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Can the process of digital transformation be overwhelming for pharma sector?

13 July 2022 | Views | By Preetpal Singh, Senior Vice President - Intelligent Automation, Persistent Systems

Enterprises can derive maximum business benefits by integrating digital technologies



Over the past few decades, the healthcare and pharmaceutical sector has come a long way in terms of embracing technologies, becoming smarter and more automated. However, this space is still challenged with disjointed processes and workflows, inaccuracy in traceability, complex validation processes leading to delayed drug releases, and poor engagement between patient and provider. While patient expectations in healthcare are dynamic, they tend to point in one direction: the desire for a higher degree of speed, service, quality, and value. How can payers (insurers) and providers (hospitals) from the industry meet their customers and patients' wishes and ensure their loyalty? This is where technology yields magic, and automation is the key.

Enterprises can derive maximum business benefits by integrating digital technologies such as Business Process Management (BPM), and Robotic Process Automation (RPA), developed with low-code. Using AI/ML-based technologies such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and conversational AI can transform and improve the functional operations of payers and providers leading to greater patient and customer satisfaction and care, significantly lower costs, improve performance, productivity, and responsiveness.

What role is Intelligent Business Automation (IBA) playing?

The modern healthcare and pharma industry tech stack can include everything from Optical Character Recognition (OCR) that interprets text on scanned files to more ambitious Robotic Process Automation (RPA) services. Forward-thinking healthcare payers and providers can automate nearly every step of their processes. However, this transformation process can be overwhelming. To put the role of IBA into perspective, some avenues and use cases that IBA can truly transform include:

- Telehealth and remote care: Engaging patients quickly and delivering care anytime and anywhere is critical. Adopting automation technologies can enable delivery of a consistent experience across channels for patients, payers, care providers, and agents.
- Revenue Cycle Optimization (RCO): For healthcare payers, revenue leakage is significant and happens due to missed referrals, delays in collections, write-offs, and incorrect claims verifications. RCO can ensure a centralized digital platform to tackle the issue.
- Simplifying and automating workflows: Healthcare enterprises deal with multiple portals, healthcare systems, and messaging channels. These increasingly disjointed processes and workflows can be transformed across the enterprise with intelligent automation solutions to improve patients' experience.
- Ensuring data transparency: Siloed information is one of the biggest internal challenges that ultimately affects the quality of the service. Automation can help consolidate multiple data sources into a single source of truth about the patient.
- Clinical trials: Clinical trial processes range from experiments to post-market surveillance (PMS) with data collection at every step. Automation in clinical trials ensures consistency, speed, quality control and data accuracy.

- Validation process (compliance): The pharma industry cannot afford errors when dealing with human lives. Injecting Intelligent Automation (IA) mitigates this risk while adhering to the rigorous regulatory standards.

AI & ML is empowering pharma

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a simulation of human intelligence in machines programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions. The actions could include simplifying time-intensive data entry activities, driving precision of business rules and models, enabling intelligent decision making, and optimizing routine processes and tasks.

Right now, AI/ML algorithms and tools are at work and empowering the pharma companies in rapidly identifying and automating business processes like:

- **Intelligent Document Processing (IDP)** to automate data extraction from unstructured and semi-structured documents and remove manual data processing lags within a business process.
- **Conversational bots** introduce seamless human-machine conversations and help improve customer engagement and satisfaction.
- **Natural Language Processing (NLP)** enables human-machine interaction by giving machines the ability to read, understand and derive meaningful insights.
- **Recognition technologies** for images simplify complex and large volumes of information processing to support business processes involving damage estimates in car/home insurance and help find errors on an assembly line. Speech recognition can help monitor call center interactions for intelligence contact center solutions.
- **Augmented Reality (AR) for lab training** fills the gap of in-person interactions thereby, simplifying training and maintenance.

How to enhance consumerisation?

What I call the Digital Front Door in healthcare and clinical trials is one of the high impact applications of IBA. It provides a consistent experience across channels for patients, care providers for all phases of patient interaction and care delivery. Automation technologies can also be applied to develop solutions across the entire pharma value chain from drug discovery to distribution. IA is a better way to manage compliance, supply chains, clinical trials, and operational excellence efficiently and with new levels of insights and collaboration.

Such intervention of automation enhances experience of the payers, patients, and providers, resulting in a cyclic effect – improved experience leads to higher expectations which in-turn fuels consumerization.

What does the future of pharma in India look like?

Healthcare and Pharma have emerged as one of India's largest sectors, both from a revenue and employment point of view. At the same time, as per some report Indian pharma industry has grown 10X in the last two decades driven by its strength in the global generics space. In the last two years, the pandemic has also highlighted the need to prioritize healthcare and pharma sectors. It revealed the potential of remote care and digital technologies in transforming healthcare of the future in India where the infrastructure is highly burdened and stretched.

I foresee the beginning of promising times in the healthcare/pharma industry of India, where the patient is at the center stage. To achieve success and transform the future, it is essential to understand and ensure a sustained convergence of client and patient needs with technologies within the healthcare and pharma ecosystem.

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