ACCENTURE.COM POWERED BY SITECORE

TRANSCRIPT

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JASON WARNKE: Hi, I'm Jason Warnke, part of the Accenture internal IT organization and I'm glad to be here today with Melissa Summers and Ornella Dian. Melissa was responsible for the initial Accenture.com replatform program and Ornella is our current leader in this area. Thanks for joining me today, Melissa and Ornella.

MELISSA SUMMERS: Thanks for having us, Jason.

ORNELLA DIAN: Yes, thank you.

JASON WARNKE: Excellent, great. Well, let's start off with maybe a little bit of the history, going back to the time when this program was kicked off. Can you tell us what led to the decision to overhaul our Accenture.com website?

MELISSA SUMMERS: Sure, Jason. So, I mean, the journey started back in 2014 in terms of a need to replatform. We really wanted to move to an actual content management platform and we were also looking to redo the site from a creative perspective, as well as move to a more consistent message across all of our content. So there were a variety of different reasons to decide to overhaul the platform. But those were some of the overall highlights of why we did it, but we also had performance gaps on the old platform. We were really failing over and moving to a static site very often and we really needed to get to a more digital solution for our external website.

JASON WARNKE: Excellent. There's obviously an array of content management platforms to choose from and there are many more today. What did we choose and why did we ultimately choose that particular platform?

MELISSA SUMMERS: Sure. We decided to go with the Sitecore platform when we chose our new content management system. It was chosen for a variety of reasons. Mostly, it was chosen due its ability to flexibly adapt to a design. We knew that we would be changing designs over time and so, we needed a tool that was going to enable us to do that functional pivot pretty easily. We also needed to address those performance issues that I mentioned earlier and have a stable platform and we were also moving to the cloud. So we needed to be able to support our enterprise at scale.

A couple of the additional reasons that we went with Sitecore were our need to enable some mass publishing and cloning type functionalities. So we needed to be able to provide for consistent pages across a variety of different country sites. So 59 different country sites and in a number of different languages. We also needed to be able to have our performance be much better than the old platform and we really saw paid load performance increase. Finally, we had the requirement to make sure that Accenture.com is always on and highly available. And Sitecore enabled us to have that requirement fulfilled.

JASON WARNKE: Interesting. A lot of really important reasons to choose and ultimately continue to evolve 'cause once you make the choice and you get on the platform, it's a continual process to keep – to ensure that those

things continue to be met, but there are obviously more requirements that come about over time.

A project like that can't be done alone. It's not just an IT thing, it's not just a marketing communications team, but maybe let's talk a little bit about the way that this all came together. What teams from across the organization collaborated to implement the new platform?

ORNELLA DIAN: Yeah, we had tons of teams that came together to basically make this huge overhaul happen. I think at the peak, there was over 300 people across different organizations that came together and collaborated on this huge effort. It was definitely a global team. So when we consider the actual IT delivery team, as well as the stakeholders and the other groups that we had to pull in, it was really worldwide.

Our internal CIO technology team was responsible for the key technology change. That team was located primarily in the Philippines and we also had a core team in Chicago supporting that effort as well. We collaborated with other groups inside of Accenture, a group primarily called Avanade and they are a Microsoft partner that we have internal within Accenture and they helped us really upskill and provide the right expertise that would facilitate the transformational change.

So there was a lot of collaboration around different groups. Our business stakeholders were also worldwide, again with a core team in Chicago. So there was a lot of coordination and all hands-on deck essentially to make this effort happen.

JASON WARNKE: That's a big team and lots of sophisticated collaborating across the globe in terms of bringing the right folks to the table at the right time. You mentioned the Microsoft skills and Avanade bringing that to the table and a very large offshore component partnering with our global marketing communications team. That must have been quite the program.

So let's talk a little bit about how you started out. What was the initial focus of the overhaul and how did this tie into the various releases along the way?

MELISSA SUMMERS: Sure. So the initial focus was really to look at what did we need at a base level in order to get the new site and across all of that new tech stack released and out to the public? So we wanted to get away from the various fail overs that were happening. We also wanted to highlight our new design, as well as we were moving to the cloud. So that was a key priority to get everything in line together. But we needed to make sure that through a really important partnership between the marketing business and IT, that we had what we needed, those must haves in order to operate the business and really show our best face externally. So we identified that key functionality and got that out as quickly as possible. And then we had a number of follow-on releases which really then turned into our current delivery process.

One of the key things here was that we were doing a massive conversion of content and that conversion was not just move page one on one CMS to another CMS. It was transforming that content into our new creative design. So it was really a huge lift and that partnership between marketing and IT was amazing to watch as all these pages really came to life in that new design.

JASON WARNKE: Interesting. So you mentioned 2014 was the start of this journey, the replatforming began in 2014. You know, five years ago, right, a lot has changed in that timeframe, a lot of user expectations, our end users on Accenture.com are business users' expectations about what they want the site to do and how they want it to perform. As enhancements and updates arise, such as new design templates and data privacy regulations that were not initially scoped out, as a part of the original build, how do we handle these changes now?

ORNELLA DIAN: Yeah, so our delivery team utilizes a framework called SAFe, so it's Scaled Agile Framework and this really enables us to basically meet all of the business requirements and even any non-business requirements, such as that those things like GDPR or data privacy regulations and fulfill those in a quick and agile manner.

And so, for us, we basically run four program increments a year that is basically a chunk of work that we plan for and commit to and then within each program increment, we are basically delivering sprints within that and our business is able to see changes really in production every month on a monthly basis. And so, we've been really successful in terms of having our stakeholders share the requirements and us actually meet the commitments in a timely manner and release regularly into production.

So, yeah, it's been great for us.

MELISSA SUMMERS: I think it's also been a continued journey with the business here. I mean as we moved into SAFe, they took a much more active role in the process.

ORNELLA DIAN: Agree.

MELISSA SUMMERS: And now have a much better – I think on both sides, we have a much better appreciation for different priorities and how long things take and how well-defined, how when we have something more well-defined, we're able to deliver it that much quickly. It's been really nice to see.

JASON WARNKE: That's great. So then if you translate that better partnership, that more agile approach to delivery and methodology, to the restructuring of the team, etc., how does that then translate to what our users feel on Accenture.com. So now that we've been live for quite some time, what has that led to in terms of the better overall experience for visitors to Accenture.com?

ORNELLA DIAN: Yeah, so it's enabled us to work on business priorities like personalization and then, as Melissa mentioned earlier, we are aligning to a new design and a new, I'll say, UI that was developed in the past year or so. And so, we've been really like over time, over the past few months, we've been realigning our content within that framework to just present a more cohesive and an improved user experience.

For us, the user is not just the external visitor or potential candidate that's coming onto our site, but also our internal users that are creating content and developing the things that we want to share out more broadly. And so, one of the cooler things that we've done lately is we've started to develop self-service framework. So, for example, we have the ability for different groups to create blogs and to self-service publish blogs, so that they're not dependent on long business processes to create the content and then they're able to just push that out at their own speed as they like. And so, that's one of the pivots that we have done just recently and where we see ourselves going in the near future for sure.

JASON WARNKE: That's great. Well, I just want to thank, you, the listener, for tuning into another episode of our Accenture 24/7 Podcast. This was a fascinating discussion on our transition to a new CMS platform which for a brand and company in our size is a, as you've heard, quite the complex process and lots going into the decision on the platform and lots going into the evolution of the platform as time has gone on, really in service of a really great user experience ultimately when our clients and our potential candidates come take a look at Accenture.com.

So I also want to thank Melissa and Ornella for being guests on the show and providing your insights into that terrific journey. So thanks to both of you.

MELISSA SUMMERS: Thanks for having us.

ORNELLA DIAN: Thank you, Jason.

JASON WARNKE: Absolutely. And you can subscribe and share the podcasts with your friends and colleagues by subscribing on any of the podcast platforms and please share it with friends, let them know if they are going through or considering a change to their content management platform, that this is a great story to hear, a great credential to understand. And with that, I want to sign off another episode of Accenture's 24/7 Podcast. I'm Jason Warnke. Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you for joining today's podcast. Be sure to subscribe to the Accenture CIO Podcast Series on iTunes for all episodes.