

# Leading a Value-Driven Digital Transformation

How teams like yours unlock growth through  
digital transformation



# How can your team lead digital transformation for your organization?

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For every business problem that your company faces, there may be some off the shelf options that come pretty close to getting the job done.

## **But your business is not a game of horseshoes.**

You don't just throw solutions into the wind and hope it lands close enough to improve your organization. A close-enough solution is not nearly close enough to meaningfully improve your business. You might score some points, but it won't set you apart. More and more frequently, companies are recognizing that true, long-lasting value is created with a custom response to their unique needs.

ADK helps businesses uncover gaps and inefficiencies that enable them to unlock strategic advantages, and works in partnership to develop custom technology solutions that create truly innovative digital transformations.

## **We'll show you how:**

- **Building proprietary products can increase your company's valuation**
- **Using custom technology can supercharge your operations**
- **Transforming your employee and customer digital experiences can cement your position as industry leader**

The goal here is to arm you with the inspiration to look at your own company, team, and processes and start to think, "how might we improve this?"



# Building Proprietary Products to Increase Your Valuation

WHO IS THIS FOR:

**Sales & Operations Executives**

KEY LESSONS:

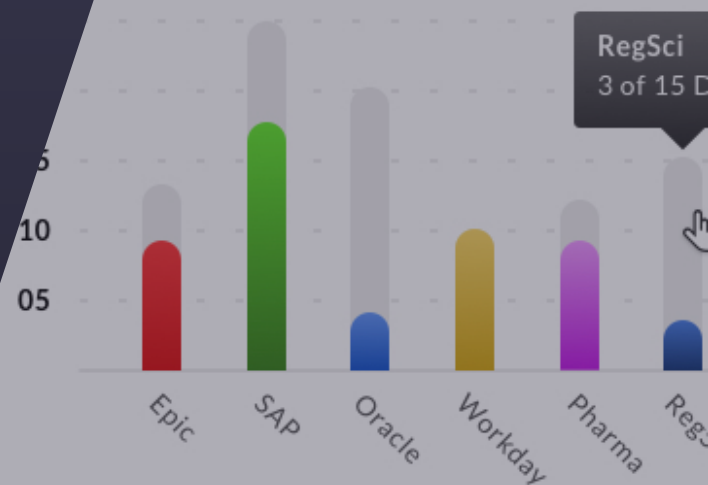
- Question whether existing process could be done better.
- Embracing custom technology can help you preserve core aspects of your culture beyond the office walls.
- Consumer-facing apps aren't just for your customers, employees love to be well-armed with the tools to succeed.

DEALS

5%

added 8 of 12 deals this month

## Daily Deals Progress by Department



## Deals

ADDED	NAME	COMPANY
07/29/2019	Allison Rebello	AAA Mid-A

# Building Proprietary Products to Increase Your Valuation



ALKU is one of the best consulting firms in the Northeast, placing top talent in some of the most vital sectors in America. In this space, most competitors tend to focus on technology that helps them with external outreach. ALKU differentiates itself by prioritizing tech initiatives that strengthen from within. The company focuses on things that will make their people more successful, building a culture that promotes passion and performance without sacrificing the fun.

Over the years, ALKU has repeatedly teamed up with ADK to help them strategize and grow through less conventional ideas that maximize their team's everyday operations and efficiency. Let's take a look at a few of those examples.

## Scaling Unique Operations Nationally

In 2018, ALKU attributed much of their organizational success to one crucial piece of analog technology: a single whiteboard. They used this whiteboard to track successes and fulfillment for recruitment teams in real-time, huddling around it regularly as a team. With their continued growth, though, relying on a single, analog whiteboard just couldn't scale with their company. ALKU attempted to scale up by syncing 6 different offices to one centralized whiteboard using video cameras. This idea was scrapped because, like most

MacGyver'd solutions, it couldn't truly replicate the collaborative process that more than 80% of the company personnel relied on daily.

They could have gone with other off-the-shelf solutions, like their competitors did, but they knew that what helped them become one of the fastest growing companies in MA was unique. Off-the-shelf simply wouldn't capture that uniqueness - they couldn't afford to try to fit their processes and culture into a box.

A respect for what made ALKU special helped them realize that a custom approach was ideal to meet their business and growth goals. After an expedited, but intensive, discovery phase, ADK was able to assist ALKU with refining their long-term vision and the roadmap to get there.

## Modernizing A Unique Process

ALKU's whiteboard strategy, "ALKU Everywhere," is now completely digital. The custom web application looks and feels exactly like the original whiteboards, which is intentional.

One of the key goals of any custom technology endeavor needs to be ensuring the tech gets used. Our discovery process, which included interviews with the end-users of the product, helped us shape a completely new tool that felt familiar to the managers and recruiters. Because of that, ALKU employees were up and running quickly, and the product soon reached 100% adoption

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***“ADK came in, understood our goals, and designed a solution that “just works”. It has exceeded every expectation that we had for the project. The team at every level of the organization is thrilled with the product.”***

Mark Eldridge, ALKU CEO

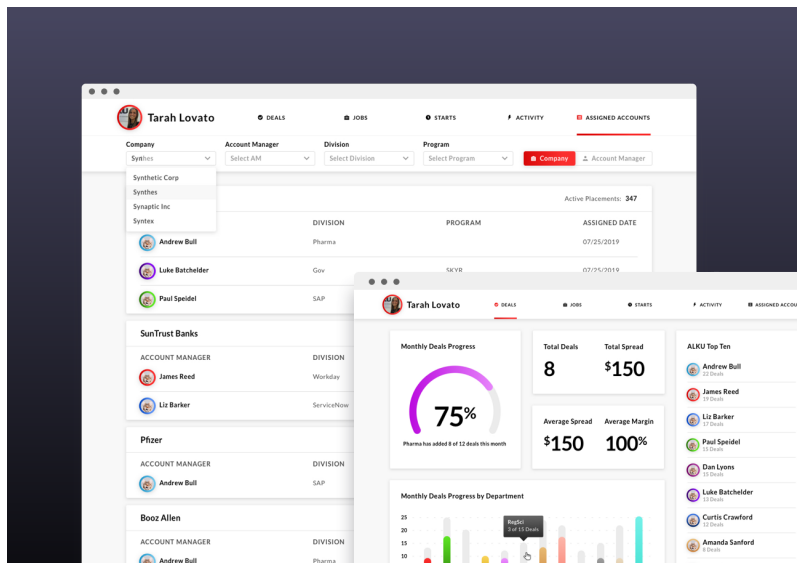
amongst the 13 department groups.

The new tool is also powered by an API to accommodate for real-time access by hundreds of employees and features a dashboard for both senior executives and the IT team to run reports and track functionality. New “Smart TVs” and Raspberry Pi devices were added to each of ALKU's 7 offices, and they are now powered by the new web application and cloud database, replacing the analog whiteboards company-wide.

## Integrating Custom Technology

The discovery phase also uncovered the key integrations that made up the backbone of ALKU's operations. If new products couldn't play nicely with these then they'd be useless. One of the challenges the team overcame was ensuring a snug fit between new and existing technology.

The teams worked closely together to integrate ALKU Everywhere with ALKU's technology infrastructure, including: Bullhorn recruiting application, CloudCall call management system, and all other process-related applications and systems.



## Scaling for an Unpredictable Future

The value of this exciting new analog-turned-digital tool was on full display in 2020 and beyond when COVID-19 forced much of the world's professionals into a remote working capacity. Armed with this technology, ALKU had no trouble quickly adapting to this new way of working. The whiteboard sessions continue to bring the team together as the company pushes forward without missing a beat.



# Fostering Healthy Competition with Gamification

WHO IS THIS FOR:

**Sales Executives**

KEY LESSONS:

- Investing in a custom-built internal product can lead to future wins.
- Discover more impactful opportunities by staying focused on the right areas.
- Gamification can be a win-win by increasing both productivity and morale.



QUARTLY PERFORMANCE

Current



Hallie Reid

Upcoming



Marvin Anderson

Upcoming



Jared Cooper

Past



Jane Garrett

Past



Elijah Cast



# Fostering Healthy Competition with Gamification

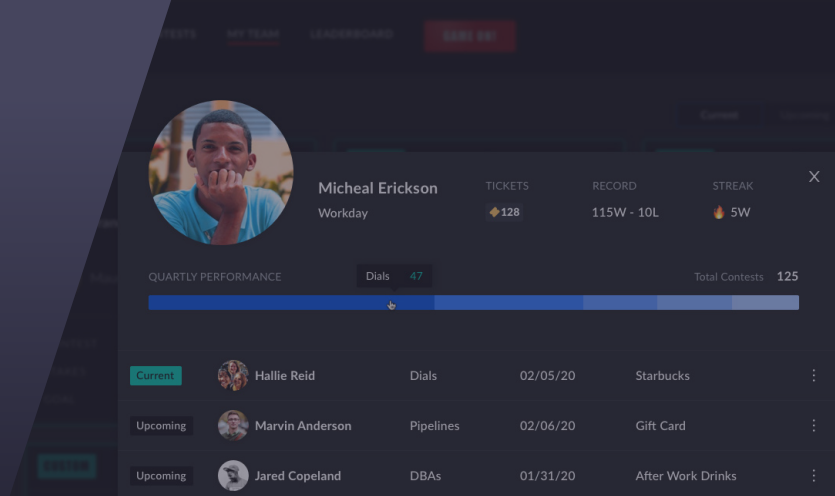
## How ALKU built a tool their employees love to use.

Energized by the success of ALKU Everywhere, the team looked into other ways they could improve operations. One of the more exciting ideas was bold and out of the box - exactly like ALKU: They would gamify their staffing efforts in order to improve productivity and double down on their culture of performance and fun.

By this point, ADK was familiar with ALKU's culture, business strategy, and technology, which greatly reduced the time spent in discovery and mockup phases. Great ideas were quickly prototyped, and eventually built another great product.

The ALKU team was already challenging each other informally, running impromptu competitions and bets with each other regarding their productivity and real-time staffing wins.

The idea was simple: harness this fun-loving and competitive energy into challenges between teammates. The Game On application brought these to life with stats, leaderboards, chat and more. Now the sales team had a structured way to lean into some friendly competition, while management could monitor and incentivize as needed.



### SHAPING YOUR STRATEGY

#### How to identify opportunities for custom apps

Coming up with a custom product or tool isn't exactly straight forward. It's easy to go down rabbit holes that are irrelevant to your organizational goals or are simply not feasible. Start by focusing on what makes your organization successful and unique, or your "unique value props".

#### Ask yourself questions like these:

- What are metrics we use to measure success?
- What processes most directly affect those metrics?
- What are the sources of our competitive advantage?
- How can we double, triple, or quadruple those advantages?

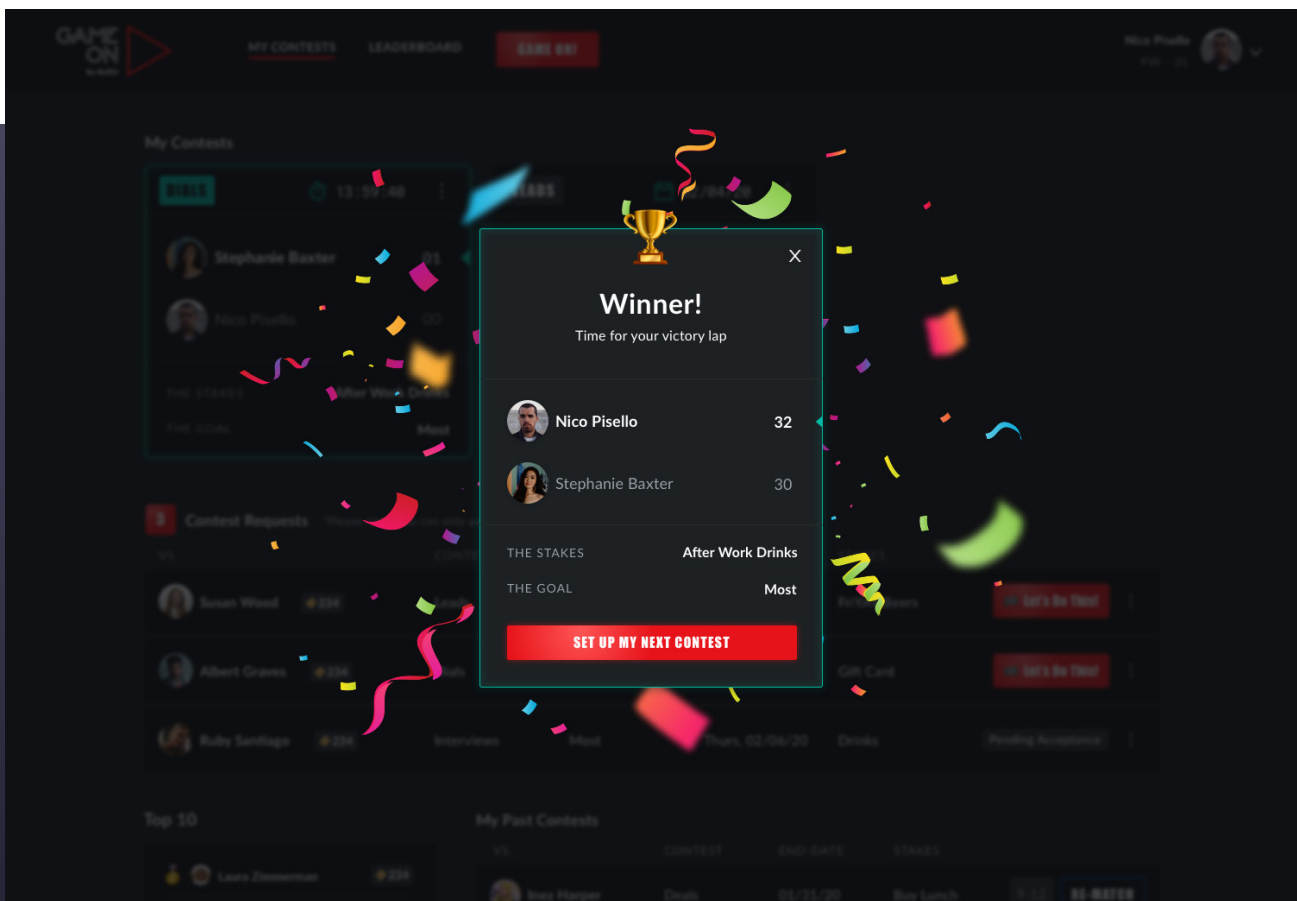
## ALKU and ADK Partnership continues to drive growth

Over a few short years, what started as a 100 employee establishment has grown into a 500+ person organization. Throughout this rapid growth, ALKU was able to solve common growing pains and promote their culture thanks to strong leadership and strategic investments in custom technology.

Because of their growth, the scalability of their digital products continues to be the primary focus for ADK and ALKU. Together, we collaborate to customize the exact

technology that will help ease whatever challenges ALKU may run into, and make work more enjoyable for the entire company. The future relationship is ripe with ideas, as the ALKU team continues to trust ADK when it comes to prioritizing their company's digital transformation.

While this transformation is fueled by revolutionizing internal processes, your biggest opportunities may lie in improving the way you connect with clients. Case in point: Span Tech Conveyors.







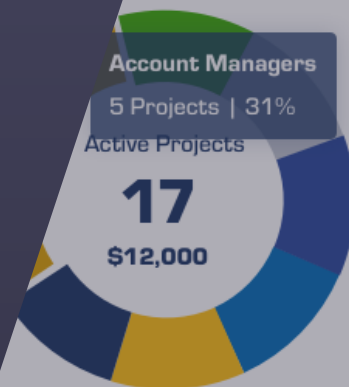
# Supercharging Operations & Sales with Custom Software

WHO IS THIS FOR:

**Sales & Operations Executives**

KEY LESSONS:

- Reevaluate your purchase funnel - how can you make it less cumbersome for the user?
- If you're in an industry that has yet to embrace custom technology, bucking that status quo can net huge long term benefits.
- Identifying the primary blockers to tackle helps improve the ROI of any custom tech project.
- Improving processes at customer touchpoints can increase efficiency AND support your brand.



	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
May						
Jun						
Jul						
Aug						
Sep						
Oct						
	\$3.4m	\$3.0m	\$2.1m	\$3.8m	\$1.5m	\$3.0m
	\$1.1m	\$2.0m	\$0.5m	\$0.9m	\$1.9m	\$0.9m

# Supercharging Operations & Sales with Custom Software



A true leader in their industry, Span Tech manufactures custom, modular conveyor systems for clients across the globe. But their digital footprint was severely outdated.

Span Tech initially came to ADK with one of the most common marketing challenges: an outdated web presence that didn't reflect their current brand.

## Modernizing a Leading Brand

After months of planning, product re-cataloguing, and building, the ADK Group and Span Tech completely transformed the company's digital presence by:

- **Designing and developing an entirely new website.**
- **Formally refreshing and modernizing the brand.**
- **Creating a visual identity for online applications.**
- **Defining digital brand standards.**
- **Streamlining the entire online lead generation process.**

Revamping and automating the lead generation process led to growth that required Span Tech to evaluate some legacy technologies that they used daily.

Though the website was set-up for capturing leads effectively, the process that followed was anything but simple.

A long-term digital transformation strategy was set in motion as ADK and Span Tech worked together to target the company's biggest operational inefficiencies, and turn them into competitive strengths that could continue to scale into the future.

### SHAPING YOUR STRATEGY

#### How to identify your service-related competitive advantage opportunities

If your competitive advantage is tied to speed of service, it only makes sense to leverage custom technology to build upon that advantage. If you become reliant on out-of-the-box SAS products, your competitors can enjoy the same advantage. To identify the biggest opportunities for differentiating your brand and maximizing your advantages over the competition, consider looking internally and asking:

- Which of your company departments are the sources of competitive advantages?
- Which departments lag behind?
- What are the biggest pain points in that department? How can you turn that into a strength?
- What are the biggest current advantages in those departments? How can you build upon those advantages?

# Rearchitecting the Bottom of the Sales Funnel

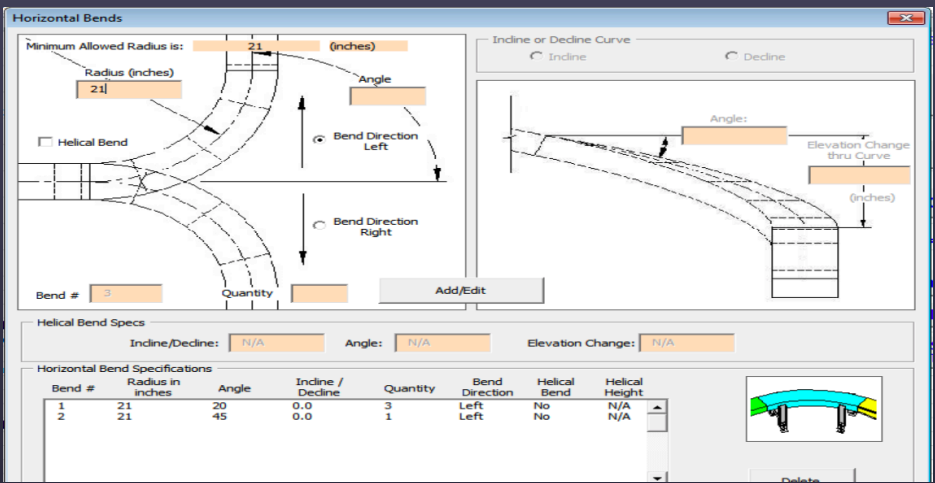
While digging into the data from the project discovery, what would be the most impactful Span Tech sales issue became evident: how they quote new conveyor systems.

Span Tech's ability to close leads was reliant on a manual process where sales reps hastily threw together complex conveyor system "designs" using dozens of outdated spreadsheets, just to generate a quote for the potential customer. Span Tech's existing process was riddled with variability and one-off customizations, all using a legacy spreadsheet-based application.

As they grew, the constant crashing, difficult maintenance needs, and long training periods began to threaten their competitiveness. The whole thing wreaked of inefficiency, and the target for innovation could not have been more evident as the relationship progressed.

There was one major complication, though.

The quoting process that we wanted to improve is also intertwined with Span Tech's ability to generate design mockups for new conveyor systems. After all, you can't exactly provide a customer with a price quote without first having the scope fleshed out conceptually.



Old Spantech estimator system

## Automating End to End Processes

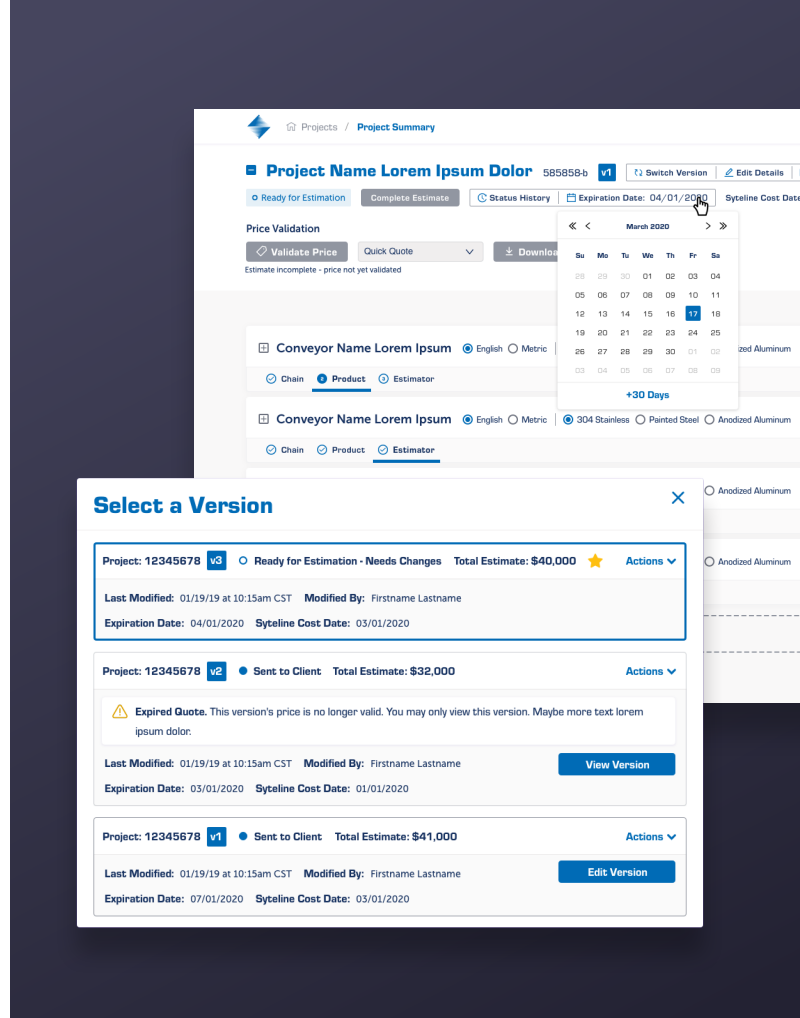
Span Tech needed to move leads quickly from an initial inquiry phase to a quoting phase. At the same time, they needed to move product designs into a production phase more efficiently. Either of these alone is a large undertaking with enormous business implications, but together they constituted the top priorities for Span Tech's digital transformation.

After months of collaboration and millions of lines of code, ADK completely transformed Span Tech's estimation process with custom software. Now both the sales team and customers can construct a new conveyor design quickly and intuitively, all while the cost updates in real time in the background. Once an accurate estimate is generated using the "conveyor builder", the design is nearly ready to enter production after the customer signs off, expediting what was once a slow and cumbersome process.

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***It's amazing that ADK Group is able to duplicate and enhance the software that took us nearly three decades to develop in just over a year. Their vast knowledge base allows them to complete many tasks in a short amount of time.***

Dale McDaniel, Span Tech VP of Operations



## Transformational Software

The estimation software is only the beginning of Span Tech's digital transformation. ADK and Span Tech continue to simplify their customer journey from website to finished conveyor product, taking a very complex process and modernizing it from start to finish. The overall feedback — from Span Tech's internal sales associates and engineers up to their COO — has been nothing short of amazement. From Span Tech's marketing to sales to internal operations, they've replaced cumbersome, clunky and outdated with sleek, modern, and intuitive.

And in an industry where competitors are slow to adapt to the latest technology, this gave them the leg up they needed to expand further/farther.



# Transforming UX for Employees and Users

WHO IS THIS FOR:

**Sales & Operations Executives**

KEY LESSONS:

- Digital transformations don't have to be company-wide. Focusing on an individual team can still have an organizational impact.
- Owning the entire customer experience makes you more efficient, flexible, and differentiated than your competition.



# Transforming UX for Employees and Users



## How tech can power an end-to-end upgrade to your core offering

APCIA is a trade association which represents 60 percent of the US Property casualty insurance market. They have 2 critical business functions: They lobby on capitol hill for their clientele (and the industry), and they publish daily summaries of laws, regulations, compliance requirements, and more on a membership-driven web platform. Their content is absolutely vital to the success of their members.

Over the last 20 years, their web application had grown organically but not strategically. They were well aware that it was filled with redundancies, inefficient processes, and limitations. It took too long for new developers to get onboarded and they had been using a legacy database (Oracle) that was beginning to show its age. Some older technology was difficult to upgrade and manage, while other parts were not even mobile responsive.

In short, they were long overdue for modernizing their platform and its supporting infrastructure.

ADK and APCIA kicked off their relationship together with in-depth discovery discussions about their business and growth plans, and quickly worked towards setting a long-term business strategy to guide future efforts.

### SHAPING YOUR STRATEGY

#### How to avoid vendor lock-in while leveling up your team to grow with your product.

When you are looking for someone to help you through a digital transformation, consider both your internal and external resources and use the external resources as a way to level up internally. With the right approach, you can avoid over-reliance on vendors whilst turning their deliverables into your own proprietary product that you can manage, maintain, and improve upon. Consider asking potential partners the following questions:

- What is your experience and capabilities with training tech teams?
- How involved or collaborative will my team be in the process?
- How much autonomy and control will we have after launch?

## Preventing Scope Creep Without Sacrificing Flexibility

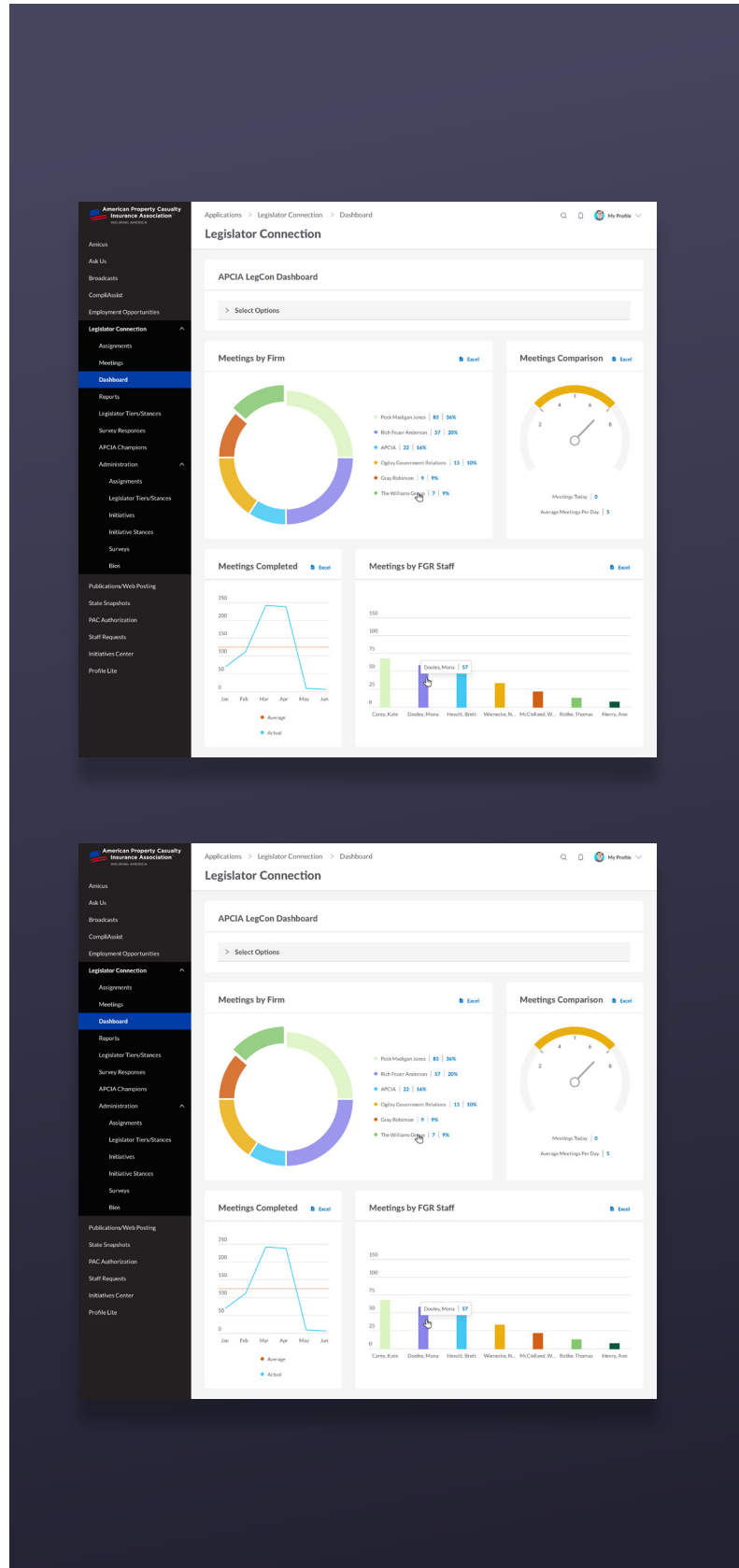
With dozens of new pieces of content published daily, the web application had quickly built up hundreds of thousands of unique pages. It supported an equally broad audience, with tens of thousands of visits per day. This put APCIA's platform on par with media and publishing websites.

Needless to say, it was clear this project would be both complicated and high stakes.

Working within ADK's Agile project management processes proved to be an essential part of keeping the teams' efforts aligned at every phase of the project. A clearly defined vision supported by a strict roadmap and healthy backlog helped make sure the team wasn't distracted by shiny objects. However, as priorities necessarily changed, everybody was able to adapt quickly.

### Notice a pattern here?

If you'd like to learn more about the Discovery phase - and any other UX strategy questions - reach out to one of our lead design strategists.

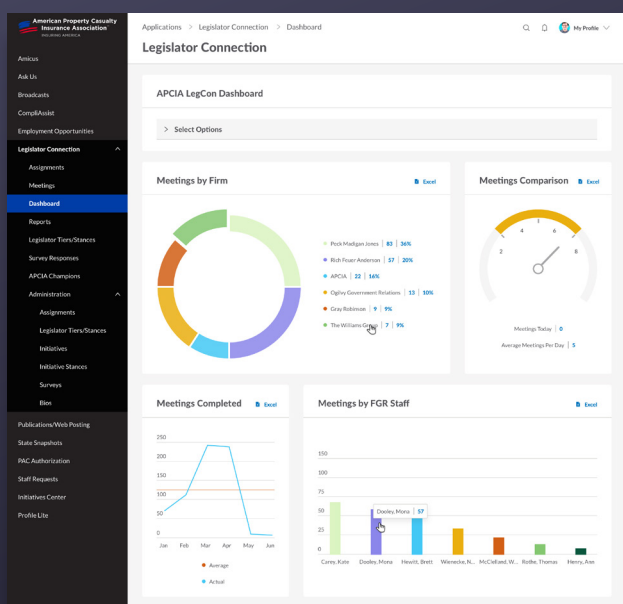
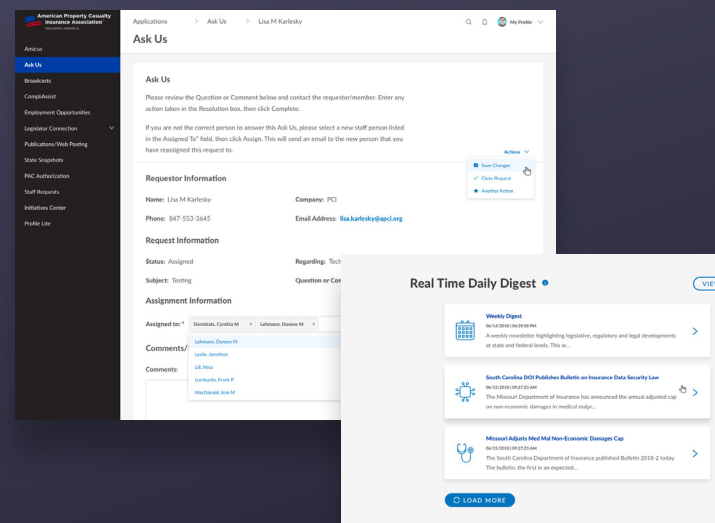




Through this iterative process custom solutions continued to evolve with the project. Soon both teams were fully satisfied with the two responsive applications:

- **A personalized, responsive and feature-rich web application ensures leads are drawn in and members are fully engaged.**
- **An administrator dashboard with functionality similar to a custom CMS. APCIA uses this app to easily publish, edit, promote and track their content at home and on their phones.**

Being able to balance a firm long-term vision with short-term flexibility is one of the greatest advantages of Agile work. For a large enterprise with multiple stakeholders and complicated user journeys like APCIA, it was the only way to make a big enough impact on their existing technology without trying to boil the ocean.



## Building for All End Users, Together

On the front end, ADK's UX and development teams integrated seamlessly with APCIA's back end engineers, while certified project managers oversaw the collaboration. ADK began by redesigning and rebuilding both their client-facing web application, and the internal admin application. ADK supported APCIA's back end team with training, ongoing product support and implementing a new deployment process.

APCIA continues to see vast improvements in their digital product usage. Internally, what was once a painfully slow content publishing process is now a well-oiled machine that employees use to churn out a dozen new content pages daily. Marketing and sales professionals no longer shy away from what was once a cumbersome platform. To external users, the redesigned APCIA web application is sleek, responsive and easy to use.

# Defining & Building Your Big Idea



It always begins with digging into known issues first. You peel away the individual layers of strategy, processes, operations, etc., and ultimately the technology underlying those systems. It can take a little longer to get to root causes of your problems, but addressing the challenges from the foundation is the best way to ensure the solution is scalable and built for longevity.

**This is where ADK has excelled for years - identifying business gaps and turning them into strengths by leveraging custom technology.**

## Discovering Your Opportunities

Forming long-term partnerships with domain experts is extremely valuable for businesses as they systematically launch exciting new tools or flesh out ideas. It's important to have a trusted advisor on your side that can help you to prioritize business problems and potential solutions by helping to balance their costs and impact.

While the discovery phase originates with a singular business need or pain, it serves a much bigger and highly strategic role that intimately familiarizes our two teams. And it is through that irreplaceable close partnership that pain points surface and ideas can flow freely. It's a safe space for intense business and strategy introspection with key business stakeholders,

department leads, and end users.

The beauty of custom tech is that its boundaries are only as confining as you want to make them. But, its potential and its reach is literally limitless.

Where does your next opportunity reside? Contact us to start digging into where your business opportunities are hiding out.

## Chat with one of our strategists to get started



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