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LIVING SYSTEMS: INTELLIGENT AUTOMATION

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Rahul Maheshwari, Intelligence Operations - Accenture [00:00:00] It's imperative to cultivate an automation first mindset and don't forget change management.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Officer - Accenture [00:00:10] Hi, it's Penelope Prett, Accenture's Chief Information Officer, and I'm glad to be here with you all today with Rich Polumbo and Rahul Maheshwari, who are part of our Intelligence Operations team. Our global I.T. team is driving technology powered business transformation in support of all of Accenture's businesses. And today, we're going to take a look deeper into how we approach automation and our team is going to share some insights with you on what's coming for us in the future. So, Rich, why don't we start with you and talk about how automation is changing how we deliver I.T. in general here at Accenture.

Rich Polumbo, Intelligence Operations - Accenture [00:00:44] Hi, Penelope. Yeah, I'm very happy to be here today and look forward to sharing some insights about the automation work we're doing. Automation is one of our key enablers to help us achieve our DevSecOps vision. In the spirit and building of a culture of 'automate everything,' we really want to enable end to end service ownership and empower teams to be completely self-sufficient. Years ago, when you would talk about automation, it was really about 'what can we do to automate testing?' Or 'what can we do to automate deployment of code to servers?' We really feel that automation will enable us to hit our DevSecOps outcomes of agility, security and quality and really taking automation to the next level. From an agility perspective, we want to have less lead time to market, from a time a story is logged to the time it gets deployed to production. And we want to have more deployments. We want to be able to deploy more often with high confidence that we're not going to cause a problem. We also want to be more secure from start and have preventative scans before a vulnerability even gets close to making it to production, where then we would catch it on a scan and then have to go back and fix it and redeploy it. We think automation can help us catch those from the start before the code makes it out of the code pipeline. And we want to have improved quality. So that goes to having a shorter meantime to restore service and having less change failures. And then, taking all of that together, we think in the end this will also help us be a much more efficient organization and have much more efficient teams, smaller teams managing more services. So, in the end, that's what we're doing with automation, Penelope.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Officer - Accenture [00:02:36] Thanks, Rich. And Rahul, can you share a bit more about our automation journey itself?

Rahul Maheshwari, Intelligence Operations - Accenture [00:02:42] Hello, Penelope. Sure. For us, the road to intelligent automation has

three stages. One, lay a foundational framework. At this stage, we enhance processes according to industry leading practices, improve data quality, eliminate inefficiencies, automate repetitive tasks using rule-based tools and more. At this stage, we use the guiding principles of shift left, meaning we focus on optimization and prevention. Two, spread that option to intelligent automation. Here the focus is to expand using intelligence services, alternative technologies, AI powered intelligent tools, for all possible automation across the board. And the third, create a vision of specialist operations, taking it beyond, exploring ways to deploy highly iterative solutions, using machine learning to predict events and recommend next best actions. Build mature self-learning, self healing capabilities which would minimize human interaction. Staging has helped us to plan, build, enhance and move up the automation journey. Standard platforms, decouple competence and architectural frameworks have helped us to automate faster with minimal investments, less disruption and higher acceptance. So Penelope, here is how we are looking at our automation journey.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Officer - Accenture [00:04:11] It's been a fascinating journey to learn about. Since I joined the group a few months ago, Rahul and I know that there is a lot of material about this. I probably should mention out on Accenture dot com, just search automation case studies or test automation case studies and you can see some of the details that Rahul is talking about. So, Rahul, I know you've been leading a number of these actual automation projects that we've been doing. Can you tell us inside the projects, what's your team been doing? And perhaps more importantly, what kind of results are we seeing as you implement?

Rahul Maheshwari, Intelligence Operations - Accenture [00:04:43] Absolutely, Penelope. Happy to show a few examples. We have been implementing several robotic process automation solutions over a period of time. For instance, we have bots which automate onboarding services and applications to a global monitoring center. Critical applications are centrally monitored and outages are proactively prevented. Next, for our global users, we have introduced about 20 self service tools to use cloud and database services. A simple example is an intelligent virtual agent which provides real-time capabilities to execute ID infrastructure requests, thereby reducing processing time by 90 percent, which is pretty good. Talking about DevSecOps, by integrating controls into the pipeline, we have rolled out security measures covering 60 percent of our external vulnerabilities. Here we catch the issue at the time of coding and the developers inform. So we are teaching our staff to spot security gaps and proactively fix them bringing prevention culture and eliminating delays. This makes us much more secure. Next year, in fact, we plan to increase that coverage to over 90 percent of our volumes. A few examples of the many is what I've talked about.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Officer - Accenture [00:06:12] And as you and I have discussed Rahul, we've certainly learned a few things on the way. What are the best practices when you talk to our clients that you usually share?

Rahul Maheshwari, Intelligence Operations - Accenture [00:06:22] It's been an interesting journey Penelope and I'm happy to share a few things we are learning along the way. Plan! Get started. Encourage a fail fast and redesign culture. Specific to DevSecOps automation as Richard talking about, land to a common platform for managing code and then begin integrating with that platform, replacing manual processes like test, deploy, scan, monitor one after the other. Be bold in this case and make adoption a priority right from the beginning. That's one part of it. And, we know, automation is a journey involving people, process and machines. This evolution reflects a technology trend Accenture calls 'Human + Machines' where workforces are becoming more human plus. It's

important to get the human factor into what we do on automation. Skills! It's imperative to cultivate an automation first mindset and don't forget change management. I would suggest encouraging reskilling and retooling. At the end of the day, people grow with specialized skills.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Officer - Accenture [00:07:40] And Rahul at this point, I'll also mention we take a lot of our key concepts from a publication from our Technology Lead and Chief Technology Officer Paul Daugherty, which is also called "Human + Machine: Reimagining Work in the Age of A.I." So if you're looking for some Sunday reading, that's a good one. So Rich, as you think about everything Rahul reflected on, and as you turn your eyes for your team to the future, what's on your plate? What's on our horizon for the next few months?

Rich Polumbo, Intelligence Operations - Accenture [00:08:09] Yeah. Thanks, Penelope. We have a really exciting few years coming up on the horizon here. So as part of our DevSecOps vision and really in that spirit of 'automate everything,' we want to move up the maturity curve and expand our catalog of automation enablers. So I'll extend on a couple of areas that Rahul touched on. So, for touchless operations, we built a foundation to auto heal infrastructure issues. So, for example, we will auto clean low disk space if we're about to run out before we actually have an issue. And what we'd like to do - and we're planning to do - is expand our auto resolution to other items like clearing blocked cues, restarting servers, removing unhealthy servers, auto scaling as demand comes online and more things like that. We want to expand that catalog, take humans out of the equation and have high quality automated scripts that can get that work done. And then extending on that, we're looking to build machine learning assets where the machine will offer suggested solutions and fixes. We want to use analytics and build machine learning models to predict and prevent issues before they occur, well before they occur. That we feel, Penelope, is going to be a real game changer for us in the future.

Penelope Prett, Chief Information Officer - Accenture [00:09:38] So, Rich and Rahul, thank you very much for the discussion today around automation. And since so much is always happening and changing in this space and we're always sharing more and learning from the market, I look forward to getting you guys together in the future to talk about it again.

Rahul Maheshwari, Intelligence Operations - Accenture [00:09:53] Thanks. Glad to be a part of this great discussion, Penelope.

R**ich Polumbo, Intelligence Operations - Accenture** [00:09:56] Yes. Thank you, Penelope. Great discussion.

Narrator [00:10:00] 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.