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'Living Services' Reach Health First

A new report from Accenture predicts a new era of highly sophisticated “living services” that can learn and tailor themselves in real-time to meet the changing needs of consumers. This new era is brought about by the convergence of the Internet of Things (IoT) and shifting consumer expectations.

Accenture officials say organisations will soon be providing a "new wave of transformative digital services." They call this trend the "third wave of digital", coming after these first two waves: Web/Internet (1990s) and mobility (early 2000s).

Healthcare is one area where this new wave will appear first, officials point out. Described in the Accenture report as the "healthcare revolution," officials say healthcare living services will be fuelled by the movement of the "quantified self" — ie, the increasing awareness of one's health and technology advances that now allow people to monitor health in many different ways. A good example is the use of wearables and mobile health platforms that are helping consumers manage myriad chronic diseases and wellness.

The concept of intelligent services that adapt and change based on consumer preference is not new, but the technology that enables living services has recently matured enough for organisations to create and deliver them at scale, the Accenture report finds. The services will start to grow on a new layer of connected intelligence formed by sensors, the cloud, connected smart devices and real-time analytics, also known as the Internet of Things.

"We call them 'living services' for three reasons," says Brian Whipple, senior managing director for Accenture Interactive. "They will change consumer experiences," he continues. "They will be driven by things that are very proximate to us such as wearables and nearables. And, at the human level, living services will affect our lives in a much deeper and more positive way than mobile and Web services have."

That era of living services is driven by what officials explain as "digitisation of everything" and "liquid expectations."

"Liquid expectations are the process by which what we're now seeing in digital is that customers are having an experience over here. They're enjoying that experience, and they are then transferring their expectations for what best experiences should be across industry barriers," explains Mark Curtis, chief client officer of Fjord, Accenture Interactive’s design and innovation group. "What that means is that…now you need to be looking long and hard at what people are doing in completely different industries." And that includes health, he adds.

The potential for "smart" health is evident from the proliferation of mobile apps and platforms. There are already

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more than 100,000 health and wellness apps available worldwide, according to the Accenture report.

For example, given the high correlation between diabetes and depression, the app Ginger IO can predict signs of depression up to two days before outward symptoms manifest. It taps into data from a patient's smartphone to record everyday behaviour and can provide early warning signs.

"Through smart mobile technology, individualised healthcare can be administered more efficiently and more effectively," officials note.

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