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SERVICE EXPERIENCE:

The Next Value Driver for Global Business Services

A Getting-Started Guide

Ten years or so ago, enterprises with shared services models—the consolidation of a single function’s business processes into one operation globally—took the next step: consolidating and integrating several functions’ processes under one operating umbrella or into a global business services (GBS) model.

The benefits of a GBS model have been obvious: further reduced cost, leveraged technology, and, most importantly, integrated processes end to end, regardless of which function they belong to. GBS has been a good news story for so many global enterprises; in addition to efficiency, the model has transformed corporate ways of working.

However, a growing number of GBS organizations are at the vanguard, learning how to create an imperative for investment in experience, no matter the function or process. Leaders have figured out how to harness their corporate contexts to make the case for service delivery transformation, creating a compelling vision that the business can get behind. By trial and error, they now know how to “sell it in”. And they are generously sharing their dos and don’ts, helping other GBS organizations to embrace a unified service experience confidently and with speed.

This paper sets forth a roadmap to begin the GBS experience journey based upon the lessons learned from a number of pioneering organizations.

The GBS model is still a work in progress for the majority.

While processes have now been standardized and optimized into effective global delivery models, it’s early days for design and investment in a singular GBS experience.

The next frontier for GBS?

The first few phases of GBS evolution are arguably complete. A substantial percentage of global enterprises have embraced some form of the model—over 40% according to SSON Research and Analytics’ March 2023 report.

GBS organizations have mastered the fundamentals: the right work in the right location assigned to the right resource. They now encompass the delivery of key processes underpinning a number of functions. Scope and scale are global. Automation has taken hold, while the data flowing through GBS is being harnessed to provide vital decision support. But leaders—and the businesses they serve—are asking, “Is that all there is?”

Let’s be honest, the main goal of GBS has historically been to impose efficiency and effectiveness, ultimately measured by how much money is saved. But delivery of efficiency and effectiveness is leaving some enterprises looking for more out of their GBS organizations. The traditional bag of tricks—consolidation into offshore locations, process improvement, analytics—have certainly delivered quantifiable value, but can only move the needle so far. GBS customers now want seamless, frictionless, and fast 24/7 capability; in short, they want what e-commerce platforms provide to their customers. So, many are asking—if my savings dashboard is so green, why am I seeing red?

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Historically, in the majority of enterprises, fixing the way that internal services organizations interact with their customers has been low on the list of priorities, leaving experience by the wayside. The mantra has been primarily focused on the business case with little concern about access, ease of use, or frictionless processes. An experience initiative costs money, is not always perceived to deliver a tangible ROI, may not impact the end customer's experience, and frankly, for CXOs looking to make an indelible mark on their businesses, it may not be on their radar screens.

But the wind is starting to change. Based upon conversations with leading global business services organizations, the ability to make a case for investing in experience that does not land on deaf ears is increasing. The track record of benefits in individual service towers such as HR and IT are now evident, suggesting that other functions can also obtain value. Technology is no longer a barrier, but an enabler.

Conditions are now ripe to change the calculus, perhaps even a perfect storm. Leading GBS organizations are harnessing tailwinds to make the case for a consistent service experience across business services functions. They now have sufficient knowledge to craft a vision for a GBS experience that the enterprise can buy into. They are learning how to navigate stakeholder agendas. They know how to pick their battles and rally internal resources around the GBS cause.

In an industry that is committed to self-referencing and taking its lead from best practices, it's time to formalize some of the lessons learned. This article documents four strategies gleaned from those leaders—who are arguably at the head of the GBS experience pack—who have harnessed them in an effort to spur those thinking about implementing GBS experience or are currently in flight.



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1

Use business context as a hook

What's compelling any change/urgency around service delivery transformation? Let's unpack four of the strongest winds of change:

1

COVID-19 has changed the relationship between employee and employer.

Even in the face of a potential worldwide economic downturn, primacy of the employee in the relationship with the enterprise remains. With a profound generational shift to Millennials and Generation Z, their embrace of digitization, and a new set of career tolerances and goals—emulating consumer experience has become more critical. Employee mobility has led to new expectations colored by what they do outside of work. Hybrid work means it is no longer possible to communicate just by walking around a desk. Global workforces mean that access during an eight-hour workday is now meaningless. As Takeda's Etienne Grisvard says, "Experience is much more than Zoom." And employees are asking for it.

GBS organizations, having learned from changing the employee experience, now have a critical proof source to unify all interaction across service towers.

2

There's not much more juice to get out of the traditional efficiency squeeze.

GBS organizations have wrung substantial year-on-year savings out of the processes they deliver through the usual playbooks—standardization and consolidation, work elimination, process automation and digitization, and offshoring. One of the next levers has been staring them in the face for some time—moving to self-service to further eliminate the work they perform, sharing the workload with their users, and aligning processes end to end.

With consumers now used to self-service accessed through a frictionless platform, the time is right to change the service/cost calculus, harnessing the power of experience.

3

Technology is now up to the experience challenge.

Think mobile. We no longer look at technology as an add-on; it is part of everything we do. And since we do not separate user experience from core technologies, customer experience technology is not synonymous only with customer relationship management. The terms were almost interchangeable because the only technology used to connect with customers was basic data like names, emails, phone numbers, and addresses. However, there has been an explosion of customer technology that is changing the customer experience. Technology can exploit the power of business context.

As General Mills' Paul Dottle says, "Buying something online, it's so easy and efficient. But if I'm ordering something inside my company, it's antiquated and kluge." The lack of technology is no longer an excuse.

4

Digitization is now on the majority of enterprises' agendas.

Look at corporate organization structures and you'll see a new role, called the Chief Data Officer or Chief Digitization Officer. Whether the move to embrace digitization runs deep with an urgent need across the enterprise, or is a passing fad, GBS leaders have a hook—and a language—to grab onto. As Siemens' Matthias Egelhaaf says, "Digitization now gives us the biggest lever to generate new value. Now we have to turn shared services centers into a tech company, because tech will make the big difference in delivering value from services."

When it comes to digital and digitization, enterprise operation experience is now compared with that of Google or Amazon, no matter what the industry or the business function.

Whatever the tailwind, GBS leaders no longer have to go it alone, pushing for investment that, to an uninitiated CXO, may look like a play for an expensive new self-service portal. When they can easily connect the dots to other imperatives, the case for transformation becomes so much stronger.

2

**Define a vision that the
business can get behind**

GBS experience is complicated.

It is not only the front door to services, but experience becomes the essence of the GBS value proposition—the brand of the operation. And, like most programs whose return on investment cannot be quantified, it requires a North Star, an unassailable goal upon which to hitch its benefits.

How does GBS define a North Star that not only compels the business to play ball, but also aligns GBS processes? For some GBS organizations, the North Star starts and stops with the employee value proposition—on-demand, frictionless, self-service hire-to-retain function, end to end. But for others who see every customer—whether the user or the business or even the supplier community, creating a vision is more complicated.

Changing the interaction with the business is a common GBS North Star. For example, Kimberly-Clark looks to experience to change the way that GBS interacts with the business across all its services, redefining its ecosystem. As the company's Rich Dobbs puts it, "In KCC, the GBS brand is equal to experience. Experience changes communication from random to structured. Experience creates the impression that GBS is the enabler of the business."

Similarly, Merck KGaA Darmstadt, Germany's North Star is optimizing service experience enterprise wide. Siemens' North Star exemplifies the need to attract the best and brightest into their GBS so that experience fueled by technology is a critical component.



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Rich Dobbs | Kimberly-Clark

3

Sell it in

The ideal driver for investment in GBS experience? Serving an enterprise who believes that they are selling experience as opposed to a product.

“We have a license to operate,” say Susana Cambeiro-Gesto and Søren Pedersen of LEGO Group. When experience is everything to an enterprise, it pervades the view of internal functions’ relationships to the business.

Other GBS organizations harness various forms of process dysfunctionality to sell the concept. Leaders say that, for them, the catalyst is often being able to show how inefficient current processes are, and how they adversely impact other corporate objectives. But aligning expectations with reality is key, refraining from overselling. Most agree that dissatisfaction is certain to occur when they don’t match.

Leaders in other GBS organizations, such as Takeda, believe selling investment in GBS experience is not an issue if the burning platform or corporate context is sufficiently compelling. Stakeholders are able to grasp the benefits and quickly sign up to the program.

But not all enterprises can embrace the imperative to invest in GBS experience.

Empirically, companies with a strong consumer focus, such as LEGO GROUP, more easily see the need for GBS experience, placing it at the same level of importance of efficiency and effectiveness. Others, with a lesser focus on the customer, may present a more difficult sell.

Unlike a single-function shared-services model, where HR or IT are the sole stakeholders, and fund and shape experience, GBS models are multi-tenant, serving functions and the business with disparate definitions of experience—and appetite for investment. Therein lies the challenge—making the case for investment and designing an experience that responds to a range of stakeholder needs. To be successful, GBS leaders are emphatic that there must be a coalition of support.

One of the challenges is that investments in service experience often get little attention. According to General Mills’ Dottle, “The technology investments that my CEO and CFO look at are so big and so large. Internal service improvements aren’t going to get their attention.”

Aligning expectations with reality is key, refraining from overselling. Most agree that dissatisfaction is certain to occur when they don’t match.



There is no one-size-fits-all strategy to advance the cause of experience across the GBS estate. However, four distinct approaches, either singly or in combination, can now be detected in the market:

Build it and they will come.

The underlying strategy here is to invest in the technology and infrastructure, then identify individual use cases that eliminate pain and deliver benefits quickly. A believer in the power of this approach, Siemens' Egelhaaf established the technical underpinnings for a comprehensive GBS experience layer with central funding, then deployed a sales enablement team to work with the business and functions to identify challenges that experience could solve quickly and quantifiably.

He calls this the "big vision/small proof points approach." The onus is then upon GBS to connect the dots, creating a comprehensive platform, although GBS leaders caution that there are different flavors of experience for each function or service.

Set the vision.

GBS proponents of this approach first set forth a comprehensive vision for experience, then identify bets—both big and small—that underscore the value of consistent service management, chasing funding after the stream of benefits garners sufficient support.

"At some point you have to realize no one's buying the big idea. So you have to break it apart," says Paul Dottle. "[Our stakeholders] do not have to sign up for the full-on journey."

Penetrate, radiate and assimilate.

Most commonly, GBS organizations approach experience by selling to functional towers or end-to-end process owners in sequence, using its success as a case study to sell into other towers. The experience layer becomes a window into a function's activities such as payroll, leave or benefits, often with a focus on the reduction of case volume that requires human intervention to deliver savings.

Merck KGaA Darmstadt, Germany's approach to GBS experience provides a good example. As the company's Oliver Darga explains, "We started by working with three different functions (HR, procurement, finance) and are now integrating and delivering a one-stop shop."

Grab onto other platform initiatives as a wedge.

Organizations, again like Merck KGaA Darmstadt, Germany, tie experience to an enterprise-wide initiative to reimagine the enabling functions. As part of the program, GBS has sufficient air cover to pivot from performance to experience, furthering its end-to-end process initiatives.

Similarly, General Mills deployed a "bottoms-up" approach—aligning with a big, critical enterprise-wide investment or "urgent tech need"—to deliver a multi-year pipeline of subsequent employee experience enhancements. "We were not going to ask for millions of dollars of investment—because we were not going to get it," Dottle says, "but we were able to build upon an enterprise change in workflow."

Leaders concur that the selling process requires stakeholder personalization—the “what’s in it for me?”

As Kellogg’s Karen Coyne says, a CXO’s endorsement, while helpful, does not always move the dial for functional or process owners. Hand-to-hand combat is in order; be prepared to address the pain and quantify the financial impact on what the stakeholder actually owns—the benefits of reduced case volume and alleviation of helpdesk employees. LEGO Group’s Pedersen goes on to say that gaining capacity is a strong sales point for stakeholders. “We’ve found if we give them a better experience, we are actually also able to improve the time that they had on their hands to do work.”

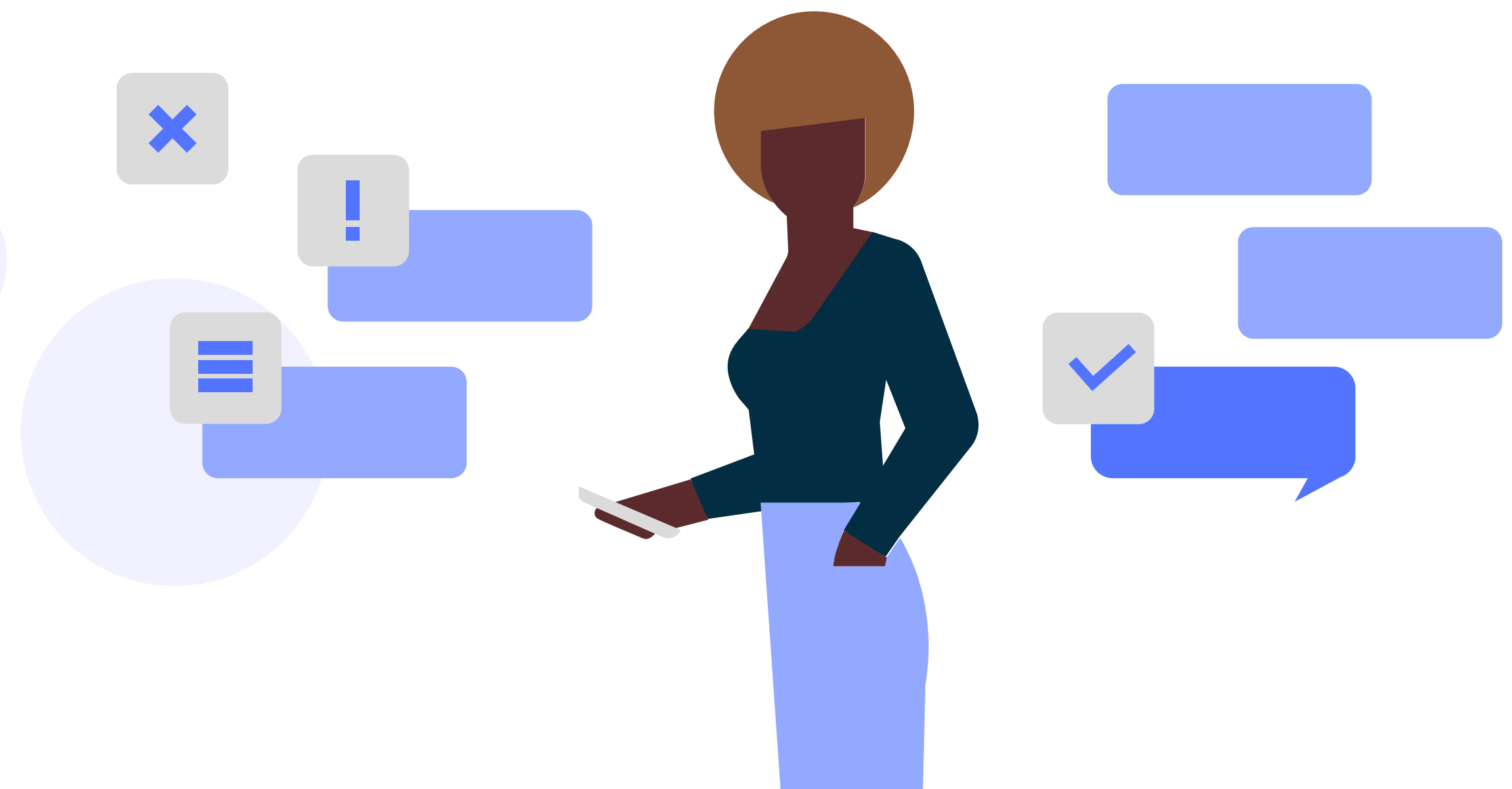
First amongst stakeholder equals is more often than not the CFO. Appealing to this stakeholder takes a bit of strategy, and a deep command of the numbers. According to Merck KGaA Darmstadt Germany’s Darga, the end-user experience argument is not as resonant; CFOs are driven by hard savings, not time savings. But there are arguments for a pan-GBS-experience layer that should resonate with the CFO. A multi-tenant service management model can help to reduce costs by consolidating services and resources across multiple functions, allowing for greater economies of scale and reusable solutions.

This should lead to lower costs for hardware, software, and staffing. Scale can also help to reduce risk by providing enhanced security, compliance and governance controls, mitigating risks relative to data privacy and security.

There is also consensus amongst GBS leaders as to who resists the model. It goes without saying that not all functional leaders served by GBS will embrace a multi-tenant experience layer. Leaders usually find that HR and finance are early adopters, while less traditional service towers lag in their enthusiasm. Unsurprisingly, some of the resistance comes from GBS and business team members who see a direct line between the embrace of self-service and a loss of team size and even their jobs.

At the end of the day, selling it requires dealing with the elephant in the room—cost. As Takeda’s Grisvard says, “I would love for cost to not be an issue, but also something that’s not going to happen.” Smart GBS leaders understand the imperative to link experience to efficiency and vice versa; investment in experience has a force-multiplier effect.

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4

Learn from leaders

Although the majority of GBS organizations are in their relative infancy when it comes to implementing a consistent experience layer across their service towers, pioneers are now freely sharing their challenges and solutions.

When leaders were asked the question of what they would do differently if given the chance, a strong consensus around nine lessons learned is apparent. Similarly, Merck KGaA Darmstadt's North Star is optimizing service experience enterprise wide. Siemens' North Star exemplifies the need to attract the best and brightest into their GBS so that experience fueled by technology is a critical component.



Start with a vision and own it!

GBS leaders are unanimous that the investment in service experience has power to move the dial on so many aspects of delivery—cost, efficiency, self-service, elimination of waste, and enhancement of both the enterprise and the GBS brand. “Know where you want to go with experience before you make decisions on a tool” is a consistent refrain, whether it is part of a broader corporate initiative or fueled by a strategy to move to the next evolution of GBS.

General Mills’ Dottle underscores the value of vision as a rallying cry, saying, “The reason the vision is so important is because pain, waste and benefits are diffused across the organization.” Takeda’s vision for experience is to enhance the quality of the workplace, believing that it is “very, very important—and goes way beyond Zoom.” And for LEGO Group, the ambition is for stakeholders to have an “awesome experience” for everyone that interacts with GBS.

All agree that the vision, when implemented, should deliver a step-change in GBS’s relationship with its customers, making it service-centric throughout the service journey.



Be realistic about the extent of change.

GBS organizations that do not understand the extent to which consistent change management is important, will likely fail. At the end of the day, service experience is about adapting behaviors, and how GBS orchestrates people, processes and technology to work together more effectively to deliver across a multitude of teams and streams.

It is important when building the business case that GBS organizations convey the fact that service operations are tech-fueled and tech-dependent but understand that implementing new technology alone is not a silver bullet. Pedersen concurs, saying that LEGO Group focuses not just on the technology but equally on creating the behaviors necessary to deliver a good experience across the entire organization. And Siemens’ Egelhaaf agrees, saying that the greatest resistance GBS encounters often comes from stakeholders’ fixation with technology, not the change.

Leaders also warn about trying to create one monolithic GBS experience, saying that each function has its own experience, or as Siemens’ Egelhaaf says, “They come in different colors.” General Mills’ Dottle advises GBS leaders to “focus on the obvious—individual customer journeys that can take transactions out of the system, improve the employee experience, and leverage the technology that’s available.” Others have found that getting one function, or use case, over the line first is best, building momentum over time.

Patience is a virtue when it comes to creating a GBS experience layer. Effective experience, like Rome, isn’t built in a day. Plan for the long haul; be prepared for continuous twists and turns as the business—and processes—constantly evolve. Service enhancements and process transformation will put ongoing pressure on experience. New functions and processes will add scale and complexity. Harnessed appropriately, change is the gift that keeps on giving. Leaders agree that GBS will be continuously improving and creating an increased stream of benefits.

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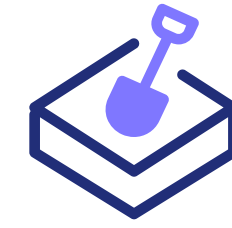


Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate.

GBS leaders are emphatic that creating a vision or service experience without full collaboration and cooperation with stakeholders is destined to fail. According to LEGO Group's Cambeiro-Gesto, it's a partnership experience, and not about finger-pointing or "we do this to you, you did this to us." Since the experience team must have a deep understanding of the processes being delivered, close cooperation is imperative.

Implementing GBS experience is no different from any other transformation program. Smart GBS leaders have concluded that service design, development of a service catalog and a consistent look and feel requires the same level of collaboration and change. They often take an "outside-in, inside-out" approach, balancing key experience design tenets with the journey maps and pain points that only stakeholders can describe to make a winning combination.

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Look below the experience waterline.

Implementing experience without effective processes and clean data is a fool's errand, according to industry leaders. They agree that experience is so much more than a implementing a portal, unilaterally saying that for experience to move the dial for the enterprise, a precondition for success is managing the dysfunction under the waterline.

Getting in the weeds with both process owners and the business to quantify the current state of waste is critical. "If we make things easy for a process, processes will be followed. We know that," says Takeda's Grisvard. Therefore, experience implementation roadmaps can't stop with the implementation of a self-service portal, but must include process improvement and service automation. Some organizations, like Merck KGaA Darmstadt, Germany, are thinking ahead. They believe there is an opportunity to think like Steve Jobs, moving from process design to service design as a North Star, focusing on experience and process as one product.

Leaders underscore the importance of current, clean data underpinning an easily accessible (and understandable in plain language) knowledge base at the beginning of the workflow. This first-contact channel further reduces the cost of experience, alleviating service tickets and inquiries.

And for those GBS organizations chasing end-to-end delivery, a unified experience is proving to be integral to implementation. Leaders agree that global process ownership will be elusive without it.





Obsess about the numbers.

Finance will be your greatest skeptic and your best friend, leaders agree. Soft benefits are hard for number crunchers to swallow; making a bottom-line argument: front and center is key to securing investment.

There should be no gap between the vision, the implementation plan and the numbers; they work together. Prioritize functions. As Siemens' Egelhaaf sums it up, "Experience must be revenue-relevant."

Merck KGaA Darmstadt, Germany's Darga has a word of advice for GBS organizations starting the experience journey. "Break out your business case into three sections: cost savings, cost avoidance and P&L impact. First, pick use cases that alleviate pain with easily quantifiable cost savings or avoidance. In a GBS environment, this provides a reference base and supports the creation of a coalition of the willing."

Finance will be your greatest skeptic and your best friend.

And don't forget to assess the cost of doing nothing. Leaders also agree that qualitative savings matter, such as time savings for the user and alleviating redundancy if each service tower focuses on its own user experience

Another sales point to the corporate bean counters is the level of control that a well-designed and implemented experience platform delivers. "With global scale, experience helps with controls," according to Takeda's Grisvard.



Develop a saleable plan.

When it comes to a better, simpler experience, stakeholders intuitively "get it", but the sales process is usually not easy. Savvy leaders are able to build an irrefutable case for "why, and why now" to get backers over the line.

Like most transformation programs, timing and knowing the audience is everything. Depending on the approach to implementing GBS experience, leaders structure the sales process differently—some focusing on pain points, others working hard to convince the functions to be early adopters. Aligning with other complementary corporate initiatives is also critical either to harness the power of tailwinds or avoid colliding with critical competing priorities.

Building support that gathers momentum is key to moving to a GBS experience platform. Functions are at different levels of maturity when it comes to experience, necessitating different conversations.

They are proud of what they do, and understandably think they are special/different. Leaders are unanimous about the value of knowing your customer—understanding both their personal risk in supporting the initiative as well as what pain can be alleviated. Kellogg's Coyne is a firm believer in personalizing the pitch to the audience. "Tell (and quantify the benefits of) the story each stakeholder wants to hear."

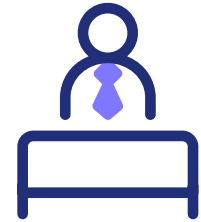
And keep the rhetoric down. Experience layers are supposed to make the lives of functions—and their users—better than before. Speaking in language that the stakeholders understand—e.g. reduction in hours, inquiries, new hire attrition, caseload, days to new hire productivity—says volumes. Setting realistic expectations is imperative, according to Takeda's Grisvard. "To harness the power of experience, there has to be a good understanding of what is better and simpler. "Painless as possible is never going to be completely painless."



Assemble the right team.

One of the most critical success factors is the team. Chartering a GBS team to go it alone will not work; service experience is no different from any other transformation program, requiring expertise and commitment of time from stakeholders, GBS, process owners, finance, IT and others. Be prepared for a range of people challenges—getting the right talent, pulling people out of the functions and holding people accountable. Especially in light of other competing priorities. And be patient—it will take a lot of time to put together the right team because most of the talent necessary usually works in functional or departmental silos.

Leaders do agree that ringfencing a dedicated core team to design and run the program, and subsequently provide governance, is a must-have. Companies like Merck KGaA Darmstadt, Germany and Siemens have assembled permanent GBS teams that scale across all tenants, creating consistency.



Govern, govern, govern.

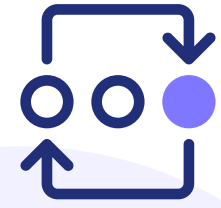
Leaders know that governance is critical, but most do not yet have a formal governance process over experience (or even a standard definition)—a critical success factor when GBS experience is multi-tenant. Clear roles, responsibilities and decision rights take on heightened importance when there is a cast of many corporate players in the experience mix. Regular reporting on the business case is critical because GBS experience is never a “one and done”—it requires improvement and investment over time as business conditions and GBS’ scope and scale evolve. And don’t forget hygiene; effective governance not only includes the monitoring and reporting on experience hygiene factors such as first-time resolution, response times, uptime and customer satisfaction, but also the attainment of the business case.

Governance is further complicated in a multi-tenant platform because each service tower or process has different metrics with different concepts of service experience. Designing a simple framework that orchestrates function-specific analysis and reporting is not an easy task. GBS organizations like Takeda govern through a stakeholder or user committee, relying on tollgates. Others, like the LEGO Group, variously measure experience, using net promoter scores and other qualitative “feel good” metrics as well as more quantitative measures such as “time to complete a purchase order”, “reopened tickets”, and “cycle time” to track performance and experience.

When stakeholders understand the power of a GBS experience platform, governance can solve another problem—strong demand. Structured reviews and frameworks can be used to prioritize use cases for investment based on value and add transparency to the decision-making process.

Be prepared for further governance complexity when other, non-GBS functions want to harness the power of experience and join the GBS bandwagon. It’s highly likely that they do not have a service orientation, so teaching them the fundamentals along with ongoing handholding is critical.

Structured reviews and frameworks can be used to prioritize use cases for investment.



Align with GBS brand.

There is overwhelming agreement that there is no whitespace between a GBS brand and what its customers and stakeholders experience. As Takeda's Grisvard says, "Employee experience is absolutely fundamental to what we do."

While GBS brands historically have focused on freeing up cost and time for the business, today the same organizations have pivoted to evoking other value. For some, linking the value created by GBS to making life easier for its stakeholders has become a brand, sending a message that GBS is so much more than your mess for less.

Others tie brand with experience in order to make working in GBS hip and modern, "elevating cool," according to Siemens' Egelhaaf. Brands are often aligned with service promises such as "Service for You". And some have used experience to pivot from process management to service management, changing GBS's relationship with the business.

Merck KGaA Darmstadt, Germany's GBS is full-in on the concept of experience as brand, redefining the relationships between the enabling functions and the business.

Whatever the brand, smart GBS leaders understand that linking experience unlocks a commitment to customers. It's a license to play.

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Summing up

GBS experience is still, for many, uncharted waters. As with any other transformation, it's not easy to make the case for change, especially when GBS organizations have not been positioned—or have positioned themselves as putting experience equal to or above cost savings.

But as enterprises build upon their successes, getting returns from single-tenant employee and IT experience, the case for building one GBS experience has become more and more obvious. Efficiency will come from eliminating redundancies in service management and moving to self-service by harnessing the power of digital. Effectiveness will come from visibility and delivering consistent service promises across all service towers.

Most importantly, GBS experience opens up new ways of working. It changes expectations. It's a new paradigm for GBS value.

About the author



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