

How to treat healthcare technology ailments

Healthcare providers have focused recent efforts largely on improving diagnoses, enhancing treatments, and helping patients live longer lives. That emphasis fits with the mission, but these companies have failed to improve their internal business processes.

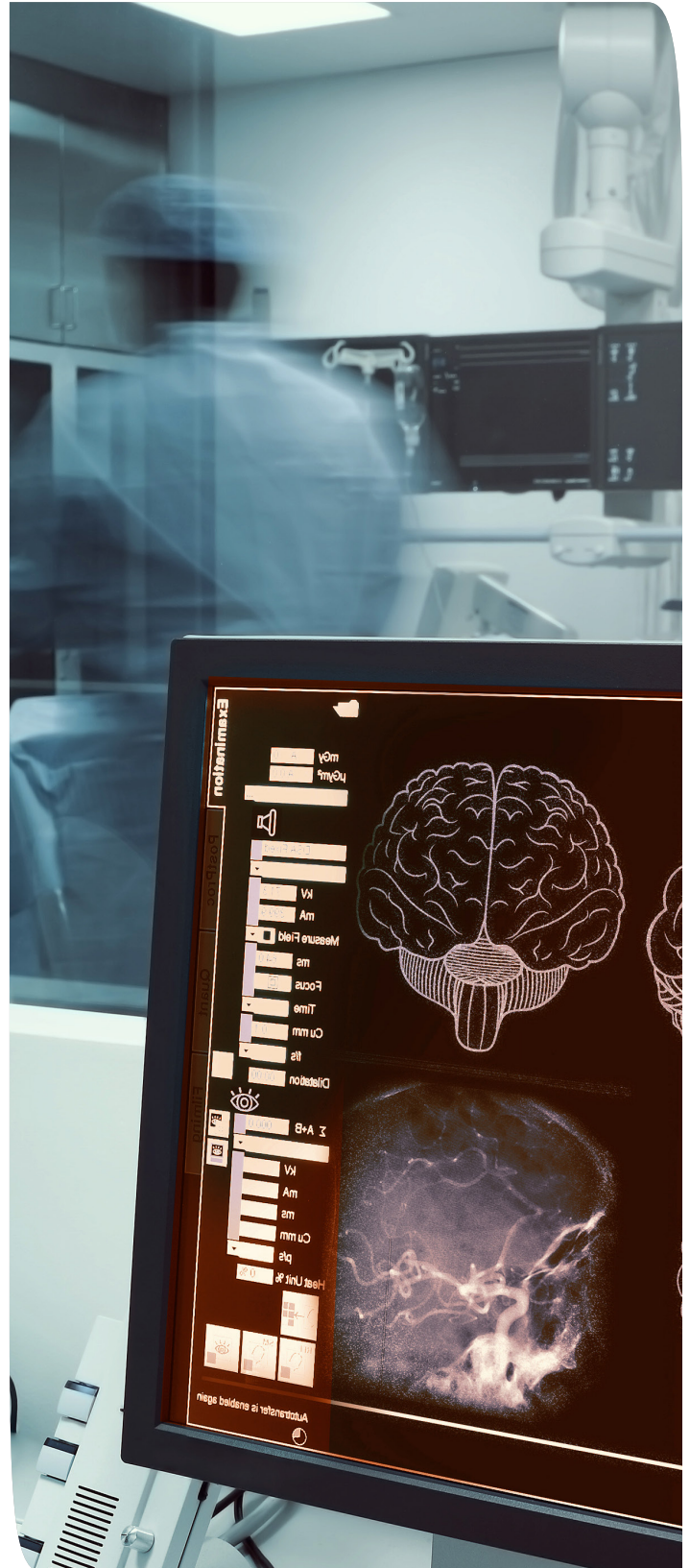
The front-end and back-end workflows are inefficient and lag well behind services delivered in other markets. The pandemic exacerbated these shortcomings. To prepare for the future, hospitals must remove friction from systems to ensure the patient experience and their own operations both improve.

The pandemic strained healthcare providers more than any other industry. They were asked to do a lot more with significantly less and traditional revenue streams were completely interrupted. The restrictions during the pandemic that made it impossible to perform elective surgeries were particularly impactful.

Hospitals are large, complex and expensive facilities. Through the years, healthcare companies created best practices designed to help them maximize the investments they received. This was disrupted by the pandemic and new rules like social distancing, but now in a post-pandemic world, companies must pivot again to adapt to further demands on their facilities. One way to boost occupancy is to schedule, diagnose, and treat patients more efficiently. If the diagnosis and treatment of patients are faster and they are discharged in less time, the rotation rate is accelerated, and healthcare facilities can treat more patients without incurring additional costs.

Hospitals were asked to do more during the pandemic. They had to ramp up and provide enhanced services to patients so the Covid-19 virus could be effectively treated and tracked. New constraints were put into place, requiring hospitals to limit the number of people in areas like waiting rooms.

As a result, costs grew 15% more than revenue. Recent technical advances offer them the opportunity to reverse that trend and increase their profitability.



Streamline patient interactions

Cause

Creating a single view of a patient's medical history has been an ongoing challenge for healthcare companies. Patients often have individual records for each medical touchpoint that sit in a unique, totally isolated bubble. So for one client, multiple records exist for various departments like obstetrics, traumatology, cardiology, and psychiatry from every time they fill out a manual form to detail their personal information, pathologies, allergies, and surgical procedures. This process results in duplication, wasted time, and customer frustration.

In addition to this inefficiency, between 210,000 and 400,000 patients each year suffer preventable damage that contributes to their death. In fact, correctable medical errors, ranging from the simple miscommunication of an allergy drug to more complex cases, are the third highest cause of death in the region.

Reality

In Latin America, only 38% of the hospitals have implemented an electronic health record system, and there is no centralized way to exchange patient information among different medical centers.

Solution

An information system that centralizes each patient's medical history is an important step toward boosting healthcare productivity. Making a single, centralized registry readily available ensures that all patient information is accessible quickly. Any medical professional could review past treatments, studies, surgeries, prescription drugs, and other items that might impact diagnoses and treatments. The backlogs and delays that currently slow down patient processing could be removed. Scheduling appointments, diagnosing problems, and treating patients would speed up, so the facility could serve more patients more effectively.

In other words...

Time is precious nowadays. No one wants to waste it filling out forms, sitting in waiting rooms, or having the wrong person contact you. When you call your healthcare provider, you know who they are, and so you expect them to have information about you and your history. Yet, in many cases, such basic data is lacking because healthcare companies keep patient data across different systems that act as autonomous information silos. Exchanging information between them is a tedious and sometimes impossible chore. In order to service customers, the system has to change so the hospital knows who the person is from the start of their inquiry until the end of their treatment.

Improving the patient experience

Cause

Healthcare companies are strained. They face increasing regulations, rising patient demands, and more competition. The availability of medical personnel can be difficult to manage because of the many variables to consider, including specialty, schedules, safeguards, and individual patient and staff personalities.

While providers would like to add staff and new solutions, fiscal realities do not allow them that luxury. As a result, they are often behind in adopting modern solutions that are common in other industries. Now, it is essential for the healthcare industry to streamline business processes, so they can maximize their human resources.

Reality

Healthcare services can be intimidating, and the process for patients is complex and difficult to navigate. Consequently, customer satisfaction in the industry is low. With more than half of the people who visit medical centers thinking their care could have been handled better. Hospitals struggle to treat patients properly, leaving themselves open to possible negative repercussions. Often, lives depend on timely or immediate assistance; as a result, 24% of incidents that lead to deaths or permanent injuries within a hospital can be attributed to not finding the right medical personnel in time.

Solution

For the system to be truly effective, patients should have a specialist at their disposal when they need it. But better collaboration among hospital staff is required to accommodate this. Solutions that will help them coordinate activities among staff, place the right personnel in the right place, and respond to customers promptly are essential for success.

Reduce operating costs

Cause

Healthcare providers are under significant pressure from regulators and insurance companies to keep costs as low as possible. But they are still required to invest in a wide range of sophisticated equipment, like ultrasound machines, and simple items, like latex gloves. As a result, they must manage a large and varied inventory. In fact, healthcare organizations purchased \$442 billion worth of medical equipment and supplies in 2020. According to First Research, the market will continue growing at a 6.1% Compound Annual Growth Rate, reaching \$603 billion in 2023. Medical companies often manage equipment reactively, only buying items when something breaks or wears out rather than proactively taking small steps to ensure that systems continue running well.

Reality

Healthcare companies do a mediocre job of managing product inventory. Two statistics illustrate the lack of processes and solutions in place to monitor and support equipment: 10% of the equipment in a health center fails at least once a day, and up to 25% of the equipment is sent for repair unnecessarily.

Solution

The key to this problem is greater visibility and the promise of more consistency. Because only when effective budgeting for supplies, maintenance, and support services is introduced will costs be reduced. Predictive analytics can help by asking important questions like, how many times does a piece of equipment fail? Do you have a solution for when it does? How much time per month is that equipment out of service? Was it in the maintenance window? The resulting data will give businesses insights into improving their systems and increasing their profit margins.

In other words...

Does anyone like going to the doctor? No. The process is time-consuming when you try to book an appointment or even just get information. Staff are often hard to speak to directly and are busy with other aspects of the healthcare facility. Unlike the relatively simple and easy interactions seen in other industries, customers often spend lots of time trying to set up appointments and get information about their health, which can lead to tremendous frustration.

Healthcare is a challenging industry that was made more so during the pandemic. Hospitals struggled to create business processes that work quickly and effectively, but now technology can offer these organizations three ways to improve their operations. Adopting a central patient record provides patient information to staff more quickly, offloads mundane tasks from patients and admin staff, and improves inventory management. New tools reduce the friction experienced during the patient journey, and predictive maintenance systems provide them with a way to increase the return on their assets. By adopting new solutions, these companies can run more efficient operations.