



ACI Worldwide: Paying Agility Forward

Mitesh Mehta, SVP of IT at ACI Worldwide, discusses how in a world of instant payments, agile technologies must align with an agile mindset.

“A crisis can ignite innovation,” says Steve Berez, a founder of Bain & Company’s enterprise technology practice and co-author of the book *Doing Agile Right*.

Without question, the coronavirus has forced many companies to become more agile, whether through reimagining supply chains, mobilizing employees for remote work, constructing new technological capabilities or offering new products. But while the pandemic put pressure on every enterprise, those that had already committed to a culture of agility found themselves far more capable of a swift, effective response.

ACI Worldwide is one such organization. Already deeply integrated in everyday commercial activity, the company, through a global network of merchants, banks, billers and intermediaries, facilitates over 225 billion consumer transactions and more than 500 million bill pay transactions a year. The pandemic has only highlighted its critical role as a payment provider.

As consumer purchasing habits change, “faster access to funds for individuals and small businesses has never been more critical,” says Mitesh Mehta, SVP of IT at ACI Worldwide. In the face of uncertainty, people need quick access to flexible options.

To serve its customers in this critical moment, ACI Worldwide enhanced ACI Speedpay, its digital billing, payment and communication solution. Using automation to facilitate more seamless communication and management of accounts, the company lets individuals facing greater financial instability use a mobile app to construct payment plans and even apply for payment relief. The solution benefits not only consumer end users, but also the billers, merchants and financial institutions ACI services.

An April 2020 survey conducted by ACI Worldwide of over 40 leading financial institutions in the U.S. showed call center volume rising in response to the pandemic. The rise was as much as 100%, with only 6% of respondents seeing no increase at all. By opening up and enhancing additional channels for engagement, ACI's agile, technology-led response helped solve payment questions through enhanced customer service, rather than longer wait times at call centers.

"The need for digital communication methods, payment deferrals and payment plans is imperative in helping our customers better serve their consumers financially impacted by the pandemic," Mehta says. "The solutions also help billers better manage call center volumes through new digital automation touchpoints like smartphones and mobile wallets."

ACI's ability to rapidly deploy solutions benefiting customers was not accidental. Disruptions, whether in contactless payment technologies or proprietary credit and pre-purchase cards, long predate the coronavirus outbreak and have made enterprise agility a priority at the company. "It's one of the six key values underlying everything that ACI does. This applies to our product strategy, which is constantly evolving as the digital payments space evolves rapidly across the globe," Mehta says. "ACI has been purposefully investing in technology that digitizes its operations and data."

Executing an ethos of enterprise agility requires a strong digital infrastructure, because poor IT can, over time, undermine even the most receptive company culture. ACI's goal is a standardized system capable of being both transformational and nimble.

"Customized technologies, while convenient in the short term, tend to create friction when reacting to change. They create and encourage organizational inertia, which in turn hinders enterprise agility," Mehta says. "ACI's choice of the Atlassian suite of products, including Jira, Bitbucket and Jira Service Desk as well as its implementation partner Praecipio Consulting, was driven by these considerations. Underlying the choice was ACI's objective to be more responsive to customer and market demands. ACI's increasing investment in Atlassian applications for development management, project management, case/ticket management and workflow management is evidence of that commitment."

Approaching agility through standardization also pays dividends in risk management. More

stable systems can better handle unexpected surges in volume (digital sales orders, for example), increases in employees working remotely or additions to an organization's technological tools. "We can tweak fraud models on the fly for the new world, process more e-commerce transactions or change the threshold for contactless payments," Mehta says. "Our fraud consultants have been working with customers to make sure the false positives don't skyrocket, but customers stay protected."

The impact of the moment will resonate well into the future.

"Primarily, this centers around the idea of transacting remotely—between people or between people and systems," he says. "Processes and transactions that had remained stubbornly nondigitized despite the tremendous technology innovation in the past 25 years have overnight become targets of digitization. Simple transactions like signing documents to major enterprise deals are beginning to be executed remotely without a single handshake."

Initiatives around digitization also extend to HR, finance, sales compensation, messaging and project management. But a momentary response, even well-executed, doesn't necessarily mean a company has the culture and processes to sustain that agility.

Mehta believes ACI Worldwide's commitment before the pandemic to enterprise agility positions the company well to head off any future challenges.

"Disaster recovery, failover and resiliency are now table stakes. The ability to stay operational through local or worldwide crises is no longer a nice-to-have reserved for the largest corporations," Mehta says. "The right technologies implemented by industry experts bringing standardized global best practices to bear can be truly transformational."

To learn more about empowering your enterprise agility with solutions like Jira, Trello and Confluence, contact your local Atlassian Solution Partner today.

