POST · 11 JUNE 2026

There's a quiet difference between a supporting function that takes orders and one that takes responsibility

The first waits for a brief, executes against it, and hopes the brief was right. The second goes upstream, early enough to understand the business need at a level of detail the business itself hadn't thought to articulate, **confident enough to advise** on the things only that function would know to raise, and forward-looking enough to have a view of where its own discipline is going. Best practice, technology, what competitors are doing, where automation and AI are reshaping the field, only the function itself can see those horizons. **The business is owed an opinion, not just responses**.

Recruitment is a good place to see this. A function that's actively partnering with the business represents the company well externally, where reputation is built one candidate at a time and the first conversation with a future employer is also the first impression of the employer itself. The same function brings into the room what an individual hiring manager won't necessarily think to raise – for instance, where assessment of someone's soft skills is genuinely a different question from assessment of their technical expertise. That distinction shouldn't land on the operations leader to develop on their own.

The same pattern shows up everywhere – in finance, procurement, maintenance, planning. When a supporting function treats its internal customers as customers, sees beyond today's brief, and brings a point of view to where its discipline is heading, the work upstream becomes the foundation for everything else: fewer surprises, fewer reworks, a process clean enough to automate. When it doesn't, **the business absorbs the cost of expertise it shouldn't have to develop on its own**.

It's not a structural problem. It's what the role is for.