



## Building the platforms of the future the right way

We are often asked to explain how Ness is “different,” as the people asking this question have usually experienced a wide range of IT services or technology partners and want to ascertain where we fit in this spectrum. Here are some of the reasons why the companies we work with say we are different.

Many companies carry out their own internal initiatives to define the technology solution they believe is needed to address a business requirement, often resulting in a series of use cases or a functional specification. If they decide not to build the solution themselves (for reasons of time, cost or lack of relevant skills), they usually then run a competitive tender to select an implementation partner to build what they have defined. Not only does this process of defining a solution and then deciding how to build it consume precious time from the internal participants, but it also results in a requirement definition that is naturally limited by their inward perception of the local problem statement.

This also impacts the likelihood of the solution bringing “innovation.” Every company board is looking for this, and companies often try to “make it happen” during the implementation phase of each initiative, but Ness sees most real innovation occurring during the problem definition and business solution envisioning phase. Companies suffering from a lack of innovation (that is impacting their market share and revenues) often look to their technology implementation partners to generate this innovation - without realising that they have probably constrained any innovative thinking by the way they have defined the requirements. Innovation is like Quality, in that you can’t just add it at the end.

Ness is different because it always starts by fully understanding the problem statement - even if brought in at the implementation stage. Ness works as a partner with all stakeholders across a business to define (or review and assess and frequently challenge) the problem statement holistically. The Ness-Client partnership helps to capture every aspect of the problem definition from an outside-in perspective that imports best practice learnings from experiences with other companies (often in other industries), as well as proven techniques for exposing latent needs, which can help identify innovation gaps and opportunities.

Ness always conceptualises an overall solution in terms of a software platform that has product-like attributes: it will be designed to have longevity and naturally evolve through subsequent releases. Ness helps rapidly envision a potential solution to the problem statement to give participant stakeholders an early version of what “this platform could feel like.” By constantly validating possibilities using prototyping techniques to de-risk subsequent implementation, Ness ensures the solution defined has the best chance of being successful and sets expectations with all stakeholders as to the optimum platform to be implemented. Ness also identifies what key data to collect once the platform is operational that will inform the subsequent platform roadmap.

Ness leads these Discovery and Envision activities, resulting in far less time being lost by senior stakeholders than if they try to manage this process themselves. It also helps mitigate the limitations of inward thinking.



Once Envisioning is complete, a company could choose to tender the implementation work out; however, by then, Ness is routinely trusted to continue on and use all the aggregated knowledge to deliver an optimal solution. Key team members from the problem definition stage continue to influence and direct the work during platform implementation to ensure that the user experience and functional capabilities agreed during envisioning persist through to implementation and work the way they are supposed to.

While Ness can use any development methodology to implement the platform envisaged, it normally employs an agile scrum approach. This ensures that new capabilities and functionality are released in satisfyingly short cycles with maximum transparency, with each new cycle delivering the highest priority business and customer value. It also enables Ness to be highly flexible as needs change. Customers love this focus and clarity.

To support this overall method of working, Ness has some specific organisational expertise it brings to bear:

- Ness has innovation and design thinkers that provide ideation and customer experience engineering to help ensure that platform requirements have been fully captured in Discovery, to consider new ways of doing things, to define the solution UX during Envisioning usually at the wireframes level, and to instantiate UX capabilities and considerations during implementation.
- Ness has a CTO Office and many CTO associates, each of whom has technical expertise in a specialist area that can be leveraged to define a new platform. They are an excellent source of additional insight and forward-thinking. A Ness client benefits from the collective technical expertise held within Ness at critical junctures during platform definition, to ensure that the latest technologies are accessed appropriately to deliver best-in-class platforms.

Together these two organisational capabilities ensure that the platform definition and subsequent implementation deliver an overall solution that looks and feels great and works well, while still being efficient to implement technically and within budgeted costs. This avoids the typical expectations/cost gap between what a design agency would conceptualize and what an IT services firm would be able to actually build.

In this era of the digital economy, users and customers won't put up with new capabilities that don't work the way that they want them to, and companies can no longer afford to get it wrong and start again. The approach that Ness uses ensures that the right platform has been defined, and that it is then implemented the right way.