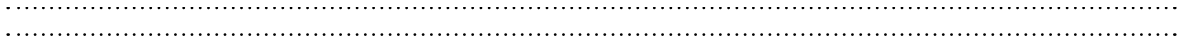# LOGICAL DESIGN SOLUTIONS®

Commercialization of the Enterprise

An LDS white paper

Commercialization of the Enterprise

The digital experiences people have in their consumer lives are shaping the expectations they have at work, creating a strong push towards the commercialization of enterprise technology. Elegant, seamless, personalized digital experiences are the expected norm regardless of a users' context. It's a fact being embraced by CIOs and demanded of corporate IT shops.

MOVING FROM MULTI-CHANNEL TO OMNI-CHANNEL

For years companies have been providing multi-channel experiences, using websites, emails, applications, and social media to deliver a message, but not necessarily in a cohesive way. Omni-channel takes the multi-channel experience and applies a strategic approach – creating a cohesive and seamless experience.
Creating a mobile version of an employee web application so it works on a smartphone is a step towards creating a "multi-channel" experience, where an employee can interact with the same asset or service, using the device of their choosing. The next evolution is to leverage corporate assets and data to harmonize the multi-channel experience creating an "omni-channel" experience, blurring the distinction between channels to provide a unified story.

The term "omni-channel" has been around for a few years and still almost exclusively refers to the evolution of how retailers enable consumers to interact with their brand via the channel of their choosing. One need only look at leading retailers such as Starbucks, Kohl's and Target as models of how to create satisfying experiences as consumers navigate from an initial touchpoint such as an email coupon, then to the app, then to the store, and then to checkout, all the while getting highly relevant messages and tools that guide them to eventual purchase and engender brand loyalty.

What would such transitions look like within the enterprise? What are some of the inherent differences, for better or worse, between public-facing retail channels and employee-facing corporate channels? What type of approaches and technical enablers are needed to realize an effective solution?

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LEVERAGE CORPORATE ASSETS AND DATA TO HARMONIZE THE MULTI-CHANNEL EXPERIENCE CREATING AN "OMNI-CHANNEL" EXPERIENCE, BLURRING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHANNELS TO PROVIDE A UNIFIED STORY."

Take a tip from consumer solutions

Let's start by taking a look at some clear examples of managing transitions when the success criteria is clear and entirely understood. Think about common consumer interactions where you transition between devices, applications, places and points in time. Web browsers operate on desktop, tablet and phone platforms. These tools enable users to link their devices via a common account, which enables synchronized browsing, where you can find a relevant article while at your desk, and walk away, knowing the browser on your tablet will make that page available to you right where you left off.

Even in this seemingly-simple scenario, some dis-satisfiers can creep in. The site may have a VPN prerequisite — a common point of frustration for employees in the "bring your own device" (BYOD) context. What's more, these services only manage URLs, which may leave out other important contextual session data such as the state of a single-page application [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single-page_application], or SSO cookies, forcing the user to re-establish this context on another device. All of these have the potential to introduce friction into what should otherwise be a simple, unified browsing experience.

Similarly, web-based content generation applications such as Google Docs have allowed authors to seamlessly move between the desktop and mobile versions of their apps, not only offering friction-free transitions, but simultaneous editing of the same content across devices. Apple is taking this type of transition to the next level by linking native applications across devices using their Continuity with Handoff technology.

Imagine looking at a baseball score on an Apple Watch. Your iPhone shows the MLB app icon on the lock screen so you can easily get more details with minimal discovery effort. If you start creating an email on an iPhone, your MacBook exposes an icon you can use to move the draft email right onto your laptop and continue where you left off. According to Apple, Handoff works with Safari, Calendar, Contacts, Mail, Maps, Messages, Notes, as well as their office suite. Each app has been engineered to provide support for specific scenarios in order to optimize the transition and offer the best productivity experience.

Elegant, cross-channel interactions like these establish new expectations for our enterprise consumers.

Technology Approaches:
From hardware to software

Different products achieve similar results using different approaches. Google relies on highly optimized web applications to keep devices in synch, leveraging cloud-based storage and near-real-time session synchronization. Typing a single sentence into a Google Doc can result in a dozen tiny requests being sent to docs.google.com in order to keep your devices updated at a very granular level, whether the use case really requires this or not. Apple's Handoff takes a different approach in two ways. First, it's optimized for the single-user model, waiting until the user signals a transition, from the phone to the desktop, for example. Then, it leverages local hardware capabilities such as Bluetooth to move data between devices directly. These different approaches, cloud-enabled vs. hardware-enabled, make sense when you consider each company's general stance on cloud-only services and the role of hardware in their respective business models.

Inside the enterprise:
considering the possibilities

How can we translate these experiences into the enterprise context? First, identify which scenarios are well-suited for a multi-channel transition via journey mapping. What types of journeys should we consider? Personal productivity scenarios such as the ones discussed above are maturing on their own, putting enterprises in the position of making sure these technologies don't compromise internal security. Locking down or disabling these features leads to dissatisfaction among employees that expect that functionality to work.

Instead, focus on enterprise multi-channel journeys, where plenty of opportunities exist in areas such as career management, learning, talent management, onboarding, and HR service delivery interactions. Consider the scenario of a bank employee who receives an email indicating they are required to take an online compliance course. They begin the course on their desktop, but can choose to pause and continue that same course on a tablet during their train ride home. This would be a multi-channel, single-application solution, whereby the transition is largely handled by the single learning application.

What about a multi-channel, multi-application journey example? Perhaps the bank employee is also a manager of several hourly employees, in a department with high turnover. She recently initiated an online HRMS voluntary termination transaction, but has a question, so she calls her local HR representative and initiates the conversation. In this HR service delivery context, the manager's recent activity should be known to the HR tier 1 service desk, just as it would in any modern, consumer-facing call center. This reduces the friction associated with orienting the HR rep and getting them to "see what I see". Before completing the call, the HR rep can also be in a position to recommend a relevant course on managing turnover that might be helpful, and know that the manager has not taken that course already. In this case, similar to an optimized consumer experience, not only was the manager's scenario satisfied in an optimized way, the experience was enhanced by a relevant recommendation.
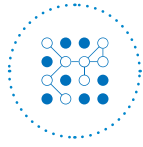
Architectural approaches

Once the important scenarios, channels and transitions have been identified and described through journey mapping, it's time to think about the technical changes to the systems in the ecosystem to achieve the desired experience. Enterprise systems typically have no lack of data, but that data is just as typically trapped in application siloes, with only a subset, if any, being aggregated into a central repository.

Depending upon the current pain points in the experience, enterprise architects should think about how the journeys fall short in the current state, what data is currently available in the ecosystem, and imagine enabling a new piece of the journey, or a transition to a different channel that can yield a more satisfying outcome.

KEY INTEGRATIONS, AT THE POINT OF NEED

Consider the manager who is in the middle of an HRMS transaction to initiate a voluntary termination, but has a question about setting the proper end date. Instead of abandoning that transaction, imagine the manager initiating an instant message chat with an HR representative. Based on the current transaction, that chat session may get routed to a representative that specializes in terminations, and they'll see the data and state of the in-flight transaction. This avoids the manager needing to explain to HR the context and nature of the task they've been struggling with – a common source of frustration when calling any help desk. Instead, the rep can quickly advance the conversation to the substance and need for help. Enabling the IM channel as a helpful, tactical detour along the way allows the journey to complete with a high level of satisfaction.

LEVERAGE MOBILE, CREATIVELY

Beyond that simple example, a natural evolution of such a system could see a more comprehensive, holistic view of the employee. Providing the HR representative information about the manager beyond the current context, such as their previous call history along with their learning and talent profiles, could enable the conclusion of a journey with useful, targeted recommendations, such as relevant learning resources, being delivered to their smartphone. Going beyond the tactical, such enablement can help align managers and employees with existing or new strategic goals of the business, and keep them engaged when they're not in the office.

ARCHITECTING YOUR SERVICES LAYER

To enable relevant and enhanced service delivery scenarios, applications such as HRMS systems will need to expose their data in highly optimized ways. This may involve creating RESTful APIs to quickly retrieve data on-demand, or it may require ETL processes into a central repository. There is certainly no lack of tools, frameworks and APIs available to choose from when enabling key integrations. Architects should work with IT systems owners to select the appropriate interfaces as well as consider the performance impact that comes with any new integration with near-real-time use case scenarios in order to keep up with how people actually interact with these systems across channels. These capabilities need to push information to an aggregated HR service agent's console, for example, in a way that rationalizes not just the employee's information, but optimizes the HR agent's experience as well.

The idea is to leverage data that the enterprise already has, bringing it forward in the experience in a usable way at the point of need. Providing data in an HR service delivery context is a powerful and compelling way to enable a low-friction, omni-channel experience. As commercial ideas continue to work their way into enterprise contexts, expectations continue to rise. These are challenging and exciting times to be wrestling with these technology solutions by leveraging an overflowing toolbox of capabilities to target an equally rich set of business possibilities.

> " Providing data in an HR service delivery context is a powerful and compelling way to enable a low-friction, omni-channel experience "

🖋 An LDS white paper

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