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NEXT LEVEL SYSTEMS

WITH CATHIE REID



ONE OF THE QUESTIONS WE'RE ALWAYS ASKING IN OUR BUSINESSES IS 'WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO BE WORKING ON NOW TO BE PREPARED FOR FUTURE CHALLENGES?' THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FIVE YEAR PLAN ANYMORE, THE WORLD IS CHANGING AT A PACE FASTER THAN EVER PREVIOUSLY EXPERIENCED, AND AS A RESULT THE TASK OF FORWARD PLANNING HAS NEVER BEEN MORE DIFFICULT.

That said, while we don't know what we don't know, we can look at the trends we are currently experiencing and expect that they will continue, with technology amplifying them to new and greater levels – or that's the approach that we take anyway.

We know that human capital is going to become increasingly scarce as a resource, and it's important to use this precious commodity where it adds the most value. For us this means continuing to progress with automating all tasks where human execution doesn't add any additional benefit, and ensuring that our people have access to the information they need, in a useable, accessible format, when and where they need it to allow them to deliver the best possible care to our patients. We're increasing the use of mobile devices in daily work activities to facilitate this, and planning for this to continue to a point where much of the daily workload is conducted at the point of patient contact via mobile rather than the traditional fixed PC locations in the dispensary.

That might sound logical and no different

to what we are all already doing in our personal lives – after all we all bank, shop, create and consume content on a daily basis via our mobile devices – but it still presents some significantly greater challenges in the healthcare workspace at this point.

Many of the proprietary systems that drive healthcare operations are not mobile enabled, or if they are they are still a fair way from being mobile optimized, so it's necessary to build or utilise bridging systems that push and pull the necessary data in and out.

There are also important security issues that need to be addressed, with those same proprietary systems currently using server based installations, allowing them to be heavily protected behind firewalls and network infrastructure systems. Opening those up to mobile utilisation requires a new way of thinking, but fortunately the advances in containering security for mobile are helping to facilitate some of this.

In addition, the legislation and guidelines governing pharmacy practice had their origin in times when this style of

healthcare service delivery had never been contemplated, and with the 'act of dispensing' still inextricably linked to an inked out section on a floor plan, there is still much work to be done here as we move beyond the traditional product supply role.

The one inescapable trend that every healthcare provider needs to be thinking about is increasing the accessibility of health data to patients. Today's patient has increasingly different needs and expectations, and if businesses are not preparing to deliver them information about their own health in a way that they can access anywhere, anytime, from any kind of device then they will undoubtedly get left behind those who are.

This doesn't mean having a website or a Facebook page – although those are important communication platforms, and if you haven't already put those in place I'm not certain you're going to buy into the rest of what I'm saying here – it means figuring out how you are going to present them with their own health information in a relevant, useable manner that allows them to actively participate in their own



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unknown, but is now able to be captured by wearables and sensors, partnering with our patients to understand their healthcare goals and needs has never been more important.

Numerous studies have shown that our patients are prepared to share information with us, so long as they feel that they are getting benefit as a result. If we can blend patient generated data, ideally collected passively with little or no effort required on their behalf, with the data that we already have around their medication information really powerful insights result. These can allow us to partner in disease state management at a level never previously possible, and this enables the

building of relationships that transcend price, location and many of the other challenges facing our industry.

Again, adopting this new thinking and turning it into reality is not without its challenges. As a country our e-health execution to date has been less than stellar. Time will tell as to whether the PCEHR will ever become a tool of value, but there is too much at stake for healthcare organisations to sit back and wait passively for the government to deliver a result. We're increasingly seeing businesses build the tools they need to resolve the issues that are causing pain for their organisations and their patients, and this is a trend that I'm certain will continue. Clearly not every pharmacy operator will have either the ability or the desire to go out and build their own EHR,

but their eyes should be wide open to the options that are presenting as others do just that.

The pace of change in healthcare may still be glacial in comparison with that which some other industries are experiencing, but it's vital that we don't get lulled into a belief that it isn't happening.

The biggest business risk of all is to sit back and do nothing- information has never been more accessible, and the very fact that you're reading this publication indicates that you've got an interest in knowing more.

Identify the things that are causing you and your patients the greatest pain, track down solutions, and implement them in manageable bite size chunks. Don't overcomplicate it, but most importantly don't wait any longer to get started.



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