

Boots prescription for success

Boots, the UK's leading pharmacy-led health and beauty retailer, grows its online prescription market share with an enhanced patient experience



Call for change

The UK pharmacy sector is undergoing rapid change due to increased competition, patients' desire for fast and easy prescriptions, and a reduction in NHS reimbursements. These factors, coupled with digitization, meant that Boots needed to adapt to changing climates and act fast.

Much of the sector's competition comes from established pharmacy chains looking to improve their service and from new online pharmacies with fewer or no brick-and-mortar stores. These online pharmacies offer to take care of patients' NHS repeat prescriptions, delivering pharmacy items free to their homes.

Boots aspires to continue growing its online prescription business by delivering on its purpose to be the first choice for pharmacy, health and beauty. Key to accomplishing this is the delivery of an exceptional and seamless patient experience.

The retailer has been at the cornerstone of UK healthcare for more than 170 years, trading online and through a widespread network of stores. It set out to improve the service offered to customers and transform the prescription market segment by launching a new online offering with the backing of its established pharmacy business and high levels of customer care.

Boots wanted to create a new digital platform that would offer more flexibility in handling patients' online prescriptions and easily scale to demand. While Boots is a leader in the pharmacy sector, renewing and relaunching its online repeat prescription proposition was no small endeavor, and the retailer needed support to deliver this transformational change.

“We knew that we wanted to transform, to change the way we work and become more agile, but we had so many questions and we didn't have the right skills within the organization. We partnered with Accenture to help us move along on this journey, bring in the right skills and knowledge, so that we could improve and deliver a new, market leading proposition.”

STEPHEN WATKINS

Managing Director, Boots Ireland

When tech meets human ingenuity

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a white lab coat over a light blue shirt, is looking at a tablet computer. She is standing in a pharmacy aisle with shelves of medicine boxes and bottles in the background. Her right hand is reaching towards a shelf, and her left hand holds the tablet. The lighting is soft and focused on her.

In just seven months, Accenture worked with Boots to deliver a brand new, repeat prescription service that has improved its pharmacy business and laid the foundation for a more patient-oriented omnichannel experience.

Fjord, Accenture's digital experience agency, worked alongside the Boots team to create a new and improved customer journey that enhanced the user experience. The team placed the patient at the heart of every design decision and tested the solution regularly to create a streamlined customer journey that resonates with patients.

In addition, Accenture created a new cloud-based digital platform for online prescriptions, including environments and infrastructure, and a repeat prescription mobile app. This new Microsoft Azure platform does not use the

same legacy technologies as the company's existing ecommerce platform but functions seamlessly alongside them. Since Boots was at the beginning of its cloud journey, Accenture helped infuse cloud-relevant policies and security measures into its processes. New leading-edge tools, such as Microfocus Voltage Security, use field-level data encryption to make patient clinical data more secure.

To help Boots bring new digital products and services to market quicker, Accenture set up a Digital Service Factory (DSF). The DSF was a blended team of Accenture resources with end-to-end digital execution skills to identify, design, develop, test, pilot and launch new products and services. It used approaches that promote startup thinking, accelerate business value and optimize return on investment.



A valuable difference

Boots now has new practices and ways of working to increase digital self-sufficiency and business performance. Accenture coached more than 100 Boots team members in scaled agile delivery, set up a digital talent and culture incubation arm, and created a delivery model blueprint for other Boots projects.

New habits and mindsets mean that the digital team is more comfortable putting minimum viable products in the market to better understand what patients want and what works. These behaviors will help the retailer get other innovations off the ground and deliver value to patients fast.

Boots can now respond quickly to customer and market demands. Instead of releasing updates and enhancements every three months, Boots' IT team now releases them every two weeks. Build, test and release activities take less than one hour, using a self-service marketplace platform which is much faster than the typical two-day process on other enterprise platforms. In addition,

streamlined processes create more transparency within the team so they can see issues and respond to them quickly. Team members are empowered with the knowledge to make decisions and spur innovations.

The changes are also helping Boots pharmacy team members to spend more face-to-face time with patients, enhancing the customer experience. New features are being added all the time to existing services in order to create a more seamless experience. For instance, recently launched functionality allows patients to view a mirror image of their patient medication record and directly order their prescription from their GP.

Boots now has a simple-to-use repeat prescription service that offers patients a more convenient, faster and improved experience. This has been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Patients receive a text once their items are ready for pick up to avoid unnecessary trips and waits.

When tech meets human ingenuity

This is just the start of Boots' omnichannel journey. The platform allows Boots to respond to competitor advances more quickly and offer new, innovative customer services that deliver on its purpose to be the first choice for pharmacy, health and beauty.

Following the full launch of the new online prescription service and associated marketing campaign, Boots has significantly increased online dispensing and the volume of online pharmacy item orders. The solution was able to handle a further spike in traffic when the pandemic hit. It also trebled year-on-year online prescriptions and created additional capacity beyond this to support future growth plans. Online prescription fulfillment delivery times fell to fewer than 7 days. The number of collect-from-store customers also increased, highlighting the value of face-to-face interaction and friendliness of Boots team members. Boots continues to support multiple transformation programs and continuous releases with its flexible and cost-effective cloud platform that's simpler to maintain. The auto-scaling digital platform handles usage spikes and avoids unnecessary costs—as evidenced by the way it successfully scaled for a 200% spike in usage during the TV campaign launch. Other Boots transformation programs are now using the platform to drive growth and spread the benefits.

“Partnering with Accenture has been a truly transformational experience that helped to change Boots from the inside out. It has been great to see both teams coming together to make a difference to our customers and patients, and we have reached some significant milestones, enabling Boots to bring a differential level of care to our patients and team members. Together, we delivered new products with high energy and high speed, which really resonated with our customers and reshaped Boots' position in the market.”

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