

# Background Research Report

## Perficient/Digital Team Apollo

Katherine Stadtmiller  
SI501 - 005  
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### About the Client:

As the full-service digital agency arm of the Perficient IT/Technology consulting firm, Perficient Digital's mission is to provide to their clients adaptable and insightful solutions to a range of business challenges. To best serve their clients, Perficient/Digital employs inter-disciplinary teams in the areas of experience platforms and design, digital marketing, strategy, planning, content studio, and solutions for mobile and emerging technology.

### Client problem:

Perficient Digital has experienced difficulty with the communication processes between their experience design, engineering, and QA teams. The company currently utilizes a multitude of documents, platforms, and tools, but lacks a "single source of truth" to serve as a centralized record of information about and decisions made regarding specific projects. This fractured inter-office network has lead to a lack of synchronization between employees, teams, and departments. They have requested that Team Apollo analyze their communication flow and have asked for recommendations that could help with project documentation and communication between all three teams.

### Questions:

1. Who are Perficient Digital?
2. What services are provided by the agency?
3. What is the agency's history?
4. How has the transition from a privately-held agency to a division of a large publicly-held company impacted operations?
5. What, in their history, has contributed to their current problem, and how have they dealt with problems in the past?

Word Count: 2100

## I. Introduction: Perficient Digital

Perficient Digital is consulting firm Perficient, Inc.'s full-service digital agency. It offers technological solutions and management consulting to clients who wish to improve their digital presence and better engage their customer base. The agency prides itself on the extent and range of the services it provides, as indicated by its tagline: "End-to-End is Just the Beginning."<sup>1</sup>

### A. Services offered by Perficient Digital:<sup>2</sup>

1. Strategy and planning: "guiding choices, inspiring opportunities"
2. Experience design: "craft well-orchestrated stories through elements on screens"
3. Content studio: "a well-told story, in the right place, at the right time"
4. Digital marketing and analytics: "tell clients when, how, where, and with whom the client will fulfill their customers' desires"
5. Mobile and emerging tech: "uniquely positioned to ready clients for what's now and what's next"
6. Digital experience platforms: "expertise and partnership with nearly every tech platform"

These services are administered by a team of approximately 150 employees; about 80 of them work in the largest of Perficient Digital's offices, located in Ann Arbor, Michigan.<sup>3</sup> Project teams are comprised of members from six departments: Engineering, Quality Assurance, User Experience, Marketing, Analytics, and Strategy.

Perficient Digital's parent Company, Perficient, is traded on the Nasdaq Global Select Market, and has more than 20 offices in 18 states, as well as operations in Toronto, ON; Chennai and Nagpur, India; Oxford, England; and Hangzhou, China.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Perficient Digital - End-to-End is Just the Beginning," *Perficient*, accessed October 10, 2016, <http://www.perficient.com/services/perficient-digital>.

<sup>2</sup> "Perficient Digital - End-to-End is Just the Beginning," *ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> Krysta Stone (Director of User Experience, Perficient Digital), in discussion with Team Apollo, September 27, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> "Contact Us," *Perficient*, accessed October 22, 2016, <http://www.perficient.com/contact>.

The agency has recently won several awards, including an Online Marketing Media and Advertising (OMMA) Award<sup>5</sup> and two WebAwards.<sup>6</sup> Their work for The Henry Ford, for which they were granted one of the two WebAwards, was a massive undertaking and involved redesigning the cultural institution's entire digital experience. The duration and scope of Perficient Digital's client relationships varies; some clients, like blinds and window-covering company Hunter Douglas, retain the agency for all of their digital needs, while others come to Perficient on a project-by-project basis.<sup>7</sup> Other notable clients include AAA, Carhartt, Honda, Humana, Illy, Jimmy John's, Johnson & Johnson, New York Life, OhioHealth, the University of Michigan, and Veritas.<sup>8</sup>

Ed Hoffman, Perficient's Vice President of Digital Experience Solutions, said, "In the age where customer is king, technology and customer experience are inextricably linked. Perficient, with its Perficient Digital Agency, is uniquely qualified to design, develop, and deploy amazing customer experience solutions that enable the world's leading enterprises to digitally transform."<sup>9</sup> This emphasis on complete customer satisfaction is what Perficient claims sets it apart from its competitors. It is a business philosophy that has carried over from Perficient Digital's previous incarnation: Enlighten.

## II. History: Perficient Digital's Past

### A. Enlighten (1983-2015)

Perficient Digital was founded in 1983 under the name "Enlighten" by a 26-year-old University of Michigan alumnus named Steve Glauberman.<sup>10</sup> As President and CEO, Glauberman guided the fledgling consultancy toward his goal: to use technology to optimize communication between businesses and their customers.<sup>11</sup> Glauberman has also worked to make technology and the internet more accessible to people with disabilities. Enlighten encouraged their clients to make accessibility a priority, admittedly because it could increase their customer base, but, Glauberman explained, "beyond the dollars, we also believe that accessible design is simply

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<sup>5</sup> Reinhold, Noelle, "Perficient Digital Wins OMMA Award for Carhartt Microsite," *Perficient*, last modified October 4, 2016, <http://blogs.perficient.com/perficientdigital/2016/10/04/perficient-digital-wins-omma-award-for-carhartt-microsite/>.

<sup>6</sup> "Perficient Digital Receives Two Awards for Excellence in Web Design, Development," *Perficient*, last modified September 14, 2016, <http://www.perficient.com/about/news-releases/2016/perficient-digital-2016-webawards>.

<sup>7</sup> Krysta Stone.

<sup>8</sup> "Perficient Digital - End-to-End is Just the Beginning," *Perficient*, accessed October 10, 2016, <http://www.perficient.com/services/perficient-digital>.

<sup>9</sup> "Perficient Announces the Launch of its Digital Agency, Perficient Digital," *Business Wire*, last modified April 18, 2016, <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/1781549411?accountid=14667>.

<sup>10</sup> Deiterich, Andrew, "Tech CEO Works for Enlightened Culture Amid Change," *Crain's Detroit Business* 18, no. 46 (2002): 14.

<sup>11</sup> "Leadership," *Enlighten*, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/about/>.

the right thing to do.”<sup>12</sup> Steve Glauberman sits on the board of the Society of Digital Agencies (SoDA), and has lectured at IT events around the country.<sup>13</sup>

The services offered by Enlighten were very similar to those now proffered by Perficient Digital. They included digital strategy and planning, website design and development, application and platform development, marketing intelligence, mobile and emerging platforms, social marketing, digital advertising and media, digital CRM, search engine optimization, and search engine marketing.<sup>14</sup>

Most recently, Enlighten’s day-to-day operations and management of the agency’s major client accounts were overseen by President Tom Beck. Vice President of Engineering, Satish Kolluri, guided Enlighten’s technical strategy and services. Adam Wilson, the Chief Creative Officer of Enlighten, won Effies, Webby’s, and Lions for his innovative work for companies like Jeep, Marvel Comics, Disney, and the Oscar Mayer Weinermobile. Project management was directed by Denise Evers, who facilitated the launch of one of Enlighten’s most acclaimed projects, an interactive and personalized website for Hunter Douglas. Enlighten’s social media strategies were the purview of Brad Brief, Director of Social Marketing.<sup>15</sup>

In 1994, however, Enlighten was considerably smaller. Just fifteen employees produced educational materials, software demos, and electronic brochures on disk. In 1998, they were awarded the Demo Disk of the Year by Advertising Age magazine for their work, and were honored at the New Media INIVISION Awards.<sup>16</sup> Despite being a multimedia marketing agency, Enlighten was slow to venture into web-based business—it was just 10 percent of its operation in 1995—because of the limitations of available technology at that time.<sup>17</sup> “It would have been like going back and starting all over because the bandwidths were so low,” said Glauberman, when asked why he initially eschewed web-based projects.<sup>18</sup>

Enlighten made the transition to—and found success in—cyberspace in the late 1990s due to increased customer demand for internet marketing. Enlighten survived the dot-com crash of the early-aughts, when many of its peers did not, and in 2001 was named by Ad Week one of

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<sup>12</sup> “Enlighten Launches Accessibility Initiative,” *PR Newswire*, New York, 2001, <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/444070013?accountid=14667>.

<sup>13</sup> “Leadership,” *Enlighten*, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/about/>.

<sup>14</sup> “About: Services,” *Enlighten*, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/about>.

<sup>15</sup> “Leadership,” *Enlighten*, *Ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Editors, Business, “Enlighten Wins Coveted ICON and ADDY Awards,” *Business Wire*, last modified June 1, 1998, <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/446898953?accountid=14667>.

<sup>17</sup> Deiterich, Andrew, “Tech CEO Works for Enlightened Culture Amid Change,” *Crain’s Detroit Business* 18, no. 46 (2002): 14.

<sup>18</sup> Deiterich, *Ibid*.

the nation's top interactive agencies.<sup>19</sup> By 2002, Enlighten's net worth surpassed \$8 million. Enlighten grew, slowly but steadily, between 1994 and 2002, as did the prestige of their clientele.

## B. Clients and Projects of Note

With the development of computers and the internet, Enlighten's client base shifted from small software companies to large, multinational corporations and institutions. By 2002, the agency counted IBM, Xerox, Microsoft, and Pulte among its main customers.<sup>20</sup> Enlighten also performed work for John Frieda, Fruit2O, Jergens, Biore, Comerica, Ban, CCS, Central Bank, Citizens Bank, Colgate, the Discovery Channel, Fine Living, Food Network, HBO, HealthMedia, Curel, Nickelodeon, Olympic, PPG, Sony, Tata, the Hartford, Thornburg Mortgage, What Was There, and Richmond American Homes.<sup>21</sup>

Italian coffee maker Illy hired Enlighten to help them market their products to US markets digitally; Enlighten adapted Illy's global "live happ-illy" slogan into a targeted media campaign that increased awareness of the brand and their products in North America.<sup>22</sup> Strategists at Enlighten offered insight into niche markets, and through paid search advertising, attracted coffee-loving customers.<sup>23</sup>

For Audi, Enlighten made improvements to their website's configurator—a tool that enables potential car-buyers to design their own vehicles—which, according to Glauberman, quadrupled sales leads from the site.<sup>24</sup>

The agency was asked by The Wall Street Journal to reimagine the newspaper's digital outlets. Enlighten delivered a campaign centered around the tagline "Always On. Always On Hand," that was designed to attract new subscribers and draw the attention of existing subscribers to The Wall Street Journal's online features.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Enlighten Launches Accessibility Initiative," *PR Newswire*, New York, 2001, <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/444070013?accountid=14667>.

<sup>20</sup> Deiterich, Andrew, "Tech CEO Works for Enlightened Culture Amid Change," *Crain's Detroit Business* 18, no. 46 (2002): 14.

<sup>21</sup> "Work," *Enlighten*, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/work/>.

<sup>22</sup> "Work," *Enlighten*, Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "Work: Illy Media," *Enlighten*, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/work/illy-media>.

<sup>24</sup> Repsher, Grant W, "Go Configure: Web Tools Boost Sales," *Automotive News* 80, no. 6185 (January 16, 2006): 46.

<sup>25</sup> "Work: WSJ Rich Media," *Enlighten*, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/work/wsj-rich-media>.

Enlighten won a Web Marketing Association WebAward for Outstanding Website and was a Silver Winner of the W3 Awards for their work for long-time customer Hunter Douglas in 2009.<sup>26</sup> The agency also designed apps and visualization tools to market Hunter Douglas' wares to customers. The iPad app, called "The Art of Window Dressing™," which won two MobileWebAwards, translated the Hunter Douglas website experience—which focused creating a personalized shopping experience—to an app.<sup>27</sup> Enlighten's award-winning product visualization tool, the iImagine™ Design Center, gave customers the opportunity to virtually try out window treatments in their own homes.<sup>28</sup>

Enlighten lent its promotional savvy to the Michigan IT Industry in 2001, when it partnered with Ameritech Foundation to sponsor the Ann Arbor IT Zone's IT Forum 2001. The agency contributed more than \$25,000 in services to the burgeoning local tech community.<sup>29</sup> Steve Glauberman, himself a high-profile figure in the Michigan IT scene,<sup>30</sup> wanted to attract creative IT innovators to Ann Arbor. "I never had any real desire to become the next Microsoft...I didn't mind getting rich, but really I just like having fun and enjoy creating the culture we have at Enlighten. A culture where hip, fun and smart people want to work," said Glauberman in a 2002 interview.<sup>31</sup>

In that interview, Glauberman also said that he "[expected] the company to double in size in the next two to three years," and that "the likely fate of the company...is eventually to be acquired by a larger company."<sup>32</sup> Glauberman's prediction was correct; in December 2015, Enlighten was purchased by Perficient, Inc..

### C. Acquisition by Perficient

Enlighten caught the eye of Randy Grigg, a managing partner of Ridgecrest Advisors and Perficient's "talent scout" of more than a decade.<sup>33</sup> Perficient was looking to increase their

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<sup>26</sup> "Work: Hunter Douglas Website," *Enlighten*, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/work/hunter-douglas-website>.

<sup>27</sup> "Work: HD iPad App," *Enlighten*, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/work/hd-ipad-app>.

<sup>28</sup> "Work: HD Application," *Enlighten*, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com/work/hd-application>.

<sup>29</sup> "The Ann Arbor IT Zone Announces the Ameritech Foundation and Enlighten Sponsor its IT Forum Programs," *PR Newswire*, March 14, 2001, accessed 20 October 2016, <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/449215681?accountid=14667>.

<sup>30</sup> "Ann Arbor IT Zone, Ameritech and Enlighten Sponsor Dec. 6 IT Forum on Technology Accessibility Honoring Memory of Heidi Van Arnhem, Founder of iCan!," *PR Newswire*, last modified November 13, 2001, <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/447062776?accountid=14667>.

<sup>31</sup> Deiterich, Andrew, "Tech CEO Works for Enlightened Culture Amid Change," *Crain's Detroit Business* 18, no. 46 (2002): 14.

<sup>32</sup> Deiterich, *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Feldt, Brian, "Perficient Acquires Michigan Digital Marketing Firm," *St. Louis Business Journal*, last modified December 4, 2015, <http://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/news/2015/12/04/perficient-acquires-michigan-digital-marketing.html>.

presence in the realm of digital marketing, and they found Enlighten's history, clientele, and success appealing. "We are excited to strengthen our digital marketing capabilities with the strategic acquisition of Enlighten," said Jeffrey Davis, Perficient's Chief Executive Officer and President. "Enlighten's compelling capabilities, reputation for delivering excellent digital experiences, customer-centric mentality, and solid client roster ensure a strong cultural fit and compelling opportunities for accelerated growth moving forward."<sup>34</sup> Though the terms of the deal were not publicly disclosed, a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission shows that Enlighten's price tag was \$3.37 million.<sup>35</sup>

The addition of Enlighten to Perficient's retinue bolstered the international consultancy firm's digital standing. Perficient had in January 2015 acquired another digital agency, Zeon Solutions, whose Grand River Interactive office happened to reside in the same building as Enlighten in Ann Arbor.<sup>36</sup> Together, Enlighten and Zeon became Perficient Digital. Steve Glauber stayed on as Perficient Digital's General Manager, as did Enlighten's entire consulting team. The deal added to Perficient's talent pool approximately 75 Enlighten employees with experience in consulting, design, sales, and support.

Many of Enlighten's long-term clients, like Hunter Davis, and major projects, including the redesign of The Henry Ford's digital experience, made the transition to Perficient Digital with Enlighten.<sup>37</sup> Bill Davis, Perficient's Managing Director of Marketing and Communications, said that he "anticipates that Enlighten clients will take advantage of Perficient's big data analytics, business optimization, and enterprise resource planning management capabilities."<sup>38</sup> The announcement that Enlighten published on its now-defunct website reads:

*Perficient's business strategy is highly complementary to that of Enlighten, and our clients can expect to receive the same dedication to service and expertise, but with access to a broader range of services and a deeper pool of consulting talent as we offer the capabilities and resources of Perficient and its enterprise partners.*<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Perficient Acquires Enlighten," *Business Wire*, last modified December 4, 2015, <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/1739101459?accountid=14667>.

<sup>35</sup> Feldt, Brian, "Perficient Acquires Michigan Digital Marketing Firm," *St. Louis Business Journal*, last modified December 4, 2015, <http://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/news/2015/12/04/perficient-acquires-michigan-digital-marketing.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Novinson, Michael, "Perficient Buys \$12M Digital Marketing Agency Enlighten," *CRN*, last modified December 4, 2015, <http://www.crn.com/news/channel-programs/300079031/perficient-buys-12m-digital-marketing-agency-enlighten.htm>

<sup>37</sup> "Perficient Acquires Enlighten," *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Novinson, Michael, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Enlighten*, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.enlighten.com>.

## D. Problems

Evidence that the transition from Enlighten to Perficient Digital was present during Team Apollo's visit to their Ann Arbor office. For example, "Enlighten" is still blazoned across door, even though 10 months have passed since the change was made official. According to Krysta Stone, our point of contact at Perficient Digital, the upheaval has contributed to the project documentation difficulties that we have been asked to analyze. Project teams are still in the process of transitioning to a more consolidated toolset, but they are, for example, still using both an Enlighten Slack and a Perficient Slack to keep track of their work, in addition to a large variety of communication tools including Trello, JIRA, Track-It!, Basecamp, SharePoint, and Axure.<sup>40</sup> Much of the decision documentation for their largest recent project, The Henry Ford, was recorded in a color-coded outline in Google Docs. Furthermore, Enlighten used Gmail to communicate, but with the acquisition, employees have been forced to switch to Perficient's Outlook-based system. Many at Perficient Digital still use their old Gmail accounts to track decisions and progress.<sup>41</sup> The changeover seems to have complicated an already complicated office.

In the past, problems have been addressed by first revisiting the teams strategy for the project. Time and money do influence their decisions. If time and money don't factor, people outside a team may be asked for input. Perficient Digital has made an effort to solve the problem of documentation; they have enlisted several groups of cross-disciplinary teams to analyze their communications, and they have asked Team Apollo for help.<sup>42</sup> It is my hope that by understanding Perficient Digital's past, Team Apollo can help them progress forward.

## III. Conclusion: Perficient/Digital in the Future

Despite the challenge of transforming from a privately-held agency to a publicly-held corporation, Perficient Digital has continued to produce award-winning work for their clients. In addition to the aforementioned WebAward conferred upon the agency, their work for The Henry Ford was also awarded a Silver MUSE Award for Online Presence by the American Alliance of Museums.<sup>43</sup> New projects abound for Perficient Digital. The agency now counts Ancestry.com, Bell Canada, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Cengage Learning, Flagstar Bank, Panasonic Avionics, and Trinity Health among their clients.<sup>44</sup> Communication and documentation troubles aside, the agency seems to be settling into its new role as a part of Perficient, Inc..

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<sup>40</sup> Krysta Stone (Director of User Experience, Perficient Digital), in discussion with Team Apollo, September 27, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Adam Kempa (Technical Director, Perficient Digital), in discussion with the author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Krysta Stone, Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> "Perficient Reports Second Quarter 2016 Results," *Manufacturing Close-Up*, last modified August 12, 2016, <http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/181072222?accountid=14667>.

<sup>44</sup> "Perficient Reports Second Quarter 2016 Results," Ibid.



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