INNOVATION COUNCIL

Spotlight:
10 Questions for Medixus

Innovation Council sat down with Nicole Kayode, Founder and CEO of Medixus to talk about her passion for health and social impact tech. She created a communication, collaboration and learning platform for doctors aimed at improving case management and clinical practice. Medixus believes that quality patient care relies on smooth communication between healthcare professionals, and access to resources that will further their development.

1 ⟩ How did Medixus get its start?

Medixus started because of my personal experience. I lost a relative in the Nigerian healthcare system and noticed that a lot of the responses regarding the relative's care were "I am not sure", or "I don't know what to do in this situation". So I wanted to develop a solution to address this very human situation and take the guesswork out of healthcare. This was around 2016.

2 ⟩ What was the moment when you knew Medixus was on track for a successful future?

I am not sure I know yet! I am still searching for that moment as a start-up owner. Getting the app live, then getting users, then getting people to post, etc. It's a moving target.

3 ⟩ Name some factors behind Medixus' success to date.

Not being afraid to ask people for help because people have been willing to guide and support me when they believe in the company. It takes a village to launch a company, for sure. Also, copious amounts of resilience have helped. Things can go wrong and the ability to dig deep to develop work-arounds has been key.

4 ⟩ What is the role of innovation at Medixus?

With innovation, we are trying to constantly adapt to the market and conditions. We keep changing and tweaking and staying alive as a start-up. Innovation keeps you in the game and hopefully in it for the long haul. My background is in digital products, building things with software developers. I managed to get Rita, my co-founder, on board and she writes code. I designed the screens, flows and other elements of the solution and she wrote the code and brought it to life. We were initially a two-woman band, moving slowly but together, and eventually we got there. Today we have 3 staff in Kenya, plus me, Rita, and a clinical lead in the UK. We are a mostly female group, with one man on the team.

5 ⟩ How much does collaboration matter for your work?

We are trying to drive collaboration among health workers, those who know each other, those who don't, etc. We are creating a pool of medical knowledge and want many people to access this pool. We enable collaboration. In terms of product development and operating the company, we used in-house resources and knowledge but then worked with users to get feedback. We did partner with clients to look at usage and improve uptake and the experience with the solution. This feedback helped us to refine our offering and meet clients' expectations, across settings whether large hospitals or tiny clinics. It helped us to get closer to our customers.

6 What can governments do to foster innovation and entrepreneurship?

They can help by making the regulatory environment easier to understand and engage with. Sometimes new regulations can be arduous for small companies to comply with and while we of course support regulation, especially in healthcare, it's important to think about the impact on SMEs. Taxation regimes can also be hard for SMEs. We appreciate policies like R&D tax credits, which mean the money we spend on R&D can be partially claimed back. Incentives for investment can really help SMEs.

7 Has Medixus interacted with the intellectual property rights system?

We have not interacted with the IP system too much, but we do have trademarks for our brand in certain markets. In some places the trademark registration was quite expensive, so we did not proceed. With software it can be hard to secure IP protection. To solidify our competitive edge, we relied on me and the team, being first to market and with a particular niche. We trusted that our execution would be the best and that our solution and services would speak for themselves.

8 What are the most important lessons that your team at Medixus has learned so far?

There are a few lessons: treat your employees well. Trust that there may be a right time for them to move on and that's okay. They are going on to something bigger and better, and your company was an important stepping stone for their personal development. We plan the future with our employees in this way, a few years out. Also, there is a fine balance between trusting people and keeping things confidential. Some partnerships may require disclosure and yet – you have to trust them in order for it to work. At times, we've trusted the wrong partner and had our ideas stolen. But it's a risk you have to manage and be okay with.

9 What is the social mission and impact of Medixus?

We know from the data that many adverse events for patients happen because of poor communication between teams and within a team. 1/10 patients get harmed when admitted, so just being admitted to hospital can be a risky endeavor. Based on our data, out of 1000 patients, 100 would likely have adverse events and there would be 30 deaths in a facility - across countries. So in one facility using a tool like ours could save as many as 1000 lives per year. Ineffective communication costs lives. So how do we get them to communicate better and stop avoidable problems and deaths.

9 ⟩ New technologies sometimes face a lag in government acceptance. Is this an issue for Medixus?

So far so good. The regulators are coming along with digital healthcare solutions. We have good engagement at the government level in our markets. Data protection acts are an important element in our space, covering healthcare data. They are receptive to solutions like ours.

10 ⟩ What message do you have for another healthcare tech start-up owner?

Don't be afraid to just jump in and start. You can tie yourself in knots really trying to cover everything but just get started, get feedback, and go from there.

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