

A Tête-à-Tête with Pankaj Vaish, President-HealthFore



Congratulations on the launch of Mediphone Pankaj.

Thank you.

So, mHealth is a buzzword today? How much do you think is hyped and how much of it is pragmatic? What else is HealthFore doing in this space besides Mediphone?

Yes, it is a buzzword and high on the hype cycle, but so were 'Cloud' and 'SaaS' a few years back. I think that very much like

them, mHealth, is now here and making a difference in people's lives. We've had a number of callers from Rajasthan, who were very appreciative of the service during the doctor strike there. Last week we had a caller from a remote village in Madhya Pradesh at 2 in the morning whose son had suddenly fallen ill and vomiting continuously, no local doctor or chemist was available. Our doctors and health officers were able to help guide the parent to stabilize the patient using home care and standard medicines available in the household. Each such call is a testament to the value mHealth brings to the people.

At HealthFore we have an entire business unit looking at bringing Tele-Health solutions to the Indian subcontinent and expanding to points in South East Asia and Africa. We've grouped ourselves to address three core business points in tele-health, encompassing Tele-Triage, Tele-Medicine and Health Concierge. You have already read about our Mediphone services which branches out of our Tele-Triage services; what we also have, is our HealthLine 24x7 health concierge service, which is primarily a free of cost, health guidance and medical directory service that runs 24x7 and is accessible through 33006666. In the tele-medicine area, we run a tele-clinic for our remote employees where the systems monitor and transmit patient data in real-time to the doctors for advice.

Great! But Tele-triage has existed in the US markets for more than 20 years now but there was not even a single success in India, What made you think that this is an area of interest and how you planned to approach and scale it?

There are several ways in which one can map success. The programs with India's National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW) have got tremendous success in establishing connectivity amongst primary, secondary, and tertiary centers. What we have realized as the reason for not having stellar success stories in the private sector was primarily because most initiatives in tele-health

were launched as point or partially integrated solutions. That is why most of these solutions do not make it beyond the pilot stage. We paid heed to this lesson before we forayed into this business and ensured that we have the right partners who not only had the ability, scale and network to support such models, but also understood the dynamics of a growing industry and shared our commitments. So if you take a quick look at our partners, we have Airtel (India's largest telecom operator), Fortis (India's largest private healthcare provider), SRL labs, Religare Wellness, Religare Health Insurance, RenKare (Dialysis Solutions), C-Doc (Diabetes & Chronic Disease Solutions) and Health Cursor Consulting who is helping us build our mHealth practice globally; to get the reach of them bringing their experience to the table is helping us enable an ecosystem that can be deployed on demand.

Do you feel that the whole array of solutions you provide including Hospital/Labs information systems, practice management software, Enterprise solutions can change the way healthcare is being delivered today?

Short Answer, yes. But as great man once wrote, "Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes time. Vision with action can change the world." Healthcare is the case in point, where we have no shortage of vision, but an acute lack of enablers.

Our strategy has been based on three pillars, our B2B enablers, our B2C enablers and our ecosystem which constitutes of our people, partners and promoters. I've already talked about our B2C enablers like Mediphone and HealthLine 24x7 and our ecosystem.

Our B2B business constitutes of next gen enterprise enablers under the aegis of our Magnum suite of products which is a comprehensive hospital information management system where we have feature rich solutions for Patient Administration System, Diagnostics, Back Office, Billing, Radiology and PACS. We are currently serving customers across India, Middle East, Africa and South East Asia where we are very happy to see difference being made where it's needed both for healthcare practitioners and patients.

Tell us something about your future endeavours.

Our tele-medicine group is working on our Live Consult platform, which we envisage would form to be a de-facto model for corporate and educational community health service. The Tele-Triage group's Tele Consult platform is already garnering a lot of interest... And of course, with our upcoming Infinity product range, we are aiming to bring the health care providers of the developing markets to the exacting efficiencies of the western market within the developing market budgets. ☺