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Acceleration of digital life



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John Denslinger sees Covid-19 as a catalyst for significant and rapid change regarding the digitization of our lives

Digital life • By John Denslinger

For more than a decade we have imagined a digital world where electronics, coupled with communications, offered humanity a less stressful daily life. As desirable as it sounded, the pace of consumer and business adoption was rather measured. Suddenly, a pandemic disrupted all aspects of civilization. That one catalyst, Covid-19, brought immediate need and accelerated digital life. The good news: the technology supporting personal routines, people encounters, day-to-day commerce, transport, workplace arrangements and remote data sharing is already available.

Looking back, digital transformation has been gradual at best, despite an avalanche of reliable components, products, systems and connectivity. Maybe it was the classic case 'a solution in search of a problem'. Perhaps it was just complacency or simply a desire to defer anticipated conversion costs that hampered greater implementation. Regardless of reason, momentum for digital and tele-based products and services is now on the adoption fast-track driven predominantly by concern over safety, security and personal well-being. Because of this, demand for digital solutions will mark a strong upward trajectory for the foreseeable future.

So, where is the big opportunity for our industry? Of all the market sectors, healthcare has got to be the largest single target for digital solutions. The pandemic has made that a priority. Hospitals, out-patient clinics, doctor and dental offices, pharmacies, nursing homes, therapy treatment centers and mental health facilities all need robust non-contact solutions, superior information sharing networks and real-time diagnostics regardless of distance. Tangential support functions like

emergency transport vehicles, fire and rescue and protective gear distribution could also benefit greatly from a cohesive 5G national roll out.

Still, digital life has gaps as this example illustrates. In my first tele-health online meeting with my practitioner, I found the experience underwhelming. Lots of face time, great conversation but any treatment or prescription required another follow-up, in-office exam. Not sure this session was all that productive for either one of us. It suggested to me the whole patient side interface was lacking. No biometric sensors, no communications linkage and no feedback loops. Let's face it, when it comes to healthcare, I believe there is a lot more digital integration yet to be achieved.

As healthy individuals we fully expect a return to normal with the freedom to work and play as we knew it. For good or bad, mandates of social distancing and protective masks will continue limiting some activity. Digital solutions can alleviate the stress of compliance. When you finally decide to attend that sporting event, concert, convention, theater etc, it will be digital technology assuring a secure, safe and healthy environment for all.

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