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Solving Health Care's Gen AI Dilemma

Leaders can take their organizations from piloting to commitment

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Generative AI (gen AI) is revolutionizing the health care industry by dramatically reshaping traditional job functions and creating new opportunities for innovation and growth. It will do this in large part by automating routine tasks that consume a significant portion of the clinical workforce's time, enhancing data analysis and enabling advanced problem-solving capabilities.

So why then are **83% of health care executives piloting gen AI**

in pre-production environments, but fewer than 10% are investing in the infrastructure necessary to support enterprise-wide deployment?

Accenture's [recent survey](#) of 300 U.S.-based C-suite health care executives from provider organizations shows boosting employee efficiency is not only a top priority for most, but they hope gen AI will deliver productivity gains that reduce costs and contribute to revenue growth.

However, the significant gaps between awareness, optimism and actual commitment are constraining adoption and progress. This underinvestment and absence of a holistic strategy place health care organizations at a disadvantage against more agile organizations. Board members'

leadership and influence are pivotal in navigating this transformation. Beyond overseeing financial performance and risk management, the board plays a critical role in shaping the vision and strategic priorities. With gen AI poised to redefine health care operations, the board must actively guide investments, foster collaboration and ensure alignment across leadership teams to seize this opportunity. Failing to act or waiting too long will allow competitors, new and old, to disrupt industry norms. Other industries are not thinking of gen AI as just a tool, but rather as their biggest competitive differentiator.

One automobile manufacturer used a gen AI platform to accelerate the transformation of intricate data into real-time insights, boosting productivity by 30%. A global financial services company is on its way to reducing costs by half, delivering IT services 20% faster, freeing employees for strategic initiatives and enhancing customer service because of gen AI. The wider this health care gap grows, the longer it will take to catch up.

To effectively scale gen AI from pilot programs to organization-wide deployment, board leaders can influence health care providers to take

four strategic steps. These include building a reinvention-ready digital core, strengthening data quality and strategy, prioritizing responsible and secure AI deployment, and forging strategic partnerships. These measures are essential for health care organizations to alleviate operational pressures, empower clinical teams and, ultimately, deliver exceptional patient care.

Action 1: Invest in a reinvention-ready digital core.

A robust digital foundation is the cornerstone of successful generative AI. This “digital core” is the essential technological capability that integrates advanced digital platforms, a seamless data and AI backbone, and a secure, cloud-first digital foundation.

Organizations with industry-leading digital core capabilities expect to reinvent twice as many functions with gen AI over the next three years and create twice as much value compared to those without this foundation, according to Accenture research in [Reinventing with a Digital Core, Chapter 1: How to Accelerate Growth Through Change](#). The board’s influence is essential here: by setting a clear mandate for technological modernization, allocating resources strategically and demanding accountability, directors can ensure that the organization builds a core capable of supporting gen AI at scale.

Action 2: Strengthen data quality and strategy.

The success of the digital core, and gen AI in particular, depends on the quality of data and the synergy

between people and technology. Data lies at the center of processes like synthesizing information, comprehending natural language, and converting unstructured data into structured formats that enable advanced analytics. A solid data foundation also prepares organizations for AI-driven changes. However, health care providers often struggle to effectively cleanse, standardize and integrate their data. These steps are critical to reduce bias and improve the accuracy and reliability of gen AI outputs. The board can champion initiatives to modernize data management, ensuring secure, standardized and accessible data. Encouraging cross-functional data sharing and analytics capabilities will maximize the value of gen AI investments.

Boards can also influence data strategy by demanding transparency in how data is used and ensuring compliance with privacy and security regulations. Regular updates on data modernization efforts should be a standing agenda item in board meetings.

Action 3: Prioritize responsible and secure AI deployment.

The rise of gen AI, especially large language models (LLMs), has heightened the need for responsible AI practices, focusing on creating value, building trust and mitigating risks. Initially centered on data bias and algorithm transparency, the expansion of gen AI usage has introduced significant challenges. LLMs increase the risk of exposing sensitive data and breaching confidentiality, especially as gen AI tools become commonplace in

workplaces and interact directly with patients, raising concerns about language toxicity and privacy violations. Additionally, according to our research, the proliferation of AI users heightens security vulnerabilities, with 85% of health care executives citing cybersecurity as a major barrier to gen AI scaling. According to our research, concerns include data theft, malicious content, targeted attacks, misuse of AI technologies, misinformation, copyright issues and the amplification of biases.

The board’s role extends to approving risk mitigation strategies, such as investments in cybersecurity, ethical AI frameworks, and training programs for employees and leaders on the responsible use of AI.

Action 4: Leverage external expertise and strategic partnerships.

Scaling generative AI requires capabilities that often extend beyond internal resources. By fostering partnerships with technology innovators and industry leaders, health care organizations can accelerate their AI adoption and close knowledge gaps. Our research indicates a divide in strategy among health care executives: 60% of CEOs prioritize hiring additional expertise, 44% opt for external partnerships, and 33% depend on internal teams. In contrast, CFOs and CIOs prefer hiring over external partnerships, showing significantly lower optimism for leveraging in-house expertise (7-10%). The board’s oversight can help mitigate the divide and ensure a balanced approach, combining external expertise with

internal team development to achieve scalable AI solutions.

Boards are uniquely positioned to drive collaboration by leveraging their networks and encouraging partnerships that align with organizational goals. Directors should hold leadership accountable for defining partnership metrics and ensuring measurable outcomes.

The Board as a Catalyst for Change

Accenture research also revealed a disconnect in leadership perspectives as to who is responsible for redefining work models, identifying tasks suitable for automation, and empowering staff with tools that simplify their jobs.

While 28% of CEOs see themselves as responsible for redefining jobs and roles impacted by gen AI, only 5% of their C-suite peers agree. Instead, 80% of respondents believe the chief digital officer or chief digital and artificial intelligence officer (80%) is best positioned to lead this effort.

Interestingly, clinical leadership is rarely seen as central to this transformation. Fewer than 4% of respondents identified the chief nursing officer (CNO) or chief medical officer (CMO) as having any responsibility for gen AI. The only exception is among CEOs, who were more likely than other executives to assign gen AI responsibilities to CMOs (7% versus 1%). This perception overlooks a crucial reality: The labor shortage is most acutely felt by the clinical workforce, particularly nurses. Clinical leaders will play a pivotal role in ensuring that gen AI-driven work-

flows deliver sustainable value and improved efficiency.

In practice, everyone is involved. The true benefits of gen AI come from fundamentally changing how work gets done, which requires collaboration across leadership levels.

The board's influence extends beyond strategy and oversight — it sets the tone for the entire organization's approach to innovation. The board must ensure that leadership teams work collaboratively and inclusively. By advocating for cross-functional leadership models, the board can empower clinical leaders to identify tasks suitable for automation, redefine workflows and implement AI-driven solutions. This collaborative approach will help address frontline challenges and ensure that generative AI enhances care delivery rather than introducing new complexities.

Fostering a Long-term Vision

Gen AI presents a transformative opportunity to address escalating costs, labor shortages and growing health care demands. With 83% of health care executives recognizing its potential to enhance financial and competitive positions, and 77% expecting revenue growth, the board's strategic leadership is essential. Transitioning from pilot projects to enterprise-wide deployment is not merely an operational challenge — it is a strategic necessity for driving efficiency, innovation and long-term growth.

Boards should take a proactive role in this journey by:

- Regularly reviewing gen AI initiatives and their impact on organizational goals.

- Approving resource allocations to ensure investments are both sufficient and aligned with the organization's strategic vision.

- Demanding measurable outcomes tied to AI initiatives, such as improved patient care metrics, cost savings and workforce efficiency.

- Holding management accountable for fostering a culture of innovation that embraces gen AI as a cornerstone of transformation.

By championing the adoption of generative AI, guiding strategic investments, and fostering a collaborative leadership culture, boards can position health care organizations to thrive in the face of growing challenges and be competitive. Gen AI is not just an operational tool — it is a strategic lever that, with the right guidance, can revolutionize health care delivery and create sustainable value for all stakeholders.

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