

Cognizant Position Paper

# Shared Service Captive Centers: Assets or Liabilities in the Post-COVID-19 Era?

Rethinking global shared services for the new normal

# Executive Summary

COVID-19 has delivered a profound shock worldwide. With close to seven million cases and almost 400,000 deaths at the time of writing, COVID-19 was something few people had heard of at the turn of the year.

The novel coronavirus has upended the lives of billions around the globe and has significantly impacted businesses too. With flights grounded, stores shuttered and offices placed in suspended animation, economic activity has sharply declined and unemployment numbers have skyrocketed. While the worst health impacts of the virus may soon be behind us, the economic health of many enterprises and organizations is in peril.

How enterprises navigate the months ahead will likely determine their fates for decades to come. Those that can mitigate the impact of the end of business as usual, retool for new opportunities and capture the winds of change can face the future with confidence and enthusiasm. But those that struggle to abandon legacy approaches past their sell-by date may find COVID-19 an unsurmountable hurdle. Already, many businesses — famous brand names of yore — have thrown in the towel. Or at least taken a standing count and called for the trainer.

One element of the strategic decisions executive leaders must make in short order is their approach to ongoing business and technology processing requirements. As software has “eaten the world”<sup>1</sup> and more executives have come to understand that “technology no longer *supports* the business, technology *is* the business,” the criticality of technology development and sourcing decisions has greatly increased. The need for “digital transformation” has become incontrovertible — but the question is about the optimal ways to achieve it.

External service providers (ESPs) and shared service captive centers (SSCCs) are two of the primary means to achieve this transformation. Both approaches have found favor and customers. Gartner estimates that there are well over three million personnel involved in the delivery of shared services around the world.<sup>2</sup>

But the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19 has surfaced different reactions among SSCC operators and ESPs. For large ESPs (of which Cognizant is one), COVID-19 has been a matter of corporate life and death. ESPs have applied a “whatever it takes” approach to ensure continuity of operations and client service. Unmet service level agreements (SLAs) result in unpaid bills, which result in huge financial consequences.

For organizations operating SSCCs, the exigencies have been less existential: painful undoubtedly, but less fundamental, given that SSCCs are often buried deep within the process architecture of an organization.

Resultingly, many organizations are now questioning the rationale of their SSCC approach. For those in financial straits, the ongoing cost of operating an SSCC model may increasingly be burdensome, perhaps even unrealistic. For financially stronger organizations, SSCCs may still be financially viable, but the management overhead of operating an internal model in the wake of COVID-19 — when all executive hands need to be on deck to navigate troubled waters — may grow to be unattractive.

At a point when ESPs have demonstrated the strength of the outsourced model — under the most onerous of conditions, having “seen this movie before” during previous downturns and the impacts it had on the operating models of banks, insurance companies, healthcare payers/providers, etc. — the benefits of maintaining, at huge opportunity cost if nothing else, an internal SSCC strategy increasingly looks like an approach for the BC (Before COVID-19) era.

Many captives have reached scale with offshore centers staffed with 1,000 to 15,000 personnel, reducing labor costs and making progress toward mature captive delivery outcomes. Yet, many of the original assumptions behind the captive movement have reached breaking points in the “new normal” of virtual, distributed workforces, cognitive-based digital workers and value-chain ecosystems. And further, most captives don’t have enough digital expertise, scale or luxury of time to maintain market competitive global shared services performance.

In this white paper, analysts from Cognizant’s Center for the Future of Work (both ex-Gartner sourcing analysts) and executives from our Strategic Engagement Team outline a brief past, present and future of SSCCs. We explore how SSCCs developed in parallel with outsourcing, how they have been regarded as a “hedge” against outsourcing, and why in the AC (After COVID-19) era, full-on outsourcing to ESPs will continue to gain traction, while SSCCs will fade from the mainstream.

If your organization is contemplating moving from a commitment to SSCCs — for financial or strategic reasons (or a combination of both) — and is pondering whether internal shared services have outlived their original promise, this white paper will help to frame the questions you should consider as your organization examines the opportunities available.

## What's past is prologue: A brief history of shared services

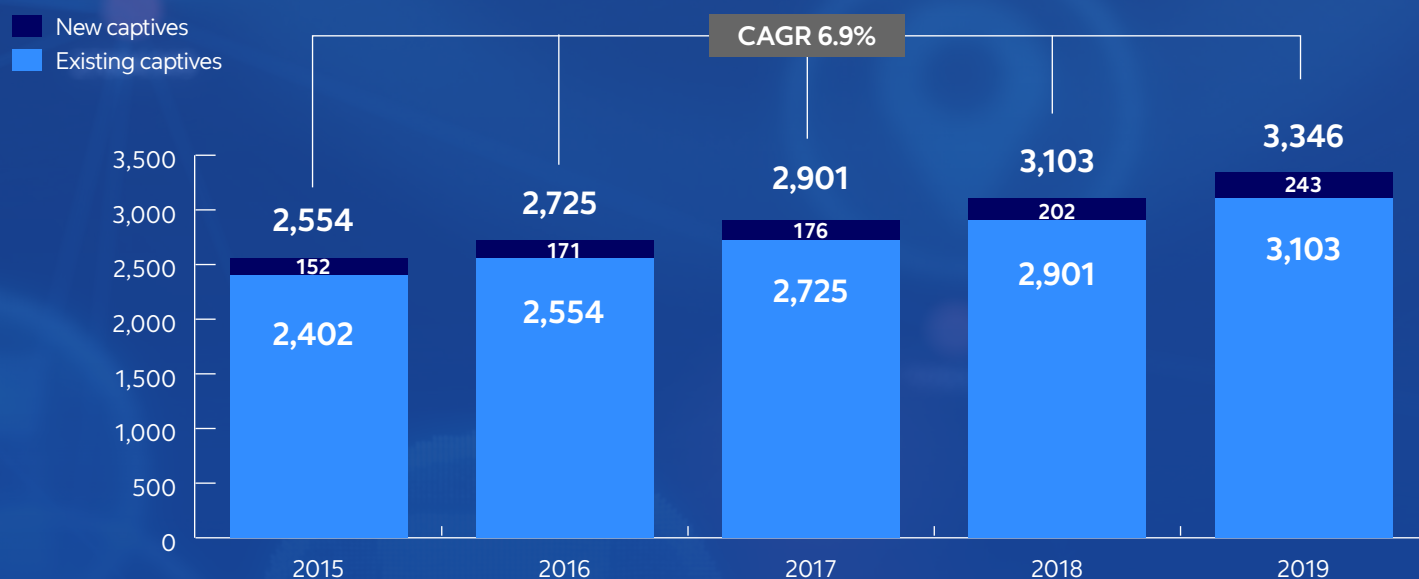
SSCCs emerged as a concept in the early 1990s as a reaction to trends initiated by the academics C.K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel, whose 1990 *Harvard Business Review* article, “The Core Competence of the Corporation,” popularized and legitimized the concept of outsourcing. While many large organizations had been leveraging services from already sizable U.S. and European IT services firms such as IBM, Andersen Consulting and Cap Gemini, full-scale outsourcing of an entire process — be that data center management or accounts payable or procurement — was still something of a rarity. With Prahalad and Hamel’s imprimatur, however, outsourcing became an increasingly common strategy and a global industry was born.

For some organizations, however, full-on outsourcing to an ESP was a step too far, accompanied by concerns (legitimate or not) about vendor reliance, provider margins and a lack of control. The SSCC idea appealed to those who regarded theories of “core competence” as new and unproven and who saw the SSCC as providing many of the benefits of outsourcing (process standardization and lower labor costs) with fewer of its downsides. Large multinationals, such as Texas Instruments and General Electric, established processing centers in India and the Philippines, and set about developing and managing globalized work processes for a world growing increasingly “flat.”<sup>3</sup> By 2019, Everest Group estimated that there were over 3,300 captive centers worldwide, with such facilities having increased approximately 7% in the last five years (see Figure 1, next page).

But with the industrialization of the internet in the latter half of the 1990s, and with the impending Y2K remediation crunch, the ESP market grew rapidly, and the SSCC “hedge” against outsourcing became less common. This became particularly true as Indian IT service providers such as Wipro, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services (and Cognizant) demonstrated an ability to deliver high-quality services at exceptionally attractive price points.

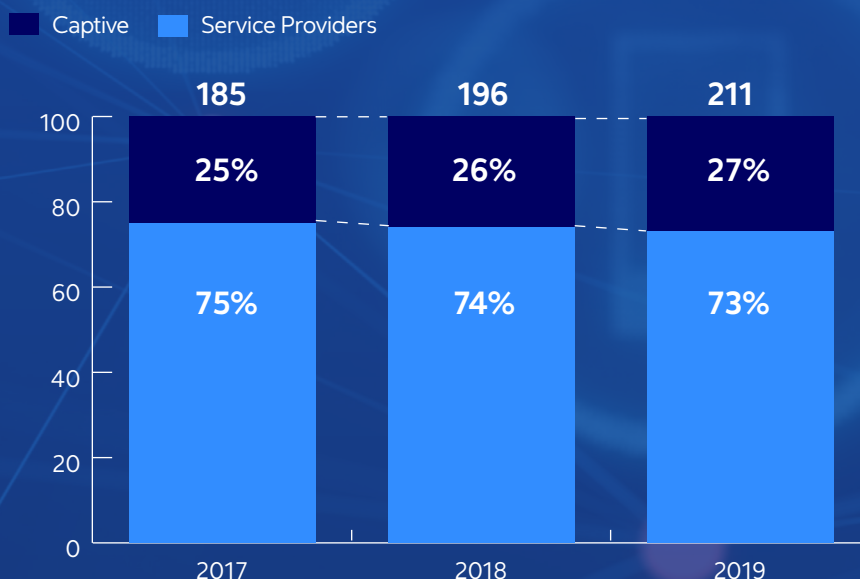
As shown in Figure 2 (next page), recent estimates suggest that ESPs capture \$3 for every \$1 spent on an SSCC. And, it shouldn’t be forgotten, a number of ESPs began life as SSCCs (Cognizant included), which were later spun off as independent, stand-alone companies as SSCC-owning executives realized the commercial possibilities of the ESP market.<sup>4</sup>

## Number of captives, worldwide, 2015-2019



Source: Everest Group  
Figure 1

## Distribution of offshore/nearshore global services market, by sourcing model, 2017-2019; US\$ billion



Source: Everest Group  
Figure 2

Notwithstanding this “battle” between an external or internal processing approach, the primary motivation behind the creation of SSCCs was — and still is — to cut operational costs via process standardization, economy of scale and leverage of offshore labor arbitrage. Through standardizing, and where possible automating, rote and repetitive IT and process work that sprawled across disparate business units (often as a result of merger and acquisition activity), SSCCs have aimed to capture the benefits of an increasingly interconnected world.

Whatever the mix — exclusively “in-house,” exclusively outsourced or somewhere in between — SSCCs found their way into the standard operating procedure of many large businesses around the world.

The next major turning point in the development of SSCCs occurred in the wake of the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2008. Under the stresses induced by recession and retrenchment, many companies, in effect, “sold” their captive capabilities to ESPs in the form of multiyear outsourcing contracts. Visible remedies that swapped capital expenses for predictable, operational expenses and short-term impact were the order of the day to boost P&Ls. CEOs and boards of directors, especially, essentially viewed these moves as being akin to cash-generating financial transactions, signaling to Wall Street that “steps are being taken” as these critical yet noncore functions (usually constituting hundreds of jobs) were transferred to providers that ran them externally, in predictable, service-based outsourcing models.

The ongoing capital needs of an SSCC, let alone the maintenance, operating and opportunity costs, saw many enterprises decide that their “in-house” approach no longer made sense. With a raft of large, mature and well capitalized ESPs now in the market to choose from, Prahalad and Hamel’s ideas were hard to refute and only extremely differentiating capabilities (managed by financially stable companies with concomitant management expertise) remained immune to the logic of outsourcing.

Those companies that did stay the SSCC course found themselves under continued pressure to generate greater and greater cost savings, and coming out of the GFC, many companies had no choice but to cut, trim and otherwise go as lean as possible in their staffing to do more with less. In the process, many companies trimmed so much fat, they cut to the bone. Once economic recovery kicked in, rising wage costs, the rapid cost-of-living increases and process volume concerns emerged. As a result, for many enterprises, the effectiveness of the SSCC engine stalled.

What happens when “cutting to the bone” won’t cut it anymore? It starts a vicious cycle in which cuts beget more cuts and the unbridled hunt for efficiency takes focus away from the structural changes occurring in the marketplace. While SSCCs were extremely effective at maximizing efficiency, they weren’t so great at process innovation and flexibility. This knee-jerk reaction — i.e., a fixation on cost reduction — had the unintended consequence of leaving the company blind to the need to invest in the future.

As the age of algorithms, automation and AI dawned in the mid-2010s, traditional approaches to shared services were found wanting, in need of a refresh, and were patently inflexible, rigid (ultimately breaking) or, worse, became hardcoded. The need for digital transformation heightened expectations for efficiency, speed and elegance. Companies that missed this change — Kodak, Blockbuster, Sears, etc. — were exposed to tremendous risk — and ultimately doom.

## Still searching for excellence: The present of shared services

Today, the heart of enterprise process work remains the continuing tension between the economies of standardized processes and stakeholder desire for process innovation. Managing this tension has been difficult, and consequently many leaders have defaulted into aggressive cost-containment mode because that was the easier thing to do, and something that has been encoded into the DNA of SSCCs since their inception.

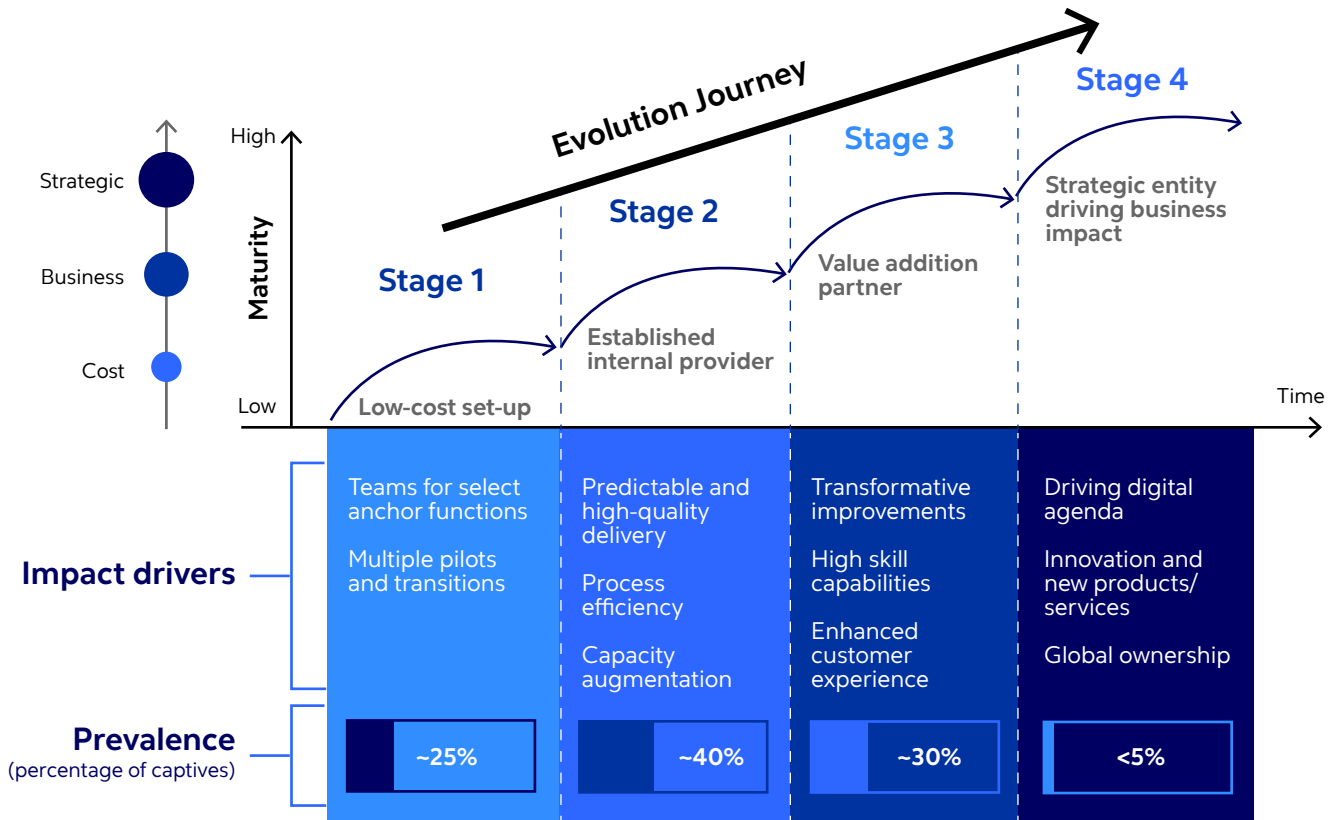
This tension now is off the charts. Why? The search for efficiency — aka, process excellence — which has been the Holy Grail for SSCCs in the last few years has run smack into the operational and economic turmoil of COVID-19. SSCC approaches that have delivered low-cost services but have failed to support the cause of digital transformation — the other Holy Grail of the last decade — are being exposed as brittle, inflexible and out-of-date. Processes that have been starved of investment now look “pre-digital” and not fit for purpose. SSCC delivery sites that were once shiny and new now resemble exhibits from the history of work.

COVID-19 is acting as a giant stress test for businesses all around the world. The only viable response is adaptation and reimagining. SSCCs predicated on squeezing cost out of business as usual are, as many commentators and analysts suggest, ill-suited to the work ahead.

At a time when transformation has never been more strategically important, manual, old-guard, “rumps-in-seats” approaches still prevail far too widely in the world of SSCCs — with the thin excuse of “we’ve always done it with 15 steps in the process.” According to Everest Group, approximately 60% of captives today are only moderately mature, and primarily focused on cost reduction, efficiency or capacity augmentation (see Figure 3). Only a very small minority of SSCCs are “strategic entities driving business impacts.”

In short, the inefficiency of efficiency is on display. Or as Warren Buffet would put it, the tide has gone out and now we’re seeing who is swimming naked.

### Captives maturity model



Source: Everest Group  
Figure 3

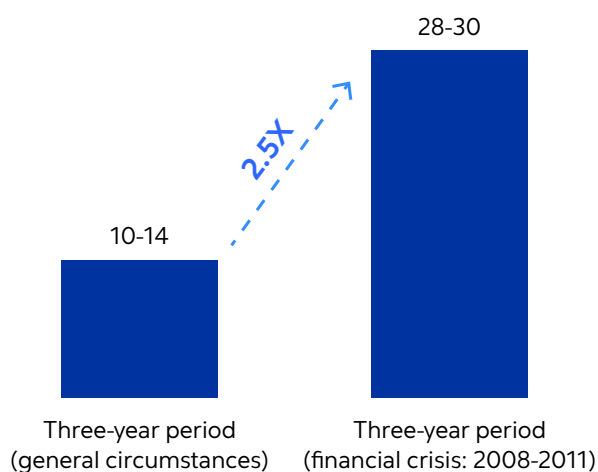


Consequently, a major rethinking is brewing in boardrooms around the world regarding the future shape of sourcing strategy. Analysts and advisors currently see multiple carve-out deals for captives in the offing, whereas in “normal” years, typically only a few come to market. With a nod to lessons learned during the GFC, the scrutiny on cost models and absent the resources to invest, many companies are now looking for potential opportunities to divest these critical, but noncore capabilities to ESPs (see Figure 4).




In an extended period of budget freezes and reduced capital expenditures, many enterprises will be looking to ESPs to take over — catalyzed by financial pressures, but with a recognition of what is at stake far beyond labor arbitrage as the sole motivation of value. For those ESPs that do it well, delivery of higher-value work will act as an accelerant to the future of work as business conditions improve.

For a number of enterprises, 2020 began as a year in which some degree of ennui had settled over the discussion of digital transformation: companies that were struggling to effect material change to their operations, but were still in business, were questioning the rationale of further efforts when things didn't seem quite so urgent or pressing.

## Three-year captive divestiture trends



### Drivers of acceleration

-  Balance sheet issues
-  Limitations exposed during crisis
-  Reorganization initiatives

Source: Everest Group  
Figure 4

But as shown in Figure 5, COVID-19 rapidly changed the mood of global business as the wisdom of first practices — online first, mobile first, cloud first, automated first, omnichannel first — became apparent to all.

COVID-19 has quickly led to greater interest in sourcing and developing modern, up-to-date solutions and services built on open standards, the cloud, software engineering, data and machine learning. Those enterprises that offer “mass customized,” consumer-grade customer and employee experiences have prospered during the lockdown; those that are still “pre-digital” haven’t. Standardized services that use simplified, standard components to further accelerate cost reduction, faster time-to-value and increased flexibility by eliminating organizational silos are increasingly recognized as the secret sauce of digital competence — particularly at a time when everything that can go online, will go online, and become cheaper, faster and higher quality in the process.

Eliminating process silos (an integral element of the SSCC model) is an essential component in achieving modern process excellence. By applying sophisticated, next-generation digital technologies (i.e., analytics, data lakes and machine learning) to front-, middle- and back-office work processes, shared services delivery can realize new levels of business performance amid organizational restructuring.

## “Who Led Your Digital Transformation? Your CIO or COVID-19?”



Source: Forbes  
Figure 5

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Already, automation — especially today’s leading-edge conversational AI and RPA bots — can buttress thinned human capabilities and are paramount to further reducing labor costs. Take Wal-Mart: its entire food distribution supply chain is automated, from back office to front office (culminating with an “Alphabot” that hastens food to your car).

While “automated shared services help make delivery cheaper” may sound ideal, it runs the risk of further reinforcing bad behaviors from the past — as learned during the last recession. A cost-reduction strategy as a sole value driver fails to focus on the real prizes — agility and differentiation — which are critical competitive “musts” during times of crisis. Yet, only a minority of internal captives or SSCs can deliver these benefits.

## **Brave new work: The future of shared services**

While it’s impossible to know how long the shock waves of COVID-19 will persist, how strong they’ll be in the future and what precise impact they will have on outsourcing and SSCs (or on outsourcing versus SSCs) one thing is certain: anticipate change.

For example, should leading G-7 countries experience acute, prolonged unemployment (in excess of 25%), it’s not difficult to imagine that the backlash to global delivery (including offshore shared services centers) would grow — intensely. Given the growing comfort with remote work in the wake of COVID-19, it could foster new platforms for onshore jobs of the future. Flexibility — in terms of location, hours, wages, etc. — could invigorate work and work processes that ultimately innovate new service delivery operating models.

COVID-19 has painfully demonstrated the weaknesses of many captives. One key aspect of this has been deficient business continuity planning; in many cases, we have seen captive shared services having to quickly move workers to work from home (WFH). This meant acquiring and deploying PCs and laptops to WFH configuration, while adjusting and expanding bandwidth and tools to enable WFH securely. Captives were competing with larger providers for needed hardware and implementation support at the same time they struggled to operationalize, at scale, a distributed workforce.

Some organizations were already trialing WFH models prior to COVID-19's onslaught, but the vast majority weren't. Key to success was also how well their operations were diversified; those with very high concentration in a single location (e.g., India or the Philippines only, which went into lockdown at roughly the same time) were not as resilient as those that had diversified footprints (e.g., Asian and Eastern European locations). The results were frequently suboptimal. Certainly, the overhead of managing new WFH models has been a major distraction for organizations.

COVID-19 also highlighted the severe dependencies shared services have on human labor. With RPA, analytics and maturing AI/ML technologies, true end-to-end cognitive solutions can be implemented to reduce labor at scale; however, the investments to pursue this course are nontrivial.

At present, sourcing strategies have been conceived reactively to the arrival of the novel coronavirus. In highly regulated industries such as banking and healthcare, process controls will dictate centralization — logically, if not exclusively physically — for the time being (e.g., insurance claims processing, payment processing and mortgage processing). But on the assumption that the virus will remain with us for another 12-18 months, new, more strategic plans for captive carve-outs (centered on the divestment of noncore services) will hold sway.

To avoid the customary default to slash costs in a commoditizing market for low-end skills, it will behoove businesses to start fostering capabilities in well-defined, strategic domains by investing in skilled resources via training or by gaining experience through partnering. Embracing a remote model — both onshore and

offshore — has become a feature of SSCCs, not a bug. While some see this as a short-term, social distancing solution for usually crowded workspaces, the results will be longer-lasting, in terms of both cost-cutting and amplified resiliency. One plausible scenario is that remote work may swing the pendulum of past decades back to major re-onshoring of work that's gone overseas in the past. Indiana not India?

Another change factor in the future of shared services (and in truth, outsourcing) will be the increasing sophistication of conversational AI technology and IT process automation (aka, RPA). On their current trajectory, both will inject innovation into future strategic plans, and as the price to implement “bots” falls below the price of wages for the “bods” they would replace, both will become increasingly attractive economically. The rise of “no code” platforms used to build internet-based businesses portends even greater demand for adequate talent at shared service centers. Such arrangements decrease the need for technological acumen for front-end users, at the expense of more capable and responsive technological management provided by SSCCs on the back end.

Jobs of the future will also benefit from this dynamic. In the future of work, it is safe to assume every job will have a growing tech component, even if not every job is a tech job. Previously low-tech employees will find themselves in increasingly tech-centric roles that rely on optimized SSCC relationships. Even those that are seemingly analog today will be powered by data and connectivity enabled by SSCCs tomorrow:

- **Digital tailors or virtual store sherpas** of the future for fashion brands and retailers will provide shoppers with in-depth reviews and practical use tips for the items they plan to purchase based on trend analysis handled by SSCC teams.

And roles that demand a higher quotient of tech-centricity will be even more reliant on SSCC support in the future:

- **Algorithm bias auditors** of the future will make timely and fair assessments of algorithm performance based on the processing power that SSCCs can help render across millions of decisions in accordance with laws and statutes based on jurisdiction.

Given the many variables the COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed, organizations will need to reorient critical workflows and tasks. Consider the average age of workers in your delivery center — are they between 24 and 26? Watch how your younger workers message, text and multitask around the process bottlenecks that work throws at them and see how quickly they resolve them. Harness those learnings, and identify — quickly — pilots that capture them within appropriate process functions. With technology central to almost every aspect of business — shared services included — this is about looking for the next “positive deviation” versus “the way we’ve always done it.”

Our point of view about the future of work within shared services reveals growing evidence of a major market shift as next-generation business process services and solutions offer ways to modernize enterprise process work. This perspective is central to our strategy and our investments. The shared services engine increasingly needs to integrate your current and post-COVID-19 business strategy to human process work augmented with collaboration, automation and analytics tools, enabled by next-generation technology platforms.

## Next steps on the journey

Wherever your organization is on the SSCC versus ESP continuum, and whatever your next steps may be, there are certain best practices that will become ever more important as stakeholders seek process flexibility and value-based thinking. Foremost among them will be to avoid the following mistakes:

- I Focusing on value solely as a function of cost:** ROI calculations can fail to quantify how innovative approaches will positively impact stakeholders, especially because shared services metrics are typically focused on full-time equivalent (FTE) input or SLAs.
- I Insufficient investment to fix problems, or needed organizational change:** The true value from SSCCs comes from a comprehensive rethink of how work is conducted. Leaders are reorienting and reframing process work, focusing on the mechanisms that deliver higher-value offerings. During these times, this demands the fortitude of CEO and/or board-level sponsorship. Without it, you're setting yourself up for "your mess for less."
- I Standardizing rather than innovating processes:** Some SSCCs may have moved into their second and third generation or iteration. Consequently, with the exigencies of COVID-19, immediate priorities (e.g., everything that *can* go online, *must* go online) necessitate a rethinking of process best practices and use of the latest advanced technologies.
- I Insufficient ability to anticipate change:** Black swan events like COVID-19 come at you fast. Companies need leadership that can guide their SSCCs to run better and run differently on dynamically responsive business models to persevere, persist and prosper during the new normal of the coronavirus and beyond. If your organization can't do that, it's simply shuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic.

## Cognizant's point of view

Our objective for captives is focused on helping organizations take the next steps toward realizing their tactical and strategic objectives.

Our solutions range from consulting or digital transformation projects, to a takeover and transformation of all or part of the captive scope, and could also include joint go-to-market and monetization of the assets and capabilities of the captive. Here are examples of these options and some approaches that have worked.

- I Outsource select functions like finance and accounting (F&A), customer experience or application development,** possibly through end-to-end business-technology solutions such as [Cognizant's Healthcare BPaaS](#).
- I Engage a strategic transformation partner to unlock the value of your individual business processes by digitizing and integrating them in a value-chain ecosystem** — e.g., enhancing automotive customer experience from marketing, sales, dealer services, warranty and asset acquisition.
- I Sell all or part of the captive to yield cash and savings quickly.** The captive holds a large component of SG&A spend, and BPO and ITO providers are poised to acquire scope and deliver early savings and potentially cash through acquisition deal structures.
- I Effect joint go-to-market to monetize the captive IP and assets.** Captives with well-performing capabilities can find partners willing to acquire and go-to-market with these assets and IP. This approach can yield returns for the captive owner on top of savings.

At Cognizant, acquiring captive centers is part of our growth heritage and something we have done with great success across multiple industries, processes and locations. Our approach is to tailor the captive transformation strategy to the strategic imperatives of our clients. This could include “escaping the captive” by selling it, restructuring the operations to value-chain ecosystems or transforming the operations and transferring back to the client to yield faster, better results more aligned to short- and long-term strategy. And in some cases, we've recommended actually increasing the reach of the captive as the way to escape the current problems.

## What's right for your organization?

Here's a checklist of considerations to weigh your own specific options:

- Is your captive's performance, and are its costs, at least at the median if not upper quartile among its peers?
- Do you truly have control of your captive and the ability to support the business?
- Do you need aggressive cost savings due to COVID-19 impacts or other business priorities?
- Have failures in service due to COVID-19 exposed the need to consider a provider that can help transform to a more resilient business continuity model, including extended and secure WFH?
- Have you made recent C-level changes with a transformation imperative for the captive?
- Are you open to extending the E2E value-chain business outcomes delivered via the captive?
- Are you rethinking core vs. context and need to offload captive functions to create the freedom to focus on other priorities?
- Do you need to conserve CapEx by leveraging a partner for investments in digital transformation?
- Are you open to exploring sole source captive deals to maximize speed-to-value in monetizing the captive?

Very little will remain unchanged by COVID-19, whether operationally or economically. How much hard-coding of process work will your stakeholders accept as new business dynamics play out? Not much. Taking the long view, we can be certain of one thing: COVID-19 will force most companies to heighten their focus on driving greater efficiency and effectiveness of their operations more than ever before — in order to innovate their way to new thresholds of growth.

SSCCs will undoubtedly play a role on this journey to the future, but with the proven track record of ESPs — now with additional capabilities developed during the pandemic — the argument to maintain an internal capability at great expense (of time, money, management overhead and opportunity cost) is weaker than it was a decade or a generation ago, when the world was less flat.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Venture capitalist Marc Andreessen's famous phrase from 2011 about the growing importance of technology, <https://on.wsj.com/37e9TIY>.
- <sup>2</sup> Gartner, Shared Services Centers on the Move, Refreshed April 2, 2020, published Nov. 29, 2018, [www.gartner.com/document/3894385](http://www.gartner.com/document/3894385).
- <sup>3</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century*, 2005, <https://amzn.to/30kflwJ>.
- <sup>4</sup> Cognizant was originally an SSCC within Dun & Bradstreet. Genpact was originally an SSCC within General Electric. Atos grew out of Philips.

## About the authors



### Ben Pring

#### **Vice President, Head of Thought Leadership and Managing Director of Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work**

Ben Pring is the Head of Thought Leadership at Cognizant, and co-founded and leads Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work. He is a co-author of the best-selling and award-winning books *What To Do When Machines Do Everything* (2017) and *Code Halos; How the Digital Lives of People, Things, and Organizations are Changing the Rules of Business* (2014). Ben sits on the advisory board of the Labor and Work Life program at Harvard Law School. In 2018, he was a Bilderberg

Meeting participant. Ben joined Cognizant in 2011 from Gartner, where he spent 15 years researching and advising on areas such as cloud computing and global sourcing. Prior to Gartner, Ben worked for a number of consulting companies, including Coopers and Lybrand. In 2007, Ben won Gartner's prestigious annual Thought Leader Award. Ben's expertise in helping clients see around corners, think the unthinkable and calculate the compound annual growth rate of unintended consequences has made him an internationally recognized authority on leading-edge technology and its intersection with business and society. His work has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *The London Times*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *MIT Technology Review*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Quartz, Inc.*, *Axios*, *The Australian* and *The Economic Times*. Based in Boston since 2000, Ben graduated with a degree in philosophy from Manchester University in the UK, where he grew up. Ben can be reached at [Benjamin.Pring@cognizant.com](mailto:Benjamin.Pring@cognizant.com)  
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As a leader on the Strategic Engagements Team, Barry works with and serves various Cognizant key accounts. He leads large teams developing digital transformation approaches for strategic clients and has pioneered innovative ways to connect Cognizant's digital capabilities with ways of solving complex client problems. Prior to joining Cognizant in 2018, Barry worked in consulting, operations and go-to-market roles at organizations such as Hewlett Packard (HP), Hewitt Associates and Exult, as well as at venture-backed companies. He has worked across business and technical domains,

driving growth in Exult's human resources business process practice from 2001 to 2004, creating some of HP's largest European client relationships from 2008 through 2015, establishing HP's cloud business unit in 2013, and leading partner and alliance strategy with the formation of DXC Technology in 2017. At Cognizant, Barry works closely with client CEOs, CIOs and other senior business leaders, communicating clear outcomes that matter, while pushing the art of the possible with internal project teams. Throughout his career, he has been a frequent writer and speaker on technology, business and digital trends and issues. Based in Boulder, CO, Barry earned a BA from the University of Illinois and an advanced degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He also studied design-thinking at Stanford University and has worked as a chef and a documentary film producer. Barry can be reached at [Barry.Weiss@cognizant.com](mailto:Barry.Weiss@cognizant.com) | LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/barry-weiss](https://www.linkedin.com/in/barry-weiss).



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As a senior-level business leader with a passion for building successful client relationships, Tom is responsible for leading large, complex deals and delivering business-technology solutions to achieve top- and bottom-line results for clients across Cognizant Digital Operations. His experience spans a range of leadership roles in business development, portfolio and account management, marketing, digital services, M&A integration and service line management for premier global services firms and with private-equity firms. Within Digital Operations, Tom oversees the structuring of business-services transformational solutions and commercials for the company's marquee clients and Digital

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Robert Hoyle Brown is a Vice President in Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work. Since joining Cognizant in 2014, he has specialized on the topics of robotics, automation and augmented reality and their impact on business processes. He has worked extensively with the Cognizant Digital Operations Practice as head of market strategy, and also with Cognizant's Accelerator leadership to drive the development of its intelligent automation strategy, messaging and go-to-market outreach. Robert is a Fellow at the Fisher Center for Business Analytics at the Haas School of Business at the

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### Desmond Dickerson

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Desmond Dickerson is a Manager within Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work. Leveraging his experience in digital transformation and marketing, Desmond consults with clients on optimizing digital strategies that prioritize user experience and engagement. His research with the CFoW focuses on the human impact of decisions related to technology development and deployment. He has an MBA (data analytics) from Georgia Institute of Technology, and an undergraduate degree in marketing from Georgia State University. Desmond can be reached at [Desmond.Dickerson@cognizant.com](mailto:Desmond.Dickerson@cognizant.com) | LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/desmond-dickerson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/desmond-dickerson) | Twitter: [@DesmondCFOW](https://twitter.com/DesmondCFOW).



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## About Cognizant

Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSH) is one of the world's leading professional services companies, transforming clients' business, operating and technology models for the digital era. Our unique industry-based, consultative approach helps clients envision, build and run more innovative and efficient businesses. Headquartered in the U.S., Cognizant is ranked 194 on the Fortune 500 and is consistently listed among the most admired companies in the world. Learn how Cognizant helps clients lead with digital at [www.cognizant.com](http://www.cognizant.com) or follow us [@Cognizant](https://twitter.com/Cognizant).



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