



SAP AZURE PODCAST

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Jason Warnke [00:00:02] I'm Jason Warnke, part of the Accenture Global IT organization, and I'm glad to be here today with Eli Lambert, who leads our global SAP IT organization and Anand Raval, who is the platform lead for SAP in the cloud. We're here today to talk about Accenture's experience along the way, lessons learned and what's next for SAP at Accenture. Thanks for joining me today, guys. Let's get into it.

Eli Lambert [00:00:25] Thanks, Jason. We're definitely glad to be here today.

Jason Warnke [00:02:26] OK, great. Eli, let's start with you. Can I ask a few different questions here? Maybe you can expand on a few of these. First off, how is Accenture actually using SAP? How is it grown? How are we leveraging it as a platform and how are we running finance on the platform? Maybe you could start there.

Eli Lambert [00:02:44] Sure. Thank you, Jason. So, you know, our strategy for our SAP platform is really to help Accenture stay ahead of future business needs. Right. We look at this across a couple dimensions to make that happen. One, you know, we have SAP as our single global instance, which gives us that single source of truth that, you know, many business leaders across enterprises are looking for. This helps us have that instant reporting across our business dimensions and that helps us read and react to, you know, any business environment that that our businesses face. Also staying current is and treating our SAP platform as an asset is huge. Right. SAP is continually innovating new capabilities and it puts us in a position to know staying current is really orchestrate which capabilities we want to bring in and leverage for our business. And finally, you know, SAP,

you know, from staying secure continuously is, you know, our mantra. Right. You, number one, stay a foundation of you know, for us, SAP and cloud exceeds the highest levels of security standards and we're always running on, you know, the latest software versions. So with that, we run SAP on we run Finance on SAP but we also treat SAP as our overall master data enterprise backbone. We use it for, you know, core functions within Finance like statutory and management reporting. We look ahead with our forecasting capabilities and also from a global consolidations perspective. But we also kind of work around the edges in terms of other modules being able to adopt recently around, you know, treasury attacks and real estate. So, you know, generally it's the engine that powers our enterprise business. But we also, you know, use that as a construction for, you know, running a financial close engine. So, you know, SAP is our engine for running our finances. A major part of that is the overall financial close that we operate every month and into every quarter that helps us get to our external results and so, you know, as a as a framework, that's generally what we use for our SAP platform. So thank you, Jason.

Jason Warnke [00:05:32] Yeah. So maybe you touched on a few points, but maybe you could dive a little bit deeper on what compelled us to start moving what sounds like a really complex environment that is so critical to us to the cloud.

Eli Lambert [00:05:46] Yeah. So, you know, as we all know, the cloud strategy at Accenture is all goodness. Right. You know, for any of our applications, cloud provides scalability, the ability to move fast. You know, with agility and response to the business needs and scale up and scale down our environments. But it also



lets us be secure. Right. So cloud generally achieves those benefits. Now, why SAP in the cloud is better? You know SAP has been moving to a connected ecosystem over these few years. And, you know, while we have, you know, our main S4 in the cloud as we'll hear about coming up here. We're also able to tap into, you know, whether it's SAP analytics cloud or a whole host of other ecosystem of services and capabilities. So Ariba, Fieldglass and many other security and supporting enablement. You know, the other thing that's important about cloud is getting from, you know, integration with our entire ecosystem and our landscape. It helps us to standardize a lot of other integrations with all of our ERP platforms across our landscapes. But why you know, Azure as a as a cloud choice for us. I want to hand it over to Anand to actually led us through that transition to talk about why that was best for Accenture.

Anand Raval [00:07:16] Thanks, Eli. Yeah, you know. So for us, the journey to the cloud really has been a story of innovation. When the cloud is ready for SAP development size workloads, we move them to the cloud. As we started to see the benefits of running SAP in the cloud, we saw the opportunity to move the rest of our landscape to the cloud and achieve the benefits Eli just spoke about. We also saw an opportunity to become a market maker for running SAP production size workloads in the cloud and can do so by working with the strategic partner. We saw the investments Microsoft is making in developing enterprise ready operations, architecture. Things like high availability, disaster recovery and cloud backups. We also had the deep partnership with Microsoft from the Office 365 and teams work we were doing together. So working with Microsoft to co-innovate and deliver SAP in Azure as an enterprise ready capability really was a natural fit for us.

Jason Warnke [00:08:16] Thanks, Anand. Great overview of our journey to the cloud for SAP. Can you tell us about the team that works on and supports SAP? What skills do they bring to the table? Where are they located? How did they work together? And how do we collaborate across platforms? You mentioned they're SAP and Microsoft. So I know those are very two strategic platforms. Tell us about that

collaboration. So a little bit about the team and then a little bit more about the collaboration on these very strategic platforms.

Anand Raval [00:09:03] Yeah, absolutely, Jason. You know, if developing Azure for SAP was a story of innovation, then delivering SAP in Azure is really more of a story of collaboration. Right. In order to make it happen. It really took a full ecosystem partnership with our core partners. SAP for its software and Microsoft for its Azure cloud platform. And all three organizations brought their vast resource pools to bear in order, design, build, test and deliver the final product. From an Accenture side we had a Follow the Sun model leveraging our global delivery network in locations such as the Philippines, India, Spain, North America and Argentina. We had a highly talented group of resources with core SAP skills sets for SAP basis and HANA database administration. We also had a team members bringing cloud environment delivery and cloud network skill sets are also very relevant for this type of delivery. So truly was an incredible global multi skillset and multi vendor effort to accomplish our goals.

Jason Warnke [00:10:09] And I have to imagine with that really rigorous program, there had to have been some challenges and then some lessons learned from this journey. Can you expand a little bit about those challenges that the team encountered and how you guys worked through that?

Anand Raval [00:10:24] Oh, yeah, we we definitely learned a lot through this process. The biggest challenge we had to face was developing the enterprise size operation architecture to run our business. We need the scale and capacity from Microsoft while also working with them to design for very demanding requirements. You know, Accenture, a company with over 500,000 people, we have to have very certain specific things in place for us to be able to manage an organization that large. The benefit for us was that we had built such strong standards with their on premise architecture. They already knew what we were striving for and we weren't really starting from scratch. The other point I'd also called is how critical it is to have the right engagement leadership from both vendors.



So we had a direct line to senior Microsoft leadership as well, as SAP leadership. So any time you ran into an obstacle, we knew they were a phone call away to help us move forward. So I'd really say those are the main challenges that we face and the lessons learned through this process.

Jason Warnke [00:11:23] That's great. Eli, we're going to come back to you and talk a little bit about benefits. So how are these changes affecting and helping us internally and externally?

Eli Lambert [00:11:36] Excellent, Jason. So, you know, moving to Cloud and especially the SAP and Microsoft Azure collaboration is really about a lower total cost of ownership. And we definitely got what we were looking for in terms of, you know, we've been able to take out a significant amount of cost in our business, but it also gave us the flexibility and agility to do more. You know, as you're well aware, we've had a recent growth model focus and all of the different dimensions that we're changing our business and transforming at once. We're able to spin up all of the, you know, for example, test environments, put all the different, you know, demo and performance testing and all the different integration spin that all up for all of our focus areas for this transformation at a much lower cost and at a speed and agility that we would never been able to achieve in the past. So that goes directly to being able to operate an SAP enterprise instance in the cloud at scale. Actually, just recently as well, you know, we've had a growth in our business, obviously and, you know, we were able to work with Anand and the technical team, to move from a six terabyte landscape to a twelve terabyte landscape in just a weekend. You know, if you for reference on premise, if we were to do something like that, we would have had to build out an entire new data center. It would have taken months and months and months of planning, right. And we were able to flip a switch and do it over a weekend in a standard maintenance window. So it's those kind of benefits that we're seeing now. Obviously, we're facing, you know, an unprecedented time with Covid 19 and, you know, all of our businesses are taking a closer look at, you know, how are we interacting with our customers?

Well, how is the health of our customers? And, you know, the cash flows because cash is king at this moment. We are able to work in detailed analysis for the health of our business with some of the finance data mart capabilities that came with being S4/HANA in cloud. So, you know and not to overlook that, you know, part of this new working in the New right that we're all experiencing is we're doing all of this remote, right? We're having this, you know, podcast remote where we're operating, you know, all of these, you know, transformational programs that we're doing leading up to our major new year transformation in September. All of this remote and we're able to operate that, you know, in cloud remotely, which is fantastic. You know, another thing that it's done and, you know, Anand sees this every day is that this is generating a lot of interest in the market. You know, our go to market teams are having us speak and engage with different clients to help understand, you know, how are we similar and how can we guide them on their very similar journey here. So there's been a lot of excitement there, a lot of best practices that our teams are generating to really guide both, you know, our future roadmap, but really help engage with our clients and show them the way of what's possible and really get them a leg up on starting their journey.

Jason Warnke [00:15:03] As you said, some really interesting times we're in. And so I guess as we shift to maybe the future, what's next in store for SAP at Accenture?

Eli Lambert [00:15:15] Yes. So I think it's important that, you know, we've invested in a digital core as our foundation, right. And, you know, our landscape and our business needs are always going to evolve. So it's really important that we connect in with SAP and the ecosystem of connecting partners that will grow our capabilities. You know, Microsoft is an example of that. But as we look at, you know, capabilities around, you know, what SAP analytics cloud can offer us. Right. It's making sure that that connected ecosystem stays rich. That Anand and I stay ahead of, you know, what are the options and capabilities that we can share with our business leaders and, you know, meet some of their needs and they're going to guide us as



to what to look forward to. But, you know, the biggest thing to reflect on is that in our, you know, 15 plus years on SAP, we've grown from a business of originally just over 75,000 to now, well over five hundred thousand. We were a nine billion dollar business and now we're, you know, 43 billion plus. And it's an enterprise platform like SAP that enables us to scale while staying on single instance. Right. Letting us tap into, you know, the new capabilities and new service and offerings. Right? As you know, SAP innovates and creates that for the market. But also, you know, it's important for us that we continue to invest as an asset, keep our enterprise architecture current so that we can meet any future business needs that come along our way.

Jason Warnke [00:17:02] And that's really, you know, a really critical point that you're raising, which is, you know, we're scaled and ready for whatever the future may bring. You said in just that, 15 years going from 75,000 to over 500,000 people and nine to 43 billion plus. Amazing. And we just don't know what's around the corner and SAP, especially SAP in the cloud, is certainly giving us that agility and that flexibility to really keep up. And so thanks, Eli, for that. Anand I'm going to finish with the last question for you today. What would you tell clients looking to move their SAP landscapes to the cloud now?

Anand Raval [00:17:44] You know, Jason, what I'd really say to them is what seemed aspirational just a few years ago is really now a reality. You know, we, like many others, had questions about how we could move our full SAP landscape to the cloud. However, through the innovation and the collaboration with our partners, we've proven it's achievable and all its benefits are really as advertised. So it works. We haven't looked back. You know, Eli and I and our full leadership team, you know, we've embraced this this new journey that we're on. And we can see the future with with our cloud platform. So, you know, we highly recommend it to anyone out there. It's very doable and no one will ever say that they regret going to the cloud.

Jason Warnke [00:19:17] Well, Eli and Anand I cannot thank you enough for sharing a really fascinating story. Such a critical area. SAP is not an area that I've spent much time in in my career

personally, but I really admire the great work that you and the team do to look after and chart the course ahead for us in the, as we call it, living in the cloud and living in the cloud with SAP and Azure. Thanks so much for spending the time with us today to share the story.

Eli Lambert [00:19:51] Awesome. Thank you very much, Jason appreciate the time.

Anand Raval [00:19:54] Thank you Jason.

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