Bringing living services to life

The digitisation of everything is raising customer expectations for products and services that deliver a highly personalised, and predictive experience based on their unique circumstances. It's forcing organisations to reassess how and what they deliver and embrace digital transformation, but it also impacts how they manage change internally.

Service design consultancy Fjord, which sits within Accenture Interactive, specialises in helping organisations adapt.

"All organisations are trying madly to deliver new products and services that meet those customer expectations. They're going through unprecedented change because of things like robotics, artificial intelligence and automation and they're finding the old ways of doing things are no longer adequate, so they're having to transform their whole workforce," says Bronwyn van der Merwe, general manager, Fjord APAC.

Accenture Interactive and Fjord call it 'Living Services'.

"There's a new breed of services being delivered which are very smart, intelligent and start to learn about a customer and adapt around their activities, intents and behaviours. We call them living services," she explains.

All organisations are trying to do it, from government agencies to telcos, banks and consumer organisations, but it's not easy for traditional organisations to deliver these kinds of services.

"For an organisation to deliver a living service is very challenging. They need to have a lot of information about their customer and their behaviours to deliver millions of really beautiful, unique experiences simultaneously," she adds.

The best example is Google, which offers predictive services based on the information and data it has on a user through its various products. For example if there is an event in your calendar, it will use Google maps to tell you how

If businesses want to meet consumers' rising expectations, they need to develop human characteristics, according to **Bronwyn van der Merwe**, general manager of Fjord Asia Pacific, the service design consultancy that sits inside Accenture Interactive.

long your journey will take and if there is any traffic.

"The rising tide of customer expectations is being set by the likes of Google and they're liquid across industry boundaries. Consumers don't look at a bank any differently than Google, and expect the same level of service," she says.

To achieve it takes vast digital transformation, but it's not just products and services that need to be touched by transformation, it's the organisations themselves.

According to latest data, 70% of digital transformations fail - van de Merwe puts a lot of that down to failing to engage internally.

Fjord talks about 'living services' because it means taking on human characteristics and moving away from the traditional top-down management structures most large businesses have.

"We are finding the only digital transformations that are really successful are those that take care of their people. Changing technology and systems is actually quite easy, but changing the human element is hard. Over the last few years CEOs have started asking us to help them with the HR aspects of digital change," she says.

As Accenture Interactive sees it there are four key human characteristics that a living business needs to adopt; personality, instinct, relationships and craft.

"Personality is really about your purpose. We need to find it and hold a megaphone to it because that's going to empower and excite your employees to be a part of the change.

"Instinct is how organisations make decisions. To deliver living services and get through digital transformation you need to be able to pivot quickly and democratise the decision making process.

"Relationships is about how it feels to work in your organisation, and the last one is craft. Every organisation needs to be the best at what it does. Whatever the craft

is, you have to have the very best skills to succeed."

Part of its approach is to put the spotlight on areas of the organisation that might be resistant to change and then create programs that act as catalysts.

"Often, you've got part of the organisation that's trying to change quickly, and you've got parts that are stuck in the old ways of doing things. They need to be taken on the journey," she explains.

Those programmes are things like employee experience engagements that look at an employee lifecycle from recruitment and onboarding all the way through end of year performance reviews.

One project Accenture Interactive is currently working on is an AI chatbot for an HR department. The idea is that it will take care of some of the more mundane queries the HR team handles, freeing up the people in the team to focus on more complex and personal issues.

The reason it's important for companies to embrace this idea of being a living business, is because new generation companies are already doing it, she says. To illustrate the point, she explains that in 1958, the average age of companies on the Standard & Poor 500 index was 61 years old. Now it's 18.

"On that run rate it would mean that by 2027 more than 75% of the S&P 500 will be companies that we've not heard of yet. These digital native organisations are set up with the right characteristics. For legacy companies it's critical to have an inspiring vision of the future. You need to be able to mobilise people, unleash their creative energy and you have to have the culture, the systems and the processes to deliver at this scale and pace." A