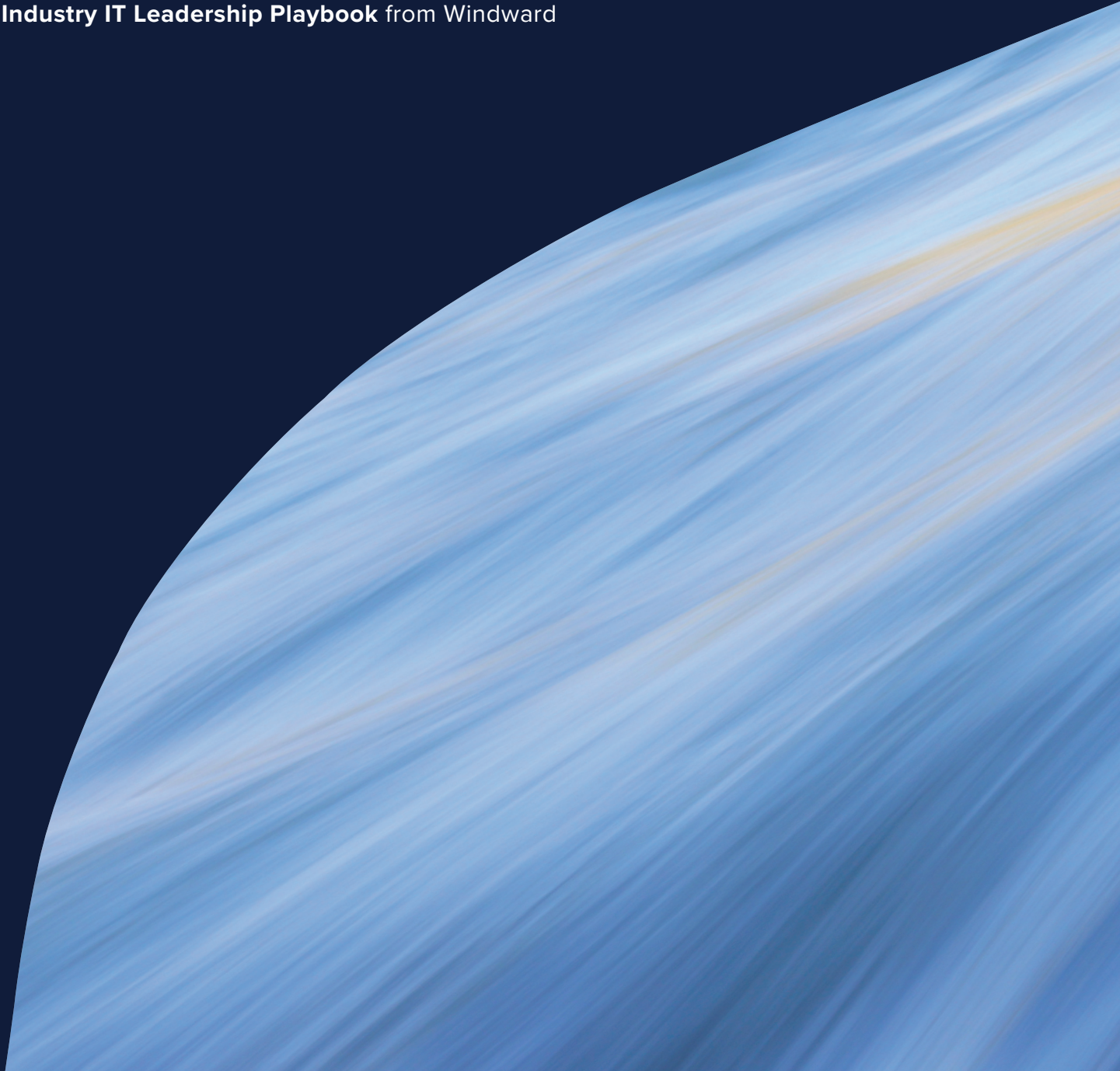# The Future of ITSM & Healthcare.

An **Industry IT Leadership Playbook** from Windward

Overview

More than ever, the future of healthcare is digital. With rapid innovation happening in both the worlds of ITSM, Medtech and Healthtech, it's vital that IT leaders in the healthcare industry keep one foot planted in each world.

Additionally, there are big societal trends well underway with the potential to dramatically impact the healthcare world. Keeping an eye on both threats like the rapid increase in cyberattacks, and opportunities, like the rise of remote care and telemedicine, is essential.

In this eBook, we'll consider three major challenges in healthcare operations and IT (security/compliance, staff retention, and financial pressures), three current trends in ITSM (AI/ML, automation, and low code/no code development) and how these intersect to impact IT strategy for the healthcare industry. Then we'll take a brief look at how IT can start planning their IT project roadmaps in a way that accounts for both.

.

windward

Major Trends in IT for Healthcare.

The world of healthcare is experiencing digital transformation. With ITSM, HealthTech and MedTech innovation moving at breakneck speed, IT executives in the healthcare sector must maintain awareness of developments in all these domains. This means having a clear understanding of how technology can be used to improve healthcare operations and the patient experience, while also keeping up with the latest changes and trends in both industries.

Additionally, there are big societal trends in play with the potential to dramatically impact the world of healthcare providers and networks. Keeping an eye on both threats like the rapid increase in cyberattacks, and opportunities, like the rise of remote care, is essential.

Healthcare IT Challenges

Turning our attention to the world of healthcare, HealthTech and MedTech, there are three big challenges that IT professionals working in healthcare organizations need to bear in mind.

These include:

Tension between innovation and security/compliance

Critical workforce shortages, burnout, and retention

Pandemic- and recession-driven financial pressures

These three trends represent new opportunities and challenges to IT operations teams. Leaders in the C-Suite tend to focus on the business implications of these trends. However, they represent a different level of challenge - and a whole new learning curve - for IT leaders and their teams in this industry.

Understanding and effectively communicating these challenges to the executive team will be a critical need for healthcare IT leaders in coming years.

windward

Security / Compliance

The tension between a demand for innovation and concerns about security/compliance in Healthcare IT operations is not a new challenge, but it is definitely a present one.

The healthcare industry is under constant pressure to both provide cutting-edge care and exercise fiscal responsibility. In an environment where budgets are tight and resources are limited, it can be difficult to justify making the investment in new tools and technologies which may not have an obvious direct impact on patient experience.

However, the potential rewards of such investments must be carefully considered. In many cases, new technologies can lead to increased efficiency and accuracy in patient care, as well as better communication between providers. This can ultimately lead to improved patient outcomes and a lower risk of errors.

In other words, while there may be some upfront costs associated with investing in new healthcare IT tools, the long-term benefits can be significant. When making decisions about whether or not to invest in new technology, it is important to weigh these potential benefits against the risks.

Security and compliance are always major concerns when implementing any new system, but this is especially true in healthcare. Any time sensitive personal health information (PHI) is involved, the potential risks of exposure must be accounted for. So as healthcare IT leaders look to implement new services and platforms, they must also consider how these new tools will impact security and compliance.

Diving Deeper: Balancing Innovation with Security

With a shift to a digital-first approach, the healthcare industry is rushing to modernize. But amidst this rush to innovate, healthcare organizations must also create long-term strategies for sustaining their innovations:

windward

Employee Retention

Critical workforce shortages, burnout, and retention have never been more prevalent in healthcare, and they all have direct impacts on the goals and metrics for which IT teams are held accountable.

In recent years, there has been an increased focus on employee retention as a key metric for success in healthcare IT. The cost of turnover is high. Aside from the direct costs of recruiting, hiring, and training to refill vacated positions, the impacts on quality of care and institutional knowledge are also great, if harder to quantify.

IT is uniquely positioned to support onboarding and overall employee experience to help counter the cost of lost productivity while a new hire gets up to speed. They can do this by providing reliable, consumer-grade applications and tools that help healthcare workers do their jobs effectively, as well as access the resources and benefits that can keep them happy and engaged at work.

Financial Considerations

The pandemic put tremendous financial pressure on already-strained healthcare networks. Long before the industry has had the chance to regroup and recover, financial forecasts are calling for a possible recession. Healthcare IT teams are impacted by these financial concerns in several ways. The pressure to provide more support with fewer resources has never been higher.

At the same time, many healthcare organizations are looking to technology as a way to improve efficiency and cut costs. Automation of manual tasks, real-time data analytics, and self-service portals are all being adopted in an effort to do more with less. IT teams need to be prepared to support these initiatives while also addressing the day-to-day demands of keeping the lights on.

The pandemic has also accelerated the move to value-based care. This shift from fee-for-service reimbursement means that providers will be paid based on the quality of care they provide, rather than the quantity of services rendered. This is a major change for the healthcare industry, and one that will have a significant impact on IT systems and teams.

Diving Deeper: Improving Employee Experience with Mobile Support

See how one healthcare organization used ServiceNow to drive a measurable increase in employee satisfaction - and reduce costs by $70,000 in a single month:

Diving Deeper: Sunsetting Legacy Tools

See how a regional healthcare company was able to sunset their aging suite of legacy IT tools on a short turnaround time - saving costs in licensing fees while improving efficiency:

ITSM Innovation.

In order to stay ahead of the curve, you need to be aware of major trends that are currently reshaping the IT service management (ITSM) landscape. These include:

1. The application of artificial intelligence and machine learning

2. Increased use of automated workflows and processes

3. The shift towards low code/no code applications and "citizen developers"

These three trends introduce new opportunities and challenges to IT operations teams in any vertical. However, viewing them through the specialized lens of the healthcare industry reveals some unique advantages - as well as risks which you and your teams need to understand and account for.

AIOps/MLOps

Enterprise technology teams are turning to advances in artificial intelligence, natural language processing, and machine learning. These new technologies can help manage the flow of alerts, issues, updates, and incidents more efficiently.

As always, the problem isn't a lack of data, it's a lack of context. AI/ML and the emerging world of AI for IT Operations, or AIOps, is currently working on delivering that desperately-needed context.

Use Cases for AI/ML in Healthcare

As with other industries, the use of AI-powered chatbots to improve customer/patient experience is a top use case for the healthcare sector. Additionally, AI and ML can be used to provide highly relevant personalized messaging that can help improve satisfaction scores for value-based care and boost participation in wellness initiatives.

But it's the high-volume data analysis capability that AI/ML brings to the table where these technologies can really shine in healthcare IT environments. The ability to quickly detect anomalies, perform risk analysis, and even automate certain operations can create greater efficiencies and cost savings - increasing profitability.

Top Use Cases:

AI Chatbots / Assistants

Automated Messaging

Process Improvement

Data Analysis

Risk Management

Predictive Analytics

windward

Risks of ML/AI in Healthcare

With any great opportunity comes additional risks and challenges. In the application of AIOps and MLOps in healthcare networks' IT stack, those risks and challenges can be devastating. In this industry, security breaches, data loss, or service disruptions can have literal life or death consequences. An AIOps or MLOps initiative depends on staff skilled in "training the robots." This requires not just highly in-demand technical skills, but also deep subject matter knowledge, to apply what a human decision-maker would understand about different medical scenarios.

There are also significant HIPAA compliance and security hurdles to overcome when attempting to integrate any new technology innovation into the strictly-regulated healthcare industry. A solution that works, but which your organization isn't legally allowed to implement, won't help anyone. The burden of this due diligence will likely fall on the internal IT team, unless you choose a vendor or consultant with a deep level of experience working with healthcare providers and networks.

Automation

Automation is fast becoming a critical business need. Like any industry, healthcare is driven to innovate to keep up with the pace of change. Integrating automation into standard IT processes allows healthcare networks and organizations to streamline repetitive tasks and eliminate a great deal of manual work. With IT automation, simple tasks can be handled error-free, with speed and agility.

Automation standardizes the audit trail, which ensures the correct people can access the right systems as needed. This helps guarantee healthcare IT organizations follow industry standards. It additionally reduces the costs associated with maintaining more manual legacy IT processes and systems. IT automation offers attractive cost savings, while also improving speed of delivery to end users and customers.

Diving Deeper: Machine Learning in Healthcare IT

Our research team explores how machine learning is improving the patient experience – and helping healthcare IT teams keep up. You can check out their insights here:

Article: The future of ML in Healthcare IT

Diving Deeper: Automating Software Tracking

See how a leading acute care hospital network gained the visibility to accurately track and manage software assets across hospitals - and realized 40% savings in licensing costs.

Case Study: ServiceNow (Automation/Cost Savings)

windward

Low code/No code Solutions

Healthcare providers and support staff are experts at doing more with less. So the advent of low code/no code application development is a natural fit for the industry. In a tight IT labor market, tools which enable healthcare network IT teams to create bespoke apps with simple point-and-click interfaces can help bridge this gap.

The latest low code and no code tools, such as Creator Workflows from ServiceNow, allow "citizen developers" to quickly create custom applications that offer consumer-quality user experience. These tools can even be used to help create new mobile apps for both internal staff and patients. This allows healthcare organizations to easily eliminate inefficient legacy systems and spreadsheet-based business processes, lowering risk and reducing costs.

Diving Deeper: 40% Increase in Development Capacity

See how Novant Health quickly enabled individuals with any level of coding experience to build apps fast using ServiceNow App Engine, freeing up professional developers to work on more specialized projects.
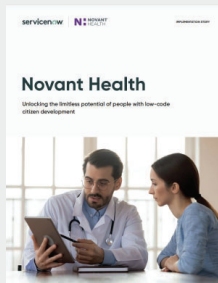
Strategic Recommendations.

IT leaders in the healthcare operations sector will have to work even closer with their counterparts in the executive team, in order to address the challenges presented by these trends. They'll need to develop a strong strategic roadmap to guide their team through not just the technical elements, but the bigger business implications.

Here are three key recommendations we would like to offer for navigating this period of intense change in the HealthTech landscape.

## Promote collaboration between IT teams

ITSM, ITOM, network security and DevOps teams need to work together closely to face the disruptive forces coming their way in the healthcare sector. Each group has their own unique skills and perspective to bring to the table, so it's never been more important to ensure information doesn't get siloed on the way to a faster, more agile future for healthcare IT.

Focus on standardization and modernization

There are already too many moving parts for ad hoc projects and processes to make sense in the realm of IT for healthcare organizations. The sooner a healthcare IT organization can move away from manual processes and spreadsheets, the sooner they can transition into the next, more profitable phase of their existence.

Case Study: Sunsetting legacy assets
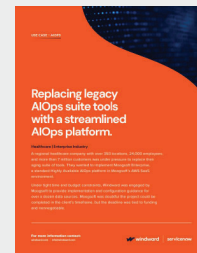
See the opportunities within the challenges

All of these sweeping changes can seem overwhelming, especially when the IT labor crunch already has many teams feeling squeezed. But they also present a myriad of opportunities to grow and develop in new and exciting ways. Tackling a new domain of expertise doesn't just make each team member more valuable - it has the potential to make their career more varied, interesting and satisfying.

windward

Conclusion.

We hope you've found this eBook helpful in framing thoughts and discussions around the rapid changes happening with technology in the Healthcare industry. Mastering newer technologies like AI/ML, automation, and low/no code development are a critical requirement for healthcare IT leaders and teams. But with the right strategy and support, IT leaders in this space can navigate these changes and help their team emerge stronger than ever.

LET'S TALK

Ready to find flow?

Windward helps companies create an IT operations strategy that connects your vision to a roadmap for success. If you'd like to learn more and discuss a strategic IT Ops plan for your organization, feel free to email us at info@windward.com or go to www.windward.com.