



Three things ecosystem experts get right

Discover what it takes
to lead disruption

Accenture Strategy

It is no small feat for a business to single-handedly navigate disruption in today's complex business climate. This is why ecosystems are taking off.

Most companies recognize the need to implement new business models to address, or even lead disruption. According to Accenture Strategy research, 60 percent of executives say ecosystems are the way to do it.¹

Businesses can use ecosystems to make strong market plays that drive disruptive growth. The opportunity is staggering. Ecosystems could unlock \$100 trillion of value for business and wider society over the next 10 years.² However, few businesses have fully capitalized on the opportunity, claiming the role of “ecosystem expert.”

Many ecosystems currently don't live up to their potential. A third of executive respondents target revenue growth of 5 percent or more with their ecosystem plays. Only 12 percent achieve this growth.³ This begs the question: What are the experts leading ecosystems getting right?

Ecosystems could unlock \$100 trillion of value for business and wider society over the next 10 years.

What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem is a network of partners within or across industries that collaborate (and compete) to provide services that satisfy customer needs and enable a seamless end-to-end experience.

An ecosystem is defined by the depth and breadth of potential collaboration among a set of players. Each can deliver a piece of the consumer solution or contribute a necessary capability.

The power of the ecosystem is that no single player need own or operate all components of the solution, and that the value the ecosystem generates is larger than the combined value each of the players could contribute individually.



Data collaboration

Experts see a win, not a weakness

Most businesses have abundant data within reach, but it is the ecosystem experts who truly seize it for insights. Our research found they have figured out how to best share data with their partners. Non-experts, on the other hand, tend to share too little. In today's environment where data is currency, 92 percent of ecosystem non-experts are concerned about sharing company assets, competitive advantage and intellectual property.⁴

They worry about sacrificing confidentiality. Some fear their data may be abused. And as many companies show up in the news for being hacked, no one wants to become the next headline.

More data, more insights

Companies use analytics to get to insights. The richness and depth of those insights increases exponentially when coupled with data from outside of the enterprise. Ecosystem experts are able to better integrate with others in the ecosystem—they marry and expand their data set with partners to enhance analytics.

Virtually all experts (97 percent) describe themselves as data-driven companies.⁵ Ecosystem experts successfully leverage data from multiple stakeholders across the ecosystem—suppliers, competitors, customers, peers and service providers—to achieve better insights.

For instance, Spanish bank BBVA is masking consumer data and making it available to partners in the ecosystem to drive superior consumer insights and create mutual benefits. The bank made its application programming interfaces (APIs) available to businesses. When developers access customers' financial data, they can create new customer-led services and improve users' digital experiences. The bank expects that sharing its APIs could lead to new customers and loan originations.⁶

Establishing boundaries

Experts understand that controlled sharing of data is key to success. They have a comprehensive data strategy and management plan. A vast number of

experts (77 percent) share data with some restrictions within the ecosystem.⁷ More control means less risk. Furthermore, not everyone should see everything at all times.



Ready, set, go: Connecting ecosystem data

Blockchain—a digital ledger that can be stored across multiple computers—is quickly gaining traction as the vehicle for data sharing across partners. For instance, the healthcare industry is using blockchain to store medical records and enable permissioned data sharing across relevant parties, such as patients, providers, insurers and pharmacies. Industrial equipment companies are using blockchain to improve transparency across the manufacturing ecosystem, serializing all parts and finished products and sharing that data to improve product authenticity and quality, even streamlining recall management.

Blockchain can reduce or eliminate costs associated with data sharing. Having a shared source of truth minimizes the need for costly reconciliations between parties.

Ecosystem platform co-development

Experts build a launch pad for value

Platforms are the lifeblood that enables ecosystem partnerships to easily collaborate and thrive—and they cannot be created alone. Successful platforms start with a smart foundation to build partner interest and investment, accelerating adoption and expansion.

The richer the partner ecosystem, the more successful the platform. Ecosystem partners drive and accelerate the reach and scale of the platform. They increase the opportunities of the platform by beginning with a compelling business case and monetization strategy, ensuring sustainable investments and participation.

And they drive innovation through the collective power of their data, talent and expertise.

Ecosystems experts (64 percent) recognize the importance of choosing the right technology platform to support the ecosystem, compared to 36 percent of non-experts.¹⁰ Experts also look for a technology partner that is going to be a collaborative player in creating the platform.

Better together

Those pursuing ecosystem opportunities may find they are not able to design and develop a robust platform on their own. Hence the need to promote development of a platform that allows ecosystem partners to collaboratively build the necessary elements.

Joint development of a platform requires an open, collaborative mindset among all participants.

All must understand that each ecosystem participant is part of the platform, but doesn't necessarily own it. The platform should meet the needs of the collective entity. Trust, comfort, commitment and confidence are essential ingredients to creating a mutually beneficial platform.

Getting to outcomes

As with ecosystems, platforms are not built overnight. A pragmatic process will lead the way:



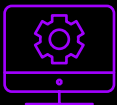
Create the team

The company convening the platform should begin with a small number of selected partners. The first circle of partners should focus on innovation, new experience creation and insight generation.



Define the rules

Experts collaboratively define up front what success looks like for the platform. They determine the platform requirements and outline what is a fair exchange of value, such as the balance of risk/reward negotiated by the ecosystem partners.



Build it

After joining the right partners and identifying the right parameters, the ecosystem participants should find or co-build a platform that meets the outlined needs. There should be a natural convener that sets the tone for collaboration and has the gravitas to pull in peers and establish enough traction so that others will join.



Scale it

When scaling a partner ecosystem, think beyond the platform. Collaboration across stakeholders and growth of the developer ecosystem hinge on high quality, innovative and readily accessible content; usability of the platform; and partner marketing—segmented, targeted outreach powered by analytics.

Platform progress

Platforms power the ecosystem, allowing all participants access to new offerings and capabilities, expanded revenue pools and greater efficiencies. The data amassed and shared from platform participants drives insights into the developer and user base to increase value of the common platform. For developers, the platform provides opportunities to monetize investments and developments.

Adobe's I/O platform is a developer ecosystem and community. By allowing access to developer tools and APIs for all Adobe products, Adobe is tapping into a broader base of talent and capabilities to power its product suite.¹¹

The Square payment platform allows beauty salons, food trucks, electricians and more to process payments seamlessly. Square's software developer's kits (SDKs) and APIs are free for developers to use. Customers benefit from out-of-the-box thinking and innovation, and they enjoy freedom from legacy applications.¹²

Platforms power the ecosystem, allowing all participants access to new offerings and capabilities, expanded revenue pools and greater efficiencies.



Master the ecosystem culture

The most successful in the ecosystem are those companies who embrace an ecosystem culture. Only then are they able to manage strategic, systematic and programmatic collaboration across the key capabilities that enable an ecosystem—data sharing, talent pooling and building the platform.

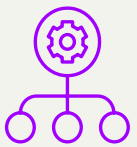
Ecosystems are here to stay. There are experts seizing the opportunity, and non-experts who are missing out on the full potential of ecosystems. Which will you be?

Learn from the ecosystem experts and pursue bolder approaches to seizing the ecosystem opportunity:



Adopt the mindset

Embrace the notion of collaboration. Most experts (77 percent) are open to partnering broadly in a variety of areas.¹³



Lead from the top

Garner commitment from senior leaders who will commit time and resources to building a successful ecosystem. Clearly define a role for leading the ecosystem—62 percent of experts have the CEO responsible for the ecosystem strategy.¹⁴



See beyond four walls

Sharing equals succeeding. More than half (61 percent) of experts are consistently looking across the value chain for opportunities to collaborate because they understand the value at stake.¹⁵ Be willing to share data to gain better insights and talent to build stronger capabilities that win over customers. Share value through co-developed platforms.

References

- 1 Michael Lyman, Ron Ref and Oliver Wright, ["Cornerstone of Future Growth: Ecosystems,"](#) Accenture Strategy, May 11, 2018.
- 2 World Economic Forum, in collaboration with Accenture, ["Digital transformation initiative: Unlocking \\$100 trillion for business and society from digital transformation,"](#) January 2017.
- 3 Michael Lyman, Ron Ref and Oliver Wright, ["Cornerstone of Future Growth: Ecosystems,"](#) Accenture Strategy, May 11, 2018.
- 4 Accenture Strategy Ecosystem Research, 2018.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Mary Wisniewski and Brian Patrick Eha, ["BBVA and B of A move to make data sharing safer, less painful,"](#) American Banker, May 24, 2017.
- 7 Accenture Strategy Ecosystem Research, 2018.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 [About Adobe I/O,](#) Adobe 2018.
- 12 [Square Developer,](#) Square, 2018.
- 13 Accenture Strategy Ecosystem Research, 2018.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.

Author

Olivier Jankelovics

Managing Director, Accenture Strategy,
Communications, Media and Technology

About the research

Accenture Strategy identified 106 ecosystem experts across 13 industries among 1,252 companies surveyed. We looked for companies that plan to lead as many ecosystems as possible, aim to disrupt their industry using ecosystems, and target 5 percent or more growth through their ecosystem initiatives. The companies identified believe for ecosystems to be successful, they require a shared vision and shared performance metrics among partners, and they need to partner differently in ecosystems compared to traditional partnerships to be effective.

About Accenture Research

Accenture Research is a global team of industry and digital analysts who create data-driven insights to identify disruptors, opportunities and risks for Accenture and its clients. Using innovative business research techniques such as economic value modeling, analytics, crowdsourcing, expert networks, surveys, data visualization and research with academic and business partners they create hundreds of points of views published by Accenture every year.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global professional services company with leading capabilities in digital, cloud and security. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries, we offer Strategy and Consulting, Interactive, Technology and Operations services—all powered by the world's largest network of Advanced Technology and Intelligent Operations centers. Our 569,000 people deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity every day, serving clients in more than 120 countries. We embrace the power of change to create value and shared success for our clients, people, shareholders, partners and communities.

Visit us at www.accenture.com.

About Accenture Strategy

Accenture Strategy works with boards, CEOs and C-suite executives to create 360° value for all stakeholders by defining and answering their most strategic business questions—including growth, profitability, technology-driven transformation, mergers and acquisitions (M&A), operating models and sustainability—with insights from AI and data science, combined with deep industry and function expertise.

For more information visit
www.accenture.com/strategy.

Join the conversation

[@AccentureStrat](https://twitter.com/AccentureStrat)

www.linkedin.com/company/accenture-strategy

This document refers to marks owned by third parties. All such third-party marks are the property of their respective owners. No sponsorship, endorsement or approval of this content by the owners of such marks is intended, expressed or implied. This content is provided for general information purposes and is not intended to be used in place of consultation with our professional advisors.