussed the possibility of adding video conferencing and customized patient journeys in the future. Tellescope's flexibility allows for all of that. While we haven't implemented everything yet, it's great to know we have the option to do so down the line.

How does Tellescope interact with your EHR strategy?

Tellescope is currently our main scheduling tool. Before implementing Apero for our EHR, we used TheraNest, which is another EHR system, but it wasn't very robust or tech friendly. That's why we didn't utilize their scheduling features. It didn't seamlessly connect with our digital portal, either. Also, since we were using TheraNest, there was no integration with Tellescope on the EHR side. With the switch to Apero, we realized that there are some overlapping capabilities. Apero can handle scheduling and is highly compatible with APIs, allowing integration with our portal. As of now, Tellescope is working well for us. We chose to stick with it because the cost is manageable. However, when it comes to our EHR strategy, we have considered whether we want to continue using Tellescope or consolidate everything into the EHR so all data is housed in one place.

What were some of the requirements that you had when you were evaluating Tellescope and other scheduling competitors?

One requirement was to be able to build on top of a scheduling API. Another was having the capability of pushing and pulling data. Our intention was to store the appointment data in our backend system. Tellescope's pipeline allowed us to easily transfer the data between our system and theirs, aligning with our data strategy.

Furthermore, since we could push and pull data, we were able to implement various constraints on our portal. For instance, we limited users to scheduling only four sessions per month and prevented scheduling beyond their subscription's renewal date. These constraints were made possible by using their API and building our own interface. This approach also offers future flexibility. If we ever decide to switch to a different platform, our code does not rely solely on Tellescope's integration. This modular and flexible development approach has benefited us as a company.

What other vendors did you look at?

We were doing our EHR landscape analysis at the same time we were looking at scheduling options. We considered Acuity and also considered using Athena and Apero for scheduling. However, we ultimately decided to go with Tellescope because it offered a faster implementation timeline and lower cost. We were also interested in using Tellescope for secure chat, and the other options were much more expensive. Tellescope stood out because it offered a bundle of different products, including scheduling and secure chat, at a favorable cost. The bundled chat feature was particularly attractive to us.

How did the pricing models compare when you were looking at purchasing this sort of technology?

For the other vendors we looked at, their pricing models offered monthly subscriptions, but the lowest tier available was too large for our needs. Some companies did offer a free option for those that had raised only up to $100k, but we had already surpassed that stage, so the next tier, which allowed up to 5000 monthly active users, was the smallest option for us. However, the monthly cost was quite high.

Additionally, many of the chat vendors charged an extra fee for the Business Associate Agreement (BAA) because they had non-healthcare clients as well. They would offer their basic chat service and then add on the BAA cost for healthcare customers. Unfortunately, the cost of the BAA was ridiculously expensive, making it unfeasible for us.

On the other hand, with Tellescope, we were able to bundle chat with scheduling, and they were willing to adjust the pricing to our current needs, which involved a much smaller number of monthly active users. Moreover, since Tellescope is a healthcare-only company, the cost of the BAA was already included in the overall contract, eliminating the need for an extra fee.

How did you find the sales process with Tellescope?

Really great. There were several reasons why we chose them, but one of the main ones was our positive interactions with the cofounders. We found the sales experience to be unique compared to other vendors. They were also very accommodating and available to answer any questions we had. They even set us up with a referral call with one of their existing customers, who had nothing but great things to say about them. This reinforced our belief that they would be accessible and responsive when we contracted with them. The referral call also mentioned how quickly they customized solutions, often within two days, when their customers needed something specific. It was clear that they were dedicated to doing right by their early customers, which really appealed to us.

Another aspect we appreciated was their transparency and how easy they were to work with. They also moved fast. Athena's implementation timeline was about 16 weeks. In contrast, Tellescope assured us that they could have us up and running within a week or two. The contracting process was also straightforward, and any comments or concerns

we had were addressed promptly. Overall, it was a smooth experience because of their smaller company size, which meant less red tape and more efficiency.

How was the onboarding and setup process?

They provided us with a test environment and allowed us to play around with it. Additionally, they were open to making adjustments based on our requirements as we worked on our implementation. They made changes for us promptly, often within the same day, so it was very quick.

What particular use cases does Tellescope solve for you?

With their scheduling tool, we could create multiple types of appointments to accommodate things like trials, 60-minute or 45-minute appointments, and so on. The appointment data could be easily transferred or copied through their data pipelines to our system, which is then tied to other things like notifications and how the information appears on our front end, which was really helpful.

We were also able to add multiple providers to each appointment, which was great for us because we follow an integrated care team model where each patient has several providers. So each provider can be linked to the patient, allowing them to view secure chat interactions, and potentially, if we implement it in the future, the patient's journey and related notes. They can also see the appointment data. This made our implementation process smoother. Apart from the constraints mentioned earlier, being able to use their scheduling widget as a foundation and customize it based on our requirements was extremely valuable to us.

What are some of the strengths and weaknesses you've noticed?

I think the strengths of Tellescope lie in their co-founders and their sales process as well as their willingness to customize solutions for clients. It's great that they prioritize security and HIPAA compliance. And the API documentation is straightforward and easy to work with.

However, one issue we've experienced is with the scheduling tool's availability settings for providers. It hasn't been intuitive for many of our providers. The process of setting out-of-office dates or general availability is more tedious compared to other tools like Calendly. We've received a lot of questions from providers. This is something that could be improved upon. Once we figured it out, training our providers wasn't that difficult, but initially, it was a bit challenging.

Another challenge is the calendar integration for providers who want to link an external calendar. Due to the BAA, it becomes tricky if the calendar they want to link is not HIPAA-compliant, like Google Calendar, for example. This poses an issue for those who don't want to juggle multiple calendars for their appointment data.

I think the main downside, which may not be fixable, is that providers don't seem to understand the concept of Tellescope being an infrastructure tool that powers a digital platform. Unlike products like Calendly, customers and consumers may not necessarily use Tellescope directly. For us, all they need to do is log in, set up their availability, and everything else happens on our portal. However, providers find it hard to grasp this concept and end up using Tellescope in ways that cause bugs and syncing issues with our portal. We have to provide communication and training around this, but it has been challenging.

Another challenge is that Tellescope is a smaller company, so occasionally we encounter bugs that we wouldn't see with a larger partner. Determining whether the issue is on our end or with the Tellescope platform can be challenging

at times. However, these instances are rare. Overall, kudos to Tellescope for their dependability. It's just an inherent risk you take when working with a smaller partner.

How would you rate Tellescope's platform stability?

Yeah, we do come across some occasional bugs, but fortunately, we've been able to address them. We haven't experienced any major downtime or stability problems. It's mostly minor issues that we notice when our providers are using the platform. For example, if they add an out-of-office block to their calendar, they can only see it in weekly view, not monthly view, which tends to confuse everyone. It's not a critical problem for our platform, but it does mean we need to provide more support and guidance to our providers.

How would you characterize the developer experience?

I'm not a developer, so I can only share information based on what I've heard from our engineers. They mentioned that the documentation provided by Tellescope was clear, and they were able to implement most things without much assistance. However, whenever they did have questions, Tellescope was very quick to respond. Our engineers had a few instances where they were able to troubleshoot or collaborate on implementing something through calls with Tellescope, which I found helpful, as it saved me from getting involved in those discussions.

In terms of development in general, our engineers were able to work fast because of the clear documentation. One challenge we faced was that Tellescope didn't provide many off-the-shelf front-end options that we could leverage. Some of the front-end features weren't easily customizable and didn't align with our brand or needs. So our engineers had to put in some extra effort in building out the front end of the secure chat we implemented.

Do you have any tactical advice for people who might want to utilize Tellescope as part of their infrastructure?

I think what has worked well for us is that they do have a lot of capabilities. For example, you can use their scheduling widget and they have a patient portal. You can sync appointments to notifications. The Tellescope dashboard allows you to do a lot of things. So when considering how to strategically build or grow your platform, it's important to evaluate whether the platform itself can be a strategic advantage for you. If not, you can leverage more of the tools they offer to reduce the workload on your engineers and minimize bugs and confusion for providers. That has been the biggest challenge for us.

The only reason for following our path is if you have an EHR strategy and aim to transition into a more clinically-oriented EHR. In that case, you might want to build something modular that can be implemented on various back-end infrastructures. Think strategically about building the data pipeline and incorporating more features through Tellescope's API instead of relying on their dashboard tools. The fact that they offer both options is great. However, deciding which one to go with early on will save you a lot of time and stress in the long run.

Did you integrate Tellescope with other products in your tech stack, or is it standalone and interacts with your backend platform by APIs?

We haven't integrated it with anything else yet. We had the opportunity to integrate it with Zoom, but the way we've implemented everything is very much on our platform, so it was easier to not integrate it. As for Apero, their data pipeline is really easy, so Tellescope just feeds appointment data into Apero using a linked ID. But it's not actually integrated.

How is Tellescope's support?

Yeah, their support team is really strong. It's one of the best things about working with them. They're pretty hands-off, which is nice if you don't need constant assistance. The invoice just automatically comes monthly, and everything runs smoothly until you actually need their help. And reaching out to them is super easy. They usually respond within the day, unless they're really busy, in which case they let you know. So overall, they're pretty easy to work with.

In the past, they even shared a Notion with us that clearly explained all the different aspects of the platform and dashboard, along with tutorial videos on how to use certain features. They've really come up with a great system of SLAs to assist their customers. But I think direct access, which might not last forever, has been the best form of support for our developers.

Do you feel like you made the correct decision when you chose Tellescope?

Yes. In some ways, Calendly was easier, because people are familiar with it, but that's not really a problem with Tellescope itself. It's more of a user issue. But when you factor in cost, the way it fits in with our digital ecosystem, and support, I still think Tellescope is the obvious choice. We just need to sort out some things with provider management.

Would you have any advice or recommendations for Tellescope for areas of growth?

I think focusing on the front-end aspects, such as providing SDKs or options for customization, could really speed up the implementation timelines. And there are certain elements of the dashboard that still feel a bit awkward. One way to address this would be to constantly make improvements based on user feedback. Take the availability feature, for instance. Even I find it confusing to use. It would be beneficial if they conducted user testing to better understand how people behave and think and then adjusted the flow of these features accordingly.

Do you have any advice for buyers who are selecting this type of product right now?

Be deliberate about your strategy before deciding on how to implement. This will save you time and help you choose the right partner. Additionally, make sure you do your due diligence. If possible, speak to a reference, especially for smaller companies, to ensure that the risk of working with them is worth it. There's always a possibility that a smaller company could fail or have stability issues, so make sure to ask about these before committing. Also, keep in mind that if you're a healthcare buyer, the BAA is important. We were a bit naive about this when we first worked with Calendly. It wasn't a big deal since we weren't billing insurance at the time, but once you start doing so, Calendly's lack of HIPAA compliance becomes an issue. Therefore, if you're using a consumer product for scheduling, you may have to switch, even if you don't want to.