Transcript:

Isaiah Nathaniel: Never let anyone beat you giving. Never let anyone beat you loving. Never let anyone beat you at believing. And finally, never let anyone beat you serving.

Jason Lopez: That's obviously a spiritual insight. But Isaiah Nathaniel has a double meaning here. It's also about the role of IT.

Isaiah Nathaniel: You're hitting a nerve. I come from a long line of preachers as I told you my first time, but here we are.

I am an on-prem guy.

Jason Lopez: Isaiah Nathaniel is a CIO. He works for, or as he would mean it, serves Delaware Valley Community Health, a hospital that offers medical, dental and behavioral health services in nine locations around Philadelphia. They're noted for focusing on accessibility and affordability, regardless of a patient's ability to pay. And that's something which informs Nathaniel's work leading his IT organization. He may be an on-prem guy.

Isaiah Nathaniel: But there is flexibility in the cloud if you do it the proper way. So for us, it's really being able to be flexible to scale at the drop of a dime based upon the business vision or the business need, but then also scale back.

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Jason Lopez: So he says if you can afford it, you can throw things into a public cloud. But his experience has shown him, it's not fiscally responsible to operate with a blank check.

Isaiah Nathaniel: Any fiscally responsible CIO would say that's not the way that we want to conduct our hierarchy of our business unit. And so for me, it's okay, let's dip my toe in the water, but let's also make sure it's fiscally responsible because waste is something that I don't like because waste takes away from patient care. It takes away from staff retention. It takes away from the ability to grow. And particularly in the non-profit space, you're looking at that bottom line to be able to say any extra spend really does take away from truly good quality patient care, patient experience, and then staff retention, relationship, and ability to serve who we need to serve.

Isaiah Nathaniel: Nutanix saved my organization by having that infrastructure.

Jason Lopez: The pandemic forced some profound changes in the way many businesses run. Spectator sports and movie theaters basically had to shut down. Restaurants had to drop everything and shift to takeout. And it seems everyone else met online via video. And in that idea, just think of how the demand for digital services affected IT. There was an accelerated shift to remote work, forcing IT departments to quickly adapt their infrastructure. Companies on a 5 year digital transformation plan suddenly recalibrated to do it in a year or two, and budgeting went back to the drawing board. Cybersecurity and disaster recovery efforts got amped up, and automation rollouts got pushed forward. Vendors like Nutanix were key, Nathaniel says, because he had to rely more on cloud services, needing more IT agility and scalability in the Delaware Valley Community Health IT environment.

Isaiah Nathaniel: Before, we couldn't control a lot of the things that were happening. You just had this sense of angst because you did not know what was coming next.

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Jason Lopez: But in looking back at the years of the pandemic, he says a lot of things he and his team launched worked and much has stayed.

Isaiah Nathaniel: Now we can say, all right, we know where we are. We know where everything can possibly be, not only from just a personnel perspective but also from an infrastructure perspective. So we can say, hey, I know where this workload is. I know if I need to migrate this workload, I can do the same thing with one simple click. But then also from a security perspective, using products like Nutanix Flow that we instituted after the pandemic started and saying, "hey, now that we're stable, let's get more stable. Let's take our scalability and be able to deliver workloads where we want them to be, but also secure them so that they aren't impacting other workloads that need the productivity that we needed to have."

Jason Lopez: There's a balancing act he needs to do, between on-prem and the cloud, hands on and automation, and maintaining flexibility... which he refers to as enabling.

Isaiah Nathaniel: Enabling means actually not being the no people, saying, here's a great idea. Give me a good use case. Make sure it's secure. Bring it in the environment. We have the scalability because of our infrastructure to be able to test things out from a development perspective. And if it goes to market, so be it. And then we'll go back to the whole wheel of innovation from there. I call it the scalability because I can pick my flavor of the day or flavor of the week because there's a new app popping up literally every minute. And it's so fun because I like the development that's happening. I like the ingenuity. I like the innovation that's coming out of these things. It's about where's the business case? Where's my business need? And then we'll throw an application potentially into it or add to one that already exists.

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Jason Lopez: We've been talking a lot about healthcare IT here on Tech Barometer over the past year and privacy and security just can't be emphasized enough. If you ever find yourself working in healthcare IT, it's going to be ever present at the top of your to-do list.

Isaiah Nathaniel: When we look at legislation like the 21st Century Cures Act and how that impacts data at the point of care for the patients being really truly in charge of their information, my data is no longer four walls sustainable. It actually is beyond my four walls. And so for me, it's make sure that, one, at rest it's properly secured. But then in transmission, it's extra secure so that when the patient gets it or the referring hospital and or specialty gets it, they can also say at that point it was secure. Your infrastructure internal to that, under that firewall, under that brick, is where the special sauce is. But I can at least say, CIO to CIO, "hey, you can trust my data."

Jason Lopez: We started this report with Isaiah Nathaniel recounting a spiritual guide. It's how he thinks about his role as the CIO of Delaware Valley Community Health. But it's a lesson he learned from his uncle, Reverend Herbert Lusk II, who died in 2022. In the 1970s, Lusk was a professional football player who played for the Philadelphia Eagles under coach Dick Vermeil.

Isaiah Nathaniel: He was part of the team that went to the Super Bowl against the Raiders. He told Dick Vermeil, I'm only going to play three years, and then I'm going to go into the ministry. I've got a calling on my life. He was getting ready to be the lead running back, brand new contract, and he followed his calling. And that calling took him to North Philadelphia. North Philadelphia was depleted in the 80s. It was one of the worst urban areas in the country. And he took a church that had less than $5 in the bank account and over $500,000 in structural damage. Forty two years later, he rebuilt the church, over 1,000 members, welcomed three presidents, built the first welfare to work program in the country, and he left a lasting legacy. And to make this even more poignant, where the church is, is actually across the street from my home office. So his words to all of us as his children, his nephews, nieces, were these four principles. Never let anyone beat you giving. Never let anyone beat you loving. Never let anyone beat you believing. And finally, never let anyone beat you serving. When you talk about moments like that, when you lose such a powerful figure, I get up every day with those four principles. And my job is to serve my patients through access of technology and give them what they deserve.

Jason Lopez: Isaiah Nathaniel is the Vice President and Chief Information Officer for Delaware Valley Community Health in Philadelphia. This is the Tech Barometer podcast and we're delighted to bring you these profiles of people in tech who are doing remarkable things. If you like what we do here, check out more stories both podcast and text pieces at the theforecastbynutanix.com. I'm Jason Lopez, thank you for listening.