

What makes a good manager?

A [project at Google](#) spent time researching what defines a great manager at Google, and through that identified the top 10 traits to grow. As listed they are:

1. Is a good coach
2. Empowers team and does not micromanage
3. Creates an inclusive team environment, showing concern for success and well-being
4. Is productive and results-oriented
5. Is a good communicator-listens and shares information
6. Supports career development and discusses performance
7. Has a clear vision/strategy for the team
8. Has key technical skills to help advise the team
9. Collaborates effectively
10. Is a strong decision maker

The last two were new additions to the list, and I believe reflect the need to both reach out to your broader organization to expand your thinking, while simultaneously understanding when the time has come to step in and drive to a decision – the leadership courage to make a decision in the face of a constantly shifting landscape, and then stand by and manage through that decision.

as our company grew in size and complexity, demands on our managers and leaders increased as well. From the results of our employee survey we learned that Googlers wanted to see more effective cross-organization collaboration and stronger decision making practices from leaders

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As the Google team identified, there is a need for decisive leadership in a time where we are bombarded with more and more data and “facts” or opinions on every decision to be taken – this coupled with FOMO (Fear of missing out) can lead to a situation where teams spend an unfortunate amount of time in the unproductive state of spinning. This leads to a negative impact on moral and reduces productivity. Contrary to that, a decisive leader, who empowers a good team and uses strong communication skills to get thoughts drawn out from the team and discussed, often has the facts actually required for the decision in the first day of deliberation! The ability to collaborate quickly and communicate the rational, get confirmation and drive to the decision is the real differentiator and the combination for real productivity!

Business Relationship Management - the role of IT as a strategic partner

Business Relationship Management is a name for what is generally referred to as the “IT business partner”. This is a role that sits between the more traditional IT organization and the broader general population in an organization, and helps translate opportunity and need to IT solutions in the most general sense.

I have held this role in various forms for a significant number of years, and over that time, heard many opinions on what it means, and how to represent value. I met [Vaughan Merlyn](#) while working at my current role, and took the Business Relationship Management training, from the [BRM Institute](#), from him. I enjoyed the course and was aligned with the approach enough to become a trainer for my company, though we have yet to fully realize that further expansion.

The salient point in this short post is the value of the role as a strategic partner, and how that is differentiating. I have had a number of conversations with peers in what we call our business partner roles, but that represent the BRM role. I hear a lot of complaints about how they don't want to be order takers, and how they struggle with relevance in a world where most business leaders are increasingly IT savvy. My argument back is that this is the time to truly embrace the definition of the BRM as described by the BRM institute, and seek to be defined as a strategic partner as opposed to “yet another IT gal / guy” who wants to add friction to my life.

I love the intro on this in the BRM institute:

Designed to **bring value to an organization through the convergence of different business functions**, the business relationship manager (BRM) role is a **senior-level, strategic business partner** who shares ownership for **both business strategy and business value** results.

[HTTPS://BRM.INSTITUTE/THE-ROLE-OF-THE-BUSINESS-RELATIONSHIP-MANAGER/](https://brm.institute/the-role-of-the-business-relationship-manager/)

My position is that we now have a great opportunity to capitalize on the growing appreciation for the

contributions of technology to our business processes and by taking the time to truly understand our business domain as well as the technologies relevant to not only that field, but adjacent spaces, we can become that trusted advisor that helps shape business strategy to take advantage of both current technology and by understanding risk tolerances, also bring in emerging technology where relevant to the business outcomes!

We need to have the courage to see ourselves in the BRM role as those trusted partners, but that only comes through real investment in the business goals and strategies. The ability to “work on the surface” of the relationship is gone if a BRM leader wants to be relevant. What used to be differentiating is now table stakes, as technology is often not a mystery and leaders are increasingly aware that they can gain advantages through well thought out approaches and tools. A real BRM, functioning as a strategic partner, will collaborate closely with the business teams, understand where they (Collectively) are trying to go, and in parallel, actively engage in industry research to better understand how to guide that business through the landscape of current and emerging technology options.

The strong and relevant BRM will be immersed in the business they support, and working regularly to be relevant and upgrade their technical skills, as well as building a broad and deep network of thought leaders to partner with.

This role is tougher than ever, but the opportunities are correspondingly growing at a feverish pace. I had conversations with one of our young innovators this past month, working with serverless solutions on AWS bringing data together into a Spotfire visualization, and came away so energized around opportunities across our portfolio I had trouble narrowing down on approaches to focus on – but that is the subject of another post though.

For now – as a BRM, please focus on continuous skill building and domain understanding to remain relevant, and help own a seat at the table, not sit at the edges hoping to be included.

GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation

The EU Regulations around data privacy and protection are emerging, and as they do, the initial rulings are in

effect. The below excerpt from the [EU site](#) references what is considered personal data – and specifically that which has been anonymised, or otherwise obfuscated. Note that even if the data as it sits is non-identifiable, if it can be combined to become identifiable, it falls under the [guidelines of the regulation](#).

The principles of data protection should apply to any information concerning an identified or identifiable natural person. Personal data which have undergone pseudonymisation, **which could be attributed to a natural person by the use of additional information should be considered to be information on an identifiable natural person.** To determine whether a natural person is identifiable, account should be taken of all the means reasonably likely to be used, such as singling out, either by the controller or by another person to identify the natural person directly or indirectly. To ascertain whether means are reasonably likely to be used to identify the natural person, account should be taken of all objective factors, such as the costs of and the amount of time required for identification, taking into consideration the available technology at the time of the processing and technological developments.

The principles of data protection should therefore not apply to anonymous information, namely information which does not relate to an identified or identifiable natural person or to personal data rendered anonymous in such a manner that the data subject is not or no longer identifiable. This Regulation does not therefore concern the processing of such anonymous information, including for statistical or research purposes.

This bit of the guideline is of particular interest to me, as part of what I see on a regular basis is the attempts to understand for each data related initiative my team undertakes, how to ascertain the potential impact of this regulation, and if it is applicable. This bit of text certainly makes it broadly applicable, and it seems good data hygiene is generally to make the assumption that any global system should plan to follow the general guidelines laid out by the regulations.

The somewhat complicating factor is that the regulations as of this writing are not in final form, and the penalties for non compliance are not trivial.

In my searching for more information on this topic, I came across a decent summary of the work – [linked here](#). This site is not an official EU government site, but rather a vendor partnership education site. That being said, I think they do an admirable job of simplifying the regulation to language that the layperson can digest and use

to better prepare for compliance.

Ref Links:

- Vendor site with summary: <https://eugdpr.org/the-regulation/>
- Text of regulation, as of this writing (In English): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0679&from=EN>
- EU site with Regulation and multi-language support: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj>