



## A Beginners Guide

# Business Relationship Management

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Business Relationship Management (BRM) has emerged as one of the most important strategic business concepts for CIOs, CEOs and leaders looking to deliver digital transformation and use technology to gain competitive advantage.

By focusing on two elements that have been grossly underestimated in IT since its inception - communication and people - BRM promises to break down business unit silos, forge collaboration between previously disparate groups and deliver value in every interaction.

BRM is crucial to almost every trend and development within business IT. By humanising IT, BRM will:

- Power digital transformation
- Facilitate progressive approaches such as DevOps, Lean and Agile IT
- Support a dispersed, SIAM IT infrastructure
- Allow IT to finally understand its contribution and converge fully with the business to support strategic objectives.

This guide will explain the concepts, history and value of Business Relationship Management, providing the ideal starting point for IT professionals learning about the capability, and a useful benchmark for Business Relationship Managers and IT leaders to check whether they have the basics in place.

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## Definition of **BRM**

“Business Relationship Management (BRM) comprises a set of competencies that are possessed by an organisational role that delivers capabilities to foster a productive, value-producing relationship between a provider business unit and other organisational business units and the end customers. The BRM role can exist in any business provider units but the most frequent occurrence is within what have traditionally been described as service provider business units such as IT, HR, facilities, legal, etc.”

This guide will focus on BRM within the IT business unit context.

## How IT looks from a **BRM perspective**

By considering technology in a BRM context, IT looks very different:

IT no longer supports the business; IT is the business. IT needs to think and communicate in business terms and should be leading business change and innovation to ensure the continued success and performance of the business. IT must no longer be seen as a service provider but as a fully converged partner with the business, working hand-in-hand with all business units exploiting technology with agility, cost-efficiency and driving the accelerated execution of business outcomes and business performance.

Without a solid BRM capability, the IT organisation will be marginalised, which is not only a risk for the future of the IT organisation, but most critically, IT and business separation is a risk to the very business itself.

This is the ultimate vision of BRM. To get there, this beginners guide describes some of the attributes required for successful BRM.

## Origins of **BRM**

The term BRM was seen in IT Service Management frameworks such as ITIL (IT Infrastructure Library v3) and referenced in ISO20000 for Service Management, but in recent years the Strategic Business Relationship Manager role has emerged. The Business Relationship Manager has responsibilities beyond those originally defined in ITIL v3 and ISO20000.

The ITIL v3 definition of a BRM included tactical characteristics and responsibilities such as:

- Maintain customer relationships
- Identify service requirements
- Sign up customers to standard services

- Customer satisfaction survey
- Handle customer complaints
- Monitor customer complaints

While these responsibilities are valid and still required, they do not satisfy the needs of a business going through digital transformation and rapid exploitation of technology in the “SMART Society” and the digitally-enabled customer.

In short, the above list satisfies a typical tactical service provider BRM definition, but are not the characteristics and responsibilities of IT as a strategic business partner.

## How has it changed since the ITIL v3 definition?

Business Relationship Management now takes a strategic role within business. CIO's, CDO's and senior IT leaders are increasingly appointing dedicated Business Relationship Managers as linchpins ensuring that IT and the rest of the business are in complete lock-step and IT is driving business strategy. This is especially prevalent within the context of the management and servicing of Digital Business Transformation. The role is seen explicitly in many organisations, while less mature organisations often merge the responsibilities across other existing roles. These vary significantly and include roles within the project management office, office of the CIO and senior service delivery roles.

As the role has become more defined, the explicit Business Relationship Manager job title is becoming more common. It carries with it very significant strategic responsibilities alongside the tactical.

BRM research and best practice is increasing as the profession has matured over the past two to three years. In Sept 2013, the Business Relationship Management Institute (BRM Institute) was formed. This North American based non-profit organisation provides a community of practicing BRM's through its membership programme and gives access to the growing BRMiBOK (**BRMI Body of Knowledge**). This emerging database of best practices, operating models and execution frameworks for practicing BRM's provides a wealth of knowledge and is leveraged as the background study material to the formal BRMP (**Business Relationship Management Professional**) and CBRM (Certified Business Relationship

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Business Relationship Management Institute (BRM Institute) is the world's premier membership, professional development, and official certification organisation dedicated to serving the global Business Relationship Management (BRM) community.



Manager) certifications and qualifications that are now available through leading training and certification organisations around the world.

The BRM Institute defines a BRM Maturity Model that provides five levels of relationship maturity. The maturity model spans level 1 “Ad Hoc” through to level 5 “Strategic Partner”.

At level 5 “Strategic Partner” both the business and IT are fully converged with shared goals and the maximisation of business value with the accompanying shared risks and rewards. The BRM at level 5 is critical to business success and performance, bridging all gaps between customer, business unit and IT.

IT Business Relationship Management is placed at the intersection(s) between end customers, business ecosystem, industry and operating environment, business strategy, business units and partners, IT business transformation and IT service operations. The BRM must understand, interpret, guide, advocate to and from each of those constituents and intersecting areas, balancing the needs of the customer and business units against the capabilities and resources of the provider to drive the appropriate and high-value exploitation of technology for business success and increased performance.

## Why is BRM so important now?

As previously stated, IT is no longer a service provider to the business; IT is the business.

A number of forces have contributed to the rise of strategic Business Relationship Management, these include:

- 1.** The need to extract increasing business value from IT service management standards and best practice frameworks that have improved IT operations and service delivery
- 2.** The need to improve the strategic alignment between business and the IT service provider. The traditional service provider must shift from order taker to strategic partner to offer multi-supplier services with high levels of availability, performance and cost management while delivering increased business agility and innovation.
- 3.** Progression from business-provider, to full convergence with the business. This means IT leading a Digital Business Transformation strategy which exploits the digitisation of everything, our technology savvy society and serves end customers.
- 4.** Customer experience expectations from an increasingly digitised society and customer base.
- 5.** Changing business operating models that have/are arising from the Internet of Things. This means responding to an increasingly connected world where



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advances in machine intelligence, predictive analytics and customer experience are innovating business operating models, from emerging start-ups and incumbents who have successfully adapted to the digital customer economy.

IT must lead digital business transformation from a position of strategic partner. BRM is the IT enabler of this transformation through the adoption of strategic business maturity characteristics. Like any maturity, this is a journey for the IT business unit, but that journey is rapidly accelerated with the introduction and deployment of strategic Business Relationship Management, with the appropriate roles possessing the correct strategic competencies to execute the capabilities that achieve true IT-business partnership.

## What does an effective **Business Relationship Manager** look like?

A competent IT Business Relationship Manager is essential for driving digital business transformation. These are the competencies required of them:

**Business IQ.** The strategic BRM must understand the industry, its ecosystem, its business model, strategy, business processes and operations. The BRM must also understand the organisation structure, roles, politics and culture, and applies the disciplines of business value management throughout all activities, products, services and initiatives.

**Domain knowledge.** The strategic BRM has knowledge and skills from IT, understands emerging technologies, service management, technology suppliers and service delivery capabilities.

**Strategic partnering.** The strategic BRM shapes the business demand for technologies to deliver optimal value from available capabilities and resources, while contributing to business and provider strategic thinking and leadership activities. The strategic BRM will be connecting, coordinating and brokering products and services linked to business objectives while stimulating high-value business initiatives.

**Portfolio management.** The strategic BRM conceives, presents, classifies, balances and recommends investment options aligned to business strategy through knowing and articulating the business value and costs of provider products and services, encouraging fact-based funding decisions from key stakeholders.



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**Business Transition Management.** The strategic BRM will understand, champion and educate the value of coordinated change and business transition management. They will advocate business value while anticipating impact and resistance in order to build commitment within the limits of available capacity and resources.

**Powerful Communications.** The strategic BRM listens, re-frames, influences and persuades to make effective business initiative cases, anticipating objections and resistance to change, from building strong, trusting and rewarding relationships, while also conveying urgency with business or provider partners when needed.

With IT providing these competencies and the accompanying capabilities, business can embrace IT as a true strategic business partner and work in complete convergence to continually succeed within the digital world.

Our mission at Sollertis is to help IT lead the business. Our solutions allow organisations to realise IT-business convergence and digital transformation, combining best-of-breed IT service management with cutting-edge Business Relationship Management (BRM) tools.

If you want to know more about BRM, digital transformation and convergence, please connect us: +44 (0) 1793 441 431.

## Any Questions?

We operate a very open and transparent organisation. If you have any questions about this paper, please don't hesitate to contact us



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