

HUMAN RESOURCES CASE STUDIES

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Human resources management at Accenture

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Accenture is a leading global company and one of the world's most recognisable brands for consultancy services in management, technology, and outsourcing. It was incorporated in 1951, and has been operating in Spain since 1965, where in 2021 it employed a workforce of 12,000 people, with a portfolio of 450 clients (80% Ibx-35 companies). Ever since Accenture launched its business in Spain, it has been a key player in the modernisation and internationalisation of businesses across all sectors and industries.

It is a global operator in corporate services, and a leader in digital, cloud and security solutions, which account for 70% of its business. In addition, it is involved in other business areas, such as Strategy and Advocacy, Marketing, Technology, and Operations. These are all supported by the area of corporate services, which includes the Human Resources (HR) department. They are continuing to marshal the transformation and 360° value creation for all the company's stakeholders, as its Spanish website explains: *“The mainstay of our corporate culture is shared success. We have developed a new strategy in pursuit of a positive impact on all our stakeholders that involves being profitable, showing concern for society, and providing opportunities for our staff”* (Accenture, 2021).

HR's mission at Accenture is to enrich the personal and professional development of all its employees. People management is the key, creating quality employment and investing to create a multitalented workforce. The company operates according to the premise of *“quality employment”*, as 98% of its staff in Spain have permanent contracts. Moreover, over 1,500 new staff have been hired over the past year.

In turn, Accenture is a pioneering company in the use of new technologies and innovation in its talent management. Based on the axiom *“technology is not a goal, it is the path to a destination”*, the company bases its strategy on the use of different approaches that facilitate its progress towards a competitive and ever-changing working environment:

- *Artificial intelligence (AI)*: such as machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP), whereby machines can perceive, understand and act, transforming the relationship between people and technology, and enabling employees to strengthen and hone their skills and creativity.
- *Cloud Computing*: model of computing in which servers, software development tools, networks, storage, and even applications are the main advantages provided by a working environment that is constantly being refreshed, at the same time ensuring easy accessibility at all times and from any device.
- *Data-Analytics*: swifter decision-making thanks to a holistic understanding of employees and the working environment.
- *Internet of processes*: this allows operationalising methods and processes, while at the same time reducing outlays with a view to optimising employees' experience through earnings, among other things.

The use of technology, evolving towards *HR Analytics*, using AI, ML and NLP techniques, renders it possible to discover the hidden talent in the company's workforce. It is worth mentioning the "*employee genome*", which means seeking to decode each employee's professional DNA to gather information on their daily interactions: their experience, know-how, interests, motivations and pastimes, thereby gaining a 360° view of each one of them. This approach earned the company the "*18th Expansión Prize for Innovation in Human Resources*", as the most innovative company in Spain in HR and for its digital talent management, always in pursuit of excellence throughout its workforce (Expansión, 2020).

Accenture applies a culture of equality in the workplace. This has involved setting goals in order to achieve a gender-balanced workforce – i.e., a 50-50 breakdown of men and women - by 2025. The company has rolled out a broad array of specific flexibility programmes to cater for the reconciliation of family and work, providing sundry services such as an online prescription service, legal aid, and assistance with official paperwork, amongst other. In addition, it has introduced a flexible working day and the option of working from home on several days during the week depending on the position held and level of responsibility involved. According to each project's requirements, employs may enjoy Friday afternoons off throughout the year, work longer hours on fewer days, or take more days off at Christmas and Easter, as well as work a shorter day in summer.

HR management at Accenture

Each one of the business areas at Accenture has the following HR departments:

- Talent Department: recruiting, training and talent, and development.
- Talent Development and Rotation Department: internal mobility, study of time and costs, etc.
- Talent Strategy Department: new trends in strategies and policies in HR and the workplace environment.

As regards recruitment and hiring, Accenture is renowned for its external approach, which begins with the posting of job offers on its own website. Once applications have been received, the recruitment teams studies and proceeds to match them with the position to be filled. The next step in the process involves interviews, which can be held over the phone, by videoconference, or face-to-face. The aim is to understand and identify candidates' skills, experience and motivations. Furthermore, some positions may require an assessment of coding skills, innate skills and decision-making, amongst others. The key is that these interviews should develop as two-way conversations between the candidate and the interviewer, whereby the potential employee can ask questions and find out more about Accenture and their prospective role.

As regards internal recruitment, there are two types of mobility: one for consultants and the other for admin staff. The company's internal mobility is used when a vacancy needs to be filled within the company or in the event of consultancy projects. The individuals responsible for these departments draw up a short-list based on the best person for the job. Candidates submit their updated CVs, created using the company's own app. This means the project manager is the one to choose and accept the candidate, conducting the necessary interviews to discover both their soft and their hard competencies.

The company keeps a register of the people working on projects in order to suitably monitor its employees. It carries out a study comparing the time a consultant has dedicated to the project to the overall time they have spent at the company, thereby obtaining a percentage of their working time. This provides a figure for the time the consultant has not been occupied and the cost this has incurred for the company.

In terms of employee development, Accenture bases its training on the precept "*Anytime-Anywhere*", with its plan accounting for over 324,000 hours/year of instruction, which means 27 hours per employee, with an investment of €7.3m. María José Sobrinos, the current Chief HR Officer at Accenture, highlights the Technology Quotient (TQ) programme designed to increase the technological experience of the organisation's entire workforce. In addition, the

latest technologies are used to identify those training schemes required for each individual employee.

Accenture provides opportunities at all stages of a working life.

Firstly, it has a programme for students on placements, both for those in vocational training and for those at university. Each year, the former provides 400 students linked to the field of IT and Telecommunications (Accenture, 2021).

Secondly, there is an offer of jobs for entry-level graduates; in other words, candidates with no experience that are looking for their first job, ready to embark upon a professional career. This scheme therefore involves openings in all its business areas, from strategy to security, and even including operations. It also extends to the segment of experienced professionals, as there are job offers in the fields of strategy, consulting, digital, operations, security, and technology.

Last but not least, a further highlight is the “Alumni” Programme, an initiative whose remit is to keep in touch with former employees of Accenture, which currently numbers 250,000 members and is active in 50 countries.

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Questions about the case

1. Identify the human resources management processes that are described in the case and analyses Accenture's HR policies.
2. Analyses the measures the company has adopted for the reconciliation of family life and work. How might these affect talent management? What about Employer Branding? Discuss.

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