Cognizant Study Finds Automation is Key to Success in Hospitals and Health, but Lack of Strategy Creates Roadblocks

Investment in automation technology is on the rise but could be happening in silos across healthcare organizations

Cognizant (NASDAQ: CTSH) announced today the results of its 2023Healthcare Provider Automation Survey. The survey of 300 hospital and health system executives found that while leaders agree automation is vital for the healthcare industry there is a disconnect between C-Suite, IT, and business leaders on how automation is being implemented.

With automation defined as "the use of innovation, systems and technologies to make processes and procedures more streamlined and efficient," the survey found that more than 80% of the executive, IT and business respondents agree that automation and its benefits are important to the success and continued health of their organizations. However, while 59% of IT leaders report automating aspects of infrastructure and IT support, only 28% of C-suite executives and just 14% of other business leaders say the same – indicating varying perceptions around the current status of automation implementation.

The survey was designed to better understand attitudes about, investment in and use of various forms of automation, including generative AI. Highlights of the survey findings focused on these key areas:

- **Appetite for automation is high:** 82% of respondents said automation is critical for their organizations. However, only 18% of respondents have comprehensive automation programs that they are refining.
- **Productivity improvement is the key measure of success:** Almost 60% of respondents said they would calculate productivity improvements as the measure of success for automation. For example, automating parts of care management can offset nursing shortages and allow more time for direct patient interactions.
- **Care management and IT support are early areas for investment :** Care management and IT support are the two areas where the healthcare industry is seeing automation tools already in place. When looking at where automation technology was being implemented, almost a quarter of respondents said they already have some automation tools in place for care management and delivery, and nearly a third reported that automation is in use for IT infrastructure and support.
- **Resistance to change is a barrier:** While there is a hunger to implement automation tools, fears about resistance limit progress with automation. Providers report resistance to automation from internal partners (40%), employee unwillingness to adapt to new procedures or learn new skills (40%), and concern about how patients will react to automation (40%) as barriers to securing funding for automation. Right behind those barriers are worries about how the public will perceive automation (38%).
- **Generative AI experimentation is already widespread:** Despite the relatively recent public availability of generative AI, hospital and health system leaders are actively looking for use cases to deploy it. In fact, 48% report that generative AI saves at least 10% of their teams' time. All respondents rank care management as a key area for the technology, while a third of C-suite executives also want to see generative AI in their finance and accounting organizations.

"We have seen a great deal of interest in automation tools across the healthcare industry, with anticipated benefits including modern and efficient IT systems, reduced employee burnout, and enhanced patient care," said Patricia Hunter-Dennehy, Senior Vice President and head of the Provider/Payvider business unit at Cognizant. "However, we are seeing a disconnect in how these tools are being implemented. It is critical that an organization put in place a well-designed strategy to ensure automation delivers the expected – and needed – benefits."

You can read the full survey reporthere.

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