Setting up for skilling up:
Fostering innovation through award-winning digital upskilling
CHALLENGE

It’s hard to find a home that doesn’t have a product by German company Henkel on top of the washing machine, under the bathroom sink or on a garage shelf.

The world’s largest producer of adhesive technologies, with Persil and Purex in its laundry business unit to Schwarzkopf, Dial and Right Guard in its beauty care vertical, the company generates over $20 billion in annual revenue. On its journey to secure further growth, Henkel needed to foster innovation.

That’s because people’s relationship to brands is rapidly evolving. Consumers and enterprise customers are no longer content to purchase the same products in perpetuity. Today—and for the foreseeable future—consumers are particularly sensitive to how brands fit into their lifestyle. And with new brands emerging all the time, there is increasing competitive pressure on large, typically fragmented companies—especially those with multiple product categories for both consumers and B2B customers.

The solution for Henkel seemed simple: Put the consumer first.

That’s easier said than done, however, when enticing products are constantly entering the marketplace, with polished packaging and attractive brand philosophies as well as innovative, flexible and fast-moving business models created to disrupt and quickly accumulate market share.

Henkel already had a wealth of resources among its 52,000 employees. But it wanted to enhance its systems to nurture existing talent, pinpoint skills gaps and offer targeted learning programs. By more quickly upskilling its workforce, Henkel could better anticipate customer needs and readily launch new products that engage—and build deeper relationships with—consumer and B2B customer microsegments.
Accenture and Henkel already enjoyed a relationship spanning 10 years, with multiple successful initiatives.

As its vision for a global digital upskilling initiative came into focus, Henkel knew that Accenture would be the ideal partner to help execute it quickly across all business units and functions, globally. So they joined forces to roll out the program.
WHAT ACCENTURE DID

The project moved quickly through four stages:

**Digital Capabilities Assessment**
First, Henkel employees across 10 job families voluntarily participated in an anonymous assessment of their strengths and skills gaps. This garnered a detailed understanding of their current capabilities, plus their aptitude for skills likely to burgeon in the next three to five years. For example, HR staff were assessed for their abilities in sourcing the future workforce, data analytics, and driving the digital employee experience.

**Digital Upskilling**
Once the strengths and skills gaps were identified, the team conceptualized job family-specific learning programs. Two of the digital upskilling programs, provided for approximately 500 IT employees and 1,500 Finance managers, were a combination of selected best practice courses from Accenture Academy and newly created Henkel use cases. This combination, offered in a contemporary learning management system, makes the courses relevant to the participants’ daily job functions.

**Digital Talent Experience**
Next, Accenture and Henkel developed new talent-management processes in a third-party cloud HR system. The enhanced system enabled a new manner of assessing employees’ existing roles and their ambitions; a decoupling of evaluating performance and potential (so more focus could be placed on individuals’ professional development); and more accurate digitizing, tracking and optimizing of the talent lifecycle.

**Digital Talent Sourcing**
Lastly, Accenture and Henkel created a “Recruiter Toolbox” for digital roles within the newly introduced system. Essentially, this established a clearer connection between the technical skills required for a certain role and what recruiters should be looking for on candidates’ CVs. This helped Henkel gain a deeper, company-wide understanding of the digital-talent lifecycle.
PEOPLE AND CULTURE

A corporate transformation of any kind (especially a digital one) often meets resistance.

However, Henkel had a large team of people eager to embrace and advocate the idea of lifelong learning. Better still, Henkel was able to say, “We hear you,” and respond appropriately to employees’ desire for new skills and opportunities.

Through this digital-talent initiative, the company was well positioned to assess, attract, support and retain talent in several job functions and levels across every business unit and region. More importantly, digital upskilling is now a key element of Henkel’s culture and long-term growth plans—not just a momentary answer to a human resources or recruiting issue.

“In a competitive market environment we are now in a position to manage challenges quicker and better,” says Sylvie Nicol, Henkel’s Executive Vice President, Human Resources and Infrastructure Services.

In the future, the learning management system will open two new pathways for talent recruitment and development: A manager will be able to quickly create a job requisition based on certain digital capabilities; or, an employee seeking a new role will be able to learn about the digital skills necessary to be considered for a job and then take relevant courses to become a viable candidate.

Henkel also transformed its internal and external image of an established corporate giant to a company that, despite its size, can be flexible and forward-thinking enough to compete with startups. Henkel now offers an environment that welcomes and nurtures an entrepreneurial spirit and drive that engenders creative, disruptive growth strategies—at all levels in both the consumer and B2B product categories.

The company effectively sent the message, globally, that learning is fun and that investing in and developing employees’ skills is not only valuable, it’s critical.
Accenture and Henkel successfully developed and implemented a global learning initiative, upskilling more than 10,000 managers with job-specific learning paths on digitalization. To increase engagement, Henkel also implemented a new learning management system, which was rolled out in just 18 weeks.

Henkel managers were invited to provide insight into their digital capabilities. A global upskilling strategy was then developed and gradually rolled out, comprising tailored and blended learning journeys focused on digital topics relevant for this specific job family.

The scale and speed of the rollout was possible because of Henkel’s progressive thinking and proactive drive, plus Accenture’s flexible approach in which it leveraged, built on and customized existing programs, such as Accenture Academy, to suit Henkel’s specific needs. Henkel’s business experts, in partnership with HR, helped to create relevant learnings for their peers. The active employee involvement ensured practical and relevant contents and helped to create a ‘pull’ for learning in the Henkel organization.

That’s why in the last 12 months, employees have engaged with the learning management system clocking around 272,000 training registrations and recording 215,000 completions.

Also, the application process for external candidates has been reduced from around 30 minutes to 60 seconds. And ever since the go live, the applications have increased by 40 percent.

The global digital transformation of Henkel’s workforce was just the beginning of its strategy to foster retention and growth. The company is now set—both with its systems and its corporate culture—to recruit even more accurately and quickly when necessary, as well as to inspire its existing staff to continually adapt and build on their skillsets at the same pace as fast-moving market forces. “Lifelong learning has become part of our culture at Henkel,” says Lucas Kohlmann, Director of Human Resources at Henkel, “It is motivating and gives our teams the confidence to grow together.”

By looking inward, Henkel has strengthened its prospects in an exceedingly complicated and competitive environment by doubling down with a major investment in its most valuable asset: the 52,000 employees it already had.
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Executive Vice President, Human Resources and Infrastructure Services – Henkel

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