

BRIDGING THE GAP: ALIGNING IT AND THE BUSINESS



In most organizations, information isn't the problem, alignment is. IT sits on a wealth of data, tools, and systems, while Operations is under pressure to move faster, make smarter decisions, and scale efficiently. But when these two functions aren't working from the same playbook, even the best data can fall short of delivering business value.

As companies pour resources into big data and AI, the real differentiator isn't how much information they collect but how well they turn that information into action. That requires more than analytics. It requires a mature, unified framework that connects IT's stewardship of data with the Business's need for timely, reliable insights.

The top benefits of Big Data are better strategic decisions (69%), improvements in operational processes (54%), and a better understanding of customers (52%). [\(BARC\)](#)

The organizations that can quantify their gains from analyzing Big Data report an average 8% revenue boost and 10% cost reduction. [\(BARC\)](#)

Businesses that invest in data and analytics report a profitability or performance increase of at least 11%. [\(KPMG Global Tech Report 2023\)](#).

54% of organizations with advanced data and analytics maturity have increased their revenue, and another 44% have achieved a competitive advantage. [\(WNS\)](#)

When organizations reach a high level of information maturity, everything accelerates, communication becomes clearer, resources are used more effectively, priorities are aligned, and teams can innovate without friction. However, when information maturity is low, familiar symptoms appear. These aren't just operational annoyances; they represent real cultural, organizational, and customer impact.

Delayed Time to Insights: It takes too much time to find information, organize it, and use it.

Mismanaged Metrics: Inconsistency with owning, tracking, and reviewing measures.

Waste of IT Resources: Resources are not optimally used.

Lack of Direction: Unclear on what actual analytical maturity looks like.

Data Instability: Getting different numbers, no single source of truth.

Ad hoc vs. Planned Work: Working on things bit by bit, tasks are not linked, feels like putting out fires.

Lack of Expansion: Inability to answer deeper questions, maintaining but not scaling or expanding work.

Tension most often surfaces at the intersection of IT and the Business. IT owns the information and Operations needs it. But without shared methods, shared visibility, and shared expectations, both sides end up frustrated, reactive, and out of sync.

This paper outlines how to bridge that gap. Drawing from our work with IT teams, data analysts, and operational leaders, we'll lay out what truly drives information maturity and how organizations can get there. The path forward centers on two essentials: visibility and a common method. In the following pages, we'll break down what's causing the disconnect and offer five actionable solutions to help your teams work together, communicate clearly, innovate confidently, and scale with intention.

What is Information Maturity?

The scope of data and business intelligence is rapidly changing. The demand for information, data, and analytics feels like it has shifted into overdrive and everyone wants access immediately. For good reason, it is the fuel that will propel their business to new heights. According to McKinsey Global Institute, “Data-driven organizations are 23 times more likely to acquire customers, six times as likely to retain customers, and 19 times as likely to be profitable as a result.” Arming decision makers with crisp, clean analytics that tell a compelling story, highlight exceptions, and monitor ongoing progress is crucial to ensuring your business is on the right track.

There are many different areas of an organization included in information maturity. At Work Excellence, we define these as culture, legal/compliance, security, applications, tech stack, data, analytics, automation, method. Each of these areas is typically managed by IT and another department in the Business whether that is Legal, HR, or Operations. This overlapping management can often lead to silos and sets the scene for some of the challenges we are seeing today. In an ideal world, each of the various systems utilized by an organization provide clean, structured data that is ready to use on-demand to gain insights into the health and effectiveness of all business functions.



In reality, the multitude of systems and applications are disconnected and getting data out of them is often manual and time intensive. Furthermore, once you can get your hands on the unstructured data there is the time it takes to actually build and maintain Business Intelligence solutions. You have a vision or a goal, you want to take your organization from point A to point B. So, how do you get there?

The Business & IT

Traditionally, the process of getting data and building reports from an enterprises system was under the sole ownership of IT. The Business would request a certain data set with details of the request outlined. After a period of time IT would deliver and the Business would consume the output. The Business had to accept whatever the output was because they did not possess the data skills or the nuanced technical knowledge of these systems and applications required to build reports.

In recent years as data and accessibility has evolved and shifted the data and analytics paradigm to a self-service model. This has granted business users access to the underlying data to build their own reports. This shift bypasses the checks and balances IT has put in place to ensure that critical systems continue to function with the appropriate ongoing support. As you can imagine, and likely experience in your own organization, this complicates the process and strains the relationship between IT and the Business.

The problems that are cropping up as a result of the insatiable appetite for data are really two sides of the same coin, with the ultimate goal of growing and maintaining a profitable business. On one side of the coin, you have the Business who wants to move fast to get to insights that influence critical decisions. The Business believes that since they pay for IT, IT should, but often does not, deliver at the speed that the Business wants. Additionally, the Business feels IT does not see or understand the value of business led initiatives and that IT talks down to the Business with indecipherable technical language.

On the other side you have IT, who wants to build and maintain modern systems that ensure sustainability. To their frustrations, they have a partner in the Business that struggles with building a cohesive set of requirements and is not willing to wait the time it takes to build a sustainable solution. They believe that the Business doesn't consider what is important to IT and that they demand high levels of output/production with sub-optimal and perpetually tapped out resources.

An Analogy: The Roman Road

Let's think about this undertaking in terms of a well-known historical event, the building of the Roman Roads. When thinking about the vastness of the Roman Empire, the roads allowed the quick exchange of information and goods between different areas of the empire, enabling aspects of its growth and success. The basis of their accomplishment was due to several key elements such as the overall purpose of these roads, the manner of construction, materials, and technique used.

With the construction of these roads, there was a need, a willingness to meet the need, and a clear direction defining how, where, and who was completing this work. There were specific delegated teams such as surveying, building, engineering. There were scientific and engineering principles used to inform material selection. Finally, this common structure was established and carried over, but it was flexible enough to accommodate any adjustments such as with variations in material, elevation, or location.

Many of these concepts can be applied to the business world as well. We need a clear direction, specialized teams, guiding principles, and a common structure to help us move forward and accomplish work. Theoretically, it makes sense but in execution it's not always quite so straightforward.

So, how do we build a better relationship and bridge the gap between these two partners that are both essential and critical to the ongoing success of an organization? The answer lies in a coordinated work methodology between IT & the Business in order to meet the ever-evolving demands of data and Business Intelligence.

Consider each of the solutions that will be presented in this paper relating to each of the successful elements of Roman Road building. The Data Maturity Map acts as a surveying tool the Work System functions as the overall plans and process for building, the Interval Map lays out the future plans, the Measurement Clarity Framework defines the bill of materials, and The Meeting COMPASS® serves as project management.

A Structured Work Method & Greater Visibility

A coordinated Work Methodology that engages every brain in the room by utilizing same page thinking and making work visible is the key to building a bridge between IT and the Business. This entails building comprehensive requirements and setting expectations through diligent and purposeful communication at key points in the value chain.

At Work Excellence, we look to provide the structure and elements so you can build your “Roman Road” bridging the gap between IT and the Business and moving your organization forward. We have the method that provides you with foundational principles and a structure to build out all of these key components of work. We don’t build the road for you but provide the structure you need to build the best road for where you are trying to go with the resources you have. We have used all of these solutions we will describe, both within our own organization and with our clients. In the next section we will take a deep look at each our recommendations and provide actionable solutions, tried and true, to bridge the gap between IT and the Business.

Solution Overview: A Structured Approach to IT & Business Collaboration

Creating alignment between IT and Business teams requires a structured yet flexible approach that standardizes communication while allowing room for adaptation based on organizational needs. The goal is not to impose rigid methods but to introduce common visual structures that help both sides communicate more effectively. These solutions are not the only way to bridge the gap, but they are the most effective and practical methods we have found.

The need for this framework became clear after analyzing various teams and projects across IT and operations. A lack of standardized interactions and structured processes led to inefficiencies and miscommunication. When fully implemented, these solutions create a structured system ensuring visibility, accountability, and progress in IT-Business collaboration.

These are the **five key solutions** implemented:

Work System: *What is our standard system for building roads?*

The Work System establishes a standardized, but flexible process for analytics development, deployment, and collaboration between IT and Business teams. This framework ensures that necessary checkpoints are in place, reducing missteps and delays. By continuously evaluating and improving the system, organizations can stabilize and enhance their workflows. This process is collaborative. Teams work together to build their systems, identify the current state, and generate opportunities for improvement.

Data Maturity Map: *What is the current landscape of roads?*

The Data Maturity Map evaluates existing systems beyond immediate business requests, identifying critical areas for improvement and establishing a timeline for data maturity advancements. This ensures leadership and broader teams have clarity on ongoing efforts.

Interval Map: *What are the big roads we need to build?*

The Interval Map is a visual tool that maps out when key initiatives will begin, creating a long-term plan for both IT and Business teams. This allows for better resource planning and clearer communication of priorities.

Measurement Clarity Framework: *What is needed to build these roads?*

This framework defines the data the business needs, and outlines steps for improving data quality to meet business objectives. This helps eliminate ambiguity and sets realistic expectations. This enables a high-quality requirement gathering process by providing a standard process teams can expand upon. This framework provides a very detailed and collaborative approach for defining the business request.

COMPASS Meeting Framework: *How do we manage the building of these roads?*

This approach to meetings provides the structure that ensures discussions are effective, progress is measurable, and key stakeholders, whether in the meeting or not, gain clear visibility into project status.

By implementing these solutions, organizations can create a structured, collaborative approach that bridges the gap between IT and Business teams. Standardizing communication, setting clear expectations, and using visual tools for alignment will ultimately lead to faster, more effective decision-making and a stronger partnership between IT and the Business. In the next pages, we will provide more detail on the implementation and application of each solution.

Bridging the Gap: Building a Collaborative Framework for IT & Business A Practical Approach to Standardized Solutions

Across our work with both Business and IT teams, we implemented a structured, standardized approach that provides clarity, accountability, and improved collaboration. Each solution is designed to enhance communication, align expectations, and drive meaningful results.

Work System: The first solution is the Work System, a clearly defined and agreed-upon process for each phase of work. Consider the process for road building. This may generally include steps such as surveying the area, designing the road, determining what materials are needed, and completing construction. It is crucial to know what the steps are and the order so that the work can move forward efficiently.

The Work System establishes structured phases and checkpoints to ensure every step in the development process was addressed, eliminating gaps in expectations and execution. Clearly defining this information provides visibility in the process. Teams are able to see how work is being done and identify areas of improvement. The Work System provided a structured space for open discussions on refining processes, adding to the collective knowledge base, and improving efficiency over time. From there, Business and IT teams gained a shared understanding of what to expect throughout the development cycle.

Data Maturity Map: The Data Maturity Map helps organizations understand the current state of their data systems and outlines the journey toward improved data maturity. Here, our road builders may take a look at the broader picture. How are we doing with maintaining current roads? What is working or not working when it comes to our broader systems? What is important to focus on moving forward?

Using this map provides a high-level assessment of data structure and maturity across different system, enabling discussions around the benefits, costs, and challenges of advancing data maturity, ensuring strategic investments are aligned with business needs. By clearly mapping out our initiatives, especially IT-driven initiatives into business-friendly language, it becomes easier to align priorities and secure necessary resources.

This tool provides directional clarity for both IT and Business teams, ensuring all stakeholders understand where the organization is headed and how data maturity improvements fit into broader business goals.

Interval Map: The Interval Map serves as a high-level planning tool. A city may establish all of their major road building projects over the next several months or projects they may need improved roads for, in order to see the long-term picture and appropriately allocate resources in the current state.

The interval map defines the timeframes in which key initiatives will begin and be completed. This structured visual provides:

- **Transparency on Upcoming Work:** Leaders can clearly see the pipeline of projects by department, function, or priority.
- **Focused Conversations on Resources & Timelines:** With a shared understanding of when projects will take place, teams can better allocate resources and manage expectations.
- **A Clearer Strategic Roadmap:** By documenting key initiatives in a structured format, leadership can more effectively communicate workload and priorities.

Measurement Clarity Framework: In this step of road building, the bill of materials is established. The Measurement Clarity Framework ensures IT and Business teams have a shared understanding of the data requirements for analytics and reporting solutions. This framework breaks down key components into three critical elements:

- **Equations:** Clearly defined business calculations that guide the overall solution requirements.
- **Dimensions:** Attributes of the data that specify granularity and help IT identify the relevant systems and teams needed.
- **Facts:** The transactions or events (e.g., sales dollars, number of orders) that define the volume and scope of data processing

By aligning on and clearly determining each of these elements, the Measurement Clarity Framework helps both IT and Business stakeholders gain a deeper understanding of solution needs, eliminating ambiguity and ensuring solutions are built correctly the first time.

The Meeting Compass®: Every project from road building to onboarding requires some form of oversight or management. The COMPASS Meeting Framework is implemented to address inefficiencies in meetings, ensuring discussions drive progress, accountability, and results.

- **Defined Roles & Structure:** Meetings follow a clear format, with assigned responsibilities for action items, decisions, and follow-ups.
- **Momentum & Accountability:** Regular check-ins ensure work stays on track, reducing frustration caused by projects stalling or going off course.
- **Consistently Productive Meetings:** Meetings are structured to be action-oriented, eliminating unnecessary discussions and ensuring time is spent effectively.

Without structured meetings, teams often felt like they were revisiting the same issues without resolution. After implementing the COMPASS structure, meetings become more focused, timelines are met more consistently, and team members report higher satisfaction with the results. The built-in feedback loop allows teams to continuously improve their meeting structure, ensuring ongoing effectiveness.

Each of these solutions plays a critical role in fostering better collaboration between IT and Business teams. By implementing standardized processes, clearly defining data needs, aligning on priorities, and improving meeting efficiency, organizations gain clarity on expectations within and between teams, stronger commitment and accountability, improved decision making through better data clarity, and a structured, sustainable approach to improvement.

These solutions aren't about adding unnecessary complexity. They are about removing barriers, creating alignment, and ensuring IT and Business teams can work together more effectively. With a structured framework in place, organizations can achieve faster, more meaningful results while building stronger partnerships across teams.

Benefits & Advantages: Strengthening Collaboration Between IT & Business

The implementation of a structured work system and standardized processes creates significant benefits for both IT and Business teams. By establishing clarity, accountability, and shared expectations, organizations can reduce inefficiencies, improve decision-making, and accelerate project delivery. These solutions streamline workflows and foster better collaboration, ensuring IT and Business teams work toward common goals in a way that is transparent and productive. Now that we have established with more clarity what each of the solutions are, let's look at some key benefits of each aspect of this framework.

Key Benefits of the Framework

1. Work System

A well-defined Work System simplifies the analytics development lifecycle for both IT and Business users, resulting in higher-value products delivered in less time.

- **Clarity & Alignment:** A collaboratively built, visual structure ensures that IT and Business teams align on language, expectations, and processes.
- **Improved Accountability:** Now there is a clear standard for development phases, helping to set realistic expectations and increase accountability for commitments on both sides.
- **Prioritized Improvements:** Teams can evaluate different value streams (high, medium, low priority) and assess effort levels, allowing them to focus improvement efforts where they will have the greatest impact.

2. Data Maturity Map

A Data Maturity Map provides a visual representation of an organization's current data landscape, making it easier to communicate data priorities to non-technical leadership

- **Clear State of Data Systems:** Displays where the organization currently stands and what's needed to advance data maturity.
- **Gap Identification & Prioritization:** Quickly highlights missing capabilities and enables teams to prioritize work based on business value.
- **Supports Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Reduces time spent gathering information and provides leaders with the insights needed to make informed choices.
- **Short-Term vs. Long-Term Value:** When combined with the Measurement Clarity Framework, decision makers can evaluate whether a quick fix or a long-term sustainable solution is the best approach.

3. Interval Map

The Interval Map serves as a visual planning tool, similar to a Gantt chart, that maps out future key improvement work.

- **Standardized Planning Process:** Helps teams apply structured thinking to prioritize initiatives and justify decisions.
- **Visibility into Future Work:** Ensures organizations can see what's ahead and strategically allocate resources.

4. Measurement Clarity Framework

The Measurement Clarity Framework creates a shared understanding of what needs to be measured, where the data comes from, and how it should be structured for analysis.

- **Collaborative Approach:** IT and Business teams build this framework together, ensuring alignment and shared ownership.
- **Defined Inputs & Outputs:** Business teams clarify the data they need, while IT maps those needs to existing systems.
- **Educates Both Sides:** The process helps the Business understand the nuances of IT while giving IT better insight into business priorities and reporting requirements.
- **Agreed-Upon Language & Metrics:** Standardizing measurement definitions eliminates miscommunication and ensures consistency across teams.

5. The Meeting Compass®

The Meeting Compass® provides a structured framework for meetings, ensuring discussions are productive and results driven.

- **Efficiency & Focus:** Meetings are designed to be concise and to the point, eliminating unnecessary discussions.
- **Action & Accountability:** Every meeting has a clear purpose, and decisions are documented to drive follow-through.
- **Eliminates Meeting Overload:** Helps teams establish the necessity of meetings and cut out those that don't provide value.

Bringing It All Together

Each of these solutions plays a vital role in strengthening collaboration between IT and Business teams. By implementing structured processes and clear visual frameworks, organizations gain:

- **Better alignment between teams**
- **Stronger accountability and commitment to timelines**
- **Improved decision-making with clearer data insights**
- **A more effective and streamlined analytics development process**
- **Meetings that drive progress rather than slow it down**

By working together within a clear, standardized framework, IT and Business teams can deliver meaningful results faster and more efficiently.

Implementation & Execution Plan: A Practical Approach to IT & Business Collaboration

Successful implementation of this framework follows a structured approach, but every organization is at a different stage in its journey. While we recommend rolling out the full suite of solutions in the order below, the most effective approach is to start with the solution that addresses your most pressing need and builds the most immediate value.

- **Work System** – Develop a standardized system for collaboration and workflow between IT and business teams.
- **Data Maturity Map** – Define your current state and identify opportunities for data improvement.
- **Interval Map** – Plan and visualize when key initiatives will take place, creating a forward-looking roadmap.
- **Measurement Clarity Framework** – Clearly define measurement requirements and create an analytical data dictionary.
- **COMPASS Meeting Framework** – Establish structured meetings that drive progress and prevent unnecessary delays.

Building a Collaborative Work System

Implementing a structured Work System starts by bringing teams together to establish a shared process. The key steps include:

- **Defining the high-level process** – Setting up clear workflows that enhance visibility and collaboration.
- **Assessing process effectiveness** – Identifying opportunities for improvement and creating alignment on the current state.
- **Addressing challenges through action plans** – Turning discussions into actionable steps to improve efficiency and teamwork.

By capturing opportunities within the process, teams can align their actions toward a common purpose, leading to improved efficiency, problem-solving, and greater cohesion.

Step-by-Step Work System Implementation:

- a.** Name the work system and identify its owner.
- b.** Record the last updated date for tracking progress.
- c.** Define start and end gates to the total process.
- d.** Outline major phases and their purposes.
- e.** Break down each phase into detailed work steps.
- f.** Identify work types that flow through this work system and rate process effectiveness.
- g.** Rate the work system with stakeholders and capture improvement opportunities.
- h.** Capture improvement opportunities for continuous refinement.

Planning: Data Maturity Map

Understanding data maturity is essential for strategic decision-making. The Data Maturity Map provides a clear picture of an organization and its data landscape, highlighting gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Steps for Implementation:

- a.** Identify relevant data systems and topics.
- b.** Assess the maturity level of data in each system.
- c.** Visualize the current state and plot progress.
- d.** Share findings with leadership to drive alignment.
- e.** Identify high value improvement initiatives.
- f.** Continuously update the map to track improvements over time.

Planning & Execution: Interval Map

The Interval Map is a visual planning tool that helps teams prioritize and sequence their improvement work. This structured approach ensures alignment across teams and realistic expectations for delivery

Steps for Implementation:

- a.** Identify key initiatives and backlog improvement work.
- b.** Define the planning horizon (e.g., next two years broken into quarters).
- c.** Assign expected start and end intervals for projects.
- d.** Continuously update the map to maintain a forward-looking view.

Measurement Clarity Framework: Clarifying Measurement & Data Needs

One of the biggest challenges teams face is the lack of clarity around measurement requirements. Without a structured approach, solutions can be built on incomplete or incorrect data, leading to misalignment. The Measurement Clarity Framework helps teams define their needs effectively:

- **Brainstorming with business teams** – Identify what needs to be measured and determine relevant data dimensions.
- **Breaking down measures to the lowest level of granularity** – Understanding how different data points relate to each other.
- **Locating data sources** – Identifying where the required dimensions and facts exist.
- **Building and executing a data collection plan** – Ensuring data is gathered effectively for analysis.
- **Creating a shared knowledge base** – Updating the framework to ensure all users have access to a clear reference point.

Structured Meetings for Effective Collaboration

Meetings are often seen as a necessary evil, but with the right structure, they can become a powerful tool for driving progress. The COMPASS Meeting Framework was designed to create clear, action-driven discussions while maintaining flexibility for creativity and collaboration.

C Core purpose

O Outcomes

M Members and roles

P Prep

A Agenda

S Safety wellbeing

S Success

Key Elements of Effective Meetings:

- **Structured agendas** – Ensuring discussions stay on track.
- **Clearly defined roles** – Assigning responsibilities for better accountability.
- **Action items with due dates** – Turning conversations into tangible outcomes.
- **Decision tracking** – Keeping records of key agreements.
- **A parking lot for off-topic ideas** – Preventing distractions while capturing important thoughts.
- **Feedback loops** – Allowing continuous improvement of meeting efficiency.

Moving Forward

Implementing these solutions provides a structured approach to bridge the gap between IT and Business teams. By adopting a standardized workflow, defining clear measurement criteria, planning with data maturity and interval mapping, and refining meetings with COMPASS, organizations can achieve greater alignment, efficiency, and long term success.

These tools are not for the purpose of adding bureaucracy or restricting creativity, but they are designed to provide enough structure to create clarity, direction, and momentum. With this approach, teams can spend less time navigating miscommunications and more time delivering meaningful results.

Conclusion / Call to Action

Big data remains a vast and complex topic, and this paper has explored how organizations can unlock its full value. Research consistently shows that when companies align their technology capabilities with their business operations, they experience stronger decision making, deeper customer insights, improved operational efficiency, cost savings, and better regulatory compliance.

Throughout this paper, we emphasized that true scalability, both effective and sustainable, depends on closing the gap between IT and the Business. Misalignment creates predictable barriers: operational silos, conflicting priorities, ineffective use of resources, and disconnected processes that limit an organization's ability to respond and adapt.

The key takeaway is clear: a better path forward exists, but it requires a shared method and shared visibility. When IT and Business Operations adopt a common structure for how work is understood, planned, and executed, they gain the clarity and cohesion needed to navigate complexity together, not as separate functions but as a unified system.

We outlined five solutions, each grounded in the Work Excellence Method, designed to strengthen alignment between IT and Business Operations. These solutions create the foundation organizations need to work as one, build scalable systems, and fully leverage data and technology to drive growth.

1. Work System – Establishes a standardized process for analytics development, deployment, and collaboration between IT and Business teams.

2. Measurement Clarity Framework – Defines the data the business needs, and outlines steps for improving data quality to meet business objectives.

3. Data Maturity Map – Evaluates existing systems beyond immediate business requests, identifying critical areas for improvement and establishing a timeline for data maturity advancements.

4. COMPASS Meeting Framework – A structured approach to meetings that ensures discussions are effective, progress is measurable, and everyone has clear visibility into project status.

5. Interval Map – A visual tool that maps out when key initiatives will begin, creating a long-term plan for both IT and Business teams.