



## Publicis Sapient demonstrates its purpose and differentiates with a non-traditional case study format—an impact film

October 06, 2022

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### IDC's Quick Take

On October 6, 2022, Publicis Sapient [released an impact film titled \*Never Done\*](#) as a non-traditional case study about its work for DreamKey Partners (a leading public housing agency in North Carolina), which not only provided a strong example of how it executes on its overall strategy and purpose, but also highlighted how it likes to differentiate from its competition using a people-centric approach to digital business transformation. For Publicis Sapient, digital business transformation is always about the people first, and the organizations involved second; this might strike some readers as backwards but the firm has demonstrated the approach can be successful. Publicis Sapient recorded an impressive 13.8% revenue growth for 2021 as [described](#) earlier this year and is consistently accelerating with strong growth at 18.5 % and 19.1% in Q1 and Q2, 2022.

### News Highlights

The film, produced in partnership with Academy-Award winning director [Ben Proudfoot](#), is the first in what is anticipated to be a three-part series of films that tell stories of how individuals and society are positively impacted by digital business transformation and related technologies. It will premier at [The New Yorker Festival](#) on October 7. The press release notes that, "The first film of the three-part Impact Films series, *Never Done*, tells the story of Kersten, a single mother from Charlotte, North Carolina, who had her life turned upside down by a lung disease diagnosis right before the pandemic, forcing her to quit her job. Unable to pay her rent, Kersten found herself one day away from eviction from her home that she shared with her two young daughters. Kersten and tens of thousands of families like hers throughout North Carolina were able to receive critical financial assistance and avoid homelessness thanks to a digital platform that Publicis Sapient built for its client, rental assistance agency DreamKey Partners, which delivered rental assistance funds quickly and at scale for Kersten and other people in need."

### IDC's Point of View

Case studies serve several purposes, but the primary purpose of Publicis Sapient's impact film is to demonstrate the positive effect digital can have on one person's life when you place people at the center. The recent impact film release is an interesting, albeit risky, new take on the case study genre.

- **Why interesting?** Because it's a good example of a case study which models the values and aspirations of Publicis Sapient, and thus gives the audience (clients, prospects, employees, potential recruits, analysts, partners etc.) a new way to get to know it as a brand. This can be enormously useful for these audience sets when making the important choice to partner, which

is always about more than the facts and figures, to make sure the people from different organizations will mesh.

- **Why risky?** Because audiences seeking the traditional case study format (i.e., a client problem is identified, then the services vendor delivers a detailed technical solution which addresses the problem, and then the client is happy with the results) will be left wanting more details after watching the film and will then have to seek them out. This information can of course be found on its website or through speaking with Publicis Sapient—but the audience needs to take that step, and the company hopes the film will peak interest to do so.

On balance, IDC believes this affective approach was a risk worth taking for Publicis Sapient because the film is well aligned with its overall strategy and purpose.

IDC had the opportunity to discuss the film with two of Publicis Sapient's leaders ahead of its release, which helped to connect the film to the firm's purpose and to understand the approach towards greater differentiation. Nigel Vaz, CEO, explained, "Our purpose is to help people thrive in the brave pursuit of next," and that he spends lots of time as a leader making sure his digital business transformation teams act as "player coaches" with a keen sense of empathy for the people impact of their work. He has been encouraged by how many clients have leaned into this people-first approach with Publicis Sapient, and the results achieved. Vaz quipped that, "if you took the people out of digital business transformation it would be easy," and the long list of failed or delayed transformation projects that led with technology reveals the insight in this statement, as well as why Publicis Sapient has chosen this approach.

When asked how Publicis Sapient came up with the idea to do an impact film instead of a traditional case study, Teresa Barreira, CMO, said, "We are doing this to demonstrate how our work embodies our purpose and inspires us to be our best by putting people at the center of all that we do. The work we do with clients reflects that. Even though the solution we developed enabled 40 thousand people to apply for housing assistance, we wanted to show the impact through the lens of one person. By telling her story, this made it real, and brings more meaning to the notion that transformation is always about people." She emphasized Publicis Sapient's approach shows that digital business transformation can be achieved using a people-centric approach, and that the film is an example of focusing your business on what matters. While it's too soon to tell the full effect of this impact film on Publicis Sapient employees, Barreira indicated the internal exposure to-date has created a stronger sense of pride in the company and its work.

When asked about the future, Vaz also pointed out that he will be keeping the current emphasis on real digital business transformation, not just incrementally digitizing business. Vaz predicts a continuation of the big cultural shift already underway, where the focus on customer and employee experience will dominate the future of work. If this trend continues, Publicis Sapient will be in a good position to highlight the benefits of its people-first approach.

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