The Business Lifesystem Dictionary

A plain-English guide to the defined terms and concepts used in the Business Lifesystem methodology

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Publication version. This Dictionary expands the concise book glossary into a fuller reference for the Business Lifesystem methodology, website and downloadable PDF.

Published by: Business Lifesystem Ltd

Website: businesslifesystem.com

Author / originator: Phil Trickey

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About this Dictionary

The Business Lifesystem uses familiar organisational language in specific and deliberate ways. Where a term is capitalised, it refers to its Business Lifesystem meaning rather than simply its everyday use.

This Dictionary expands the principal defined terms used in the methodology, the book and related Business Lifesystem materials. It is designed for leaders, consultants, transformation teams and delivery professionals who want to understand how the methodology connects strategy, delivery, governance, capability, culture and value.

The definitions are deliberately practical. They are intended to help people use the language consistently, ask better questions and connect organisational activity to measurable Value.

How to use this Dictionary

Use the quick reference table to scan the defined terms. Use the A-Z Dictionary for fuller explanations and context.

The terms are connected. For example, Purpose links to Drivers, Objectives, Target Value, Results, Golden Enablers, Capability, Delivery Management Vehicles and Realised Value through the Golden Thread. Business DNA links Customer, Proposition, Capability and Finance. Value Opportunities and the Enterprise Value Ledger connect Value Potential, Target Value, Latent Value, Realised Value and Foregone Value to the Enablers and other conditions required for realisation. Benefits Realisation Contracts make material Benefit ownership and commitments explicit.

The Dictionary is not intended to replace judgement. It provides shared language so that leaders can make the Enterprise clearer, more coherent and easier to improve.

Core frameworks at a glance

Framework	Purpose
Business DNA	Customer, Proposition, Capability and Finance: the four connected perspectives used to understand the underlying logic of the Business.
Living-System Layers	Creation, Nature, Nurture and Environment: the four ways of understanding what shapes the Enterprise.
Golden Thread	Purpose -> Drivers -> Objectives -> Target Value -> Results -> Golden Enablers -> Capability -> Delivery Management Vehicles -> Realised Value.
Value states and Enterprise Value Ledger	Value Potential, Target Value, Latent Value, Realised Value and Foregone Value: the states used to understand a Value Opportunity and the relationship-based ledger that connects Value to Enablers and other realisation conditions without double-counting.
Five Business Lifesystem Stages	Reveal, Design, Route, Deliver and Sustain: the connected stages through which the Enterprise is understood, redesigned, transformed and continually renewed.
Four Conditions for Reducing Confusion	Clarity, Consistency, Priority and Focus: the operating conditions that help the Enterprise convert more effort into Value.
CHOICES	Collaboration, Harmony, Openness, Innovation, Creativity, Environment and Success: the framework for examining internal culture and behaviour.
PERSPECTIVE	Political, Economic, Regulatory, Social, People, Environmental, Competitive, Technological, Innovation, Vogue and Ethical forces shaping the external Environment.

Quick reference: defined terms

This table provides a concise view of the terms included in the full A-Z Dictionary.

Defined term	Short definition
Accountability	The clear ownership of a decision, Result, Benefit, risk, Capability or action, with authority sufficient to influence what happens.
Activity	Organised work undertaken by the Enterprise, usually through teams, projects, workstreams, functions or operations.
Alignment	The condition in which Purpose, strategy, priorities, Capability, delivery, governance and Value are sufficiently connected and mutually reinforcing.
Asset	A resource owned, controlled or accessed by the Enterprise that supports Capability and helps the Business deliver its Proposition.
Benefit	A measurable advantage resulting from change that has real Value for the Business and contributes to one or more Objectives.
Benefit Owner	The person accountable for ensuring that a defined Benefit is realised and sustained, with authority to influence the conditions on which it depends.
Benefits Realisation Contract	A governance commitment that makes Benefit ownership, measures, dependencies, Capability, financial treatment and accountability explicit before and after delivery.
Business	Whom the Enterprise serves, what it offers, what it seeks to achieve and the Value it intends to create.
Business DNA	The underlying logic of the Business, expressed through four connected perspectives: Customer, Proposition, Capability and Finance.
Business DNA Relationships	Six relationships used to test alignment: Need–Offer Fit, Promise–Delivery Gap, Capability–Funding Gap, Spend–Value Gap, Experience–Operating Model Gap and Offer–Economics Fit.
Business Lifesystem	A connected methodology for seeing, understanding, designing, transforming and sustaining an Enterprise as a living system.
Business Lifesystem Toolkit	The detailed assessments, models, templates, registers, scoring mechanisms and practical tools that support rigorous and repeatable application of the Business Lifesystem methodology.
Capability	What the Business must be able to do to fulfil its Proposition and achieve its Results, created through People, Partners, Process and Assets.
Capability-Funding Gap	A Business DNA relationship showing where the Capability required to deliver the Proposition is not supported by sufficient resources or Investment.
Chaotic Evolution	The accumulation of individually sensible changes without repeatedly reconnecting the Business and Organisation as a coherent whole, creating complexity, fragmentation and misalignment.
CHOICES	The BLS lens for examining internal conditions and choices through Collaboration, Harmony, Openness, Innovation, Creativity, Environment and Success.
Clarity	The operating condition in which the Enterprise is clear about Purpose, Objectives, ownership, priorities, Value and the work required.
Collaboration	The CHOICES condition concerned with how effectively people, teams, functions and partners work across boundaries to create Value.
Consistency	The operating condition in which language, decisions, governance, measures and behaviour reinforce rather than contradict one another.
Creation	The living-system layer concerned with the origins, Purpose, history and accumulated choices from which the Enterprise has emerged.
Creativity	The CHOICES condition concerned with how the Enterprise generates, tests and applies new ideas to improve Value.

Current Enterprise Integrity Assessment	The structured assessment used during Reveal to understand the current Enterprise by examining the Business, the Organisation, the connections between them, where Value Leakage is occurring and where Latent Value or other Value Opportunities may exist.
Current Enterprise Model	A practical, evidence-based representation of the current Enterprise, showing the Business being conducted, the Organisation through which it is enabled and the connections between them.
Customer	The Business DNA perspective concerned with whom the Business serves and whose Needs anchor Value creation. Its components are Market, Acquisition, Retention and Need.
Customer Need	The need, problem, expectation or outcome required by the Customer that gives purpose and direction to the Proposition.
Define	The Proposition component concerned with clarifying what the Business intends to offer and the Value promise it is making.
Deliver	The stage or Proposition component concerned with making the offer, change or Capability work in practice.
Delivery Management Vehicle	A portfolio, programme, project, workstream or other mechanism used to organise and govern delivery. It carries work towards Value; it is not the Value itself.
Design	The stage in which leaders describe the future Enterprise required to achieve Purpose, Objectives, Results and Target Value.
Design Implication	Something revealed by diagnosis that the future Enterprise needs to address without prematurely defining the solution or project required.
Designed Evolution	The continuing condition in which an Enterprise adapts deliberately while repeatedly reconnecting change to Purpose, Business DNA, the Golden Thread and Value, rather than allowing change to accumulate chaotically.
Develop	The Proposition component concerned with building, refining or improving the offer so it can meet Customer Need and create Value.
Driver	An internal or external force that makes action necessary, valuable or urgent and explains why an Objective deserves attention now.
Emerging Trend	A developing pattern, expectation, technology, behaviour or market signal that may shape the future Environment of the Enterprise.
Enabler	Something that must be created, changed, decided or put in place to make an Outcome possible.
Enterprise	The complete living system formed by the relationship between the Business and the Organisation.
Enterprise Regeneration	The deliberate renewal of an Enterprise to restore coherence and strengthen its ability to create Value by preserving what works, removing or redesigning what no longer does, strengthening what is fragile and creating what the future Business requires. It is achieved through the five Business Lifesystem stages rather than added as a sixth stage.
Enterprise Value Ledger	A relationship-based Business Lifesystem tool that records Value Opportunities across Value Potential, Target Value, Latent Value, Realised Value and Foregone Value, linking them to Enablers, dependencies, Investment, effort, resources and other realisation conditions while avoiding double-counting.
Environment	The external context surrounding the Enterprise; also a CHOICES condition concerning the Organisation's internal response to sustainability, economic and community responsibilities.
Experience-Operating Model Gap	A Business DNA relationship showing where Customer experience is damaged by the way the Organisation is structured or operated.
Finance	The Business DNA perspective concerned with how resources are obtained and committed and how sustainable Value is created, through Investment, Income, Profit and Value.
Five Business Lifesystem Stages	Reveal, Design, Route, Deliver and Sustain: the five connected stages through which the Enterprise is understood, regenerated and sustained. Enterprise Regeneration is achieved through the stages rather than added as a sixth stage; Sustain supports Designed Evolution.
Focus	The operating condition in which leadership attention, resources and delivery effort are concentrated on the work that creates the greatest Value.

Foregone Value	Value that could have been pursued or realised but has been consciously rejected, lost or made uneconomic or unavailable.
Four Conditions for Reducing Confusion	Clarity, Consistency, Priority and Focus: four operating conditions that help an Enterprise convert more effort into Value.
Future Enterprise Design	The discipline of defining the future Enterprise by designing the future Business first and then the Organisation required to enable it.
Golden Enabler	A product, decision, activity or deliverable that directly enables one or more Outcomes or Benefits to be realised.
Golden Thread	The line of sight from Purpose → Drivers → Objectives → Target Value → Results → Golden Enablers → Capability → Delivery Management Vehicles → Realised Value. Results comprise Outcomes and Benefits.
Harmony	The CHOICES condition concerned with constructive balance, tension management and the ability to work through disagreement productively.
Income	The funding, revenue or resource inflow through which the Business sustains itself and supports its Proposition and Capability.
Innovation	A CHOICES condition concerned with improvement, proactivity, experimentation and technology; also a PERSPECTIVE factor when examining external innovation.
Integrity Check	A structured test of whether the relationships across the Enterprise are sufficiently clear, coherent, credible and owned.
Interim Enabler	An Enabler required to make another Enabler possible rather than directly enabling an Outcome or Benefit.
Investment	The financial and other resources committed by the Business, including money, time, capacity and leadership attention, and the choices about where those resources should be deployed.
Latent Value	Value associated with a Value Opportunity that could be realised from existing or planned Enablers but remains unrealised because one or more required conditions are absent or incomplete.
Living-System Layers	Four connected ways of understanding what shapes the Enterprise: Creation—its origins and accumulated history; Nature—its underlying Business pattern; Nurture—how it is led and shaped internally; and Environment—the external world to which it must respond.
Market	The Customer context or environment in which the Business operates, competes, serves or is chosen.
Nature	The foundational layer of the Enterprise, describing what it is built from: Customers, Propositions, Capabilities and Finance.
Need-Offer Fit	A Business DNA relationship showing whether the Proposition genuinely addresses Customer Need.
Nurture	The cultural and behavioural layer of the Enterprise, shaping Collaboration, Harmony, Openness, Innovation, Creativity, Environment and Success.
Objective	A clear statement of what the Business intends to achieve, not an activity, project, solution, deliverable or milestone.
Offer-Economics Fit	A Business DNA relationship showing whether the Proposition makes financial and resource sense for the Business.
Openness	The CHOICES condition concerned with whether issues, risks, evidence, disagreement and learning can be surfaced honestly.
Organisation	How people, resources, processes, partners and assets are arranged to conduct and enable the Business.
Organisational Debt	The accumulated complexity, workarounds, misalignment and unresolved decisions that make the Enterprise harder to lead and improve.
Outcome	A measurable improvement in performance, behaviour, condition or experience enabled by one or more Golden Enablers.

Output	Something produced or delivered through organised work that may enable change but is not, by itself, an Outcome or Benefit.
Partner	An external or internal party whose contribution forms part of the Capability required to deliver the Proposition and achieve Results.
People	The human Capability required to conduct the Business, including skills, capacity, leadership, roles, behaviours and experience.
PERSPECTIVE	The BLS lens for examining external forces through Politics, Economics, Regulation, Social, People, Ecology, Competition, Technology, Innovation, Vogue and Ethics.
Preserve-Stop-Strengthen-Start	Four choices used during Design to determine what the future Enterprise should retain, remove, improve or create. Together they express the core logic of Enterprise Regeneration.
Priority	The operating condition in which the Enterprise is clear about what genuinely comes first and how competing demands are sequenced.
Process	The organised sequence of work, decisions, handovers, controls or interactions through which the Business is conducted.
Profit	The financial surplus or return generated by the Business where commercial or financial sustainability requires it.
Promise-Delivery Gap	A Business DNA relationship showing where the Proposition promises more than the Enterprise can reliably deliver.
Proposition	The Business DNA perspective concerned with what the Business offers in response to Customer Need and the promise of Value it makes. Its components are Define, Design, Develop and Deliver.
Prospect	A material opportunity that the Enterprise is sufficiently well positioned to pursue, identified by relating external opportunity to internal strength and Capability.
Purpose	The enduring reason the Business exists and the Value it is ultimately there to create.
Realised Value	Value that the Enterprise can demonstrate has actually been achieved, evidenced and sustained, rather than merely planned or forecast.
Result	A collection of one or more Outcomes and Benefits that demonstrates progress towards an Objective and quantifies Value.
Risk	A material exposure created when an external threat interacts with internal weakness, dependency or vulnerability.
Retention	The Customer component concerned with sustaining valuable relationships, trust, use, loyalty or dependence over time.
Reveal	The stage in which the Current Enterprise is made visible, including the Business, Organisation, connections and Value Leakage.
Route	The stage in which leaders choose a credible path from current reality towards the Target Enterprise Model and Realised Value.
Route Map	The representation of the chosen Transformation Route, showing sequencing, Enablers, dependencies, Capability, Investment, decision points and Value-release points.
Spend-Value Gap	A Business DNA relationship showing where expenditure or effort is not producing sufficient Value for the Enterprise.
Stop Decision	A deliberate leadership decision to stop, pause, retire, decommission or simplify work that no longer sufficiently justifies the resources it consumes.
Strengthen	The design choice to improve, reinforce or invest in something that remains valuable but is not currently strong enough.
Sustain	The stage in which clarity, Alignment and Value discipline are embedded into the way the Enterprise is led and managed.
Target Enterprise Model	A coherent representation of the future Enterprise, bringing together the future Business and the Organisation required to enable it.
Target Value	The measurable Value the Enterprise intends to create through achievement of an Objective.

Transformation Route	The chosen path through which the Enterprise intends to move from current reality towards its future state and Realised Value.
Value	The financial or non-financial worth created, protected or enabled by the Enterprise relative to the Investment, effort and resources involved.
Value by Subtraction	Value created by stopping, retiring, simplifying or decommissioning work that no longer sufficiently supports the Business.
Value Leakage	Value lost or eroded through weak connections, duplication, fragmentation, unclear Objectives, unsupported change or other forms of misalignment within the Enterprise.
Value Opportunity	A defined opportunity to create, unlock, protect or increase Value, against which Value states and the Enablers and other conditions required for realisation can be related.
Value Potential	The plausible Value associated with a defined Value Opportunity if the necessary conditions can be satisfied, before the Enterprise decides how much of that Value to target.
Value-led	A Business Lifesystem principle in which decisions, priorities and actions are governed by the Value the Enterprise intends to realise. The principle is applied throughout the methodology through concepts including Value-led Delivery, Value-led Governance, Value-led Leadership and Value-led Reporting.
Value-led Delivery	An approach to delivery in which Investment, prioritisation, sequencing and delivery decisions are continually governed by the Outcomes, Benefits and Target Value they are intended to realise, rather than by the completion of activity or Outputs alone.
Vogue	The PERSPECTIVE factor concerned with prevailing fashions, narratives, expectations or emerging trends that may influence the Enterprise.

A-Z Dictionary

The following entries provide fuller descriptions of the principal Business Lifesystem terms. Some terms also appear as components within larger frameworks such as Business DNA, CHOICES, PERSPECTIVE and the Golden Thread.

A

Accountability

Short definition: The clear ownership of a decision, Result, Benefit, risk, Capability or action, with authority sufficient to influence what happens.

Full description: In the Business Lifesystem, Accountability is more than being named in a plan or shown in a governance chart. It means that a person or role is genuinely responsible for ensuring that something is achieved, resolved, changed or sustained. Accountability matters because many Enterprises lose Value when responsibility is fragmented across committees, projects, functions or suppliers without anyone having enough authority to act. Strong Accountability connects ownership, decision rights, evidence and consequences.

Activity

Short definition: Organised work undertaken by the Enterprise, usually through teams, projects, workstreams, functions or operations.

Full description: Activity is necessary, but it is not the same as Value. The Business Lifesystem distinguishes between work being done, Outputs being produced, Outcomes being achieved and Benefits being realised. This distinction helps leaders avoid confusing motion with progress. An Enterprise may be extremely busy while still failing to move towards its Objectives. Activity should therefore be tested against the Golden Thread: why is it needed, what does it enable and how does it contribute to Results and Realised Value?

Alignment

Short definition: The condition in which Purpose, strategy, priorities, Capability, delivery, governance and Value are sufficiently connected and mutually reinforcing.

Full description: Alignment is one of the central disciplines of the Business Lifesystem. It is present when the Enterprise can explain how its Objectives relate to its Purpose, how delivery activity supports those Objectives, how Capabilities enable the desired Results and how Benefits will be realised. Alignment is weakened when strategies, projects, budgets, teams and suppliers operate to different logics. The aim is not perfect uniformity, but sufficient coherence for leaders to make better choices and convert more effort into Value.

Asset

Short definition: A resource owned, controlled or accessed by the Enterprise that supports Capability and helps the Business deliver its Proposition.

Full description: Assets may include physical estate, equipment, technology platforms, information, data, intellectual property, brands, licences or other resources that support delivery. Within Business DNA, Assets form part of Capability because they help determine what the Business can reliably do. An Asset creates Value only when it contributes to the Proposition, supports Customer Need, enables Results or improves the Organisation needed to conduct the Business.

B

Benefit

Short definition: A measurable advantage resulting from change that has real Value for the Business and contributes to one or more Objectives.

Full description: A Benefit is not simply a hoped-for improvement, a positive narrative in a business case or a broad statement of intent. It should be specific, measurable and owned. In the Business Lifesystem, Benefits sit within Results and provide evidence that activity has created Value. They may be financial, operational, strategic, customer-related, staff-related, quality-related, risk-related or capability-related. A Benefit should be linked to an Outcome, have a baseline, have a target and be supported by an explicit realisation route.

Benefit Owner

Short definition: The person accountable for ensuring that a defined Benefit is realised and sustained, with authority to influence the conditions on which it depends.

Full description: The Benefit Owner is usually not the project manager. A project may deliver an Output or Golden Enabler, but Benefits are commonly realised through operational, financial, behavioural or organisational change. The Benefit Owner must therefore be close enough to the Business to influence how work changes after delivery. For a cash-releasing Benefit, this may include a budget holder. For a productivity, quality or customer Benefit, it may be an operational or service leader. Without a credible Benefit Owner, Benefits remain aspirations rather than commitments.

Benefits Realisation Contract

Short definition: A governance commitment that makes Benefit ownership, measures, dependencies, Capability, financial treatment and accountability explicit before and after delivery.

Full description: The Benefits Realisation Contract is not intended to be a legal contract. It is a disciplined governance commitment that makes a material Benefit explicit before Investment is approved and keeps responsibility alive through delivery and operational change. It should identify the Benefit, baseline, target, owner, measurement method, dependencies, enabling changes, complete cost of realisation, financial treatment where relevant and evidence required to prove realisation. The purpose is to resolve assumptions and disagreements before the Investment decision, make the commitments required from delivery and the Business visible, and prevent expected Value from becoming a hopeful consequence of successful project completion. Where a cash-releasing Benefit is claimed, the relevant Budget Holder should agree how and when the financial consequence will be taken.

Business

Short definition: Whom the Enterprise serves, what it offers, what it seeks to achieve and the Value it intends to create.

Full description: In the Business Lifesystem, Business is used deliberately. It does not simply mean a commercial company. It describes the value-creating logic of the Enterprise: the Customers or communities it serves, the Propositions it makes, the Capabilities required, the financial or resource logic that sustains it, the Objectives it pursues and the Results it needs to achieve. Public services, charities, healthcare systems and commercial firms all have a Business in this sense, because each exists to create some form of Value.

Business DNA

Short definition: The underlying logic of the Business, expressed through four connected perspectives: Customer, Proposition, Capability and Finance.

Full description: Business DNA describes the core pattern of the Business. Customer explains who the Business serves and the Needs that anchor Value. Proposition describes what is offered in response. Capability describes what the Business must be able to do to deliver the Proposition and achieve Results. Finance describes how resources are obtained, committed and converted into sustainable Value. These four perspectives should not be assessed separately. Their relationships reveal whether the Business is coherent, viable and capable of delivering what it promises.

Business DNA Relationships

Short definition: Six relationships used to test alignment: Need–Offer Fit, Promise–Delivery Gap, Capability–Funding Gap, Spend–Value Gap, Experience–Operating Model Gap and Offer–Economics Fit.

Full description: The six Business DNA Relationships are Need-Offer Fit, Promise-Delivery Gap, Capability-Funding Gap, Spend-Value Gap, Experience-Operating Model Gap and Offer-Economics Fit. They help leaders test whether the Business makes sense as a connected whole. A Proposition may be attractive but unsupported by Capability. A Capability may be strong but insufficiently funded. Customer experience may be damaged by the operating model. These relationships reveal where Value Leakage, misalignment or strategic risk may be hiding.

Business Lifesystem

Short definition: A connected methodology for seeing, understanding, designing, transforming and sustaining an Enterprise as a living system.

Full description: The Business Lifesystem helps leaders understand an Enterprise as the relationship between the Business and the Organisation. It provides language, models and disciplines for revealing how the Enterprise currently works, designing a clearer future, creating a credible Route to Value, delivering Golden Enablers and sustaining clarity, Alignment and Realised Value. It is not a rigid consulting product or a single diagnostic checklist. It is a practical way of making complexity visible enough to lead deliberately.

Business Lifesystem Toolkit

Short definition: The detailed assessments, models, templates, registers, scoring mechanisms and practical tools that support rigorous and repeatable application of the Business Lifesystem methodology.

Full description: The Toolkit provides the practical mechanisms used to apply the methodology systematically and repeatably. It includes detailed assessments, working templates, scoring mechanisms, registers, facilitation structures and diagnostic tools for revealing the Current Enterprise, assessing Business DNA alignment, testing the Golden Thread, designing the Target Enterprise Model, creating the Transformation Route, governing Benefits, maintaining an Enterprise Value Ledger and identifying opportunities for Value by Subtraction. The Toolkit should be applied proportionately. Its purpose is not to create paperwork, but to provide the working artefacts needed when the methodology is used rigorously across a real Enterprise.

C

Capability

Short definition: What the Business must be able to do to fulfil its Proposition and achieve its Results, created through People, Partners, Process and Assets.

Full description: Capability forms the bridge between the Business and the Organisation. It describes what must be in place for the Business to deliver what it promises. Capability includes skills, capacity, partners, processes, systems, data, assets, ways of working and management disciplines. A Business may have a strong Purpose and attractive Proposition, but it will struggle to create Value if the required Capability is absent, fragmented, underfunded or misaligned. Capability should therefore be tested against Customer Need, Proposition and Finance.

Capability-Funding Gap

Short definition: A Business DNA relationship showing where the Capability required to deliver the Proposition is not supported by sufficient resources or Investment.

Full description: The Capability-Funding Gap appears when the Business expects a level of delivery that its current resource, Investment or financial logic cannot support. It may show up as overloaded teams, underpowered systems, weak supplier capacity, inadequate training, missing data or unsupported processes. The gap is important because leaders may describe the issue as poor delivery when the deeper problem is that the Business has not funded, prioritised or created the Capability needed to achieve its Objectives.

Chaotic Evolution

Short definition: The accumulation of individually sensible changes without repeatedly reconnecting the Business and Organisation as a coherent whole, creating complexity, fragmentation and misalignment.

Full description: Chaotic Evolution occurs when decisions, initiatives, systems, structures, roles, processes and workarounds accumulate over time without the Enterprise being repeatedly reconnected to Purpose, Business DNA and Value. The individual decisions may have made sense at the time, but their combined effect can create complexity, fragmentation, duplication and misalignment. Chaotic Evolution is not the same as disorder. The Organisation may still function, but it becomes harder to understand, lead and improve.

CHOICES

Short definition: The BLS lens for examining internal conditions and choices through Collaboration, Harmony, Openness, Innovation, Creativity, Environment and Success.

Full description: CHOICES examines the internal conditions that shape how the Enterprise behaves through seven lenses: Collaboration, Harmony, Openness, Innovation, Creativity, Environment and Success. Collaboration considers how effectively people, teams, functions and partners work across boundaries. Harmony examines how constructive tension, cooperation and responsiveness are managed. Openness considers whether evidence, risk and disagreement can be surfaced honestly. Innovation examines improvement, proactivity, experimentation and technology. Creativity considers how effectively the Organisation generates, tests and applies new ideas to improve Value. Environment considers the Organisation's internal response to sustainability, economic and community responsibilities. Success examines reputation, differentiation, brand strength and how performance is evaluated. The framework recognises that strategy, structure and delivery methods are filtered through culture. A sound Target Enterprise Model will not create Value if the internal conditions make change difficult to own, adopt or sustain.

Clarity

Short definition: The operating condition in which the Enterprise is clear about Purpose, Objectives, ownership, priorities, Value and the work required.

Full description: Clarity reduces confusion by making the important relationships visible. It helps leaders distinguish between activity, Output, Outcome, Benefit and Value. It also makes ambiguity harder to hide: who owns the Benefit, what problem is being solved, what will change, what should stop and how success will be evidenced. Clarity does not remove complexity, but it makes complexity easier to lead. It is one of the Four Conditions for Reducing Confusion.

Collaboration

Short definition: The CHOICES condition concerned with how effectively people, teams, functions and partners work across boundaries to create Value.

Full description: Collaboration is more than goodwill or meeting attendance. It is the practical ability of the Enterprise to connect work across organisational boundaries, share information, resolve dependencies and act in the interests of the whole system. Weak Collaboration can create duplication, handover friction, local optimisation and delayed Benefits. Strong Collaboration helps the Organisation support the Business as an integrated Enterprise.

Consistency

Short definition: The operating condition in which language, decisions, governance, measures and behaviour reinforce rather than contradict one another.

Full description: Consistency helps an Enterprise convert effort into Value by reducing contradictory signals. If leaders say that one Objective is critical but allocate resources elsewhere, the system receives an inconsistent message. If governance measures activity while strategy asks for Outcomes, teams optimise the wrong things. Consistency does not mean rigidity. It means that the Enterprise is coherent enough for people to understand what matters and act accordingly.

Creation

Short definition: The living-system layer concerned with the origins, Purpose, history and accumulated choices from which the Enterprise has emerged.

Full description: Creation helps leaders recognise that an Enterprise does not start from a blank page. It has a history, founding Purpose, legacy commitments, inherited assumptions, past Investments and previous decisions that continue to shape current reality. These origins may create strengths, identity and legitimacy, but they may also explain why certain complexities have accumulated. Understanding Creation helps leaders distinguish what should be honoured, what should be challenged and what should no longer determine the future.

Creativity

Short definition: The CHOICES condition concerned with how the Enterprise generates, tests and applies new ideas to improve Value.

Full description: Creativity is the capacity to imagine, generate and test better ways of serving Customers, organising work, using Capability and creating Value. In the Business Lifesystem, Creativity is not detached innovation theatre. It is useful when connected to Purpose, Customer Need, Proposition, Capability and Finance. Weak Creativity can leave the Enterprise trapped in inherited assumptions. Unfocused Creativity can add complexity. Disciplined Creativity helps the Enterprise generate and test better choices; Innovation examines how effectively promising ideas and opportunities are turned into practical improvement.

Current Enterprise Integrity Assessment

Short definition: The structured assessment used during Reveal to understand the current Enterprise by examining the Business, the Organisation, the connections between them, where Value Leakage is occurring and where Latent Value or other Value Opportunities may exist.

Full description: The Current Enterprise Integrity Assessment examines the Business, the Organisation and the connections between them. It helps reveal how the Enterprise is actually working, rather than how formal documents suggest it should work. The assessment may test Business DNA, governance, Capability, delivery, Benefits, priorities, operating model and cultural conditions. It also looks for Value Leakage, Latent Value and other Value Opportunities. Its purpose is to identify where the Enterprise is coherent, where it is misaligned and which Design Implications should shape the future Enterprise.

Current Enterprise Model

Short definition: A practical, evidence-based representation of the current Enterprise, showing the Business, Organisation and their connections.

Full description: The Current Enterprise Model describes how the Enterprise currently creates, loses, protects or absorbs Value. It is based on evidence rather than aspiration. It should show Customers, Propositions, Capabilities, financial logic, organisational arrangements, dependencies, governance, delivery activity and known Value Leakage. The purpose is not to criticise the past, but to make the present visible enough for leaders to design a more coherent future.

Customer

Short definition: The Business DNA perspective concerned with whom the Business serves and whose Needs anchor Value creation. Its components are Market, Acquisition, Retention and Need.

Full description: Customer identifies the people, organisations, communities, users, patients, citizens or stakeholders the Business exists to serve. It examines the markets or environments in which they exist, how they are acquired or accessed, how relationships are retained and what Needs the Business must address. Customer is the anchor of Business DNA because Value only makes sense in relation to someone or something served by the Business. Without a clear Customer perspective, Proposition, Capability and Finance can drift away from real need.

Customer Need

Short definition: The need, problem, expectation or outcome required by the Customer that gives purpose and direction to the Proposition.

Full description: Customer Need is not simply what the Business already offers or what internal teams assume Customers want. It should be understood from evidence, experience, data and direct engagement. Clear Customer Need helps leaders assess whether the Proposition remains relevant and whether Capability and Finance are aligned. If Need is unclear, the Enterprise may optimise internally while failing to create sufficient Customer Value.

D

Define

Short definition: The Proposition component concerned with clarifying what the Business intends to offer and the Value promise it is making.

Full description: Define establishes the boundaries, purpose and intended Value of the Proposition. It should answer what is being offered, to whom, why it is needed and how it contributes to Objectives. Weak definition creates confusion later in design, development and delivery. A poorly defined Proposition may lead to overcomplicated services, misaligned Capability, weak Customer experience and Benefits that are difficult to evidence.

Deliver

Short definition: The stage or Proposition component concerned with making the offer, change or Capability work in practice.

Full description: Deliver has two related uses in the Business Lifesystem. As part of Proposition, it concerns how the offer reaches Customers and creates experience. As one of the Five Business Lifesystem Stages, it concerns how Golden Enablers are created and embedded through Delivery Management Vehicles. In both uses, the central discipline is the same: delivery should remain connected to Outcomes, Benefits and Realised Value, not become an end in itself.

Delivery Management Vehicle

Short definition: A portfolio, programme, project, workstream or other mechanism used to organise and govern delivery. It carries work towards Value; it is not the Value itself.

Full description: A Delivery Management Vehicle carries work towards Value, but it is not the Value itself. Projects and programmes may produce Outputs, create Golden Enablers, build Capability and coordinate change, but their completion is not evidence that Benefits have been realised. The Business Lifesystem uses this term to remind leaders that delivery structures are vehicles, not destinations. They should be selected and governed according to the Results they are intended to enable.

Design

Short definition: The stage in which leaders describe the future Enterprise required to achieve Purpose, Objectives, Results and Target Value.

Full description: Design follows Reveal. It turns insight about the Current Enterprise into choices about the Target Enterprise Model. Design should not jump prematurely to projects, structures or systems. It should define the future Business, the Organisation required to enable it, the Capabilities needed, the Value to be created and the Design Implications that must be addressed. Strong Design creates coherence before delivery activity multiplies.

Design Implication

Short definition: Something revealed by diagnosis that the future Enterprise needs to address without prematurely defining the solution or project required.

Full description: A Design Implication sits between diagnosis and solution. It captures what the Target Enterprise Model must respond to, such as a Capability gap, unclear ownership, weak Customer fit, Value Leakage, fragile governance or an unaffordable Proposition. The discipline is important because Organisations often rush from problem to project. By identifying Design Implications first, leaders can make better choices about what should be preserved, stopped, strengthened or started.

Develop

Short definition: The Proposition component concerned with building, refining or improving the offer so it can meet Customer Need and create Value.

Full description: Develop turns a defined and designed Proposition into something that can be used, delivered, adopted or scaled. It may involve product development, service design, process design, technology build, pathway redesign, supplier work or operational preparation. In the Business Lifesystem, Develop should remain connected to Customer Need, Capability and Finance, otherwise the Enterprise may create something impressive that is hard to deliver or insufficiently valuable.

Designed Evolution

Short definition: The continuing condition in which an Enterprise adapts deliberately while repeatedly reconnecting change to Purpose, Business DNA, the Golden Thread and Value, rather than allowing change to accumulate chaotically.

Full description: Designed Evolution is the alternative to allowing Chaotic Evolution to return after transformation. It does not mean that change is perfectly controlled or centrally planned. It means that adaptation remains sufficiently deliberate for leaders to keep the important connections visible: why the Enterprise is changing, what Value it is seeking, how the change affects Business DNA and whether new decisions strengthen or weaken the whole. Enterprise Regeneration may be required to restore coherence where substantial renewal is needed; Sustain then embeds the disciplines that allow the regenerated Enterprise to keep evolving without losing sight of Purpose and Value.

Driver

Short definition: An internal or external force that makes action necessary, valuable or urgent and explains why an Objective deserves attention now.

Full description: Drivers create the context for strategic choice. They may include financial pressure, Customer Need, regulatory change, technology, competition, workforce constraints, risk, quality issues, political pressure, demand growth or new opportunity. In the Golden Thread, Drivers sit between Purpose and Objectives. They explain why the Enterprise must act and help leaders distinguish genuine strategic necessity from noise, fashion or local pressure.

E

Emerging Trend

Short definition: A developing pattern, expectation, technology, behaviour or market signal that may shape the future Environment of the Enterprise.

Full description: Emerging Trends are considered within PERSPECTIVE because they can create opportunity, risk or pressure before they become fully established. Some trends are material and require strategic response. Others are temporary fashions that may distract attention or add complexity. The Business Lifesystem encourages leaders to examine trends deliberately, testing their relevance to Purpose, Customer Need, Proposition, Capability, Finance and Target Value.

Enabler

Short definition: Something that must be created, changed, decided or put in place to make an Outcome possible.

Full description: An Enabler may be a product, decision, policy, process, technology, skill, supplier arrangement, dataset, governance change, role, asset or other condition required for change. Enablers are important because Outcomes rarely appear simply because an Objective has been written down. Some Enablers directly support Outcomes or Benefits and are therefore Golden Enablers. Others are Interim Enablers because they make further Enablers possible. Identifying Enablers helps leaders create a credible Route to Value.

Enterprise

Short definition: The complete living system formed by the relationship between the Business and the Organisation.

Full description: Enterprise is the central unit of analysis in the Business Lifesystem. It includes the Business - whom it serves, what it offers, what it seeks to achieve and the Value it intends to create - and the Organisation through which that Business is conducted and enabled. Seeing the Enterprise as a whole helps leaders avoid solving problems in fragments. A Business may be clear but poorly enabled. An Organisation may be busy but disconnected from the Business it exists to serve.

Enterprise Regeneration

Short definition: The deliberate renewal of an Enterprise to restore coherence and strengthen its ability to create Value by preserving what works, removing or redesigning what no longer does, strengthening what is fragile and creating what the future Business requires.

Full description: Enterprise Regeneration describes the deliberate restoration of coherence and Value-creating capacity where Chaotic Evolution has allowed Business and Organisation to drift apart. It is not wholesale reinvention and it is not an additional Business Lifesystem stage. Reveal, Design, Route and Deliver provide the mechanism through which regeneration occurs, while Sustain enables the renewed Enterprise to continue through Designed Evolution. The design logic is expressed through Preserve, Stop, Strengthen and Start: retain what remains valuable, remove or redesign what no longer does, reinforce what is fragile and create the Capability and organisational conditions the future Business requires.

Enterprise Value Ledger

Short definition: A relationship-based Business Lifesystem tool that records Value Opportunities across Value Potential, Target Value, Latent Value, Realised Value and Foregone Value, linking them to Enablers, dependencies, Investment, effort, resources and other realisation conditions while avoiding double-counting.

Full description: The Enterprise Value Ledger provides an Enterprise-level view of Value that complements, rather than replaces, Benefits registers and Benefits Realisation Contracts. For each material Value Opportunity it can record Value Potential, the Target Value being pursued, Value already Realised, Value that remains Latent and Value that has become Foregone. It also shows the Enablers, dependencies, resources, effort, Investment and other conditions required for realisation. Value is recorded once against the opportunity and contributing projects, Assets or Enablers are linked to it, preventing several delivery vehicles from independently claiming the same Benefit. The Ledger therefore supports better Investment choices and a more credible account of how Value moves from possibility to evidence.

Environment

Short definition: The external context surrounding the Enterprise, including forces, constraints and opportunities that shape strategy, delivery, risk and Value.

Full description: Environment is one of the Living-System Layers. It recognises that the Enterprise does not operate in isolation. Politics, economics, regulation, social expectations, people factors, ecology, competition, technology, innovation, emerging trends and ethics can all affect what is possible and valuable. Environment should be assessed through PERSPECTIVE, not as a detached horizon-scanning exercise but as part of the Business Lifesystem: what does the external world mean for Customer Need, Proposition, Capability, Finance and future Value? Environment also appears within CHOICES, where it concerns the Organisation's internal response to sustainability, economic and community responsibilities. This is distinct from the wider external Environment layer.

Experience-Operating Model Gap

Short definition: A Business DNA relationship showing where Customer experience is damaged by the way the Organisation is structured or operated.

Full description: This gap appears when the Business promises an experience that the operating model cannot consistently support. It may be caused by handovers, fragmented systems, unclear ownership, poor information, duplicated processes, supplier boundaries or misaligned incentives. Customer-facing problems are often symptoms of operating model design. Testing the Experience-Operating Model Gap helps leaders look beyond individual complaints and understand the organisational causes of friction.

F

Finance

Short definition: The Business DNA perspective concerned with how resources are obtained and committed and how sustainable Value is created, through Investment, Income, Profit and Value.

Full description: Finance includes Investment, Income or funding, Profit or surplus where relevant, affordability and Value. It describes the financial logic of the Business: how resources flow in, how they are spent and what worth is created from that commitment. In public services, Finance may involve budgets, funding, capacity, cost avoidance and social Value as well as income or profit. Finance must be connected to Customer, Proposition and Capability, otherwise the Business may promise more than it can sustain.

Five Business Lifesystem Stages

Short definition: Reveal, Design, Route, Deliver and Sustain: the five connected stages through which the Enterprise is understood, regenerated and sustained. Enterprise Regeneration is achieved through the stages rather than added as a sixth stage; Sustain supports Designed Evolution.

Full description: The Five Stages provide the practical mechanism through which Enterprise Regeneration occurs and Designed Evolution is sustained. Reveal makes the Current Enterprise visible. Design defines the future Business and Target Enterprise Model. Route creates a credible Transformation Route and Route Map. Deliver uses Delivery Management Vehicles to create and embed Golden Enablers. Sustain builds clarity, Alignment and Value discipline into ordinary leadership and governance so the Enterprise can continue adapting without allowing Chaotic Evolution to return unnoticed. The stages are connected rather than strictly linear; evidence and changes in the Environment may require earlier assumptions, designs or routes to be revisited.

Focus

Short definition: The operating condition in which leadership attention, resources and delivery effort are concentrated on the work that creates the greatest Value.

Full description: Focus is one of the Four Conditions for Reducing Confusion. It requires leaders to make choices about what matters most, what must wait, what should stop and where scarce Capability should be applied. Without Focus, priorities multiply, delivery capacity fragments and the Enterprise becomes busy without moving coherently. Focus does not ignore complexity. It gives the Enterprise the discipline to act within it.

Foregone Value

Short definition: Value that could have been pursued or realised but has been consciously rejected, lost or made uneconomic or unavailable.

Full description: Foregone Value is one of the Business Lifesystem Value states. It makes visible Value that is no longer expected to be realised, whether because leaders deliberately chose a different priority, conditions changed, an opportunity was lost or the additional Investment required became uneconomic. Recording Foregone Value is not an admission of failure in every case; sometimes it reflects a rational choice to deploy scarce resources elsewhere. Making it explicit prevents old forecasts from remaining embedded in the Value story after the Enterprise has consciously changed course.

Four Conditions for Reducing Confusion

Short definition: Clarity, Consistency, Priority and Focus: four operating conditions that help an Enterprise convert more effort into Value.

Full description: The Four Conditions help leaders understand why hard work is often absorbed by the system. Clarity makes the Enterprise understandable. Consistency reduces contradictory signals. Priority determines what genuinely comes first. Focus concentrates effort on what creates Value. Together, they help reduce confusion, duplication, rework and fragmentation. They are not abstract values; they are practical operating conditions that can be tested in strategy, governance, delivery, investment and everyday decision-making.

Future Enterprise Design

Short definition: The discipline of defining the future Enterprise by designing the future Business first and then the Organisation required to enable it.

Full description: Future Enterprise Design reverses the common tendency to begin transformation with structures, systems or projects. It first defines the future Business: whom it will serve, the Customer Needs it will address, the Proposition it will offer, the Results and Value it intends to create and the Capability required. Only then is the Organisation designed to enable that Business. The discipline is embodied in the Target Enterprise Model and uses Design Implications and Preserve-Stop-Strengthen-Start choices to translate diagnosis into a coherent future rather than an accumulation of local solutions.

G

Golden Enabler

Short definition: A product, decision, activity or deliverable that directly enables one or more Outcomes or Benefits to be realised.

Full description: A Golden Enabler is part of the Golden Thread because it creates the conditions for Results. It may be a new system, redesigned process, policy decision, supplier arrangement, data capability, role change, training programme, operating model change or other critical dependency. The word Golden is used because not every Output is equally important. Golden Enablers should be identified, sequenced and governed because they explain why delivery activity is necessary for Realised Value.

Golden Thread

Short definition: The line of sight from Purpose → Drivers → Objectives → Target Value → Results → Golden Enablers → Capability → Delivery Management Vehicles → Realised Value. Results comprise Outcomes and Benefits.

Full description: The Golden Thread connects strategic intention to evidence of Value. It should allow leaders to explain how Purpose and Drivers lead to Objectives, how Objectives define Target Value, how Results demonstrate progress, which Outcomes and Benefits are required, which Golden Enablers make them possible, what Capability is needed and which Delivery Management Vehicles will create or embed that Capability. It should also be tested backwards: if a project or Investment exists, what Result and Value does it enable?

H

Harmony

Short definition: The CHOICES condition concerned with constructive balance, tension management and the ability to work through disagreement productively.

Full description: Harmony does not mean avoiding disagreement or creating artificial consensus. It means that the Enterprise can manage necessary tension between functions, priorities, Customers, budgets, risks and time horizons without fragmenting into defensive local interests. Weak Harmony can result in unresolved conflict, passive resistance, silo behaviour or decisions that are repeatedly reopened. Strong Harmony helps the Enterprise surface trade-offs and make integrated choices.

I

Income

Short definition: The funding, revenue or resource inflow through which the Business sustains itself and supports its Proposition and Capability.

Full description: Income may mean commercial revenue, public funding, grants, allocations, donations or other forms of resource inflow depending on the Enterprise. In Business DNA, Income is part of Finance because it affects what the Business can afford, how sustainable its Proposition is and whether the required Capability can be maintained. Income should be understood in relation to Investment, cost, Value and the Results the Business is trying to achieve.

Innovation

Short definition: A CHOICES condition concerned with improvement, proactivity, experimentation and technology; also a PERSPECTIVE factor when examining external innovation.

Full description: Innovation has two related uses in the Business Lifesystem. Within CHOICES, it examines improvement, proactivity, experimentation and the effective use of technology: how well the Organisation turns ideas and opportunities into practical improvement. Creativity is distinct but connected, focusing on generating, testing and applying new ideas. Within PERSPECTIVE, Innovation examines external developments in technologies, models and approaches that may create opportunity, risk or pressure for the Enterprise. In both uses, Innovation should remain connected to Purpose, Customer Need, Capability, Finance and the Results it is intended to enable; novelty alone is not Value.

Integrity Check

Short definition: A structured test of whether the relationships across the Enterprise are sufficiently clear, coherent, credible and owned.

Full description: An Integrity Check examines whether the logic of the Enterprise holds together. It may test connections between Purpose, Drivers, Objectives, Target Value, Results, Benefits, Golden Enablers, Capability, Investment and delivery activity. It can also test whether Business DNA relationships are credible and whether accountabilities are owned. The aim is to reveal weak assumptions before they become delivery failure, Value Leakage or unmanageable organisational complexity.

Interim Enabler

Short definition: An Enabler required to make another Enabler possible rather than directly enabling an Outcome or Benefit.

Full description: Interim Enablers are often necessary in complex transformation because some conditions must be created before the Golden Enabler can be delivered. For example, data cleansing may enable system migration, a policy decision may enable process redesign, or supplier mobilisation may enable service change. Interim Enablers should be recognised in the Route Map, but leaders should avoid mistaking them for Value. Their importance lies in what they make possible.

Investment

Short definition: The financial and other resources committed by the Business, including money, time, capacity and leadership attention, and the choices about where those resources should be deployed.

Full description: Investment is broader than capital or cash expenditure. It includes scarce organisational resources such as people, capacity, data, technology, assets, management attention and political or leadership energy. The Business Lifesystem treats Investment as a choice: resources are committed in expectation of Value. Investment should therefore be connected to Objectives, Target Value, Results, Benefits and Capability. If that connection is weak, the Enterprise risks consuming resources without creating sufficient Value.

L

Latent Value

Short definition: Value associated with a Value Opportunity that could be realised from existing or planned Enablers but remains unrealised because one or more required conditions are absent or incomplete.

Full description: Latent Value exists when part of the capability to create Value is already present or planned but the complete realisation mechanism is not. A technology Asset may contain unused functionality, an Outcome may release capacity that is simply absorbed, or a Process improvement may create opportunity that still depends upon data, skills, adoption, resources, Investment or another Enabler. Latent Value should not be treated as guaranteed Value. The Enterprise Value Ledger makes the remaining conditions visible so leaders can decide whether further Investment is justified and whether the opportunity should become Target Value, remain latent or be consciously Foregone.

Living-System Layers

Short definition: Four connected ways of understanding what shapes the Enterprise: Creation—its origins and accumulated history; Nature—its underlying Business pattern; Nurture—how it is led and shaped internally; and Environment—the external world to which it must respond.

Full description: The Living-System Layers help leaders see the Enterprise as more than structure, process or strategy. Creation considers origins, Purpose and accumulated history. Nature describes the underlying Business pattern through Business DNA. Nurture examines how the Enterprise is shaped internally through culture, choices and behaviour. Environment considers the external world to which the Enterprise must respond. Together, the layers show why transformation cannot be reduced to a project plan or organisation chart.

M

Market

Short definition: The Customer context or environment in which the Business operates, competes, serves or is chosen.

Full description: Market is a Customer component within Business DNA. For commercial firms, it may mean a defined market, segment or customer group. For public services, it may mean a population, community, commissioning environment or service context. Market helps the Business understand who it serves, how Needs are changing and what alternatives, expectations or constraints shape Customer behaviour. Market should be interpreted proportionately according to the nature of the Enterprise.

N

Nature

Short definition: The foundational layer of the Enterprise, describing what it is built from: Customers, Propositions, Capabilities and Finance.

Full description: Nature describes the underlying Business pattern through Business DNA. It helps leaders understand what the Business is, whom it serves, what it offers, what it must be able to do and how sustainable Value is created. Nature is important because transformation often fails when it changes organisational arrangements without understanding the Business logic beneath them. A Target Enterprise Model should be grounded in the Nature of the Business it exists to enable.

Need-Offer Fit

Short definition: A Business DNA relationship showing whether the Proposition genuinely addresses Customer Need.

Full description: Need-Offer Fit tests the relationship between Customer and Proposition. A Business may continue to offer products, services or activities that were once valuable but no longer meet current Need. It may also design new Propositions around internal assumptions rather than evidence of what Customers require. Weak Need-Offer Fit creates wasted effort, poor experience and reduced Value. Strong Need-Offer Fit provides a clearer basis for Capability, Investment and Results.

Nurture

Short definition: The cultural and behavioural layer of the Enterprise, shaping Collaboration, Harmony, Openness, Innovation, Creativity, Environment and Success.

Full description: Nurture examines the internal conditions that influence how the Enterprise behaves. Structures, processes and strategies do not operate in isolation; they are filtered through the seven CHOICES lenses: Collaboration, Harmony, Openness, Innovation, Creativity, Environment and Success. Nurture is assessed through CHOICES. It matters because even a clear Target Enterprise Model can fail if the internal culture does not support the decisions, behaviours and adoption required to realise Value.

O

Objective

Short definition: A clear statement of what the Business intends to achieve, not an activity, project, solution, deliverable or milestone.

Full description: Objectives translate Purpose and Drivers into deliberate strategic intent. They should be specific enough to guide choices about Target Value, Results, Capability, Investment and delivery. An Objective should not simply name an initiative or describe a preferred solution. For example, implementing a system is not an Objective in BLS terms unless the intended Result and Value are clear. Good Objectives help the Enterprise prioritise, sequence and govern work through Value.

Offer-Economics Fit

Short definition: A Business DNA relationship showing whether the Proposition makes financial and resource sense for the Business.

Full description: Offer-Economics Fit tests the relationship between Proposition and Finance. A Proposition may meet Customer Need but still be unaffordable, underfunded, poorly priced, economically fragile or dependent on unsustainable resource use. Conversely, financial targets may undermine the Proposition if they ignore what is required to deliver Value. This relationship helps leaders test whether the Business can sustain what it promises and whether the financial model supports the desired Results.

Openness

Short definition: The CHOICES condition concerned with whether issues, risks, evidence, disagreement and learning can be surfaced honestly.

Full description: Openness is essential for revealing the Current Enterprise. If people cannot discuss failures, constraints, Value Leakage, weak assumptions or conflicting priorities honestly, Chaotic Evolution remains hidden. Openness does not mean uncontrolled criticism. It means creating conditions in which the Enterprise can see reality clearly enough to act. Weak Openness produces green status reports, hidden workarounds and decisions based on partial evidence. Strong Openness improves learning and accountability.

Organisation

Short definition: How people, resources, processes, partners and assets are arranged to conduct and enable the Business.

Full description: Organisation refers to the enabling arrangement through which the Business is conducted. It includes people, structures, roles, processes, systems, data, partners, suppliers, assets, governance and ways of working. The Organisation is not the same as the Business. An Organisation may be restructured without changing the Business, and a Business may change direction while the Organisation remains shaped around the past. The relationship between Business and Organisation forms the Enterprise.

Organisational Debt

Short definition: The accumulated complexity, workarounds, misalignment and unresolved decisions that make the Enterprise harder to lead and improve.

Full description: Organisational Debt builds when short-term choices, temporary fixes, duplicated arrangements, deferred decisions and legacy ways of working are allowed to accumulate. Like financial or technical debt, it may be manageable for a time, but it creates a continuing cost. It consumes capacity, slows decisions, increases risk, weakens accountability and makes future change harder. The Business Lifesystem helps leaders reveal Organisational Debt and decide what should be stopped, simplified, strengthened or redesigned.

Outcome

Short definition: A measurable improvement in performance, behaviour, condition or experience enabled by one or more Golden Enablers.

Full description: An Outcome is a changed state, not simply something delivered. It may involve improved performance, better Customer experience, changed behaviour, greater quality, reduced risk, improved productivity or stronger capability. Outcomes sit within Results and help demonstrate progress towards Objectives. They are distinct from Outputs. A project may deliver a system, process or report; the Outcome is the measurable change made possible by that Output and its adoption.

Output

Short definition: Something produced or delivered through organised work that may enable change but is not, by itself, an Outcome or Benefit.

Full description: Outputs include plans, systems, reports, policies, training materials, processes, structures, prototypes, deliverables or completed tasks. They are often necessary, but their existence does not prove that Value has been created. The Business Lifesystem distinguishes Outputs from Outcomes and Benefits to prevent delivery activity being mistaken for success. A completed Output should be tested by asking what Result it enables and how that Result will contribute to Target Value.

P

Partner

Short definition: An external or internal party whose contribution forms part of the Capability required to deliver the Proposition and achieve Results.

Full description: Partners may include suppliers, contractors, strategic alliances, delivery bodies, commissioners, regulators, collaborators, professional groups or internal functions. Within Business DNA, Partners form part of Capability because the Business may depend on them to deliver its Proposition. Partner alignment is critical. If partners are governed only through contract activity rather than Outcomes and Value, delivery may complete while the Enterprise fails to realise the intended Benefit.

People

Short definition: The human Capability required to conduct the Business, including skills, capacity, leadership, roles, behaviours and experience.

Full description: People are a core component of Capability. They include employees, leaders, managers, professionals, contractors, volunteers and others whose work enables the Business. People Capability is shaped by skills, capacity, motivation, roles, accountability, culture, leadership and ways of working. In the Business Lifesystem, people should not be treated as a generic resource line. They are often where the practical ability to realise Benefits either exists or breaks down.

PERSPECTIVE

Short definition: The BLS lens for examining external forces through Politics, Economics, Regulation, Social, People, Ecology, Competition, Technology, Innovation, Vogue and Ethics.

Full description: PERSPECTIVE examines Politics, Economics, Regulation, Social, People, Ecology, Competition, Technology, Innovation, Vogue and Ethics. It helps leaders assess the external world in a structured way and distinguish what is material from what is merely interesting. The purpose is to understand which external forces materially affect the Enterprise and then relate them to internal strengths, weaknesses and Capability. This relationship helps identify Prospects that the Enterprise is well positioned to pursue and Risks created where external threats interact with internal weakness, dependency or vulnerability.

Preserve-Stop-Strengthen-Start

Short definition: Four choices used during Design to determine what the future Enterprise should retain, remove, improve or create. Together they express the core logic of Enterprise Regeneration.

Full description: Preserve-Stop-Strengthen-Start provides a disciplined way to move from diagnosis to Future Enterprise Design. Preserve identifies what remains valuable and should be protected. Stop identifies activity, structures, processes, systems or commitments that no longer create sufficient Value. Strengthen identifies what should be improved or reinforced. Start identifies what must be newly created. Together these choices express the practical design logic of Enterprise Regeneration: preserve what works, remove or redesign what no longer does, strengthen what is fragile and create what the future Business requires.

Priority

Short definition: The operating condition in which the Enterprise is clear about what genuinely comes first and how competing demands are sequenced.

Full description: Priority is one of the Four Conditions for Reducing Confusion. It is not the same as having a long list of important things. Priority requires leadership choices about what must come first, what depends on what, what should wait and what should stop. Weak priority discipline allows the loudest issue, strongest sponsor or most urgent pressure to dominate. Strong priority discipline connects strategy, operational reality, capacity, delivery and Value.

Process

Short definition: The organised sequence of work, decisions, handovers, controls or interactions through which the Business is conducted.

Full description: Process is a component of Capability. Processes help turn Capability into repeatable performance, but they can also create friction, duplication and Value Leakage if they are poorly designed or no longer fit the Business. A process should be assessed against Customer Need, Proposition, ownership, information, systems, risk and Value. The Business Lifesystem encourages leaders to examine processes as part of the connected Enterprise rather than as isolated workflow problems.

Profit

Short definition: The financial surplus or return generated by the Business where commercial or financial sustainability requires it.

Full description: Profit is a Finance component within Business DNA. In commercial Enterprises, it is central to sustainability and Investment capacity. In public service or non-profit contexts, the equivalent concern may be surplus, financial headroom, affordability, cost control or resource sustainability. The Business Lifesystem treats Profit or surplus not as a detached financial measure, but as part of the wider logic through which the Business sustains its Proposition, Capability and Value creation.

Promise-Delivery Gap

Short definition: A Business DNA relationship showing where the Proposition promises more than the Enterprise can reliably deliver.

Full description: The Promise-Delivery Gap tests the relationship between Proposition and Capability. It appears when the Business makes commitments to Customers, stakeholders or funders that its Organisation, resources, systems, partners or processes cannot consistently fulfil. The gap may produce complaints, delays, staff pressure, cost escalation or reputational damage. It is often misread as a delivery problem when the deeper issue is a mismatch between what the Business promises and what its Capability can support.

Proposition

Short definition: The Business DNA perspective concerned with what the Business offers in response to Customer Need and the promise of Value it makes. Its components are Define, Design, Develop and Deliver.

Full description: Proposition describes the products, services, pathways, solutions, experiences or offers through which the Business serves Customers. Its components are Define, Design, Develop and Deliver. A strong Proposition should respond to real Customer Need, be supported by Capability and make financial or resource sense. Weak Proposition clarity can lead to overextended services, duplicated offerings, unclear ownership, poor Customer experience and Investments that are difficult to connect to Value.

Prospect

Short definition: A material opportunity that the Enterprise is sufficiently well positioned to pursue, identified by relating external opportunity to internal strength and Capability.

Full description: A Prospect emerges when an external opportunity identified through PERSPECTIVE is considered alongside the Enterprise that actually exists. The same market, technology, regulatory or social opportunity may be attractive to one Enterprise and unrealistic for another because their internal strengths, data, Capability, relationships, Investment capacity or readiness differ. Prospects therefore connect external analysis to practical strategic choice. They help leaders focus on opportunities that are both material and credible rather than treating every favourable trend as something the Business should pursue.

Purpose

Short definition: The enduring reason the Business exists and the Value it is ultimately there to create.

Full description: Purpose is the starting point of the Golden Thread. It explains why the Business exists beyond immediate activity, structure or projects. Purpose should guide Objectives, priorities, Investment and the design of the Enterprise. It is not a slogan unless it influences choices. In the Business Lifesystem, Purpose becomes practical when it connects to Drivers, Objectives, Target Value, Results, Capability and Realised Value.

R

Realised Value

Short definition: Value that the Enterprise can demonstrate has actually been achieved, evidenced and sustained, rather than merely planned or forecast.

Full description: Realised Value is the endpoint of the Golden Thread. It distinguishes intended or promised Value from Value that has genuinely been created, protected or improved. Realised Value should be evidenced through Results, Outcomes, Benefits, financial measures, operational performance, Customer experience, risk reduction or other agreed indicators. The discipline matters because many Enterprises approve Investments on the basis of forecast Value but pay too little attention to whether that Value appears after delivery.

Result

Short definition: A collection of one or more Outcomes and Benefits that demonstrates progress towards an Objective and quantifies Value.

Full description: Results sit between Target Value and Golden Enablers in the Golden Thread. They translate Objectives into measurable evidence of progress and Value creation. A Result may combine several Outcomes and Benefits. For example, a Result might include faster throughput, reduced cost, improved experience and released capacity. Defining Results helps prevent Objectives remaining vague and helps leaders decide what delivery activity, Capability and Investment are genuinely necessary.

Risk

Short definition: A material exposure created when an external threat interacts with internal weakness, dependency or vulnerability.

Full description: In the Business Lifesystem, Risk is strengthened by relating the external Environment to the current Enterprise rather than treating threats in isolation. A regulatory, workforce, competitive or technology threat does not create the same exposure for every Organisation. Its significance depends upon internal weakness, dependency, fragility and Capability. CHOICES and PERSPECTIVE help leaders understand that interaction, distinguish material Risks from generic threat lists and identify the parts of the Enterprise that must be strengthened, redesigned or protected.

Retention

Short definition: The Customer component concerned with sustaining valuable relationships, trust, use, loyalty or dependence over time.

Full description: Retention is part of the Customer perspective within Business DNA. In a commercial setting it may involve customer loyalty, repeat purchase, contract renewal or reduced churn. In public service or healthcare contexts, it may involve continued trust, appropriate use, engagement, access, confidence or sustained relationship with a service. Retention should be understood in relation to Customer Need, experience, Proposition and Value, not simply as a marketing metric.

Reveal

Short definition: The stage in which the Current Enterprise is made visible, including the Business, Organisation, connections and Value Leakage.

Full description: Reveal is the first of the Five Business Lifesystem Stages. It examines how the Enterprise is actually working before leaders decide what to change. Reveal may involve evidence gathering, interviews, document review, diagnostic workshops, Business DNA assessment, Golden Thread testing, benefits review, governance review and analysis of organisational complexity. Its purpose is to replace assumption with a clearer view of current reality.

Route

Short definition: The stage in which leaders choose a credible path from current reality towards the Target Enterprise Model and Realised Value.

Full description: Route turns design into a practical journey. It considers sequencing, dependencies, Capability, Enablers, Investment, risk, decision points, Benefits and what should stop or simplify. The Route should be credible, not merely attractive. It should show how the Enterprise will move from the Current Enterprise Model to the Target Enterprise Model and when Value can realistically emerge. The Route is represented through the Route Map.

Route Map

Short definition: The representation of the chosen Transformation Route, showing sequencing, Enablers, dependencies, Capability, Investment, decision points and Value-release points.

Full description: A Route Map is more than a timeline. It should show how the Enterprise intends to move from the Current Enterprise Model to the Target Enterprise Model. It may include Golden Enablers, Interim Enablers, dependencies, Capability build, Investment, Stop Decisions, decision gates, delivery vehicles and Benefits Realisation points. The Route Map helps leaders understand not just what will happen when, but why the sequence is credible and how Value will be released.

S

Spend-Value Gap

Short definition: A Business DNA relationship showing where expenditure or effort is not producing sufficient Value for the Enterprise.

Full description: The Spend-Value Gap tests the relationship between Finance and Value. It appears when money, time, capacity or leadership attention continue to be committed to work whose Value is unclear, eroded, duplicated or no longer sufficient. This gap is particularly important in complex Enterprises because activity often persists through habit, politics or governance inertia. Identifying the gap creates the basis for Value by Subtraction and Stop Decisions.

Stop Decision

Short definition: A deliberate leadership decision to stop, pause, retire, decommission or simplify work that no longer sufficiently justifies the resources it consumes.

Full description: A Stop Decision is one of the most important but neglected disciplines in transformation. Enterprises often start new initiatives more easily than they stop old ones. As a result, complexity, reporting, systems, programmes and processes accumulate. A Stop Decision makes subtraction explicit. It should be based on Purpose, Value, evidence, risk and consequences, not simply short-term cost cutting. Used well, Stop Decisions release capacity and reduce Organisational Debt.

Strengthen

Short definition: The design choice to improve, reinforce or invest in something that remains valuable but is not currently strong enough.

Full description: Strengthen is one of the Preserve-Stop-Strengthen-Start choices. It recognises that not every problem requires replacement. Some Capabilities, processes, governance arrangements, relationships or Propositions may be valuable but underpowered, inconsistent or insufficiently integrated. Strengthen choices should be linked to Target Value and Results so that improvement effort is directed where it matters most.

Sustain

Short definition: The stage in which clarity, Alignment and Value discipline are embedded into the way the Enterprise is led and managed.

Full description: Sustain is the fifth Business Lifesystem Stage. It is concerned with preventing Chaotic Evolution from returning unnoticed after the immediate transformation activity has ended. Sustain may involve governance routines, Benefits tracking, capability ownership, periodic Integrity Checks, Stop Decisions, learning loops and leadership disciplines. The aim is to make the Business Lifesystem part of ordinary management, not a one-off intervention.

T

Target Enterprise Model

Short definition: A coherent representation of the future Enterprise, bringing together the future Business and the Organisation required to enable it.

Full description: The Target Enterprise Model describes what the Enterprise needs to become in order to achieve its Objectives and Target Value. It should include the future Business logic, Customer, Proposition, Capability, Finance, organisational arrangements, governance, operating model, delivery implications and Benefits realisation requirements. It is not simply an organisation chart or technology architecture. It is the future Business and enabling Organisation considered together.

Target Value

Short definition: The measurable Value the Enterprise intends to create through achievement of an Objective.

Full description: Target Value translates ambition into an explicit value expectation. It may include financial improvement, avoided cost, released capacity, better Customer experience, improved quality, stronger resilience, reduced risk, increased income, social Value or other measurable worth. Target Value is important because it gives Objectives a practical test. If leaders cannot describe the Value they intend to create, it becomes difficult to decide what to prioritise, fund, deliver or stop.

Transformation Route

Short definition: The chosen path through which the Enterprise intends to move from current reality towards its future state and Realised Value.

Full description: The Transformation Route is the strategic path, while the Route Map is its representation. It explains how the Enterprise will move from the Current Enterprise Model to the Target Enterprise Model, including sequencing, dependency management, Capability build, delivery vehicles, Stop Decisions and Value-release points. A credible Transformation Route recognises constraints, capacity and risk. It should not be confused with a high-level roadmap that lists initiatives without explaining how they connect to Value.

V

Value

Short definition: The financial or non-financial worth created, protected or enabled by the Enterprise relative to the Investment, effort and resources involved.

Full description: Value is central to the Business Lifesystem. It may be financial, operational, social, customer-related, staff-related, strategic, risk-related, quality-related or reputational. Value should be understood relative to the Investment, effort and resources involved. The key question is not simply whether activity has occurred, but whether the Enterprise has created, protected or improved something worth the commitment it made. Value becomes credible when it is connected to Purpose, Target Value, Results and Realised Value.

Value by Subtraction

Short definition: Value created by stopping, retiring, simplifying or decommissioning work that no longer sufficiently supports the Business.

Full description: Value by Subtraction recognises that improvement is not always created by adding more activity. Enterprises often release capacity, reduce risk, improve focus and strengthen performance by removing work that no longer creates sufficient Value. This may include reports, systems, governance forums, initiatives, processes, roles, controls or commitments. Value by Subtraction depends on explicit Stop Decisions and careful assessment of consequences, but it is essential for reducing Organisational Debt.

Value Leakage

Short definition: Value lost or eroded through weak connections, duplication, fragmentation, unclear Objectives, unsupported change or other forms of misalignment within the Enterprise.

Full description: Value Leakage occurs when effort, money, capacity or leadership attention fails to convert into the Value expected. It may appear through duplicated work, delayed decisions, unresolved dependencies, unused Outputs, poorly owned Benefits, weak adoption, fragmented systems, overlapping priorities or unclear accountability. Value Leakage is often gradual and hard to see. The Business Lifesystem helps leaders reveal where it occurs and redesign the Enterprise to reduce it.

Value Opportunity

Short definition: A defined opportunity to create, unlock, protect or increase Value, against which Value states and the Enablers and other conditions required for realisation can be related.

Full description: A Value Opportunity provides the unit around which the Business Lifesystem can organise Value without allocating the same Benefit repeatedly to individual projects or Assets. An opportunity may depend upon several Enablers, Outcomes, Capabilities and other realisation conditions, while one Enabler may contribute to several opportunities. Its Value can move through different states: Value Potential, Target Value, Latent Value, Realised Value and Foregone Value. The Enterprise Value Ledger records those relationships so leaders can understand what Value is available, what they have chosen to pursue and what must still happen before it can be evidenced.

Value Potential

Short definition: The plausible Value associated with a defined Value Opportunity if the necessary conditions can be satisfied, before the Enterprise decides how much of that Value to target.

Full description: Value Potential represents the plausible scale or significance of a Value Opportunity before the Enterprise commits to pursuing all or part of it. It provides a way to distinguish what might be possible from the Target Value leaders deliberately choose to pursue. The difference matters because available opportunity can exceed affordable or practical ambition. Value Potential should therefore be considered alongside the Investment, Capability, dependencies, effort, risk and other conditions required for realisation rather than being treated as a forecast Benefit.

Value-led

Short definition: A Business Lifesystem principle in which decisions, priorities and actions are governed by the Value the Enterprise intends to realise.

Full description: Value-led is a Business Lifesystem principle rather than a single stage or tool. It means that leadership, governance, delivery and reporting decisions remain connected to the Value the Enterprise intends to create and can ultimately evidence. The principle is expressed through Value-led Delivery, Value-led Governance, Value-led Leadership and Value-led Reporting. It does not replace normal controls; it ensures that those controls serve the wider question of whether scarce Investment and Capability are still being converted into worthwhile Results and Realised Value.

Value-led Delivery

Short definition: An approach to delivery in which Investment, prioritisation, sequencing and delivery decisions are continually governed by the Outcomes, Benefits and Target Value they are intended to realise, rather than by the completion of activity or Outputs alone.

Full description: Value-led Delivery keeps delivery activity connected to the Business by continually governing Investment, prioritisation, sequencing and delivery decisions through the Outcomes, Benefits and Target Value the work is intended to realise. Time, cost, scope, risk and quality remain important, but they sit inside a wider Value conversation. The discipline asks whether Golden Enablers are being adopted, whether Outcomes are changing, whether Benefits remain credible and whether the original Value logic still justifies continued Investment. A project can be on time and still fail to create Value if the operational, behavioural or financial conditions required for realisation are weak.

Vogue

Short definition: The PERSPECTIVE factor concerned with prevailing fashions, narratives, expectations or emerging trends that may influence the Enterprise.

Full description: Vogue captures the effect of what is becoming fashionable, expected or widely discussed in the external Environment. It may include management trends, technology hype, public sentiment, sector narratives, investor expectations or policy fashion. Some trends reveal genuine opportunity. Others create pressure to act before the value case is clear. Assessing Vogue helps leaders distinguish useful signals from noise and connect external pressure to Purpose, Customer Need and Value.

Applying the Dictionary

The value of the Dictionary lies in its use. Shared language allows leaders, teams and advisers to test assumptions, identify weak connections and distinguish between activity, Output, Outcome, Benefit and Realised Value.

The Business Lifesystem does not seek to make complex Enterprises simple. It seeks to make them clear enough to lead, govern and improve deliberately.

For further information about the Business Lifesystem methodology, advisory support, the forthcoming book and related resources, visit businesslifesystem.com.

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