



Unlocking hidden value through partnering

Italian broadband provider accelerates business process transformation with innovative three-way partner engagement model

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Aria SpA

Industry: Service provider

Location: Italy

Challenge

- Tighten financial control while also improving procurement process efficiency and enterprise responsiveness

Solution

- Using a 'Partnering with Partners for Business Success' model, Cisco, Accenture and BackFlip developed a cloud procurement solution that enables Aria to monitor and authorise expenditure, remotely and in real-time

Results

- Approval has accelerated by around 60 per cent for purchase orders
- Average response time increased by around 55 per cent
- Solution implemented within just two months

Challenge

Aria is Italy's leading provider of fast Internet and related services using innovative WiMAX (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access) technology. As the only provider with a 3.5GHz national licence across all regions, Aria is uniquely positioned to meet the growing demand for broadband services, in particular helping to bridge the gap between 14 million households currently without connectivity.

As a relatively new and rapidly growing company, Aria is focused on becoming a telecommunications player at national level. However, this strong desire to extend its footprint of mobile base stations has needed to be tempered against a declining global economic environment.

The worldwide financial turmoil drove Aria to tighten control of expenditure and centralise the approval process. But, at the same time, it didn't want to introduce bureaucracy and impede growth or compromise key strengths, such as its responsiveness to market needs and compliance regulations.

As an evolution of its information system transformation program, just after implementing SAP ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) Aria worked with outsourcing partner and systems integrator, Accenture, to carry out an in-depth analysis of its procurement process. The study compared available standard SAP functionalities to Aria's future needs.

It revealed several pain points for the business. From a workflow perspective, purchase requisitions could require as many as 13 different approval decisions. Delays were due to human latency, for example, because people were either out of the office, or were unaware that there was a request sitting on the system that needed their attention.

To meet this business challenge, Aria had to look beyond a traditional vendor relationship. "We needed experts in business processes, collaboration and personalised on-demand communications. Therefore, no one company on its own could provide the complete answer," says Chris Ballard, Head of IT at Aria.

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Solution

Working with Accenture meant that Aria was already well on its way to finding these complementary capabilities. Based on a ‘partnering with partners’ strategic approach, the ACBG (Accenture & Cisco Business Group) was created in February 2009.

The ACBG approach offers clients the best of two industry leaders by combining Accenture’s world-class strategy, technology and implementation professionals – who have industry-specific knowledge of how technology impacts people, applications and business processes to achieve high performance – with Cisco’s advanced and emerging network and unified computing technologies. The aim is to give mutual clients a single gateway from which they can access a much wider pool of expertise and resources, in turn helping to improve their IT project success rates and accelerate time to benefits.

“The Accenture Cisco Business Group effectively enables Accenture and Cisco to work as one virtual entity. In this case, we were able to work behind-the-scenes and take our proven business process and change management thinking and fuse it with Cisco’s advanced collaboration technology know-how,” says Frank Redey, Partner at Accenture.

And, when an exciting on-demand cloud proposition from US-based Cisco Partner, BackFlip sparked Aria’s imagination, they found that Cisco and Accenture were on the same page. BackFlip’s participation in Cisco’s Developer Network program meant that the companies already had a significant head start in terms of knowing each other’s technology and dovetailing internal capabilities and work practices.

“Cisco Developer Network is about enabling growth through open innovation. It offers a fast-growing social networking community of more than 14,000 developers, Cisco engineers, and product managers. It provides a wealth of Web 2.0 tools to enable people to collaborate effectively and drive the development of more applications that take advantage of Cisco application programming interfaces (APIs),” says Bernadette Wightman, Managing Director, Channels Cisco UK and Ireland.

For Aria, this ‘one approach’ partnership model helped to dramatically shorten the plan-to-implementation cycle, enabling its new multi-channel procurement approval solution to be designed, staged and implemented within just two months.

The solution, integrated and installed by Accenture, allows each user to set their preferred communication preferences. This information is then used to initiate a call or to send a SMS, via Cisco Voice XML servers and gateways, to the approver’s chosen device. The user is then presented with an interactive menu, for example, press one to approve, two to decline, three to forward on, and so on. All interactions are automatically synched back, using BackFlip’s Process Communications on Demand™ platform, to the SAP ERP system.

“It’s all about empowering users to personalise the way they interact with the business systems. Being able to adapt the business process to their communication habits makes users more productive, minimising latency in the process. The Aria case is a great example where before, Aria’s busy executives and employees had to remember to log onto SAP to check for messages in their inbox. Now, they receive an alert and can effortlessly monitor and authorise spending on a real time basis, even when they are out of the office,” says Gil Perez, CEO at BackFlip.

“The training and support provided us by Accenture was excellent and users adopted quickly to using the Backflip system,” says Chris Ballard.

Results

Introducing a new innovative engagement model between Cisco, Accenture, and BackFlip has enabled Aria to unlock the benefits of partnering. As well as enabling the company to embed communications tools into a business process and roll out the solution in record time, the partners also helped to measure success.

These results showed that on average:

- The purchase requisition approval process had been accelerated by around 60 per cent, a reduction from 36 to 14 hours
- Response times had significantly increased, with 86 per cent of approvals completed in just over two hours compared to only 31 per cent before.

The on-demand procurement solution is both highly scalable and extremely cost effective. It is delivered as a cloud service so rather than have a huge capital outlay Aria can pay as it goes out of its OpEx budget. It is very easy to add users and the provider also has the option to include mobile browsing and IM at no additional cost.

Chris Ballard has no doubt about the value of a partnering with a best-of-breed partners approach: "We like to outsource all our requirements in one go to Accenture since it reduces the number of contracts and relationships we need to manage and for the quality of the results."

And it's a two-way street. For the partners, it provides a single view of how to drive maximum value for the customer and a joined up approach for delivering that proposition.

"The key to growth is to deliver compelling solutions that improve competitiveness. A Partnering with Partners approach helps to do this in two ways. It enables everyone to share their own unique insights into the same customer opportunity and create innovative value propositions. This collaborative approach also reduces project risk and time to benefits by making sure all the best possible technical expertise and resources are in place," says Bernadette Wightman.

Next Steps

BackFlip's solution has proven to be such a hit that Cisco plans to incorporate it in to its own Collaboration portfolio, Cisco CEBT On Demand™. Going forward, the ACBG solutions team is focused on two main customer propositions. The first is to create process driven collaboration propositions, based on the BackFlip solution, where technology is embedded within a key business processes to make the process more cost-effective and efficient. This is achieved by structuring workflow around collaboration in a way that makes it easier to do business.

Dedicated Accenture engineering consulting resources are also working closely with Cisco's Advanced Services and Product teams to develop a pervasive collaboration infrastructure. Charles Nebolsky, Partner at Accenture Technology Labs provides a glimpse into the future: "The idea here is to create a differentiated infrastructure that allows customers to simply plug in Cisco's broad portfolio of Unified Communications and Web 2.0 products. Instead of requiring feet on the ground, these solutions will be provisioned very easily and remotely using software interfaces or intelligence that lives on the routers."

PRODUCT LIST

- Cisco Voice XML Servers and Gateways
- BackFlip Process Communications On Demand™ Service
- Accenture Consulting Services and Systems Integration

About The Accenture & Cisco Business Group

The Accenture and Cisco Business Group helps organisations use IT as a strategic asset to reduce costs, drive revenue and deliver superior customer service. With a unique 'one team' approach, we assist clients in charting practical roadmaps to design, build and run network-enabled solutions that are effectively integrated into key business processes. Our distinctive portfolio of solutions helps clients bring immediate payback and improved, sustainable agility and includes Data Centre, Infrastructure and Network, Unified Communications and Collaboration, Customer Contact Transformation and Outsourcing solutions.

<https://microsite.accenture.com/acbg/>

About BackFlip

BackFlip's Process Communications On Demand™ service empowers organisations with the ability to receive access and communicate information at any time through any communication channel and device. Business applications can invoke the BackFlip service easily and securely whether they are hosted or lie behind the corporate firewall. Interactive alerts, business information and real-time notifications can be sent out from any system to any user by a variety of communication channels including automatic voice calls, instant messages, text messages and mobile browsing. As a result, business processes are accelerated, users no longer have to wait for information, and decisions can be made and implemented quickly and effectively.

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