Datacentrix Healthcare Indaba 2022 focuses on urgent requirement for accelerated digital transformation

Datacentrix held its inaugural Healthcare Indaba at Zebula Golf Estate in Limpopo Province, hosting an event that brought together South Africa's technology leaders with healthcare industry players to discuss critical trends and insights within the sector.

In his welcome address, Datacentrix CEO Ahmed Mahomed stated that, while the local healthcare industry has seen significant progress in digital transformation, it has not been fast enough, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only underscored the fact that the process needs greater acceleration.

“The slower rate of technology adoption in healthcare can be attributed to several factors,” he said. “The lack of standardisation across technologies, poor systems integration, highly customised systems and processes, physical on-site limitations, as well as hospital admission and administrative processes that are still largely manual are some that were mentioned.

“Specialists tend to operate within a vacuum, without a common data set across the data systems and no single view of a patient's data, meaning that the historical context of the patient is often lost, and specialists don't necessarily have access to all the data that is available for a patient. There is a need to have a single view of all information related to a patient to all service providers.”

> A serious challenge is the significant gap between technology and business, and digitisation can help to align technology investment with the delivery of business objectives. The key lies in being able to access and understand data in real-time; it is here that digital transformation delivers its best value.

Bridging the technology/business disconnect in healthcare

According to Mahomed, another serious challenge is the significant gap between technology and business, and digitisation can help to align technology investment with the delivery of business objectives.

“The key lies in being able to access and understand data in real-time; it is here that digital transformation delivers its best value,” he commented.

> People are not worried about the complexity that happens in the background, and so it is our role to demystify this complexity and deliver their expectations. Everyone has been affected by the 'great transformation' during this period of technology acceleration, with priorities shifting and business models and ecosystems being reinvented.

Abdullah Verachia, CEO at the Strategists

His advice was for healthcare organisations to start the digital transformation journey with network infrastructure, to leverage the intelligence that can be gained in terms of the customer experience. “Collecting, mining and applying this intelligence opens opportunities to customise and improve the user experience, increase revenue, decrease costs, and drive efficiencies.

“We must be mindful that healthcare is a complex ecosystem. However, it is possible to use the opportunities this provides us to pave the way to improved access to healthcare, to leverage the data patterns in order to support preventative healthcare, and to enhance the user experience.”

Better use of data for improved healthcare experience

An important point raised by keynote speaker Abdullah Verachia was that because people have become accustomed to a frictionless and seamless digital experience in everyday life, they expect the same from their healthcare providers. “People are not worried about the complexity that happens in the background, and so it is our role to demystify this complexity and deliver their expectations,” he explained.

“Everyone has been affected by the 'great transformation' during this period of technology acceleration, with priorities shifting and business models and ecosystems being reinvented.

“So, what does the future of healthcare look like?” he asked. “Healthcare technology allows us to think about how we can fundamentally improve the system to bring down costs and add efficiencies.”

Referring to 'The Future of Healthcare: Insights and Implications from Multiple Global Discussions' by Tim Jones, Caroline Dewing and Jonathan Besser, Verachia spoke about macro trends affecting the future of healthcare between 2020 and 2030, including the power of data, increasing patient centricity, and empowering more flexibility in organisations. Additional points included:

- **Urbanisation and health** – we have a historical lens on how we manage budgets and allocations;
- **The West versus the Rest** – patients are becoming more demanding about what is possible, and some features that can be adopted in an emergent market like South Africa must be provided at the right cost. This includes for instance tele-medicine, accelerated digital platforms, and increased remote visits; and
- **Prevention and wellness** – recognising the importance of preventative healthcare and individualised medicine in providing greater transparency and improved patient autonomy. The automation of workforce elements and making healthcare data enabled are critical factors here, so that the data can be utilised to leverage the patient's experience.

Verachia also noted several areas where technology has had a significant influence on the healthcare space in recent years, such as using medical wearable devices to improve preventative medicine, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to enable personalised treatment.

> According to 'The Future of Healthcare: Insights and Implications from Multiple Global Discussions', the healthcare space will see three different scenarios emerge: technology saving the day; prevention taking over from sick care; and health systems becoming increasingly privatised.

According to research from Insider Intelligence, not only are 80 percent of consumers willing to use smartwatches that measure health data, but 84 percent of industry leaders believe that AI will transform healthcare, with the AI-powered healthcare tools market set to exceed $34 billion by 2025 worldwide, says Tractica.

“Furthermore, patients want on-demand healthcare. They have more power now, and as stated in a 2017 Accenture report, we're seeing 77 percent of patients saying that the ability to book, change, or cancel appointments online is important in their choice of a healthcare provider. People are far more digitally enabled today, and the way in which they use technology is fundamentally different.”

Could technology be healthcare's lifeline?

Verachia posed the question as to whether healthcare needs a new operating system, asking how technology could be better integrated in our reality and also business strategy. The answer, he believes, lies in using existing technology – but in new and different combinations – to deliver better value.

“Phase one of healthcare transformation focuses on the strengthening of core business, including the improvement of costs, productivity and the patient experience over the shorter term. The second phase looks at revenue growth, leveraging current skills, building new partnerships, and entering adjacent segments. Phase three concentrates on the longer-term objective of reinvention; creating or making the most of emerging spaces and new business models.”

He continued to explain that, according to 'The Future of Healthcare: Insights and Implications from Multiple Global Discussions', the healthcare space will see three different scenarios emerge: technology saving the day; prevention taking over from sick care; and health systems becoming increasingly privatised.

“With all these circumstances, it is critical to remember that technology will play a role here, but digital is only an enabler,” he added.

The Healthcare Indaba 2022 was supported by platinum sponsors Aruba and Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), as well as gold sponsors Cloudflare, eNetworks, Hewlett Packard (HP), ManageEngine, OpenText, Palo Alto Networks, Rubrik, and Teraco. Highlights of the Indaba included presentations on topics such as healthcare at the edge, hybrid IT and identity management; as well as pertinent solutions discussion by Datacentrix and the participating technology partner experts.

For more information on the Datacentrix Healthcare Indaba 2022, please visit www.datacentrix.co.za/health_indaba_2022.html