

Zoom On: Jörg F. Debatin, Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, GE Healthcare



[Prof. Jörg Debatin](#)

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Prof. Jörg Debatin is Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at GE Healthcare. HealthManagement.org asked him 7 Questions:

1. HealthManagement.org promotes management and leadership in healthcare. Where do you see main angles to contribute to as CTO?

My training and work as an academically active diagnostic radiologist coupled with my experience in running a major University Medical Center will result in a somewhat less standard interpretation of the CTO role. I have the privilege of leading GE Healthcare's Technology, Research and Medical Solutions, or TRMS, organisation. I view the team's role as that of an integrator and enabler - driving product and solution development across our portfolio.

The core responsibility of a CTO is to manage technology and its development into products. As I'm without an engineering background, I'm unable to help solve technical challenges or invent new technologies in the traditional sense. Fortunately we are blessed with a brilliant Chief Engineer, whom I closely partner with in order to ensure that we continue to push the envelope of what is possible from a technology perspective.

To me, technology management goes beyond the nuts and bolts; it is about serving a purpose. Being a physician the purpose of our technology is quite obvious: helping patients to get better. The patient is the common denominator throughout our product portfolio in all markets we serve, and they are becoming more informed as the Internet continues to demystify medicine. These increasingly knowledgeable consumer-patients are looking for clear value clear from their individual perspective.

This value lies in tailored solutions. While most patients don't seek to understand the details of how their medical issue is solved, they do look for a maximum of comfort, speed, and safety. They are focused on the ultimate outcome, feeling well again, and minimal distress during treatment.

For GE Healthcare this focus on patient value based on outcome and experience represents a huge opportunity. We have the broadest technology portfolio beyond imaging - including Healthcare IT, Monitoring, and Life Sciences, putting us in the unique position of being able to provide solutions that combine our imaging and monitoring expertise with a deepened understanding of the molecular basis of biology. This transition also represents a huge challenge, as it requires a change of culture and way of thinking throughout the business.

2. Europe is in a crisis that affects any business. How can GE deal with it?

Being European myself I remain an optimist at heart and expect Europe to move out of the crisis mode before too long. GE Healthcare is heavily invested in Europe and remains committed to the 'old continent'. Beyond the markets, which will undoubtedly regain strength, we are already

seeing the results of recent economic reforms in countries like Portugal and Spain. GE stands to benefit from the creativity inherent to European diversity. We need this creativity to manage the transitional process from a transaction-focused company to an organization that provides integrated solutions based on patient value to our customers.

3. Where do you see the biggest opportunities in the next years?

Product solutions that provide more patient value related to outcome and experience are going to be the differentiator for GE Healthcare. I am supported in this thinking by the Medical Solutions Group within our team, which is geared toward identifying pressing medical needs together with our customers.

Our aim is to integrate these insights much earlier into our technology planning. We will focus our planning processes around unmet medical challenges and customer needs. Their proper identification requires a personalised view of our customers: neuroradiologists have different needs from women's health imagers and they both differ to those of cardiologists. Each customer group expects us to meet their needs throughout our entire portfolio. This has vast implications for the engineering and design of customer interfaces and will further drive the importance of IT within our portfolio.

To master these challenges requires creativity, in spades. At GE we are lucky enough to have a wealth of talent across the world and realize that innovation can come from anywhere. To have the best products and solutions it's also imperative that we engage and integrate the creativity of our academic partners and tech startups. We are continually working to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones.

4. What is your top management tip?

Customers determine our success. This is the first of five GE Beliefs, which describes our management philosophy. For me, it's the most important as it brings us back to the purpose of our work. Our customers know and understand what they need to better serve their patients. If we can please our customers, we are adding value for patients. I will use my CTO role to anchor this belief at the heart of our technologies.

5. If you had not chosen this career path you would have become a...?

I have been privileged to be a part of several different worlds during my professional career: academic medicine, management of health care providers, and now technology management in the world's largest med-tech company. The common denominator has been healthcare, a most fascinating field that I never want to leave. I believe I would be happy in any career, as long as it was within healthcare and committed to making people better.

6. What are your personal interests outside of work?

I am blessed with a large family. My four boys still keep me quite busy and are a lot of fun. Beyond family activities I like water sports, jogging and a bit of golf.

7. Your favourite quote or motto?

'The sky is the limit.'

Jörg F. Debatin holds a medical degree from the University of Heidelberg and an Executive MBA from Hochschule St. Gallen, Switzerland. He started his career as a diagnostic radiologist at Duke, Stanford and continued on this path in Zurich, Switzerland. In 199 he was appointed Professor of Diagnostic Radiology at the University of Essen, Germany.

A distinguished physician having been awarded several academic honours and awards in his field, Prof. Debatin held the position of Medical Director and CEO of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf for eight consecutive years. During his tenure he implemented a clear portfolio strategy focusing on complex medicine and established a Comprehensive Cancer Center linking clinical medicine with new oncologic research strategies.

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