Accenture's journey to master data management underpins business quality, speed and flexibility

High performance. Delivered.

Opportunity

For forward-thinking organizations, accurate master data—an organization's single source of basic business data used across multiple applications and processes—has become a strategic imperative in the drive to achieve high performance and a key element in driving a digital agenda. To achieve accurate master data, organizations must develop a capability to manage unprecedented volumes of data in an integrated way with rigorous maintenance and governance processes to maintain quality.

For Accenture, the need for a robust master data management (MDM) capability was driven by two main factors. The first was by the need for improved data quality to address new Sarbanes-Oxley requirements and data inconsistency driven by point-specific needs within silos without appropriate governance and controls. The second was the challenges faced in the limited agility to support the company's ever-changing business, such as management reorganizations, new focus areas in the market, and ventures, acquisitions and divestitures. Both business and IT leaders recognized the need to create an MDM capability to eliminate the long lead time to manage master data changes and address quality issues.

The journey to an MDM capability began with the implementation of SAP® as a single instance. Accenture's story is one of the progressive steps Accenture took since those early days to shape MDM to being the prime provider of high-quality, timely master

data. This is the data that today drives Accenture's integrated cross-functional reporting, integrated security model and other core business processes that support the company's business runners and internal functions.

"Operating off of an integrated, centrally managed set of core master data allows Accenture with equal confidence to segment its results globally across geographies and business units to meet external reporting requirements and to dissect its results with analytics to identify risks or predict trends," remarks Todd Harding, Managing Director of Global Operations & Reporting. Accenture shares its experience along to others who seek to take a similar journey.

Solution

Laying the foundation

Transitioning from a private partnership to a global public company gave Accenture the opportunity to create an ERP strategy from a clean slate and lay a new IT foundation. At the time, Accenture made the strategic decision to create a single global instance of its ERP, SAP, to transform all corporate functions, leveraging standard, global business processes and shared services.

Accenture's internal IT organization collaborated with the business to create a finance Master Data Management function that would sit within Accenture's Operations Support for the Enterprise (OSE) organization. Together, OSE teams

deliver production and end-user support for Accenture's ERP operations. Aligned with the Finance ERP capability implementation, the finance Master Data Management function's initial focus was on management and legal organization structures, WBS elements, global chart of accounts, and customer records.

Maintenance functions at each management and statutory node were centralized, supported by new, standardized processes and controls with strong sponsorship from IT and business leadership and active governance representing each stakeholder group. Rudimentary work flow and system input tools supported the maturing teams and processes.

Expansion and integration
With this foundation laid, the next stage in the journey of the development of Accenture's MDM capability was to expand and integrate. As SAP Human Resources and Sales capabilities were implemented, the scope was extended to Career, Competency, Location, and Product data. The MDM capability naturally scaled in cost-effective shared services centers leveraging a follow-the-sun approach to support their respective business and system processes. The team has evolved to nearly 100 specialized employees managing more than 10,000 transactions per month.

A key development during this time was the implementation of a single, integrated data model spanning business processes and applications ensuring one version of the truth. "While the model assures rigorous processes, it also has the flexibility to adjust to the ever-changing reality of the business and to take on board new applications or capabilities," says Steve Collins, managing director of Accenture's Enterprise Data and Finance portfolio. IT resources were charged with designing, implementing and maintaining this integrated data model, collaborating with the OSE and other

business teams to ensure appropriate data definitions, relationships and service levels were in place.

Optimization
With the organization, process and technology foundations in place, the next stage focused on optimization. The MDM team was aligned with the Accenture Operations organization, enabling further scale, cost savings, career development opportunities, sharing of best practices and enhancement of Accenture's go-to-market capability.

Many of Accenture's workflow and request management tools are undergoing a major transformation to leverage ServiceNow, a cloud-based, platform-as-a-service solution for Enterprise Service Management that is digitally enabling Accenture's end-to-end service management process. The solution is automating the MDM request fulfillment process with real-time validation and seamless integration and master data creation across Accenture's ERP, leading to a faster turnaround with higher quality and less effort.

Results
Accenture's MDM capability has evolved from simple beginnings to one that is a critical component in supporting Accenture's growth strategy. The lead time for the processing of master data has been significantly reduced and largely removed from the critical path of reorganization changes, integration of acquisitions into Accenture business applications, and other critical business events. Data quality and cost-to-serve are significantly improved.

"Process rigor, automation and organization optimization is providing the business with greater agility and confidence in data and reporting than ever, enabling the team to rotate from the provision of basic transaction services to critical business advisory services," says Matt Foulger, Managing Director of Accenture MDM Operations.

As Accenture's MDM journey continues, the team looks to bring in additional functions and enhance technologies even further, especially in areas of analytics and artificial intelligence.

About Accenture
Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions—underpinned by the world's largest delivery network—Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With more than 394,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at www.accenture.com.

12460175