
RESEARCH INSIGHT REPORT

GBS as a Catalyst for Growth **From Cost Center to Strategic Value Driver**

Survey Analysis

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Strategic Partnerships Drive Growth Agenda

Today, global enterprises face unprecedented challenges. These include navigating geopolitical tensions, adapting to rapid technological advancements, and managing complex supply chains. Amidst these hurdles, Global Business Services (GBS) emerges as a pivotal catalyst for sustainable growth, standing as a cornerstone for global enterprises, enabling them to navigate economic uncertainties and achieve sustainable growth in an increasingly complex world.

This report highlights the findings of a recent survey conducted by SSON Research & Analytics. The results provide valuable insights into the strategic importance of GBS in driving enterprise growth and thus shifting from cost-containment towards core business support and the front office.

Specifically:

- **81%** of organizations view GBS as strategically important to growth, and
- **55%** report full alignment between GBS and board-level priorities

The data suggests a growing trend toward strategic partnership, though execution capabilities vary significantly. Our research highlights the successes of GBS in driving enterprise growth but also the hurdles that stand in the way, offering leaders actionable insights to advancing their agenda.



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GBS: A Vehicle for Growth

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In a volatile, uncertain and complex world, Global Business Services (GBS) provide enterprises with a degree of certainty in delivering business outcomes through digital transformation. Global organizations operate across multiple time zones, languages, legal and cultural boundaries, and GBS can deliver organization-wide services while accommodating all those distinctions.

There are several broad macro challenges currently at play. The world geopolitical order is in a state of disruption; AI is evolving fast and will be able to efficiently perform several human level tasks; there is a climate and sustainability imperative; and the international regulatory landscape is constantly shifting. Customer expectations are also becoming more demanding. Digital transformation and AI are changing how large organizations work, what they offer, and what value they deliver.

All these challenges can be overcome. As this research shows, a substantial majority of organizations (81%) view GBS as strategically important to their growth with more than 50% considering this a board agenda item. GBS is no longer just about cost containment but about making significant, innovative, lasting contributions to *revenue generation and profitability* by identifying and orchestrating initiatives *that are truly enterprise wide*.

GBS: Realizing the potential of AI

This report takes stock of several challenges but, more importantly, also considers the opportunities for growth that GBS offers by reimagining the future of business operations and how process work will be performed. While AI is, indeed, disruptive, it can be as much a factor in the resolution of challenges as it can be a cause of them.

At Capgemini, we see that AI can make a significant positive difference, creating a connected enterprise and transforming Global Business Services. However, at present, 40% of enterprise data is not ready for the AI environment. Deployment of AI at scale for enterprise business operations will require a *data trust* to be established. This will allow GBS organizations to drive economies of scale in a centralized operating model enabled by GenAI and Agentic AI. And it will allow GBS to move from cost-saving to revenue generation ... from operational management to being the truly strategic enterprise muscle that this survey shows enterprise boards and CXOs are so keen to realize.

For instance, significant improvements can be made in:

- **Finance operations**, by AI Agents performing most of the transactional process activities to free up humans to work on higher value activities unlocking incremental business value in areas such as working capital.
- **Supply chain operations**, with demand forecasting, inventory optimization, and real-time logistics management enhancing agility and proactively managing supply chain disruptions while reducing cost.
- **Client operations**, with personalized marketing campaigns, sentiment analysis, and customer service automation fostering deeper engagement and loyalty.
- **HR operations**, by streamlining and improving recruitment processes, talent management, and employee feedback analysis, facilitating better decision-making and employee satisfaction.

You'll notice that implicit in all these is a need for a comprehensive approach encompassing data, AI technology and processes drawn together from every part of the operation.

Traveling Companions

In short, a GenAI and Agentic AI-enabled approach to GBS can provide a strategic advantage that not only addresses an organization's technological needs but equips it to face the challenges highlighted in this report while also becoming a significant vehicle for growth.

It's a new approach requiring *reimagination* of enterprise functions and business processes to fundamentally change how organizations and humans envision work. It may sound daunting but when you're moving into uncharted territory like this, it makes sense to seek the company of a traveling companion. Ideally, this will be a service provider who knows the terrain needed to reach the destination across industries and geographies and has enough experience to adapt to your own ambitions and circumstances.

It's a challenge, but one that can be successfully overcome. If you want to explore how to turn this into an opportunity, please get in touch with me.





Introduction

Today, Global Business Services stands at a critical inflection point in its maturity journey, increasingly recognized for its potential as a strategic driver of value creation and enterprise growth.

This evolution reflects broader changes in the business landscape, where digital transformation, data analytics, and customer-centricity have become paramount. GBS organizations, with their cross-functional visibility and process expertise, are uniquely positioned to drive these initiatives.

However, the transition is not without its challenges. The survey reveals a notable gap between GBS's strategic potential and its current state of execution, particularly in areas such as revenue generation, pricing optimization, and sales effectiveness. Indeed, many GBS leaders struggle with cultural resistance, capability gaps, and resource constraints as they attempt to evolve their operations.



Key Research Findings at a Glance



Strategic Importance of GBS:

A significant majority (80%) of respondents rate GBS as a strategic enabler of their organization's long-term growth goals. This underscores the critical role GBS plays in driving enterprise growth beyond traditional cost-cutting measures.



Role in Business Value Creation:

GBS is increasingly involved in driving business value through revenue generation, digital transformation, and innovation. Approximately 37% of respondents indicate that GBS plays a significant or critical role in these areas.



Alignment with Board-Level Priorities:

Over half (55%) of the respondents report that their GBS priorities are fully aligned with Board-level priorities such as growth, margin improvement, and digital modernization. This alignment is crucial for ensuring that GBS initiatives support enterprise goals.



Collaboration with Key Roles:

GBS collaborates with various executive roles, including Chief Financial Officers (74%), Chief Sales Officers (19%), and Chief Growth Officers (14%), to drive business growth. This highlights an integrated approach to support enterprise-wide initiatives.



Focus on Revenue-Generating Activities:

While GBS activities are traditionally focused on cost-saving, there is a growing emphasis on revenue-generating initiatives: 21% of the respondents indicate an equal or mostly revenue-generating focus in their GBS activities.



Measurement of GBS Impact:

Organizations are increasingly measuring the impact of GBS on top-line growth and profitability: 52% of respondents already do this, highlighting the importance of performance measurement.

What the Survey Results Mean for GBS Leaders

The survey data presents several critical implications for GBS leaders, requiring thoughtful consideration and strategic response:

Strategic Alignment With Enterprise Goals is Strong

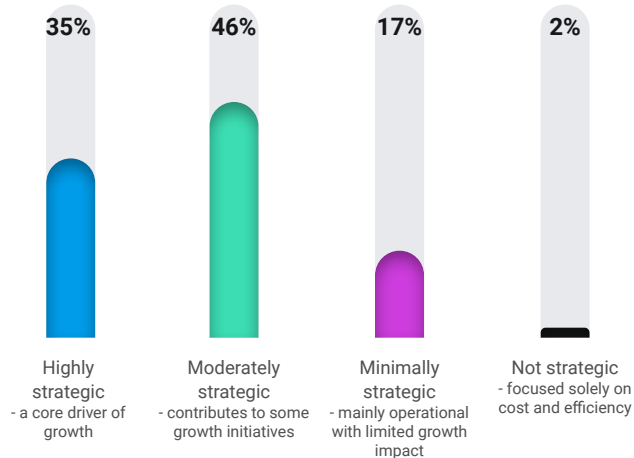
81% of organizations **view GBS as strategically important to growth goals**, showing widespread recognition of GBS's impact beyond traditional cost-saving role.

55% of respondents **report full alignment between GBS and board-level priorities**, indicating strong strategic integration at the highest levels.

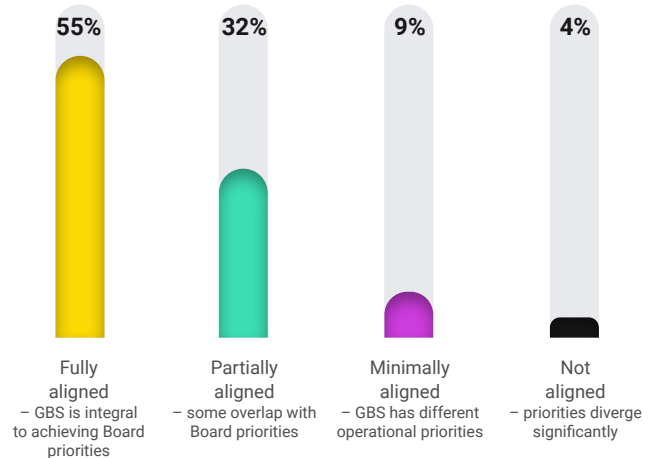
74% of GBS organizations **collaborate directly with the Chief Financial Officer**, showing robust C-suite engagement and influence.

The data suggests a growing trend toward strategic partnership, though execution capabilities vary significantly.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE CURRENT STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF GBS IN SUPPORTING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S LONG-TERM GROWTH GOALS?



HOW ALIGNED ARE YOUR GBS PRIORITIES WITH BOARD-LEVEL PRIORITIES (E.G., GROWTH)?



IS GBS COLLABORATING DIRECTLY WITH ANY OF THESE ROLES SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF DRIVING BUSINESS GROWTH?





Current State of Growth Initiatives: Impact Still Emerging

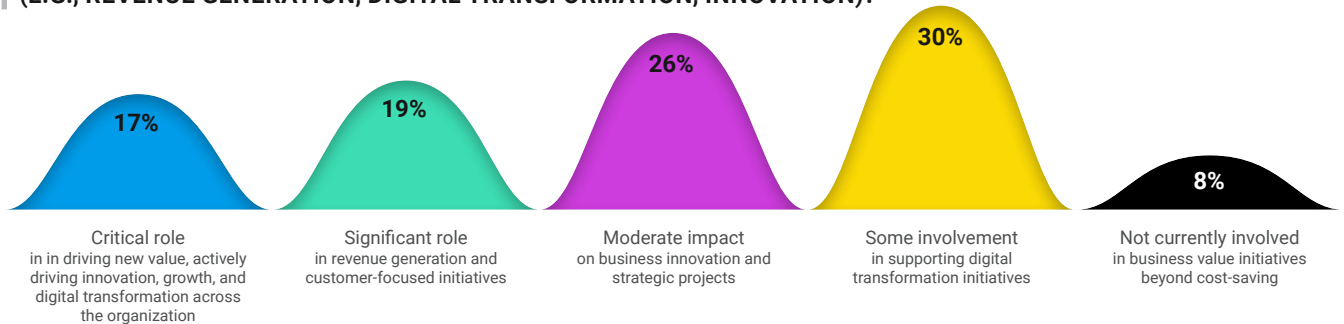
79% of activities **remain primarily or mostly focused on cost-saving** rather than revenue generation, reflecting a traditional shared services mentality.

26% of GBS **play an important in driving new value and innovation**, with most still focused on operational efficiency, highlighting a significant opportunity for expansion.

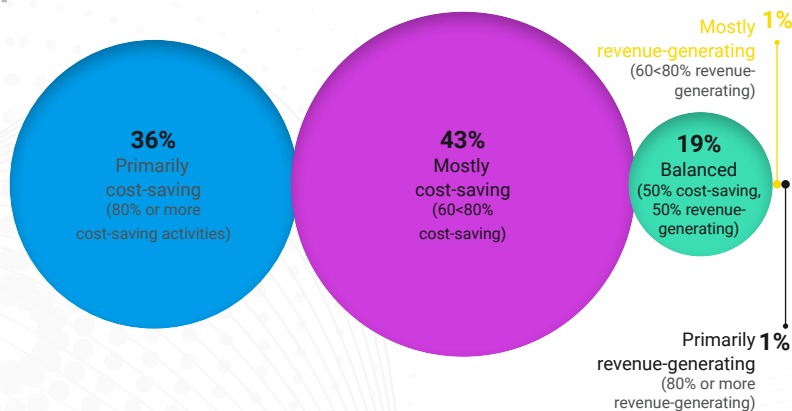
48% of organizations **do not measure GBS impact** on top-line growth and profitability, indicating a critical gap in value demonstration.

The findings suggest that while the potential for growth contribution is recognized, most are at early stages.

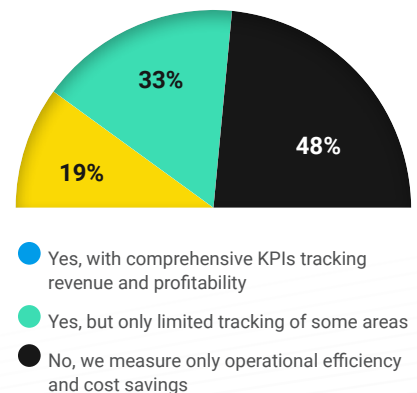
WHAT ROLE DOES YOUR GBS PLAY IN DRIVING BUSINESS VALUE BEYOND TRADITIONAL COST-CUTTING (E.G., REVENUE GENERATION, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, INNOVATION)?



WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR GBS ACTIVITIES ARE FOCUSED ON TOP-LINE/REVENUE-GENERATING INITIATIVES VS COST-SAVING?



DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION MEASURE THE IMPACT OF GBS ON TOP-LINE GROWTH AND PROFITABILITY?



Analytics and Data Capabilities: Untapped Potential

49% of GBS use analytics either “extensively” or just “moderately” to drive top-line growth, showing capability but still a considerable untapped opportunity in this critical area.

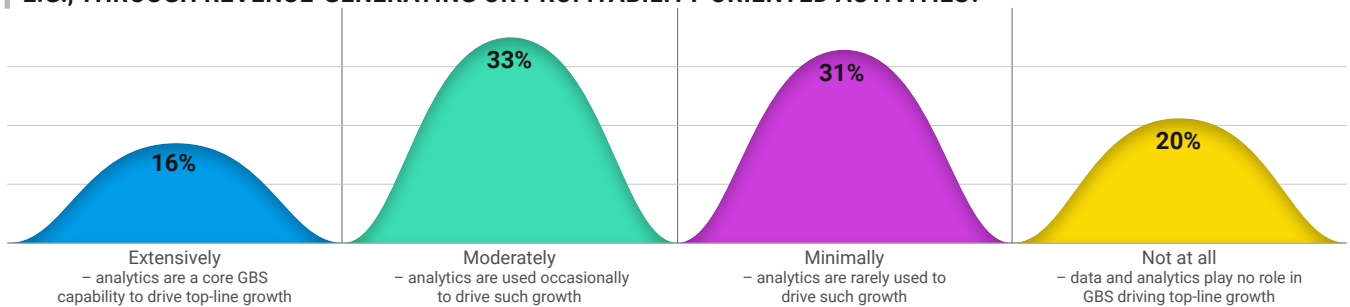
63% of respondents use analytics primarily for process efficiency rather than strategic initiatives around sales effectiveness or pricing optimization, highlighting enormous opportunities for growth.

22% of GBS manage data systematically as a strategic asset, suggesting a gap in opportunity.

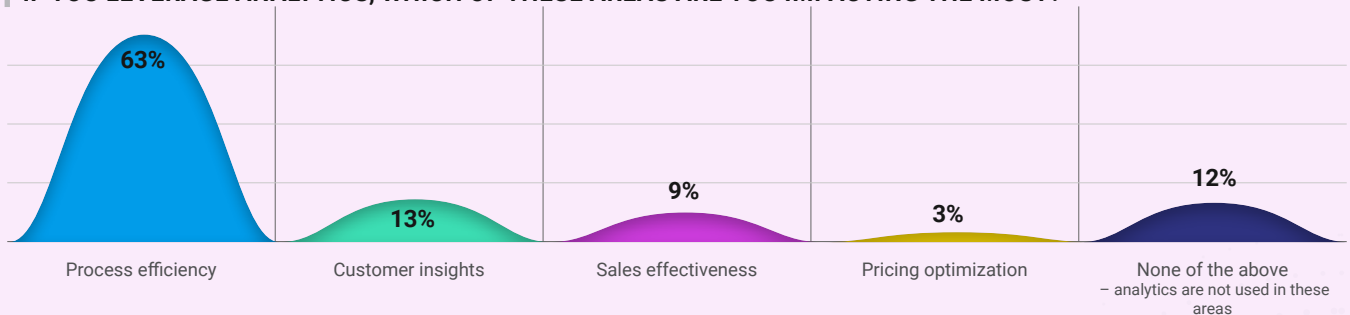
66% of respondents limit their use of data to operational improvement or transactions.

The results reveal an opportunity to expand analytics capabilities beyond operational efficiency to strategic value creation.

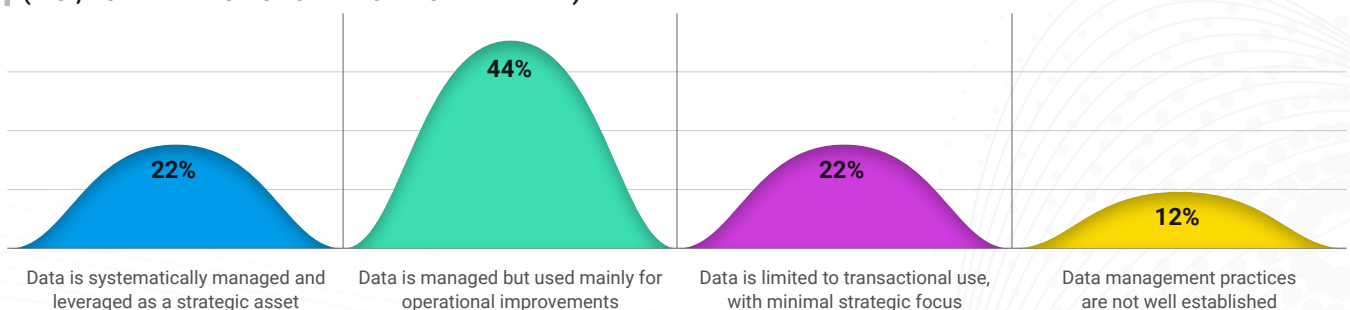
HOW EXTENSIVELY DOES YOUR GBS FUNCTION LEVERAGE DATA AND ANALYTICS TO DRIVE TOP-LINE GROWTH, E.G., THROUGH REVENUE-GENERATING OR PROFITABILITY-ORIENTED ACTIVITIES?



IF YOU LEVERAGE ANALYTICS, WHICH OF THESE AREAS ARE YOU IMPACTING THE MOST?



TO WHAT EXTENT IS DATA BEING MANAGED AS A STRATEGIC ASSET IN YOUR GBS TEAM (E.G., FOR REVENUE GROWTH & PROFITABILITY)?



Challenges and Barriers

Despite the growing opportunity for GBS to impact growth, several challenges and barriers prevent it fully realizing its potential. The survey identifies the following key challenges:



Anchored in operations:

53% of respondents believe GBS's operational/cost focus is limiting it from generating new revenue streams.



Technology:

While not the leading barrier to GBS' ability to drive growth, 41% of respondents believe the limitations of their current technologies play a key role in this regard.



Lack of customer facing integration:

15% of respondents cite this as an impediment to GBS' ability to generate new revenue streams.



Leadership Support:

Limited executive backing for GBS expansion is a bottleneck for broader integration efforts. 45% list lack of executive support as a key barrier.



ROI Satisfaction:

Many respondents list "ROI" as a leading KPI to measure GBS's impact on revenue growth and profitability. Implementing and tracking these metrics is critical to proving GBS's influence in these areas. Every success, no matter how small, needs to be communicated.



Cultural Resistance:

Cultural resistance to change is the leading barrier to GBS playing a more significant role as growth catalyst, according to more than half of respondents (52%). Organizations need to foster a mindset shift to change this.



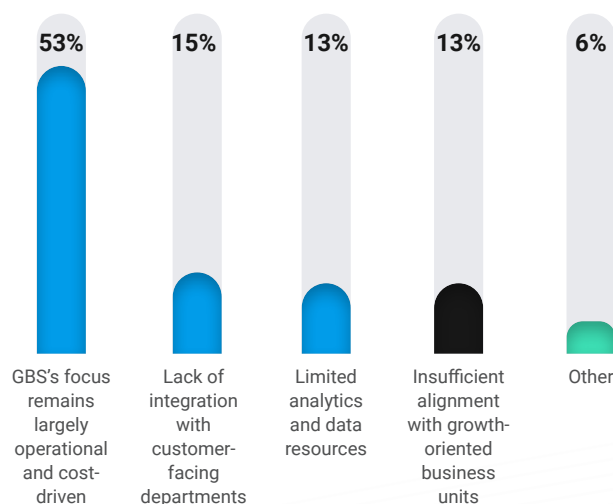
Resource Constraints:

Resource constraints, including limited analytics and data resources, are holding back GBS's transformation into a growth catalyst. Organizations need to invest in specialized capabilities to overcome this barrier.

WHAT IS HINDERING GBS TRANSFORMING INTO A GROWTH CATALYST?



WHAT IS THE MAIN BARRIER TO GBS GENERATING GROWTH IN NEW REVENUE STREAMS?





Opportunities for Growth

Despite the challenges listed above, there are several opportunities for organizations to leverage GBS as a catalyst for enterprise growth. The survey highlights the following:

1. Advanced Analytics and Data-Driven Insights:

Leveraging advanced analytics capabilities and data-driven insights can significantly enhance GBS's role in driving top-line growth. Organizations should invest in building strong data analytics capabilities within GBS to support pricing optimization, sales effectiveness (only 11% of GBS currently contribute to enhancing sales effectiveness), and customer insights.

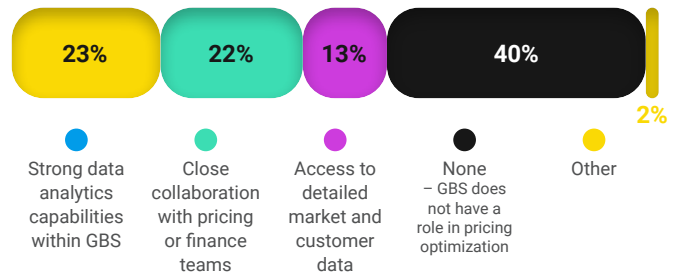
2. Collaboration with Other Teams: Close collaboration with cross-functional teams is essential for GBS to support new revenue streams. Organizations should foster a collaborative culture and ensure that GBS is integrated into key business processes, for example through closer collaboration with pricing or finance teams.

3. Digital Transformation and Innovation: GBS can play a critical role in driving digital transformation and innovation across the organization. By embracing new technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotic process automation, GBS can enhance operational efficiency and support strategic initiatives.

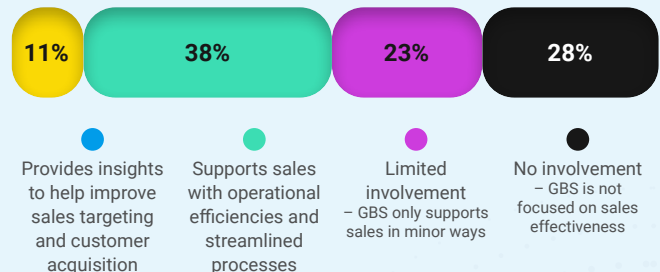
4. Leadership Commitment: Strong leadership commitment is crucial for the success of GBS initiatives. GBS should position themselves as a strategic lever for enterprise growth and work to secure executive sponsorship.

5. Continuous Monitoring of Key Metrics: Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents are continuously reviewing GBS metrics to ensure alignment with growth-oriented goals. Half the respondents conduct at best annual reviews aimed at high-level alignment only.

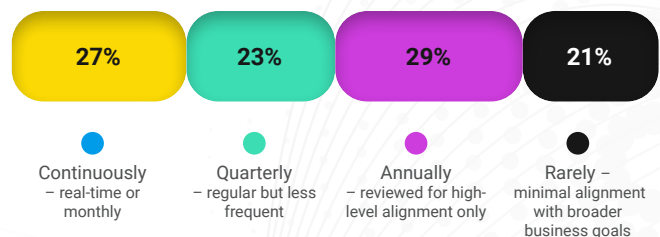
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FACTORS WOULD MOST ENABLE YOUR GBS TO CONTRIBUTE TO PRICING OPTIMIZATION (EVEN IF NOT CURRENTLY ACTIVE/IN SCOPE)?



HOW DOES GBS CURRENTLY CONTRIBUTE TO ENHANCING SALES EFFECTIVENESS WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?



HOW OFTEN ARE GBS METRICS REVIEWED TO ENSURE ALIGNMENT WITH BROADER, GROWTH-ORIENTED ENTERPRISE GOALS LIKE REVENUE GROWTH & PROFITABILITY?





Best Practices for Leveraging GBS to Drive Growth

Based on the survey findings, here are some best practices GBS leaders should adopt to ensure they are positioned and acknowledged as key drivers of enterprise growth.



Align GBS with Strategic Priorities:

Align GBS initiatives with the organization's strategic priorities, such as growth, margin improvement, and digital modernization. This will help secure executive support and ensure that GBS initiatives contribute to broader enterprise goals.



Invest in Advanced Analytics:

Build strong data analytics capabilities within GBS to support decision-making and drive top-line growth. Leveraging advanced analytics can provide valuable insights into customer behavior, market trends, and operational efficiencies.



Foster Collaboration:

Encourage close collaboration between GBS and business units or finance departments to identify opportunities for revenue generation and innovation. This will help ensure that GBS initiatives are integrated and support enterprise-wide goals.



Embrace Digital Transformation:

Leverage new technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotic process automation, and digital platforms to enhance operational efficiency and drive innovation. GBS can play a critical role in supporting digital transformation initiatives across the organization.



Secure Leadership Commitment:

Secure executive sponsorship and position GBS as a strategic lever for enterprise growth. Strong leadership commitment is crucial for the success of GBS initiatives. Communicate the value of GBS to stakeholders and demonstrate its impact on business outcomes.



Measure and Track Performance:

Implement comprehensive KPIs to measure the impact of GBS on top-line growth and profitability. Regularly review GBS metrics to ensure alignment with broader enterprise goals and make data-driven decisions to optimize performance.



Actionable Insights

Based on the survey findings, GBS leaders should focus on the following key areas:



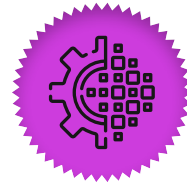
Strategic Repositioning

- Develop clear value propositions beyond cost savings
- Establish comprehensive KPIs tracking revenue and profitability impact
- Create formal alignment mechanisms with board-level priorities



Capability Enhancement

- Invest in data and analytics capabilities
- Develop skills in revenue-generating activities
- Strengthen integration with customer-facing functions



Cultural Transformation

- Address cultural resistance through change management
- Build stronger relationships with business units
- Demonstrate value through pilot programs and quick wins

The Future of GBS: AI Agents as Catalysts for Value Creation

Global Business Services are well-positioned to drive sustainable growth for global enterprises. However, what's holding many GBS organizations back is the yawning gap between capability and execution. With most GBS still focused primarily on operational improvement—and constrained by a limited mindset—this shortsightedness is preventing them from targeting bigger wins on distant horizons. To fully realize their potential, GBS organizations must embrace a more expansive vision that goes beyond efficiency gains to actively shaping business strategy and innovation.

The survey data clearly shows that GBS have the potential to be significant catalysts for enterprise growth. While challenges exist, particularly around cultural resistance and capability gaps, the foundation for transformation is robust. Success will require focused effort on building new capabilities, strengthening stakeholder relationships, and demonstrating clear value beyond traditional cost savings. GBS leaders who can effectively navigate this transformation will position their organizations as critical drivers of enterprise value creation and growth.

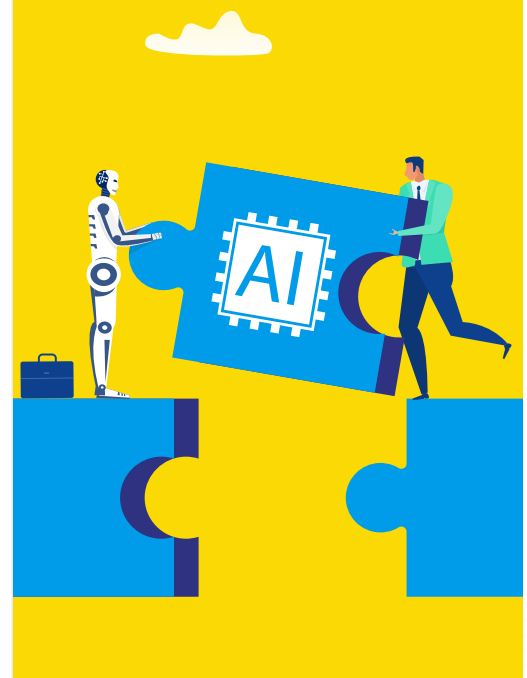
This is where the emergence of AI and specifically agents can be a game-changer. AI-driven automation has already enhanced efficiency and cost-effectiveness, but the next frontier lies in AI agents—intelligent systems capable of reasoning, decision-making, and proactive problem-solving. Unlike traditional automation, AI agents can adapt dynamically to business needs, orchestrating complex workflows, analyzing vast datasets in real time, and offering predictive insights that drive strategic outcomes.

The integration of AI agents into GBS is accelerating digital transformation by augmenting human expertise and enabling new levels of service delivery. These intelligent systems not only automate tasks but also enhance decision-making in areas such as finance, procurement, HR, and customer service. Most importantly, AI agents serve as a force multiplier for value creation. By continuously learning from interactions and business patterns, they refine operational models, identify optimization opportunities, and provide leadership teams with strategic insights that were previously inaccessible.

As GBS organizations shift from transactional service delivery to becoming digital innovation hubs – and acting as catalysts for growth – AI can play a pivotal role in enabling agile, data-driven operations. This shift not only enhances operational resilience but also solidifies GBS's role as a key driver of enterprise growth.

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The integration of AI agents into GBS is accelerating digital transformation by augmenting human expertise and enabling new levels of service delivery.”





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