



Productivity in Uncertain Times Via the Elastic Digital Workplace

AHIP Institute and Expo Online 2020

Audio Transcript

Nick Lochner: Welcome everybody, thank you for joining us. This is the “**Intelligent Payer: Productivity in Uncertain Times Via the Elastic Digital Workplace**” session. Really looking forward to diving in and unpacking what all that means. Would be nice and exciting to be meeting out on South Beach, but as we’re all in a little bit different environment—and world—at this point, I’m very excited to be able to come to you via this virtual experience that AHIP is putting on. And I hope that you’re able to get some good nuggets out of this. One thing I would like to say is, as we’re moving along, please ask questions, and we’ll be answering them via chat as we go. And you can always meet us in the virtual room that will be set up after the session as well; we’ll have some contact information for you on that. But again, welcome and we want to do a couple of real quick introductions. I’ll let my partner, Nicole Bolton from Anthem, introduce herself in a moment. But just a little bit of background about myself. I’m Nick Lochner. I have been at Accenture 28 years. All of that time has been focused on what we would call our talent and organization practice. It’s been called different things over the years: Human Potential, Talent Organization. Think of it as focused on the worker-workplace and the

people part of a transformation. I started out as an industrial engineer at the University of Wisconsin with a secondary major in math. But I really got into the people side of change, transformation and technology and how all three interact. I spent the first 15 years at Accenture focused on automotive and industrial equipment clients, and the last 13 years all focused on the health and payer space. I work out of our location in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the suburbs of Milwaukee, and have a wife and three older teenage kids. It makes for an interesting office workplace and environment, as you’re all probably experiencing as well in this pandemic. A lot of my focus at Accenture has been on the current pandemic-centered environment. Before this current environment, what has been the impact of technology on the workplace and on the workforce? That interaction between human and machine was all about digital, mobile and artificial intelligence, et cetera, and how to be data driven. One of the themes we’ll be diving into today is just how that trend really seems to be accelerating. It’s nice to know a lot of what I’ve been thinking about over the last many years is now accelerating. With that, let me hand it over to Nicole.

Nicole H. Bolton: Hello everybody, I'm really glad to be with you virtually, if not in person. I am a VP of HR strategy and planning at Anthem. I've been with Anthem for just about a year. And I'm new to the Indianapolis area. I relocated here with my family from St. Louis. I was previously with Post Holdings, a consumer packaged goods company and started my career in legal doing employment benefits, labor issues, and made the switch to HR about six years ago. In terms of my work at Anthem, I see HR strategy and planning as one of my primary responsibilities. I oversee our associate relations function, and our HR Technology Group. And I have responsibility over the Chief of Staff function. I've just started a new team called Our HR Strategic Initiatives Team where we're working to inject agile methodology into the way we work within HR and serve the business. I have two boys, 14 and nine, who are under strict orders to stay upstairs as I'm recording this, and three dogs and a husband—he's wrangling them at the moment. I'm really excited to be here and to be talking about this today.

Nick Lochner: Excellent, well, thanks and again, welcome everybody. It was nice to put a collared shirt on, which I haven't been doing as much lately. I'm sure you're all sitting at your laptops, hopefully comfortable and ready to ask questions. And you know, really when we talk about it, it's a pretty big title: The Elastic Digital Workplace. I think most of us have experienced this rapid shift—we went from what's on the left hand side of the screen here, working in different locations with people, open workspaces, collaboration in person and so on. And basically within a day, maybe a week max, we started to work from home—empty office space, empty conference rooms, zoom meetings, Microsoft team meetings, pick your collaboration tool! We made this

shift in a very short period of time, and I'm sure many of you were in the middle of that fire drill, both personally and as a leader. I'm also pretty sure each of your experiences were probably unique. But there are a lot of similarities and everybody's situation is a little more personal. I think back to my experience in working with Accenture and the first thing that comes to mind is, where are all the people I work with? Are they safe? How do I stay in contact with them? Do we have the safety of our people in mind? Then my thoughts shifted to more of the basics.

Now at Accenture, we probably talk a little bit more about working this way. In fact, we work remotely quite a bit. However, a lot of the fundamentals that I did see payers address—for example, the technology, the internet, Wi-Fi security, laptops, mobile phones, potentially the applications that go with it—that was a big scramble for everybody. So, we shifted from, is everyone safe to, do we have the tools to be effective? Then we shifted to, are we working productively? And how are we going to support our people to be productive as we move forward? Everybody's been through this thought process in their own form or fashion. And we've all had different experiences, both domestically and internationally. The question now shifts to, what's next? What are we moving toward? I would say the jury's still out. One thing that is interesting is that within the first few weeks of this, a lot of the discussion focused on how do we start moving people back? Should we move them back? What would that look like? How long would it take? It focused on those basic questions. I've seen a big shift in the last several weeks. Now, managers are asking how do we get our people to thrive? How do we get our people to be more productive?

Recently, I went back and looked at what people were saying about work from home, digital working, and remote working. I pulled up four different headlines, all from the end of 2019, and they all contradicted each other. Just to quote them here, there was a two-year study from Stanford that showed astonishing productivity boosts of working from home. The very next one was the negative effects of working from home on company culture from a study in January of 2019. And the list goes on. There's a Harvard Business Review article from 2019. Are remote workers more productive than in-office workers? What's interesting is, the answer is, well, it depends. It depends on the workforce. It depends on your organization's culture and how you're supporting them. It depends on their desires and needs. What we are finding is, you as an organization are able to figure out what is working and discover for yourself where productivity is happening. And then the thought process starts to become, okay, we're getting real time data. Are we as productive as we used to be? Which workforces are thriving? Which work forces are not? Then it starts getting into, but will that last? And can we sustain that? And that's a little bit of what we want to get into today, to talk about some foundational principles around the questions, is your organization elastic, can it expand, stretch and adapt? I would argue it's not just about working from home or working remotely. It's about a combination of all of that. And it's about the movement of people, and digital enablers are very important. Do you have the tools and technology to be effective in this environment? Do you have the right workplace operating models in place and the skills that you're providing your people?

It's really about driving the Elastic Digital Workplace to get the workforce to thrive in the future, given the fact that there are many different variables that depend on the workforce. From a consideration standpoint, this page has a lot of words on it. But, I would argue that if somebody says, "so should we dot-dot-dot, stay at home, keep working from home, bring people back to the office, and what will that look like?" There's well over a billion answers to that question, because it depends on so many different components, and each component has dependencies within it. If you have 15 to 20 categories of five dependencies each, that's many combinations of what the perfect answer may be. This allows you to start thinking about issues such as, which countries do we operate in and what are the laws and regulations for those countries? Which workforce are we talking about? And Nicole, to bring you into the conversation a little bit as we tee this up, I know at Anthem you have experienced all these different considerations and are thinking about them. And I'm curious if you have any comments or anything you'd like to highlight?

Nicole H. Bolton: This is a good list. There are so many things we as employers have had to think about in order to serve our employees as well as our outward businesses. Culture really stands out to me. We had planned to roll out a number of culture workshops this year in person, bringing leaders together from across the country, learning from one another and spending a couple of days together to talk about culture and build that playbook further. We obviously had to switch gears very quickly when COVID occurred. But we've found ways to use virtual platforms and increase communication.

For example, we have culture conversations based on monthly themes. The first theme was appreciation. And this past month, it's been being your best. We provide virtual toolkits to managers where they have meeting starters; they have a couple of slides that they can pull up with their teams. We've also built a number of toolkits for managers, because not every manager knows how to manage a group virtually. Not everyone has had that experience. And so, just giving them tools, giving them guidance on how best to engage with their teams has been critical. Just maintaining that frequent, transparent communication. We've gotten into some habits over the last couple of months that I would love to see continue. We're bringing our executive leadership team together—we probably have around 250 people on a virtual platform once a week—to talk about things like culture and business, and go beyond even the COVID topic to talk about how we can thrive. We're also highlighting people. For instance, we highlighted a doctor just last month during one of those forums who had volunteered at an underprivileged hospital in New York using our medical volunteer hours. She came on that forum and explained what that meant to her. Looking for those ways to connect, to continue those cultural conversations, and to build that connection, has been so important for us.

Nick Lochner: That's excellent. We've experienced a lot of the same dynamic I will say from an Accenture standpoint. I really embraced your comment about culture because one of the things that I've seen is if you've worked with Accenture before, you know that there are a lot of opportunities to work remotely. In this current environment, it was very simple for us to transition Accenture resources to

"mandatory work from home" because a lot of us are so used to working in different environments, at different accounts, at different clients. The security protocols, the virtual private networks we have, and the technology that we use to work within someone's firewall and make sure that we're taking care of our clients' data and information have always been a day-to-day reality at Accenture. And because it's a focus for us, culturally it was easy for us.

I think your comment about supervisors and managers is another good one, too. Our leaders and our managers and our supervisors are used to working in that environment and supervising our people. That isn't always the case at companies, and that's a whole other skill and discussion that we can get into as part of this. The one thing that I will say about all of these components is this: now it's turned into a sprint. I'm sure you are experiencing an uptick in thinking about taking a journey to cloud. It's the concept of artificial intelligence, of all the mobile applications and the security that allows you to do that. Put your data in the cloud and work from anywhere and have the protocols in place to know that it's secure. All of those things were topics of conversations. We've been talking about it and executing on it for a while; now, that agenda is extremely accelerated. And I anticipate that the sprint is just beginning for you, as you are looking to become more agile, more elastic and wondering how you're going to operate in the future. And so, what does this mean from a workforce and workplace standpoint? That's really what Nicole and I hope to dive into a little bit here and talk about with you. And so, I want to bring a couple of concepts to the table. We'll be covering these with some examples shortly, but I just want to provide a quick

overview and background about what's on this page. How do you get your workforce and your workplace to thrive going forward? It's about your people and their performance. It's a function of their emotion, which includes how they're feeling—do they feel safe? Do they feel a part of an organization they want to be a part of? I'm using the word emotion here, but it encompasses all of that—the capabilities you have in place, and peoples' skills, their abilities, the org models, the operating models you have, the policies you have, and so on. And then there's the technology piece, which is the third part of the equation. A lot of people jump to that initially: do our people have Wi-Fi? Is it secure? Do they have a device to work remotely? We've got lots of stories, and I'm sure you've all experienced it, particularly if your organizations have outsourced or offshored captive resources.

It's a challenge to move let's say 10,000 people to work from home, spread across four different countries. But somehow, many of us did that. And now we're standing here saying, is it working? What should we do next? And how should we think about it? If you think about maximizing this equation, do our people feel safe? Do our people have what they need? Can they perform? You find that maximum point that works for that individual, that team, that particular workforce. That's what the future looks like. And I would argue, the way to enable that is to be elastic or agile, to leverage the technology and the digital solutions and think about the workplace not as a cubicle in one of your locations, but as being anywhere in the globe. Nicole, I'm going to spin it over to you and just ask if you have any comments or questions before we explore some of the details we'll talk about?

Nicole H. Bolton: Nick, that's an excellent point. I think you made a good point up front in terms of technology. Technology itself is not a solution. I think it's an enabler. From Anthem's standpoint, we've had to be very thoughtful about what it is that we're trying to do and what we're reimagining the company to be after COVID. Technology can enable that. But we really have to define who we want to be. We know we can't go back to the old way. We have to look ahead and use this as an opportunity to get stronger in some of these areas and assume an even better position to support our associates and our customers and providers and members. So certainly, technology plays a huge role in terms of making it easier to do business and easier to do work. But it's really about defining who you want to be after COVID.

Nick Lochner: Perfect, yes, I totally agree. I'm looking forward to diving into some of this. Just as a reminder, if you have questions, please keep them coming through; we'll continue to answer those as we go. But with that, I'd like to dive into a little more detail about how some of these dimensions we're seeing play out. And with that, Nicole, maybe I'll start with a question for you. Getting into the examples and actions that you can see on this page. How would you describe Anthem's approach to this current situation overall?

Nicole H. Bolton: We've used the word "playbook." There's not really a set playbook for these kinds of circumstances. Like many of you, we found ourselves having to react quickly. We put a COVID Task Force together as soon as the crisis started and I've been able to serve on that since its inception and to see the progress and the changes that we've had to undergo very quickly.

The safety and well-being of our associates was first and foremost. We have 70,000-plus associates and a number of locations in the US and abroad. It was important for us to ensure we had a solid plan that looked out for their safety and their wellness during this. As a healthcare provider we also had to look at how we additionally support those members and customers and providers as they're navigating these unprecedented circumstances. We've relied on one of our core values, and that's agility. It has been one of our core values since I've been with Anthem, and it has been exercised. I think we've had to be thoughtful, but we've had to be awfully quick in order to address all the things we've needed to address. We divided our approach into three phases. First, it was to respond, recover, and then reimagine, and we moved into reimagine fairly quickly. As I just mentioned, what is it that we want to be? How do we put a new lens on things? How do we become more agile? How do we be more consumer-centered and ground ourselves in the strong local roots that we have? Our current situation has shifted our way of viewing this. I think it's a terrible circumstance for all of us to be in but it also presents such opportunities, and we've been able to see leaders flourish. I think under these circumstances, they've had to act quickly and in an agile way.

Nick Lochner: What I grabbed onto, Nicole, is the word reimagine. And that was an excellent way to tee that up and how you're thinking about it. It's shifting from, you know, "holy cow, we're in a very interesting time and we just completely changed the way we're operating our business by moving people out and asking them to work differently." To, "okay, take stock, where are we at? Are we recovered, where are we going to go?"

And I've read many things about this early on, that people can't wait to get back to normal or get back to regular operations. I think the theme here is that this isn't the direction to go. It's not about getting back to normal or regular operations. It's more about learning what's working for you now, and what's not working for you now. While we can actually do a lot more than we thought we could, we don't know what the future will hold. There are many different scenarios, and we're not going to take anything for granted. So, how do we reimagine how we're going to work? Are there new ways for us to go about doing this? And so with that, maybe let's just shift a little bit, Nicole: how are you working differently? How is Anthem working differently? What are you doing differently?

Nicole H. Bolton: The difference between Anthem and Accenture is we had only about 38% of our associates working at home prior to COVID and through a pretty quick but thoughtful phased approach, we now have approximately 99% of our associates working at home at this point. So that's been a giant shift for us. And it's worked well. We've been pleased with how flexible and productive people have been. You've alluded several times to the reimagining phase. Probably getting people home was the easy part. It didn't feel easy at the time, but returning them to an office is an even more complex task and one that we are taking slowly and very deliberately. We're making data-driven decisions and thinking about all the different variables of what that will look like. We've supported associates in a number of ways. We have, for example, rolled out additional and expanded benefits, including emergency paid leave, to help associates deal with things facing them in their personal lives.

We've also had a one-stop shop for information. I think during these times people can get information overload. We've tried to be purposeful about how we're communicating, and very transparent. We've built a whole section on our intranet dedicated to COVID. And there are broad resources for associates, but there are also manager-specific resources and toolkits for those folks as well. Something that worked well was an app we rolled out to our leadership where we could give them real time updates. So, if we were shutting a particular office down to clean, or releasing a press release that was relevant to the business, or putting out a new toolkit, we could essentially have those important pieces delivered directly through an app with notifications on everybody's mobile phones. Hopefully, we'll keep this innovation even after this crisis because it's been an easy way to get important information to people quickly. We've also had a lot of virtual forums for our leadership and our managers, where we're meeting and we're connecting, and we're talking about not only COVID but the business and how we can reimagine things. The new frequency of communication has been a game changer for us. We communicated a lot before the pandemic, but this type of crisis requires that we step up and do even more in that area. And then one of the things I'm most excited about is something I'm currently working on called the marketplace, which I know you know about Nick. It's been a pivot point for us that has served an important purpose.

Nick Lochner: I'll talk about that in just a second, but I do want to comment on this concept of the workforce of the future. What does the workforce of the future need to thrive? How are they going to work? How is AI going to change the way people work?

What does that mean? How is AI going to help people change the way they work and drive new opportunities, new businesses?

What skills do people need? How do you manage and supervise these kinds of new workforces? What's the technology going to bring and drive for these folks? And when I think about all of that, prior to this, a lot of the focus was on "how do you take your current workforce and find ways to "re-badge" people, if you will, move them from one place to another, taking advantage of their experience? Where can we leverage them in the future? Because digital and AI are going to disrupt the jobs that people are currently doing today. I think what's happened now is "boom"—that's all accelerated. Parts of businesses are being completely disrupted. That affects our payer world. So, with that backdrop, Nicole, could you provide a little bit more detail about the marketplace, and some details on how that's working?

Nicole H. Bolton: Yes, and I think you hit the nail on the head with the word disruption. The healthcare industry as a whole has been disrupted. We started to see an uneven distribution of our work across the organization as COVID started to heat up. It's affected healthcare across the country, but we felt it as well. If you think about the pause with elective procedures right now, that affects one part of the business. Here's another: dental. We don't have people going out and getting dental care like they were prior to COVID. It also increased the need for resources in other areas of the company. Things like finding digital solutions for our customers, members, and providers and doing additional member outreach. In some areas we were busier than ever, trying to move very quickly in some parts, and then other parts had excess capacity.

We could identify those areas pretty easily. Therefore, based on roles in a certain part of the business you can determine that this list of associates has excess capacity. We need to look at this group, but then you also have other folks who might have 10% or 20% or 30% capacity. And certainly you can ask managers who on your team has capacity, but it's not very efficient. I think when you're dealing with an economy right now where unemployment is so high, very few people want to say, I don't have enough to do. I mean, there's an emotional piece to that. And, so we were looking for a way to flip the narrative and make it something that could be positive, essentially allowing associates to raise their hands to do more.

One of our values—and it fits so nicely into this—is expecting more. It just seemed like us to say, who wants to raise their hand to do more? We have a culture that's mission driven. And we knew that would resonate with associates. We wanted to be able to have them raise their hands and then connect them with some of the need across the organization, and to assist in areas that would drive the business and drive services to our communities. So, a small group of us started to brainstorm and we got a group together on a WebEx and started to talk about it, and what that could look like. And then we said, “how would we do this for an associate base of 70,000-plus people? How would we do that in an efficient way?” And we'd recently deployed ServiceNow, which is a case management tool in our associate relations group. And so, we knew we had that technology. And then we partnered with you. You've been helping us with that implementation. And, Nick, would you like to tell us a little bit about the automation piece? I think you can do better justice to it than I could.

Nick Lochner: Sure. I'll keep it brief. From an automation standpoint, we had been working with Anthem around ServiceNow, as Nicole mentioned, for employee associate relations. It just happened to be when a lot of this current environment started up, and we were able to leverage it. In addition to that, Accenture early on identified an opportunity we had been working on that focused on CHR roles industry wide, not just in payer. We wanted to know what's on people's mind, what's concerning them the most? It was this concept that there were some organizations letting tens of thousands of people go because of the environment. And there were other organizations looking for people. How could we map those things together? There's this concept or solution that we put together called People Plus Work Connect. If you want to look for it on a search engine, it would come up right away. The concept is, how do you take one business and another business and bring supply and demand together to get more people back to work faster, and what kind of skills do those people have that might be transferable to another place? All of that got stood up within a week. We're constantly putting people on to that.

While that was going on, this concept for Anthem came along. So the question was, how do you take that project-based component and provide visibility for people to raise their hand? What I love about Nicole's description of the project is that it's an emotional thing for people right now. It's allowing people to feel like the organization is doing something for them and helping them find an opportunity to contribute. I think the power of that is just amazing. With the time that we have left, Nicole, could you talk a little bit about how you went about tackling this, and maybe a little bit more about what you've done so far?

Nicole H. Bolton: Sure. We had to do this quickly because there was a need and we wanted to address it in an agile way. We wanted to connect that need with the supply. In the first phase, we used the ServiceNow platform as a demand aggregator, so HR BPs and leaders gathered the projects and the initiatives that we had around the company. We put those into the platform, and then we redeployed our recruiters who were not as busy and who had capacity to match associates to projects and to other areas of the company where we could utilize them fully. And again, that was in those areas where we knew the capacity existed based on things we could measure fairly easily. We were able to stand up and do that in a couple of weeks. We redeployed about a couple thousand associates during that time. So, it was really effective.

I think phase two is what I'm really excited about. I just had a meeting about it this morning. And that's when we're really going to open up this marketplace to associated managers and make it more free flowing. So now that we've sort of tackled the obvious areas of capacity, we're really trying to target those folks who have 10% or 20% capacity, who could be making those outbound phone calls to members with some training or who could be working on a project. Essentially, we're going to allow the associates to apply for different projects that will be in this marketplace. Based on their skill sets and availability, they will be matched with managers. Managers can essentially look at those, choose people who may be appropriate for other things that don't require specific skill sets, but maybe just some training. We really want it to be inclusive and open.

And I think it'll serve an important need during COVID. But we're looking for this to be something that's part of our developmental model as well. And to complement the leadership model that we're building. It enables associates to direct their development. I think most companies struggle with things like job rotations and more formal programs because they're really clunky. But if we can get into a culture of encouraging managers and associates to look at their jobs and then carve some time out for stretch assignments or additional things that they can be doing around the company, we think that's a win-win. And I think right now, especially, it should help with morale and engagement and keeping people feeling fully productive, which is so important during this time.

Nick Lochner: Yes, I completely agree. I realized we're coming to the end of our time. I think we'll leave it at that. That's a great way to wrap up. Thank you for the opportunity to chat with you. I think one of my favorite parts of doing this is the discussions that happen right after the presentations at a booth or even over dinner and drinks. If you're able to get into those sessions online, definitely take advantage of those. Please feel free to reach out. We have contact information here if you would like more information or would just like to have a conversation about it. And, we'll continue to take questions on the chat as we go. I hope everybody has an enjoyable time with this virtual AHIP. Take care.