A STADIUM BUILT FOR FINANCE GAMEPLAY

Abstract

Ansar Islam, the Head of Finance Operations at a leading European sportswear manufacturer, was mandated to tackle the extensive financial process fragmentation across the company's global network of sales outlets and supplier tie-ups. This case delves into how Ansar set up a Global Capability Centre (GCC) with expert help from Infosys BPM, and experienced peak performance in the finance game.

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The need to work out the flab

Ansar Islam is the Head of Global Business Services (GBS) & Finance Operations at a leading European sportswear manufacturer. The company has a global sales network of close to 3000 outlet stores, and complex supplier partnerships extending across several countries in Europe, the Americas, and Asia. However, over years of rapid growth, the company's financial operations had struggled to keep pace due to the various regions following their own individualized processes.

The fragmentation had created inconsistencies in the organization's financial data, increasing the cost to serve, and limiting effective control, and a radical overhaul was not only much needed but also very overdue. And so, the company's leadership had handed down Ansar a strategic mandate to consolidate the fragmented, "in country" finance processes into a unified global operating model. As Ansar pondered the massive scope of transformation needed, he decided that the best way to tackle the challenge would be through establishing a global capability centre (GCC). However, this was easier said than done. The new GCC capability would need to be set up from scratch, in the right location, with the right people, and using the right technology to host multi-tower finance operations.

The more Ansar thought about the expansive effort, he realized that he needed to engage an external transformation partner who could deliver end-to-end: from location analysis and facilities set up, to IT infrastructure deployment, staff recruitment, process transition, and finally the digitalisation of operations for sustained value. And so, Ansar sent out a global RFP seeking a service provider with experience and expertise in setting up a GCC from scratch for large global MNC's. After an exhaustive search, Ansar finally chose Infosys BPM, to help drive the change based on its long track record of success with similar endeavours.

A marathon effort

Infosys BPM deputed veteran transformation Ketki Pathak to lead the effort and over a series of meetings, Ansar briefed her on the challenges and his vision for the new GCC. Then, kicking off the game, Ketki directed her team to first diagnose the extent of fragmentation.

They soon reported back on the wide variety of policies, tools, and process maturities that the company's financial operations were heavily saddled with, and which had created control gaps and inefficiencies, and constrained scale. They had also studied the existing platforms

being used for various processes such as e-invoicing, cash applications and reconciliations, which would help avoid leakages and duplicate payments while setting up the GCC.

Approach summary

- Deep dive into existing processes and platforms
- Defining the GCC blueprint
- Detailing service catalog and performance regime
- Building out GCC "shell"
- Recruiting talent
- Standardizing processes

Soon after, Ketki and her team began working closely with Ansar's team to standardize the diverse processes into a global operating model. Together, they defined the GCC blueprint with respect to its people, process, and technology and also detailed out its service catalogue, service level agreements (SLAs), and key performance indicators (KPIs).

Next, to set up the GCC, Ketki recommended first moving the financial planning and analysis (FP&A) scope from Europe to Chennai, India as a spearhead

initiative. With Ansar approving the plan, the team focused on building out the GCC "shell". They analysed potential locations for the best fit, and later helped Ansar set up the new facility, with floor branding and putting up the needed IT infrastructure and access controls.

Ansar had been concerned about the risk of loss of in-house talent and knowledge during the transition to the GCC. Ketki too understood that speed to hire at scale was paramount. So, in the third phase, her team supported Ansar's team through

the full cycle of recruitment into the GCC. They carried out employer branding and marketing activities to attract the right talent, created job descriptions, sourced skilled candidates, verified their backgrounds, released offer letters, and rapidly onboarded them. And soon, the GCC's various finance towers including FP&A, P2P, O2C, R2R, and RPA were staffed by a skilled team of 150 finance professionals sourced both internally from within the company's departments as well as externally.

Ketki and her team then began unifying the in-country variations into standardized processes. Later, recognizing the need to accelerate scale they hired an additional 150 staff and began work on digitally transforming the operations. To reduce adoption friction and realize sustainable value from the GCC, they stood up an Automation CoE to implement robotic process automation (RPA). Also, to

streamline adoption of the new ways of doing things and to sustain value, the team deployed Generative AI for language neutralization and leveraged value from platforms that were already being used across various regions.
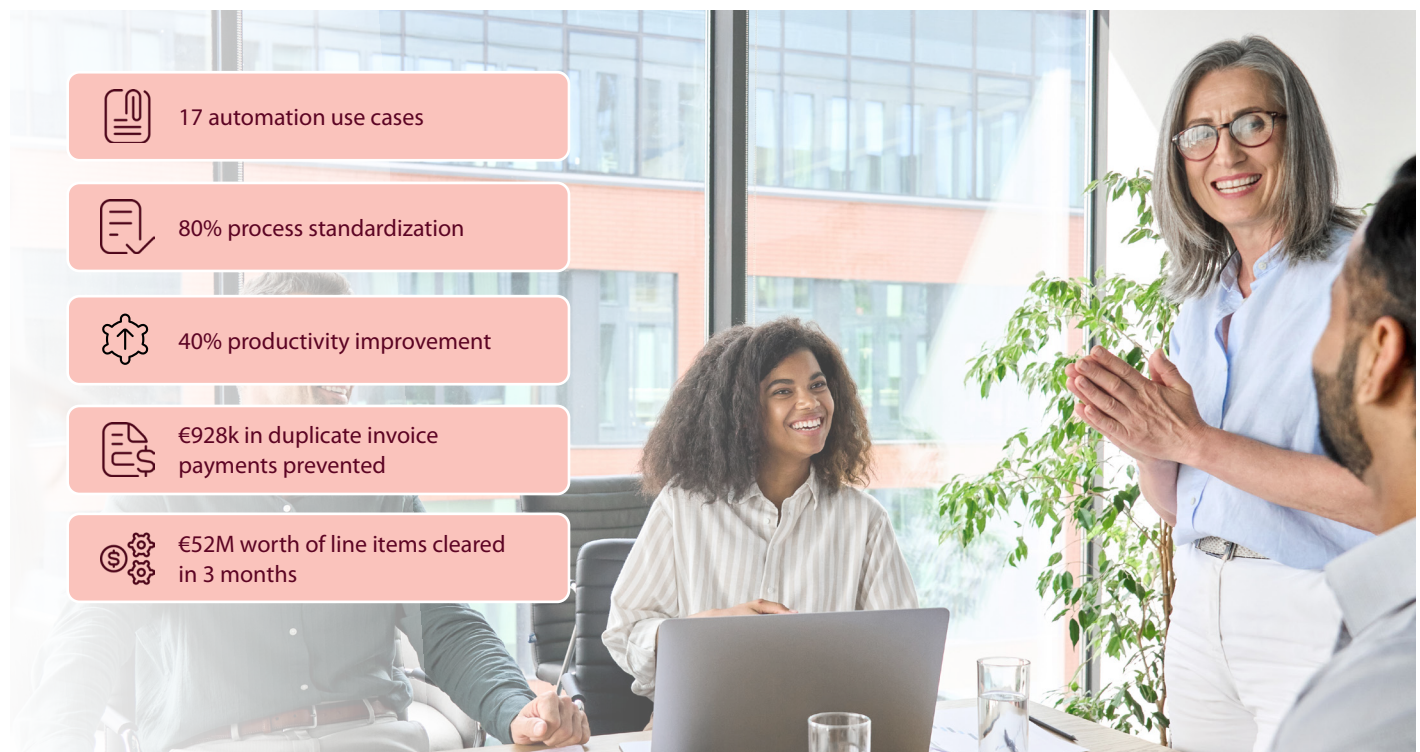
Once these transformations were in place, Ketki's team shifted gears to optimize the GCC's operations further. They supported

IT migrations and built dashboards to run the GCC efficiently. Further, to reduce change fatigue and loss of local control as the company's in-country teams transitioned to the new global operating model, Ketki ensured rigorous process documentation and instituted audits and controls, thereby mitigating the change management risks.

The trophies beyond the finish line

Almost from the get-go, the GCC operated at a high maturity with 17 automation use cases from the automation CoE. Seven involved bots and the other 10 were tactical implementations across the invoice to cash (I2C) and record to report (R2R) processes. Ansar was also impressed with the audits, controls, and reporting dashboards that Ketki had implemented that enabled an extremely transparent governance mechanism.

Key benefits

- 17 automation use cases
- 80% process standardization
- 40% productivity improvement
- €928k in duplicate invoice payments prevented
- €52M worth of line items cleared in 3 months

With its streamlined performance, the GCC soon ironed out the many kinks in the company's financial operations. By the end of the transition, Ketki and her team had carried out over 80% standardization across processes, driving consistency and scale, delighting Ansar with a near 40% productivity improvement.

There were other great outcomes too. Through better controls in cash operations, the team prevented €928k in duplicate invoice payments, and automation helped clearing out €52M worth of pending line items in just over 3 months. Also, over €22M was reconciled on time, reducing the risk of revenue

leakage. With the GCC operating at near peak performance, internal customer experience soared and NPS metrics were consistently above 70 across services, indicating outstanding user satisfaction and stakeholder advocacy.

The team's leveraging of existing platforms also delivered good dividends. The GCC carried out over 50% of electronic invoicing through Tradeshift, over 75% of auto cash application via HighRadius, and also achieved a ~3-day close leveraging Trintech. All these platforms had already been licensed by the company for several regions prior to the GCC's setup.

Needless to say, the partnership between the sportswear manufacturer and Infosys BPM in setting up the GCC from scratch has been a race well run. Yet, Ketki and Ansar are gearing up for even more spirited performances ahead. Their "what's next" roadmap for the future of the GCC includes expanding its service catalogue and executing a phased transition from existing GBS centres to a new Global Hub. On the operations front, they want to experiment with deploying "two models within the same GCC" and also explore employee transfer constructs. With the two having established solid teamwork, it looks like new game records will be set!

Names have been altered to preserve the identities of the people involved.

For more information, contact infosysbpm@infosys.com

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