



# CIO 24/7 LIVING SYSTEMS PODCAST: ENABLING AN AGILE WORKPLACE

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

**Margaret Smith - Global Geographic Services Executive Director, Accenture**

[00:00:00] Crisis has been a real catalyst for change, and one of the keys to getting through this has been finding the opportunities that are being created.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:00:11] Hi everyone, it's Penelope Prett, Accenture's Chief Information Officer and I'm glad to be here today with Margaret Smith, who leads Accenture's Geographic Services Organization, which includes our office services, real estate, procurement and travel. And with Melissa Summers, who heads up our corporate technology and our global I.T. organization. Our global I.T. team is driving technology powered business transformations in support of all of Accenture's different businesses. And today we're talking about the agile workplace and how we work together to enable geographic services in today's world. Hi, Margaret. Thanks for joining us today.

**Margaret Smith - Global Geographic Services Executive Director, Accenture** [00:00:48] Thank you so much for having me. Really excited to be here.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:00:51] Prior to the pandemic,

Margaret, Accenture had a large remote workforce already but we still had to enable a pretty significant number of people to work remotely, in short order, who had previously been sitting in our offices and real estate locations. How did we get everyone out of the office and into their home safely so quickly?

**Margaret Smith - Global Geographic Services Executive Director, Accenture**

[00:01:11] Well, the first thing we did is we focused on what we were learning in China because, of course, they saw the results of the pandemic first. And we looked really quickly at what had enabled success and the number one thing was giving people laptops and desktops in their homes. And so by the end of March, as the pandemic spread around the globe, we were able to get ninety five percent of our people working remotely. We maintained business continuity to all of our clients. We brought on new work. We executed on project mobilizations and go live. And we basically moved Accenture virtually. We partnered with I.T. and other parts of the business, including procurement workplace, to send over 80,000 computers



# CIO 24/7 LIVING SYSTEMS PODCAST: ENABLING AN AGILE WORKPLACE

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

into people's homes, enabling them to work from home. So this included ordering a whole lot of new laptops, but also sending desktops home. We took full advantage of Microsoft Teams with a really large increase in audio and video. Just a real success story, Penelope.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:02:16] And Melissa, if you can for a minute, since you support Margaret's I.T. landscape within Accenture, how did you and your team need to shift to support the rapidly changing work patterns?

**Melissa Summers - Corporate Technology Lead in Global I.T., Accenture** [00:02:28] Sure. Thanks, Penelope. I mean, building on the Microsoft Teams increase, just to point out, as we moved to fully remote, there was a tremendous increase in that Teams usage. We saw over two hundred and sixty percent increase in audio minutes and over a six hundred and forty percent increase in video minutes in a month. And really, we've continued to see usage rise in the months since then. But really what we did was build upon the great partnership that we have between I.T. and Geographic Services. And, in this, it really came to life. We were able to create some applications that addressed local needs and one of these allowed

employees to identify where they were working, if they were working, and we would be able to provide that information to leadership. What we did from an I.T. perspective was make sure that there was an understanding globally of these applications and the needs that they were addressing and that enabled us to expand the usage of these solutions very quickly as a similar need was articulated elsewhere as the pandemic continued to roll through. So this example started in India but quickly was shared with many other countries. At the same time, we had developed a tool so that all of our employees could access information about how to search for a location to determine real time, what their office specifics were, whether or not an office was open, or if there were health and safety requirements for entry. And then the third item that was created is...we created an online community for our people, an online home for our people. So hashtag more together now. So this was really a site - or is really a site - that puts everything in one place, not just to meet our work needs, but also to meet our personal needs as home and work life have definitely combined. So these are just some of the examples of the responses from an I.T. perspective we needed to put into place, Penelope.



# CIO 24/7 LIVING SYSTEMS PODCAST: ENABLING AN AGILE WORKPLACE

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:04:21] Thanks, Melissa. And Margaret getting people back into the office is going to be a fluid and rapidly changing process. And I'm sure your team has been working around the clock to prep for it. Can you tell us a little bit about the thinking on this topic and what's happening in the space now?

**Margaret Smith - Global Geographic Services Executive Director, Accenture** [00:04:38] So Penelope as different parts of the world ease restrictions, we're executing our own plans to return to the offices and we've got a very comprehensive return to office playbook. As an office wants to reopen and return to some level of normalcy, they fill out a 200 point checklist as to whether or not they've done everything to keep an office and our people safe. From that, we then bring people back in waves and there are three waves and each wave has a percentage of people coming back with it. So 10 percent, 30 percent. 50 percent. The majority of our people will continue to work remotely until the pandemic ends. We continue to closely monitor what's happening around the world and try to be very clear that, though we have a global process and global guidance

, there is always things we have to consider locally about what's going on, both with clients locally, but also in the community locally.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:05:34] And Melissa, as Margaret's plan rolls forward, how is I.T. enabling all these people to return in those wave structures? And how are you planning to manage through what's going to be a rapidly changing environment as we learn more?

**Melissa Summers - Corporate Technology Lead in Global I.T., Accenture** [00:05:47] Absolutely. So we're continuing to partner closely with Geographic Services and Human Resources as they work through that playbook. And the technology side of it is really about implementing a variety of tools and integrating existing technologies to make sure that we can support those new processes that our employees and workplace professionals are going to need to follow in order to return to the office. One of the key things that we're doing is implementing work dot com, and this is really enabling us to support these processes, do health surveys, handle shift management and command center reporting, as well as provide support



# CIO 24/7 LIVING SYSTEMS PODCAST: ENABLING AN AGILE WORKPLACE

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

to contact tracing through case management. Some of these solutions will be short to mid-term, but many of them will be long term and part of our new operating model in how we respond to unknown future events.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:06:37] Thanks, Melissa. And Margaret, when I talk to other CIOs these days, the one thing we all agree on is that we're going to have a brand new normal when we start returning to the offices. So when you think about how we were pre pandemic and how we will be post pandemic, how does that impact how you conceptualize our office?

**Margaret Smith - Global Geographic Services Executive Director, Accenture** [00:06:58] Crisis has been a real catalyst for change and one of the keys to getting through this has been finding the opportunities that are being created. A lot of our clients are now recognizing some of our services can be done remotely. We are all recognizing that there are roles that we thought would never be at home that are now working perfectly successfully at home. So we also understand, though, how much personal connection matters. And with all the collaboration and the tools in the world, and

no matter how successful they are, there is still personal engagement that is essential for long term success. So the HR team is looking across the entire business to understand in a physical distanced environment - and then beyond that - who should be remote, who should return to an office and rethinking some of the assumptions, looking at the actual roles that people have and what they're executing. So we're going to adjust our approach based on the evolving situation in geographic markets, but also the new muscle memory we're learning and the catalyst for change this has provided. We're going to incorporate that in our thinking, specifically talking about the meat and potatoes of my job, real estate implications. There's still a lot of unknowns. So I'd like to avoid making any long term real estate decisions, because, as we all learned in the last six months, we can't predict the future. In the short term, we may actually see an increase in space requirements because physical distancing is really difficult to do in our high capacity centers. We have to continually seek to preserve flexibility because the world opens and closes again. We have a project in flight currently that focuses on building the workplace of the future, which is going to look a lot at flexible and collaborative spaces. Penelope, I'm



# CIO 24/7 LIVING SYSTEMS PODCAST: ENABLING AN AGILE WORKPLACE

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

hoping that what we're learning now, we will always incorporate some of the good practices we've learned through this process.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:08:54] Thanks, Margaret. Melissa, turning to the I.T. perspective, what do you see changing going forward?

**Melissa Summers - Corporate Technology Lead in Global I.T., Accenture** [00:09:00] I really see us accelerating a number of things that we've started already. So really a focus on agility. So, to use an example, we were in the midst of moving to a more digital visitor check in process. And as a result of the needs for a return to office, we were able to adjust that to make it relevant for anyone coming into our offices specifically to support the revised employee processes. So examples like that and optimizing what we have will become even more important to be able to do quickly. And then the other thing that I think we will continue to see accelerate is really the availability of information to our employees. But we've definitely seen is that the information around our buildings and workplaces has become even more important to our employees as they need to deal with their days and figure out what the best place to work for them is.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:09:49] Thanks, Melissa. An ongoing theme in these podcasts and in things I post on LinkedIn is that it's absolutely necessary to have a strong and vibrant partnership between I.T. and the various business areas in order to truly be able to respond flexibly and quickly and to innovate in our approaches. And I think the relationship between the I.T. organization and Geographic Services is just a perfect example of that. So can I ask both of you, how do you see our two organizations continuing to evolve that partnership over the time to take it to greater and greater heights?

**Margaret Smith - Global Geographic Services Executive Director, Accenture** [00:10:25] I think what's interesting is it's a great question, but I don't love the wording in the question, because one of the things that we've learned through all this is it isn't about two organizations. It's about evolving as one team. And what's been amazing to me, having been with Accenture a long time, is throughout the Covid response and a return to office effort, I've seen the magic of Accenture happen in front of me. Amazing examples of one seamless team working across the organization. So your team's ability and my team's ability to absolutely act



# CIO 24/7 LIVING SYSTEMS PODCAST: ENABLING AN AGILE WORKPLACE

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

as a single unit has been critical to our success. Collaboration and working as one has been key. We've done it across all the functional areas at Accenture. We're working together to innovate, to drive insights from data. I don't do a meeting that doesn't have four or five different organizational entities on it and everybody's contributing because we're after the same goal. This continued teamwork is absolutely going to be the key to the success going forward.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:11:28] Melissa, anything to add?

**Melissa Summers - Corporate Technology Lead in Global I.T., Accenture** [00:11:30] Yes, I would say the empathy and compassion that has been revealed as a result of this crisis has really been something. And I think that really goes to the 'One Accenture' point that Margaret just made. I expect that we're going to continue to act with agility to support our employees in the coming months and years. That change is going to be inevitable. And so this close partnership is really going to continue to drive our success. I also think that the I.T. and analytic solutions that we're building, we're gonna continue to see the need to share those more broadly.

And I think the actions that we've defined to date in terms of implementation is really going to provide that information to our employees.

**Penelope Prett - Chief Information Officer, Accenture** [00:12:10] Ladies, thank you so much for a great conversation today. It was great having both of you here and I look forward to hearing about continued developments in the space.

**Margaret Smith - Global Geographic Services Executive Director, Accenture** [00:12:19] Thanks, Penelope. It was absolutely a pleasure talking to you and Melissa today.

**Melissa Summers - Corporate Technology Lead in Global I.T., Accenture** [00:12:23] Agreed. It was a great conversation. Thank you for the opportunity.

**Narrator** [00:12:27] 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

Copyright © 2021 Accenture  
All rights reserved

Accenture and its logo  
are registered trademarks  
of Accenture.