

Enabling ITV to harness greater flexibility and lower costs through SOA



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"Everyone is talking about SOA. At ITV we have started to use SOA to deliver real benefits to the business."

– Richard Cross, Technology Director

For more than 50 years, ITV has remained the UK's largest and most popular commercial broadcaster. Today ITV plc—formed in early 2004 through the merger of Granada and Carlton—is a multi-channel, multi-platform, content-driven media company, firmly focused on the needs of viewers and advertisers. As well as owning all the regional Channel 3 licences in England and Wales, accounting for over 90% of ITV1 advertising revenues, ITV plc also has several fast-growing free-to-air digital channels.

ITV plc's other operations include the UK's largest commercial production company, world-leading production and distribution businesses, a major regional news division, and the leading cinema screen advertising business in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The ITV Consumer business is an increasingly important part of the company, opening up new revenue streams and exploiting ITV's content on expanding platforms.

Business challenges

To stay ahead and grow revenues in the dynamic marketplaces in which it operates, ITV needs fast and accurate decision-making based on seamless access to business information and operational data across all areas of the organisation. Of equal importance, the company needs to constantly reduce its cost base and improve time to market. All these objectives require a strong bridge between the business and the technology supporting it.

In 2005, ITV plc's management decided to strengthen this linkage by aligning the group's business and technology more closely. The existing technology department was structured around four key divisions: broadcast; production; consumer; and shared services. Each of these divisions was closely aligned with the business units it served.

ITV felt that integrating its technology more closely across the enterprise would improve its strategic flexibility and ultimately its business performance. Whilst each of these divisions were closely aligned to the business units they served, it was not felt that they were well-positioned to support end-to-end processes or solutions, with human intervention being required to share data across divisions. ITV decided to tackle these issues by moving to an enterprise architecture that would facilitate a consolidated view and flow of information across the business. In July 2006, the company engaged Accenture to help it define a single enterprise architecture across all of its technology divisions, enabling it to drive greater re-use, better integrate its systems and enjoy shorter timescales for technology delivery.

How Accenture helped

Working against tight deadlines, the Accenture project team started work in August 2006 on an Enterprise Architecture Planning study across ITV. This included three distinct phases: a current technology environment assessment; the definition of the target technology architecture; and the outline of the roadmap to achieve the vision over a two- to three-year period.

In the first phase, the team examined and assessed the current technology systems 'as-is' across ITV's key operations. The main findings pointed to the need to fully exploit existing IT assets and different application technologies, and therefore an enterprise-level standards-based approach was required.

Phase two involved building a clear picture of ITV's key business and technology drivers through a series of interviews with key business and technology stakeholders. The Accenture team used this to link the enterprise architecture technology recommendations back to five key drivers:

- grow revenues
- develop direct consumer relationships
- shorten time-to-market
- reduce operating costs
- reduce risk.

Accenture then set out clearly how these could be reflected in the 'to-be' future technology architecture.

"SOA is one of the key enablers identified within the technology blueprint we developed with Accenture" – Richard Cross, Technology Director

This work enabled the team to draw up the Technology Blueprint, defining the technology capabilities required to support ITV's strategy over the coming two to three years. This embodied several key technology principles, including the need for end-to-end business processes and common systems across the business. For example, ensuring the central Digital Asset Management storage systems could support various areas including both production and broadcasting, developing a common mechanism

for integration, and building an enterprise data warehouse to support business intelligence and insight across many distinct areas of the business—all based on a common technology platform.

The Blueprint also supported a step-change in enterprise rights management across ITV through the use of composite applications and SOA technology to provide access to rights information from a number of key legacy systems, and to support end-to-end rights processes.

The process for executing the Technology Blueprint was then defined in the third phase of the Enterprise Architecture Planning study—the creation of the Enterprise Architecture Roadmap. This specified the key activities and proposed timelines, mapping out how the various technology elements would link together and interact.

“SOA will provide greater flexibility around our technology systems, allowing us to integrate better with third parties and bring new offers to market faster than our competition” – Richard Cross, Technology Director

In both ITV and Accenture's view, integration and process orchestration were key enablers for the new architecture. So the team proposed that a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) should be used to integrate the business and technology systems in a way that would put the roadmap into effect while minimising the need for investment in systems replacement. For example, SOA enables a composite application to allow different parts of the business to access the same legacy system and data via a Web browser to meet their own specific needs.

While ITV bought into the benefits of SOA, its application to the roadmap needed to be tested fully. So the Accenture team conducted a Proof of Concept (PoC) in two phases, a Technical PoC and a Functional PoC. At relevant points in the PoC process, the Accenture client team called in SOA specialists from across its global network to provide input and expertise. While building the PoC the Accenture team also worked with Oracle, both to

validate the technology standards set out in the initial Enterprise Architecture work, and to demonstrate the concept and value of SOA to the business.

“Accenture has provided skilled architects and SOA practitioners to help accelerate ITV's SOA journey” – Aidan Gray, Controller of Technology Planning & Governance

The Technical PoC was designed to prove the chosen technologies at a high level from a purely technical perspective—including interoperability, security, integration and reporting tools—and the findings validated the technology standards selected. This created the basis for the functional PoC, which focused on applying the technology to a business process within ITV. This functional application was then demonstrated to the main business stakeholders across the organisation, winning buy-in for the tangible benefits SOA would bring to their business units and to the company as a whole. This demonstration also underlined SOA's potential as a way to implement workflow for a number of areas within ITV—enabling end-to-end processes across multiple back-end systems and technology areas.

High performance delivered

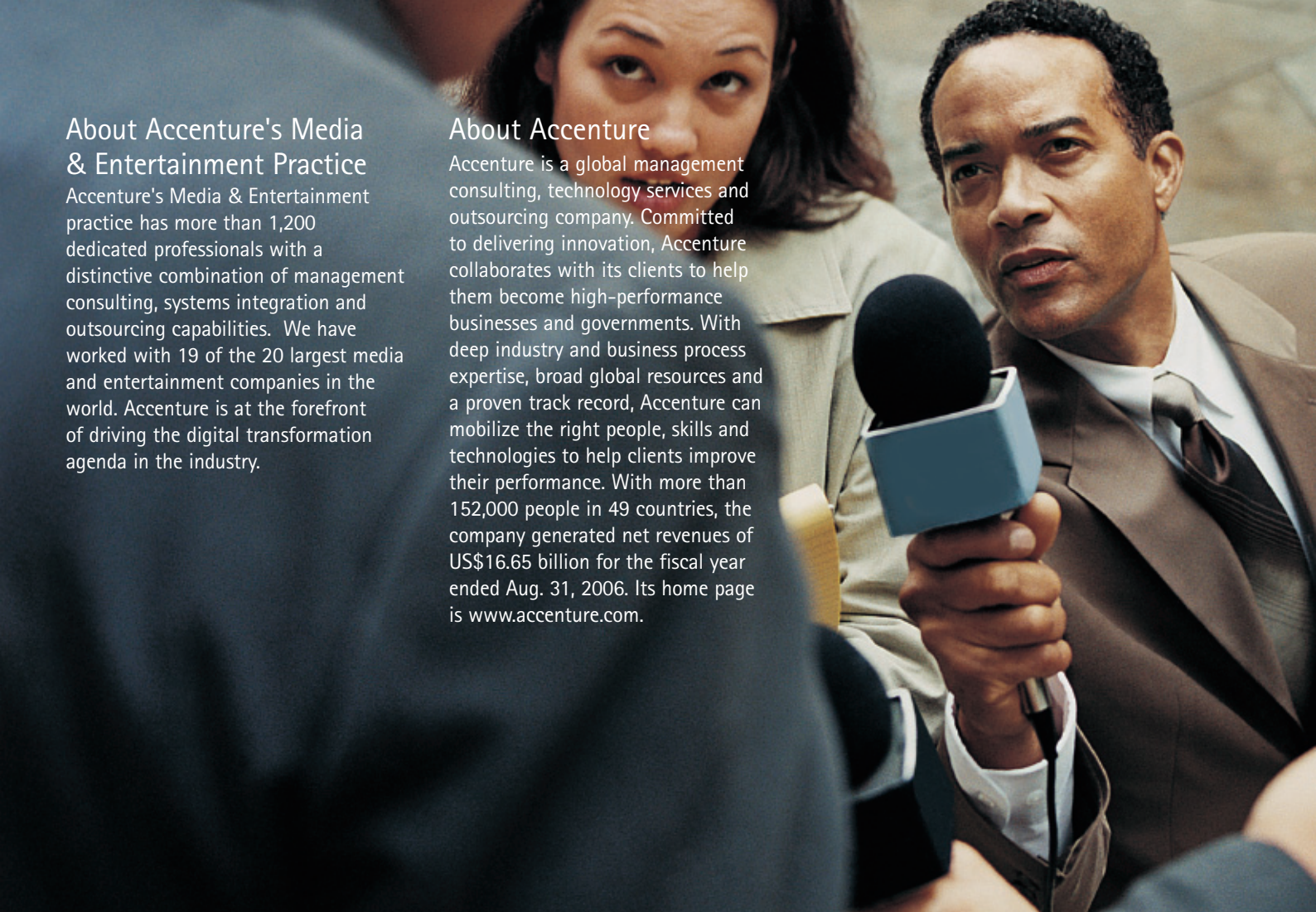
As a result of the project, ITV has revised its direction and roadmaps for the key strategic technology areas it needs to build over the next few years. These roadmaps include an SOA-based technology architecture that will enable ITV to realise the full benefits of its evolving strategy, while also driving greater flexibility, end-to-end integration and informed decision making.

With the next step being to prove the value of SOA for a specific area of the business, ITV is proceeding with the execution of the Accenture Technology Blueprint, using the Enterprise Architecture Roadmap as its guide. Accenture's SOA methodology will further benefit ITV by opening up new and improved opportunities for ITV to partner with third-party and alliances across the media and technology industries.

Over time SOA will shorten time-to-market and reduce operating expenditure by driving standardisation across the business and improving re-use of existing technology components and services. SOA provides ITV with the ability to change business processes quickly and to integrate with new providers for economic value and growth. All this means that ITV can realise and externalise more value from its existing legacy application.

ITV now has a more efficient and productive future ahead, owing to the tight integration between its business and technology functions, made possible through SOA.

Accenture has provided skilled architects and SOA practitioners to help accelerate ITV's SOA journey.

A photograph of a man in a brown suit and tie holding a blue microphone. A woman in a light-colored jacket is looking towards the camera in the background. The scene appears to be a press conference or a media interview.

About Accenture's Media & Entertainment Practice

Accenture's Media & Entertainment practice has more than 1,200 dedicated professionals with a distinctive combination of management consulting, systems integration and outsourcing capabilities. We have worked with 19 of the 20 largest media and entertainment companies in the world. Accenture is at the forefront of driving the digital transformation agenda in the industry.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company. Committed to delivering innovation, Accenture collaborates with its clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. With deep industry and business process expertise, broad global resources and a proven track record, Accenture can mobilize the right people, skills and technologies to help clients improve their performance. With more than 152,000 people in 49 countries, the company generated net revenues of US\$16.65 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2006. Its home page is www.accenture.com.

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