



HFS Hot Vendor: Axis Workshops

Coverage initiated: Q1 2021

Introduction

The HFS Hot Vendors are an exclusive group of emerging players, each with a differentiated value proposition for the HFS OneOffice or HFS OneEcosystem. HFS analysts speak with numerous exciting startups and emerging players.

We designate a select group as HFS Hot Vendors based on their offerings' distinctiveness, ecosystem robustness, client impact, financial position, and the impact in our OneOffice and/or OneEcosystem Frameworks. The HFS Hot Vendors may not (at the time of writing) have the scale and size to be featured in our Top 10 reports, but they have the vision and strategy to impact and disrupt the market.

Author: David Cushman

Axis Workshops are on a mission to scale creativity by making collaborative meetings more effective for distributed teams. They aim to demystify and democratize the techniques of design thinking—the popular end-user-value centered, ideation-to-pilot solutioning process. It's a proven and effective creative workshop process for iterating products, services, and strategies, but it is resource intense and considered best delivered in-room. Good facilitators who can draw out a clear plan as an output to proceed with are rarer than hens' teeth.

Axis developed a platform to take design thinking online, making its processes and techniques digitally accessible to all. It adds smartphone interactions to give every stakeholder a voice in the journey.

Axis is a London, UK-based start-up, launched in 2017 and exposed to rapid learning through the trial-by-fire cycles of deploying with hundreds of users at Accenture, its charter customer. The leadership of the small team includes 15-year Accenture management consulting veteran Rob Hopkin and ex-Tesco Head of Technology, Paul Williams.

The Axis platform supports users by storyboarding their workshop—planning out each step and ensuring a plan-on-a-page outcome. It offers a range of off-the-shelf templates to suit regular business needs from campaign planning to project prioritization.

The platform offers a simplified and accelerated take on design thinking (cutting time to plan by 30% to 50%) with functions enabling online users to

- Frame the context by working as a team to understand organizational opportunities and constraints
- Brainstorm new ideas by collaborating and clarifying through team-work
- Evaluate ideas by scoring and building the case for change
- Plan for change by agreeing on accountabilities and timelines
- Extract the plan straight into Excel, avoiding write-up time lag and ensuring accuracy

In HFS' reference checks, customers agree the platform's clear structure cuts planning time and speeds time to outcome delivery. They find it effective in a range of contexts, from strategic decision making to brand planning.

"If you want to reach alignment with a structure that enables everyone's voice to count in a wide range of collaboration workshop contexts—and get to an outcome at speed—Axis is well-suited," observed a client who has been using Axis for three years. Customers identify the need to add in

workarounds when using Axis for Customer Journey Mapping or aspects of user experience (UX) design but highlight Axis's willingness to generate bespoke solutions when required.

Axis completed a significant funding round early in 2021, enabling the company to further evolve the product with a focus on needs-based templates across agile delivery, strategy, customer experience, project and program delivery, and sales and marketing. It also aims to expand its analytics and insight capabilities.

HFS' take

HFS has designated Axis Workshops a OneOffice Hot Vendor because the platform can help democratize and demystify design thinking. It raises any organization's design thinking capabilities, enhancing employee digital fluency skills and ensuring customer and employee experiences are central to rapid ideation and decision making. Axis's straightforward online approach disrupts the "theater" of design thinking, making it a widely accessible tool that teams working from anywhere can collaborate with. Design thinking is transformed from a once-in-a-while offsite activity into an everyday way of working available, virtually, to all. In doing so, it delivers design thinking as enhanced Digital Fluency skills—essential supporting components of the OneOffice Emerging Tech Platform—the technology to deliver the

HFS OneOffice Organization vision. HFS' Point of View: Adopt Design Thinking To Craft Your Work-FromAnywhere Future highlights design thinking as a critical transformational activity in 2021. To scale the value Axis Workshops can bring to the OneOffice vision they should consider:

- 1. Workflow integration:** Delivering APIs to integrate with products the team currently advocates using in parallel, such as Slack, Zoom, and Teams, extending ease of use and driving uptake.
- 2. Insight partnerships:** To ensure inprocess decision making is informed by fresh and relevant data and insights relevant to the target enduser, improving the quality of outputs.

Vendor factsheet

- Axis was founded in London in 2017
- Key executives include Robert Hopkins, who has 15 years in consulting and extensive design thinking and workshop experience; Paul Williams, a prior Head of Technology at Tesco; and Danny Draper, a digital design director with experience in UX and communications
- Funding sources include a consortium of angel investors
- Axis is used in over 30 organizations, including consultancies, corporations, government organizations, and nonprofit, non-governmental organizations (NGO)
- Notable clients include Accenture, Axis' charter customer. Within Accenture, Axis is part of the digital worker toolkit available globally across the business

Solution portfolio

Axis is a cloud-first SaaS solution for collaborative meeting design and delivery. The solution is free to trial for up to three attendees. Paid subscriptions include \$25 per month for one workshop with unlimited attendees and an enterprise level with custom support. In addition to SaaS, Axis also provides professional services to build custom Axis templates that support the crossorganizational standardization of key workshops and meetings, e.g., marketing strategy, pipeline management, account planning, and project governance.

Partnerships

Axis collaborates with Accenture, Purple Goat, Private Goodness, and Unida Diversity Consulting on an Innovate UK-supported project to define how collaboration can be made more inclusive. The project is researching why certain voices tend to dominate to the detriment of others.



About HFS

Insight. Inspiration. Impact.

HFS is a unique analyst organization that combines deep visionary expertise with rapid demand side analysis of the Global 2000. Its outlook for the future is admired across the global technology and business operations industries.

Its analysts are respected for their no-nonsense insights based on demand side data and engagements with industry practitioners.

HFS Research introduced the world to terms such as “RPA” (Robotic Process Automation) in 2012 and more recently, the HFS OneOffice™. The HFS mission is to provide visionary insight into the major innovations impacting business operations such as Automation, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Internet of Things, Digital Business Models and Smart Analytics.

Read more about HFS and our initiatives on:
www.hfsresearch.com or follow
[@HFSResearch](https://twitter.com/HFSResearch)