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HCL's Digital Open Innovation: Enhancing Business Model Effectiveness through Talent and Customer Acquisition, Development, and Retention

SOLOMON N. DARWIN

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Haas School of Business
University of California Berkeley

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This case study, through the implementation of Starting Point in the two key verticals of HCL; Life Sciences/Healthcare and Public Services, provides an illustration of how the intersection of new digital technologies—mobile devices, cloud computing, and online collaboration—is now transforming the way organizations will conduct business in the future.

Realizing that many of its current employees were already leading ‘digital lives’ and now used to obtaining news and other information from their personal handheld devices, the senior leadership of two key verticals of HCL; Life Sciences/ Healthcare and Public Services implemented Starting Point. Starting Point is a fully integrated digital platform which can be accessed on any handheld device on iOS and Android platform. (Exhibit 1) Starting Point was to achieve two key objectives by making internal information available on mobile phones and tablets: firstly to enhance the new employee on-boarding process and secondly to empower employees so that they would have access to key information more quickly that would allow them to increase customer sales. By making this transition from analog to digital, executives believed that Starting Point would improve organizational agility, increase employee efficiencies, and enhance sales effectiveness and efficiency. It was also expected to facilitate seamless interaction of sales leaders with customers, reduce the time an employee took to be productive, provide consistency in employee onboarding and help provide continuity in business when employees left.

Explaining the need for starting Point Sandeep Kishore, Corp Vice President and Global Head, Life Sciences/Healthcare and Public Services says;

“Starting Point as a concept had been around for a while and in different parts of the organization. One of the biggest opportunities which we are trying to solve with Starting Point is how do we enable our team—which is interfacing with the customer and has to be well-informed—so that they have the tools and capabilities to add continuous value to those customer discussions. Our business is to collaboratively find solutions for our health sciences and public services customers. With rapid changes in technology, there is always that cusp which is available and it is in that cusp that we often find opportunity...so how do you enable an organization on about what’s happening in the marketplace? With information on what’s happening with that industry segment? On what’s happening with my customer? There were two dimensions to addressing these questions. The first dimension was when you looked back we didn’t have in one place where all this information was available. The second dimension was that the world has rapidly become more digital in the last couple of years than it has before—with the onslaught of the mobile devices—and we wanted to make sure that we enabled our people with their devices that they carried with them 24/7.”

Starting Point was implemented in 2 phases, Basic and Advanced. Both the phases were implemented in six weeks each. The first version had the “Basic” content: industry/accounts overview, analyst reports, company overview, while the next version which was “Advanced” had training programs from Delivery perspective as well. A six member core team consisting of Sales & Pre Sales, Delivery, HR, Strategy & Program Management, Marketing and Solutions was formed to implement it. In addition to the core team, over 70+ HCL employees eventually worked on different aspects of the project.

With the strategy department coordinating the project effort, Amit Varma (Head of Strategy and Program Management for Life Sciences/Healthcare and Public Services) explained:

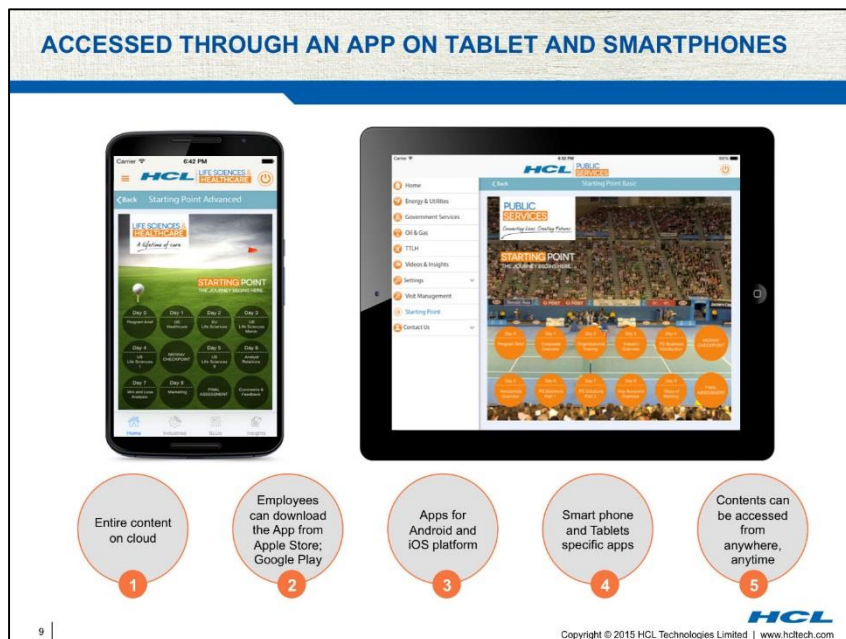
“Our goal was to create a unique platform on mobile and tablets that would be both world-class and be the gold standard. It would significantly improve business effectiveness and agility in the shortest period of time. To do this we needed to develop a platform where content could be accessed anytime anywhere thus improving the business effectiveness and agility.”

The program has received exceedingly positive reviews from sales heads across the Life-Sciences/Healthcare and Public Services verticals, the two verticals for which this is initially rolled out and has become the gold standard for other verticals to adopt too. Todd Crandall, Sales head for Public Services, observed that the new hires for his team became productive almost immediately and sales cycles improved due to shorter turnaround time. He noticed that the starting point is being used not just by new hires but also by any sales leader who needed updated content for his business.

With Starting Point, these two verticals had taken a giant leap from being analog to becoming more digital. Thinking about the next steps on Starting Point and the impact it will have on business, Sandeep recalled a blog posting that he wrote recently on Digital Darwinism:

“The ever-expanding global internet penetration, new platforms and technologies, mobile and wearable devices, industrial and consumer IoT, cloud, analytics, big data, social collaboration, etc. will accelerate digital adoption across the globe and impact all industries. All businesses must fast become digitized. Either be digital or be extinct. Digital is the new D—Darwin.”¹

Exhibit 1: Starting Point a fully integrated Platform can be accessed through an App



¹ Sandeep Kishore, “Be Digital or Extinct—the existential question,” blog posting.