



ENHANCING BUSINESS VALUE WITH EFFECTIVE BUSINESS-IT ALIGNMENT

Amid increases in data volume and complexity, the critical role of information technology (IT) continues to expand for today's science-based, data-driven organizations. IT projects are, however, notorious for high failure rates. Due to a wide range of factors, success in laboratory informatics projects can be particularly difficult to achieve. Some of these factors include:

- A wide variety of complex workflows, processes, instrumentation and technologies utilized in modern labs
- The need to maintain the highest levels of IT security while avoiding the stifling of innovation
- Complex integration requirements with laboratory and enterprise systems and devices that are frequently deployed at multiple sites
- Complex compliance requirements in regulated industries
- A communication bridge between the many different stakeholder domains that informatics systems typically engage is necessary
- Strategic planning is necessary to effectively customize implementations to maximize business value

This last factor touches on a key challenge that scientific organizations face – a gap often exists between what technology promises and what it actually delivers. Eliminating this gap is imperative for business growth and success.

Given the increasing pressure to improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, enhance innovation and reduce compliance risk, it is critical for companies to develop an overall IT strategy that will ensure that the entire laboratory informatics infrastructure, along with individual projects, are optimized to provide a high level of business value.

Towards this end, industry-leading organizations are employing professionals with the IT skills, coupled with deep scientific domain knowledge and experience to successfully navigate the above-mentioned challenges. These Business Engagement Professionals (BEPs) work to enhance IT engagement and alignment with the business to drive the overall business value of IT infrastructure.

In this white paper, we will describe the activities which a BEP typically engages in, provide an overview of the methodology they employ to enhance the business value of your IT infrastructure, and discuss the benefits that your organization will incur by appropriately scaling your IT team to include one or more of these highly skilled professionals.

The Business-IT Disconnect

In most companies, IT departments are in the business of demand management – responding to urgent requests from business units to implement dozens or even hundreds of solutions for both local and multi-site projects. As such, IT leaders struggle with trying to achieve company-wide strategies.

Without a coherent strategy and point of contact serving to tie together business units, IT and business executives, the business value of IT infrastructure will not live up to its potential.

If you answer no to any of the following questions, your business would likely benefit from hiring a BEP:



- Do your business unit managers and executives trust IT to deliver on business capabilities?
- Is there transparency into how IT works and evolves to support your organization?
- Are you either leaving gaps or duplicating effort due to business analysis occurring within IT and business staff concurrently?
- Do business leaders and IT leadership communicate with each other on a regular basis?
- Do business leaders recognize the business value that IT generates?
- Do your IT leaders understand your business problems and how IT can contribute to solving them?
- Does your CIO attend meetings with the strategic business executive leadership?
- Does your organization have a business-IT governance board with defined processes and structures?
- Are there open channels of communication between business leaders, IT and scientists that allow ideas to percolate up from all areas of the organization?
- Is your IT strategy aligned with business goals?

The reality is that effective business-IT engagement happens when business executives and business leaders recognize the value of IT and thus prioritize healthy business-IT communication, along with alignment of IT strategy with business goals. One of the most effective ways to realize the potential of IT infrastructure to drive business value is to hire a qualified Business Engagement Professional.

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Business Engagement Professionals – Linking Business and IT

Business Engagement Professionals work to direct and facilitate a company-wide alignment of technology solutions with business goals. A qualified BEP will have the skills, domain knowledge and experience to guide your organization towards achieving the IT architecture and infrastructure that maximizes business value.

Qualified BEPs are not easy to find, however. Some of the qualifications these individuals must have in order to be effective include:

- Experience in your industry
- Understanding of regulatory compliance issues
- Knowledge of the capabilities of relevant laboratory and enterprise systems
- Business analysis capabilities
- Communication, diplomacy and people management skills
- Strategy and roadmap development skills
- Project and Portfolio management expertise
- Risk management expertise

Business Engagement Professionals act as trusted advisors and thought leaders for your business, fostering alignment horizontally across different functional areas (e.g., IT, business management, laboratory, manufacturing, etc.) and coordination vertically through all the different levels of your organization (from bench level analysts all the way up to senior executives).

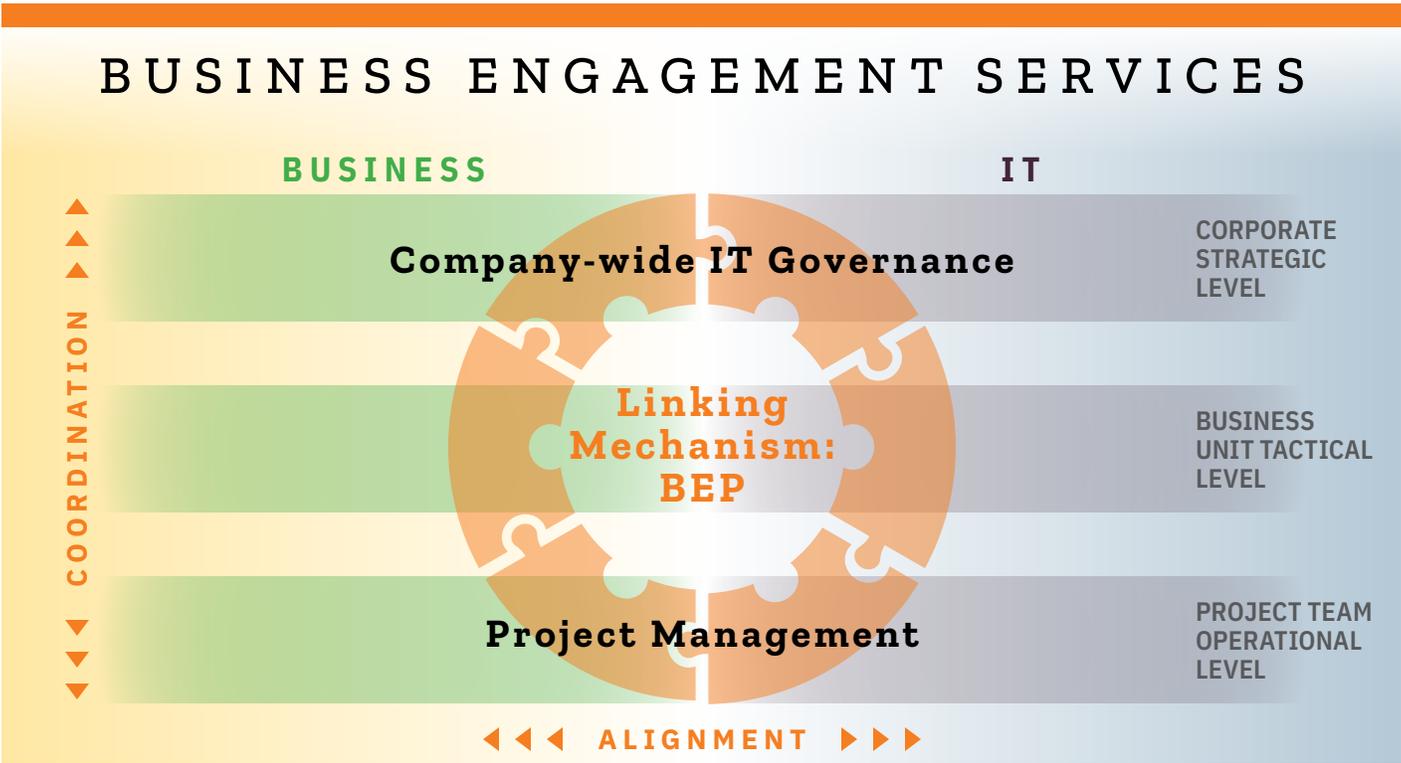


Figure 1: Business Engagement Services

Business Engagement Professionals focus on achieving key business objectives through the effective use of technology and are responsible for the planning and execution of initiatives that drive the continuous improvement of IT’s ability to provide business value. BEPs are thus involved in activities in a wide range of areas: requirement development, IT strategy and roadmap development, solution architecture and discovery, risk management, data management and analytics strategy, application portfolio rationalization, data security, regulatory compliance, and more.

Responsibilities of Business Engagement Professionals are extensive. Areas where BEPs get involved and add value in overseeing collaborative efforts include:

- Strategy and roadmap development
- Customer relationship management
- Service strategy management
- Demand management
- Data and analytics strategy management
- Requirements and business process management
- Vendor relationship management
- Change management
- Compliance management (GxP/SOX)
- Application portfolio management

Business Engagement Professionals serve as a strategic interface between key stakeholders and work to implement a system of governance mechanisms that will facilitate effective business-IT alignment. As such, BEPs represent and promote business interests to IT leaders to ensure IT infrastructure and services advance business goals and needs. BEPs also communicate IT’s vision, ideas, capabilities and strategy to business management to maintain alignment and foster synergy, while maintaining strict adherence to corporate, regulatory, security, and other governing bodies and policies.

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BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT BENEFITS

What Business Engagement Professionals bring to your Organization

BUSINESS BENEFITS:

- Increased business alignment with IT
- More business value from IT infrastructure
- Improved collaboration and enhanced innovation
- Improved operational efficiency, flexibility and agility
- Improved end user satisfaction and convenience
- Enhanced cyber security, data privacy, business continuity, disaster recovery and IT SOX
- Enhanced regulatory compliance
- More predictable operating costs
- Improved resource management and placement

- Flexibility to scale resources up or down based on business needs and priorities
- Faster and more efficient solution implementations, enhancements, patches

IT BENEFITS

- Better alignment and allocation of IT resources
- Increased efficiency through IT shared services
- Better placement through matching skills with business and technical domains
- Increased IT focus on high value activities and workloads leveraging Managed Services

Figure 2: Business Engagement Benefits

Those individuals functioning in the role of BEP need to have excellent communication and interpersonal skills to be effective in their work. At any given time, they may be required to negotiate, build alliances, listen, learn, and moderate conflict, and resolve competing interests on both tangible and intangible issues. BEPs are responsible for communicating all decisions, requests and relevant project information on all initiatives to appropriate staff in a timely fashion to support successful outcomes. BEPs also work to keep business management up to date on progress by presenting relevant KPIs and analyses to document improvements, along with providing regular status updates on initiatives at the desired cadence and appropriate level of the organization.

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Business Engagement Best Practices

Given the wide range of activities and stakeholders that are involved in the Business Engagement Professional's mandate, it is essential for these individuals to apply a comprehensive and proven methodology to achieve success. The reality is that most IT initiatives and/or strategies fail to achieve the desired business value because a proven methodology is not followed.

Effective BEPs work across functional domains to establish business-IT engagement and alignment throughout the organization utilizing the following best practice approach:

- Identify IT capability areas (e.g., IT strategy development, compliance management, change management, security management, data management, portfolio management, IT innovation management, functional requirements management, technical requirements management, service strategy development/management, etc.)
- Assess maturity of IT capability areas with regards to business alignment
- Perform a Gap Analysis (current state vs. future state) for each capability area
- Prioritize each capability area based on gaps and business needs
- Develop an IT roadmap containing initiatives to address these gaps



Some additional best practices for Business Engagement Professionals include:

Strategic Planning. One of the biggest mistakes companies make when starting an IT project is to not do the strategic planning necessary to ensure that the project enhances business value. Many organizations try to select and implement a system without first performing the due diligence required to align business unit functional needs with the strategic needs of the business – an error that is magnified if more than one site is involved. BEPs work to leverage best practices in business analysis across business units and initiate a thorough workflow and business analysis at the start of every IT project in order to optimize business processes, IT architecture and technology selection.

Value Engineering. BEPs should leverage a value-engineering approach to maximize resources and deliver innovative solutions. Value engineering seeks to identify all elements of function and cost in a project and balance them against one another in order to maximize the project’s function while minimizing life-cycle cost (capital, operating, and maintenance). This approach assures that you achieve maximum value for each dollar spent on the project.

Teamwork. Given the extensive responsibilities and scope of this position, it is essential for BEPs to build a team by placing the right resources in the right business and technical domains to support business-IT alignment. BEPs work to mentor, develop, motivate and direct both IT and business team members. Once the team is in place, systems and procedures need to be established to maximize coordination, cooperation and alignment. A good BEP draws on the strengths and competencies of their team to maximize success.

Conclusion

In today’s challenging business environment, one of the driving factors of your company’s ability to effectively compete in the marketplace is an ongoing investment in leading-edge technology. But just investing in technology solutions is clearly not enough. It is also critical for organizations to take the steps necessary to optimize their IT infrastructure in ways which maximize the business value it provides.

Unfortunately, many companies lack a coherent mechanism for effectively tying together business units, IT and business executives to achieve the necessary Business-IT alignment. IT leaders are too often caught up in managing the deluge of demand from different business units, without the overall strategy for successful business engagement. As such, they end up implementing solutions that address localized objectives without effectively taking into account company-wide business goals.

In order to improve the business value of IT infrastructure, industry-leading organizations are employing Business Engagement Professionals to serve as trusted consultants and thought leaders for their business. These professionals work to develop and implement strategies that foster the Business-IT alignment necessary to generate significant business value – improved operational efficiency, cost reduction, enhanced innovation, reduced compliance risk, and much more. As Intel’s CIO Kim Stevenson recently commented, “There are no IT projects, only business projects”.

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ABOUT ASTRIX: Astrix Technology Group is a full-service global laboratory informatics consulting, regulatory advisory and professional staffing firm focused on serving the scientific community since 1995. Our organization provides highly qualified BEPs with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to drive continuous improvements in your company’s IT processes and services. If you would like to discuss your organization’s needs and/or IT strategy with one of our experts, please contact us at www.astrixinc.com for a free, no obligations consultation.

