

Volume 15 • Number 5

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Printed in the U.S.A.

Volume Fifteen, Number Five

PharmaVOICE (ISSN: 1932961X) is published monthly except joint issues in July/Aug. and Nov./Dec., by PharmaLinx LLC, P.O. Box 327, Titusville, NJ 08560. **Periodicals postage paid** at Titusville, NJ 08560 and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to PharmaVoice, P.O. Box 292345, Kettering, OH 45429-0345.

PharmaVoice Coverage and Distribution:

Domestic subscriptions are available at \$190 for one year (10 issues). Foreign subscriptions: 10 issues US\$360. Contact PharmaVoice at P.O. Box 327, Titusville, NJ 08560. Call us at 609.730.0196 or FAX your order to 609.730.0197.

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Talking SMAC

In this month's Forum, experts from multiple disciplines, from drug development to marketing, discuss the challenges and opportunities that technology is bringing to the table. AstraZeneca's CIO David Smoley sums up the changing landscape neatly: "When it comes to IT, we cannot operate in a world of annual plans because they are obsolete in months, if not weeks. It's also a big challenge to sort through all the information and identify what is relevant and important, versus what is noise. Increasingly, IT underpins every activity within a company. No matter what sector you are in, it is likely that competitors who are at the leading edge with IT will have an advantage over their peers. In an innovative company, in a heavily regulated industry, this takes work to get the right balance."



One of the latest technology trends centers around the acronym SMAC, the combination of four technologies — social, mobile, analytics, and cloud (SMAC). As leading companies aspire to become something new, aka a "a connected workforce," analysts at PwC say organizations need to do more than simply invest in and install SMAC technologies. The power for the organization lies in the ability of the connected workforce to combine SMAC in new ways that drive insight, spur innovation, and create value. The impact can be significant, improving products and services, increasing operational efficiency, and providing greater customer and employee engagement. PwC reports that 61% of global CEOs state that socially enabled business processes are strategically important to their business success; 86% of U.S. CEOs think that it is important that they themselves champion the use of digital technologies.

Experts across the board agree that the CEO should facilitate discussions with the entire C-suite to ensure that the strategic intent of SMAC initiatives maps to organizational culture and goals for employee performance. PwC reports that for leaders, transformative planning for cultural shifts and more open connections is a key element of the overall employee experience. Leadership needs to guide culture change and innovation by "walking the talk" and ensuring regular participation as part of the connected workforce.

According to Cognizant, today's SMAC Stack — "the fifth wave" of IT architecture — is happening faster than anything that's come before. By 2020, as many as 100 billion computing devices will be connected to the Web. And corporations will be managing 50 times the data they do currently. So SMAC will have a multiplying effect on businesses and increase productivity across the organization.

The management of all these data is another C-suite challenge. The sheer complexity of storing and indexing large data stores requires prioritizing, organizing, and validating on the back end and employing front-end analytical tools that are accessible to knowledge workers, Cognizant analysts say. It's bigger than merely changing out technology; it also requires a delicate overhaul of key knowledge processes to ensure that signal is applied and noise is discarded.

Taren Grom
Editor

Their word...

DENISE MYSHKO

Managing Editor



With a combination of epigenetic and genetic markers, we will be able to detect cancers much earlier than we do now.

ROBIN ROBINSON

Senior Editor



Storytelling, which is an age-old communication tactic, is finding new life in contemporary marketing.

KIM RIBBINK

Features Editor



While pharma companies face some challenges in Spain, its strong infrastructure and transparent regulatory environment make it an appealing market.

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- ▶ Wearables in Clinical Trials
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