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The Why & How of C-Suite Alignment

*Seizing the opportunity to serve as thought
partners and transformation leaders*

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“HOW DO WE “LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD” WITH OTHER SENIOR BUSINESS LEADERS?”

It's the eternal question in corporate real estate and facilities management (RE/FM) circles. Professionals in our sector have asked it for more than 20 years. Many industry observers consider it stale, and yet it uncovers some fundamental truths about the current state of RE/FM.

Instead of asking how to get a seat at the table, the right question to ask is:

“WHY DON'T WE HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE TODAY?”

Because we haven't yet earned it yet. Just to be clear, meeting quarterly or annually with the business units or senior management team to review RE/FM plans is still what more than 95 percent of RE/FM organizations do. They consider those meetings as proof that they've got a “seat at the table”. Sadly, that's not the case and it perpetuates the legacy “order-taker” mindset that RE/FM teams carry with them.

It may sound harsh, but we've become victims of our own success. Certainly, a great deal of value has occurred in the industry and produced significant cost savings – in fact, maybe more than from any other functional area of the enterprise. Top performers in RE/FM have gained a reputation based on reliability, responsiveness and productivity. We are known to have a practical, “get-it-done” attitude, which is why the C-suite can come across as not valuing what we're doing or, putting it more bluntly, ignoring us.

Simply stated, as an industry, RE/FM has too often acted and measured its performance like a back-office function. So it's no wonder that senior enterprise executives often view us as such. “We'll call you if we need you,” seems to be the perspective the C-suite has toward RE/FM. We are not typically invited to shape the corporate agenda or the strategic vision of the enterprise. However, our peers in finance and HR are often at the table.

A few innovators have embraced next-generation sourcing models and globalized their operations, but even fewer have achieved the exalted status of strategic business partner. While these are the exceptions, they show us just how much is possible for RE/FM in terms of enabling and even transforming the business.

Now back to the original question – how do we get a seat at the table? We must re-direct our hard work, refine our thinking and better align our strategic roadmap to the C-suite agenda. Continuing to produce immediate, tangible results and focusing on the longer-term strategic framework can get us there. That's how RE/FM's potential value contribution to the enterprise can increase exponentially.

The good news is that RE/FM leaders are well positioned to engage with senior leaders across the enterprise because many of the critical issues and daily challenges facing RE/FM teams have become more prominent within the broader business agenda.

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5 WAYS TO ALIGN WITH THE C-SUITE

1. **Be an enabler – not an order-taker.** Devising and proposing solutions proactively is a way to build sustainable, trusted relationships with key business and functional stakeholders. Plus, it's an opportunity to add value consistently across the business cycle, rather than at infrequent transactional or operational events.
2. **Focus on people, culture and connectivity – not facilities and real estate.** Our job is to make the company's most valuable asset – its people – more productive and collaborative. Inspiring people and unleashing their creativity through forward-thinking workspaces and quality facilities adds a lot more value than simply knocking a few more dollars off a supplier budget.
3. **Translate values into spaces and services.** Physical workspace should be an expression of corporate values and the corporate brand – especially when sustainability is a top priority. The service levels provided by RE/FM can and should reflect core values, too.
4. **Use metrics that emphasize value, not just cost.** Six Sigma and advanced quality measures should be re-evaluated and implemented on a proactive basis. This shouldn't be a reactive approach to an event. Establish balanced scorecards, dashboards, KPIs, SLAs and benchmarking processes that are truly incorporated into a performance management toolkit for RE/FM leaders.
5. **Think outside the function.** Knowledge of RE/FM best practices and current industry standards is critical, but being eternally curious about the business is the best way to create innovative and disruptive new ways to add value and drive business enablement. The top talent in RE/FM – just as in finance, sales, marketing, IT and other functional areas – truly get the business and are perceived by the C-Suite as business leaders, not functional enablers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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George Bouri is a Member of the Global Board of Trascient Management Consulting, LLC and the Managing Principal for the Americas region, with over 20 years of combined management consulting and corporate experience. Mr. Bouri has a proven track record in business transformation, helping take many leading companies to financial and operational success. In his role at Trascient, he is responsible for providing leadership for the firm across a broad range of areas, including driving growth strategies, building client solutions, spearheading key accounts, and optimizing service offerings.

Prior to joining Trascient, Mr. Bouri served as Senior Vice President of Global Shared Services Real Estate & Facilities for Time Warner Inc., where in an effort to more efficiently manage resources across the company, he spearheaded the creation of a center-led organization that represented a first across the Time Warner companies and became the blueprint for other shared services initiatives to follow.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Bouri has held senior management positions at blue-chip companies, including Deloitte Consulting, Andersen Business Consulting, Sun Microsystems, Hewlett-Packard and Richard Ellis (now CBRE). While at Deloitte, he orchestrated business transformation initiatives for numerous clients resulting in significant efficiency gains and profitability improvements, including American Express, Citigroup, DuPont, GE, Merck, Pfizer, Thomson Reuters, among others. With an emphasis on business transformation (process, people and technology) and through innovative capital asset & workplace programs, clients also experienced reductions in employee turnover and major improvements in employee morale, satisfaction, and overall business performance.

George has been frequently quoted in national media publications, such as The Wall Street Journal, Forbes, and Fortune Magazine as well as a number of industry journals. He is often featured as a keynote speaker and panelist at major conferences and serves as a visiting faculty at a select number of academic institutions.

Mr. Bouri received a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Denver, Daniels School of Business and a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration (BBA) from the University of Wisconsin.

ABOUT TRASCENT MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Trascent, a premier global management consulting firm, drives measurable performance improvements in Real Estate and Facilities Management (RE/FM). The firm partners with leading companies in biopharmaceuticals, consumer packaged goods, diversified industrials, financial services, high technology and other sectors to develop breakthrough solutions and generate quantifiable results. Trascent's top-rated industry conferences have been attended by senior RE/FM and business leaders from more than 80 companies in the United States, Europe and Asia.

Our services include:

- Sourcing Strategy
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To learn more about Trascent and our breakthrough performance solutions in RE/FM, please contact:

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