The myBBC Story

Accenture puts security at the heart of myBBC’s digital user experience.


THE MYBBC STORY

In the digital age, the BBC’s mission to ‘inform, educate and entertain’ remains as important as it’s ever been. But how people use the BBC, interact with it online and use digital channels for viewing catch-up content on different devices is a huge change.

myBBC is, in many ways, the future of how all of the BBC’s audience will eventually engage with its content and services. Not only does digital offer the chance to reach and communicate with audiences in many different ways, it also opens the possibilities of building truly one-to-one relationships. And at the core of achieving that goal is the ability to support a unique online identity for every one of the many millions of BBC service users.

Phil Fearnley, Director of Homepage and myBBC outlined this vision, describing a personal BBC tailored to the individual, with identity as the core organizing principle: “We are transforming the BBC online – this time to focus on you, the viewer... So we will invite you to register with us and sign in. By signing in, we will be able to find out about your interests, tastes, preferences and consumption patterns so that we can help you discover more content. We’ll learn from you and recommend things you may love, to bring you even greater value.”

OPPORTUNITY

As the BBC moved forward with myBBC, it became apparent that managing unique user identities at scale would become an ever more critical capability. myBBC achieved its initial launch using an existing identity management solution. But in order to ensure that it could grow in-line with myBBC’s evolution and rapidly rising adoption, the BBC realised it needed a new, next generation identity platform that could also meet new privacy and access requirements.

The new platform would also have to be able to expand and scale as the BBC’s digital user base grows, with frictionless, secure access a key element of the digital customer experience myBBC provides.

SOLUTION

To deliver the new platform, Accenture partnered with ForgeRock, a leading provider of customer-facing digital identity solutions. Following a competitive tender for an internet scale consumer identity solution, the joint proposal was selected in early 2015, and work started in July.

myBBC needs to underpin the whole of BBC online as well as marketing and audience activities. Accordingly, the new identity solution – BBC Account – had to do the same, making sure that everything about the online user experience works seamlessly from user registration and single sign-in. But identity is not simply about access management. myBBC required fine-grained identity capabilities to enable personalisation, multi-device support, parent-child permission settings, portable ‘pick up where you left off’ session management, and advanced consent management to ensure data privacy. These capabilities are all underpinned by the ForgeRock solution, and have been integrated across all of BBC online including BBC News, BBC Sport, BBC Weather and BBC iPlayer as well as on web, mobile and tablets that require sign-in to access content and personalisation features. Users can now personalise and organise their experience in a highly secure environment. An advanced identity capability gives the BBC free rein to develop its digital strategy and extend viewers’ experiences, preferences and choices.

HOW WE DELIVERED

BBC Account was a highly collaborative project. Accenture’s leading digital and security capabilities, the best-of-breed digital identity platform from ForgeRock, and the BBC’s architecture, user experience and front-end expertise formed a powerful delivery team, giving the BBC the skills required, and the confidence it needed to handle users’ personal information.

““The BBC is rapidly transforming their business by securely connecting millions of customer identities across the digital world. Built on the ForgeRock Identity Platform, the new BBC Account delivers the highly personalized, relevant and secure experience to drive digital customer engagement.”

Mike Ellis, CEO of ForgeRock
The ability to support millions of users at once is fundamental. The new platform is designed to handle both a huge volume of users, and sudden peaks in demand in response to specific events on the BBC:

In a matter of minutes the platform infrastructure can automatically scale to many times its business-as-usual capacity.

“We brought the best thinking of Accenture, combining our world-class digital and security expertise, to provide an innovative approach to cloud deployment. This gives myBBC the resiliency, scalability and trusted infrastructure to respond rapidly to unpredictable traffic and user load, while keeping users’ personal data secure.”

Kelly Bissell, Global Managing Director, Accenture Security

Millions of existing user accounts have been successfully transitioned to the new platform

The system supports thousands of user sign-ins, new user sessions and access control decisions every second

Following extensive performance testing and optimisation, the platform has been proven to handle tens of thousands of requests per second in response to peak demand

RESULTS

For the people at the heart of the BBC’s services – its audience– the new BBC Account platform offers much more than just a standard sign in process. Rather than providing a barrier, the BBC’s identify platform is a digital user experience in its own right. The new identity infrastructure implemented by Accenture, ForgeRock and BBC architecture and engineering teams is powering a wide range of new features and capabilities for myBBC viewers, and enabling the BBC to fulfil core tenets of its royal charter. It has the ability to shape a more personalised BBC experience, support users across all of their connected devices while keeping its audience’s personal data safe and secure.

Phil Fearnley summed up the project’s impact: “The BBC Account platform is the backbone supporting a seamless user experience that delivers supreme ease of use and convenience in a personalised, private setting. Together with the BBC, Accenture and ForgeRock have provided the technology that’s enabling us to create 21st century digital experiences for BBC audiences. The BBC Account is a major step in the digital transformation for the BBC, it is the gateway to a better richer and more personalised experience of everything that the BBC has to offer.”

With people based in the UK and India, work began in July 2015 and swift progress was made to launch the new platform in late September. A robust solution, at scale, was essential to handle one of the BBC’s highest-profile digital events: the start of voting for its hit show Strictly Come Dancing. That was one of the first real tests to put the new platform through its paces after launch, when people signed in to vote on the show, creating an instantaneous peak in traffic that placed big demands on the new system.

myBBC’s new identity platform is highly innovative, and its innovation is matched by the technology supporting it and the way that we worked to deliver it. Automation was a key feature of solution deployment, enabling 99.95% availability. We’ve delivered a hugely responsive, future-ready cloud-based infrastructure that is able to resize itself according to the variations in user load. It’s also ‘self-healing’ so that when a problem is detected the infrastructure automatically starts fixing itself. We used an IBM Watson chatbot to manage and deploy infrastructure, which means that the solution can understand commands in human language. And extensive use of standard APIs in the build means new applications can be easily adapted and integrated, creating a seamless transition to the new platform. And this, for example, will give the BBC increasingly sophisticated abilities to enable and restrict new services according to changing licensing requirements over time. It really is a platform built for the future.
ABOUT ACCENTURE

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