

Masterful Business Partnering “Delivering more with less”



Why Business Partnering?

The world of business is increasingly complex and competitive. Leaders seek ever-increased performance and higher customer service - but with an ever-dwindling resource base they are looking for ways to “do more with less.” To maximise performance all parts of the system need to be integrated and in communication from a position of mutual understanding. A healthy tension between the business and functional agendas is necessary, and when well managed it can be a driver for change and source of creativity.

When managed poorly, the ineffective collaboration and coordination results in strategic “tearing”, wasted time, duplication, friction and ultimately poor client service and declining business results. We are always happy to have informal conversations to discuss how Business Partnering can help you and your business.

Boston Consulting Group reported that in the 9 years to 2014, 77% of Fortune 500 companies found their support functions became MORE inefficient, MORE ineffective or both when it came to developing business profitability.

How do you maximise business performance while encouraging a more effective collaboration between the functions and the rest of the business they serve?

Business Partners (BPs) serve as a bridge linking functions and business units to ensure that their technical expertise is applied to address the real and current concerns of the business and create value.

This means they can greatly improve integration within the organisation. They maximise the timely deployment of the functions’ skills and expertise within a shared context of business priorities. This requires a high degree of relational mastery and business acumen to sit alongside their technical expertise and experience. Masterful BPs have independence of thought and action – always in service of the wider system.

Do you have one or more of these challenges?

- Areas where internal functions are in conflict with the business or at best tolerating each other
- A sense that subject-matter expertise isn’t being harnessed to its maximum to deliver business results
- The implementation of the matrix organisation has resulted in decreased performance and increased complexity rather than simplifying things as envisioned
- Wide disparities of performance between the same function in different parts of the business or between different functions in the same area of the business
- New innovations within functions not being implemented at the required speed or across the whole organisation
- Business areas are complaining that the functions are operating to their own narrow agendas and not “understanding the business”

If so, then establishing Business Partnering as an effective role, structure and capability could be part of what’s next for you. ***If you already have business partnering in place, but think there’s a potential to further improve its performance, here are some questions to consider to pinpoint how to do so:***

- **Does the business understand** what the BP role is and how it can benefit from it? Do BPs know how to effectively contract with the business?
- **Do your BPs understand the business imperatives** that they are being asked to work towards?
- **Is there a genuine and effective 2-way communication channel** open between the business and the functions? (Blockages can occur just as much back into the function as out of it!)
- **Are your BPs appropriately skilled in sustaining deep trust based relationships** with their business leaders and staff?
- **Do the BPs understand how their personal presence is impacting their effectiveness** and how they need to change it?
- **Can the BPs operate with clarity and courage** under the daily pressures of delivering into the business?
- **Do BPs have any forums to meet and share insights** into their roles and how best to serve the business?

So, we can all agree the world of business is increasing in complexity. We firmly believe that an effective business partnering strategy with well skilled and motivated BPs can make a real contribution towards navigating this complexity. Such BPs can make a significant contribution to the business bottom line and with the external environment increasingly pushing each organisation towards innovation, effectiveness and performance, there is no better time to build business partnering capability.

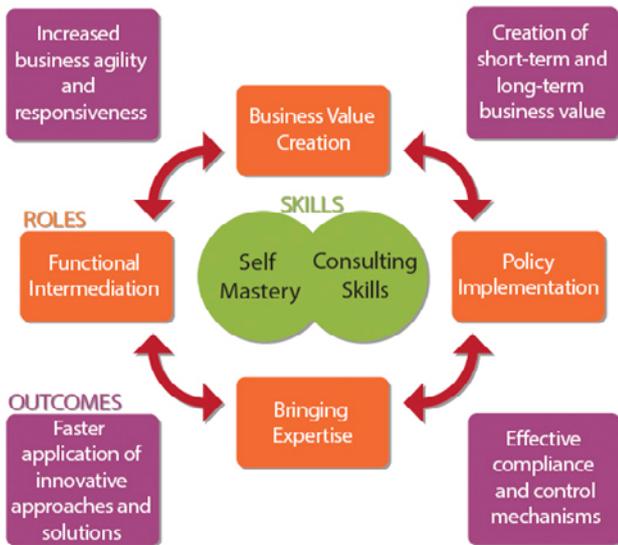
FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Reconsidering the future

What do we offer?

We work closely with our clients to design BP development interventions which fit their business. We draw on the framework of key **Skills**, **Roles** and **Outcomes**:

Skills: (I use the following skills...)



Self-Mastery – Ability to maintain independence of thought and action under pressure and to choose the most effective way to relate to others and move forward aligned with key business and functional priorities. Having the courage and confidence to step into difficult situations with skill to build shared and sustainable outcomes.

Consulting Skills - Ability to deeply sense what's most needed in a business and initiate work that will drive this agenda forward, with clear contracting and collaboration and steering towards the best outcomes.

Roles: (..to play these business partner roles..)

Business Value Creation - Deepened insight and “savvy” around how the organisation makes money and creates value, so that the BP’s contribution drives the bottom line for the short and long term rather than distracting from it.

Policy Implementation - BPs’ ability to bring about compliance in an effective way that builds commitment rather than resistance from the business and drives sustainable and ethical results beyond blind adherence to process.

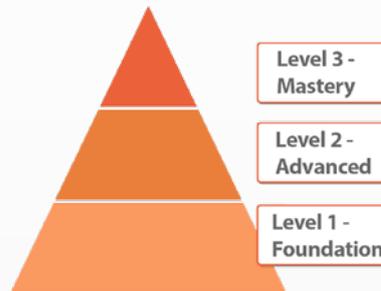
Bringing Expertise - While we regard core functional expertise as a given when people embark on a business partnering learning journey, we help BPs to deepen this and leverage it in service of business outcomes.

Functional Intermediation - Growing a network within the BP’s own function, in other functions and among suppliers to initiate and execute richer solutions to the business’ needs.

Outcomes: (...and deliver the desired business outcomes...)

- Increased business agility and responsiveness
- Creation of short-term and long-term business value
- Faster application of innovative approaches and solutions
- Effective compliance and control mechanisms

Business Partnering Maturity Levels



Individual

Level 1, Foundation – Formally holds the business partnering role but has limited understanding of the dimensions of that role and the ability to flex as necessary.

Level 2, Advanced – Aware of the key dimensions of the business partnering role and consciously chooses the right approach depending on the context as well as having self-driven focus to improve less proficient areas and amplify strengths.

Level 3, Mastery – The ability to select and skilfully adopt the most effective aspects of the business partnering role for any situation and ability to create long-term business value.

Organisation

Level 1, Foundation – The organisation has put BPs in place in most functions or there are people playing this role informally without any formal structures in place. There is not necessarily a shared understanding of the role and expectations between Functions and Business are not closely aligned. Pockets of good practice exist but are not propagated.

Level 2, Advanced – BPs in place in all Functions. Many effective relationships with some BPs formally part of some Management Teams. Willingness to collaborate is BAU but implementation remains patchy. Success still depends on individual performance rather than a systemic alignment.

Level 3, Mastery – BPs are seen as strategic partners to business units. Their extensive networks are deployed to create value. Success is seen as a collaborative effort and mutual benefits are declared and acknowledged across the organisation.

How do we help?

Based on our extensive experience of working with BPs they tell us that their priority needs are to be better able to:

- Have difficult conversations
- Have clear contracting conversations
- Build networks in anticipation of need

We have delivered a range of interventions, ranging from a series of in-person strategic workshops to 6-9 months blended in-person and virtual programmes (sample intervention next page).

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Business Partnering Program:



These are some of the individual shifts participants report 6 months into the program:

From:	To:
Putting functional agenda first	Driving total business agenda
Working in functional silos	Being a business ally
Being reactive and taking orders from business	Being pro-active, strategic and challenging the business, with a sense of "centred presence"
Having a fixed position	Deeper listening to find shared needs
Jumping to conclusions	Sensing into the right solution
Working in a more "transactional" way	Powerful increases in relationship-building and influencing skills

Up to 6-18 months after our intervention, BPs report that they have matured in their role and have become trusted advisors to the business through:

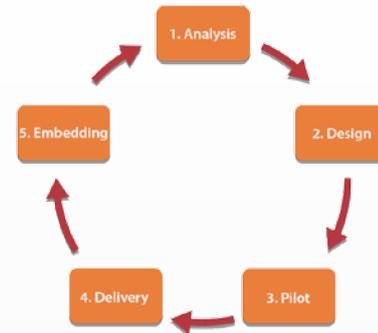
- Understanding the business better and bringing external expertise to the table
- Working more collaboratively within and across functions to add value
- Bringing fact-based independent challenge.

Participants tell us that overall, they have gained:

- Greater confidence through shared experience and peer support
- Greater influence in the business
- More resilience to the pressures of the role
- Increased ability to take intentional prioritised actions
- More enjoyment of the role.

One key additional benefit has been that the competencies needed to partner well internally enable more effective external partnering with clients, suppliers and a wider group of stakeholders.

How will we work for you?



1. Analysis – research, structured interviews and/or ‘future-search’ workshops to identify common and distinct needs for the respective business support function(s). Based on these, we then agree the best next steps forward.

2. Design – Co-creating a customised solution to your situation. We use your expertise of your organisation and combine that with our design and business expertise to co-create a powerful design. We know that “one size doesn’t fit all” and we design for your unique context and requirements. We focus on the relational aspects of being a BP because these are often less developed and can be the powerful lever to true partnership building but we recognise the role is multi-faceted and our designs combine “knowing about” with “knowing how to” in the overall intervention.

3. Pilot – Piloting the different elements of the designed intervention in a shortened timeframe and measuring its effectiveness.

4. Delivery – Delivery and continuous evolution of the intervention to capitalise on the achieved learning and further customise the approach to the changing business context.

5. Embedding – supporting the adoption of the new BP behaviours across the business.

Future Considerations and Business Partnering Programmes

- 2,400 hours of face-to-face delivery
- 3,000 hours of online delivery
- 105+ cohorts
- 680 senior participants
- 1450 mid-level participants
- 4+ years average client engagement



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Reconsidering the future

Case Studies:

PHILIPS

As part of a wider business transformation, we co-created a cross-functional Business Partnering modular programme (blending group virtual and face-to-face modules, 1:1 coaching, and peer coaching) for over 9 enabling functions, and a bespoke program for both the Quality & Regulatory function and the Procurement function. In 2 years, 2015-2017, this will have reached approximately 500 BPs with 3 cohorts at senior level and 18 at mid-level, with many more BPs now on a waiting list for the program.

"Business Partnering Flagship Program allowed me to extend my capability to make an impact outside of my direct functional area. It engrained the importance of contracting and readiness to play different roles to stay effective. The program structure cleverly addressed the slower knowledge absorption of experienced managers by great preparatory materials, repeating the most important parts of material after several months so they really stick and by putting participants into learning mode by wonderful attention training techniques. 1 year after the training I feel I truly stepped up my Business Partnering skills."

**Program Participant, Senior Management
Philips**

SHELL

Shell were intent on increasing the effectiveness of their BPs across all functions AND to improve their ability to connect with each other as well as their businesses. We designed and co-delivered, with Shell faculty, a 2 level multi-function program: a Mastery program for senior BPs comprising face to face modules, distance learning, inter-modular assignments and learning sets run over 8 months (we have run 20+ cohorts of 24 over 5 years); and a Skill program delivered virtually across 4 months for cohorts of 24 which includes learning set activities and assignments to support the 2 virtual workshops (we have delivered 40+ cohorts over 5 years). Both programs continue to be well received and credited with an improved culture of business partnering across the functions.

"Future Considerations have partnered with us to transform our developmental approach to building business partnering capability across all our Global Functions, e.g. Finance, IT, HR, Legal, External Relations. A key success factor is Future Considerations recognising that this requires both a deep personal change journey as well as organisational systems interventions, for example in transforming how the functions collaborate together to drive business impact. Our partnership with Future Considerations has been instrumental in designing interventions which holistically address the cultural change journey required and this has enabled us to make progress over recent years."

**Nicole Cunningham-Snell,
VP Learning and Organisation Effectiveness,
Global Functions at Shell**

About Future Considerations:

Our purpose is to enable the world's leaders, institutions and systems to evolve, and to influence the great challenges of our time.

We work towards this by developing courageous and authentic leadership. Leaders with passion, authenticity, a sense of their values and the impact and power to make things happen.

We design, facilitate and run pioneering leadership development programmes, which work at the cross-section of personal development, organisational effectiveness and global business challenges.

"Cultural diversity is now real. Having come from a relatively 'cultural' background, I'd never thought about differences in cultures, I'd just worked hard to accept them. Now, I see that a deeper understanding of how to use differences can propel a team's/individual's success so much further."

**Participant,
HSBC Brazil**

"You have changed my life and transformed my business. Our recovery and strong growth is in no small measure due to the leadership development and cultural change."

**Simon Collins
CEO
KPMG UK, Corporate Finance**

"We have worked with Future Considerations for over three years, helping us develop two big programmes – a collaboration toolkit and a major people management programme. The content and quality of materials developed was outstanding – fit for purpose, not over-engineered, using blended learning solutions. Their strengths are understanding client needs, heavy-lifting of programme creation, facilitation, learning methods, and their conscientiousness and integrity."

**Richard Doyle,
Group Organisation Effectiveness Director,
Cadbury Schweppes**



Contact details

Contact us for an informal conversation about your challenges and how we might help you to address them.

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