

XaaS Files Podcast_EP12

Podcast Intro [00:00:01] Welcome to Accenture's X-as-a-service files the podcast for business leaders helping their companies transform using innovative digital business models. Here, you'll learn from some of the industry's leading movers and shakers, senior executives from companies around the globe who are changing the way the world works and plays by delivering all types of compelling subscription services. Join your host, Kevin Dobbs, Accenture's X-as-a-service managing director who brings 20 plus years of experience as an entrepreneur, CEO and senior executive to the table. Kevin has led dozens of as a service business transformations for some of the largest technology and industrial companies globally. Now let's get to today's episode.

Kevin Dobbs [00:01:03] Thanks again for tuning in today to our X-as-a-Service Files podcast, and I'm continuing my conversation with Jeff Laue, the founder and CEO at N3. So, again, your perspective on this would be pretty interesting in that as many of these companies are pivoting more to these digital sales and marketing models, and especially in B2B, I see a lot of companies are starting to get into new territory. What's the importance of kind of working with partners to help you through that transition? I know you kind of touched on I had a little bit earlier on one of the segments, you know, what recommendations would you have?

Jeffrey Laue [00:01:49] I think partners have always been important to any B2B sell, right, if you think about it, everybody makes a product. But, you know, whether you're whether your product is a pen, you know, you need a partner that makes the box that then ships the product and those are all partners, in essence. If we're back in our world of software and technology, when the world was supply side, you had every reseller imaginable and every disty doing fulfillment and then you have partners that would always do, you know, Accenture, the system integration and consulting to make the product work in the environment. And now we fast forward to where we're in this digital transformation, partners are even more important, because the solutions are changing so fast where they fit, nobody knows. So you both need a partner that if you're you know, if you have a product, whatever, whatever it might be and you want to sell into healthcare or you want to sell into the legal field, depending on the size of the organization that's selling the product, you need that partner for access. You need that partner for industry experience. And most of all, you know, everything is about trying to build a differentiated product and partners in those environments, whether it's software, whether it's document scanning, and both of those, whether it's, you know, basic shipment of goods, the partner can help you create a new unique offering that makes you more valuable, more sticky to your clients where they don't go to your competitor.

Kevin Dobbs [00:03:38] Yeah, well, it's interesting, one of our prior guests was talking a lot about companies now trying to figure out what what's chorded their business versus what isn't and trying to spend more of their time and effort on what really differentiates them. You know, conventional wisdom would say sales and marketing is probably not something typically you would outsource but or find a partner to help you with. But I know N3 would probably disagree with that. I know in my experience, we've seen lots of examples of companies leverage partners to kind of just as you said, go into vertical markets to do differentiated types of selling, let's say the client isn't really good at. Are there specific things, areas kind of in the sales and marketing realm where you see partners kind of really helping companies who are transitioning into these new models?

Jeffrey Laue [00:04:36] Yeah, and I think you hit the nail on the head and everybody sees sales and marketing as a core. But for years, all companies have, first of all, kind of outsourced or used partners. Right. If you're General Electric, in the days we used to work with them, they would use partners or disties to get turbine motors into power plants and complete the configuration. If you were every software company in the world or ecosystem, you'd need a partner that could go in and help you grow faster by being able to configure the software. And then you need a partner that could work in this area of the business. And now we fast forward the world to digital transformation. You know, I can talk in terms of partners that help companies that are selling products that enable that. But I'll talk in terms of, you know, partners that help companies change their front office. So we gave the example of a very large multibillion dollar, I did earlier, system integrator consultancy,. We helped them transform their whole their whole sales approach when COVID hit. You know, nobody was doing anything and they weren't going to the clients and they weren't working on messaging. And their you know, their Marketo was not integrated right with their software. And so they brought us in. Today even where, you know, sales is very much a core function. I agree with that. But where companies like N3 come in and never, never go away often are, you know, we can come in and we meet clients where they want to buy and where they have their needs. You know, if you're having problems with your strategy, we would come in and help them with their strategy. If they're to the point where they think they have an inside sales function, but they're not sure they can scale quickly enough in this region, we would scale with the region and then we would go away. The thing that we always see is that there's always a hybrid model, right? Where when we went in and worked with the client, we would enable the direct sales force, but then we would keep going in a motion. And oftentimes we'd end up would be when we'd bring a new product to the new market because we could be more agile or we'd find that after years of doing it, we're still outperforming the direct sales inside sales force because they management and leadership and they they'd have higher churn rates of employees than we did. And so there's there's there's always there's always a need for partners in the front office. And then there's always a need in any B2B in whatever kind of good you sell. You probably I mean, if you're selling office supplies and you're the manufacturer of paper, you're that you still have local providers that are combining that with furniture, combining that with supplies. Of course, you have to compete against Amazon, but there are those suppliers of those products have the partners provide value add on a local level?

Kevin Dobbs [00:08:06] Yeah, I mean, agree about the you've got to kind of meet your your customer where they're at or your client where they're at, in fact, we've got a project right now where we're working with N3 and some other capabilities in the firm where we're almost building kind of a separate but equal sales capability to launch some new products into the market. And one of the things that was interesting that our client was telling us is this is a great opportunity for them to learn and see what the new models look like. I know you're N3 is doing some really innovative kind of cutting edge things in the market when it comes to selling. And I know a lot of our clients look at us as kind of an example of what they'd aspire to. And so we're finding doing simple things like even doing brown bags where we're talking about certain types of marketing best practices or sales best practices just to help their teams as they start building some of that muscle inside their organization can be really, really invaluable. And I'm sure, you know, that's not the only time you've ever seen that right?

Jeffrey Laue [00:09:19] No, we've seen that scenario, you know, all all over the place where we where we'd be brought in sometimes were brought in just to help the client with with the obvious, right. Where you're where you brought into the client. And somebody had

taken a kind of a wag, kind of a wild guess as to what what the outcome for potential product in a market could be. And so what did we do? We do something as simple as a what we call a market finder, you know, better than doing market research. We go and try to sell into the market. And then what are the what are the insights that we learn? And so that's one where we're where we could help as a partner. And we've done that even in direct sales force situations.

Kevin Dobbs [00:10:07] That's great. Well, Jeff, I really appreciate your time today. I mean, I think we've learned a lot across kind of a market perspective and then I think we learned a lot from hearing how you built your successful business. And then, you know, this last segment, we've talked a lot about how partners can really help companies who are trying to stand up and scale new digital sales motions. So, thanks for your time and your insights.

Jeffrey Laue [00:10:34] Thank you.

Podcast Intro [00:10:37] Thank you for listening to Accenture's X-as-a-service files, please be sure to visit our podcast web site at Accenture dot com X-as-a-service files that's Accenture dot com slash x-a-a-s-f-i-l-e-s, where you can listen to more conversations with other industry leaders about their vision and perspectives on innovative digital business models. You'll also find more great insights from these leaders on our blogs that accompany each episode. And of course, we always appreciate it when you rate and review the show. Be well. And we'll catch you again on the next episode of the X-a-a-S files, where we'll learn about the next venture in the Digital Transformation Business Journey.

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