

EUROPEAN ENERGY SUPPLIER:

ENABLING AMAZON
ALEXA FOR VOICE-ACTIVATED
CONSUMER ENERGY
ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT




accenture

ACCENTURE COLLABORATED WITH A MAJOR EUROPEAN ENERGY SUPPLIER TO CREATE THE FIRST VOICE-ENABLED SMART HOME SERVICE FOR UTILITY CUSTOMERS IN THE CLIENT'S HOME COUNTRY.

CLIENT PROFILE

The client is a major European energy supplier. In addition to supplying electricity and gas to customers in its home country, the company generates electricity through nuclear, coal, natural gas and renewable sources.

OPPORTUNITY

The client (a tier one supplier) wanted to improve its digital brand strategy and develop a new voice channel combined with an Amazon strategic partnership. One of the ways it intends to achieve these goals is by delivering unique solutions and highly satisfying, multi-channel customer experiences and interactive connected home services.

Recently, in response to changes in customer perceptions around digital interactions with utilities—especially within the connected home arena—the client's innovation division set out to explore the possibility of introducing a voice-enabled smart home service that could enable a digital channel shift and allow customers to interact with the energy supplier without having to use a computer, phone, or laptop. The team operationalized an existing proof of concept based

on Amazon's home device, Echo, and the backend, natural language processing product that powers the Echo voice service, Alexa. The success of this connected home prototype strongly suggested that the Echo/Alexa solution could voice enable a number of customer inquiries and interactions with the client.

For help in fully developing the Echo/Alexa solution for utility customers in its home country, the client turned to its digital engagement partner, Accenture. Accenture was selected based on numerous factors, including its digital capabilities (such as web and mobile platforms); its agile delivery capability; and a strong combination of exceptional delivery credentials and deep business process knowledge of the client and the utilities industry.

SOLUTION

While Accenture had successfully collaborated with the client on a number of digital projects in the past, the launch of the Echo/Alexa service presented a unique challenge. The client sought to introduce an innovative, market leading, and customer-centric

voice-enabled user experience, one that would position it as a pioneer in the digital utility market of its home country. Furthermore, the company needed to launch the solution in just two months, to coincide with Amazon's rollout of its Echo device in Europe. This gave Accenture a limited time to mobilize resources across geographies with voice user interface (VUI) and AWS capabilities.

The Accenture team quickly deployed digital experts from the Accenture Global Delivery Network, as well as experienced professionals from Accenture Digital, Consulting, and Technology to industrialize the Echo/Alexa service as quickly as possible. The team's main goal was to build a fully functioning "skill"¹ that would enable customers to carry out hands-free interactions. Accenture, in close collaboration with the client, carried out all key components of the project—design, build, test, deployment, and post go-live support. Key aspects of collaboration included:

- Daily discussions with the product owner and agile team members, as well as weekly sprint reviews to demo progress.
- Extensive collaboration with Amazon as a launch partner and an independent security testing company.
- Strong collaboration with key client stakeholders to ensure backlog refinement, prioritization, and delivery using distributed agile across teams in the UK and India delivery centers.
- Supporting the client in prioritizing functionality (intents) in the backlog to achieve a minimum viable product within four sprints (two months).
- Leveraging a deep understanding of the client's architecture to build a new innovation system (Alexa) via APIs (application programming interfaces), integrated in real-time with the SAP system of record.

Throughout the project, the client and Accenture worked together closely, leveraging Amazon's assistance and expertise, to ensure the solution was meeting expectations and certification requirements. The client and Accenture worked to achieve project success through key tenets of collaboration, including:

- Rapidly mobilizing teams across the UK and India within a two month go-live timeline, assisted by a scrum methodology.
- Upskilling the teams in Amazon Web Services and hosting the solution on the Accenture Development Operations Platform.
- Combining functional knowledge with the voice interface to deliver innovative solutions.
- Leveraging a US platform for build and test before moving to the client's home country and achieving first-time Amazon certification.

RESULTS

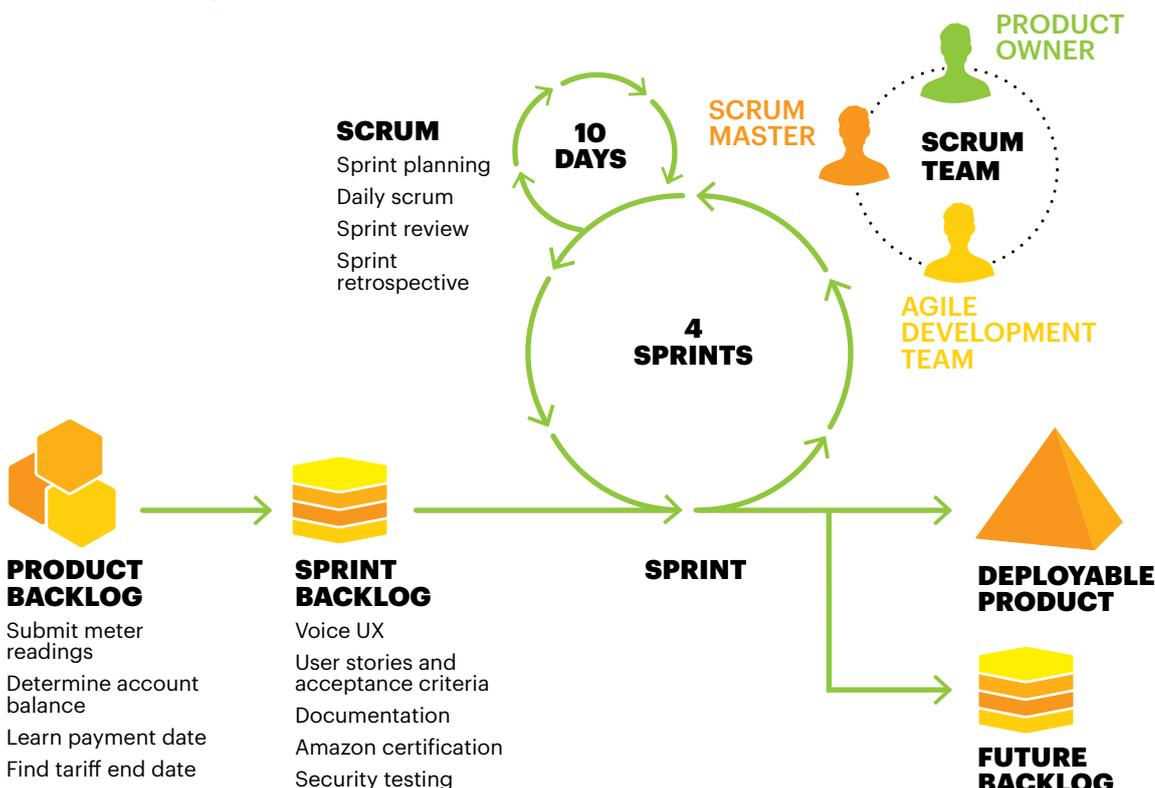
With Accenture's help, the client built a production-quality Echo/Alexa connected home solution in just six weeks. The solution passed the Amazon app store certification² on the first attempt, including a security vulnerability assessment by an external vendor. The high-quality product was launched and received positive client feedback, a testament to the collaborative delivery process. The client is one of the first blue chip companies (and the only utility) to be involved in the launch of Echo products in its home country.

As a result of the project, the client's customers now have the opportunity to take advantage of several customer portal activities, in a hands-free, voice-enabled, interactive way, to:

- Submit meter readings.
- Learn their account balance.
- Learn their next payment date.
- Learn their tariff end date.

Shortly after its launch in the client's home market, the client's "skill" (acknowledged by Amazon to be complex and unique) had logged 600 unique customer views and 20 customer ratings within its first few months of deployment, averaging 4.2 out of 5 stars. The project has helped secure the client's reputation as an innovative energy retailer and connected-home leader, positioning the client for a significant uplift in brand strength and supporting its digital mission of becoming a first mover in the connected home space. Furthermore, the engagement has positioned the client to better deflect call center costs through the increasing use of self-serve channels by customers. The client is now determining how to best bundle their products with the Echo device to attract new customers. In all these ways, the simple, easy, and intuitive connected home service is bringing the client's digital strategy of "making energy easy" to life and setting a new standard for customer service and engagement in the utility industry of the client's home country.

ALEXA—HOW WE DELIVERED



REFERENCES

1 Alexa provides a set of built-in capabilities, referred to as skills. For more information, see <https://developer.amazon.com/public/solutions/alexa/alexa-skills-kit/getting-started-guide>.

2 Once a new skill has been certified and published, users can see it in the Amazon Alexa App and enable it for use with their devices—<https://developer.amazon.com/public/solutions/alexa/alexa-skills-kit/docs/publishing-an-alexa-skill>.

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