



CIO 24/7 PODCAST: LIVING SYSTEMS - POWERING FINANCE WITH SAP S/4HANA IN THE CLOUD

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Eli Lambert, SAP Lead for CIO - Accenture

[00:00:00] Our global IT organization mission is to provide that enterprise platform that stays ahead of Accenture's business needs.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Office - Accenture

[00:00:12] Hi, it's Penelope Prett, Accenture's Chief Information Officer. And I'm happy you can join us today as I speak with Andrew Inchley who leads Strategy for Accenture Finance and Eli Lambert, who runs SAP platforms in Accenture CIO. And today we're going to be talking about how Finance and IT work together to make strides in the SAP arena. So we'll start with the foundation of our transformation, SAP and the power of S/4HANA. So, Eli, I know that SAP has been Accenture's ERP provider for the last number of years. How are we leveraging SAP as a platform today?

Eli Lambert, SAP Lead for CIO - Accenture

[00:00:51.9] Thank you, Penelope. You know, our global IT organization mission is to provide that enterprise platform that stays ahead of Accenture's business needs. To do so, we follow three principles. Single global instance is our North Star. Over time, our business has gotten more complex, and it's to the credit of our teams - business, global IT and SAP partner all together. We've demonstrated the flexibility and

agility that we need to meet our business needs at scale. Second, we stay current and we really invest in our SAP platform as an asset. Global IT organization is challenged every day to adopt and deploy new innovation at the speed of business. Moving tests for HANA allows us to tap into that broader spectrum of cloud connected ecosystem services and capabilities, our finance, and the rest of our business needs. And third, we stay secure...always. As part of our overall cloud strategy, CIO has partnered with SAP and Microsoft to be one of the first and largest to run S/4HANA on Azure in the public cloud. Thereby meeting or even exceeding the highest levels of security standards at a fraction of the cost. Penelope, it's these three principles at the core of our global IT enterprise platform strategy, to provide our business the single version of the truth on a secure platform with evolving and expanded capabilities for the future. It's really an incredible, powerful position to be in.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Office - Accenture

[00:02:35.6] So building on that. Andrew, can you talk a little bit about why the one single version of the truth has value for Accenture? And what does it mean for Accenture finance?



Andrew Inchley, Strategy Lead of Finance - Accenture [00:02:47] Thanks, Penelope. Sure. Accenture is a really complex business. We have over half a million employees across 51 countries and over 6000 clients. And yet, despite this complexity and scale, we've got one global finance organization supporting the different countries, the different services and the different leadership teams across the business. We're running consistent finance processes across all of this, explicitly aligned to our business strategy. The fact we've got one version of the truth built on that foundation of Accenture's production with S/4HANA in the cloud gives us the ability to close our books efficiently in six days globally. It gives us the real time information we need for our evolving business with better analytics, enabling improved decision making. And it means we can respond really quickly to new needs, issues or requirements as the business evolves. So in March, for example, as the Covid pandemic started to escalate, we moved within days to implement weekly reporting that tracked key business indicators of the global market level and help give business leadership the confidence to make decisions.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Office - Accenture [00:04:07.5] It's been a powerful story to date, Andrew and as you kind of turn your eyes to the future, how do you expect finance to continue to transform within Accenture and do you have a couple of examples you can share with the audience about using automation or analytics as you move forward?

Andrew Inchley, Strategy Lead of Finance - Accenture [00:04:18] Yes, sure. So in finance, our strategy uses the concept of human plus machine putting digital at the heart of our processes to automate or even eliminate manual tasks. We want to further reduce the effort our people spend on transacting, accounting, controlling, complying and reporting so they instead focus on planning, analyzing and advising the business. In terms of specific examples, automation of key processes is an important area. For example, our billing solution reduced the processing time from days to

minutes and freed up finance resources to focus on more valuable activity and improved our cash flow DSO measure. But then we're running more sophisticated analytics and predictive models within treasury, internal audit, corporate planning just to mention some examples. And our financial dashboards have got analytics they're looking at why results are what they are, not just providing the headline numbers. And, in some cases, even automatically generating the accompanying commentary, enabling our finance teams to focus on driving actions and forward looking outlook, not just on describing historic data.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Office - Accenture [00:05:22.2] And so, Eli, if I can ask you, what do you see as next for SAP within Accenture's IT organization?

Eli Lambert, SAP Lead for CIO - Accenture [00:05:35.7] Perfect. Thank you, Penelope. You know, with SAP as our digital core, we have the ability to leverage future leading-edge capabilities that SAP will continually release along our roadmap. SAP actively invests in the platform, as well as the ecosystem of services that power it. Our global IT teams can select and try out new services and we can adopt those that meet the needs of our business teams. Those business teams, in turn, they get new solutions that improve the way they work, often by gaining better insights, many that Andrew described, that helps his business teams drive for the future. And running our SAP system in cloud allows us to scale at the pace of business not only today, but in the future. Penelope, in a nutshell, what's next for SAP at Accenture is a continuous innovation cycle to evaluate and experiment with these leading capabilities that will positively change the way we all work at Accenture.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Office - Accenture [00:06:46] It's a really interesting story. And when I share it with clients, one of the things that comes up over and over is the level of positive collaboration between Finance and global IT so let me ask you, Andrew, as our internal finance client, what do you think the key



ingredients are to a successful partnership like that?

Andrew Inchley, Strategy Lead of Finance - Accenture [00:06:47.4] It's a great question, Penelope. I think there are probably three things worth calling out. At the start of what we're doing, anything we're doing, we need to have a clear idea on how we'll drive value for the business. This is something we've explicitly put at the heart of our finance strategy and anytime we're talking through potential investments, it's part of the discussion with global IT. In parallel with that, we need the ambition, willingness to think differently, being prepared to reimagine processes, reimagine policies, not just automate what we have today. We see a far greater level of benefits as a result of that willingness to think differently about what we do. And then finally, I talk about strong relationships, not just between global IT and Finance, but also with the other corporate functions within Accenture, making sure that we're solving for the user, for the business as a whole rather than a siloed, functional outcome. And then also about the relationship with external partners, such as SAP. It's something that's been critical to working through issues as they arise.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Office - Accenture [00:07:48.2] Eli, anything you want to add that you know?

Eli Lambert, SAP Lead for CIO - Accenture [00:07:52.6] No, thank you, I completely agree with everything Andrew just shared. A core tenet of our living systems approach is that business and IT alignment. Andrew guides us with the vision and ambition and we apply that

continuous innovation and talent transformation to be the IT partner that Finance needs us to be. We also extend that mindset to the relationship with SAP as a platform provider, as well as Accenture's own SAP practice, really working together as one team. We can break the mold, lead in the market, just like we've done recently with our investment with

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Office - Accenture [00:08:36.7] It's a fascinating and powerful story, guys. And for those of you who want more information, you can look it up on Accenture dot com. I really look forward to working in this partnership and figuring out how to take Accenture to even greater heights in the future. Many thanks to both of you for joining me today.

Andrew Inchley, Strategy Lead of Finance - Accenture [00:08:48.5] It was a pleasure, Penelope. Thank you.

Eli Lambert, SAP Lead for CIO - Accenture [00:08:51] Thank you very much.

Narrator [00:08:53] Thank you for joining today's podcast. Be sure to subscribe to the Accenture CIO podcast series on Apple podcasts or Spotify. Find the full CIO 24/7 podcast series and additional ways to subscribe at Accenture dot com slash CIO podcast.

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