

# Ep.18 - Daniel Garrison\_mixdown

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

michigan, accenture, pandemic, company, clients, talent, north america, world, talking, business, detroit, focused, innovation hub, part, rural broadband, innovation, arthur andersen, state, big, partner

## SPEAKERS

Announcer, Ed Clemente, Daniel Garrison

**A** Announcer 00:01  
Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity, an economic development podcast featuring candid conversations with business leaders across Michigan. You'll hear firsthand accounts from Michigan business leaders and innovators about how the state is driving job growth and business investment, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, building vibrant communities and helping to attract and retain one of the most diverse and significant workforces in the nation.

**E** Ed Clemente 00:28  
Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity brought to you by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Hello, my name is Ed Clemente. I'm your host today. And we're fortunate to have Dan Garrison from Accenture. He's the Detroit Office Managing Director, and you're the are you the Managing Director? I want to make sure I get it right.

**D** Daniel Garrison 00:46  
Yep, yep, I'm I play a couple of different roles in the company. But in the context of Michigan, I am our Detroit Office Managing Director, we say Detroit even though we've got offices within Accenture and several locations around Michigan. So I I think about my focus in the region on Michigan as a whole.

E

Ed Clemente 01:03

Right. And and I know, one of your previous titles a little bit is the I don't know, a Client Delivery for Accenture, Digital across North America means but it sounds intriguing.

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Daniel Garrison 01:17

Yeah, yeah. So so let me unpack that a little bit. You know, within Accenture, we had a part of our business for about five or six years that just focused on digital stuff. And digital for us meant, you know, digital experiences mobile apps, applied intelligence, which for us is big data analytics, artificial intelligence. So anything in that big digital domain, and within North America, I ran what we call the process of delivery. And what that basically means is, I'm overseeing the fulfillment of the commercial, and the emotional commitments we make to our clients to help them kind of achieve that value. That is the reason they partnered with us in the first place. So I did that for five or six years, when Accenture had a digital business. And then we went through a bit of a pivot and changed your organization. And now we have a heavy focus in what we call interactive. So interactive is it's Accenture's digital agency now and is actually the world's largest digital network. And it's all about experience. So it's it's reimagining business through experience. So my job these days, my primary job in the firm is that whole delivery concept, again, like fulfilling the commitments of the client, but I do that globally for Accenture's experience agency.

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Ed Clemente 02:41

Let's not that I not to hear more about that. But I think people should know what Accenture is a little bit. So I know you have you mentioned that you have some offices here in Michigan. But I think Accenture was originally way back Arthur Andersen.

D

Daniel Garrison 02:58

It goes back a long time. So you know, let me do the kind of quick 101 history. Yeah, so Accenture. You know, we're a fairly large company these days. We got about 540,000 people globally, 200 cities 6000 clients globally, and, you know, 185 partners in our ecosystem. But if you go back historically, I mean, we've been around for a long time. So we've been in Michigan for 65 years alone, right? Just the state of Michigan 65 years. And as you said, we were our kind of heritage is Arthur Andersen back in the day, and then Anderson Consulting from 1989 to 2000. And that's the organization I joined. And then around 2000. You know, we broke off and became Accenture. And that's who we've been as a publicly traded company since then. So in Michigan, 65 years back, Arthur Andersen,

the Anderson Consulting, and we've been Accenture since 2000.

E

Ed Clemente 03:56

So what is your sort of just one twenty second definition, what does a consultant do?

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Daniel Garrison 04:02

That's a great question. Um, you know, I think the way to look at consulting these days, it is a partner to organizations that are trying to solve really hard business problems that either you know, they don't have the in-house thinking, talent, capabilities, experience and so they bring in partners such as Accenture to help work through those problems. We tend to be partners and stay with our clients for many, many years. So I use the word partner a lot because it's, it's more appropriate than the transactional nature that consulting sometimes kind of gives you the vibe of.

E

Ed Clemente 04:37

I think that that just to give a little bit of but I know you're with the Detroit part, but can you explain a little bit what the Innovation Hub is? I think you sort of touched on that a little bit with your digital.

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Daniel Garrison 04:48

So you know, innovation as a theme became very important to our company, globally in the last five or six years and right innovation is all about, in our point of view, is all about figuring out new ways, better ways to solve existing problems. And so we took it so seriously that we actually created this Innovation Network, we formally identified locations around the world that would have these innovation hubs, we put leaders in place and methodologies for how you solve problems differently. And within Michigan, we are the number eight innovation hub in North America. And the number really doesn't mean anything. Besides, we're kind of an official Innovation Hub. So for us, we've got a primary innovation location in Livonia. And a lot of what we refer to as industry x data work happens there. And that's about bringing digital into the manufacturing space. But we also have a heavy innovation component in our downtown office where we do work with quantum computing for businesses. And we've got some stuff going on in Ann Arbor with what we call a forge and some other parts of the Metro Detroit. So in general, you know, when we say innovation, we're talking about multiple locations in the Detroit Metro area that focused on this concept, but it's anchored in the facility we have in Livonia.



Ed Clemente 06:15

And I mean, even though you've got these physical footprints, but you also have clients, I would imagine that you deal with around the state as well as around the country to right, because, say, I don't know who your big clients are, but I'm sure they have DNA around the world, if not just Michigan in the United States.



Daniel Garrison 06:34

Absolutely. And that's, you know, that's one of the things that you asked the question on what's it mean to be a consulting organization. So we've got clients in the Michigan market, I know, part of automotive consumer goods and services, education, energy, health, you know, insurance, retail, those are big companies. And those are companies that often have a global presence. And so as a partner, we're able to bring together solutions, not only focusing on their business in North America, per se, but also and you know, Europe or parts of Asia or whatnot. So the programs that we do with our clients, our Michigan clients, very rarely are they just focusing on Michigan business, because so many clients in Michigan, the bigger companies have a global footprint.



Ed Clemente 07:18

But But obviously, you know, from the MEDC's perspective, you play a big part of the fabric of this state, obviously. And and I think that that also projects thought, globally, because I think you being located here, and we're number eight, in the country. I'm sure you've done a lot of international stuff yourself, I think you told me at one time used to travel to China a lot.



Daniel Garrison 07:41

Well, I used to travel before the pandemic, I was at about 100,000 miles a year. It You know, it actually in the air. And so to that end, I used to be in Europe all the time, and parts of Asia and all over North America, obviously, that's, that's changed quite a bit in terms of me physically traveling to those places. But my day, you know, every single day is working with some team from some other part of the world, you know, we're at, you know, this morning, coming up on lunch. And already I've had calls with India and the Philippines, just as an example.



Ed Clemente 08:15

And we should use that as a tangent to talk a little bit why it has changed so dramatically.

And how that is, you know, I hate to use the word pivot, but we all do. Not a better word to use. I think they're in COVID right now. But I know that it's done a couple things, it's done two things, at least one is it's either accelerated changes that sort of were in the works already. But secondly, I think it's also shown, like a triage of priorities for you know, what really is important, because we're only going to put resources behind certain things. So can you kind of kind of explode on that a little bit where you've noticed...

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Daniel Garrison 08:53

Yeah, I mean, I think that no one would argue that the pandemic in general has caused businesses everywhere to have to, you know, take kind of inventory of their strategy and their ways of working and their talent strategies and what they need to do for their people and all that. So if I, if I just reflect back a little bit over, you know, starting from when the pandemic truly hit North America, call it in the March 2020 timeframe, we saw a lot of changes have to happen very quickly, both with our organization with our clients, with my friends that are executives in the Michigan market and with me myself, and so, you know, I just think about what I had to do. And for me personally, like everyone, I had to learn how to adjust I wasn't going to the airport every Monday anymore, I wasn't getting on a plane, and instead it came down to alright, am I working out of my home office, the basement couch, my kids play room, or am I going to go downtown to our office that day. And I found that you know, just a simple patterns of where I'm going to work from and how that how that balances with mental health and changing up the scenery, and not being trapped at one desk in, you know, one place all the time, so, so a lot of personal stuff. Now, companies, you know, same thing, right. So we, we observe very quickly that companies first had to figure out how to keep their their workforce engaged. And this was this was universal, this is around the world. And some of the problems we saw company solving, you would never guessed, like, you know, in parts of the world, we were literally on conference calls, trying to figure out how to get you know, Ridwan, a desk someplace in India, because we got a laptop, he's got broadband connectivity, but just those are the realities of what people's lives are in very small work environments in different parts of the country. So all that actually came into play for our Michigan clients, as well, as we had to adapt and be on part of their journey as well, because they were challenged with their own, you know, kind of enabling their workforce. And it was really interesting, because some companies, I mean, they were just on top of this immediately, and others, I think there was a little bit of this is going to be a two week thing, and then everything's gonna go back normal, here we are. And that simply is, you know, not the way things panned out. So, you know, seeing how companies had to adapt not only their business strategies, but collaboration, and now the big one is just the talent strategy, right? There's so much disruption of talent, and honestly, opportunities for people that are looking to do, you know, sort of digital work these days. Overall, I think that, you know, we're going to see

trends that have been set into motion that are going to be here to stay. You know, we've got new ways of working, hybrid ways of working, you know, different ways of collaborating, all those sorts of things are going to be part of the fabric of how you do business in Michigan and beyond going forward.

A

Announcer 11:56

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E

Ed Clemente 12:13

Even when COVID has some resolution to some degree, I think a lot of these things will become permanent. And I think a lot might go back. But I think that's kind of where I'm kind of asking you because you're right, in the thick of this. Especially, I think one other side note is that everybody thinks, you know, during this era, that we've become more sort of, like internally focused. But in reality, I think it's never been more of a global economy, as we see these challenges with shortages, and you know, resources. So it's sort of like two conflicting things at the same time. What's going on?

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Daniel Garrison 12:53

Yeah, no, I think you're spot on there. You know, I think that one of the things when I talk to my clients in this market, I tried to bring a point forward, which is, you know, we're focused heavily on vaccines. And that's going to be a theme for a while, I think, in the world we live in. But vaccines aren't a time machine. And they're not going to bring us back to the state of the world in February 2020. And so all the things that have evolved, and the ways of working and the different focus, the different collaboration, all of those new patterns, they now need to be accounted for in an organization strategy. And I don't care if you're a tiny startup, right, with three employees, or if you've got 300,000 employees, you can't ignore the differences that are in place now and are going to be here for the duration. Some of them are great, right? There is. I mean, you know, there's all kinds of studies and research that have been done on the effects of family and, and bonding and time we've all had together and some of them aren't great, right? We struggle as a company, like a lot of organizations have, how do we make our people our employees in Michigan still feel connected? When they haven't seen somebody in person from the office in a year now? Right? How do we, how do we take talent that is joining our company has joined our company during the pandemic, okay, and is never perhaps been in an Accenture office or met an Accenture employee in person. Like that's just mind blowing, to think about a

whole generation of talent that have joined the workforce, and and this is what they've stepped into. And I'll be talking to somebody, you know, who just graduated from Michigan State or whatnot, and the person will say well, I didn't actually, you know, walk across the stage for my diploma, and I had a laptop shipped to me from Accenture and things are going great, but I'm looking forward to actually seeing you in person someday. Those are those are human patterns that I think all organizations need to think about going forward, because even when things do settle down to the point that we can start to call out, like, hey, this is back to normal, and I'm able to go to a restaurant whenever I want, these things have been relaxed. There are there are new trends and patterns that are here permanently. And we are constantly thinking about what we do with that, and how we have that show up in not only how we manage our company, our business and the experience for our people, but then also how we work with clients to solve their business problems in light of that new reality.

E

Ed Clemente 15:31

Yeah, I kind of tell people, sort of certain tonically, but I say, you know, the people that are busiest during the sort of this era, are lawyers, HR officials and insurance companies, because those are the three that have the most risk factors involved, you know, and even I would maybe I'd add in even the commercial real estate arms. Right, yeah, that's gonna all change a lot of things. On the, you know, I want to mention something else, and only because you're my first person I've ever heard, but you sort of live sort of, you're living the digital nomad lifestyle, actually. And, and why don't you just give a little bit and also tell me because you're the first person that really sort of hammered into me what Starlink was, and maybe you can tell me what it means to you, too.

D

Daniel Garrison 16:21

Yeah, yeah. So So let's talk about digital nomad for a second. So um, so tell you a quick story. In the summer of 2000, okay, call in August, I had to get on a plane or the only time I traveled twice during the call it the year long pandemic window, and one time, we were losing all this junior talent in the Boston area. And so I got on a plane I flew out there, and we, you know, with our masks on and sat outside and had this conversation at a cafe and I, this woman I was meeting with her name is Jane, I said, well, Jane, tell me why you're leaving, like I flew here to have this conversation, because I'm seeing this more and more. But she told me she's like, well, listen, I literally can pick the phone up tomorrow. And I can answer a call from the recruiter and I can have a job in Silicon Valley. And they are telling me, I never have to get off my couch in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And that that trend, like it just hit me full on. I'm like, wow, the game has changed. We have blurred the lines from where you have to work. And now, this concept of a digital nomad of you being able

to have your office, wherever you have, you have a laptop, and you've got connectivity, that became very, very apparent very quickly, even in Michigan. So you know, Ed you and I have talked, my my family has got a place in northern Michigan outside of Charlevoix, and we've spent a lot of time there. And working from there is was fully compatible with what my job required, because I'm virtual. I'm on video conferences 10 hours a day, but it also was compatible with things that were going on with my family at times my kids, you know, they were under quarantine because they got exposed or whatnot. And so this concept of digital nomad, I think, started to grow very quickly and took hold. Now you think about enabling technologies, right? The federal government was already on track to dump billions of dollars into rural broadband. Okay, and Starlink. And if I'll do the Starlink, 101. And please, folks listening don't know what it is. But, you know, a long time ago, when Elon Musk first had the vision of SpaceX and putting humankind on Mars, he realized he needed some way to generate a ton of revenue to fund that program. So he created Starlink, and Starlink is a satellite-based internet access company, but the differences because you might be saying, well, you got to Hughes Net and these other things have been around forever, but Starlink their approach is to have many, many 1000s of low Earth orbit satellites. And the key there is the low Earth orbit, right? Physics doing what physics does, the lower you are to the planet, the lower the latency for the communication. So now you've got connectivity that's actually on par with what you might get with a cable or a fiber provider so Starlink is a satellite dish you put it on your roof, and if it has a view of the northern sky, you get awesome, like 180 megabit downstream bandwidth with great latency and all that good stuff. I managed to get into, I managed to get into the beta for Starlink, long months ago. And my place in northern Michigan was just at the cut off as far as the the latitudinal line. And so going up there and working in that environment with this satellite dish, it was very eye opening because with the expansion of rural broadband all over North America and especially in Michigan, you're gonna find more people being able to work in those little pockets of the state that are historically limited in terms of technology and connectivity, all that is very quickly changing at a time that the human patterns being driven by the pandemic are colliding and changing as well. So that's just, you know, you and I have talked about this in detail. And I think it's fascinating because companies need to think about that it should influence and change recruiting strategies, like for us, we are now pivoting and thinking about how we go and talk to academic institutions and start to tap into them for some of our talent where we wouldn't think about things like that 18, 24 months ago,

E

Ed Clemente 16:32

I think we could probably talk for an hour just about other things that we're just talking about Michigan, you can imagine what this is doing to more developing countries, for example, you know, in Africa, or India and China, how it might change the concept of, you

know, what is urban areas anymore? (Lines are being blurred) Yeah, it's a fascinating time to be alive and to be experiencing this. Well, anyway, in a, we've kind of burned through our time here, which didn't surprise me at all. But I'm hoping I hit most of the points, I think he wanted to bring up I think, unless you had something else you wanted to add that I didn't get to.

D

Daniel Garrison 21:18

Yeah, I mean, I'll just, you know, I'll just kind of maybe close this up with just talking about super fast, some of the bigger trends that are accompanying, you know, the the pandemic disruptive patterns, um, you know, but but, and these aren't going to be a surprise, but the things I see coming at Michigan, which are going to continue to drive change and disruption, their cloud, their artificial intelligence, and then that that autonomous and electric vehicle combo, so I'll leave you with one, one quick example. And then we go ahead and wrap it up, if we need to but as I talked to, for example, I was on the phone with some of our teams in Israel a couple of weeks ago, and we had a partner on the phone, and they heard I was from Detroit, and they got very excited, like, we've been looking for contacts, because they're working on automated technology in Israel there, and they're like, we need to connect into the fabric of the Detroit market. You, you have such a heritage and a pedigree with automotive and blah, blah, blah. So I think that our state's history and a bunch of industries, but certainly anchored in automotive, is drawing talent and attention because of those technology disruptions across cloud, artificial intelligence, electric vehicles and autonomous vehicles. And I think that trend is gonna continue for us as well. So we live in really exciting and interesting times, I think.

E

Ed Clemente 22:37

Yeah, I'm sure you. I don't know if you've heard of Trevor Pawl, who works for the MEDC. Yeah, that's one of his big goals, along with a lot of other things. But, you know, in some ways, what might have been the rust belt, historically, now might be the place where people still know how to make things and do things. While a lot of the rest of the world, or at least the US has not been making things. So, you know, we're fortunate to have all the engineers and manufacturing sites in the state as well. (Absolutely.) And the last question I have for you might be hard for you, but maybe not. Do you have a favorite spot of what you like best about Michigan? Or maybe an event? Or, you know, what do you like best about the state?

D

Daniel Garrison 23:17

Oh, that's a great question. So so I've been with Accenture for 24 years. And I have been

asked slash suggested to move to different parts of the world a bunch of times on my journey, some in North America, some in Europe, and I've been asked that I was asked to move to Australia at one point, and I turned it down. I've been out of our Detroit office the entire time of my career. And I think I anchor it back to just the diversity and by diversity, I'm talking about the people and the cultures I'm talking about the weather, like I'm just not the sort of person that would be happy with, you know, 50 to 70 degrees, 12 months out of the year, right? And then just the fact that you can you can be downtown Detroit and surrounded by such rich culture and history, and then you can drive three hours north or four hours, you know, Northwest and be in Traverse City or other parts of northern Michigan. And it is just a completely different vibe and feel and experience, but you're still in your home state. So for me Michigan's always going to be home. And it's primarily because of the diversity of what there is to do and to see. And, you know, the companies that make up our DNA.

E

Ed Clemente 24:33

Well, I think you can't ask for a better testimony than being offered to go to all those places you've mentioned and you still love Michigan. And I think, you know, as you you know, you get older you realize how nice Michigan is and we just were lucky, you know, I can't I was born here, but you know, I think it is got a lot more advantages as I've gotten older. And I want to say again, thanks again to Dan Garrison. He's from Accenture Detroit office, Managing Director And I want to thank you very much, Dan for taking time to be with us today and we look forward to talking to you in the future.

D

Daniel Garrison 25:05

Excellent, thanks for the time Ed. Take care, we'll talk soon.

A

Announcer 25:10

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