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Accenture helps the Alzheimer's Association develop a location management strategy, business case and service to help people with Alzheimer's remain active and safe at home longer

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's disease care, support and research. Through its national offices in Chicago and Washington, DC, and in collaboration with more than 70 chapters around the country, the donor-supported organization provides information and support services to all those affected by the disease, advocates for policy change and research funding, and advances research toward prevention, treatment and cure.

Business challenge

Currently, more than five million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, a progressive and fatal brain disease, and that number is projected to soar to as many as 16 million by 2050. The disease—which destroys brain cells, causing memory loss and severe problems with cognition and behavior—is the seventh-leading cause of death in the United States.

Because of the disorientation and memory loss that accompanies Alzheimer's, people with the disease can easily become lost when they wander away from their homes or care centers. "Wandering" is a phenomenon that affects 60 percent of all Alzheimer's sufferers. Of those individuals not found within 24 hours, up to half can suffer serious injury or die. Understandably, wandering is a primary concern for family members and caregivers. It is also a primary focus for the Alzheimer's Association, which is committed to helping individuals with Alzheimer's age safely at home as long as possible.

To help deliver on that mission, the Association established the MedicAlert + Safe Return™ program—a low-cost, low-tech service aimed at helping to locate individuals who wandered. Persons enrolled in the program, which continues to be offered, receive an identification bracelet that contains a toll-free telephone number for the Alzheimer Association's 24/7/365

call center. Anyone finding the lost person calls that number and receives immediate assistance.

While the Safe Return program had provided effective, life-saving services for 15 years, the Association wanted to capitalize on new technology to provide a service that would enable families to proactively locate the person with Alzheimer's, thereby reducing stress and promoting independence. It was particularly interested in understanding how new technology products might be applied to limit and manage the incidents of wandering.

Recognizing that it would benefit from outside help, the Association issued a request for proposals (RFP). Its intention was to select a company that could partner with the Association to deliver the most suitable, technology-enabled tracking product. Accenture responded to the RFP. It did not, however, propose a technical solution. Rather, it suggested that the Alzheimer's Association should first conduct a market analysis and a feasibility study to not only ensure that an appropriate, market-ready technical solution was available, but also to assess whether such a solution would meet the current and future needs of families and caregivers over the course of the disease. Importantly, these assessments could also be used to help shape a holistic vision of what the Association wanted the next-generation MedicAlert + Safe Return program to be.

The Association agreed this approach made sense and Accenture was best positioned to lead the feasibility study and visioning efforts. Several factors influenced the Association's decision, including Accenture's deep understanding of tracking and tracing technologies and their potential applications, its research-based insights into the healthcare marketplace, and its team members' personal experiences with friends and family members coping with Alzheimer's.

How Accenture helped

The Accenture team—which comprised management consulting and technology consulting professionals highly skilled in delivering innovative solutions to public sector, health and life sciences organizations, as well as resources from the Accenture Technology Labs (Accenture's technology R&D organization)—worked closely with the Alzheimer's Association to understand and synthesize marketplace changes and identify the technology solutions that could best enable an improved Safe Return program. The feasibility study examined two important factors:

- **Market needs:** Accenture worked side-by-side with the Association to examine the marketplace realities that were shaping the nature of care among Alzheimer's sufferers. This study revealed that the group most interested in technology-enabled wandering solutions were child caregivers of parents suffering from early-to-moderate-stage Alzheimer's. Adult children—who often had families of their own or lived far away—sought products that would allow them to be "proactively aware" of their parents' activities and enable them to deliver more effective care giving, even from a distance. Most important was a solution that would allow their parents to remain independent for as long as possible.
- **Technology readiness:** Accenture's assessment of electronic tracking devices that could improve home care of the elderly revealed that off-the-shelf technology products failed to meet the demands of child caregivers. While promising location-management technologies and services were on the horizon, existing technology products were either too costly or too invasive and inappropriate for in-home use. Accenture cautioned the Alzheimer's Association from entering the market with one of the existing products, only to have to withdraw later due to poor performance or lack of customer uptake.

Armed with these assessments, the joint Alzheimer's Association and Accenture team developed "Aging Safely," a long-term vision for how the Alzheimer's Association could help those living with the disease be more independent and engage with families more effectively to improve care. The vision—supported by Accenture's competitive product assessment, customer segmentation, various use-case scenarios, evaluation of primary research, and market testing of potential product concepts—was accompanied by a prioritized list of recommendations for the Alzheimer's Association's CEO and Board of Directors to consider as they worked to further the Association's commitment to advancing effective care practices.

The Alzheimer's Association kept a close and patient eye on the device market. Four years after the creation of the Aging Safely vision, the Association believed new electronic tracking solutions were mature enough (and cost-effective enough) to meet the needs of the target market as outlined in Accenture's previous study.

With the technology and core solution components now available, the Alzheimer's Association faced a new challenge: determining the right business model to bring this type of innovative technology solution to market. Once again, the Association turned to Accenture. According to Nancy Cullen, senior director of Corporate Initiatives and Business Development at the Alzheimer's Association, "Accenture was instrumental in helping us have an even greater impact on people living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers. When it came time to build the specific business case for deployment, we were confident Accenture would bring the industry knowledge, strategic insights and technical expertise that had been so beneficial before."

Resources from Accenture's nonprofit industry group and the Accenture Technology Labs worked with the Alzheimer's Association and Community

Wealth Ventures (a management consulting company specializing in services for nonprofits), to examine three business model alternatives. These alternatives would have the Alzheimer's Association either: create a new venture and serve as the primary business owner of the tracking tool/service; enter into a transactional cause marketing relationship with product and service providers; or license its brand to the selected product and service providers who met key quality criteria. In addition to identifying these options, Accenture conducted market research and benchmarking analysis, and estimated the costs and revenues associated with each. Based on the resulting business cases, the Association determined that it would enter into a hybrid of a licensing and co-marketing relationship for the core tracking service and a cause-marketing model for compatible product and service providers.

High performance delivered

The Alzheimer's Association has recognized that its incorporation as a not-for-profit does not preclude it from adopting sophisticated business practices and strategies. Accenture's research and experience supports this business perspective and shows that private-sector practices and collaborative business models can help nonprofits use their resources more effectively, affect their communities more positively, and achieve sustainable results that drive high performance.

By teaming with Accenture, the Alzheimer's Association benefited from the type of world-class management consulting skills more commonly applied in the for-profit community. Through its careful analysis of market conditions, technologies and business models, Accenture helped the Association not only establish a vision for enhanced service, but also bring that vision to life with a solid business case for a next-generation tracking and monitoring solution. Based on this strategic front-end work, the Alzheimer's

Association launched Comfort Zone™, powered by Omnilink, in October 2009.

Comfort Zone marks the first comprehensive location management system designed specifically for Alzheimer's patients and caregivers. The custom-designed monitoring solution, which the Alzheimer's Association has brought to market through licensing arrangements with several industry partners, is based on Omnilink's advanced location-tracking platform. The solution's Web-based technology offers a number of features identified as important by Accenture's initial market assessment, including:

- The option for personal choice in a solution for the family impacted by the disease
- The ability for caregivers to designate "comfort zones"
- The ability for caregivers to receive automatic alerts if these comfort zones were breached
- Access to a monitoring application that can work on any type of device and network

Comfort Zone proactively communicates the location of the wandering person within two to 30 minutes, based on the family's selected service plan. The Comfort Zone monitoring center can also provide emergency responders information to help ensure that people are found as quickly as possible.

In recognition of its contributions to this effort over the years, Accenture was recently awarded the Alzheimer's Association's 2009 Mission Mover Award. According to Ms. Cullen, "Throughout our efforts to enable people with Alzheimer's to live more independently and provide some piece of mind for their caregivers, Accenture has been an instrumental partner. They brought the business skills and analytical capabilities needed and demonstrated a deep personal commitment to our cause every step of the way."

Statistics about Alzheimer's sufferers obtained from: <http://www.alz.org>.

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—Nancy Cullen,
Senior Director of
Corporate Initiatives
and Business
Development,
Alzheimer's Association

About Accenture Nonprofit

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About Accenture's Health Industry Practice

Accenture's health service group provides innovative solutions to both the private and public sectors of the health care industry, including integrated health care providers, health insurers, managed care organizations and public health organizations. The company has thousands of resources dedicated to helping organizations in the health industry achieve and sustain high performance.

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