



A LIFE FOR INNOVATION BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

HEALTHCARE ORGANISATIONS ADAPTED, COLLABORATED, AND ITERATIVELY EXPERIMENTED THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BREATHING LIFE INTO INNOVATION

EXPERTISE & SERVICES: [Providers](#), [Healthcare Technology](#)

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During a crisis, we have no choice but to show resilience and solve problems quickly. How did our healthcare systems manage to continue to save lives under unfamiliar and stressful conditions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic? Organisations achieved success not by following existing protocols, but by adapting, collaborating, and launching new ideas and processes through a build, measure, learn, and iterate approach.

ADAPTED: UPTAKE OF DIGITAL, PROBLEM-BASED INNOVATION & FINDING NEW USES FOR OLD THINGS

To enable continued support and care for patients throughout the Pandemic, **Healthcare providers** across the globe quickly adapted their ways of working, harnessing digital solutions including telehealth, electronic prescriptions, and enablers of remote monitoring & virtual care. **Patients** too, quickly adapted, accelerating adoption of technologies from home.

“Before the pandemic, there was an established narrative on the barriers to innovation in the NHS but now, we are seeing NHS services adopting digital technology at astonishing pace.”

– King’s Fund, 2020¹

In December 2019, NHS Digital reported that just 15% of 23 million primary care appointments during the month had taken place by phone or online. By April 2020, 49% of appointments during the month were by phone or online.

– NHS Digital, 2020²

By May 2020, many GP practices were reporting delivering 90% or more appointments virtually. The transformation has been equally dramatic in some hospital and community services.

– King’s Fund, 2020¹

Healthcare Technology companies created solutions to new problems emerging across healthcare and did so at a rapid pace. To maintain fast and high adoption rates of healthcare technologies, companies must continue to pursue their reimagined design & adoption methodologies, with **problem-based innovation and iterative testing**.

During the pandemic, when time was not on our side, innovation was often achieved through repurposing existing capabilities and solutions; **“less problem-first, more solution first”**. Finding new uses for old things proved highly effective during the pandemic and is a methodology likely to stay. For example, we saw reuse of the London Excel as the “Nightingale Hospital” and USNS Comfort & Mercy Navy Ships enabling transportation and care beds to patients³.

“The global digital health market is estimated to observe significant growth and gather £745 million by 2027; this growth is mainly due to the rising adoption of digital health services to obtain real-time health information amidst the pandemic.”

–Globe Newswire, 2020⁴

“Solution first innovation” methodologies were not limited to healthcare technology companies but extended to **players unfamiliar to the healthcare sector** including the likes of Dyson, Ford, and Prada who utilized their technologies, manufacturing capabilities, and expertise to increase supply of key resources for healthcare providers and patients.

These companies **anchored on their existing solutions** and searched for the problem. If these new players seek to continue supporting the healthcare sector, it will be important for them to invest in talent and prioritise partnerships to identify future healthcare problems to solve for.

“Non-healthcare companies are helping meet shortages of ventilators, gowns, and more.”
Business Insider, 2020⁵

COLLABORATED: TAKING MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO SOLVE FOR PROBLEMS

During the pandemic, a range of collaborations emerged, all built upon **shared goals and problems** the collaboration could solve. For example, nurses in care homes collaborated with hospitals to address shared challenges around infection, prevention, and control (IPC) and how patients should be prioritised in care homes for safe discharge from hospital.

Global Pharmaceutical companies collaborated with Academia and smaller Life Science & Technology companies to amplify research & development efforts, enabling us to **quickly understand the behaviors and effects of the COVID-19** virus and ultimately design, test, and roll out vaccines at scale and faster than the world has seen in its history⁶.

Collaboration and sharing of expertise is a powerful tool and showed to be vital to adequately responding to the rapid spread and detrimental effects of COVID-19. We hope to see continued collaborative ways of working models in post-pandemic times to maintain efficiency, high value, and innovation.

With **75% of organisations** recently reporting to incorporate innovation in their **top three priorities**⁷, we are hopeful that there is indeed **intent for a life for innovation** beyond the pandemic. However, the question remains: **how** can healthcare organisations and companies best leverage experience and lessons from pandemic-induced innovation as we gradually head into recovery and a post-pandemic world?

Encouraging and embedding a framework and culture of innovation will enable you to better face challenges of the future

Investing in a framework and culture of innovation builds organizational resilience and an innate ability to become stronger, leaner, and more focused through challenging times. In fact, pre-pandemic, 50 of the most innovative organisations of 2020 outperformed their index of companies by 17% over the past year⁷. Even removing tech giants from the equation (Apple, Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Netflix) showed that top innovators' still outperformed⁷ by 13%. The pandemic also taught us that innovation doesn't need to be overcomplicated and restricted to technology, but instead is made of a few simple ingredients which, when combined with dedicated resources and frameworks, enable significant long-term improvements and evolutions in organizational culture and mindset.

Here are some short and long-term tactics to ensure that innovation in your organization has a life beyond the Pandemic.

SHORT-TERM

Celebrate Past Successes to Launch into the Future

Capture and share stories of innovation that your organization created over the pandemic. By creating a spotlight on your successes, you are showing innovation is more achievable than it is daunting. Indeed, you are showing multiple ways your organization can innovate, not just through complex technology, but through process change as well. At the same time, don't allow your business to get stuck in the past or continued “response to COVID” mode. Innovation is about staying ahead of the market and shaping disruption rather than responding to stimulus, such as the pandemic, and being the disrupted. Instead, reflect on how behaviors changed over the last year—e.g. consumers changed their dietary behaviors and focus on health and mental wellness, employees became comfortable working remotely—and identify how shifts like these should influence your future products and services.

Curiosity Killed the Cat, or Did It?

Encourage your employees to be curious, fighting urges to default to old or more comfortable ways and relentlessly asking “why” customers would want to purchase your solutions. Continue to strive for customer-driven solutions, whether your customers are internal, other businesses, or consumers, by asking what are the customers’ needs and pain points, and working backwards from there. When your team needs to be jogged out of the status quo, apply a constraint like “how would you communicate if all phones disappeared” to see what creative solutions may lie dormant. The pandemic has shown us how quickly we can adapt and evolve away from stable, predictable processes and ways of working. Organisations should feel confidence now that they too can embody a growth mindset and go after innovation opportunities that they may have been shelved pre-pandemic.

Lead with Empathy and Vulnerability as a Foundation for an Innovative Culture

COVID-19 showed us the power to build connections in two keys ways: Build connections among a workforce without having clear and definitive direction or strategy and build connections with populations who don’t as readily have access to healthcare that meets their needs. For the first time, many leaders said “I don’t know,” which opened the door for others to suggest solutions when they otherwise may not have. For the first time, the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in all facets of the enterprise rose to the top of the agenda. Organisations should continue to make these types of connections by leading with empathy and vulnerability in how they communicate in order to build a culture where all levels of the business are empowered to share ideas and are encouraged to experiment.

LONG-TERM

Define Innovation for your Organization Over the Long Term

Successful innovation requires an organization to think long-term, making innovation a priority connected to organizational strategy, committing resources to it, and working diligently to turn commitment into tangible and measurable results. In context of past successes and changes in consumer behavior, reevaluate your organization’s innovation strategy and ambitions. Understand which innovation strategies are no longer relevant in the post-pandemic world, like repurposing infrastructure to build face masks. Identify which strategies can be repurposed to solve new problems, like applying telemedicine and remote monitoring to new and unique use cases that may not have seemed possible before.

Drive Disciplined Experimentation and Iteration

Innovation is about discipline and speed, not just new ideas. Stand up simple processes (value proposition design, portfolio governance, etc.) that assess, prioritize, and govern ideas in your innovation portfolio. Establish sprint methodologies, using design thinking or other human centered design tactics, that allow your innovation team to quickly find solutions to customer problems and move ideas along quickly. Finally, don’t wait for or require a perfect product or solution. When public health or safety is not a concern, launch capabilities swiftly to test customer reactions, learn through their feedback, and then iterate to improve the product or solution. Think about defining success in non-traditional ways and leverage data to demonstrate the value and impact made.

Pursue Collaborations & Unique Experiences to Build Diversity of Thinking

Through partnership and humanity, we saw the power of our collective intelligence over the course of the pandemic. We saw joining of our local councils, the NHS, and voluntary and community organisations, enabling both local and national tracking and monitoring of COVID-19 infections. Post-pandemic, organizations should remember the value of collaborating with organizations outside their four walls to broaden mindsets, build cognitive diversity, and reimagine what is possible. Integrated Care Systems (ICS) serve as a perfect opportunity to maintain this highly effective way of working and ultimately lead to better patient outcomes and care.

Collaborations can take many forms as long as the goal is to build diversity of thinking: Sponsoring open-innovation events in your community, hosting or sponsoring innovation externships, investing in ventures that are disrupting the markets you work in, making connections across stakeholders to collaborate on new products and services, formalizing engagement with local

academic institutions, and a myriad of other options. What tactics make the most sense will vary based on your organization's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, but a focus on collaboration should be a key tenet of any innovation strategy.

There are many lessons we can take from a quite tumultuous 1.5 years. For so many in our world and even in our own communities, the fight is still not over and innovative solutions are still necessary. As so many look to close this chapter in our world history, we at Vynamic hope that innovation across the healthcare ecosystem continues to bring light beyond the pandemic to those in darkness.

To find out more about how Vynamic supports healthcare organisations nurture and embed innovation, please contact [Chrisna Govin](mailto:Chrisna.Govin), Innovation Lead (US) and [Nadine Taylor](mailto:Nadine.Taylor) (UK).

Interested in learning more?
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END NOTES

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