

The Importance of Business Integration

Orchestrating integrated department functions requires coordination, communication and commitment.

Essential
Business Services, LLC

Mission Critical

Companies must coordinate and integrate plans, departments, and functions in order to meet the overall company mission which is to satisfy customers, sustain performance, and ultimately, grow and mature as an organization. Although employees may have unique or highly valued skills and the will to carry out the company mission, their work needs guidance and integration. Departments or functions must be integrated so that important tasks are not missed, productivity flourishes, and the work environment is less stressful and more satisfying.

The responsibility for ensuring integration and coordination between business departments and functions starts at the executive level, flows down to department managers and then to line personnel.

Companies without integration often have communication problems that contribute to lower productivity. For example, the cost to complete tasks can increase as employees work without direction and take longer to finish a project or employees duplicate work when their efforts are not coordinated. A project or task may be held up in one department because the department manager is not aware of the critical overlap between departments or the timeframe involved.

Employees of poorly integrated companies tend to work with a singular mindset thinking that their work function is the only function that matters. Without an understanding of how each task fits into the company-wide workflow, an employee has little insight into the impact his work has on the greater organization.

Integrated Communication Strategies Lead to Increased Productivity and Sales.

When department managers are not on the same page and fail to communicate company strategy, outline critical directives, or communicate the seriousness of overlap with other departments, the result can be an increase in performance errors and the time to complete tasks. The result will be lost productivity and money along with employee frustration and a loss of faith in company leadership.

While a poorly integrated company has trouble with communication between departments and functions, a highly-integrated company has strong connections across departments, functions and product lines. For example, the sales department generates revenue for a company while accountants focus on reducing costs and reporting for management. Although these functions are not similar in scope, strong integration between the functions means that accounting feedback about sales performance helps the sales department improve, while important customer data from sales helps accounting provide insightful reports for top management, who then formulate relevant business strategy. Without tight integration, feedback is missing, decisions are guesses, and opportunities are lost.

Businesses with Outsourced Functions Can Thrive and Stay Connected.

If internal integration is a key to success and necessary to enhancing productivity, how are smaller companies, with no departments, to achieve strong connection across various business functions? If a business employs a bookkeeper and outside consultants or companies provide other critical functions like accounting, payroll processing, tax returns, and marketing, how can business leaders integrate outsourced functions with a small number of in-house functions?

- 1. Recognize that companies need integration to increase productivity, please customers, and make each dollar count.**
- 2. Search for integrated service providers and speak with them about how they create value and connection across functions. Companies, like Essential Business Services, provide coordinated and highly skilled services like accounting, payroll, and tax preparation along with business strategy consulting. Integration and coordination issues are addressed with experienced “plug-in” functions and “on-call” skills that provide back-office support for companies.**
- 3. Instruct employees to communicate with outside functions or departments in a way that ensures productivity and commitment to company standards and strategy. Set the engagement rules for employees and/or managers and the out-sourced functions. Be sure to keep task overlap in mind.**
- 4. Monitor and evaluate performance. Hold regular meetings with employees and contractors and gather feedback to further improve coordination, communication and performance. Take responsibility for fostering a “connected” business culture.**

In many ways, the “plug-in” approach is a cost-effective shortcut to increasing productivity. Less costly than hiring and training staff, outsourced, integrated functions or departments are highly skilled and work on tasks as assigned. Many carrying and training costs are reduced if not eliminated. The combination of employees and contracted support works best when company leaders make sure that business strategy and standards are communicated across all functions, whether in-house or outsourced.

As business leaders analyze company operations, they should think of ways to integrate processes, departments and functions to save time and money. Integration leads to greater efficiency, lower costs and a better work environment. Regardless of the size of the business, a commitment to better coordination and integration is a sound strategy.



About the Author

Accountant, Enrolled Agent and NTPI Tax Fellow, [Denise Robinett](#) leverages her extensive accounting, tax and corporate management experience in her role as a business owner, author, speaker, start-up strategist and management coach. After years working in industries ranging from higher education to manufacturing, Denise founded Essential Business Services (EBS) in 2005 and Essential Tax Services in 2016. As a “back office for your business,” EBS provides integrated services in the areas of accounting, tax, payroll, and strategic consulting.