Developers are one of the most valuable constituencies in business today, regardless of industry. A platform company’s developer ecosystem can make or break its success.

Apple’s App Store now offers 2.2 billion apps from which developers earned $20 billion in 2016, up 40% in one year. By the end of 2018, IDC predicts that Salesforce’s ecosystem of partners will have created $272 billion in positive GDP impact and one million net new jobs worldwide. And in the space of six years, developers have propelled Amazon from being an online retail company to becoming the world’s first $1 trillion company. Conversely, Nokia, Research in Motion (Blackberry) and many other former industry titans that have struggled to gain traction with developers now find themselves on the brink of existence.

With the advent of the Internet—particularly the emergence of cloud, open-source and vastly reduced costs for storage, hardware and processing power—developers have emerged from the shadows into the light. They are authors of coded innovation and pioneers in the art of the possible. Recent advances toward API-centric and microservices architecture and programmable infrastructure have expanded developers’ potential exponentially. Their work attracts new users to a platform, which leads to revenue growth, higher market valuation and helping to ensure the continued relevance of your company.

The global developer population is expected to increase to 25 million by 2025. Stack Overflow, one of the largest online communities for programmers, gets a question posted to its forum every eight seconds and receives more than 50 million unique visitors per month. Yet, the pace of technological change and the ever-increasing competitive landscape make attracting and retaining developers challenging. Meeting their specific needs is paramount but tough to do given developers are typically high functioning, self-proclaimed over-achievers (typically multilingual, multi-OS and multi-platform).

Companies that strive to stand out amongst the competition need to build a thriving developer ecosystem, which is committed to the platform’s ongoing success. This requires a unique understanding of the value proposition that the platform offers developers. It also requires designing, launching, managing and optimizing scalable operations that can bring that value proposition to life.
WHO BENEFITS FROM THE ECOSYSTEM?

When a platform has a strong and responsive developer ecosystem, the company, its developers and its users all benefit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVELOPER</th>
<th>PLATFORM</th>
<th>USER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monetize Investment in Development</td>
<td>Growth in Developer Numbers</td>
<td>Differentiated Offerings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer Opportunity to Develop Something Unique</td>
<td>Data-Driven Insights Into Developer &amp; User Base</td>
<td>Continuously Relevant Platform Capabilities</td>
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<td>Collaboration From Peer Developer Community</td>
<td>Increased Future Adoption &amp; Loyalty</td>
<td>Innovative Value Creation/Value Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn New Skills, Improve Existing Skills</td>
<td>Network Effect of Growing Developer Base</td>
<td>Integrated Omni-Channel Experience</td>
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<td>Ability to Grow New Business, Enhanced Revenue</td>
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WHAT DOES A GOOD DEVELOPER ECOSYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

Many companies equate managing a developer ecosystem with exposing a set of APIs, coupling this technology with static knowledge-base content and providing some level of developer support. However, this isn’t sufficient in today’s dynamic landscape. Accenture defines a developer ecosystem as the network of developers that builds products and services on top of an existing platform. It is a living entity with constantly evolving needs. The most innovative and fastest growing companies in the world nurture their developer ecosystem through a comprehensive approach that incorporates content, marketing and support (Figure 1).
**Content** can make or break a developer ecosystem. It has to be written by developers, for developers—straight to the point, and with an uncomplicated design. Content is a many splendored thing, encapsulating case studies, code samples, whitepapers, blogs and tutorials. Documentation on APIs and SDKs needs to be comprehensive and up-to-date. Content delivery is equally critical. Content needs to be available where developers digitally live—in areas such as developer forums and social media.

**Support** is necessary in a variety of ways across multiple channels. Support models should be designed to be flexible, mapping to developer segmentation. Developers need access to sandbox environments, must be able to raise issues with support teams via a number of channels and must be able to rely on continuously updated and accurate documentation. Using artificial intelligence and automation allows a broader base of developers to be handled more quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively while simultaneously enabling a state of continuous improvement.

Building in a tight feedback loop gives engineering insight into performance issues, feature requests and bugs.

**Marketing** is a company’s main channel for attracting developers and success is grounded in how well the platform segments and understands them. The needs of solo developers seeking support once per month are considerably different from those of an enterprise developer visiting daily or an executive at a large IT services company responsible for thousands of developers. Programs such as hackathons and developer days engage developers, provide the opportunity for face-to-face interaction and build developer relationships and emotional connections with the platform.

Analytics enable platforms to effectively extract insights from the developer ecosystem and provide input back to product engineering for feature development and roadmap integration. Analytics and reporting give the platform a continuous pulse on the developer ecosystem that is a valuable source of intelligence for product innovation.
**HOW ACCENTURE CAN HELP**

Accenture’s comprehensive services help companies realize their vision for a developer ecosystem, run it efficiently at scale, reinvent their ecosystem to capitalize on its potential and recruit and engage developers through ongoing marketing and advocacy. Whether a company is conceptualizing, designing and launching a developer ecosystem or operating and optimizing one, we help to build a scalable and sustainable model for success.

Figure 2: How Accenture Can Help

**Realize.** For organizations that are formalizing their developer support Accenture helps in getting started. We analyze the requirements that the developer program must fulfill by using developer input, market research and competitive benchmarking. We define the roadmap, organization structure and technology requirements including the systems, processes, tools, people, success metrics, insights and dashboards needed. We then validate the roadmap from a business case, resource requirement and technology feasibility perspective.

**Run.** Accenture can operate your developer ecosystem for you. We have comprehensive capabilities to build, manage, optimize and track developer ecosystems. We support developers through global 24/7, multi-region, multi-language operations that scale rapidly and flex with demand spikes such as those associated with seasonal platform use or new product releases. We support both live, one-on-one, tier one customer onboarding and broader email and forums, ensuring consistent, high-quality developer experience across all channels.
We continuously improve operations by automating and optimizing workflows. By monitoring developer issues and input we are able to provide feedback to product engineering to resolve issues in future releases and spur innovation.

**Reinvent.** Sometimes platforms need to step back and reinvent their developer ecosystem so that it is sustainable and drives value into the future. Accenture helps you determine how to refine the program. We interview developers about their needs and current support, benchmark against competitors, identify the developers the platform most wants to engage, and formulate a strategy, roadmap and go-to-market plan. We execute the re-launch and ensure that content is up to date, useful and accessible. Once re-launch has occurred, we monitor operations and then transition to either the company’s developer support team or an Accenture managed service.

**Recruit.** For developer ecosystems that are up and running effectively, we work alongside you to identify, onboard and enable developers on an ongoing basis. By segmenting the developer ecosystem, platforms can identify their advocates and create a targeted marketing strategy that leverages advocate enthusiasm. We build and execute plans to foster relationships with developers through events, focus groups, meetups, hackathons and other activities for developers to connect with each other and the company.

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**SCALING DEVELOPER SUPPORT AT A LARGE PLATFORM COMPANY**

A platform company with a portfolio spanning online advertising, app development, consumer hardware and payments was struggling to cope with the scale and diversity of its booming developer ecosystem across its portfolio. Accenture worked with the company to standardize and roll out common tooling, processes, monitoring and reporting across the developer communities.

We are now supporting more than 60 products across three major platforms in 10 languages from three continents.

Services include engaging, evangelizing and motivating developers, delivering developer support services, creating platform adoption accelerators, improving the platform and monitoring and monetizing the platform.

Through process improvements and automation Accenture is handling 30% more cases than the company did seven months earlier with no increase in support engineer headcount. Through cross-skilling and up-skilling of support engineers globally, the team can handle volume spikes without impacting SLAs and quality scores are consistently above 96%.

More than 4,000 field insights have been delivered to product engineering teams of which more than 100 resulted in major product or developer experience improvements.
Accenture helps companies design and operate their developer ecosystems at scale (see “Scaling developer support at a large platform company”). We understand the breadth of what it takes to build and operate winning developer programs. Through this experience we created numerous assets that help our clients accelerate the definition, documentation and scaling of new developer ecosystem capabilities (Figure 3). We bring the breadth of Accenture’s capabilities to our programs including our expansive global operations footprint, advanced analytics and automation, and deep industry and process understanding.

Managing and scaling a flourishing developer ecosystem is critical to platform growth. Accenture Webscale Services for Developer Ecosystems brings global scale, speed and an innovative edge in support of the developer ecosystem. With Accenture as a trusted provider, leaders can stop worrying about current operational issues and focus on what they do best: innovate and disrupt.

**Figure 3: Powering your Developer Ecosystem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVELOPER ECOSYSTEM ACCELERATORS</th>
<th>CAPABILITY FRAMEWORKS</th>
<th>OPERATIONAL PLAYBOOKS</th>
<th>QUALITY GUIDELINES</th>
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<th>WORKFLOW MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE &amp; MACHINE LEARNING</th>
<th>SERVICE &amp; OPS ANALYTICS</th>
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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 425,000 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.