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Felix THE FELIX PROJECT

CASE STUDY

EMBRACING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO HELP END HUNGER

With Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Power BI, The Felix Project is growing toward its goal of providing 100 million meals per year by 2024.

Challenges

Imagine waking up and not knowing where your next meal is coming from. Every day in London, 1.5 million adults and 400,000 children face this reality. Working with local food retailers, restaurants, wholesalers and farms, The Felix Project is helping to solve the pressing issue of food poverty by securing fresh, nutritious food that cannot be sold and delivering it to over 350 other nonprofits, primary schools and holiday programs across the UK capital. Rather than going to waste, this healthy food makes its way to vulnerable people who would otherwise go hungry.

Throughout its short history, The Felix Project founded in 2016 has been singularly focused on the mission to “save food and change lives.” A few dozen employees and several hundred volunteers spend their time and effort supporting the cause. However, operations were not as efficient as they could have been.

Each day, managers at the nonprofit’s depots in London manually cataloged locations, planned routes, assigned volunteer drivers and printed out paper manifests to track activities. At each stop, drivers filled out the manifests with basic information – such as the amount of food collected and delivered – and returned the paperwork at the end of their shift. It was then entered into a series of spreadsheets at the end of the week or the month. With 140 different routes every week, the volume quickly accumulated. Entering all this information into The Felix Project’s siloed data management system and creating reports took several days of manual work each month, and it was very difficult to ensure accuracy or visibility into day-to-day operations.

“What we had was a whole system of systems that didn’t talk to each other, lacked connecting interfaces and required a huge amount of manual processing of paperwork,” explains Mark Curtin, CEO of The Felix Project.

As a young nonprofit, almost all the organization’s resources have gone toward the core functions of its mission and not the technology to support it. The Felix Project knew this needed to change to support its ambitious goal of redistributing the equivalent of 100 million meals each year by 2024 – a tenfold increase over what it provides currently. “We wanted to get out of startup mode and become a growing, sustainable, mature nonprofit. We understand how technology can enhance the capabilities of an organization and we were ready for that,” says Curtin. “We wanted a platform to help us look forward and start making positive decisions based on data.”

However, with no IT department of its own, The Felix Project needed the support of trusted digital transformation partners, and turned to the expertise of Accenture, Microsoft and Avanade a joint venture between Microsoft and Accenture.

Collaboration in action

The venture began with several workshops – led by Fjord, a division of Accenture Interactive – during which The Felix Project outlined its core challenges to determine the best way to solve them. While we went into this process with a brief to create a simple mobile app for drivers, we left with a much more comprehensive and impactful proposal to replace several existing tools and methodologies. The resulting solution is a combination of route and volunteer management, customer relationship management – for both donors and beneficiaries – the mobile application for volunteer drivers and a reporting and analytics platform. This is all based on the Microsoft Power Platform, including Power Apps portals, Dynamics 365 and Power BI.

During the earliest planning phases, the entire world changed. The Felix Project suddenly faced the incredible challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which greatly increased the demand for its services while simultaneously

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limiting the availability of its volunteer drivers. With the nonprofit's existing tools stretched to the limit, Accenture and Avanade developed and deployed the platform and moved into pilot testing in less than six weeks. Just four weeks later, the solution was fully adopted and is in use across the organization.

With the new mobile app, named RouteMe, drivers can access routes, maps and pickup information, and fill out digital forms. This automatically inputs data into Dynamics 365, making existing paperwork and spreadsheets obsolete, erasing hundreds of hours of manual inputting each month and saving thousands of sheets of paper annually. Even better – it happens in real time. Power BI dashboards give The Felix Project full visibility into operations and can generate reports in minutes. The entire platform will transform the way the nonprofit operates.

People and culture

It's hard to overstate the impact that a platform like this has on the technical maturity of The Felix Project and its readiness to scale up to achieve its ambitious goals. "We have a group of people at the organization who are really excited about the opportunity to learn something new and open their eyes to what's possible," says Curtin. "There is just a great enthusiasm for what's to come from this. Lots of our volunteers have commented on how much we're growing up, moving from a little startup to something backed by the most cutting-edge technology delivered by some of the best companies in the world in Accenture and Avanade. It gives us great credibility and establishes a culture of being very serious about doing important things. This will ultimately help us reach many more people in need."

Value added

This solution has helped The Felix Project rethink the way it operates and will deliver value in several important ways:

A future-ready platform to support growth

With the new, scalable Microsoft Power Platform and Dynamics 365, the nonprofit has a base infrastructure that will underpin all the applications and technology it plans to implement to help support its ongoing growth. "Our key goal is to grow the organization 10 times in terms of impact but not in terms of number of staff, depots, vans, etc.," explains Curtin. "We do plan on growing organically through acquisition – such as our recent partnership with the FareShare charity that will see us acquire their entire London operation – but technology will be important to get us the rest of the way. This is the beginning of that."

Driving immediate efficiencies

In addition to helping achieve longer-term growth, the new tools will have an immediate impact on the way The Felix Project plans its day-to-day operations. "Route optimization is key for us," says Curtin. "The phrase that we use is that we want to shift around as little air in our vans as possible. Currently, they're only full of food 70% of the time and are empty the other 30%. With new insights, we can better understand route options, how much time is spent traveling and how much food is being delivered to and from each location. We can look at patterns and find efficiencies that will help us cut costs and scale up our operations immediately."

Measuring the success of new initiatives

With the ability to monitor key metrics in real time using Power BI, the impact of future programs and adjustments will be instantly measurable. This level of analysis was previously impossible and has set The Felix Project on the right path toward success.

A priceless partnership

“First and foremost, we are extremely grateful as an organization,” says Curtin about partnering with Accenture and Avanade to develop this solution. “We really felt valued as clients throughout the whole process, which speaks volumes. We are proud and privileged to have worked with market-leading organizations such as Avanade and Accenture. We’ve benefited hugely by having the best in the business on our side.”

About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences on the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals bring bold, fresh thinking combined with technology, business and industry expertise to help make a human impact on our clients, their customers and their employees. 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. Avanade has 38,000 professionals in 25 countries, bringing clients our best thinking through a collaborative culture that honors diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation.

Learn more at www.avanade.com

About The Felix Project

The Felix Project is a London charity with a practical solution to the dual issues of food waste and hunger. We work with businesses to rescue surplus food – good quality, nutritious food that is in-date and safe, but is at risk of being wasted – and deliver it free of charge to local charities and schools serving people in need.

The Felix Project was founded in 2016 in memory of Felix Byam Shaw, by his father, entrepreneur Justin Byam Shaw. We are now London’s largest food redistribution charity. In 2020, we distributed enough food for 21.1 million meals.

Our vision is a London where no one goes hungry and good food is never wasted. For every £1 donated, we deliver £12 worth of good food.

About Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services in strategy and consulting, interactive, technology and operations, with digital capabilities across all of these services. We combine unmatched experience and specialized capabilities across more than 40 industries – powered by the world’s largest network of Advanced Technology and Intelligent Operations centers. With 506,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture brings continuous innovation to help clients improve their performance and create lasting value across their enterprises.

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