



CASE STUDY

JA Europe keeps the spotlight on student success during global health crisis

Avanade helps the nonprofit transform its major live events into virtual experiences with Microsoft Teams

Imagine being a JA Europe student. For the past year or more, you've put all your ideas, passion and hard work into building a functioning business to compete in the JA Europe Enterprise Challenge or Company of the Year event. You're excited to travel to sunny Greece or beautiful Portugal to share that business with a group of judges and your peers in hopes of being recognized for your achievements. Then COVID-19 hits and all that is in jeopardy.

Business situation: Disappointing students isn't an option

JA Europe – a member of JA Worldwide – helps prepare young people for success in the working world. For more than 100 years, the global nonprofit has worked with businesses, schools and organizations to give students practical training and experience in job readiness, interview preparation, building a personal brand, starting a business and more. Avanade is JA Worldwide's global technology partner, and people across our organizations work together throughout the year to volunteer and engage with students.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, JA Europe found itself in a difficult position. As a traditional nonprofit that spends all its time working closely with students in person, the organization needed a way to continue this important work remotely. Immediately, Avanade and JA Europe began working together to rethink the way the nonprofit operates by getting employees up and running on Microsoft Teams so they could continue holding workshops and training sessions. However, a much larger challenge was looming on the horizon.

Every year, as part of their work with JA Europe, students from across the continent create their own startup companies to address a need in their communities. An incredible amount of work goes into building these businesses, and the organization holds two flagship events each year – the JA Europe Enterprise Challenge and the Company of the Year – to recognize students' efforts with awards for innovation across multiple categories. For 2020, the JA Europe Enterprise Challenge was set to take place in Greece, with Company of the Year being held the following month in Portugal. When the continent was effectively shut down due to the pandemic, the fate of the events was thrown into question.



Solution: Making the best of a difficult situation

Now imagine again that you're one of those students. Canceling the events was the last thing JA Europe wanted to do. It reached out to Avanade, and together we hatched an ambitious plan to reimagine both live events as virtual experiences using Microsoft Teams, Teams live and video streaming platforms.

"In a moment of global crisis, where the education of the next generation is interrupted, there are two ways you can respond," says Salvatore Nigro, CEO of JA Europe. "Either as an individual organization or through a collective response. The latter is more powerful."

With only a few months to make this happen, Avanade and JA Europe quickly assembled a team of 39 volunteers from around the world. After a series of virtual, design-led workshops to gather requirements and build a strategy, we began developing the technical environment in which the events could take place, beginning with the Enterprise Challenge. This included:

- **An updated public website** where participants and visitors can find information about the event and finalists, as well as a public voting system for specific awards
- **A Teams-based, virtual judging system** with separate channels for each jury, scoring sheets and whiteboard support
- **A Teams-based networking application**, through which students and other participants can submit materials, live chat, find announcements and learn about their peers
- **Live event capabilities**, including the ability to host, view and record presentations such as the opening and closing ceremonies

In addition to building this platform, Avanade helped train more than 300 students, judges and JA Europe employees on how to use the solution properly so that the event would be a great experience for everyone. It may be missing the Greek sunshine, but it could maintain the same spirit of friendly competition and camaraderie.

Results: A quick fix becomes a platform for the future

The virtual Europe Enterprise Challenge was an incredible success. Student teams connected and were celebrated for their startups in front of a much larger audience than would have been possible during a live event, as families, friends and other JA Europe students were able to participate from home. For example, the event saw a 362% increase in visits to its website, and a viewership increase of nearly 31 times for its opening and awards ceremonies over the previous year. In addition, the solution enabled voting for a new Public Choice Award, which saw nearly 9,800 votes. Learning from this experience, JA Europe hopes that the subsequent Company of the Year event will see similar success and growth, and the organization will continue incorporating Teams into its future events.

However, the organization sees this project as more than just a temporary solution for an individual problem. JA Europe and Avanade have treated this crisis as an opportunity to rethink how the nonprofit operates by removing traditional bottlenecks. With Teams, JA Europe can increase participation in its events, work remotely, offer new services, reduce costs and – most importantly – expand its reach. Today, JA Worldwide works with 20 million students every year. Its goal is to reach 100 million. By embracing this kind of innovation with Avanade, JA Europe is taking a huge leap toward helping achieve that goal.

“Working together with Avanade and Microsoft, we have been able to transform the lives of youth by embracing rapid digital transformation. Together, we have delivered a much greater impact for our key beneficiaries – the leaders of tomorrow.”

Salvatore Nigro, CEO, JA Europe

About JA Europe

JA Europe is the largest non profit in Europe dedicated to preparing young people for employment and entrepreneurship. JA Europe is a member of JA Worldwide which for 100 years has delivered hands-on, experiential learning in entrepreneurship, work readiness and financial literacy. JA creates pathways for employability, job creation and financial success.



About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences on the Microsoft ecosystem. With 38,000 professionals in 25 countries, we are the power behind the Accenture Microsoft Business Group, helping companies to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and transform products, leveraging the Microsoft platform. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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