

September 15, 2020

Welcome to WoW – the Woman of the Week podcast series from PharmaVOICE. This episode was made possible by a generous sponsorship from Microsoft. For more information about Microsoft, visit microsoft.com.

In this episode, Taren Grom, editor of PharmaVOICE meets with Beenu Kapoor, VP, IT Trial Management, Products Lead at IQVIA.

Taren: Beenu, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW podcast program.

Beenu: Thanks, Taren. It's a privilege to be on PharmaVOICE WoW podcast.

Taren: Well, we're delighted to have you. I am excited to learn about your journey. Over the past 25 years, you've had a lot of interesting roles; you've done a lot of interesting stuff, culminating right now in your current role, leadership at IQVIA Technologies. Tell me about it.

Beenu: Sure, Taren. Taren, when I looked back at 25+ years of my professional life, my mantra has always been to just go with the flow. This mindset has made me take lots of risks in my professional life; some of which turned out to be golden but others did not pan out that well.

I started my career in the IT space actually in the financial industry, switched over to pharma aiming to have a better work-life balance when my kids were young. After which, I made a very risky move by falling my gut to leave a very stable and rewarding IT job at Bristol Myers Squibb to join a CRO against the advice of all. Not even a single person advised me to join a CRO because back in those days joining a CRO from a pharma company was considered to be jumping on to the dark side.

I saw two big advantages. Actually, that's the reason I pursued this move. One, I was getting a chance to be on the business side with responsibility for managing clinical trials and secondly, I felt that the outsourcing trend was on the rise and the services organization I thought will benefit from this trend.

Taren: Boy, did you call that trend right, right?

Beenu: Yes, I called that trend right but that move did not turn out to be a great decision. As not having the science degree proved to be a huge disadvantage for my growth on the business side. But I did capitalize on this experience by using the business acumen that I had picked up and made yet another big move to join consulting.

Now, consulting is in between that space between business and IT, primarily helping both the business and IT leaders strategize and operationalize their vision. I also got into clinical

technology product development space with TransCelerate which was a non-profit consortium of 17 pharma companies to build a common collaboration IT platform for investigators and sponsors.

That experience help me and springboard into my current role which is the VP of IT at IQVIA, responsible for trial management suite where my team and I are embracing digital transformation and are committed to bringing intelligent, intuitive and interoperable trial management technologies that orchestrate better patient outcomes and speed to market.

Looking back, was any of this planned? No, it wasn't. All I did was not be afraid of seizing the responsibility that placed me out of my comfort zone. Retrospectively, the words of great Steve Jobs ring so true. He said "you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in the future" and that's exactly how my journey has been so far.

Taren: That's awesome. I love that you seized that opportunity and I love that all your dots connected. That's a great story and it shows that you have that internal courage to make some of those bold leaps, even when everybody is telling you no. You did follow your gut to great success, kudos to you.

Beenu: Thank you so much.

Taren: Yeah, I want to go back and talk a little bit about the term you used just a few minutes ago, about digital transformation. It seems that's a term that is often used but means different things to different people. What is your take? How is it being incorporated into the products for which you are responsible?

Beenu: Yeah, you're right. Digital transformation is sometimes used in many different ways, sometimes it is used to mean using the latest technology like social media, mobile, artificial intelligence, machine learning, et cetera. It also sometimes is used in the context of design thinking to really create those novel based to engage with the stakeholders.

But the textbook definition of digital transformation is truly about leveraging the technology to engage with the stakeholders using new business models by removing the constraints and in turn creating exciting new possibilities that improve lives and organizations.

My focus is on envisioning and transforming, on the operational world of clinical trials, by providing digital trial management suite of products for enabling that seamless experience for all stakeholders, not just the sponsors, not just for the sites, not just for the patients but all stakeholders, sponsor sites and patients. The technology solutions are generally built for a very specific set of stakeholders that result in very siloed process and related data.

The vision of digital trial management suite of products is to enable that end to end clinical trial process by providing orchestrated, connected intelligence for the stakeholder consumption. If

you really break it down, the vision is – there are three components to this vision and how we are going after digital transformation.

The very first one is streamlined clinical process, end to end. Number two is inclusiveness of all stakeholders and number three is connected intelligence leveraged by AI, ML and cloud platforms. AI, ML standing for artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Taren: That’s great. Tell me, how has been the uptake internally at IQVIA because I would imagine those are some of your stakeholders as well as the company’s customers, the sponsors?

Beenu: Yeah, the approach that we are taking for both internal and external clients is about showing them the business value and the business outcomes that these products can deliver and leveraging that. The internal adoption is being planned. We are actually in the pilot mode and we’ll be ready to deliver this in Q3 September of 2020 and similarly, for the external clients as well. We are showcasing what these products can do and having those conversations with the clients to make the adoption happen.

Taren: That’s exciting. Congratulations on getting towards the end of that milestone trajectory for yourselves, to launch. Let’s talk too about that power of connected intelligence that you alluded to earlier. What is that experience mean for stakeholders? You talked about AI, ML, SaaS and cloud platforms, where do you see the power of this going?

Beenu: Yeah. Good question. See connected intelligence is about providing that augmented decision-making paradigm to the user, right. In other words, helping the users by suggesting what the next best action the user should take.

Next best action is actually not an easy thing to do. It is really formulated by behind the scene blending together the data algorithm using the operational expertise and consumption of insight by the user.

I will briefly talk about these three areas that enables connected intelligence. Number one is sourcing and transformation of a variety of data assets. Now, data as you know is really something which is becoming – is the new goal and it can come in the form of structured data generated inside and outside the enterprise. It can be unstructured real world data generated through social media, connected devices, et cetera, right.

Using all these data, the second area is really generating that insight from the data using artificial intelligence and machine learning and other predictive analytics which really involve using a learning platform where the hypothesis can be tested and finalized.

Then the third area is about providing that information and insight to the user when it is needed, how it is needed and where it is needed. To give you an example, a user can request information and insight on demand or they can request it on a specific schedule, right. I want it delivered every morning at 9 a.m. The user can choose to receive it on a laptop or a mobile

device using a report of an alert or an email or through voice-enabled assistant like Alexa and Siri, et cetera.

It is all about delivering an intelligent experience to the user. That is what connected intelligence is all about.

Taren: Beenu, I would really love to hear about your leadership style. How do you manage a diverse global team?

Beenu: Taren, I consider myself to be a passionate leader that inspires the team by my energy, my perseverance, my action-oriented approach. I lead by example and do not expect my team to do anything that I'm not ready to achieve myself. I personally try to excel above the norm, challenge the status quo, shape and deliver on solutions, leveraging a team of knowledge workers because I believe that the collective wisdom of the team is greater than the sum of its part.

I encourage team members to play their position like cogs in a wheel instead of being managed in a very hierarchical structure. My approach is clearly define the goal first and the purpose behind the goal and in turn, inspiring the team to identify with the pursuit and mobilize them to achieve the objective. That's the approach, that's the leadership style that I go with.

Taren: That's awesome. No wonder you have such a dedicated team behind you. You know, I'm always curious to ask leaders what are some of those leadership qualities you look for in others? Obviously, you can't do what you do alone so you need a real quality team. What are some of those qualities?

Beenu: Yeah, I look for people who are selfless leaders and great communicators because leaders who are able to clearly convincingly articulate the vision and plan, to motivate and rally the team behind them and at the same time to have that humility to recognize that they are standing on the shoulders of the team that is really doing the heavy lifting in order to achieve the vision. Selfless leaders – is something which moves me.

Taren: Excellent. Those are great qualities to look for, I agree. What drives your passion for healthcare? You obviously could have used your talents anywhere in any sector and you started out in a different sector. What brought you to healthcare?

Beenu: This is almost everyone has heard of clinical trials, right, which is the last hurdle before a treatment like a vaccine, a drug or a device is approved by the health authorities. Clinical trials can take a long time, many years, right.

The general public has come to realized this fact as the race for COVID vaccine is being played out. My work is envisioning and shaping solutions for clinical trials to run effectively and efficiently. It is extremely gratifying to realize that this work has made a minor difference in the lives of patients who really need these novel treatments the most.

I mean at the end of the day when I look at and think about like it has really making a difference in the lives of patients, that is what makes all the pain, all the hard work, all the sweat and tears go away.

Taren: That's awesome. Beenu, how do you define success for yourself? Obviously, there are metrics for your business outcomes and your strategies but how do you define success for you?

Beenu: Wow, Taren, this is really a deep question. If I'm honest then I would say my definition of success for myself has evolved over time. Being raised in a middle class family in New Delhi, India and coming to the US for work was considered a huge achievement at that time.

Then, as my career progressed, I moved up the ranks from an individual contributor to a manager, and I considered that as a check in the box as well, right. But reflecting on all these small achievements which at the time I thought were successes, I feel today I have a better sense of what truly matters.

I would say that success to me, now, is really helping and supporting people in order to achieve their full potential. This truly warms my soul.

Taren: Nice. That's lovely. Building on that question since this is our WoW podcast, I'd like for you to tell me about an accomplishment or a wow moment that shaped or transformed your career.

Beenu: Sure. I started my career in information technology, IT, after completing my MS in computer science. The IT field is vast. I mean, one's whole career can be consumed in a specific technical specialization area. For me, destiny had something else in mind that changed the trajectory of my career.

I got an opportunity to pursue and executive MBA from Rutgers Business School after approximately 10 years of starting my career in IT. That really opened my eyes to completely novel, non-technical world, the world of micro and macro economics, finance, business strategy, sales and marketing, right.

These were the concepts and disciplines that I had known about but superficially and did not have much appreciation for. But after doing the MBA, I was in awe with this business side of things. This made me jump from clinical IT to the business world of managing clinical trials because of which, I genuinely understand and live by the phrase "do not do technology for the sake of technology." I mean, looking back, I feel my executive MBA from Rutgers was a moment that changed the shape of my career.

Taren: That's awesome. It goes to show the power of education and the power of broadening one's horizons to think beyond what is current and what could possibly be.



Beenu: Absolutely. Well said. Well said, Taren.

Taren: Thank you so much for sharing that and thank you so much for sharing your journey with us. I truly appreciate it. It was great to get to know you a little bit better. Thanks for being part of our WoW podcast program.

Beenu: Thank you, Taren. It was really a pleasure. Thanks.

Thank you for listening to this episode of WoW – the Woman of the Week podcast. Thanks again to Microsoft for sponsoring this episode. For more information about Microsoft, visit Microsoft.com.

Don't forget to check out our other WoW podcast episodes at pharmavoice.com/wow.