

The GBS Innovators *of 2026*

Part 2

10 leaders redefining what
GBS can be.



Introduction

Global Business Services has spent the better part of two decades proving it can do more with less. Now it is being asked to prove something harder: that it can lead. Across every conversation in this collection, a common story emerges, one where GBS is no longer measured only by transactions processed or costs removed, but by its ability to see across the enterprise, connect what others cannot, and turn that vantage point into growth and competitive advantage.

This report brings together the perspectives of GBS leaders from Cardinal Health, Tesco, Warner Bros, Asklepios Business Services, Kärcher, Schindler, Masco, and beyond, alongside independent voices shaping the standards the industry measures itself against. What they share is not a single playbook, but a set of convictions that recur again and again. Transformation succeeds when it starts with the business problem, not the technology. Governance, trust, and stakeholder alignment matter as much as any system implementation. And the organizations creating the most value are the ones willing to redesign how work happens, rather than simply automating what already exists.

That last conviction is inseparable from the conversation about artificial intelligence. GBS is transforming in the age of AI, and the leaders featured here are candid about what that shift requires: moving beyond tools that merely assist individual tasks toward Agentic AI where AI agents participate directly in workflows, coordinate activity across systems, and execute routine decisions within defined governance frameworks. The organizations profiled here are not waiting for that shift to arrive. They are building the standardized processes, trusted data, and governance structures needed to make agentic AI a source of advantage rather than risk. The consensus is clear: the differentiator ahead will not be whether an organization has

access to AI, but whether GBS can translate that capability into outcomes the enterprise can see, measure, and trust.

Showcasing this kind of innovation matters because GBS transformation rarely happens in the spotlight. It happens in the redesign of a broken process, the redefinition of a metric, the quiet decision to build governance before technology. The pages that follow offer a rare, direct look at how that work actually gets done, and what it will take to lead GBS into its next chapter.



Sally Fletcher
*Head of Thought Leadership & Community
at Hypatos*



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SIEMENS

Eckard Eberle

CEO, Siemens Global
Business Services

"The defining question will no longer be 'How many people do we need?' but rather 'What is the optimal mix of people, AI agents, and governance to create exponential business value?'"



Winner of World's Best GBS 2026 (SSON Research & Analytics)



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

Shared Services at Siemens has a history of more than 20 years. Siemens Global Business Services as it exists today was established in 2019, and since then we have been on a continuous transformation journey. In 2022 we redefined our strategy, which was an important step as this is where we introduced topics like transformation and value creation.

The following year, in 2023, we introduced several changes that helped us take our business to the next level. These included the introduction of breakthrough targets to measure our long-term ambitions, the establishment of a CRM function to professionalize our interface with customers and increase value generation, and the creation of a regional hub model to strengthen GBS' resilience, competitiveness, and customer proximity.

Last fall, in 2025, we reorganized with a strong focus on our customers, reducing complexity and creating a simpler setup that strengthens our speed and customer centricity. Our journey is about transforming from a mandated service provider into a fully managed business that creates value for its customers by boosting productivity. In 2026 and beyond, we will continue to accelerate this journey, for example by fully leveraging new technologies such as AI.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

One big lesson learned is that you need a clear vision of where you actually want to go. For us, that means running GBS as a fully managed business: treating it like a real business, with professionalism, hard metrics, and numbers we are genuinely held accountable to. That is what takes a GBS to the next level.

A second learning: To get there you also need the right setup. A setup that offers enough flexibility to react to change at any time, through scaling, digitalization, and continuous adaptation. And that setup only works if you keep your eyes firmly on the customer. Thinking like the customer, anticipating their needs: 100% customer centricity is non-negotiable. That is how you transform into a high-performance GBS.

But at the same time, you must never forget to bring your people along on that journey every single step of the way. Service business is people business. If we talk about AI for example, reskilling and upskilling are not optional; they are essential, because in the end it is not just about AI, it is about the collaboration between AI and people. And that is the most powerful lesson of all.



How is your GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

We see that the classic Shared Services model (labor arbitrage and outsourcing) alone is no longer sufficient. Customer expectations are changing. They need our value contribution to defend their position in the market and to stay competitive. And they want us to do more with less, which means that there is a need for more productivity and value creation. One of the levers to achieve that, among others, is technology and especially AI. With our reorganization last year, we created the necessary conditions for more digitalization, harmonization and standardization.

To tackle AI from a holistic perspective, we launched the AI@GBS program, which helps us to move beyond isolated AI solutions. Let me give you some examples of what a holistic approach in digitalization can look like: first you can leverage your ecosystem and create a standard together with a partner, as we did with our My Services Portal.

Second you can leverage your own developments and adapt and enhance the standard – we did that with our Agentic AI prototype which reduced

manual work and led to faster, more accurate, and compliant invoice processing. And lastly you can leverage AI to create even more productivity and reach a high level. We did that with our Cash Application, which provides AI power for the process of mapping incoming customer payments to open invoices in a company's accounts receivable system. You see, a holistic approach in digitalization means systematic exploration, prioritization, implementation, and introduction of highly effective use cases.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation, and competitiveness?

Siemens' purpose has guided the company for more than 175 years: To create technology to transform the everyday, for everyone. Siemens is doing this by combining the real and the digital worlds to help our customers to become more competitive, more resilient, and more sustainable.

We are now at a pivotal moment for Siemens: our markets are changing, competitors are moving fast, technology is developing at rapid speed. But Siemens is acting from a position of strength. With its ONE Tech Company North Star, Siemens is taking the next step, building a model for speed, scale and productivity, creating stronger foundations for customers, innovation and growth. We as GBS are already on this journey.

Our passion for value creation and innovative services enables our customers to accelerate their transformation. We bring together expertise, data and technology to scale impact. We simplify, we standardize, we scale what works, across functions, businesses and regions, turning ideas into solutions and solutions into real business impact. This means more opportunities to create value and productivity, which is fundamental to the whole Shared Services idea.

So, we as GBS contribute significantly to productivity, as we are a unifier across countries and businesses, delivering services and creating synergies.

We boost productivity in GBS' own operations and processes and on the customer's side by realizing significant cost improvement with process standardization, scalability and improvement in services beyond the purely transactional.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next 5 years?

Over the next five years, I see a continuous rise in agentic operating models in which GBS capabilities will be created through networks of autonomous AI agents, with people orchestrating, governing, and continuously improving these digital workforces.

Every team leader will effectively become the leader of both humans and agents. We are already seeing early evidence of this transformation. For example, the current overall accuracy level of some of our live agents is 97.5%, resulting in a no-touch rate of approximately 74% for PD/AP invoice validation. That demonstrates that when AI agents are deployed for well-defined tasks, the efficiency gains can be substantial. As these capabilities mature and expand into increasingly complex workflows, the opportunity extends far beyond automation: it enables an entirely new operating model and new value-add services based on agentic capabilities.

The winners won't be the organizations with the most AI, but those that redesign GBS around human-agent collaboration. In that future, GBS becomes the enterprise's innovation engine: continuously creating new digital capabilities, scaling best practices globally, and accelerating business transformation. The defining question will no longer be "How many people do we need?" but rather "What is the optimal mix of people, AI agents, and governance to create exponential business value?"



Bill Jolly

SVP GBS

"The Enterprise Mindset is not only essential in aligning efforts with business outcomes, but also plays a critical part in reimagining how work gets done."



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

Aligning our GBS ambitions directly to the outcomes of our business was key. This entailed shifting our organization from a service orientation to that of a solutions partner to drive business outcomes such as revenue and top-line growth, improving margin and accelerating cash flow levers. We were able to unlock enterprise value across our GBS organization through stakeholder engagement, moving from an operational task-driven focus to a collaborative approach.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

The importance of establishing and fostering an enterprise mindset across our organization. This is broader than mere change management and encapsulates how to ingrain this way of thinking into your GBS and how to align processes, systems and talent development.

The Enterprise Mindset is not only essential in aligning efforts with business outcomes, but also plays a critical part in reimagining how work gets done and how solutions are developed as we pursue disruption with technology, including AI.



How is your GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

Building on a strong base of operational activities over the years and a track record of driving productivity, we've earned the opportunity to help our enterprise transform across all aspects of the business.

Our collaboration has matured to include solutions for our R&D activities, supply chain assistance, and go-to-market activities such as engagements with our customers and partners.

Our diverse reach and engagement across the enterprise supports our ambition of GBS being a key transformation engine for Bayer that will be further enhanced by our progress in AI Disruption.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation, and competitiveness?

A few examples when it comes to enterprise growth:

We support tail customers and channel partner management. We are also involved in creating a seamless user experience/customer experience for our customers to minimize churn and leverage pull-through sales.

We have developed analytics and created insights to accelerate growth opportunities and are focusing on scaling across our divisions and corporate functions. It is important to us to create an effortless experience so we focus on “ease of doing business” both internally and externally.

When it comes to innovation and competitiveness:

We are spearheading an AI disruption project which starts, not with the technology, but with process re-imagination. As GBS are experts in transformation, we are leveraging our reach to support AI efforts across the enterprise, including helping to improve personal productivity with AI and transforming end-to-end workflows. To remain competitive, we are focused on knowledge retention, scalability and flexibility.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next 5 years?

For me it's all about technology disruption to support the reimagination of how work gets done with AI (both Generative and Agentic) and/or other emerging technologies. This will drive the future of how Global Business Services delivers enterprise value.



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

One of the transformations I am most proud to have led was turning a fragmented, regionally managed GBS organization into a truly global GBS model. We moved from three regions and a BPO partner operating largely independently to an integrated global nearshore and offshore model, scaling GBS to around 2,500 people, including approximately 1,500 roles in the Philippines and India.

What differentiated our approach was that we challenged the traditional “lift and shift” model. Moving complexity does not remove complexity. Instead, we used the transition itself as the transformation moment, redesigning and standardizing processes, changing ways of working, and embedding automation and digital solutions as we built the future-state organization.

This delivered substantial productivity improvements and significant savings, alongside automation and digitalization at scale. More importantly, it repositioned GBS from a collection of regional service operations into a globally connected platform for transformation.

Once the transfers and initial standardization were completed, we continued the journey with S/4HANA, another major transformation program building on the global foundations we had created.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

My biggest lesson was how critical strong Executive and Board sponsorship is to transformation at scale. Every major transformation will encounter challenges, and what made the difference for us was having visible, active sponsorship throughout the journey; not simply endorsement at the beginning.

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transformation at scale. Every major transformation will encounter challenges, and what made the difference for us was having visible, active sponsorship throughout the journey; not simply endorsement at the beginning.

We complemented this with a strong governance model that enabled rapid decision-making. When challenges emerged, we could escalate them, make decisions quickly and keep the transformation moving. This support was fundamental to the speed at which we were able to transform the organization.

My key takeaway is that a strong vision and a great team are not enough. Transformation at scale needs leaders at the top who actively sponsor the change, are prepared to make difficult decisions quickly, and remain committed when challenges inevitably arise with no hesitations. That is what turns ambition into execution.



How is your GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

Our GBS model is evolving rapidly from traditional shared services into a global transformation and capability platform. In recent years, we have had to accelerate significantly across several areas to close the gap with leading GBS peers. This required us to strengthen the fundamentals while, at the same time, building the capabilities needed for the future.

A major part of this evolution is the implementation of end-to-end Global Process ownership, creating stronger global standardization, accountability and continuous improvement. This represents a significant change in how the organization operates, and it is a journey we are still progressing.

Alongside this, we have accelerated automation and digitalization and are now actively testing AI capabilities while building dedicated AI capability within the organization.

Importantly, we do not see AI as a standalone technology initiative. Our ambition is to embed AI into our E2E Global Process model so that technology, process transformation and people capabilities evolve together but we realize it's a journey.

We have moved quickly from catching up with our peers to building the foundations for what comes next. Our ambition is for GBS to go beyond being an efficient service provider and become a transformation engine for the enterprise—combining global processes, talent, automation and AI to continuously reinvent how work gets done.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation and competitiveness?

I see GBS contributing to enterprise growth by creating capacity—allowing the wider organization to focus more of its resources and talent on customers, markets, products and other activities that differentiate the business.

Our global scale gives us a unique enterprise-wide perspective. We can identify common challenges across functions and regions, connect capabilities that previously operated in silos, and implement solutions once and scale them globally. This is becoming increasingly important as we strengthen end-to-end Global Process ownership and move from optimizing individual activities to transforming entire processes.

Innovation is becoming an increasingly important part of that contribution. Through automation, digitalization and our emerging AI capabilities, GBS can act as a testing and scaling ground for new technologies—experimenting quickly, demonstrating value and then embedding successful solutions into global processes.

Ultimately, I see GBS contributing to competitiveness through a combination of productivity, scalability, speed and innovation. The more

complexity we can remove and the more intelligently we can use technology, the more capacity we create across the enterprise to focus resources and talent on activities that drive growth and competitive advantage.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next five years.

I believe the real revolution in GBS will be AI-first redesign of end-to-end processes.

Today, we still tend to look at an end-to-end process as a sequence of traditional process steps and then ask: “Where can we apply AI?” I believe that very soon we will reverse that logic.

We will start by asking what AI agents can own, orchestrate and execute across the end-to-end process—and then design the remaining process steps, human interventions, controls and technology around them.

This is a fundamental shift. Today, we largely use AI to improve or automate processes that were originally designed for people. The next generation of GBS will increasingly design processes AI-first, with intelligent agents orchestrating significant parts of the workflow and people focusing on judgment, exceptions, governance and value creation.

That, for me, will be the real revolution: we will no longer fit AI into our processes—we will redesign our processes around what AI makes possible.



Anand Singh

Global Transformation Architect

"GBS will shift from 'supervising bots' to 'orchestrating a workforce of AI agents.'"



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

As a Global Transformation Architect, I co-led the automation of our Procure-to-Pay workstream, moving it from a largely manual, exception-heavy process to an intelligent, touchless operation.

We deployed automation tools and worked on harmonizing the entire P2P lifecycle across invoice matching, PO exceptions, reducing manual touchpoints and cutting invoice processing cycle time. Beyond the efficiency gain, it freed our teams to shift their focus from traditional back office processes / function to a value-adding one.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

Automation only sticks when the process is fixed before the technology is applied; bolting bots onto broken workflows just automates the chaos faster.

The bigger lesson was that successful P2P transformation is 30% technology and 70% change management: getting stakeholders across procurement, finance, and vendors aligned on standardized processes was harder and more critical than the tooling itself.



How is your GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

P2P within GBS is shifting from a cost-arbitrage, transaction-processing function to an intelligence layer — using automation and analytics not just to process invoices faster, but to predict exceptions, flag fraud risk, and optimize working capital. We're moving from "process what comes in" to "shape what comes in," embedding controls and data quality further upstream with the business.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation, and competitiveness?

By automating high-volume P2P activity, GBS frees enterprise capital — both financial and human — for higher-value work. It also becomes a proving ground for enterprise-wide automation and AI adoption: technologies piloted in P2P (intelligent document processing, agentic workflows) become the blueprint other functions later scale, making GBS a genuine innovation engine rather than just a back-office cost center.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next 5 years?

Agentic AI — autonomous agents that don't just automate discrete tasks (like matching an invoice) but manage entire end-to-end P2P workflows, making judgment calls, flagging exceptions, and learning from outcomes with minimal human intervention. GBS will shift from "supervising bots" to "orchestrating a workforce of AI agents."



Insulet

Tim Palmer

Former Head of Business Transformation and CX

"With effective governance and a competent team, we were able to break an overreliance on external support, saving at least 50% on each project."



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

I led a large GBS consulting service team for a pharmaceuticals company.

About 10 years ago I was helping to build an advanced GBS organization. We looked for opportunities to replace external spend with internal alternatives, and spotted the potential to add value through a flexible workforce. We targeted a reduction in a \$140M annual external spend, which we reduced to \$10M-20M. We built the team out from our existing GBS transformation capabilities.

We did not try to meet every demand, there were many areas where external expertise was still valuable, but with effective governance and a competent team, we were able to break an overreliance on external support, saving at least 50% on each project. We ended up working on all of the major strategic programs in the company.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

That you have to work really hard to build a high-performance culture. The peak size of the team was 400 people in seven locations, with six major skill groups. More than half of the team were hired from Big 4 consulting companies, and we had to build our own culture to avoid a hybrid of legacy cultures and some unhelpful cliques within the team.

We worked actively, implementing a multi-year rolling plan that set out the expectations and reinforced the right behaviors. We focused on items such as self-awareness, individual strengths, leadership purpose and behaviors, and psychological safety. The work created a vision and a bond that still stays with many of the team today.



How is your GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

An effective GBS evolves to do things that are not natural to the rest of the organization. I have worked in 11 different GBS models – and every structure has met the specific needs of the company that it supports.

In recent GBS's I have worked in, this has included: replacing external spend with internal services, designing and building end-to-end enterprise processes, building an enterprise transformation capability, driving automation, leading the resolution of difficult-to-solve problems.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation, and competitiveness?

If a GBS is not supporting the core business, it's doing the wrong things. Five examples of impactful support I have seen delivered:

1. Driving experience excellence – making it easier to use the internal processes, increasing the connection of the employees to the company
2. Creating new capabilities to manage master data and analytics – improving data and bringing a high level of brand-focused analytics expertise to support commercial and other teams
3. Supporting launches – connecting all of the GBS services required to help effectively launch new brands, increasing speed of action and effectiveness
4. Building cost effective specialist services – for example, creating and managing digital content, activating digital channels, technical writing
5. Creating service capabilities to fill gaps in the enterprise – for example, managing Fleet, transparency reporting, knowledge, compliance



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next 5 years?

I expect that GBS organizations will do as we did and extend their transformation capabilities beyond the boundaries of GBS. Internal consulting teams provide an excellent opportunity to connect the GBS organization to core business teams, solve business problems, and save significant money in the process.

Once a company has an internal consulting capability, the opportunities to add value increase.



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

One of the most rewarding transformations I've led was helping a global credit card organization design what would become a GBS model from the ground up. We came in on the ground floor and mapped out a 5–7-year journey from domestic finance only to international finance to human resources, purchasing, FP&A, and analytics/automation. The transformation wasn't simply about consolidating work—it established global process ownership, redesigned governance, modernized the service delivery model, and created a multi-year roadmap. It's not often you get to witness the entire journey as a consultant.

What made the project successful was that GBS became an enterprise transformation capability rather than another support function. The organization achieved significant cost savings, improved service quality, and created more value-added services for their internal customers. More importantly, leadership began viewing GBS as a strategic partner that could continuously improve how the business operates, rather than simply reducing cost.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

The biggest lesson is that operating model design matters far more than organizational design. Too many organizations jump to immediately debating reporting lines and locations before agreeing how work should flow across the enterprise or who owns end-to-end outcomes.

The most successful transformations start with business strategy, customer experience and process ownership, then align technology, governance and finally organization & roles (last). When those elements move together, change becomes sustainable rather than another restructuring exercise.

Speaking of change, another important lesson is to align stakeholders at the very beginning of a transformation. Before the kickoff, preferably. When leaders agree early on the vision, priorities, and define what success looks like, it prevents competing agendas from slowing progress later. That alignment makes it much easier to sustain momentum as the transformation moves from strategy into execution.



How is your GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

The leading organizations I work with no longer define GBS by the services it provides—they define it by the value it creates. GBS is evolving from a transaction-processing organization into an enterprise capability responsible for process excellence, data, automation, AI enablement and continuous transformation. I believe service catalogues are still important as you don't want to get caught in the elevator with the CEO and not be able to describe what you do in 20 seconds, but at the end of the day, it's the value in dollars, efficiency, service, top line growth, etc. that gains the attention of the business.

Increasingly, GBS owns cross-functional outcomes rather than individual functional activities. It becomes the place where business, technology and operations come together to redesign how work gets done across the enterprise, making it a strategic partner for growth rather than simply an efficiency engine.



How do you feel GBS models are evolving in the Age of AI?

Slowly, but they will get there. AI represents the biggest opportunity GBS has seen since the shift from decentralized operations to shared services, and if ignored a potential shift back to decentralized operations. The organizations that will benefit most are not those deploying the most AI tools—they are the ones that have already standardized processes, improved data quality and established strong governance. Overcoming change resistance from powerful forces (legal, human resources, business units, controls) will be a much larger hurdle than determining what can be automated with AI and how.

Over the next few years, I expect GBS to become the enterprise's AI orchestration layer, combining people, automation and digital agents into integrated operating models. Our organization charts will represent both, human workers and digital workers. Success will be measured less by headcount reduction and more by faster decision-making, better customer experiences and the ability to continuously adapt business processes as AI capabilities mature.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation and competitiveness?

GBS creates competitive advantage by making the enterprise easier to change. Through standardized processes, global data, and integrated technology, it provides the foundation that enables organizations to scale acquisitions, enter new markets, deploy AI faster and respond more quickly to changing business conditions. Advances in AI will put a spotlight on our existing infrastructure barriers.

Because GBS operates across functions and geographies, it has a unique enterprise-wide perspective. That visibility allows it to identify opportunities, eliminate duplication and accelerate innovation in ways that individual business units often cannot achieve on their own or at scale.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next five years.

The defining trend will be the emergence of GBS as the enterprise orchestration layer for human and digital work. Rather than managing only people and processes, GBS will coordinate employees, automation, AI agents and external partners within integrated end-to-end workflows.

The organizations that succeed won't necessarily have the most advanced AI—they'll have the operating model, governance and process ownership to deploy AI at scale. In many ways, the future competitive advantage of GBS will be measured less by labor arbitrage and more by its ability to orchestrate intelligent work across the enterprise.

Hopefully we will also begin to see the institutionalization of formal Change Enablement COE's within GBS organizations, or anywhere in the organization! We have been complaining for years (decades) that change resistance and the ability to manage it is the number one barrier to GBS progress. Yet, as a consultant that gets a look into numerous organizations, it's rare that we see more than one person in charge of managing enterprise-wide change – quite frequently the answer is no one is formally in charge of managing change.



Stefan Markov

Head of Finance Business
Services, Bulgaria

*"Technology accelerates transformation,
but culture ultimately determines whether
it succeeds."*



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

Over the past few years, I've led the transformation of finance operations from a traditional transaction-processing model to an intelligent, end-to-end service model. One example is our billing transformation programme, where we combined process redesign, automation, and stronger business ownership to simplify complex billing activities and reduce manual intervention. Rather than focusing solely on efficiency, we redesigned the operating model around customer outcomes, data quality, and scalability.

The result was improved productivity, faster issue resolution, better stakeholder experience, and greater capacity to support business growth. Most importantly, the transformation created capacity for our teams to focus on analytics, decision support, and innovation instead of repetitive transactional work, positioning our global finance services organisation as a strategic contributor to business performance.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

The biggest lesson I learned is that transformation succeeds because of people, not technology. Organisations often focus on tools and automation, but sustainable change only happens when employees understand the purpose behind the transformation and see how they can contribute to it.

I learned that investing time in communication, capability building, and stakeholder engagement delivers a greater return than any individual technology implementation. Success comes from bringing people on the journey early, allowing them to challenge assumptions, and empowering them to become owners of the change. When teams feel they matter and can shape the future state, resistance decreases and innovation increases. Technology accelerates transformation, but culture ultimately determines whether it succeeds.



How is your GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

The global model is moving far beyond transactional excellence and service delivery. We are increasingly operating as a strategic enterprise capability that combines process expertise, data, technology, and talent. Instead of being organised around functional silos, we are building end-to-end ownership across critical business processes and leveraging automation and AI to create greater value.

Our teams are spending less time processing transactions and more time providing business insights, managing risks, supporting customer outcomes, and driving transformation initiatives. We are also developing broader skills in analytics, digital technologies, and stakeholder management. The future GBS organisation is not simply a service provider; it is a partner that helps shape enterprise strategy and delivers measurable business outcomes.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation, and competitiveness?

GBS contributes to enterprise growth by creating the operational foundation that allows the business to scale efficiently. By standardising processes, improving data quality, and leveraging automation, GBS enables faster decision-making and reduces organisational complexity. Equally important, GBS provides a platform for innovation because it operates across multiple functions and regions, giving it a unique perspective on best practices and improvement opportunities.

As AI and advanced analytics become more prevalent, GBS is well positioned to identify use cases, accelerate adoption, and convert ideas into measurable outcomes. In a competitive environment, organisations that can rapidly adapt, simplify operations, and unlock insights from their data will outperform others, and GBS increasingly plays a central role in enabling that advantage.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next 5 years?

The defining trend will be the emergence of AI-powered autonomous operations. While automation has already delivered significant efficiency gains, the next generation will move beyond task automation to intelligent systems that make recommendations, orchestrate workflows, and support decision-making in real time.

These capabilities will enable organisations to respond more quickly, operate with greater agility, and unlock new opportunities for innovation and value creation. Organisations that successfully combine AI with strong process expertise, data, and governance will gain a significant competitive advantage and be better positioned to adapt to changing business needs and customer expectations.



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

One program that really stands out was working for a consumer goods company to establish their GBS organization with footprints in Budapest, Buenos Aires and Kuala Lumpur. What really set this project apart was that we jointly deployed a leading GBS target operating model with impressive transformation capabilities.

Key building blocks included a GBS lead with a seat on the client's executive committee, true end-to-end Global Solution Owners reporting into GBS, one of the first "one-stop shop" ServiceNow implementations serving as the engagement layer across GBS, and an organization structured around solution excellence and delivery excellence. These elements turned GBS into a powerful transformation engine.

Although already a few years ago, we still use their set-up as a blueprint for clients who want to make step changes and evolve towards a high-maturity Digital or Agentic GBS organization.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

Having helped establish more than 30 GBS and shared services organizations over the past 20+ years, one of my biggest lessons is that no two clients are the same. Each organization has its own starting point, culture, ambitions and constraints.

Whether the answer is a fully integrated GBS or a landlord model with stronger functional governance and steering, an offshore model that maximizes labor arbitrage in locations such as India, or a digitally enabled model focused on process efficiency, the right design always depends on the client's specific context.

The same applies to scope: some organizations start with classic administrative functions, while others pursue higher-value operational areas such as supply chain, marketing or engineering. For me, this variety is what makes every transformation such a rewarding endeavor.



How is the GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

I see two major shifts shaping the evolution of GBS: a stronger focus on enterprise value creation and the build-up of transformation capabilities. Leading GBS organizations such as Siemens, recently recognized with SSON's World's Best GBS Award, are focusing on value creation. They co-create with their business customers, deliver measurable top- and bottom-line impact, and accelerate enterprise transformation.

Companies such as Philips demonstrate how GBS can become a transformation engine by building in-house capabilities around PMO, digital, analytics, AI and continuous improvement as a service. Both trends are shaping how next generation GBS operate these days.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation, and competitiveness?

Beyond efficiency, mature GBS organizations become innovation platforms: they sit across functions, processes, data and technology, which allows them to identify automation opportunities, deploy Agentic AI, harmonize data and scale digital solutions across the enterprise. This combination of efficiency, agility, transparency and transformation capability makes GBS a real driver of competitiveness — not just a support function.

Additionally, GBS increasingly serve as a talent platform. Many of our clients are leveraging nearshore and offshore hubs of their GBS organizations to hire scarce talent for digital transformation and expert functions.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next 5 years?

Agentic AI will be the defining trend for next-generation GBS over the next five years. For this reason, we have reorganized our practice at EY around both classic and agentic GBS.

Over the last 12+ months, we have realized that GBS as business platform is significantly accelerating the roll-out of agentic AI programs across enterprises. GBS organizations establish agentic CoE, build agentic capabilities and drive agentic AI initiatives within GBS and beyond.

This will fundamentally change the GBS value proposition: from operating standardized services at scale to managing highly automated, data-driven and self-optimizing service ecosystems.



Kamila Grembowicz

Head of Global Business
Solutions, Astellas Pharma

"GBS is no longer viewed as a service provider. It is becoming a strategic capability that helps shape how work gets done across Astellas."



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

Since joining Astellas in 2024, I have led the transformation of our Global Business Solutions organization from a traditional service delivery model into a modern, agile, and strategically aligned enterprise capability. This included consolidating outsourced providers, standardizing global processes and ways of working, and redesigning the operating model around agile principles.

A key focus has been simplifying operations, accelerating our technology and automation roadmap, and building critical capabilities to ensure the organization remains future-ready. We also established Global Capability Centers, providing access to diverse talent across the value chain while co-locating capabilities that were previously fragmented across the organization. Today, GBS and our GCCs are fully integrated into Astellas, helping enable strategic priorities, support sustainable growth, and advance our mission of turning innovative science into value for patients.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

The most important lesson was that transformation is ultimately about people, not processes or technology. Even the best-designed solutions will struggle without effective change management and strong employee engagement.

I learned that frequent, transparent communication is essential. Employees want to understand the purpose of the change, contribute to the journey, and feel they are part of shaping the future rather than simply being informed once decisions have been made.

Another critical success factor is visible executive sponsorship. When leaders consistently reinforce the vision and expected outcomes, it builds confidence and alignment across the organization. Finally, culture plays a decisive role. Sustainable transformation happens when new ways of working become embedded in the organizational mindset, not just implemented as projects.



How is the GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

Our GBS model is evolving far beyond transaction processing and service delivery. While operational excellence remains important, we increasingly act as process owners, innovators, and transformation partners for the enterprise. We also adopted an agile operating model, which is still pretty uncommon these days.

One of our major focus areas is improving employee experience by simplifying processes, reducing bureaucracy, and enabling employees to spend more time on value-adding activities. We lead the design of end-to-end global processes and play a central role in driving digital transformation initiatives, including AI adoption across the organization.

As a result, GBS is no longer viewed as a service provider. It is becoming a strategic capability that helps shape how work gets done across Astellas, driving standardization, continuous improvement, innovation, and business value at an enterprise scale.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation, and competitiveness?

GBS contributes in multiple ways. First, traditional way is to provide efficiencies coming from process standardization, automation, and continuous improvement, including reduction of complexity and freeing up capacity of employees and leaders across all functions.

Beyond efficiency, GBS is a key driver of innovation. We help scale new technologies, including AI and automation, and provide data-driven insights that support better and faster decision-making. There is a lot of research proving that more engaged and satisfied employees deliver more value to the company.

We also contribute directly to the Corporate Strategic Plan by delivering sustainable cost efficiencies and improving operating margins. By combining operational excellence with innovation and strategic partnership, GBS strengthens Astellas' competitiveness and helps create the foundation for long-term growth.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next 5 years?

Without question, the defining trend will be the integration of AI into every aspect of business operations. However, the future of GBS is not simply about automating processes. It is about building an organization where people and AI work together to achieve better outcomes.

Leading GBS organizations will focus on developing new skills and capabilities, enabling employees to leverage AI effectively while strengthening critical thinking, problem-solving, and business partnership capabilities. As routine work becomes increasingly automated, GBS will shift toward delivering strategic insights, predictive analytics, and decision support.

The next generation of GBS will be defined not by the scale of services it delivers, but by its ability to combine technology, data, and human expertise to become a trusted strategic partner for the enterprise.

A portrait of Chris Gunning, a man with grey hair, a beard, and glasses, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue jacket over a light blue shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

NIQ

Chris Gunning

Head of Enablement; Finance Operations (Finance GBS)

"Throughout my career, one belief has remained constant: "Never Stand Still". Whether developing people, improving customer experiences, adopting new technologies or creating enterprise value, the organizations that thrive are those willing to keep evolving."



In brief, tell me about a transformation you have led which has made an impact.

Over nearly 25 years in Shared Services and GBS, what has always energized me most is building teams across cultures and locations, bringing diverse people together around a shared purpose, and seeing them grow into confident, strategic partners to the business. One of the most significant transformations I helped lead was the move from a largely decentralized finance organization to a more mature, globally integrated Finance GBS operation. While some activities had already been consolidated, work remained fragmented across the organization.

The transformation created a much higher level of centralization, supported by a more integrated operating model. However, customer feedback made it clear that centralization alone was not enough. Service quality, consistency and experience still needed to improve. That required stronger governance, controls, performance management and end-to-end ownership. As maturity increased, the focus shifted from stabilization and fixing the basics to an enhanced focus on automation, analytics, continuous improvement, innovation, stakeholder experience and value acceleration.



What was the biggest lesson you learned?

The biggest lesson, reinforced throughout my career, is that transformation is ultimately about people, not process or technology. You cannot impose change on an organization; you have to bring people with you and anchor them to a clear North Star. This requires inspirational leadership: creating belief in the destination, giving people confidence during change and helping them understand the role they can play in shaping the journey. Strong change management, communication, visible leadership and culture are all critical.

When teams are engaged, energized and empowered, they stop seeing themselves simply as transaction processors and begin taking ownership of outcomes, customer experience, continuous improvement and innovation. I firmly believe passionate people drive change and create momentum technology alone cannot generate. When I look back on my career, perhaps the thing I am proudest of is helping develop other talent and then seeing those individuals progress, become leaders and build successful careers of their own. Technology enables transformation, but people sustain it, and developing people is the most lasting legacy a leader can create.



How is the GBS model evolving beyond traditional shared services?

Earlier in my career, we were often obsessed only with building delivery towers, centralizing transaction processing and capturing scale. Those remain important foundations, but I believe they are now table stakes.

Modern GBS must become an enterprise capability platform, bringing together capabilities that can be leveraged across towers, functions and business units. These include analytics, reporting, AI enablement, controls, continuous improvement, innovation, change management and capability development. Cross-functional teams can then connect opportunities across traditional silos and apply expertise where it creates the greatest enterprise value.

At the same time, success is no longer defined only by the traditional two Es of efficiency and effectiveness. “Experience” is the third E, and we must ensure the right level of experience for everyone who interacts with GBS: our customers, our business stakeholders and our employees. For me, a mature GBS model must deliver all three. That is how GBS earns trust and credibility. The future is less about organizational structures and much more about enterprise capability and experience.



How does GBS contribute to enterprise growth, innovation, and competitiveness?

I believe mature GBS contributes through much more than cost reduction. Efficiency and productivity remain important, but the real opportunity is the ability to create value for the enterprise. GBS has a unique position because it connects processes, data, technology, people and stakeholders across the organization, allowing solutions and capabilities to scale. It creates capacity for higher-value work, improves decisions, strengthens controls and provides specialist expertise at scale. I saw the power of this earlier in my career when my Shared Services team expanded beyond traditional back-office processing into commercial operations and revenue-generating activities.

That was real value creation: not only reducing cost, but directly supporting revenue, growth and customer outcomes.

GBS can also incubate innovation by testing ideas, proving value and scaling what works globally. Developing leaders, experts and digital talent creates further competitive advantage. Centralization creates efficiency, but maturity creates value, and that is where I believe GBS becomes genuinely exciting.



Name one trend you think will define next-generation GBS over the next 5 years?

I predict the defining trend will be the shift from process-based to capability-based GBS, enabled and accelerated by generative and agentic AI. AI agents will increasingly orchestrate end-to-end workflows, moving beyond task automation towards agentic operating models, with people providing judgement, governance, exception management and continuous improvement.

This will automate rules-based work and reshape both the workforce and the operating model. For me, however, the differentiator will not simply be who has the most AI. It will be who best combines human and digital capabilities to create value. As GBS changes, our skill sets must change too.

We must become more AI-literate while strengthening judgement, creativity, collaboration, inspirational leadership and change management. Throughout my career, the most successful transformations have always depended on bringing people with you, and I do not believe that will change.

The winners will combine agentic capabilities with mature processes, trusted data, strong controls, responsible governance and engaged, adaptable people. The future of GBS will be powered by technology, but it will still be shaped and led by people.

Hy About Hypatos

Hypatos enables The Agentic GBS with AI agents that execute end-to-end processes across P2P, O2C, H2R, and R2R—making decisions within human-set boundaries and scaling operations without headcount growth.

We put process ownership in the hands of business leaders, elevating organizations from support provider to business partner. Results: 90%+ straight-through processing, 6-9 month ROI, and 20x productivity gains.

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