



# ACCENTURE POWERFUL MINDS

## PODCAST EPISODE 3

### AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

#### **Mental Health and Tech: finding the balance**

**Alex**

Welcome to the Accenture Powerful Minds podcast series. I'm Alex, a Senior Manager at Accenture, and I'm here with Lakhy, a first-year Apprentice, and Aaron, an Analyst. We'll be chatting all about the relationship between mental health and technology; it's a meaty topic but essential for us to keep this conversation going. Let's get into the first question. So how can we leverage technology to support mental health? Lakhy do you want to start us off?

**Lakhy**

I've seen a lot of apps online that are really tailored towards helping people sleep, helping people deal with anxiety, that sort of technology where people are speaking to you and meditation techniques and teaching you how to handle stress and work life or whatever you're handling, I think that type of technology is really good.

**Alex**

Yeah sure. What about yourself Aaron?

**Aaron**

Yeah, I think we live in pretty extraordinary times, you know there's so much variety in technology on the market today like Lakhy was saying the breadth of apps available, we've got options like artificial intelligence, so the rise of

chat bots, helping people with anxiety and things like that. You've got things on the market like VR training for example, so being able to immerse yourself in environments where actually it may invoke some discomfort and doing that in a controlled setting can be quite powerful. I think we have a tremendous amount of choice within the technology market at the moment. It's how we leverage those new technologies which I think is really exciting.

**Alex**

Yeah I think it's a really good point. I think personal experience I'd always been slightly on the fence around the use of technology when it came to mental health and I think sometimes because people can use technology in a way that perhaps isn't good for their mental health. It can keep people up too long getting caught in that constant scroll that people use, but at the same time I found it really useful myself. My wife and I laugh regularly that we use one of the apps that have rain sounds and it's a really good way of focusing the mind on a sound as you're trying to get to sleep avoiding that constant thought. We often joke that it seems to be raining again tonight, but it's a lovely way of using a really simple technology to help focus the mind and be able to get that improved level of sleep.

I think technology can help you focus but it can also be a distraction, and I think one of the things we sometimes need to be more disciplined around is using some of the functionality that we have in technology. Like I know for myself personally that when I get to a



certain time in the evening I like to turn all my notifications off, because I don't want to be pinged by emails, I don't want to be constantly disrupted because it doesn't allow me to be present and enjoy the moment.

What do you think a healthy relationship looks like with social media?

### **Lakhy**

Knowing people my age and how obsessed they are with social media and having all the apps like Instagram, Snapchat, and I think a healthy relationship is not dwelling on the little things. Because social media isn't the most healthy place because you have random people, trolls online that really do impact people's mental health so a healthy relationship is don't focus on the little things. I think that's the one thing young people find really hard, or in school it's a lot of "what do people think of me, why am I like this, why is this person like this, why am I not like that" – and social media just adds to that, because then if you experience it in school you can experience it at home when you think you're safe and you're not going to hear those things, so when you're at home hearing it constantly that's an issue.

### **Alex**

So you actually end up not having any rest from it so it's another way of being constantly on, which may not be helpful. What are your thoughts Aaron?

### **Aaron**

We live in a society where we have so much technology around us that actually even when you're at home supposedly relaxing, and I'm talking from experience, I might be in bed still scrolling through and I think we then start to live in a world where we start comparing with other people. I do it, we all do it, where you'll look through and you'll think I wish I looked a little bit like that, or I wish I was on a nice holiday like that and then you start thinking that people are living in these great worlds, these sort of super mega rich people and you start putting yourself down, and I think that can lead to a culture resulting in things like depression and anxiety and things like that where you are constantly

comparing.

### **Alex**

One of the interesting areas I found is not having grown up with the social media front being a little bit older I guess. I will read a lot about younger folk who are constantly on social media comparing themselves to others, feeling they're not living up to standards and that impacting their longer-term mental health or their self-esteem, which of course transfers into the workplace and transferring to their personal lives as well. I hope younger folk will consider this sort of mindful use of technology, not a need to use it but using it for intentional purposes and for purposes that are hopefully positive, and I think that again comes down to that art of having some discipline around it. Using it when you want to use it but being able to put it down and not feel that you have to, that you can disengage and I wonder whether that is a difficult thing amongst peers when there is already a set of habits and behaviours that are formed.

### **Aaron**

I think some of the positive sides of technology are often overlooked. Social media can be a really powerful tool for reaching out securing advice from people who may have been in a similar situation. I know talking from personal experience having battled through a mental health problem myself, one of the first steps that I took was to look over social media and see am I alone here or have other people experienced similar things to me, have they been through this and what does that that look like now. A healthy relationship with social media can be used in a positive way like that. I also think it's useful from a networking front. I personally use the platform LinkedIn a lot and I get a lot of advice from people who are maybe further ahead in their career than I may be or vice versa. So within Accenture at the moment I have a reverse mentor and for those who don't know what reverse mentoring is, it's usually with someone more senior than you, so in my case it's with a Managing Director at Accenture and I mentor him and he mentors me, and the only way that came about was through LinkedIn because I thought there was a really interesting post that he was presenting on that. So from that front I



think that's a positive relationship with technology, but of course I appreciate there are many negatives to it is well. So it's just being a bit tech-savvy particularly when there is this new culture of what we're calling sad-shaming now, where people will enter social media or they'll talk on social media around some of their mental health problems, or they'll vent on there, and as a result that leads to people saying some quite negative things and then I think things start to spiral out of control so it's just being savvy with social media platforms.

**Alex**

Yes, it's a really interesting point.

**Aaron**

Alex what do you think around technology and the positive impact that can have on mental and physical health, and general well-being?

**Alex**

There is a lot of good use of technology, we see some brilliant technologies used with companies like BUPA, with Big White Wall, which allows people to voice their concerns in an anonymous way, but it's always listening, it's always on and checking that people are okay. I think there are some wonderful apps that are out there, things like Sleepio, which again is something we offer through Accenture. I certainly know with my experiences at Accenture that we take mental health very very seriously. Five years ago we launched our global mental health allies programme, I certainly know that our programmes have helped me a lot. About three, three and a half years ago I'd had a breakdown myself, I was very well supported by Accenture throughout that period and actually being part of that mental health allies network was a key part of my own recovery, a safe space to be able to talk about life, work, how I was feeling, how I was coping but also provided a platform for that ongoing learning – learning about how to manage stress, learning about how to live a life where you did feel okay not to be okay, but also starting to build that discipline into your life around physical and mental and emotional health, and I think largely social health as well.

**Aaron**

And what are your experiences with our mental health allies programme, what's the culture like from your angle?

**Lakhy**

Mental health in the workplace is very hard to speak about, but that was my before I joined Accenture and before I knew about the mental health scheme. I thought no you've got to constantly be on, constantly be working, if you've got issues don't talk about it just work. But after the year, since last year I've learnt a lot about the training and learnt that it's not bad to talk about it if you're down or something is wrong, if anything it will help you because bottling it up isn't going to help the company, isn't going to help your work, so at the end of the day no one is winning. One of the other things is that we constantly have events where everyone is talking, so everyone actually gets up from behind their desk, everyone gets into the room and speaks about what they've done, if there's anything they need to talk about. And the one thing that everyone is constantly saying is ask someone if they want a drink, and go speak to them.

**Aaron**

That really resonates with me Lakhy actually. When I first joined, I took a slightly distorted view of personally what constituted male success and I thought that actually it was about bottling up mental health problems, it was about trying to be this really confident person on the outside that didn't give any weakness away. The reality is quite different, and this is what I find stands Accenture out a mile. I love coming to work knowing that it is okay to not be okay. It's okay to put your hand up and say actually I'm really struggling today, and one thing I'm really proud of working for this company is that there are so many visible allies which act as that mechanism of support to help people in need. I was recently given the opportunity to speak at International Women's Day and I was really vocal about my experiences overcoming a mental health challenge, and as a result of that I had at least five people email me afterwards saying "oh my



goodness I'm so excited that you've been so honest about that because I too have been struggling". They are five people that no longer feel like they need to suffer in silence. That for me is really powerful. Yes we work in professional services, that doesn't invalidate the fact that we have mental health and I think that is something that we should really shout about.

**Alex**

That's all we've got time for, but if you can't get enough head over to our own social channels to follow the conversation. Don't forget to tune in to the rest of series to find out more about how technology is changing your world. And if you want to work with us and play a part in shaping the future, head to our website to find out where you can apply your powerful mind.

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