



SAMER TAKEDA

TRANSCRIPT

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Stinger 00:03

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Tom Lehmann 00:15

Hello and welcome to Driving Digital in Biopharma. I'm your host, Tom Lehmann. In this episode, we continue our podcast series through a conversation with Samer Ansari, who is the Head of Data, Digital & Technology, within the Oncology Business Unit at Takeda. My conversation with Samer explores several topics including Takeda's focus on building in-house digital capabilities that are targeted at delivering better outcomes for patients and customers. Samer also shares his personal experiences that emphasize the need for oncology innovation to occur swiftly to address unmet needs.

Thanks for listening and I hope you enjoy this episode...

Tom Lehmann 00:52

Hi, Samer, welcome to Driving Digital in Biopharma.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 00:56

Thank you, Tom. Hello. Thank you for having me.

Tom Lehmann 00:59

It's great to have you here today. So before we get started and for the benefit of our listeners, can you please introduce yourself and maybe share some details about your background?

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 01:08

Of course,. Well, I'm Samer Ansari. I head up

data, digital and technology for Takeda oncology. I'm based here in Boston, and I've been with Takeda oncology for five years now. And before that, I was in a medical device company, I was there for about seven years. And before that, I was a consultant. So gradually, I've gone from smaller companies, to midsize companies. And then you know, for the last five years, it's Takeda, And my core focus is really around customer experiences, patient experiences, and driving exceptional differentiation through data and innovation across US, Europe, Canada, and Japan. Those are primarily the markets that I focus on. And, I'm happy to be here, and I'm happy to talk to you about the different capabilities and proof of concepts we're working on Takeda.

Tom Lehmann 02:16

That's great. And again, welcome to the podcast. We've got a lot of good discussion we can have ahead of us with that background, and obviously the work that's been done. So why don't we start the big picture here. We've seen Takeda Oncology make very notable progress in building in-house digital capabilities that are both customer and patient focused. And you mentioned that where you focus in general, with both the customer and the patient side of things. From our experience, and looking across the industry, making such progress in a short time is pretty unusual. What did you focus on? And how are you able to do it so quickly?

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 02:51

Tom, as you said, right, I think for large organizations, making progress when it comes to innovation and digital transformation, it takes



a lot, because you know, the larger you are, the harder it is. And sometimes it takes a lot of time. What I found was that you got to pick your bets, you got to be very strategic about where you want to create an impact. And for me, it really is, it was very clear, you got to start with the business, you got to understand what the priorities of the organization are. And for Takeda that it I'm very proud to say that patients always come first. We do believe in: it starts with the patients, then trust, then reputation, and then business follows. And for us focusing in on the right patient outcomes was the key. And that was the underlying aspect in all of this.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 03:55

And I'll tell you a bit of a bit of a story as well. My family has history of diabetes. And when I was working in technology as a consultant, I was like, alright technology is great, but how do I use it for the betterment of...or for the good of the world? And I felt like, okay, maybe I can use it for something in healthcare, because I was living in Boston and Boston is, as you know, it's like the Silicon Valley of biotechs. And for that reason, I was like, "Alright, how can I apply my technology skill set in healthcare or life sciences?" And diabetes piqued my interest because I felt like, okay, this is something that most of my family had it or has it. And I need to make sure I know how innovation can make an impact here. So I went into diabetes, I worked for seven years for a company called Insulet that was the tubeless pump for Type I diabetic patients. And I could see how in real life, you can really apply technology for better patient outcomes and reimagined patient experiences. But about five and a half years ago, my dad was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer, and he only survived for six months. And by the time he was diagnosed, and the six months he was getting the treatment, it was extremely painful.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 05:20

But also it really dawns upon you how quickly the news hits patients, how the caregivers are impacted—everyone's life changes pretty much in a day—and the limitation of options patients have at that time when it comes to treatment.

And it's pretty severe in terms of like, literally your life is on the line. And there aren't many options, there really aren't many options. And back then for pancreatic cancer five years ago, it was pretty bad. So I saw my dad go through that journey. And me, my brother and my mother, we lived through it as well. And then he passed away in six months, and I got a call from a company called Takeda Oncology and they were like their mission was "we aspire to cure cancer."

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 06:14

And I got a call literally a few weeks after he passed away. So he passed away in April 2018 and I joined Takeda Oncology, October 2018. And it was like there was a calling, and it fit the purpose right away. And I was personally driven by this mission of, "Okay, I'm gonna go inside the system of this pharmaceutical industry, and try to see how can we really move and make an impact at the speed at which smaller, medium sized companies make an impact." The interesting thing was when I joined Takeda Oncology, Takeda Oncology was, as a business unit that's especially carved out within Takeda to be an independent business unit that can move with autonomy at the speed at which it needs—because oncology is absolutely about innovative medicine, and science, but it's also about speed, getting the medicine out there as fast as possible because of the unmet need out there.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 07:38

And what I what I did was "Okay, it starts with the patients, and how do you make two or three bets every year, where we can hone in on and make an impact and that journey, that mindset has really has really been the core the key. You need a bit of a personal passion, you need a bit of clarity in terms of where you're going to make an impact, and you need the organizational structure and sponsorship behind you to move forward and make that happen.



Tom Lehmann 08:06

I appreciate you sharing not only a little bit of the history, but also the personal story there. And it is interesting, it gives you different context what I imagined just as you stepped into this role as an executive in the organization, you have a view of things. But when you have gone through this as a caregiver or a family member, and see somebody go through it, it just changes the narrative for you or the impact that you could have and appreciate how that just changes the outlook that you have, as you look at something like this.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 08:34

You know one thing I'll just add to that is, when I when I came in with that. But what I've seen around is everyone who's working for Takeda Oncology, every one of them has been hit very close by a cancer story, either in their house or they were affected by themselves. So that, at the end of the day, that brings us together, because we have that one common theme within us,

Tom Lehmann 09:00

Absolutely. So so tell me that a little bit more about you said two to three bets per year, what were some of those bets that you made to move this along?

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 09:10

For us, it was really the customer experience and also the patient experience. We saw that customers were extremely overwhelmed with information across different channels. And frankly the different channels that we have, it could be our field reps or our websites, emails, the banner ads, all the different congresses. It's very easy for the messages not to be coordinated and orchestrated. So I think, this terminology of omni channel has been there for a long time now. But like five years ago, there was a there was a lot of momentum around how do we stitch the data across different channels that our customers interface with us through. When you stitch the data and therefore and then you add smartness and orchestration to it to make sure that we are more relevant with our customers and we're meeting our customers needs whenever we engage with them, whether in person or through our digital channels.

So I think doing that is an enormous task because it's easier said... you know, you can stitch the data, but the reality is, it's all over the place in most big organizations. And you need very robust foundational, stable capabilities, platforms, services, data management capabilities that keep the data curated, quality proof at all times. And those capabilities take time. And that's what we've been focusing on. And we've built it over the last few years.

Tom Lehmann 11:05

So when you're looking at data, right, and there's lots of different ways in which you can utilize data to address a business problem, some organizations will say, let's establish the data platforms and infrastructure and capabilities first, and then from there, really try to find the business problems to address with that infrastructure. As opposed to saying we have these business problems, let's use that explicitly to define what we want out of our data. Do you take one or either of those approaches?

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 11:34

That's a great question, Tom. The challenge is, and I've seen a lot of people walk through that lane, which is they start with infrastructure, and then you know, the infrastructure never ends. That's the reality of it, it keeps getting complicated and complicated. There's always a technical debt that you you're trying to remove, but it keeps on adding. So I think my approach has been, I've been very clear, it starts with a business, you got to figure out what is exactly the problem you're trying to solve. We have very surgical and strategic about solving that problem. In parallel, invest in deep infrastructure capability that you need for long term sustainability. Those two need to go hand in hand. But the platform, the foundational play, also has to be built in a way that the upfront wins are directly impacting and solving the acute business problems that we're trying to solve.



Samer Ansari _ Takeda 12:40

And I think the issue happens when the business problems are still there, the data is still either outsourced or it's not connected, it's not curated, it's not usable for analytics... When business has those dire problems and all you're doing is investing in infrastructure, things fall through. That's not that's not how you achieve success. I think they need to be very much interlinked. You absolutely need to—all organizations need to—invest in sustainable data foundational capabilities. But the trick is how you front load that roadmap, where solving real business challenges. At the end of the day, you got to make sure that the data is ready for analytics, that is making the business make data driven-decisions for commercial or medical or patient needs as quickly as possible.

Tom Lehmann 13:40

That makes sense. So maybe with that in mind, just given the magnitude of that challenge, plus perhaps some of the other things that you had worked on... We see organizations, just because this takes a while, right, this is not something that you do quickly, be challenged by their ability to actually get to a demonstrable business outcome. So it could be sponsorship changes, or maybe the sponsorship is on different pages. It could be organizational complexities that just exists in the way that you're structured. It could be that those business priorities that you talked about just change. Did you go down the path of having to deal with any of those are things that just got in the way or just made this a little bit more challenging?

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 14:20

Listen, challenges are always there? Right? I mean, you think about digital transformation in a large pharmaceutical organization. I think pharmaceutical industry in general, is, as you know, is a heavily regulated industry. And in general, and I've heard someone explained this, which really stuck with me, that this industry is over decades and maybe centuries, has been trained to have a perfect finished product at the end, because people's lives depend on it.

And that product is a medicine. It goes through so much research, so many trials, development, regulatory approvals, and then at the end of the day, you have a medicine out in the market. And the regulations vary from country to country.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 15:09

Now, digital is complete opposite. You have an imperfect product, an idea which may or may not work at huge risk. And the ask is go experiment, and 95% of the time we're going to fail—but the 5% that that sticks is going to be a big win. That is a very different mindset. That agile mindset is a very different mindset and trying to infuse that within the industry and try to make sure that we're keeping up at the pace at which this digital transformation is happening outside of the industry, is definitely a challenge.

And I think Takeda is absolutely focused on, on becoming a digital biopharmaceutical organization. It has made it a key, fundamental priority in its business model, in its operating model.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 16:05

So for me, the challenge also is, how do you continue to invest in sustainable capabilities, but also showing the impact, more upfront—impact that's more real. And there's all kinds of philosophies and you know, and we've all had conversations with many of our peers and other companies, but also some of the best minds in the industry as well. It's very hard in this industry to link digital capabilities with things like revenue. So I think challenge is more around explaining what the investments are, making sure the investment choices are directly mapped to the business priorities, but also how you show impact. But if it's not directly mapped to revenue, how do you tell a story that the impact is, is still important enough for us to sustain?

Tom Lehmann 16:59

So when you look at the choices around where to invest, right, these types of capabilities, I imagine sometimes it's easier to find a correlation between investment and outcome. And other times, it's very difficult to find a correlation between maybe some of those business outcomes that most organizations are driving towards... How do you figure out that connection between investment and impact, and therefore, how do you prioritize?

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 17:26

That's a really good question, Tom, I think there... at least in my line of work, there isn't really a direct correlation that isn't subjective, between revenue and digital capability. It just... it's very hard to do that. And many people have tried it. But you know, it's still very subjective. I think what we try to do is, we try to keep it clear, that we're trying to enable exceptional or best in class, customer and patient experiences. And how we measure an experience from what it was and how it's getting better, is the quality of the engagement, the duration of the engagement, and the follow through of the engagement that occurs.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 18:11

And we all know that our customers and patients are, at the end of the day, they're humans, and they live in a digital world, they all are experiencing digital in their day to day life, they all have...most of them have smartphones with all the apps enabled, and therefore they have a higher bar in terms of what the expectation is when they interface with the healthcare world. And how we show up relevant, but also well placed, timely, concise, in those channels, with our customers and patients is extremely important. It's telling the story in a way that, you know, is experience enabling versus revenue generating, I think that's the angle that I've progressed with.

Tom Lehmann 18:58

I like that and I think implicit in that is, again not everything that you're going to do is going to work, right?

And part of this is the experimentation and in a space where at times there's a culture which is very open to experimentation and a recognition that things may fail, there's other times you see a culture that will play out this, "Okay, we expect that every investment, we've had a direct correlation to an impact here." That ability to experiment and learn as you go does seem like it has to be part of this journey that you've been on.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 19:30

Listen, absolutely right? You got to, you know, we have this mindset around innovation but also you can get your eye off of the foundation and how you how you mix the investment choices between foundation or innovation is key, right? While you need to have some deeper capabilities on your foundational end, the innovation, it's also important, where it's also very easy to get distracted by the next new shiny object. And the next new shiny toy, right? We all read on our LinkedIn feeds all the new things that keep coming up. So it's very easy to get distracted. I think folks on the inside like myself and my peers, we're all very aware of those. But it's very important not to get distracted, stay focused on the bets that have direct impact to the core patient and business priorities that we have. And we balance them out based on feasibility, sustainability, scalability, and then we make those choices and say, Okay, of all these 10 different shiny things, I'm going to invest in one or two. And if those fail, that's fine. But I'm going to fail fast, I'm not going to wait six to 12 months to fail, I'm gonna give it three months or so and see if it sticks great. And then you got to have a very clear way to see if this is really making an impact or not very quickly. And then you pivot, and it's okay to pivot. We encourage you to pivot.

Tom Lehmann 21:10

Well, and as you said, it does feel almost like it's by the day, the technology is evolving at a rate



that we have not seen. And particularly again, with data at its core, so much of this it feels like it's data at its core. I am curious, though, what's your sense on Gen AI? Right? That's certainly capturing lots of mindshare and conversation right now. What's the real potential in your space for Gen AI?

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 21:36

Listen, I think there's tremendous potential, right? That's not news to you. That's not news to anyone. But I think when it comes to particularly areas of content, and what typically companies, not just pharma, but all companies spend, in terms of content creation, Gen AI has huge potential upside in terms of bringing efficiencies in that domain, while still maintaining the strategic aspects and regulatory aspects in mind. Gen AI has a huge opportunity there. Also, I do think that analytics summarization, where you have large volumes of data, but how Gen AI could summarize some insights, and then generate insights and content, using those insights is going to be very interesting.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 22:30

There's also a lot of companies like us, there's so much documentation that is generated, but also reviewed. And in that generation and review process Gen AI can make a huge impact.. But on a personal side, I love the efficiency it brings to my day-to-day life, right? I have like a Gen AI assistant on my laptop. I can ask questions, I can have a do some basic tasks, like calendar management sometimes, or scan through some emails, which is really helpful. it can summarize meetings for us, it can it can scan through slides and large amounts of documents. For me, that's been hugely beneficial. And we're experimenting with some new features. And I've given it to all of my team as well and we're all kind of learning along the way. So it's kind of become this...a bit of a movement, which is what's the next fun trick that we're coming up with learning Gen AI.

Tom Lehmann 23:41

So share with me if you can, you mentioned your team...and typically, as we talk about some of the emerging technologies, there needs

to be, right—a human component to this and it is often an augmentation, not replacement. So as I go back to the first part of conversation, you're talking about your team who are equally passionate about doing something that has real customer and patient impact in this oncology space. So that's sort of one element of how your team interacts with digital. The other side is, as you just discussed, there are enablers which are going to augment the way that they do their work. Help me understand, how is the organization responding to this? And how do you move them along at the same pace as far as what you're trying to accomplish, ultimately, for your end customers and for patients,

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 24:24

This is an are I am personally very passionate about. I strongly feel, getting the right talent, but also getting the right talent for exciting roles, and creating an environment where they're really having fun working with each other; they are innovating, and they're coming up with ideas to solve collective problems that are impacting business in our patients. I think that's the most fun part of it. And then spending time with that team, being in that environment is what really gives me energy. And I do feel what I've seen... it actually goes back to one of the earlier questions you asked as well, which is, how do you overcome the challenge of organizational complexity? The trick that I've seen work is, if you can find the right problem to solve, that is big enough, that has tremendous potential or impact, and you can connect that problem directly with a solution that is co-created by a team—and you can show them the path, that we can get to actually achieving success in solving that problem folks start to lean in. And there's an extra amount of energy, excitement, enthusiasm. You know, you start seeing that it's not just your team, but other functions or people from other domains are also leaning in and they want to be part of that journey. They want to get on the ship, they want to help you solve that problem. Folks don't rally around departments or



functions or budgets. Folks rally around more inspiring real problems and real opportunities that are making an impact in the lives of patients. And as long as you're able to connect the work you're doing exactly to the end outcome for the patient, I see that energy coming in. And that's been the secret sauce. And yeah, that's what I try to do behind the scenes.

Tom Lehmann 26:30

So why not bring the discussion to a close with one final question. So you've, you've obviously made a lot of progress in the last couple of years and a number of things to be proud of with both customer as well as patient experience. You've got an organization, as you were just talking about, that has rallied around a lot of these areas, and it feels very purpose driven. Yet at the same time, I think you've mentioned that there's many things still to be done. So what does the next couple of years look like? What are some of those areas that say, well, we've made progress, there's real things that we can keep doing. And therefore, what would be some of the priorities that you're looking at over the next few years?

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 27:05

Yeah, that's a really good question as well, I think as Takeda Oncology, we're definitely committed to bringing the most innovative medicine faster to our patients. So that remains the mission. And also making sure that access to medicine in different markets is made easier along the way. Given that, I do feel that what gives me energy also is that Takeda Oncology is like...the sandbox for innovation within Takeda too, right? We're in every major market, and we have a team in the larger markets. And we can experiment with innovative technologies, we can experiment with Gen AI, with more traditional AI, we can experiment with the new Blockchain capabilities as they come forward as well.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 27:57

We're going to experiment with the new content generation and omni channel experiences, and also with patient facing applications of digital tools. I think this is where I'm really motivated to

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 28:29

And we have challenges. The thing is that the market dynamic continued to change. We had COVID along the way. The technology keeps getting more expensive. And also there's new technology around the block every day. So that's the hard reality of the field. And the things that I'm really passionate about in the future are, purely from a technical perspective, you look at what the potential Gen AI and AI has, quantum computing could do, the AR world could bring. You think of 5g and the potential of 5g and eventually blockchain as well. It's not like any of these individually, but the intersection of these five, six things coming together in the next two to three years in a more mainstream way. Human lives are going to be radically evolved. And as human lives are radically evolved, our customers and patients lives would also be evolving quite a bit. And in light of those how do we keep up with that? But also not just keep up with that, how do we use that intersection point to leapfrog and bring a completely new era of experiencing, is something that is extremely exciting, because I do feel this industry is absolutely ripe and ready for that breakthrough from a clickability and digital revolution perspective.

Tom Lehmann 30:07

It sure sounds like it. And again, it sounds like coming into this you've got significant momentum. At the same time, we're seeing that the technology world continues to evolve. And therefore the tools you can work with and pull from will continue to be even more available. And you've got a very, not only your personal passion for this, but a very engaged and passionate team. So it sounds like you've got all the ingredients. And now it's a matter of set the team loose on these challenges. So I do look forward to hearing more about that journey. And so it's been great having here today. I really appreciate not only just where you started with a very personal connection to what drives you in this space, but just some of the experiences you've had in the past several years. It's been



really helpful to hear.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 30:46

Thank you very much, Tom, thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

Tom Lehmann 30:50

Good to have you here and I wish you luck on this journey. Thanks again for joining.

Samer Ansari _ Takeda 30:53

Thank you. Take Care.

Tom Lehmann 31:02

A big thank you to Samer for joining me in the discussion today. As I reflect on our conversation, it's clear how Samer's personal connection to oncology has motivated him to create the greatest impact for patients.

And we got a glimpse into the actions Samer and his team are taking to improve the customer experience, the patient experience, and the coordination across channels by stitching the available data together.

While solving business challenges, Samer emphasized the need to map investment choices to business priorities and ultimately showcase the impact of those investments.

A cautionary note shared is that not all technology bets are successful, and teams must be prepared to recalibrate if initial outcomes are not promising.

As this episode concludes, two questions to consider:

(1) What are your big digital bets for the year? With a 'fail fast' mindset, are you prepared to recalibrate your trajectory if needed?

(2) How are you building enthusiasm for your digital journey? Are you able to link the work you're doing to the impact you're creating?

Once again, thanks, Samer, for sharing your perspectives with us.

As always remember to like and subscribe to Driving Digital in Biopharma on your favorite podcast platform so you don't miss an episode.

Until next time...this is Tom Lehmann with Driving Digital in Biopharma.

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