



Digital-only experience, our mantra to success amid covid: Sachin Dutta, COO, Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance



The outbreak of Covid-19 has brought several challenges for industries across the world and which intensified with the second ongoing wave and the scare of 3rd wave. To understand the adversities of the pandemic on the insurance sector, in particular, Elets News Network (ENN) recently spoke to Sachin Dutta, Chief Operating Officer, Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance, who helped us delve deeper into the growing significance of being contactless and how is his company using the concept as the key driver during these tenuous COVID circumstances.

Excerpts:

1. The digital revolution is transforming every industry around us amid the pandemic. How is it changing the life insurance segment, especially during these uncertain times?

The digital revolution in the last few years has transformed the way customers purchase products and interact and engage with companies. Life Insurance industry in the past few years has seen rapid adoption of this dynamic and evolving digital revolution. There has been a paradigm shift in adoption of

digital solutions across customer lifecycle right from onboarding, ongoing servicing and claim settlement, with increased reliance on digital solutions like Digital onboarding, Video KYC, Tele and Video Underwriting, Chatbots, Whatsapp and IVR servicing, collaboration tools, contactless solutions etc. The Life Insurance industry has further digitally enabled their sales forces and customer interactions in real-time omni channel environments and offering remote and RPA driven advice 24/7 on varied digital platforms. Digital is no more just the add-on but the entire value proposition chain or an ecosystem in itself, which is already transforming the way in which companies offer products & services and engage with their customers.

2. What role are the emerging technologies such as AI, ML, Big Data Analytics and RPA playing in ensuring digital delivery across the insurance sector?

The industry is leveraging its digital tools powered by the latest in the world of technology including AI, ML, Big Data Analytics, RPA etc. This enables a wide range of new applications by collecting, analyzing and operationalizing vast amounts of data for improved marketing, underwriting and customer retention. In the coming years, with this large scale adoption of digital solutions, business models will completely transition to digital mode thereby reducing human interface, increased system reliability and enhanced interests of customers. While humans will continue to design smarter, sharper and evolving digital solutions; with reliance on AI & ML, the bots shall take over the menial jobs and improve precision on activities that require judgment thereby ensuring consistency.

These emerging technologies set the organization not only on the path to offering a superior user experience but also help optimize and modernize the way we look at automation, processes and customer outcomes. The use of AI and ML not only enables continuous self-improvement but also provides analytical insights towards further improving business processes and operations.

AI, ML and Big Data specifically from an Insurance perspective provides better visibility and understanding of customer and process and also enables better Risk management. Customers also have a wide range of choice and can easily compare one app vs the other and hence in order to sustain this rapid digital expansion, one must invest in right solutions which can sustain on their own over a period of time rather than being high on maintenance, complex on change management and difficult to explain or operate.

3. Cyber threats post covid outbreak has reported inflation across the BFSI sector. How are you strategizing your risk management to ensure safety and recovery in case of damage?

In view of emerging Cyber threat vectors, the Company has a SIEM (Security Information and Event Management) solution in place that provides a holistic view of the Company's cyber security stance in real-time and assists the Company to be more proactive in the fight against security threats. The Company's Information Security Management Function makes effective use of advanced analytics capabilities by using next-generation artificial intelligence for cyber security. The Company has automated triaging process encompassing context related parameters, history of alert and threat Intel available.

As such there is no need to panic and get every security solution available in the market to cover the risk; however, the focus should be on awareness of the landscape, environment, leak points and enhanced focus on basics. Continuous review and Risk evaluation of the changes in processes, new technology solution adoption is one of the key focus areas for every organization. We are also evolving and continuously reviewing our Information and Cyber Security setup and also looking at adoption of DevSec Operation in the solutions. The policies, processes and IT operational points with respect to Backup Strategy, setup realignment, risk Monitoring and access reviews has been enhanced to ensure we have a robust recovery process and this also enables an early identification to ensure risk is minimal and within appetite.

4. Data analytics is pivotal in driving the Bancassurance Model which is seen as a big opportunity. Would you like to tell us your experience in this regard?

Data analytics with the right strategy, vision and appropriate utilization helps in drastic improvement in performance of the Company by enabling a robust & informed decision making process and ultimately resulting in better products and services. We firmly believe that Data Analytics is a huge benefactor to the life insurance industry where the insurers collect & assess large quantity of highly relevant data. The advancements in data analytics and its adoption can help transform varied aspects of business including but not limited to customer experience, Fraud detection & prevention, Product pricing and self-servicing option for customers. With Data Analytics, the Company can also gain insights into its profitability, modify sales practices and processes to improve profits, reduce wasted time with policyholders; hence maximizing overall performance.

Our Bancassurance model of operations relies heavily on adoption of data analytics and enables us to size and seize relevant opportunities, offer tailor made products, adopt focused risk management practices basis past trends and ensure adoption & availability of convenient services. Data analytics also provides us an ability to predict various financial and customer outcomes; thereby helping us design suitable strategy basis such information. Furthermore, data analytics coupled with other progressive technologies

like AI and ML, not only ensures customer delight but also provides competitive advantage thereby helping the Company gain a better market share.

5. What are your views on intelligent automation? How is it significant for the insurance industry?

Intelligent Automation is a critical driver typically in a complex model and processes of Life Insurance considering the core systems and legacy processes which may not be aligned to modern architecture and setup. Intelligent automation can help insurers leverage on artificial intelligence, data mining and other breakthrough technologies to reduce reliance and automate redundant and repetitive processes. Some of the areas where we have leveraged and benefitted from intelligent automation across policy life cycle include

- Customer onboarding encompassing lead collection, aggregation, processing and conversion
- Self-servicing with the introduction of WhatsApp Bots, Intelligent automated IVRS, customer portal
- Efficient underwriting process driven by AI/ML-powered rule engine
- Faster policy issuance with intelligent automation and seamless integration of front end and back end processes
- Identification of cross-sell and upsell opportunities

In a nutshell, intelligent automation is helping the industry drive business models which are efficient, customizable, scalable and at the same time offer an enhanced customer experience.

6. With the second wave of the covid outbreak, a lot of plans pertaining to operations are likely to change. How are you re-strategizing 2021 with contactless offerings in mind?

COVID-19 has been an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of mankind which has impacted not only each one of us at a personal level but has caused a paradigm shift in strategic outlook of companies especially in the Insurance sector. Our strategy in this new normal offers a digital first and digital only experience to our customers across all stages of the customer journey and it has already seen a higher adoption compared to the pre COVID world. There has been multi fold increase in payments through online mode, increase in self-servicing through IVR, significantly higher uptake on WhatsApp registration for servicing, increased footfall on our website etc. Our strategy focuses on all customer touch points encompassing onboarding, servicing and payments.

For customer onboarding, our processes are powered by digital, guided and intuitive buying journeys across varied platforms with capabilities like video verification, tele medicals, digital submission of documents, digital policy pack delivery etc. seamless integrated into the backend process.

In our continued endeavour towards customer excellence, we continue to offer varied digital servicing avenues to our customer with the customer experience being the core of our strategy and processes. We have remotely enabled traditional contact centre based servicing. We have also observed a significant increase in uptake of self-servicing through our always on Integrated Voice Response System (IVRS) and customer portal. Regular communication with our customers being key aspects, we have also enabled digital interactive communications delivered to the customer's choice of device through emails, SMS, WhatsApp. There has been a multifold increase in uptake on servicing through WhatsApp which is powered by ChatBot offering 24*7 service availability to our customers.

With contactless being the key driver in these tenuous COVID circumstances, we offer digital and contactless payment options to our customers accessible from the choice of device. Our diversified bouquet of digital payment avenues includes UPI, e-Wallets, Netbanking, Online payments through credit or debit card, e-mandate registration etc., to name a few. We also regularly share payment reminders with our customers through varied delivery platforms like emails, SMS, WhatsApp and automated voice messages.

Link - <https://bfsi.eletsonline.com/digital-only-experience-our-mantra-to-success-amid-covid-sachin-dutta-coo-canara-hsbc-oriental-bank-of-commerce-life-insurance/>