

TRANSFORMATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS



The Nexus of BRM,
Agile, and DevOps
Methodologies

TABLE of CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Business Relationship Management	4
DevOps	5
Agile	6
The Nexus of BRM, DevOps, and Agile	6
Business Relationship Managers – Success Drivers for Agile and DevOps Adoption	10
BRMs and Agile Teams	10
How BRMs Enable DevOps	11
Cultural Evolution Through BRM, DevOps, and Agile	12
Communications Related to External Business Partners	12
BRMs Prioritize People over Processes and Tools	13



INTRODUCTION

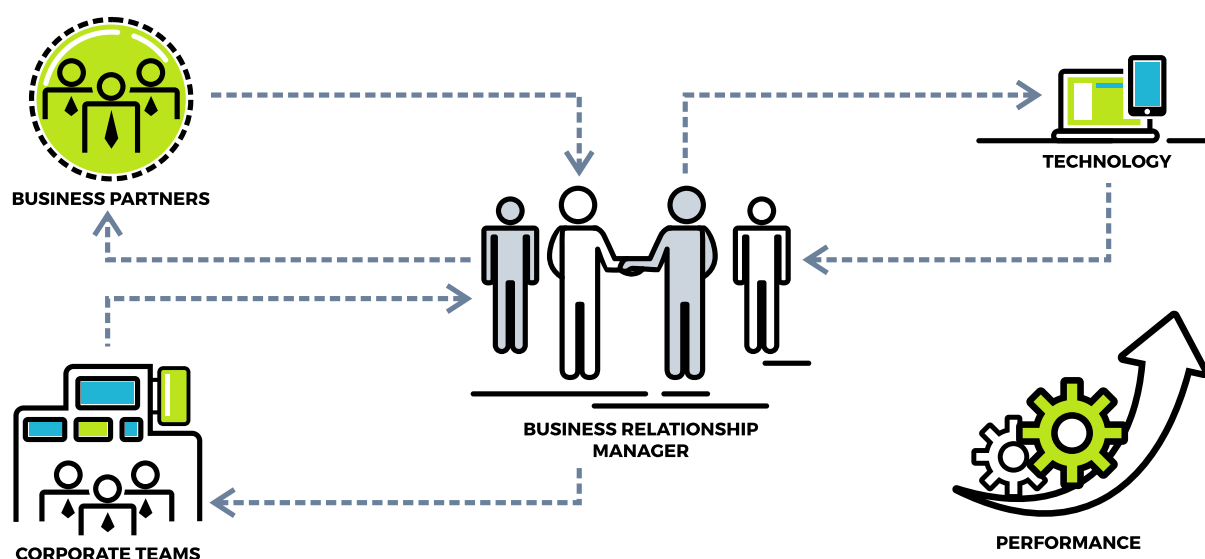
Call them methodologies, business disciplines, technology strategies, or strategic approaches. Whatever you call them, you can't buy BRM, DevOps, and Agile by the unit, the processor or by named users. You can't successfully advance or implement them without a measure of **positive people and process disruption**, nor can you measure them with any standard KPIs. Business Relationship Management, Agile, and DevOps are all rooted in **relationships and communication**. They require expertise to make them successful.

When orchestrated correctly, they coexist within your organization; increasing the effectiveness, efficiency, cohesiveness, and success of your teams and at the same time, drive value and satisfy both personal and organizational purpose. Not just IT, not just HR, not just Finance, but all departments and all functions to which they deliver business capabilities.

In order to best understand the value and application of these systems it's necessary to first define them. From there, a review of their interactions will expand the scope of their use and help define how they complement one another.

Business Relationship Management

Organizations are made up of relationships and communications. As such, all organizations have a business relationship management (BRM) capability. A BRM capability is designed to stimulate, surface, and shape business demand across all functions and to ensure that the potential business value from that demand is captured, optimized, and recognized.



A strong BRM capability converges cross-functional teams and eliminates value-depleting organizational silos. It strengthens collaboration and drives a culture of creativity, innovation, and shared ownership across the enterprise. Holistic, innovative, and value-driven strategies can be created and deliver their intended business value results while converging teams. As such, Business Relationship Managers (BRMs) are skilled in the art (capability) and science (discipline) of strategically converging and driving teams towards organizational purpose, departmental objectives, and facilitating interdepartmental communication. It creates a convergence culture, where everyone receives information at the same time, in the same context.

BRMs work to satisfy organizational purpose by acting to drive cultural change, building strategic partnerships, and driving strategic value. They understand how to prioritize business initiatives and articulate them in context to their cross-functional colleagues (or business partners) in a way that resonates with them, gains their buy-in, and enables the organization to work together towards common goals. Those goals may be purpose-based, related to efficiency, profitability, market share growth, or innumerable other business growth and success metrics. BRMs translate executive strategy into a shared roadmap.

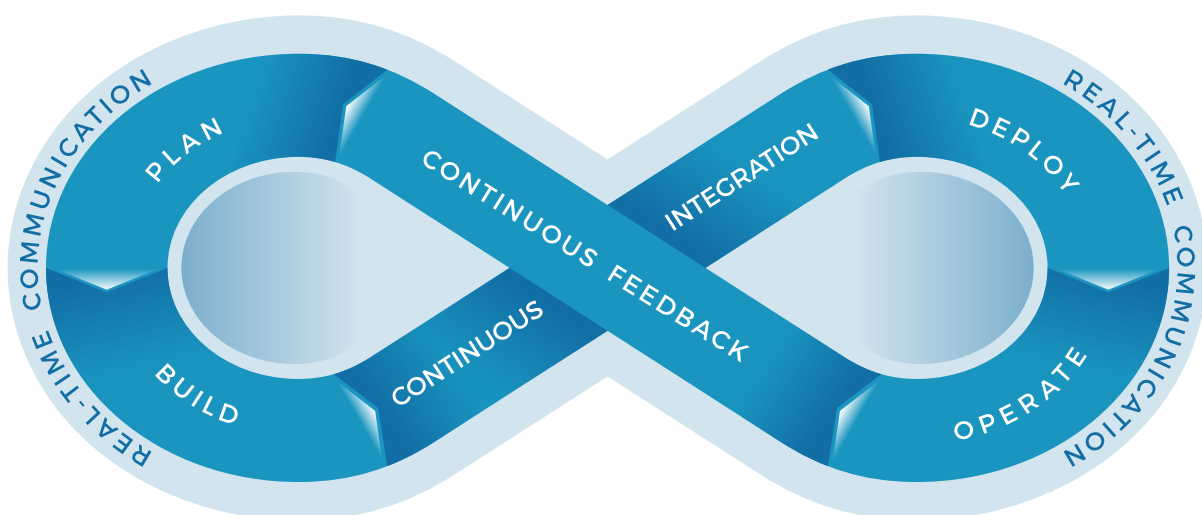
DevOps

DevOps is the orchestration of people, processes, and technologies to enable the continuous delivery of value to business partners. DevOps practices enable previously siloed departments to collaborate and communicate towards continuous improvements in areas like:

- Innovation and integration of applications, business processes, and the digital workflows that mirror them
- Feedback and input from business partner user groups including employees and partners
- Manual Delivery of applications from development to QA testing to production
- Deployment by automating application releases, including minor patches, fixes, and functional upgrades

Automated application releases flow through QA testing to production with minimal human intervention. This frees up development staff to focus on strategic planning and building functionality that users truly care about, instead of debugging previous code releases.

DevOps is not new, though many more companies are adopting it in recent years. The proliferation of cloud services, application containers and microservices development methodologies has put DevOps within reach for more businesses. The [role of Business Relationship Managers](#) as curators of continuous feedback and the implementation of Agile methodologies have also made DevOps more achievable.



Agile

Agile software development enables businesses to create and respond to change. Agile relies on effective communication and collaboration to identify when a pivot is necessary. BRMs stand critical in an Agile environment, as they can ensure the development team understands business goals. Additionally, BRMs demonstrate how teams can build applications to meet their goals, either all at once or through multiple “quick wins.”

A BRM is like a GPS, helping navigate the development team towards a destination. Agile is the steering wheel, used to maneuver the team through each leg of the journey through constant minor course adjustments. Some executives may be hesitant to adopt Agile management styles because it provides a safer environment for failure than they may be accustomed to with Waterfall methods. Agile empowers developers to communicate issues along the way and to work with BRMs to either minimize the impact of a small failure or to make a course correction and avoid failure altogether.

The Nexus of BRM, DevOps, and Agile

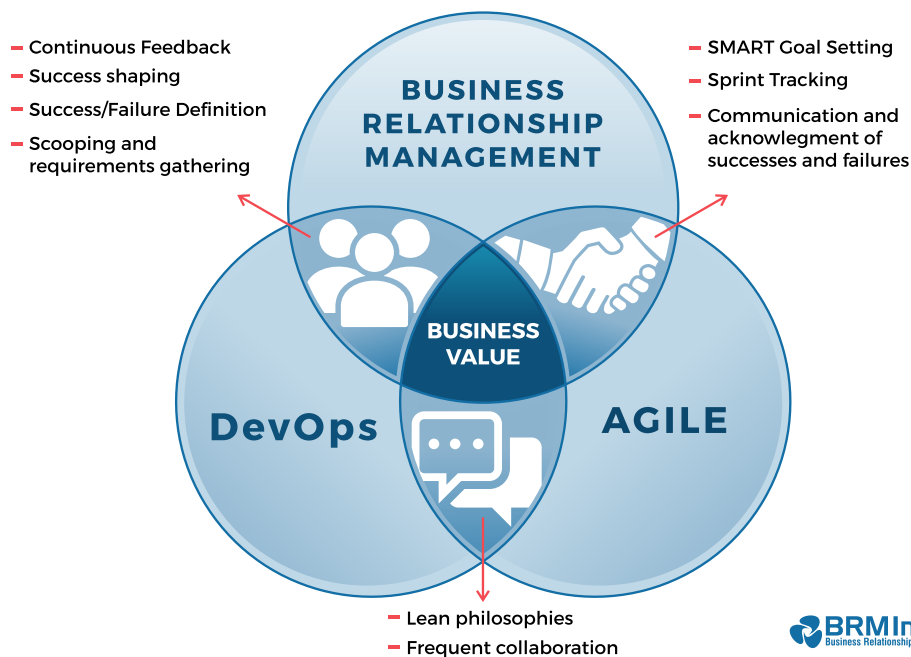
Many elements of BRM, DevOps, and Agile intersect and make the other complementary practices or disciplines more successful within a multi-departmental organization.

At the heart of all three disciplines lie purpose, relationships, communications, and business value. Business Relationship Management is a role performed by an individual, either as an explicit or implicit part of their job.

BRMs bring purpose, relationships, and recognized value to the forefront of any organization. BRMs exemplify personal autonomy. They are deeply engaged in evolving culture, strategic partnering, driving value, and sharing ownership with others to ensure purposeful results.

BRMs serve as the strategic interface between a business function and one or more business partners to stimulate, surface, and shape business demand for the function’s business assets and capabilities. It also ensures that the potential business value from those assets and capabilities is captured, realized, optimized, and recognized. As an organizational role, the business relationship manager is a connector, orchestrator, and navigator between their function and one or more business units and external partners.

Relationship Driven by DevOps



These practices and processes create an environment where people work together more effectively, and where wins are shared across the organization, instead of in individual service providers or individuals. BRM promotes an environment where constructive feedback is encouraged, and where it aligns with business priorities, it is acted upon. Microsoft's Principal DevOps Manager, Donovan Brown said of DevOps (which can be applied to both BRM and Agile):

"To succeed with DevOps, you must change the way your people think about their roles. They all must have a common goal that would encourage them to work together. Delivering value to the end user is the responsibility of everyone involved in the application. Once your people are aligned, you can use products to help them follow their process to deliver value continuously."

[Jeremy Byrne, a Certified BRM](#) from Loughborough University in the UK, was asked what he thinks shared ownership of strategy and results would look like. Jeremy said that he feels organizations and BRMs should create a culture that encourages empathy.

"Everyone working together when they need to, people being brought together at the right times for the right reasons to make decisions to deliver the most important value in a completely transparent and open manner."

~Jeremy Byrne, CBRM®

Prioritize People Over Process and Over Technology or Tools

It's often said that a company's employees are its most valuable assets; followed by its information. Successful advancement of BRM and adoption of Agile and DevOps requires businesses to ensure their employees feel that they are valued as an important part of the business. This applies to the implementation of new business processes, and the development of business application functionality to facilitate those processes. BRMs can't just be appointed to a role, and then say that DevOps and Agile will now happen. Rather, these practices must become **a way of life**.

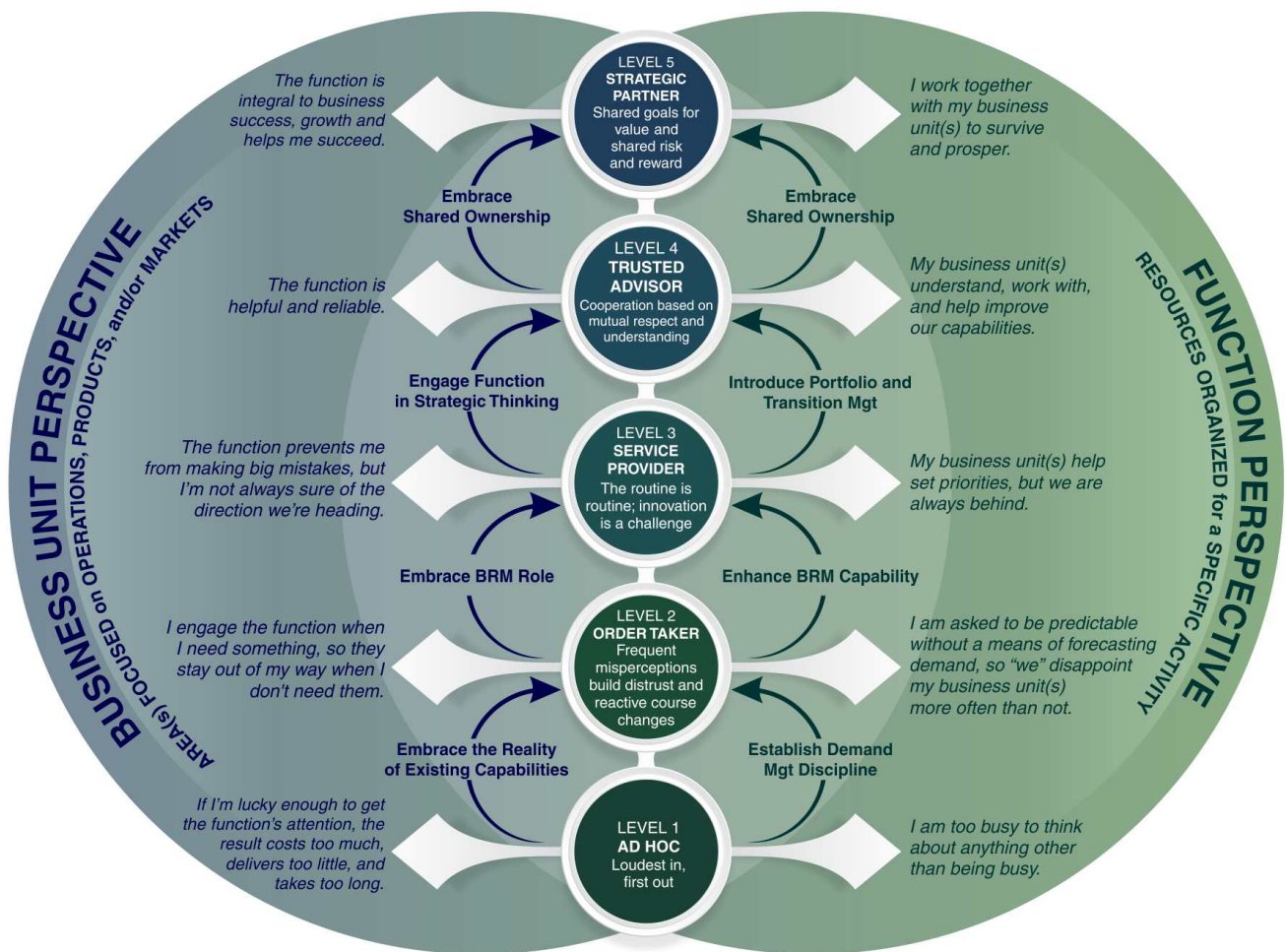
"Together [we can] shape a future that works for all by putting people first, empowering them, and constantly reminding ourselves that all of these new technologies are first and foremost tools made by people for people."

~Klaus Schwab
Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum

BRMs initiate, cultivate, and sustain relationships between people and business functions. They act as delegates in meetings or scrums for IT or other functions. In other cases, they can schedule, lead, and guide in-person meetings, conference calls, or web conferences. They can ensure everyone is heard, that priorities and objectives are understood, and that everyone remains clear on their roles moving forward. Where uncertainty lies, BRMs can follow-up and manage action items until blockers are addressed.

To succeed in implementing DevOps and Agile, there must be constant communication and feedback which can be acted upon, then evaluated. BRMs ensure avoidance of bottlenecks, misunderstandings, and miscalculations about the requirements or expected deliverables.

Once people become comfortable with these new practices and methodologies, suitable tools should be chosen which meet business requirements and with which stakeholders, users, and business partners feel comfortable. Processes should not be re-engineered for tools, but rather for user ease. Similarly, users trained on tools can't be customized to reflect the [cadence and flow](#) of business.



Business Relationship Managers – Success Drivers for Agile and DevOps Adoption

Businesses that are the most successful at advancing their BRM capability and adopting DevOps and Agile do not need to take a long journey to do so. Instead, they practice a series of immediate changes, or change flipping, to implement the practices overnight. Many companies start by adopting DevOps in a pilot division of their organization. A financial services company might start with “DevSecOps” (DevOps practices for Information Security) as a pilot with their technology organization and their operations counterparts such as finance and logistics.

Creating a series of quick wins which can impress executives in the C-suite and prove the impact of DevOps is an ideal way to create a repeatable model to use company-wide.

BRMs set the foundation for converged teams and strategic partnerships and immediately ensure:

- Organizational purpose is identified
- Strategic relationship plans
- Both short and long-term strategy exist across all functions
- Value KPIs are identified across all functions
- Approaches exist for ideation and value management
- Continuous communication

BRMs and Agile Teams

BRM Institute recently published a whitepaper¹ on BRM and Agile Development and Delivery. Agile teams often focus on delivery and development, and Scrum Masters often need help distilling requirements down to sprints or epics in a system like JIRA. Business Relationship Managers first gather and prioritize both strategy and ideas, and then establish value and milestones for deliverables through discussions with Project Leads.

The whitepaper makes an interesting comparison to a BRM team as those who steer the boat, while an Agile Software Development Team sets the cadence and style of rowing. When the engine (delivery) and steering system (project management and quality control) are synchronized, it builds trust and predictability which can help a project succeed.

An Agile development team should feel their BRM counterparts help them secure resources and realistic timeframes for delivery. Likewise, BRMs should feel the Agile team has the skill and discipline to execute on time. Agile teams often appreciate having a BRM as their “connection” so they can continuously design, develop, integrate, and monitor their project with a “single point of focus” for communication to Product Managers and other business partners.



How BRMs Enable DevOps

Many of the ways BRMs complement Agile teams remain consistent with how they can be DevOps [evangelists](#). BRMs sometimes function much like foreign ambassadors, meeting with different “special interest groups” like Marketing, HR, IT, and Finance. They are critical to positioning technology as a Strategic Partner to the line of business departments. This means not treating IT as a cost center/order taker/service provider, or as a “body shop” for keeping applications, data, and devices operating and secure.

Building business cases and shaping demand in a DevOps environment requires skills like interviewing business partners about:

- What is needed
- What the scope of a project is as far as value and timeframe
- Who will be impacted – who stands to gain
- What the risks are
- What success and failure look like

BRMs own value and define SMART goals for DevOps, set and manage expectations across IT and operations, and communicate wins, losses, and gaps throughout the journey. BRMs with balanced technical and business acumen and strong leadership skills will succeed at championing DevOps practices in their organization.

Agile teams create an environment where “to err is human; to debug, divine”. Permission to fail fast, recover, and learn from the experience should be a “shared purpose” and part of company culture. At least where failure wasn’t avoidable, and with minimal damage to a company’s reputation and performance. More than just making space, BRMs have the knowledge to document these failures and share lessons learned in the process. As in life, your business becomes more resilient as a result. It’s not how many times you get knocked down—it’s how many times you rise back up.

Cultural Evolution Through BRM, DevOps, and Agile

DevOps and Agile require a great deal of documentation and continuous measurement against the goals and KPIs that are established and adjusted throughout project lifecycles. Markedly, BRM Metrics are an excellent resource for articulating, measuring, and tracking against value targets like:

- Purpose satisfaction
- Improved productivity
- Partner satisfaction rates or Net Performance Scores
- Profitability, or average revenue per user
- Partner retention
- Contract renewals and new partner onboarding
- Conversion rates, such as event leads to opportunities or e-commerce sales transactions

BRMs collaborate with departmental leaders and data science teams to gather these metrics to present to executives. They can also work with technical teams on evaluations of data visualization tools and business performance dashboards. These evaluations represent why it's important for BRMs to exemplify skills and experience on communicating with both internal and external business partners. For example, they should be comfortable negotiating with consultants and technology vendors to meet business needs.

Communications Related to External Business Partners

Once DevOps and Agile practices are implemented in an organization and begin to gain traction, BRM professionals will not merely sit on the sidelines and observe. Especially when internal and external business partners remain involved in initiatives. Therefore, they need to continually conduct a BRM SWOT analysis on business challenges for addressing and confirming whether the project goals meet value targets. BRM Metrics offer a Business Relationship Maturity model for ongoing evaluation of relationship success and measuring the value coming from them.

BRM Prioritizes People Over Process and Tools

Leveraging BRM will drive faster success in Agile and DevOps because it will:

1. “[Shape demand](#)” for company-wide initiatives. They build relationships with suppliers, service providers, and across internal teams. They leverage these relationships to build credible business cases for what a business needs to succeed as far as innovation, efficiency, partner satisfaction and revenue growth.
2. Create a [convergence culture](#), where everyone with a need or a right to be aware of information receives it at the same time, with the same message, and in the identical context. When everyone across functions is on the same page as far as a business obstacle or opportunity, it helps agile teams to pivot as required. Everyone can feel empowered to act, to collaborate, and to take ownership of the results of their actions.
3. Lead, manage, and deliver communications between Agile development teams, business users, executives, and external business partners. They need to translate, prioritize, initiate, and monitor projects and project milestones. DevOps requires continuous feedback from across the business and distilling this feedback into actionable project roadmaps remains critical.
4. Constantly focus on business value every day, all day. It is the nexus of BRM, DevOps, and Agile. It successfully converges partner value, employee value, supplier value, and investor value.
5. Demonstrate how BRMs are shifting the language of business around the world to Recognized Value.

Personal Purpose + Organizational Purpose + Societal Impact = Recognized Value.

Visualizing the ways BRM, DevOps, and Agile are similar, dissimilar, and where they overlap is only the beginning of the journey for your business. Each individual company will have their own unique mix of these practices, as well as maturities of these practices. By participating in BRM Institute events, leveraging our informational resources, and networking within the community, you will beneficially learn from others who have adopted these practices before you.