CAN GLOBAL SHARED SERVICES AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE CO-EXIST?

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Global Shared Services (GSS) teams do not have customers in the traditional sense. Still, the Business Units (BUs) they serve have the same expectations as conventional B2B customers: effortless and consistently excellent experiences that allow them to focus more on the customer and provide increased value. However, in the rapidly changing business environment, the original mandate of many GSS teams to create efficiencies and deliver basic services isn't enough.

GSS **MUST** adopt a customer experience (CX) mindset to move beyond transactional execution and become a value-added partner. Unfortunately, most companies do not apply even the most basic CX principles they use with their external customers to their internal customers. Based on our experience, the GSS teams that excel are organized around the internal and external customer experience.

How does the Customer Experience concept apply to GSS?

GSS must evolve beyond solely providing back-office support to impacting business outcomes by proactively offering end-to-end agile solutions utilizing cross-functional teams.

Shifting from a back-office efficiency mindset requires transforming from a frequently siloed transactional approach to execution to a holistic view of both the BUs' requests and the context of the external customer needs. To accomplish this, GSS must develop an engagement model and strategy that is organized around the experiences delivered to internal and external customers.

GSS can provide greater value to the organization by concentrating on internal and external customer needs, fostering increased collaboration, and sharing skills and tools.

According to The Hackett Group's 2023 GBS Performance Study, the top GSS objectives are:

- Alignment with both Corporate and Business Unit strategic goals
- Reduction of operating costs
- Service excellence
- Delivering digital transformation
- Organization compliance
- Be valued as a business partner
- Contribute to enterprise agility

Alignment on strategic goals, service excellence, and value as a business partner are also typical objectives of a traditional B2B CX strategy.

What are the challenges when designing and implementing a GSS CX strategy?

It can be challenging to instill a hyper-customer-focused mindset in a team that has been historically focused on compliance and cost reduction. In many cases, GSS teams require training and tools to move beyond transactional order-takers to strategic partners with a business impact mindset. Implementing a successful CX strategy correctly may require a "crawl-walk-run" approach.

For example, a GSS client approached us with the objective of "improving their customer experience" by reducing effort, increasing collaboration within GSS and with the BUs, and overall becoming more internally and externally customer-focused. From our first conversations, it quickly became evident that the different service leaders within GSS were not aligned on what they call their internal customers, the definition of customer experience, and whether they even needed to become more customer-centric.

Crawl: The first order of business was to align leaders on the meaning of customer experience and fundamental CX principles and strategy. We also discussed the challenges of conflicting directives and goals between GSS and the BUs (e.g., standardization, efficiency, and cost savings vs. customer experience, retention, and growth).
Walk: Next, we addressed what prevents GSS employees from providing consistently good experiences and the internal customers' perceptions that GSS hinders growth. We advised GSS on how to evolve from operating as a default siloed service provider (order takers focused on individual processes/tasks) to taking a more consultative sales approach to collaboration (trusted partners focused on end-to-end success).
Run: Lastly, we worked to define an experience vision and service promise and how to visualize their value to the BUs and the broader organization.

While there is no one standard approach to transforming from a default service provider to an expert solution partner, there are some basic principles to consider as a GSS CX strategy is being developed:

- Ensure GSS goals are simultaneously aligned with the Corporate requirement for cost reduction and the BU requirement for growth.
- Master the basics and provide an effortless experience – using GSS should be easier than using an external vendor.
- Provide a seamless experience – when a project requires different GSS functions, teams should be able to work cross-functionally towards a common goal.
- Re-evaluate current processes and procedures - remove unnecessary obstacles and bureaucracy.
- Improve communications - speak the BUs language, do not use internal GSS-speak.
- Ensure BUs clearly understand the GSS fee structure – transparency is vital to collaboration, and it is not possible to demonstrate added value if fees are a black box calculation.

There is tremendous value in GSS having a CX strategy. Taking a holistic view and working cross-functionally to understand the BUs requests and the customer needs is another way to drive greater value and deliver business growth. The shared services teams that excel are organized around the experiences of their fellow employees as well as external customers.

ImprintCX understands the keys to successful CX strategies and can support you along the way. We have a proven CX framework to develop the foundations for sustained customer-centricity.

What to know more? [Let's talk!](#)

About the Author

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Ed is a recognized customer experience expert, journey mapper, and researcher. He has achieved a very successful career by building relationships and providing innovative solutions to meet clients' needs. With over thirty years as a global researcher, management consultant, and business leader, Ed brings his experience, expertise, and passion to every consulting assignment.

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ImprintCX is a modern marketing and customer experience services company that seamlessly combines insights, consulting and activation into one integrated offering. The company is powered by sophisticated analytics, deep human understanding and design thinking to help organizations develop and deploy retention and lifetime value strategies for their high impact customers. Collectively, the ImprintCX team has developed and lead hundreds of customer experience transformations for Fortune 500 companies such as Mercedes Benz, Honeywell, Pizza Hut and Walmart.com.