Experience the difference

How Intelligent Business Services fuel growth and place the user experience at the heart of the enterprise
Across most industries, the last decade has been characterized by a business trend to evolve customer offerings beyond just products to encompass experiences and services.

This has been driven to a large extent by the consumerization of technology, mass availability of data and desire to extend the lifetime value of a customer. Increasingly, consumer purchases are not just driven by price, but also by brand purpose, a differentiated experience, convenience and relevance to consumers’ everyday lives. This has heightened consumers’ expectations of the businesses that serve them.

A similar digital evolution is now occurring in the way that core business functions need to operate. While partially driven by rapidly changing technology and the quick and easy ability to manipulate data, it is also driven by heightened employee expectations. As consumers themselves, employees expect their interactions with core business functions to be as seamless as the experiences they enjoy in their personal lives—ordering a cab from Uber, shopping on Amazon or booking a hotel on Airbnb. Processes hinder this frictionless way of operating erode value rather than unlocking the opportunity for top-line growth and a more human-centered experience across the enterprise.

A new way of thinking is required—one that places the human at the center of a set of experience-led business services.
People are shifting from a “me” to a “we” culture and they want their purchases to reflect the social, environmental and political causes they care about. What does that mean for businesses? They need to radically redesign their business models, adapting to life-centered design...

Until now, human- and user-centered design has often separated people from ecosystems. Now, designers must begin to address people as part of a greater ecosystem...

To successfully make this shift, they’ll need to embrace a broader, more holistic systems mindset. Designing for two sets of values—personal and collective—will be critical.

Fjord Trends 2020, Accenture Interactive
It’s about people, not process

Intelligent Business Services combine an evolved operating model with a radical shift in company culture and mindset to create business value by orchestrating experience-led services that follow the needs of individual users rather than the linear steps of rigid, disconnected business processes.

By adopting a human-centered point of view—as opposed to a process-oriented one—organizations can enhance the value of their business services in the eyes of customers, employees and business partners, and thereby transform performance from good to great, and create a powerful engine for top-line growth and workforce engagement.

To make this happen, business services must evolve in two ways:

1. Operating Model: Companies must adjust their operating model to break down the traditional functional siloes and organizational barriers between the ‘front’ and ‘back’ office. Creating experience-led services requires collaboration across functional teams within the ‘one’ office—from finance, HR and procurement to the supply chain, marketing and sales teams. Functional capabilities remain important, but all must work together to deliver the Intelligent Business Services promise of differentiated and relevant experiences.

2. Culture and mindset: Companies must develop a powerful company culture and mindset based on growth, customer satisfaction, experience and business value, rather than the traditional levers of speed, cost, quality and efficiency, which have defined the evolution of global business services to date (see Figure 1).
Figure 1: Evolution from functional Shared Services to human-centered, experience-based Intelligent Business Services
For example, it’s no longer acceptable to raise three individual service desk requests with HR, IT and Facilities (e.g., for payroll setup, laptop procurement and security pass creation) for each new recruit. In the world of Intelligent Business Services, all functional departments would activate the necessary business processes from a single interaction with the service function, which then orchestrates a sophisticated interdependent set of actions across functions (see Figure 2).

The role of shared services moves from an inward-looking processor of transactional, repeatable and standardized tasks to becoming an outward-looking advocate and champion for delivery of a human-centric experience.

**Figure 2: Moments in employee onboarding**

- **HR**
  - New hire orientation
  - Employee setup
  - Benefits enrollment
  - Payroll setup
  - New hire/job training

- **FINANCE**
  - Cost center mapping
  - Signing authority
  - Expense management

- **PROCUREMENT**
  - Contingent labor vendor
  - Corporate credit card

- **FACILITIES**
  - Building access
  - Security card
  - Health and safety

- **IT**
  - Security profile/role
  - Authority levels
  - Personal computer
  - System access
  - Mobile phone
  - Log-on details

- **ON-SITE**
  - Orientation
  - Uniforms/tools
  - Workplace schedule
  - Site specific programs

**Employee:** I want a smooth and transparent onboarding experience that reaffirms why I chose this company, connects me to my colleagues, and gets me oriented and contributing.

**Hiring Manager:** I need to onboard a new joiner to my team in the most seamless manner.
Four defining characteristics

As an enabler of growth and experience-led services, Intelligent Business Services have four defining characteristics:

- Human-centric, experience-based services
- Digital at the core
- Agile and capable workforce
- Value ecosystem
An operationally focused mindset has historically dominated business process service delivery. However, with Intelligent Business Services, experience-based services are designed and created around deeply understood, specific user needs—or personas and/or mindsets—mimicking the look and feel that an individual has come to expect from their favorite online shopping channel: it’s easy to access, intuitive to use and always available (see Figure 3).

These personas are designed to address the needs of distinct user groups, integrating the necessary business processes that sit behind the most frequent user requests.

Customer Services provide a face and access point for queries coming from retailers, distributors and the organization’s B2B clients, while the Employee Services team orchestrates key employee moments. Supplier Services integrate the needs of a business’s supply chain, while Consumer Services acts as a focal point for end consumers. In each scenario, an experience agent acts as the interface with the individual user, helping them to navigate the necessary functional capabilities needed to resolve the matter at hand. The complex orchestration of business processes across functional disciplines is carried out behind the scenes so that it appears seamless to the user.
Figure 3: Experience Towers for Intelligent Business

Measured and optimized at the service rather than functional level, Intelligent Business Services minimize risk and the likelihood of sub-optimal local delivery, and place the emphasis firmly on a consistent user-centric experience that is intuitive and integrated.

They also simplify the engagement model and provide intelligent services and solutions that are flexible and tailored, while balancing global and local requirements and supporting reliable services from anywhere, 24/7.
Digital at the core

Accenture’s 2019 Technology Vision report highlighted that 94 percent of business executives surveyed had experienced the acceleration of technology innovation in their organization over the last three years. With nearly all organizations prioritizing investments in digital, what began as a differentiating advantage has now become table stakes. But that doesn’t mean organizations don’t face obstacles in this area.

While investment in digital technology is a priority for nearly all businesses, more than half consider their talents’ lack of understanding of digital business models and relevant data analytics, AI and machine learning skills as a major barrier to achieving their objectives. Organizations need to encourage their teams to think of ‘digital’ as more than just technology, considering it an essential ‘way of being’ for the experience economy.

Consider the speed and responsiveness of self-service apps in travel, retail or hospitality. These channel experiences are enabled by flexible customer interfaces that integrate seamlessly with back office systems, and reduce the need for manual intervention or human-to-human contact. In some instances, even customer communications may be carried out by chatbots and digital assistants, powered by AI and machine learning. AI can be used to create experiences that are not just personalized but help us extend our perceptual capabilities, enhancing our vision, extending our understanding, and making us better learners. In short, enhancing the human experience.

The overriding imperative is to enable your people to operate with the speed, ease and convenience that they experience outside of work, and to question anything that stands in the way of this experience-led approach.

Agile and capable workforce

When it comes to talent, it’s clear that recruitment and skills profiles will look radically different in the future. Teams will comprise a range of talents—from data scientists, scenario planners and design thinkers, to specialists in areas such as marketing and R&D—to create the optimal combination of skills and capabilities that will future-proof the organization.

In delivering new experiences and services, the skills required will no longer just be about core finance or HR processes. In addition, the workforce will need HR scenario-planners or finance professionals who are as comfortable with story-telling and scenario planning as they are with crunching the numbers. The breadth of skills required also will be much greater. With automation and smarter machines performing more repetitive, transactional tasks, talent can focus on higher-level creative, descriptive analytical and strategic work. Organizations also will need to have the right digital learning platforms to continue to keep skills relevant within their workforce.

Alongside Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ), organizations should start to consider their teams’ Technical Quotient (TQ) as a core competency. This is about understanding the opportunities that a ‘digital-first’ mindset can unlock by realigning team structures, identifying where the strengths of humans and machines exist, and harnessing the power and scale of the cloud and data analytics so the organization can easily anticipate and respond to changes in user behavior and demand. While this new mindset can unlock growth for the organization, some individuals may not be capable of making the shift. In these cases, organizations need to make some difficult decisions as they re-think and adjust their talent strategies.

Unlike the more siloed functional roles we see today—with a focus on cost improvements to the bottom line—team members in the new world of Intelligent Business Services will share a passion for collaboration, especially as they operate in cross-capability ‘pods.’ These teams will adapt and respond rapidly to solve problems, and collaborate to seize opportunities for top-line growth as they become apparent.
Value ecosystem

Businesses today often don’t have the luxury of sizeable investment to create whole new capabilities. With the ever-changing requirement for new skills and capabilities, organizations struggle to keep skills current and future-proof. In response, they should evaluate their ecosystem to determine which partners can help fill capability gaps and increase their speed to market. Leaders who open their organizations to further, deeper relationship with key partners find that this approach breeds opportunity for joint value creation. In place of a transactional vendor-customer relationship, your partners become a strategic, integrated component of your operating model, invested in your success as much as their own.

Tapping into that ecosystem requires careful assessment and planning, as organizations need to understand what they need to ‘own’ in-house and what can be bought, borrowed or built by others. Organizations need to balance the use of niche providers with those who can scale globally. They also may want to expand their ecosystem to handle non-core areas, such as cybersecurity. As they do, new ways to collaborate across the ecosystem will become increasingly critical, though they must retain governance and decision-making power to maintain control of their destiny.

Accenture research shows 90% of enterprises believe they need to partner closely across the ecosystem to exploit market opportunities.²

²: Accenture competitive agility research for Retail, 2019
An engine for innovation, insight and intelligent experiences

The Intelligent Business Services operating model—orchestrated around specific user needs—draws on services from across various functions to create valuable, intelligent experiences.

This way of operating contrasts with less mature models of business services, where global process owners seek to improve performance by driving process standardization and efficiency across a functional area.

Rather than being scattered across the organization, critical new capabilities are brought together in a global network of innovation studios and digital hubs, which provide a ready pool of deep expertise that can be drawn upon from across the organization as and when needed (see Figure 4).
Figure 4: Inside Intelligent Business Services
Digital Hubs

With the promise of a more human-centric approach, it is vital that technology enables experience and doesn’t confine it. Digital hubs pool the talent needed to design for experience over cost-optimization, bringing the disciplines of platforms, data analytics, cybersecurity and digital communication to the fore. Viewed another way, it’s about user satisfaction over an exclusive focus on SLA compliance.

Given the need to rely on service partners from across the ecosystem, and to protect the integrity of an evermore complex and integrated flow of data and information, specialist hubs for technology platform intergration and cybersecurity become core components of Intelligent Business Services. This expansion in footprint breaks down some of the traditional boundaries between the IT function and the Business Service Center, forcing a more intelligent and collaborative organization.

With data as the lifeblood of decision-making, accessing real-time insights is critical for moving at pace and developing a more intelligent, responsive organization. The Intelligent Business Services organization is the ideal home for pooling talent in advanced analytics, machine-learning and automation technologies into SWAT teams to ensure critical mass and ready skills availability to deliver more personalized services at pace and with agility.

Likewise, the very human-centric premise of experience-led services requires a step-change in the nature of communication typically experienced when interacting with a business services organization. Specialists in digital communications, chatbot engines and customer service offer meaningful human interactions (even where provided by a digital assistant) in real time, as opposed to anonymous email updates that simply inform you of the status of your service desk ticket.

In the end it’s really about digital technologies, data and analytics coming together to drive growth and a human-centric experience.

Innovation Studios

The role of the innovation studio is to look beyond cost optimization and lean processes to focus on human-centric experience services and being a catalyst for growth.

This requires agile pods of multi-disciplinary experts—design thinkers, technical architects, social scientists, platforms experts, business subject matter experts and end users—who are brought together by an Experience Lead—a new role—to work together to innovate and solve for an experience problem. Trained in innovation and agile methods, these blended teams apply rapid test-and-learn methods, incubation techniques and accelerator assets that speed up delivery and scale successful new capabilities, while at the same time creating
a more dynamic, energizing working environment. In doing so, they speed up the shift to an experience-led culture.

Innovation studios need not be in-house teams or physical environments, though many businesses see the benefits of building these capabilities themselves. Tapping into global networks of innovators and ecosystem partners can equally provide the stimulus and disruptive thinking required to improve performance with the user front of mind.

Control Tower

With more partners to orchestrate the delivery of more sophisticated experienced-based services—each of which is reliant on complex sets of real-time data—the requirement for a single, end-to-end view of performance, process compliance and potential risks is only heightened. This is where the Control Tower becomes important.

The Control Tower provides teams across the organization with structured, real-time and tailored reporting and analytics on current and future performance. It has the power to generate analytical insights that help organizations make better and faster decisions, meet service and experience expectations and manage risk.

For the CFO, the Control Tower combines data from across the enterprise and marries it with external marketplace data to identify how outside factors might impact future business performance. This moves the CFO beyond financial reporting to running the enterprise with a view of future risks and growth opportunities.

Elsewhere, the Control Tower can provide an organization’s sales directors with a real-time view of their own region’s performance vis-à-vis all other regions and territories. The lessons and actions arising from this insight are immensely valuable in improving overall business performance within each sales period.

Operations Support

The final, but no less important, component of the Intelligent Business Services center is the operations support unit, which houses the support functions (e.g., recruitment, finance and the team that onboards new services). With the move from a mindset of cost efficiency to one focused on value, experience and growth, the modus operandi for the team providing operational support must also change to accommodate agile methodologies, iterative approaches and new reporting metrics that focus on quality of experience.
What got you here won’t get you there...

Business leaders should see the move to Intelligent Business Services as an opportunity to break out of the straight-jacket of the organizational silos that have characterized global business services for so long. In shifting focus from cost optimization to organizational capability and enterprise growth, huge value can be unlocked from the creation of sophisticated and satisfying user experiences that require agile, more organic, cross-functional teaming.

Challenge established orthodoxies within the C-suite to secure buy-in: After years of process standardization and cost-optimization, colleagues across the C-suite may be forgiven for their skepticism about the evolution of business services to a set of experience-based services. After all, ruthless efficiency and customer-centric experiences are not common bedfellows. So, set yourself an ambitious ‘north star’ that breaks established conventions and opens minds to what is possible. Perhaps that’s something as simple as a self-service app for employees to submit their business expenses, which delivers a user-centered experience and collapses the silos between finance, HR and compliance teams. These proofs-of-concept will demonstrate the innovation and growth that can be unlocked with Intelligent Business Services, and secure the buy-in of your C-suite colleagues.

Nurture a new growth and experience mindset across the enterprise: With a move to an experience-based perspective, an innovation, growth and experience mindset is essential, requiring creativity, agility and close collaboration across multiple functional disciplines. The challenge is to maintain the energy, dynamism and curiosity of teams over the medium to long term, rather than slipping back into more comfortable and established patterns of behaviour. Being ‘digitally savvy’ is as much a cultural change as it is about harnessing data and new technologies to serve the user better. That requires disruptive thinking, a stimulating work environment and new capabilities to stay fresh, agile and living.
Rethink your talent strategy to become future proof: With the need for new skills, new ideas and a new mindset, your talent strategy will need to evolve. This is not only about re-designing the hiring strategy to recruit a more diverse workforce and securing talent with rich data science and design thinking skills; it is also about re-skilling your existing workforce and providing them with the on-demand tools and technology to continuously learn in a digital and agile way. Using your ecosystem partners to access a capable workforce with specific expertise (e.g., cybersecurity) that is in high demand will be imperative to helping Intelligent Business Services remain nimble and relevant to business demands.

Design human-centric experiences using digital technologies: Responsiveness to customer behaviour will only become more critical as the pace of change becomes faster. The user of any given service must be at the heart of everything that we design; involving only process, technology and functional SME’s to transform services is no longer going to be good enough. To drive a real human-centered experience, an array of multi-disciplinary skills is needed, with agile pods of IoT specialists, social scientists, data scientists, design thinkers, business specialists and—crucially—users providing input on how to design for the best possible experience.

Draw on the power of your ecosystem: No one organization can monopolize innovation and stay at the cutting edge—it requires diversity of thought, talent and perspective. Intelligent Business Services organizations will need to draw on an ecosystem of partners to harness the skills, capabilities and innovations that they need to reinvigorate and accelerate the development of their own organization. Ecosystems also are a valuable tool for obtaining access to digital technologies and analytics that will help transform the business. To overlook this is to close one’s mind to the possibilities for growth.


Accenture research shows that nearly 50% of enterprises say their back office is not keeping pace with front-office requirements as they evolve toward an intelligent organization that replaces siloed functions with seamless processes and digital capabilities.3
Make your move, experience the difference

Whether evolving your existing shared services model or jumping straight to Intelligent Business Services, it pays to pilot this new operating model on a small, discrete set of services before embarking on full-scale transformation. While simplicity and ease of interaction are welcome developments for those making use of such services, it takes thoughtful design and careful implementation to integrate a complex set of services in a seamless manner. Taking the necessary time to discover the best approach, pilot this new operating model, nurture a new human-centric, experience-led mindset, and then rapidly scaling to new audiences, will pay dividends in the medium term.

Having made the move to Intelligent Business Services, customers, employees and suppliers will be sure to experience the difference.
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