



Podcast Transcript

Risk Never Sleeps

Episode 66

Will Landry

Ed Gaudet: Welcome to the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast, in which we learn about the people that are on the front lines, delivering and protecting patient care. I'm Ed Gaudet, the host of our program, and today I am pleased to be joined by Will Landry, the SVP and Chief Information Officer for Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Will Landry: That's right. Thanks. Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, Will, welcome to the program. I saw you worked at BCBS too at one point.

Will Landry: I did. I was at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana for a couple of years. I was primarily, I was there to, there for a couple data center migrations. And we had some on-premise data centers, and we migrated to some co-lo facilities. It was basically two-year projects that we finished in a few months and then kind of moved on to do something else for that.

Ed Gaudet: We know them well. We do some work with them today. Let's start off with, tell our listeners a little bit about yourself, your role, and a little bit about the organization.



Will Landry: Sure. Yeah. So my name is Will Landry. I'm the Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer for the health system. I've been with FMLS for four years, a little over four years now. Prior to that, I was with Lafayette General Health, another health system in southwest Louisiana. And then, for five years there, and then with Blue Cross Blue Shield Louisiana and with a large home health care and hospice company called Amedisys. And that's also in Baton Rouge, but it's a national home health and hospice company. And prior, that's my health care experience, prior to that, my experience is all in the retail wholesale/John Deere industry. So my dad was a design engineer for John Deere and ended up being a president and general manager of a John Deere dealership for a long time. And that's all my jobs through middle school, high school, and college were all working at John Deere dealerships.

Ed Gaudet: Awesome. John Deere makes a phenomenal product.

Will Landry: They do. And so what I do, I'm responsible for all IT, all technology and innovation as well too, and all of our digital space. So we are a large Catholic health system based in Baton Rouge. We have ten hospitals in Louisiana and Mississippi and over 300 ambulatory locations, like clinics in both of the states as well. And so we have a large footprint of technology in all those locations. We have over 40,000 active users within our environment, of which 20,000 are employees. So we basically have, you know, a lot of contractors, a lot of life physicians and outside staff. And we also have a lot of independent partner facilities that are, they're independent, but we provide our medical record to. So we use Epic as our medical record. So we have a Community Connect program where we provide IT services and that EMR to other independent facilities. We have a lot of different smaller ambulatory clinics, but we also have three inpatient facilities that we do that with now as well.

Ed Gaudet: Okay. Cool. So as you look over the next 12 to 24 months, what are the top 3 to 5 priorities you're focused on?

Will Landry: I'll give you our main three strategies. Our first is just consumer experience and optimization. So we have spent a lot of resources and assets and money on implementing new systems, whether it's Epic, whether it's our new ERP with Oracle Cloud. And we've done a lot with our Microsoft products and tool sets and different technologies that we've put in place. And now we're focused on optimizing and getting more out of them, but also improving the consumer experience. In healthcare, we talk a lot about reducing clicks for providers, but we want to reduce clicks for everyone; not just providers, but for our nursing teams, for our back office staff, for our shared services staffs. We want the technology to be simpler and easier to use for everybody, so that they're focused on what they're good at and focused on being more productive and not just focused on using the technology. The second area where we're like, really have heavily focused on is, it's kind of three pronged, but is our revenue cycle operation or billing operations and using artificial intelligence, AI and analytics to do that better and to be able so that we're billing better, that we're coding better. And it's not just about increasing revenue and making more money so that it's right; we want it to be right. And so the billing is right for the patients at the end of the day. Those are the things that we're really focused on that. And obviously using our data, we've made an investments in these systems and now we want to be able to utilize the data for analytics, for social determinants of health and being able to help the communities that we serve. And in our third, the third strategy that we're really focused on this year, it's, and there's there's kind of two sometimes opposite, but there we have them together as one strategy because they're so complementary: cybersecurity and interoperability. We have to be secure and we also have to share data. And so we, and we have to do both things very well. And that's, that, we are really focused on improving both of those areas.

Ed Gaudet: That makes sense. I could see that with the ONC and the interoperable. So that does make a lot of sense that they're together. But you're right, there's some tension there between enforcing the control and opening it up to share the data to patients and partners. I love the way you think about that. How did you get into healthcare and cybersecurity, or I'm sorry, IT in general?



Will Landry: Yeah, IT has always been a passion of mine. I've had since, and I'll attribute this to my father, but I've had a PC since I was three years old, an old IBM PC junior. With the Kennedys, and the Commodore 64 were out there, I had an IBM. My dad made an investment and it definitely paid off in the long run, for me at least. That is something that really gave me a passion for: how does this work? I've always wanted to know how things work, how they're built, what's behind this that makes it tick. And then through middle school and high school, I got into coding. And so my elective classes in high school were all like programming. We did Turbo Pascal and C plus.

Ed Gaudet: Turbo Pascal. Yeah, I know it well.

Will Landry: I probably don't get a lot of Turbo Pascal mentions recently.

Ed Gaudet: But I met my wife at a Turbo Pascal class, so.

Will Landry: And then when I, and then in college, I majored in information systems and my programming classes were all my ESAs. That was, and then. So I just always had a passion for that. And then, how I ended up in health care. I was doing, I mentioned earlier my background, early background was a lot of John Deere and a lot of agriculture commercial equipment industry, I was doing IT in those areas, but I ended up, just I had to do something different because my parents' company, they sold it, they retired, they did something different. So I was looking to just do something different. And I stumbled upon an IT operations manager job at Amedisys. And I never had even considered working in health care. And I really had, I really got, I really kind of connected to the purpose of health care. And we did a, we did, our leaders had to do at one point they, they asked all of our leaders to do ride-alongs with some of the nurses to kind of get an idea of what they do on a daily basis. And it really hit home, like how hard health care is for me to see that first hand. And it really, I'll never forget that because it's really reminded me what we do from a technology perspective in health care is we are trying to make their job easier, not harder, and we have to keep reminding ourselves of that all the time, that the technologies to try to make them more efficient and more effective in what they're doing so that they can care for the patients better.

Will Landry (cont'd): And that is always, and then also too, along with that part, I learned later when I was at Lafayette General, I really learned, it hit home, that when we provide these EMR electronic medical record systems in health care, it's interesting because we're in an industry where we're providing a service that our users really don't want because it's, that's changed over time, but not long after the Affordable Care Act, there's a lot of negative providers and nurses about having to document electronically. And so we have a lot of pressure to deliver systems that are up, that they're up times 100% and that they're not a hindrance to what they're doing. And so it's a little bit different that we, that's a really high bar that we have to set. And we're constantly trying to improve that.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, I remember that you mentioned saving clicks. And I remember the first time I heard that the light bulb went off. And since then this is back in 2009-2010, that's been my center for design as I think about designing products for healthcare. It is that notion of saving clicks and reducing that burden of IT on the provider and support folks that are trying to provide services to the providers. Yeah, no, that's a great point. I'm glad you brought that up. So a lot obviously happening, I'm sure, in your world. What keeps you up at night?

Will Landry: I think what keeps me up at night is just the availability of our systems. And that can be from, that's obviously from cyber attacks or even from physical failures and hardware failures, things like that. And as we become as not just the healthcare, not just our industry, our company, but as consumers we've become, we are way more dependent on technology than we were a year ago, than five years ago, than ten years ago. And our expectations of uptime and access to these systems has increased exponentially over that time period, too. So being able to keep these systems online and available, that's, that obviously keeps me up at night.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. I imagine that's, like for any type of critical system, that's the number one feature. If it's not up and running and available, it doesn't matter what's behind it. So tough couple of years with the pandemic, what are you most proud of personally and professionally over the last couple of years?



Will Landry: What I'm most like, so what we've been able to do, I would say during the pandemic, we, I remember sitting, I was sitting in this office and our VP of RF cycle sits right next to me. She came in here, this is three weeks; it was probably late January. And was, basically she was like, Hey, this thing ...; be prepared to have people go home because we had an ice storm a few years ago and our VPNs didn't work. And so I was like, Oh, okay. So we started ..., and I just started, I think I was like two weeks into the job here. I didn't really know the history of how it, when it all went down. So we actually, I got with our director of infrastructure and our network teams and stuff. We started actually planning some stuff out. Hey, if we had to send a lot of people home, could we do it? But the answer was like, No. But this was, we had to resent, I remember I think we sent everyone home on like March 26th or something like that. It was somewhere in that timeframe.

Ed Gaudet: That sounds about right.

Will Landry: And we were, we had, we were upgrading circuits, putting stuff in place, we were scrambling to do all this stuff. And I think we were a few weeks ahead of a lot of other companies because we were getting really good lead times from our providers and our ISPs, and they were like, happy to do it. And we were turning up circuits and gig circuits everywhere. And I will say that I was very proud of that because we did not miss a beat when we sent people home. We had hardware like technology ready from a bandwidth perspective. And we, that was really great. The other thing I will say that we've done is we've had a really good over the last three years with things have shifted a lot in our work environment and our workforce, we were, I think that summer, June 2020, we told all our team that was remote, we basically said, Hey, if you are remote now, you can stay remote indefinitely. So if you like working from home and you are like deciding whether or not you want to put an investment into a home office, go ahead and do it. And so we're not, if you want to stay, let's, we're seeing good productivity and it's working out well. And from an IT perspective we are not in the hospital. We are actually already a shared services facility. So we're already off-site anyway. So it didn't really make a lot of difference. We were able to retain a lot of employees that way. We actually were able to retain not just because of the, the ... that, but actually we've had employees that have moved because spouses got other jobs, and other areas are out of state, and in the past we wouldn't have kept them. But now it doesn't really matter.



Ed Gaudet: Yeah. You're still in that posture, you're still having people work remote?

Will Landry: We do. We still have. We have right around 500 people in our IT that are like full-time employees. And we have on-site positions that have to be on-site, our PC techs or telecom techs. So they're doing actual on-site work. But we have about, let's say, 350 eligible, that are eligible for remote work. And we have the 350, we probably have 310 that are remote.

Ed Gaudet: Oh wow. That's great. Yeah.

Will Landry: It's a pretty high percentage of remotes. I come in to get out of the house. Few others that are like that too. I laugh because my wife and kids know that too. But I need a change of scenery from time to time. But it's been good. I think only our biggest challenge is we've had to find new ways to communicate. We've had to find when we bring on new hires or younger or, not necessarily younger, but less experienced staff, less experienced in IT or healthcare IT, we've had to train differently. We've had to mentor differently. And I'm not sure that we're doing that as well as we were doing before, but we have other productivity gains that we did.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. Cool. Are you finding ways to bring people back in on a more frequent basis?

Will Landry: Yes. We're doing things like, we're doing things like more, we probably have more parties and tailgates and kind of stuff to bring, to do things on site. We'll do some team meetings a couple times a year where we bring people on-site, and it's more about, it's a lot more about fellowship and networking than it is about the meeting itself. And so we're doing a lot of that too. We're also, we've encouraged our team members, we're doing something this year that we haven't done in the past, and we've already seen some positive outcomes from it. Instead of coming back into the office, which is a shared services office, and it's not the hospital, we encourage our teams to like have so many visits in the hospital or in a clinic per year to go actually sit on site, go, That's what we want. We want more, what are they, go see what the users are doing, how they're using the systems. Versus coming sit in.

Will Landry (cont'd): And it's not like every day, but it's a few times a month or a few times a quarter what we can make work out. And that's not only as our team enjoyed it and got a lot of good feedback from it, our end users and our customers are really enjoying seeing that as well too.

Ed Gaudet: Oh yeah, the providers can say, Look at all these clicks. I need to get rid of these clicks. I remember a couple of those sessions. So outside of healthcare and IT, what are you most passionate about? What would you be doing if you weren't doing this job?

Will Landry: Playing with my kids. I have an eight-year-old son and a four-year-old daughter.

Ed Gaudet: Oh great.

Will Landry: I have young kids and so we do a lot of basketball outside. We go to a lot of events. I have, actually have LSU season tickets for football. So we go to, my son and I go to a lot of football, basketball games together. And then I love, I like, I really like doing electrical work. That would be, I always say that if I wasn't, if I had to change careers, or if I came back in a different life, I might be an electrician. And I'm not very good at it; I just like doing it. ...

Ed Gaudet: Nice. Nice. And I noticed the bobbleheads on your credenza there or your.

Will Landry: Yeah. Those are for lots of different games and events, and some of them are for gifts from people. And I don't think I bought any of those. I think they're all like either gifts or events. You know, you go to a bobblehead night and you get a. That's where some of them are. I got a couple, I got a Pelicans player, a Philly player. I used to live in Baltimore, so I've been to, I don't have an oriole bobblehead, but I need one. But I've been, I've actually had a few different Phillies bobbleheads. And this is my probably most unique one, it's the Pelicans King cake baby. It's their mascot during Mardi Gras season.

Ed Gaudet: You mentioned Baltimore. Guess whose birthday it is today? Edgar Allan Poe.



Will Landry: That's awesome. So I always love to be at the Three Ravens mascots because of Edgar Allan Poe. So.

Ed Gaudet: That's right. It's pretty cool. So if you could go back in time, what would you tell your 20 year old self?

Will Landry: I think I would tell myself two things. I would think, I would tell myself like one, keep working hard. It's going to, the hard work pays off. And it does. I'll tell anybody that today. And the other thing is that you don't know everything. Although I'm pretty convinced my 25-year-old self, even if I told my 25-year-old self, he would disagree; he would definitely think he knew everything.

Ed Gaudet: You'd be fighting with yourself.

Will Landry: Yes. But, and I think that's, and I think that's, I think that's key for anybody in their 20s to hear.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, yeah. No, nobody wants to hear that when they're 25. What are you talking about? I'd be remiss if I didn't ask you this question. This is the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. What's the riskiest thing you've ever done?

Will Landry: I think the riskiest thing I've ever done. I was thinking about this the other day is probably: my buddies and I, my brother and two of my really good friends from high school and college we went to, we went whitewater rafting in 2015. And it was an overnight trip, and we picked one of the hardest rivers and we'd never, the three of us, I mean, the four of us had never really been before, but it was like a level four rafting.

Ed Gaudet: Where was it? Local or?

Will Landry: No, it was in, it was in California. It was out right outside of, it was on the Tuolumne River, right outside of Yosemite. And it was really fun. But it was, we pumped the boat once. It was pretty risky.



Ed Gaudet: Oh, boy. Anyone get hurt?

Will Landry: No, we didn't, but we went like the first week, I think it was the second week it was open and the water temp was like 45 degrees, it was really cold. So when you hit the water, it was really cold. But we had a great time. And looking back on it, my buddy and I were talking about it at lunch the other day. We were like, That might not have been our best decision.

Ed Gaudet: Never is, right? Sounds good on paper. Music or movies, for the next question.

Will Landry: Movies!

Ed Gaudet: Oh, all right! You're on a desert island. You can bring five movies with you. What would they be?

Will Landry: Any Star Wars movie. I'm good. I might pick some others. I've really, I could probably watch silly movies. I could watch the Wayne's World movies over.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, yeah. Love it.

Will Landry: Kind of The Back to the Future and definitely.

Ed Gaudet: Back to the Future. Yep. Airplane!

Will Landry: Yes. But Star Wars movies. I can watch any Star Wars movie.

Ed Gaudet: So did you play D&D as a kid?

Will Landry: I did not.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, okay.



Will Landry: Never did. No. I was into like, I played a lot of computer games. Like, I was really into King's Quest. I really liked the King's Quest, like the text-based, like, kind of adventure-based game. I never played Dungeons and Dragons.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, okay. So last-minute comments or advice to those folks that are thinking about getting into healthcare, IT, or cyber?

Will Landry: I think, so my advice, I think my advice is: it is a very rewarding career, but it is hard. Healthcare and cyber and then you add them together. It's very hard, not for the faint of heart. But I think that with anything, the harder it is, it's not made for everybody. And I think that you can be very successful with a lot of hard work. But it also, I think you have to be very diligent in making sure that, from a security perspective, obviously, because your users or your access, people don't, you know, naturally you want open access, you want to be able to use systems, but you also want to be able to secure it. So there's, we talked earlier about interoperability, security or sometimes pulling in opposite directions. I think with any system in securing it, you're going to have, you're going to be pulling in opposite directions. And it is something that it's not easy, it's not for the faint of heart. And there will be a lot of long nights. But it is a very rewarding career.

Ed Gaudet: And you can have some fun, too.

Will Landry: Absolutely.

Ed Gaudet: Absolutely. All right. We've been talking to Will Landry today with FMOL out of Baton Rouge, the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System. This is Ed Gaudet from the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. Remember, if you're on the front lines protecting patient safety or delivering patient care, stay vigilant because Risk Never Sleeps.



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