

InterSystems UK&I: Building the data backbone for AI

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InterSystems used its recent UK & Ireland Data Summit to set out its case that the value in enterprise AI will go to whoever controls trusted, connected data, rather than to whoever has the most capable AI model. The event also marked a key milestone for the company, 40 years since it opened its first international office in the UK, and for a business whose technology already sits underneath much of the NHS, it's a strong and credible story to be telling as it looks to capitalise on its next phase of AI-enabled growth.

Four decades on, InterSystems still isn't a brand known as widely as perhaps it should be, but its technology supports a remarkable amount of everyday life. More than 1bn patient records are stored on it, around 60% of NHS data flows through its Health Connect integration engine, and Epic, the dominant US electronic health record (EHR) vendor, runs on its database. Outside healthcare, it handles more than 2bn equity trades a day and tracks over 20m shipping containers globally. At the centre of all of it is, InterSystems IRIS Data Platform, which combines a high-performance database with integration and analytics, underpinning its HealthShare and Health Connect interoperability products as well as its TrakCare and IntelliCare EHRs.

CEO Terry Ragon opened the summit by video, explaining that the company had gone "all in" on AI shortly after ChatGPT arrived, including building a new generation of its technology with AI at the core. He also set out a series of leadership changes. Don Woodlock, previously head of health solutions, became President at the start of the year and now runs the business day to day, whilst Ragon remains CEO, focused on long-term strategy and technology. Ragon confirmed that the company will remain private, held in a trust in perpetuity, and that HealthShare, its shared care record and interoperability line, has moved under Senior Vice President Scott Gnau and merged with the data platforms group.

That last change was mentioned almost in passing, though it is a significant move and one that really underpins the firm's strategy, bringing the interoperability products and the data platform together. Ragon also went out of his way to stress that a healthcare executive becoming President does not make InterSystems a healthcare-only company. Whilst health represents the core of the business, the data side has a far wider opportunity, one the business has still not fully exploited in areas such as supply chain and critical national infrastructure.

An AI data backbone

Woodlock built his keynote around a line from Dr Philip Payne of the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA), "*there is no AI strategy without a data strategy, and no data strategy without an interoperability strategy*". It's an apt quote, and one that ties directly into what InterSystems calls its 'AI data backbone', in which departmental systems, siloed by design, feed a unified layer of normalised data on which applications, analytics and agents can then be built. The idea isn't new, but the reasoning behind it has sharpened. A standalone chatbot needs very little context, whereas an agent working across a hospital or a bank needs the right data in the right shape and the ability to reach into the systems that actually do the work. That is fundamentally an integration problem, and one InterSystems has spent decades solving.

The flagship example the firm uses is IntelliCare, built on their IRIS data platform, which InterSystems describes as the first AI-native EHR. IntelliCare is designed around reducing the administrative burden on clinicians, with its ambient listening capability the clearest example, turning the conversation between clinician and patient into clinical notes and suggested next steps

such as tests or orders, which the clinician can then review.

The challenge is that the platform positioning is not unique. The hyperscalers, data platform vendors and EHR suppliers all want to be the platform their customers build on, and most are making similar arguments about data and context being the foundation for AI. Where InterSystems has a real edge is in how deeply it is already connected into health systems, alongside decades of product depth in data interoperability and integration with complex, often ageing systems. Many other platform providers have the scale and resources to compete, but they lack that heritage, and the trust that comes with having run critical systems for so long.

Getting IRIS ready for agents

Jeff Fried, Director of Platform Strategy and Innovation, set out where IRIS data platform is heading. The headline announcement was AI Hub, InterSystems' foundation for agentic AI, which lets customers open up their existing IRIS data platform applications and data to AI agents, with those agents working under the same security, auditing and access controls that already govern everything else. That's important because one of the biggest risks with AI agents is that they end up with broader access than intended, or that every new tool adds another layer of permissions to manage. Keeping agents inside the existing controls means they can only see and do what the organisation already allows, with every action recorded in the same audit trail, which is exactly what regulated customers need to be able to show. Around 110 customers are in early access, with more than half already using the AI vector search capability InterSystems added in 2024.

One of the more interesting facts of the day was around data scale. Epic's production systems are currently rated at 240m database operations per second, a huge number, but this compares against close to 2bn that InterSystems says it has run in the lab. Epic expects its load to double in three years and quadruple in six as AI changes the way its users work. For any organisation planning for AI at scale, it really shows how much additional demand AI puts on the systems underneath it, well beyond the cost of the models themselves. Platforms that can't scale will hit performance and cost walls as agent usage grows, and InterSystems has positioned itself as one of the few suppliers able to handle that scale of workload.

In a separate briefing with us, Fried put that trend at the centre of InterSystems' opportunity, arguing that agents are far more data-intensive than people, and that whilst building an AI application is relatively easy, integrating it with everything around it is much harder. That is where InterSystems wants to sit, as a trustworthy platform on which to build AI rather than simply a database that AI happens to use.

A bigger role in managed services

Peter Cutts, who runs managed services and SaaS operations, made the case for letting InterSystems run the software as well as sell it. InterSystems has hosted customer systems in the UK for more than a decade, running services across pairs of separate data centres so that one can take over if the other fails, and holds the top rating under the NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit, the annual assessment any organisation handling NHS patient data must complete. The underlying positioning is about keeping customers current, since new AI features only reach those running the latest versions. Monthly maintenance updates will be introduced from next year, alongside AI-assisted upgrades that carry existing customisations forward into new versions. This is designed to make staying up to date far easier. Commercially, it also moves InterSystems towards more recurring revenue and a closer, ongoing relationship with its customers.

Putting AI to work in-house

Perhaps the most credible part of InterSystems' AI pitch though was the activity inside its own organisation. Nikolai Mitchko, Director of AI Enablement, described how the company now uses

AI to match similar support cases across more than 80 countries, summarising cases so nothing is lost when they move between engineers, and flagging urgent issues. In one example, a bug that had resisted reproduction for weeks was resolved in about an hour by an agentic coding tool running an internally hosted frontier model. Mitchko's team is measured on customer outcomes rather than models shipped, or as he put it, there is no "token-maxing leaderboard".

Lessons from the VA and the NHS

InterSystems partner **Ready Computing** offered a clear illustration of what InterSystems technology can do at national scale. CEO Michael LaRocca walked through its work with the US Department of Veterans Affairs, connecting more than 130 instances of the VA's own EHR across 170 hospitals for 11.5m active veterans.

InterSystems framed the session around what it would take to deliver a single patient record for England, which, given it already provides many of England's regional shared care records, would be one of the largest opportunities in front of it, though any such programme still looks some way off. Unlike the VA, a single federal organisation, the NHS spans dozens of integrated care boards and hundreds of trusts, and the biggest barriers are likely to be consent and governance rather than technology, particularly given the NHS's history with failed national data programmes.

The same pattern showed up at a local level. UK healthcare integration specialist **Integrella** described Transfer of Care, a system built on InterSystems' Health Connect Cloud, which sends patient details from London Ambulance Service crews to emergency departments whilst the ambulance is still on the road, and is now around 45% rolled out across London. The data involved is only a handful of structured fields, yet an earlier attempt broke down because the ambulance service feared it would be "weaponised" against it in performance discussions, a reminder that in the NHS the technology is rarely the hardest part.

Startups to watch

InterSystems also showcased four companies from its digital health startup incubator:

Aegis Trace, a six-month-old London business, captures each AI decision, strips out personal data and checks it against the applicable regulations, before sealing it as a signed, timestamped record that a regulator can verify years later. It's part of the FCA's AI sandbox, is raising a £3m seed round and is selling through partners including InterSystems and wealth management software provider Objectway.

Whyze Health builds real-world evidence datasets for life sciences, bringing together clinical, claims, patient-reported and device data around individual patient journeys, and is running proofs of concept in the US whilst expanding across Europe.

SurgeryAI, led by former NHS nurse Natalie Cooke, is using five years of NHS theatre data to predict how long operations will take and build schedules that balance clinical priority, waiting time and theatre capacity. It has signed its first NHS contract and is about to go live.

Directed Systems makes FDA-cleared software that helps clinicians manage blood pressure and circulation during surgery and intensive care. Notably for a UK company, its first paying customer is in Texas, and it is now looking for a route into the NHS.

Can InterSystems turn data at scale into AI growth?

In many respects InterSystems is right that without a strong data foundation it is almost impossible to get real value from AI, though data alone won't win the argument. The reality is that value will

come from both the data and the models, and the suppliers best placed to benefit will be those that can combine strong AI capability with deep domain and vertical expertise, whilst enabling organisations' proprietary data to be used effectively and safely. That combination is what AI buyers in regulated sectors such as healthcare and financial services will increasingly be paying for, and it is where InterSystems' decades of experience working with complex, sensitive data gives it an advantage over many of its peers.

Our view is that InterSystems has the positioning right. The product capability Fried outlined is substantial, particularly AI Hub's approach to bringing agents inside the security and audit controls customers already rely on. It also appears to have the right mindset, with a measured approach to bringing its AI Hub to market, ensuring it is working in production before releasing more widely. Its partner and startup ecosystem is a further strength, giving InterSystems routes into innovation it would struggle to build alone.

Two further opportunities stand out. The first, as with many suppliers, is taking its own AI learnings out to customers, since the work Mitchko's team has done across support, testing and engineering is exactly the kind of practical experience organisations are looking for as they try to move AI beyond the pilot stage. The second is supporting data at scale. The headroom InterSystems is building with Epic has plenty of legs beyond healthcare, as agentic AI drives data volumes and transaction loads sharply higher across financial services, supply chain and other data-intensive sectors.

There are some areas for caution, though. Its AI Hub remains in early access, and the evidence for its broader agentic capabilities is still largely anecdotal. The bigger challenge may be pace, with the hyperscalers and large data platform vendors moving quickly and spending heavily on agentic AI. InterSystems' deliberate, governance-first approach is a strength in regulated industries, but it risks being outpaced if those rivals close the gap on trust and integration.

InterSystems also needs to raise its profile. It is well known within the health sector, but much less so as a data interoperability and AI platform, and less still outside healthcare. Over the next twelve months, we will be watching if its new AI Hub moves into production with named customers, whether AI capabilities in IntelliCare and IRIS data platform translate into measurable customer outcomes and revenue growth, and whether its AI capabilities start to generate further UK reference customers beyond health. Progress on those fronts would give the market much firmer evidence that InterSystems' AI story is as strong as its data foundations.

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