DIGITAL LEADERSHIP BLOG 2020

"Digital front opens in war on Covid-19 as start-ups come to aid of NHS" "Video Consultations available to 5.3 million patients in Britain on the NHS" "Push Doctor aims to run online service in 500 practices by the end of 2020"

Coulter Partners recently talked to CEO, Wais Shaifta of Push Doctor on digital disruption and talent in healthcare.

CP: *Given* **Push Doctor** *is at the interchange between two sectors, do you see yourself as a* **technology business** *or a* **healthcare business***?*

Wais: Push Doctor is a technology business within the healthcare sector - a sector above all others where it is critical to have a high level of industry expertise. We deliver through technology, but we ensure that we are providing absolutely the safest care possible.

This requires professional representation at every level, provided by GPs, medical specialists and experts in compliance.

CP: *Why is the technology vs healthcare an important distinction?*

Wais: I think it's about our approach more than anything. Push Doctor comes at this from a technology angle. Our primary focus is bringing digital transformation to the NHS, by working in close partnership with them. And our goal is not only to provide the digital technology and the expertise, but to do this in a world class way.

A tech approach plays to our strengths and is, we think, the best way to gain adoption. With healthcare dominated by the NHS in Britain, we have an ideal opportunity to build on the

wonderful job they are doing by bringing them into the digital era. Marrying our technological knowhow with the healthcare expertise of the NHS we make a formidable team!

CP: *What are the biggest differences in the challenges of running **Push Doctor** versus a business like **Just Eat** or **Treatwell** where you have previously been a leader?*

Wais: Not wishing to sound too cheesy, I think it's the responsibility that makes the difference. In the food and wellness industries the main concerns are around getting a product on time. Or about giving correct advice on allergies. In healthcare by comparison there is absolutely no room for mistakes. Safety and compliance are key. We commit a great deal of resource therefore to making sure we provide the safest care platform possible. The wrong care or a misdiagnosis may seriously impact a human life.

To my great satisfaction, the Push Doctor platform has been instrumental in helping people get the care they need, in saving lives and even in preventing suicide. This responsibility that can mean life or death gives me a purpose that resonates more than in any other industry I have been involved in.

CP: *Specific to **Push Doctor**, what are the biggest challenges to **scaling the business** right now?*

Wais: When it comes to digital transformation, healthcare is creating the biggest buzz right now. Attracting talent and interest in Push Doctor, therefore, is not a hard sell. The transformations we're making in this market and the impact on people's lives speak for themselves.

The biggest challenge we actually have is to effectively prepare healthcare professionals who work with and for us, predominantly from the NHS, for a private environment.

Exchanging the familiar NHS culture for a private platform like Push Doctor, they have to adapt to a faster pace, an unfamiliar environment and changes in working practices. Not everyone has embraced the challenge, but many have flourished and enjoyed the efficiency benefits of accessing records and systems via a single login. The NHS is now our largest business partner and successfully marrying the public and private sectors is our key focus for continuing improvement.

CP: *Where are the biggest **talent gaps** you are seeing in the market? How are you addressing those gaps?*

When we built this business in 2013, some saw us as a private technology company entering the healthcare market with a product based purely on consumer feedback, and a call centre approach rather than a customer care team. The best thing that we did when I took the helm, was to hire a Chief Medical Officer and then build out the medical team to maximise safety and compliance. This was a massive education for the whole business, and everyone is now in tune with the quality levels of care required in this industry. Nothing is verified on today's platform unless it's through our medical team. This goes back to your first question and makes us most feel like a healthcare company.

CP: *What one change would make the **biggest impact** to allow technology to change people's health and happiness?*

Wais: It's all very well having free access to personal data, but if I saw 30 years of my own medical records, would I know what they meant, or what to do with them, or who to share them with safely? Open access to data sounds groovy, but we need to be sure it's delivered securely, if patients are to truly benefit.

Most important for me is how we support the industry moving towards the future world of data. Training everyone to adopt the new technology is key and providing digital programmes across the ecosystem is more important than increasing the hype around AI and other digital buzzwords. Are the people on the ground, who are often still operating old technology, getting the training? Are they getting the support to adapt to this future?

Clinician are still using 10 to 11 logins to access multiple systems to consult all their patients. A single sign-in to systems that are fully integrated and synchronised would enable us to make this future a reality more quickly. We are not taking our eye off AI and Big Data at Push Doctor – after all this is our product - but our goal is to help clinicians gain the skills to make this future a reality.

Working in partnership with such a strong brand as the NHS takes a measured approach, in order to drive transformation at our pace. Our product can now be fully integrated with the NHS input systems, and we are building a platform where there can be a single sign in. Integration means someone in secondary care can access primary care records, for instance and we don't have challenges in making all this happen relatively fast. Other operations by contrast have made the NHS nervous in wanting to access patient data with a fear it may be sold to Big Pharma or to the US.

CP: *How do you view the role of Big Tech such as Google in the future of healthcare?*

Wais: Their approach and intention are what is most important. Are they getting involved to make lives better and healthier? Is their intention to improve efficiencies and provide better care? Google and other tech giants have the talent, resources and infrastructure to excel in this sector, but I think they have an important responsibility to enter the market for the right reasons, with sensitivity and integrity.

More about Push Doctor: https://www.pushdoctor.co.uk/