Persistent Podcast | Episode 06

Ganesh Nathella & Gurvinder Sahni

Gurvinder Sahni: Welcome to the Persistent Podcast, where we explore conversations that drive transformation and shape the future. I'm your host, Gurvinder Sahni, Chief Marketing Officer at Persistent. In a world where change is the only constant, we are on a mission to uncover ideas, insights, and innovations, that are redefining industries and societies.

From technology and business to culture and beyond, we will dive into the most pressing topics and trends of our time. Join me as we engage with thought leaders, industry disruptors, changemakers, from diverse backgrounds and industries. Together, we plan to explore conversations that are at the core of change and shaping the world that we live in.

So, let's get started on this journey of discovery and exploration joining me today. I have a special guest, Ganesh Nathella. Ganesh, welcome to the podcast.

Ganesh Nathella: Thanks, Gurvinder for having me on this podcast and I look forward for a great conversation.

Gurvinder Sahni: Thank you. So, for our audience, Ganesh is a Senior Vice President and for Healthcare and Lifesciences at Persistent Systems.

We will talk about how we create more responsible and ethical healthcare, a topic which is very up close and personal to Ganesh and his entire team. And so, buckle up for a riveting conversation that cuts

through the noise and gets to the heart of what it means to protect data in this digital age.

So, Ganesh, let's get started. Digital transformation is a very hot topic. It also brings challenges, and the more we talk about AI, the whole data privacy part is becoming very important. What, according to you, how are healthcare organizations addressing, especially patient privacy in this digital age?

Ganesh Nathella: Sure. there is so much happening in the healthcare space. And of course, we have a long way to go, and we are in an age where the digital tools like telehealth, artificial intelligence, data analytics are transforming healthcare at the speed of lightning.

And these advancements unlock incredible potential to improve patient outcomes. But along with that also comes serious concerns about data privacy. If you look at data privacy, it isn't just about securing the information, but how do you ensure that patient data is used appropriately. Most importantly, it's accessed by those who are really authorized to use that data, right?

Just as we expect doctors to respect confidentiality, data privacy ensures that these expectations are maintained in the digital realm.

Gurvinder Sahni: So then, if you take a step back for those of us who are unfamiliar with healthcare data privacy, how would you explain this in layperson terms? Like why should people be concerned about data privacy in this realm?

Ganesh Nathella: Think of healthcare data, specifically data privacy as something that is a locked journal, right? Where only few authorized people can read the specific chapter. Now, if you look at the journal itself, it's going to contain the medical history as well as sensitive information of patients. And, you wouldn't want just anyone going through this data, right? So, data privacy essentially ensures that your health data is only accessed by the people who have the right to do so. For example, it's either the doctors or somebody from your family who is providing care or the health care providers themselves.

So, while keeping unauthorized parties out, it's about maintaining patient trust and respecting the boundaries of personal information.

Gurvinder Sahni: You know, that's a powerful analogy. I love that part of being a log journal. But as we move toward more personalized care, like precision medicine specifically, how do privacy concerns evolve?

Ganesh Nathella: See, if you look at precision medicine or personalized medicine, it's an exciting frontier that's still evolving.

Gurvinder Sahni: Do you want to explain for our audience a little bit. Because for everybody's listening to this, what does it mean, personalized care or precision medicine, if you can also add that part into your answer as well, please.

Ganesh Nathella: Absolutely, I will absolutely do that. So, it's an exciting frontier, first of all, essentially think of it as when we say personalized medicine or precision medicine, essentially what we are saying is each individual is different, right? The DNAs of the people are different, the behaviors of the people are different. The belief systems are different and so on so forth. So essentially in precision medicine, what we are saying is it's integrating the broad range of data, whether it is the genetic information or the family history or the socioeconomic background. Sometimes the behavioral data, right? Using all these things, what we are saying is we can tailor the treatments for these patients like never before.

Now, coming back to the data privacy and what it means for the precision medicine is when we're looking at all these things, such sensitive data is being used, the privacy concerns naturally grow. It's not just about securing the data, but it's also about ensuring that is used responsibly. Now, the challenge is, how do you balance the benefits of precision medicine with the need to protect your patients' privacy? This is where practices like data governance, responsible use of AI, role-based access — all those things come into play to make sure the sensitivity is addressed properly.

Gurvinder Sahni: It's like finding a delicate balance between innovation and responsibility, which I hear quite often when I'm engaging with my fellow leaders in terms of responsible use of technology.

Now, speaking of responsibility, there are regulations like HIPAA, GDPR, which are constantly evolving as well. Now, sometimes it feels like organizations are in a constant race to keep up with these updates.

Are these regulations helping or hindering innovation? And what is your point of view from this perspective?

Ganesh Nathella: At Persistent, Gurvinder, we see them as essential guardrails. Many times, what we see while navigating regulations, many of our customers, we see them feel like they're trying to cross an obstacle blindfolded, right? So essentially what we are saying is that for them to ensure patient data, it's protected and treated with care. This is where, if you look at Persistent, we help our clients navigate this maze through AI-driven compliance tools or proactive data governance frameworks. and responsible use practices. It's not just about playing defense. It's about creating a culture of accountability and trust in healthcare innovation.

Gurvinder Sahni: Love that. And I think I love that perspective that compliance is not a barrier, but it's an enabler of trust. And that brings me to a critical point. Ganesh, as we future gaze for a moment and look into the future, privacy challenges will be becoming even more complex.

Right now, what's Persistent's playbook for helping healthcare organizations master data privacy in this ever-evolving landscape. Would love to hear your views as someone who deals with this day in and day out.

Ganesh Nathella: Absolutely. The way we look at it, of course, having worked with customers for a very long period, we have frameworks.

Our approach itself is rooted in three pillars. The first one being proactive data governance, the second being responsible innovation, and the third is having a rock-solid compliance. We have focused on creating a strong data governance framework that goes beyond security. We are ensuring data is not only protected, but also used responsibly.

And this is necessarily where the HIPAA compliance systems, the role-based access controls, advanced AI-driven solutions for privacy monitoring come in place, right? And we have partnered with leading healthcare and life sciences companies to design and implement privacy-first solutions, ensuring that they can harness the full potential of data.

While safeguarding the patient's trust, whether it's enabling precision medicine, supporting clinical trials, or accelerating telehealth adoption,

our expertise in data privacy empowers health care organizations to innovate securely, responsibly, and efficiently. More importantly, ethically.

Gurvinder Sahni: I think that's a winning playbook right there, Ganesh. And I know that it's responsibility and innovation working hand in hand. I see that playing out there. Can you talk a little bit about, and maybe I'm going off the script for a moment, Persistent also positioning itself as the ecosystem orchestrator of choice. Do you want to talk a little bit about the role of partnerships and the ecosystem that we operate in and how that ends up being a key strength for us as we operate in the market?

Ganesh Nathella: Absolutely, we are probably one of the very few organizations that very early on realized that if you have to solve the problems of the industry, specifically healthcare, as well as the problems for our customers, we have realized very early that we won't be able to solve all the problems by ourselves.

If you really wanted to provide the best solution to our customers, we have to look at an extended ecosystem. This is where we not only collaborate with our customers and with our own teams. We also work with the extended partnership ecosystem, whether it is the various hyperscalers or partners, the various product companies, and for that matter, academia, government organizations, and so on and so forth, where we are looking at getting the best of each one of these ecosystem players. So, we are able to solve the problem for our customers as well as move the ball forward so that innovation can be accelerated in healthcare like other consumer-centric industries.

Gurvinder Sahni: What are your thoughts on responsibility and innovation working hand in hand together. What are your closing thoughts on as you envision data privacy being an intrinsic part of the future of this whole healthcare evolution. What's your view on that?

Ganesh Nathella: Absolutely. Good. This is an amazing question, right? See, at Persistent, we don't really see data privacy as a legal obligation, right? It goes beyond that. It's about doing what's really right for the patients as well as for the entire industry.

If you look at everyone in the healthcare ecosystem, whether it is providers [etc.]. So, I'm going to talk a little bit about, how we can use data privacy in a way that respects patients' trust? And if the answer isn't

a resounding yes, then we need to rethink our approach, right? This is where we believe data privacy isn't just a necessity. It's a moral compass for us, guiding everything we do in healthcare.

Gurvinder Sahni: That's amazing. That whole point of it being a compass that acts as a guide is so much better than treating it as a burden. Now, I think that's a very inspiring set of messages there, Ganesh. One, of course, for our own teams, as we can always learn more.

And I think for our audience out there who want to know more from the perspective of privacy and health care. Now, let's have some fun. You know, I was recommended this book *Taking Up Space* recently, and as I was reflecting on certain points that Karen [Lynch], who happens to be the former President and CEO of CVS Health, she spoke about two points and let me start with the one which really appealed to me.

There was a point of leading with empathy, having the perspective of understanding the other side in your day-to-day working and dealing with people. You are a senior leader in the company, and can you talk about how this plays a role in your working style as well?

Ganesh Nathella: No, absolutely. If you look at the ecosystem, specifically in health care, you are dealing with emotions, right? Specifically, when you're looking at patients, many of them have some conditions which are life threatening conditions and so on and so forth. So, if you look at health care itself of all the industries, empathy is going to be a very, very important factor, right? That's why if you look at many doctors, when you look at their ratings and if you look at their scores and so on and so forth, doctors who have empathy are recognized very well by the patients. They have the highest customer scores. And if you apply that even within our own teams, empathy plays a major role.

Essentially, at the end of the day, you're dealing with emotions of people. It's very important that we put ourselves in others' shoes, whether it is a patient's or your own teams'. So, you are able to relate to what they're going through. We may not be able to solve all the problems, but at least you're able to relate.

I think in empathy, the most important thing is listening to people, right? Many times, when people want to talk to you, they are looking for

someone who can listen. So, I think that's the most important thing in my mind.

Gurvinder Sahni: Now, I think we've been through the next point where she [Lynch] speaks about responsible transparency, right? In terms of demonstrate responsibility through individual action. And we've worked together for a time, and I've seen this play out, but would love to hear you speak about this. Again, we are talking about the topic of data and privacy, where transparency also plays a role. Anything that you want to share with our audience today from that perspective.

Ganesh Nathella: Absolutely. So, transparency while again, it could be situation-specific as well, but many times what I have seen in transparency, it's very important for all of us to communicate and sometimes we all want to over-communicate. You may not be able to address or provide the answers that the people are expecting. But if you are transparent, at least people know what's the rational and trust can be built being transparent.

Gurvinder Sahni: Trust can be built by being transparent — that's an inspiring message Ganesh coming from you. So overall, as we can see, Persistent is clearly shaping the future of healthcare by harmonizing innovation and privacy. Ganesh, I want to thank you for being on the podcast for this week and sharing your insights.

Ganesh Nathella: Thank you. This has been a great conversation. And thanks again for having me on this podcast.

Gurvinder Sahni: Thanks again and for our guests, do subscribe to the Persistent Podcast, we are available on YouTube and all the other prominent channels. We will continue to strive and produce new episodes and these inspiring conversations.

If you have a story or if you have a guest that you want us to interview, feel free to write to us at podcast@persistent.com. Let's continue to shape the future together. Thank you.

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