

Curing the NHS' tech ailment



Mr. Tony Rich

*****@***unify.com

Global Market Segments and
Programs - Healthcare - Unify

Digitisation is a term thrown around in the public sector, and the NHS is no exception. Just like many organisations, it faces backlogs, inefficiencies and administration burdens, but there is a solution: technology.

Technology can help NHS employees offer the best level of patient support, and in return, reduce stress and improve recovery. Adopting the right, and latest tools can vastly improve the experience of not only patients, but staff too. In fact, those employed by the NHS will see huge benefits, as technology lets them do the job they signed up for, without a huge administrative burden.

So, how can the industry put patients at its centre again?

Patients or Customers?

Put simply, patients are customers. Although the NHS is a public service, patients want to be cured, and sent back out in the world. No one likes staying in a hospital bed longer than needed and reducing stress levels is key to achieving this. [According to Deloitte](#), patients that felt minimal stress at the hospital tended to be discharged sooner. Allowing this to be your motivation can make adopting technology easier and more rewarding.

In America, seeing patients as customers is the norm. The industry is vastly different to our own in the UK - Americans look at hospitals more like businesses than public services. While the UK might not want to copy this funding method, there is value to be gained from seeing patients as customers. For example, increasing the speed of discharging a healthy individual – as though it was a business – can ensure others in need are treated rapidly. The key to this? Technology.

Automation and Mobile Devices

Information can be hard to come-by in the NHS. If staff don't know where or why a patient is, levels of stress rise in what's already a very stressful environment.

This is where automation improves customer experience. For instance, adopting an automated and secure system where doctors have text messages sent about discharging patients could significantly cut a patient's time spent in a bed.

Staff can focus on ill patients, and perfectly healthy patients no longer have to wait for discharge papers to be physically signed. Instead, approval could be given remotely through a digital device.

This can also be seen as a way of extending the reach of bed management solutions. By expanding the technology onto an active ward, it could join the dots between back office and real-time software.

In one swift moment, the patient experience is smoother and less stressful. It means that [staying in a hospital 8 months longer than needed](#). never happens again.

Communications and Collaboration Tools

Automation improves efficiency, but how can we improve communication? Surprise, surprise – technology can help with that too!

Although technology doesn't have the power to make the food a five star gourmet meal, it can certainly help patients make choices. Staff enter each room with a piece of paper, noting the meals a patient would like. It's inefficient, and in today's world of dietary restrictions, it's not something to get wrong!

So, why not make the food menu digital and available on the TVs or portable mobile devices? Patients make their orders, and employees no longer need a clipboard. It's simple, easy and effective.

Infrastructure

Switchboards – the hubs of hospitals. They take external calls, but the majority tend to be internal people. With an automated operator – a one number service – internal users can dial in, speak the name of who they wish to talk to and are immediately connected. Switchboard operators are freed to deal with calls that matter.

Now take this idea to meetings. Video conferencing and virtual meetings can have an immense impact. Losing time with employees physically moving from hospital to hospital is cut. Staff can get more done and virtual meetings make engaging with colleagues easier.

Ultimately, communication and collaboration technologies can help the NHS alleviate the strain it faces. Care will vastly improve, and staff members focus on what matters – caring for patients. It's no easy feat, but adopting technology and improving communication between staff and patients is a surefire way to improve the NHS, making it both a better place to be and to work. It will lead to its employees focusing on why they were there in the first place, taking the organisation back to its roots: providing the best care in the world.

Published on : Tue, 25 Apr 2017