

THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE: NECESSITY OR FAD?



Business transformation is a prime focus for companies today, to improve agility, drive successful customer engagement, enable innovation and scale, and deal with disruption. In [a recent report by KPMG](#), 93 percent (93%) of surveyed companies are undergoing or have recently completed business transformation initiatives, and those companies experienced, on average, an 8 percent (8%) surge in profit.

While the words “business transformation” are often thrown around loosely, the challenges presented by transformation initiatives are often difficult to overcome. To address those challenges and offer potential solutions, many organizations are establishing corporate Centers of Excellence (CoE) to provide best practices and drive innovation within the organization.

A PreSales Centre of Excellence can focus on identifying best practices from the existing knowledge base, scaling them up for the wider audience and standardizing them to ensure their conformity and consistency of usage. Standardization ensures the uniformity of messaging across the organization, and, as a result, enhances the customer experience. Interestingly, this standardization also acts as a foundation for further innovation which percolates down the organization. A CoE, as a whole, thus acts as a catalyst for organization-wide innovation.

A good example of a PreSales COE is the **“Innovation Community” formed by the** PreSales team at Capgemini. This community focuses on forming extended relationships and collaborative communities, internally and externally, building an ecosystem of experts that can be mobilized quickly in response to client needs. They have a flexible and truly agile engagement process that

does not expect clients to follow the usual rigid sales/presales process that, instead, aligns with the clients' buying process. In this way, this team inspires organizational stakeholders, innovates new business models, and implements new and disruptive technologies.

However, a common perception still prevails that a Center of Excellence is an organization established solely to improve people, process, and technology, based on a desired outcome. Is this idea just another fad, or is a Center of Excellence truly necessary to improve the complex business initiatives within organizations? Is it a value-add, or a buzzword that organizations are responding to out of a need for greater guidance?

What is a Center of Excellence?

According to [Gartner](#), a CoE is *"a physical or virtual center of knowledge concentrating existing expertise and resources in a discipline or capability to attain and sustain world-class performance and value."*

Essentially, the CoE is a discipline that builds expertise and knowledge to drive tangible business results. Furthermore, Centers of Excellence do not just enable—they create and scale innovation. The CoE leverages processes and standards to innovate throughout the **customer engagement lifecycle**.

How does a CoE add to the growth of an enterprise?

When creating a Center of Excellence, one of the prime objectives is to identify best practices across the organization. This allows you to leverage an existing knowledge base, reducing development time and providing a platform for further innovation and scale. The concept behind building a CoE is typically based on a technology, an application, or even a critical process.

Also, when it comes to mindset, leadership, and tools, Sales/PreSales teams either already have the data that can drive experiences that customers expect, or they engage with the potential clients or existing customers to understand and set the right expectations. A CoE helps in making interactions seamless by sharing insights on customers' existing state, future state, industry benchmarks, and offers clarity across the company. This maximizes the customers' lifetime value and builds a strong partnership between the two organizations.

For example, the PreSales Centre of Excellence at BMC facilitates optimal customer engagement. The team focuses on the earliest possible engagement in the sales cycle, starting with strategic account planning that is followed by customer-aligned engagement. This is driven by creating customer-specific deliverables that help clients understand how BMC solutions can provide value-add to their processes and assist them in tackling business challenges. By leveraging engagement excellence, PreSales COE helps identifying best practices, standardizing them and spreading them across the PreSales organization. The team also innovates new ways of addressing challenges faced in the field, and proactively develops solutions (new deliverable types, processes, benchmarks, industry trends, etc.) to be shared with the wider audience.

Conclusion

A Center of Excellence, therefore, is far from just a fad. Instead, it has become a pillar for success. A well-established CoE that is focused on how to consistently innovate and scale enhances the

customer experience throughout the engagement lifecycle. Optimally, a CoE can contribute to a company's brand image and reputation, increasing its competitive advantage.

At the end of the day, even for a CoE, all that matters is the impact on business excellence. Because, as Earl Nightingale would put it, "Excellence always sells."