

Evolving Shared Services Toward Global Business Services

Many CFOs and other C-suite executives aspire to mature their existing shared services and outsourcing (“SS&O”) initiatives into a more integrated and sophisticated service delivery model that provides business value beyond lower-cost delivery. While cost reduction in a single functional area (e.g., Finance) may have been the impetus for the initial centralization efforts, some organizations realize that lower costs are only the tip of a broader back-office transformation opportunity.

These organizations are interested in realizing the significantly greater value which comes from a Global Business Services (“GBS”) model. GBS not only takes advantage of the lower costs generated by centralization but also focuses on implementing more effective ways of working, increases strategic agility, enables greater focus on core operations and drives its innovation into the broader business.

GBS organizations typically focus on four key areas to drive enhanced value:

[1] Value Creation/Performance Management

While most shared services and outsourcing efforts are initially approached as cost centers with a mandate to significantly reduce the cost of delivery, mature GBS organizations take a more holistic view on the value they provide. Enhancing corporate agility and innovation become key goals for these more experienced organizations.

GBS organizations are highly metrics-driven, often providing real-time visibility to process quality and timeliness. Performance transparency and internal customer reviews are fundamental to the service delivery model. Monthly, quarterly and annual reviews of value provided become the normal course of business.



2 Talent Management

Right-sourcing (optimal in-house or delivery partner) is fundamental to GBS services scope and delivery model decisions. Functions and processes which provide differentiation or competitive advantage are always retained in-house, while the outsourcing of routine activities frees up finances and employee bandwidth for areas with greater return to the business. Meanwhile, right-shoring (optimal delivery center locations) is approached in concert with the broader objectives of the organization. For example, organizations in a high-growth mode will sometimes use a new captive delivery center, keeping the activities and services in-house as a low-risk means of entering a new market.

GBS organizations also take a strategic approach to employee career paths. Functions and processes which provide a rich talent pool will typically remain within a captive delivery center rather than outsourced. Talent is cultivated, and upward and lateral career mobility is encouraged among high performers. Meanwhile, leadership views GBS high performers as a source of future leadership talent in addition to a source of lower-cost delivery.



3 Global Processes and Interaction Model

GBS organizations strive to establish and maintain global process standards, reducing variations wherever pragmatic. This standardization includes taking an end-to-end process orchestration view, including critical handoffs from/to other parts of the organization. “Global Process Owners” are frequently in place with a mandate to standardize and optimize process performance across all geographies and segments/business units where that is appropriate.



4 Automation

Increasingly, GBS organizations find themselves in the middle of enterprise automation and AI efforts. By their nature, many GBS processes are transactional and have been simplified to the point where additional process redesign will not lead to significant cost savings.

GBS leaders often turn to intelligent automation to generate the next step-change improvement in cost, efficiency and effectiveness. When done properly, automation is often designed and implemented as part of an automation platform (leveraging corporate standards) rather than as one-off, point solutions. The most sophisticated organizations often launch an Intelligent Automation Center of Excellence (“IA COE”) within GBS that identifies, designs and implements the future way of working. The process, technology and data skills and approaches resident in the IA COE can then be portable to the rest of the organization.



The Path Forward

For CFOs and other C-suite executives, achieving GBS maturity represents an opportunity to reimagine shared services as a strategic asset rather than just a cost-cutting tool. The shift to GBS is not merely about operational efficiency: it is about driving business value, fostering innovation and positioning the finance function as a catalyst for growth. Organizations that proactively invest in performance management, talent strategy, process standardization and automation will gain a sustainable competitive advantage. CFOs who embrace GBS are future-proofing their organizations, enabling scalability and strengthening enterprise-wide resilience.

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