

Depaul UK:
**Giving everyone a
place to call home**



CHALLENGE

Depaul UK—a charity that provides vital and life changing accommodations and services to homeless youth across the United Kingdom—is committed to giving its approximately 280 employees the resources and tools they need to advance the organization’s mission.

Depaul UK identified three primary opportunities to boost productivity.

- **Reducing the organization’s reliance on manual processes.** Only 27% of Depaul’s workers believed the organization offered an optimal digital workplace and the processes necessary to work effectively and efficiently. Doing away with manual processes, along with multiple, fragmented applications and systems would free employees to spend more time serving the homeless.
- **Creating a technology environment that was fit for purpose.** 61% of Depaul employees cited poor Internet connections and inadequate remote access as their biggest obstacle to work performance. The organization’s legacy technology, tools, applications and devices made it difficult for users to work from home and inhibited flexibility for the many mobile workers providing direct services to clients.
- **Building an environment that enabled better collaboration.** Depaul has multiple office locations, as well as site-specific projects and services. The charity’s network of distributed offices necessitated virtual collaboration. However, the existing technology environment was not fully geared to support this. For that reason, a standardized, intuitive collaboration toolset was considered a priority.

After gaining a detailed understanding of Depaul’s objectives and working environment, Accenture confirmed that pursuing these opportunities would boost productivity. It also added two more opportunities to the mix: optimizing the utilization of Depaul’s physical space and strengthening knowledge management capabilities. These initiatives would further enable Depaul’s staff to fulfill the organization’s mission.



WHAT ACCENTURE DID

Depaul and Accenture collaborated to assess the workplace and develop a subsequent strategy and roadmap. The comprehensive nature of the workplace assessment and recommendations, based on ~ 20 hours of interviews and joint working sessions, enabled the team to present a plan uniquely tailored to Depaul's environment and workplace challenges. The joint team followed a phased approach.

CRYSTALIZING THE VISION

The team created a workplace vision and mission for the transformation that would serve as the strategic tagline and reference point for future workplace decisions. Ten visioning sessions with key stakeholders and a detailed assessment of current ways of working were key inputs to the vision statement that became the project's North Star: **"Reducing organizational inefficiencies to create a more productive and efficient workforce that supports Depaul's agenda to provide everyone with a place to call home."**

UNDERSTANDING THE WORKFORCE

Next, the team set out to understand the workforce's current ways of working. Interviews and surveys with employees and stakeholders from across the organization were used to define six workplace personas—each with its own workplace requirements and pain points. The personas were fictitious representations of Depaul's various user types. For example, the "Client Interface" persona depicted Depaul workers who spent most of their time engaging with vulnerable populations outside the office. The "Enabler" represented a desk-based Depaul worker who provided support to other Depaul teams. The creation of these personas allowed the team to tailor the workplace recommendations and roadmap to best suit the needs of all employees and create the best workplace experience.

CONDUCTING ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

The team conducted 6 focus groups to engage a broader employee base, validate the personas, and identify additional attitudes, themes and pain points. This due diligence exercise confirmed Depaul's key opportunity areas: fit-for-purpose technology, collaboration tools, streamlined and optimized processes, better utilization of space, and improved knowledge management.

BUILDING THE PROGRAM OF CHANGE

In the final phase of work, the team presented recommendations and a high-level roadmap. Based on the comprehensive assessment of workforce needs and pain points, Depaul received 18 specific recommendations for achieving its vision. All recommendations were impact-assessed against existing and pipeline projects/commitments and sequenced over a two-year roadmap to maximize adoption and effectiveness.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The workplace-transformation project was designed with one goal: to help Depaul better carry out its vital mission. The recommendations and roadmap addressed the workplace challenges head on.

If implemented, the suggested recommendations will empower Depaul's people to be self-enabled, self-sufficient and more productive in their jobs. Automation and new cloud-based collaboration tools are ushering in a new culture of inclusivity and knowledge sharing, potentially freeing personnel to spend more time serving homeless youth. Equally important, the recommended changes will create a new work environment that will help Depaul attract and retain a more efficient and flexible workforce and support better work-life balance for employees.

VALUE DELIVERED

In just three months, Depaul and Accenture completed the comprehensive workplace assessment, identified the workforce's main pain points, and developed an actionable plan for moving forward. The team ultimately made 18 recommendations, which fell broadly into five categories:

- **Corporate applications.** There's a tremendous opportunity for Depaul to make better use of its existing platforms and the core functionality of existing applications to create a cloud-based IT hub for people and services. The benefits include increased collaboration and efficiency.
- **End-user computing.** To achieve better security, greater flexibility and more consistent employee experiences, it was recommended that Depaul adopt a clear strategy for distributing and refreshing employee devices, laptops and accessories. The team also recommended upgrading the organization to Microsoft Windows 10 operating system and utilizing a single platform for asset management.
- **Core platform.** The team recommended that Depaul review and revise its content-management strategy for its existing infrastructure, assess the stability and reliability of its existing WiFi network, and implement Office 365 licenses (along with system training). These changes would improve employee's digital dexterity, introduce best practices in the workplace, and drive greater workplace efficiencies.
- **Telephony.** Given that many of Depaul's employees spend considerable time out of the office delivering hands-on services to vulnerable populations, it was recommended that the organization distribute corporate smart phones, assess its telephony capabilities, and standardize services on the Microsoft Teams platform. These steps would help ensure that non-office employees felt like they were part of the Depaul team and encourage onsite/offsite collaboration.
- **Space.** Depaul's physical workspaces were not optimized for the types of work taking place in its offices. To enhance employee flexibility and enable activity-based working, the team recommended that the organization upgrade and standardize its meeting room technology, develop private and quiet spaces, and implement hot-desking and desk-booking systems.





VALUE DELIVERED

“A review of the way we communicate and collaborate was well overdue, both to respond to the feedback from our staff and to ensure the effective delivery of services internally and to our beneficiaries. Although we had clarity on what we wanted to achieve, we didn’t know where to begin so Accenture took us on a journey from crystallizing our vision through to developing detailed recommendations and a roadmap for their delivery. They continue to support us as we implement these recommendations across the organisation.

Despite the technological emphasis of the project, the Team at Accenture were mindful of the complexities of what is a significant organizational change project. They are a pleasure to work with which has helped to keep our internal team engaged.

Although the project was not complete at the start of the outbreak in March 2020, the progress to date helped us enormously with the transition to remote working due to Covid-19. Accenture’s agility has also ensured that our work with them can continue safely”

After reviewing the recommendations in detail, Depaul’s leaders quickly sprang into action. The organization has upgraded its remote desktop and is now in the process of implementing Microsoft Teams and deploying Office 365 across the organization. The charity is also developing a new physical workplace strategy that involves turning its central London office into a collaboration space (rather than a traditional desk-based office) and enable all employees to work from home unless they have in-person meetings.

These changes, and others yet to come, will help ensure that Depaul will be providing its vitally important services for years to come.

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