



Become digitally disruptive:
The challenge to unlearn





BORDERLESS PLATFORMS: Going beyond the wall to liberate organizational potential

As humans, a common instinct when building something is to build something else around it. Is it made out of bricks? Great! We'll surround it with more bricks and stack them as high as we need to, for protection.

Dismantling walls to extend reach

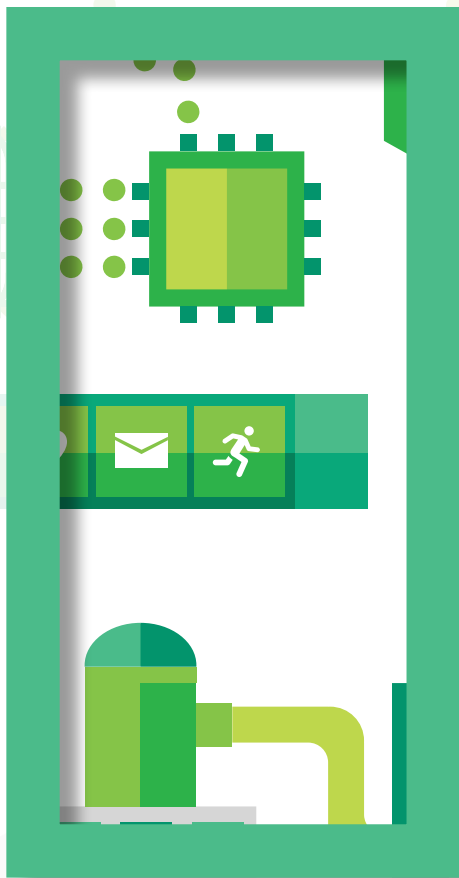
We also tend to carry this impulse over into the companies and systems we build. Interoperability is fine, as long as nothing can threaten our security or control. Meanwhile, around us a hyper-connected economy is taking shape, limiting the growth potential of the old ways of doing business. The only way to play a meaningful role in this world is to join in by leveraging a new class of technology platform that extend the reach of the organization and its ecosystems beyond self-made "borders."

Microsoft points the way

Microsoft is a great example of a company reaching beyond its own limitations and comfort zones to leverage the good in the wider world. A few big shifts in the last year alone include:

- a cloud partnership with IBM;
- connectors in Office365 for rival CRM vendor Salesforce.com;
- giving Windows 10 away for free;
- opening the Microsoft Azure cloud platform to Linux;
- open-sourcing the .NET programming environment

It is a reinvention to rival any before it. The company has moved from running a closed ecosystem to embracing competitors and interoperability, an evolution as exciting for this shape-shifting giant as it is for the rest of us.¹



Platforms that enable and enforce openness

As with Microsoft, the rest of us must open up and tap into new commerce opportunities that are only possible with digital. A dogged focus on our own industry, knowledge and resources is no longer enough. With the rise of mobility and cloud, most organizations' platforms today struggle to: meet new levels of demand; respond quickly; and be accessible to a multitude of devices.

Rethinking closed platforms offer companies a way to go beyond their own industries, to learn, share, become inspired, innovate more quickly and break through the growth ceiling.

Case in point: Amsterdam's shared platform improves urban life

In the Netherlands, the city of Amsterdam teamed with energy network company Alliander, telecom operator KPN and city-affiliated agency Amsterdam Innovation Motor (AIM) to create a cross-industry public-private business ecosystem. The partners built a shared platform for projects to improve urban life while reducing environmental impact.²

Amsterdam, a participant in the CityService Development Kit (CitySDK),³ actively pursues the open API economy through the adoption of open-standards software platforms—essentially striving to create “programmable municipalities.” Building borderless platform ecosystems in this case demonstrated the benefit of bringing together mutually supportive organizations across industries to create differentiated offerings and create value that they cannot provide alone.

The power of we

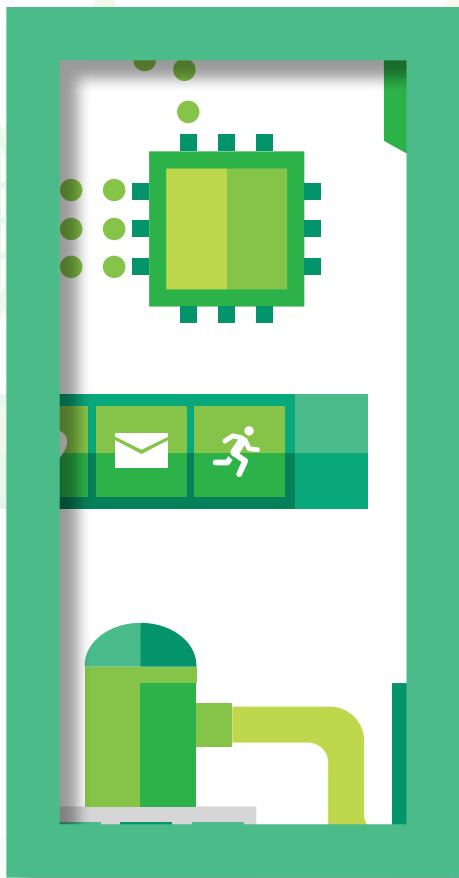
Borderless platform-based businesses are different from others in that they allow outsiders to create value for the enterprise. It's a shift from a me-centric business to a we-centric collaborative model that challenges traditional notions of control and security.

In a recent TED Talk, online activist Jeremy Heimans summed it up: “Old power works like a currency and is held by a few who guard it closely, keeping lots in reserve to spend. New power is more like a current. It's made by many, is open, peer driven and is most forceful when it surges.”⁴

² [“Cross-industry ecosystems: Growth outside the box,”](#) Outlook, Accenture, February 2013

³ [“Inside Amsterdam's efforts to become a smart city,”](#) The Kernel, Jan. 4, 2014

⁴ [“What new power looks like,”](#) TED Talks, June 2014



Heimans also explained as follows in the Harvard Business Review: “The goal with new power is not to hoard it but to channel it.”⁵

Look to the cloud

Hybrid clouds will be the building blocks powering borderless enterprises. They will allow for the control and protection of key data and enable the organization to publish and consume data at scale, while more easily integrating with other organizations. It truly is the best of both worlds: giving organizations access to publicly available building blocks in the platform with the ability to choose where—on public or private clouds—workloads need to run at scale.

To help accelerate the adoption and ROI of hybrid clouds we’ll need the know-how of a new generation of workload architects. Avanade, along with Accenture and Microsoft, recently announced the Hybrid Cloud Solution for Microsoft Azure, to help facilitate and manage hybrid cloud workloads. It delivers new technologies to migrate and manage applications between private and public clouds in a controlled, seamless and automated way from a single console.⁶

Transform to ward off disruption

There’s a stick to go with this carrot too. According to IDC, industry-specific platforms will disrupt a third of the top 20 market leaders in most industries by 2018.⁷

The time is now for organizations to start thinking about and investing in their platform transformation. There is a limited timeframe to lock in preferred partners and build sustainable ecosystems that become the foundation of the future.

⁵ “[Understanding ‘New Power,’](#)” Harvard Business Review, December 2014

⁶ “[Accenture and Microsoft launch new hybrid cloud platform to accelerate enterprise-wide adoption,](#)” Microsoft press release, Dec. 8, 2014

⁷ “[IDC Directions 2014: Profiting from Platforms and Predicting Materialization,](#)” quoted in Mobyquity



About Avanade

Avanade helps customers realize results in a digital world through business technology solutions, cloud and managed services that combine insight, innovation and expertise focused on Microsoft technologies. Our people have helped thousands of organizations in all industries improve business agility, employee productivity and customer loyalty. Avanade combines the collective business, technical and industry expertise of its worldwide network of experts with the rigor of an industrialized delivery model to provide high-quality solutions using proven and emerging technologies with flexible deployment models — on premises, cloud-based or outsourced. Avanade, which is majority owned by Accenture, was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation and has 23,000 professionals in more than 20 countries. Additional information can be found at www.avanade.com.

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