



# **SAP ARIBA**

CIO 24/7 Podcast:  
Accenture innovates its  
procurement experience in  
moving to cloud-based SAP  
Ariba Procure-to-Pay

## **CIO 24/7 Podcast: Accenture innovates its procurement experience in moving to cloud-based SAP Ariba Procure-to-Pay**

**Chris Crawford:** Welcome to the CIO 24/7 Podcast bringing you the latest updates from Accenture's internal IT organization. I am your host, Chris Crawford and today I have SAP Ariba IT Program Lead, Eli Lambert and Finance Corporate Services and SAP and IT Portfolio Lead, Steve Collins with me to discuss Accenture's migration of procure to pay services to cloud based SAP Ariba. We'll talk about some of the changes in procurement and what this is enabled with us. Thanks for joining me Steve and Eli.

**Steve Collins:** Thanks for having us, Chris.

**Eli Lambert:** Thanks Chris.

**Chris Crawford:** So, procurement, I'll admit that I don't pay a whole lot of attention to procurement. What's exciting, what's new? What has changed here with procure to pay processes?

**Steve Collins:** So, Chris, Accenture is a pretty unique situation in our scale of 400,000 plus employees and most of them have the ability to buy stuff. That's not common in many companies. So, we have a little challenge to get our arms around that and drive the spend to our preferred places and our contracted pricing. And what's new and exciting is the capabilities that Ariba has recently launched just last year going general availability with their guided buying capability, that we can take advantage of their cloud based software as a service offering with a look and feel like our employees are used to seeing out on the internet to go explore for the things they need to buy but still have that process backing of the, that we want as Accenture and excellence to manage our procure to pay.

**Chris Crawford:** Ok, that's interesting, so did we, so, it is more of a store based front? I remember before I could go in, search for vendors or particular products and it would guide me that way but it was admittedly a fairly old school interface. Is it, will I see different things as a user and what are some of the different things that the procurement agents and the finance guys are going to see in the back?

**Steve Collins:** Yeah, it is very much going to be a new look and feel. I'll hand it over to Eli to talk further on it but you're right Chris, it is going to feel like our employees see when they go to eBay, it is going to feel like what they see when they go to Best Buy, right, which is actually what we have to compete against. We want our employees to use our preferred pricing, we need to be as easy and as obvious as them stopping at Best Buy on the way home from work and charging in a higher price.

**Eli Lambert:** That's right. So, Chris, I would say that the game changed for Ariba with their recent general availability of guided buying. Right. This is the capability that put our Accenture Procurement Organization kind of over the decision point to go forward with this and it's an experience platform. It is going to be a platform that influences and changes the behavior of our you know, 400,000 potential buyers so that we can drive the purchasing activity, you know, on to our platform and really direct and get to whether it is catalog and contract spend is that kind of primary benefit.

**Chris Crawford:** That's interesting. So, I guess this deployment, tell me more about the deployment. Was this a shift in thinking that originated from procurement or was this just availability of new things or what was, maybe tell me about the genesis of the change here and how we went about it.

**Eli Lambert:** Excellent. So, a couple of years ago, our procurement organization was putting together a refresh of their procurement strategy for the enterprise. And as this, one of the elements of that company mall, right, as that more consumer like experience was out there and Ariba's guide to buying played perfectly into that. And so, I think, the strategy and a component of that, that company mall type of experience meeting the technology availability was important. I think to go forward from that, you know, our deployment is really a team effort as you'd expect from many of our CIO recently implementations. So, procurement, CIO partnering together as we do on setting that up, locking in the investment. Our technology and operations go to market teams are actually playing a significant role on our teams here bringing expertise together and then of course we are partnering with SAP Ariba themselves, especially where we are doing some of the newer capabilities making sure that we have the right skills and expertise and we are even providing our feedback on co-innovation opportunities going forward. So, obviously, that kind of array of skills and experience is essential to deliver a P to P solution like this as Steve said, really tailored for the scale and complexity of Accenture. We

are doing this together for about a two-year deployment to get to our 55 plus countries and 400,000 users and one of the things that we'll see as we go through this is we've got multiple region waves, right, so that we're mitigating any business or technical risks as we go forward. We are able to learn from our early waves and get some optimizations in there so that we, you know, continue to run forward with a better and better experience and overall solution.

**Chris Crawford:** Cool. I mean, any, so we are part way, we've got the technology implemented and we are part way through a worldwide deployment. Is that accurate?

**Eli Lambert:** Perfectly. Yep, that's exactly right.

**Chris Crawford:** And any interesting gotchas along the way, you know, in the early regions that we've made adjustments to or has it gone kind of according to plan?

**Eli Lambert:** Well, overall, I would say that the noise level is very low, right, and so we haven't gotten any of the big things wrong. But I think some of the early indications and we've been doing both user surveys and we've also been doing some sessions with recent kind of frequent purchasers and kind of got into the, their experience in some of these things and you know, a lot of what we look at in terms of you know, whether it is speed or acceleration of being able to get a purchase in the door and in the team's hands so they can actually leverage that, a lot of that kind of speed and experience items are definitely trending up which is very encouraging and I think we, especially from a finding a right thing to buy and getting navigated to the right channel, I think guided buying is playing a plus and a benefit to that. Obviously, with any change, some of the communications and what they look like and what they are asking you to do, some of that is always a bit of a learning curve and so we are working with teams to understand, you know, feedback on what we can do to communicate, you know, actions better and those sort of things, but I think, you know, no major noise. We are getting kind of acceleration and benefit or feedback on it is easy to use, it is easy to navigate. Then, obviously, working to make sure our messages are clear. And the one other thing I would say is, just in the early, you know, driving to our target benefit, just in the early days, we are seeing a lot of activity and increased activity actually directed to some of the content and catalogs that we're maintaining and making available to users and so that, that early movement and behavior of buying on catalog was something that we have there easy to search and see pictures for and just point and click is exactly the behavior that we are driving. So, we are seeing some of that in our early results as well.

**Chris Crawford:** Yeah, that's interesting just because I know when you go from an interface that had been around for a long time organized around your power users and then you go to something that is targeted more at the wider audience, sometimes those power users get into a bit of an innovators dilemma problem where the power users get frustrated because you've changed their world but it is good to hear that, that this has been, the new process has been helping people all around. I guess maybe final question here about what sort of results are we seeing or how are you guys measuring the success of the overall program and do you have any early results that you could share?

**Eli Lambert:** Yep. So, you know, one of the things that we set out forth is, you know, what are those key operational metrics that, you know, our procurement organization needs to make sure that they are running kind of at pace and meeting their commitments both to our vendors but also our different client teams. And so, we've put those out there and we are definitely tracking to find a set of metrics around turnaround time and volume and exceptions and that sort of thing. You know, one of the other things we'd say is that it is really important to get this behavior where we are driving more and more of those users exactly as you described Chris, those decentralized and you know, non, kind of core power users getting to follow the opportunities and the content that we have available for them. Because, really, what we are looking at is over a horizon and we typically invest in a three-year horizon and we can see an opportunity of \$20 plus million of really driving that behavior and moving onto you know, the really, it is a negotiated content, right, that our procurement teams and sourcing leads you know, in all the different categories say, hey, here are the best opportunities, the best prices that we can negotiate if we can navigate our users in volume, right, to that kind of purchasing, we will further drive that savings. And the last thing I would say is, you know, this is a platform, right, and like any –

**Chris Crawford:** Everything is a platform now. Come on.

**Eli Lambert:** It is. And as a cloud platform, you have those future opportunities to further connect in with marketplaces or other kind of industry, you know, industry innovation that you know, as a single IT shop we

would never be able to compete with, you know? So, these are some of the things that we are excited about looking ahead.

**Chris Crawford:** Fantastic. I think that's a great way of closing this off, Steve, unless you have any final words or wanted to get a word in edgewise.

**Steve Collins:** Thanks Chris. I appreciate the opportunity to share what we are doing here. It is procurement but actually it is kind of exciting.

**Chris Crawford:** You read my mind. Thanks a lot and thank you to the listeners for sitting through another CIO 24/7 podcast. I'm Chris Crawford and with me today was SAP Ariba IT Program Lead, Eli Lambert and Finance Corporate Services and SAP IT Portfolio Lead, Steve Collins. We were all discussing Accenture's migration of procurement services to cloud based SAP Ariba. Be sure and check out the previous episodes on the CIO 24/7 podcast series and subscribe.

# # # #

## 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 approximately 401,000 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](http://www.accenture.com).

Copyright © 2017 Accenture  
All rights reserved.

Accenture, its logo, and  
High Performance Delivered  
are trademarks of Accenture.