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Accenture's customer engagement acquisition strategy is aimed at OneOffice dominance in a virtual world

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Defining Future Business Operations

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Accenture's 20th and 22nd acquisitions of 2020 are enhancements to its impressive customer engagement and operations capabilities. As the firm hustles toward its mission of reimagining business through experience, it has amassed a vast portfolio of assets in digital marketing and content production, sales and marketing operations, as well as customer experience design and strategy, the latest additions being Creative Drive and N3. These recent acquisitions are helping the firm complete its own version of HFS' OneOffice vision for customers, especially as services firms race to help clients transform in a fully virtual environment.

There are very few firms that can deliver on services across the entire customer engagement value chain, and across the continuum from tactical and operational to strategic and creative. A front office design that actually caters to customers in a personalized way and drives business outcomes must be free from siloes, and make insights as well as creative assets easily accessible to present in the right time and place (Exhibit 1). Thus, one of the greatest challenges companies need help with is filling in the gaps between their agency and internal staff for getting content to market with quality and speed. It is increasingly complex to engage with B2B customers effectively across all touchpoints and channels in a personalized way. Accenture has the potential to bridge the gap between design and brand activation, as well as intelligently and cost-effectively execute on the operational pieces of engagement, marketing and sales.

Exhibit 1: The customer-centric digital organization must be free of siloes and aligned to the same outcomes



Source: HFS Research, 2020

CreativeDrive will drive an omnichannel vision for customers

CreativeDrive specializes in rapidly creating content for brands, particularly ‘shoot and capture’ visual content that is done in studios. More importantly, Creative Drive is skillful at managing the complexity of creating and delivering content at scale globally, adding some new geos to Accenture’s delivery and a technology platform for managing the downstream distribution of creative assets. Its geographical footprint is attractive as it pertains to supply chain savings, considering the growth of eCommerce. What’s most interesting about this addition to the portfolio is this idea of generating greater personalization in an omnichannel world — a bit of an elusive target, but given the right connected flow of data and outcome alignment between strategists, creative and production teams, there is potential to generate real top-line impacts, not just spot improvements like click-through rates that many marketers get stuck on.

Service might be the new sales, but premium B2B sales talent is uber valuable... and N3 brings some serious chops

Previously a formidable competitor to Accenture’s sales operations business (a \$1Bn opportunity for Accenture in 2021), N3 (along with the Yesler acquisition back in April), presents a massive opportunity to address the trend that is the rise of B2B inside sales and marketing. N3 brings to the table a unique approach to revenue generation with an outcomes-focused strategy. This company which has previously described itself as an ‘outsourced sales in a box,’ company, takes a mixture of inside sales talent with some secret sauce AI and ML IP, and uses it to deliver sales outcomes for large and mid-market technology firms. The firm is well known for high-value sales in the software world, where it is the largest inside sales provider for Microsoft, but Accenture can potentially take this specialized talent and expertise to apply to B2B sales organizations in other industries.

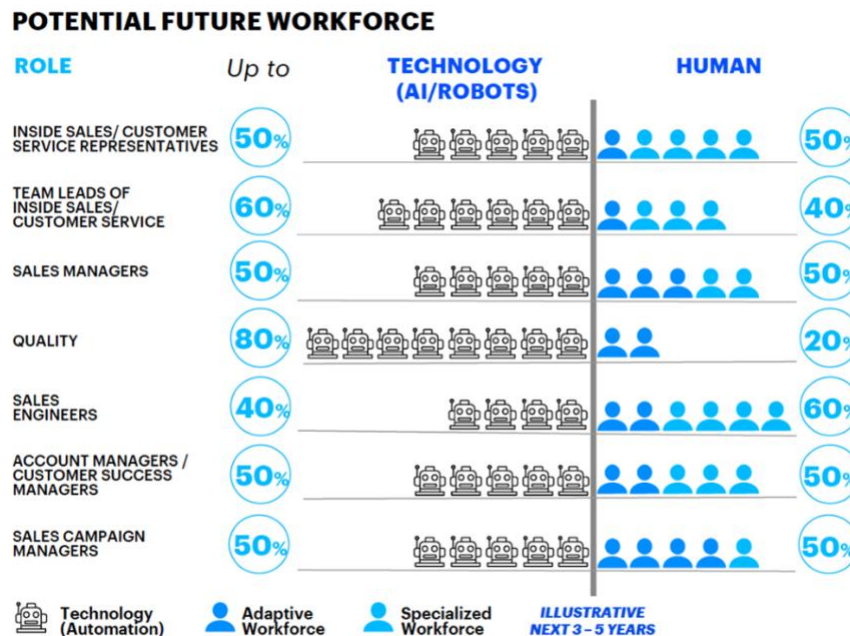
The synergies with SynOps present tremendous opportunity for aligning outcomes in the front office

SynOps has ostensibly been a key platform during the pandemic-induced rapid shift to virtual working and all of the workforce orchestration that went with it, combining the data and visibility into work being performed both by human workers at home and by their digital ‘colleagues.’ Part of SynOps’ appeal has been its prescriptive approach to defining new human and machine roles (see exhibit 1) and how they work together, blending elements of virtual assistant and analytics digital capabilities with adaptive and specialized talent such as knowledge engineers, AI robot supervisors and data scientists, to generate the outcomes akin to that of our OneOffice Experience.

While the strategy isn’t yet crystal clear, integrating plugging these newly acquired assets into the SynOps platform has the potential to enhance and accelerate the insights and outcomes these firms are already producing for customers. Accenture already leverages the collective insights from aggregating and anonymizing almost 1000 clients across multiple offerings and industries along with 3rd party data – as the catalyst to understanding where a client is on their journey and what the opportunities are to improve, and these assets have the potential to expand that journey optimization. Getting N3’s ‘agent cockpit,’ its proprietary sales agent interface, plugged into SynOps could create new feedback loops to improve

operations such as knowing what leads to prioritize, for example. It could also produce deeper insights into the performance of CreativeDrive generated content to get personalized messages to customers on the right platforms. From a vision and culture perspective, both of these newly acquire firms seem to espouse the same talent and technology balanced approach that Accenture excels at.

Exhibit 2: Accenture’s vision for the future digital workforce seeks the right balance of humans and robots



Source: Accenture, 2020

The Bottom Line: Accenture’s newest acquisitions reinforce and expand its experience agency prowess for digital customer experiences

The magnitude of change clients are undergoing in this new fully virtual environment has made it an even greater challenge to maintain the essence of their brand while competing in this ‘have-to-have’ marketplace. While it is not yet clear the level of integration SynOps will get with these two new assets, it is abundantly clear is that Accenture is stitching together a portfolio which addresses the very requirements of a fully virtual OneOffice organization; its blending of creative talent which is well orchestrated and augmented by intelligent automation and the use of real-time analytics for the immediacy of insights are at the core of the OneOffice foundation. And most importantly for buyers across its portfolio of capabilities, Accenture seems to do well at segmenting the offerings into consumable pieces and then connecting them together for customers where appropriate. CreativeDrive and N3 will enhance the outcomes-driven front office vision and ability — N3 for the complex B2B sales world, and CreativeDrive for personalized, rapid, and data-driven marketing — both bolstering that frictionless digital customer experience that is required to survive and thrive in today’s economy.

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2020 DEFINING BUSINESS OPERATIONS IN THE NEXT DECADE

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The HFS mission is to provide visionary insight into major innovations impacting business operations, including: automation, artificial intelligence, blockchain, Internet of things, digital business models, and smart analytics.

HFS defines and visualizes the future of business operations across key industries with our Digital OneOffice™ Framework.

HFS influences the strategies of enterprise customers to help them develop OneOffice backbones to be competitive and to partner with capable services providers, technology suppliers, and third-party advisors.

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