

Why it matters to be a
‘NEVER-LEGACY LEGEND’
and how you too can be one



THE NEVER●LEGACY LEGENDS
playbook for companies with a purpose

“IF WE WANT TO THRIVE, COMPETE, AND GROW IN AN INCREASINGLY DIGITAL WORLD, WE ALL HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND LEAP FORWARD.”

Over a decade ago, Marc Andreessen, the formidable technology investor declared that ‘software is eating the world’. He was proven right; moreover, software is the world these days. And that comes at a price, in many dimensions. At a huge carbon footprint to the planet, chewing and spitting out talent and very often at a higher monetary cost than benefit.

If we want to thrive, compete, and grow in an increasingly digital world, we all have to take responsibility and leap forward. Incremental steps will tie us to our legacy forever and widen

the gap of prosperity and opportunity between stakeholders that actually need each other to succeed.

In this paper we will explain why it takes more than mere technology decisions to take this leap. Why we all must set and embrace a new standard for never-legacy thinking and technology. This also means we have to aspire to be the legends of our time. Legends who look to the future for change today. Legends who create a new alternative to power businesses from the core to the very last mile and end-user. Quite simply, because we can.

PLEDGE AND A MISSION

‘Never-legacy legends’ might appear to be a contradiction at first sight. Legends build legacies. Remember the obvious ones like Nelson Mandela or Gandhi. Technology legends like Gordon Moore or environmental legends like Jane Goodall. Others might rather think of Freddy Mercury, who stated with a wink in his eye: ‘I won’t be a rockstar, I will be a legend’. With courageous actions, large and small, they left and leave an imprint on human history. Legends see a situation they want to change and get to work, tirelessly and powered by a strong conviction and an imaginative mind. They have a dream and want to bring it as close as they

can to reality. They execute their dream, step by step. They labour, they invent, they build, they convince, they reach out, elevating others to achieve great things with lasting effect.

They leave a legacy by breaking through legacy thinking. By turning their eye to the future, powered by experience of the past. By understanding the complex context of today. Legends see opportunities and make the most of those. Taking others with them on their journey, for the benefit of all.

THE UNBEARABLE BURDEN OF LEGACY

...ON THE BUSINESS

In general, it is not 'bon ton' to address challenges in too much depth. We much rather talk about opportunities, pushing all these rather irritating hindrances to the side of our plate. Let's take a minute to address the 'unspeakable' and the 'assumed' for it touches a (raw) nerve with everyone in the IT industry and, indeed beyond.

The issue of legacy software cannot be overstated. The amount of code that is outdated, no longer used, no longer fit for purpose, a security risk and a major hindrance for full digitisation is mountainous and impossible to imagine. Let's try, however. In 2015 already MIT estimated that the oldest computer program still in use was MOCAS written in Cobol and implemented in 1958 more than 10 years before we landed on the moon. Over the years, this and many billions of lines of other legacy code have been migrated to new generations of computers, programming environments, submitted to new standards and gone through the hands of changing teams over the years.

The longest running legacy systems are adversely almost always key and critical core solutions. Government, insurers, and banks are

amongst the worst 'victims' (or self-offenders) of complexity and legacy and often use old code they are unable to replace. Whereas these sectors seem to be tied up by complexity and the need to store masses of data over prolonged periods, at the same time they must deal with critical and demanding end customers. Moreover, they compete with fintech and other global players, seeing the bank branch and agent being replaced by the mobile device. The bank in your pocket and the agent has turned into a GUI and a chatbot. To top it off, financial services players dedicate more than 80% to adapting legacy systems to compliance. The rules rule, not the business.

But there is literally no sector that does not suffer from legacy. The logistics industry survives on agility, flexibility, and small margins, so digitisation is a pre-requisite for this sector. Retail needs to get goods to customers quickly through stores or internet – speed matters. In the production industry security, standards, openness to integrate with other partners in the production chain matter most. Legacy holds them back and creates unsafe circumstances.

... ON TALENT

Legacy is also – literally – a drain on talent. Banks, insurers, in fact any institution suffering more than others of masses of legacy, finds it difficult to attract the right IT talent. People fear being put on projects just making fixes, carrying out maintenance, or even switching off old technology, rather than work on exciting new projects using new technology. The human

debt we refer to these days resides in both not allowing people to work in the right job in the right circumstances as well as not creating an environment whereby people extract the best from themselves. Engaging you staff in collaborative efforts is more rewarding than seeing them move to work for a big brand big tech supplier.

...ON THE PLANET...

Lately we have gotten the idea that digital equals sustainability; i.e. working remotely means not commuting, which stands for green. All this leads to one of the greatest misconceptions of our time: "Digital is green". In truth software consumes masses of energy and leaves a huge carbon footprint. And as digital continues to emerge in all aspects of every single human experience, its energy consumption growing not in step but disproportionally. Because we do not see and touch the impact, we imagine that more is better. More apps, more pictures stored on your phone, endless libraries of email and that is just our personal life.

In business every interaction and transactions between applications and devices requires energy to complete. Just because Moore's law makes us believe we can triple and quadruple without impact, that does not make it true.

Particularly hardware is now running into a situation where it no longer can keep up with the increased complexity of core software, applications, data silos and a wild variety of apps. Furthermore, it is also true that we store more data than ever (because it's cheaper than figuring out what to keep and what to bin) and we are not particularly good at truly 'replacing' our applications. More often than not, we optimise them at the expense of more code.

Concluding we can state that legacy is a massive burden if not properly dealt with. The weaknesses in its design and the assembled technical debt are a threat to business continuity. But maybe most importantly: it hampers and disrupts innovation. Energy can only be consumed once. That is why we believe in 'unchaining your business' towards a never-legacy culture and reality.

BUILDING A NEVER- LEGACY ENTERPRISE

Recycle, upcycle, renew, replace, open and integrate, build and expand, are all words that refer to the intrinsic motivation to connect our existing world to a new, more streamlined and efficient one.

Moving away from rigid core hard coded and wired environments to a fluid technology infrastructure. Connecting to databases full of triggers, where procedures are translated into the business logic in flexible middleware and the ultimate experience through contextual user interfaces on any device.

A world where business and technology run on separate rails but on the same track, in tandem in the same direction. Where IT and business analysts collaborate, and each excel in their own talent and expertise. The technology people are freed up to focus on true sustainable architecture and design and the business teams work with proven templates, to create – citizen developer or not – the user experience they know they need.

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FOUR STEPS

1.

COMMIT TO A NEVER-LEGACY CULTURE

Building a never-legacy culture means first and foremost building one single culture across business and technology. A culture whereby people feel free to question every decision on impact and innovation but also efficiency of operations. Powered by experience of past projects but with an open mind to the new talent at the table, new technologies and new insights from other industries.

Thereby software moves from being a capability to being an intrinsic part of the business. Skills, practices, leadership, and organisation start twinning and running on a parallel track. This is the right time to move away from a technology agenda that the business side for lack of expertise simply had to trust. Or for IT departments to feel isolated, as 'business would always win'. Technology, data and digital have taken seats in the boardroom and where 'heritage and finance' tended to dominate the CEO seat, we increasingly hear a call for the 'smartest technologist to take the top seat'.

And this must permeate all areas of the organisation. Product management is a link pin between technology and the business and therefore one of the most important hires for any company.

And all those not directly involved with technology must go on a learning curve from basic training about IT and its impact to exchanges with start-ups and building close relationships with software companies, at every single level. Embracing digital centricity means taking away 'digital fright', in terms of embarrassment for the lack of expertise.

Educate, educate is the mantra to create this common language for a single culture.

Finally, never-legacy easily feels as if decisions of the past were wrong, issues were not timely addressed etc. The only way to break through this to a new way of thinking is by having an open – blame free – dialogue. It is imperative that all people around the table feel safe to address issues and learn lessons from the past in order to move faster forward. This is probably the most important task for the woman or man at the helm.

This, coupled with clear, consistent, even repetitive communication will win over the entire organisation, team by team, talent by talent. Over time this appealing culture will also win over the hearts and minds of your business partners, suppliers, and clients alike.

2.

EMPOWER NEVER-LEGACY TALENT

Whilst the 'war for talent' rages on, companies with a clear and attractive purpose find it easier to recruit top talent. Having a never-legacy culture instantly implies continues education and development and an environment in which talent can excel. Companies that build a single culture attract top talent on all axes: technology, business, finance, and operations for people know that they are involved and engaged in the entire process and result.

As such, curiosity is the one talent, not often measured, that is a vital requirement. An insatiable appetite to learn new things and acquire new skills. Transient across age and experience, curiosity binds people around a common goal, adding expertise and experience to deliver lasting results. Experienced engineers

and salespeople working together with young analysts familiar with entirely new tools sets are the teams that make the difference.

Allow top software engineers in beyond the IT debate and give them autonomy. Let them obsess over data, then leverage their data to make the right business decisions. Focus on the developer experience in your company as you do over your customers' satisfaction. Most of all let them work together to drive realistic innovation forward.

Young talent wants access to senior talent, to learn and develop faster. Make sure the never-legacy culture lets them twin and connect. Make sure that any decision-making format has active participation of your up-and-coming talent.

3.

EMBRACE NEVER-LEGACY TECHNOLOGY

Never-legacy technology implies two things: unchain the past and no lock-in towards the future.

Going back to the studio to draw up plans for a total replacement or parts of it is the necessary starting point. This however does not require a much dreaded 'big bang' approach, so many of which fail at huge expense.

A software factory style design studio is the place where your own IT teams sit together with experts to design visual models and processes that suit your business. Digital blueprints for your organisation.

Starting with a firm look at the heart of the application landscape in order to untangle 'spaghetti junctions' and more importantly, not create new ones with quick fixes by overzealous citizen developers. All the good that this development brings cannot hide the danger of building new 'app jungles' in which businesses over time will get lost too at the cost of a massive footprint.

Never-legacy means inventing new solutions based on proven templates to reduce time to market. In today's environment and increasingly so going forward, these applications need to be modelled around authentication, authorisation, and user preferences.

Run-time built and available in real-time multi-language environments on all devices in the hands of your end-users. Giving them access to the relevant data they need to execute their tasks.

This is where true sustainability comes in, built once to last a long time, these applications must continuously be able to communicate with other – old and new – systems. An integrated service tier is therefore the defining asset behind the creation of a legacy proof environment.

Ironically building a never-legacy environment in a sustainable way, also means embracing the good of the legacy element. Doing more with less waste is a key driver and differentiator. And indeed, it would be a waste if key and rich functionality would be binned, simply because it is no longer supported by today's technology. Keeping what people love to use, enhances the level of acceptance by end users to embrace change and anything new.

An 'upcycler' approach is a realistic alternative today to new build. Absorbing the functional data, detecting, and correcting inconsistencies and wrapping this in the new application can be done today.

In the way 'second-hand designer fashion' combats overproduction and consumption and encourages a proud second life, 'upcycling' gives 'stuff that works' an everlasting life.

4.

BUILD AND JOIN NEVER-LEGACY ECOSYSTEMS

Ecosystems might seem a buzz word these days, but the reality of ecosystems has driven survival and success since pre-Neanderthalic times.

Success thrives on dialogue, check points, ideation, experience, and fresh insights. During Covid we all experienced that collaboration creates results, digital and real life, corner to corner around the world. Developer communities 'rule' entire parts of our world behind the scenes. Smart companies embrace and embed this notion.

Internal inspiration from all sides of the fence should be encouraged. Empower technologists that sit outside the structure to own expert groups, let them liaise with the business to achieve much closer alignment and avoid derailing over time.

Externally, ecosystems thrive as well. Whereas in the past user groups were often 'organised moaning' sessions about the road map and focused on single user goals wrapped up in a jolly, today we see truly fluent collaboration with a mixture of users who fear 'missing out on a future setting dialogue' more than 'competitive edge and secret'. It is massively encouraging to see that where companies do not embrace this openly, it still happens in online communities, not open to management.

Motivate your teams to get together in real life and in developer communities with your partners and clients, to spread the never-legacy legend culture. Motivate each other to do more with less.



SETTING A NEW STANDARD IN SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

THE NEVER • LEGACY LEGENDS

IS THUS A PLEDGE TO YOU.
YOU CAN BE ONE.

Jointly we can co-create technology solutions to suit your business in a sustainable manner. By setting a new standard in low code core development platforms. By never locking you into ill-fitted standard technology. By turning your developers into the legends who drive your business to impact and results. By deploying your own experts and teams to get to market, fast. And most of all by taking your sustainability goals off the page into a working reality.