



HEALTHY

Software

PRANAM BEN, CEO & FOUNDER OF VISIONS@WORK

By Nancy Curry

»» Amid the nationwide debate over healthcare reform, a company based in Central Florida's Lake County has launched a system of online file sharing between doctors, hospitals and even patients that just could set the standard for patient referrals and monitoring, and lead to major cost savings for the industry.

Clermont-based Visions@work, developer of strategic software solutions for the healthcare industry, has embarked on a yearlong program that could revolutionize patient care in Central Florida and beyond. The company is providing its Preferr physician referral software at no cost to Lake County's four hospitals and roughly 600 physicians, and to the Lake-Sumter Community College for use in its new pilot training program for Electronic Health Records Support Technicians. This will make Central Florida the proving-ground for a technology with the potential to transform the healthcare industry.

CEO Pranam Ben founded Visions@work in 2008, building on 12 years of experience in information

technology, web-based product development and consulting, most recently as Director of Professional Services for NCR Healthcare.

T Texture: What inspired you to start Visions@work?

PB Pranam Ben: There were three main factors. The first was a significant gap in the care delivery process — when patients are referred to different providers, their information does not flow from one point to the other. Second, there's a tool missing in physician relationship management for hospitals and large providers. Today's approach is very reactive, and my goal was to enable a more proactive one. Finally, I saw

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PHOTOS BY PHELAN EBENHACK

I could offer a solution to healthcare providers inundated with software that does not add value or is too expensive.

T What is Preferr?

pb On a very basic level, it's a collaborative platform that allows all healthcare providers to talk to each other in an easy, secure and seamless fashion. The foundation for all current and future applications is that the Internet is the backbone of the system.

T What does using the Preferr system mean to patients?

pb The burden of arranging care goes away. Today, in many cases, patients are expected to arrange care for themselves by referral from their primary care physician. A delay in follow up could lead to potential health consequences. The beauty of Preferr is that the patient's information always stays ahead of the patient.

T What does it mean for healthcare providers and insurers?

pb On Preferr, not only are providers going to save on paper costs and staff time, but they are also significantly improving process efficiency, which enables them to see more patients and impact their top and bottom line.

If you're a primary doctor, you want to know whether your patient scheduled and had an appointment with the specialist. Now you know. In the past, the doctor had no clue until he heard from the hospital. Today, the hospital has no idea which doctors are sending the highest number of referrals. We can track volume, patterns and status of referrals, and that's a key factor for the hospital because their financial health is driven by referrals.

There is also a natural partnership with insurance companies in sharing patient health information, real-time eligibility verification for the patients, and real-time authorization on the services requested.

T Streamlining communication of medical records is such a good idea. Why are so few doctors and hospitals already doing it?

pb The industry today is top heavy. Small- to mid-size providers are challenged with issues around cost, productivity, maintenance, data integration, data security and regulatory compliance. From a continuity of care perspective, this impacts the hospitals and larger providers too.

There are only four other commercial products out there offering what Preferr does, but competition is not my concern. It's a blue ocean space ... we're addressing a very niche need in the industry. Our challenge is delivering more features on the platform to empower our customers to do more with it and benefit more from it.

T Can you quantify the potential cost savings?

pb There are both quantitative and qualitative savings to the healthcare reform agenda. The savings are centered around paper costs, staff time, accounts/receivable cycles, Medicare and Medicaid spending, administrative costs and streamlined operations. We can quantify savings in each of these categories. For example, the average paper handling cost is currently around 80 cents per page. That includes all the tasks associated with paper — printing, filing, staff time, shredding, etc. The volume of paper forms handled by a provider varies from hundreds to thousands a day, depending on the scale of the operation.

T What do you see as the biggest challenge?

pb The biggest challenge that all technology solutions face in healthcare today is adoption — users embracing automated solutions and exploiting them to do things better, faster and cheaper. Eighty-five percent of health care providers are using paper records for referrals, so there is tremendous opportunity. There never has been a better time to usher in a fundamental change in the thought process and approach to providing care.

T What made you choose Lake County for the pilot program?

pb Our corporate offices are here, and Lake County employs the largest number of healthcare professionals in Central Florida — one in every six workers. So, it made all the sense to start here, bring the benefits of Preferr to local providers and then use the program as case study, with the ultimate goal to be a worldwide platform. **x**