Putting people at the heart of design

Going from enterprise-level applications to human-centric mobile applications

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Opportunity

As a company that applies technology innovations for clients, Accenture is driving its own internal agenda to make itself a more digital enterprise across a number of dimensions. One of these dimensions is to bring digitization to Accenture employees in the same ways that they experience as consumers to improve the employee experience. Accenture people consume content and perform their work-related tasks on multiple types of company-issued and personal devices. As mobile devices have become a part of everyone's lives, they are becoming integral to the workplace, also. As a result, employees expect consumer-like, productive and simple ways to accomplish things on their devices.

Recognizing this shift, Accenture's internal IT organization initiated a program to examine how mobile plays a role in Accenture people's overall experience with the company. The program is focusing on capturing common "moments" employees have when interacting with key company systems and simplifying those moments through a mobile platform. The opportunity—and challenge—for internal IT is to move from a complex systems landscape to one that provides unified, integrated services and experiences across websites, devices and touchpoints. It's also an opportunity—and a journey—to go beyond standard

approaches and transform the way mobile apps are developed on an ongoing basis by creatively innovating, designing, developing and delivering.

Solution

An internal IT-led team worked with various IT leadership and functional stakeholders to create a mobile strategy. This initial strategy-setting was done in the context of Accenture's overall mobile IT strategy that relies on several IT programs that are transforming Accenture's technology function from its current model to a digital one. The strategy developed determined core "containers," in essence, mobile apps, that would serve up the "moments" identified as critical to Accenture people to perform in a mobile way.

"The interesting thing," says Gabi Martin, Enterprise Experience Architecture Lead, "is that our mobile apps strategy isn't about specific apps. Our strategy starts with defining 'moments,' such as reporting time or registering for a learning activity. When you start this way, you can bring this thinking to the design. For now these moments will be delivered through mobile apps, but in the future, it could be through some other type of device." In parallel, internal IT is evaluating use cases where developing a responsive solution that leads to a website may be more appropriate than creating a downloadable app.

Design thinking

Accenture has applied design thinking to many IT initiatives, but its use has grown with Accenture's strategic shift to digital solutions in recent years. It's an approach that takes a user-centric view to determine how people do the things they need to do each day. For the mobile apps initiative, project team members pushed the boundaries of design by taking a different approach, that of creating an entire experience rather than creating an app that focuses on a business process or the transaction of tasks. Specifically, the project team's focus has been on designing app experiences that enable action or awareness "moments" that matter most to Accenture people. To do this, the project team looked at how employees use key systems on a daily, weekly and ongoing basis throughout their journeys at Accenture. This information is guiding and prioritizing the opportunities to create employee-focused applications.

Strategy drives prototypes that lay out requirements

To determine the moments that matter to Accenture employees, the project team used human-centric research methods and ideation to work with Accenture employees to identify the most important moments and how to make them more efficient and enjoyable. Moments include such things as connecting with people, needing technical support, reporting time, approving an expense, or registering for a learning activity. The People app, for example, helps an employee who walks into an Accenture office connect with people in a number of ways without initiating any action.

Agile development

An Agile development approach was used to take the core "container" structure created during strategy development for rapid design, prototyping and development. Project team members used analytics generated from holistic platform usage of Web activity to identify top features employees used, and subsequently to prioritize which moments to deliver and which mobile containers to work on. Priorities were adjusted based on real usage and user input. At the same time, team members assembled Web and mobile experiences targeting the different needs of various employee demographic groups. Backstage components, both technical (e.g., Application Programming Interfaces [APIs] and services) as well as non-technology (e.g., food service), were used to enable moments behind the scenes.

Team members worked collaboratively and across functions, letting prototypes drive requirements. "An important aspect of the mobile app initiative," says Kush Jhawar, CIO Lead for Human Resources, "was the team's ability to prototype the experience model quickly and realistically to see how it worked when applying it to real scenarios." At various flex touchpoints, the user interface and features in mobile apps are added or eliminated based on usage results. A growing list of mobile application prototypes has been developed to help the team communicate the enterprise-level experience vision and obtain user feedback for improvement. Most of these prototypes are actual applications today. An important aspect of this development approach is that only a small amount of budget is spent on testing a moment. If it is not successful based on user satisfaction, team members move their focus to a different moment or rethink the moment completely.

Team members continue to iterate on an ongoing basis in an Agile way to further develop experiences and smart capabilities in the mobile apps. They are also exploring how to move from delivering solutions in an Agile way to delivering *experiences* in an Agile way—moving from solution thinking to experience thinking—to address the several channels of an experience that can include physical, digital and human interactions.

Design Thinking at Accenture

Today	Tomorrow
Business and technology centric	People and experience centric
Waterfall	Iterative and agile
Individual workers	Collaborative, cross-functional teams
Requirements drive prototypes	Strategy drives prototypes that lay out requirements
Feels like work	Feels like (serious) play

Accenture's mobile app big picture and the layers of moments

To enable all of this to happen, the underlying technology is being transformed from the current IT platform into a software-as-a-service platform that includes an experience architecture layer. This new layer is needed to enable experiences to be built into mobile apps and websites and to enable the apps to start consuming source services (via APIs), such as software-as-a-service and platform-as-a-service. The team is also enabling persons with disabilities with a platform that significantly enhances their ability to interact with the company using the persons with disability features on mobile operating systems, such as text to speech.

Results

Accenture's mobile apps journey is both innovative and challenging, as the team members involved adopt and mature new ways of designing, developing and delivering mobile apps to the workforce. A year into an ongoing journey, nearly all planned mobile apps have been released, yet continue to evolve on the experience maturity trajectory. "Initiative success is measured based on the satisfaction of our people," says Randy Wandmacher, Organization Change and Employee Experience Lead. "It is not based on the IT investment."

Accenture's mobile app approach obsessively focuses on increasing employee productivity and satisfaction "in the moment." Team members are primarily focusing on app download and usage metrics and ratings to determine their priority areas of focus and where they will change and evolve over time. Accenture has adopted the approach that its mobile apps will evolve and change as users' needs and perspectives change, and Accenture must be nimble and ready for that journey.

As a part of the journey Accenture is also balancing the need to keep its data secure while providing easy access to moments in a mobile way. In order to protect Accenture's data, the company controls access to its mobile apps catalog via a mobile device management (MDM) solution. This means that before any individual can download an app on their device, they must enroll their device to gain access to the catalog. To further drive adoption of mobile apps, Accenture is moving from embedding security at the device level (MDM) to embedding it into the app themselves using mobile application management technology (MAM).

As the initiative advances, Accenture's app ecosystem is reducing the company's systems footprint, supporting increases in productivity, agility and employee satisfaction, and helping enhance employees' professional lives. Progress is also being made in creating unified, integrated services and experiences at Accenture across websites, devices and touchpoints as employees accomplish things using multiple types of devices.

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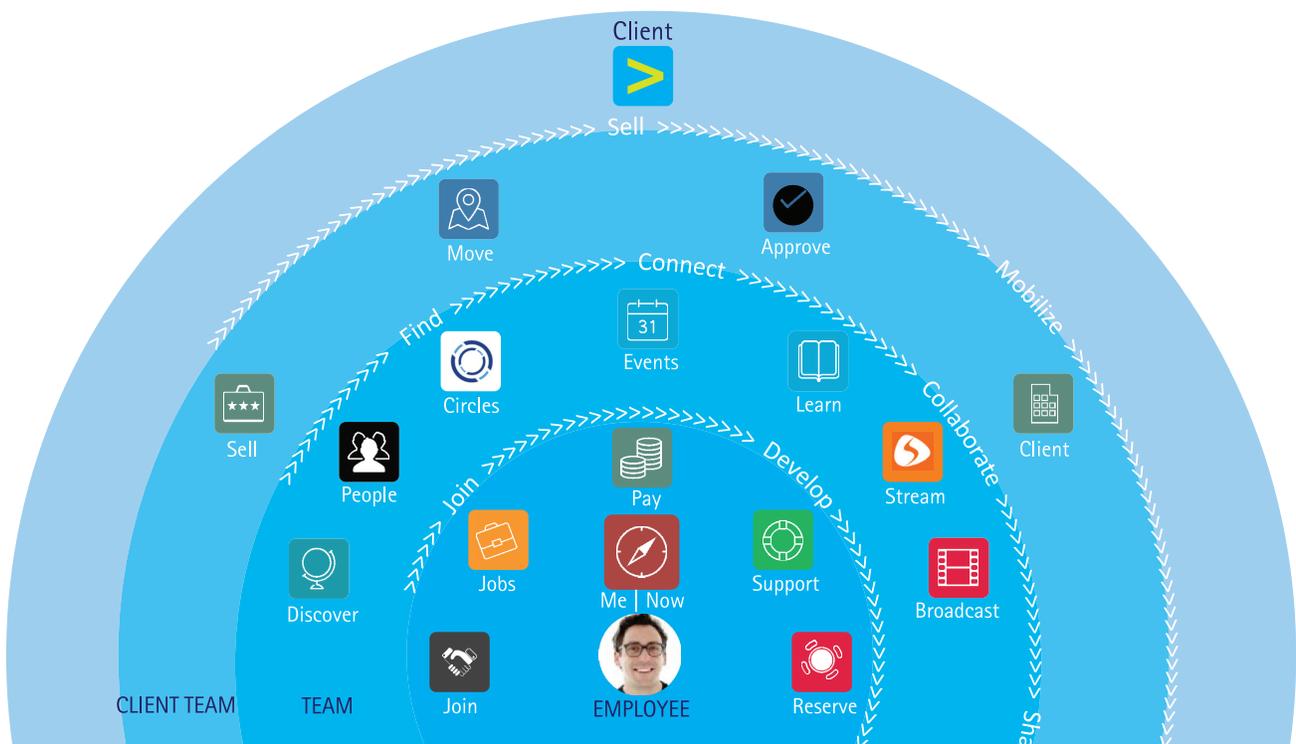
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