



Case Study

A New Operating Model Builds Alignment and Unity

Around a Critical Recruiting
and Retention Tool



The Situation

An international aerospace and defense company (the company) determined inconsistencies across business areas regarding how they manage their tuition assistance program, a key employee benefit. A critical issue was the lack of an operating model outlining the program's process, procedures, and governance. This led to discrepancies in how business units managed the program. Subsequently, employees could have different experiences from one business unit to the next.

In partnership with GP Strategies® (GP), the company defined an operating model and a governance framework. The operating model provided a visual representation of how the program would support and deliver value to employees consistently across the enterprise, and the implementation of a governance framework ensured the program would continue to support employees and operate as intended.



The Challenge

The aerospace and defense company partnered with GP's business consulting team to solve the inconsistencies across business units regarding their tuition assistance offering. The company had a policy for the governance of tuition assistance, but it was ambiguous enough that those who managed the program across each business unit interpreted some aspects of it differently.

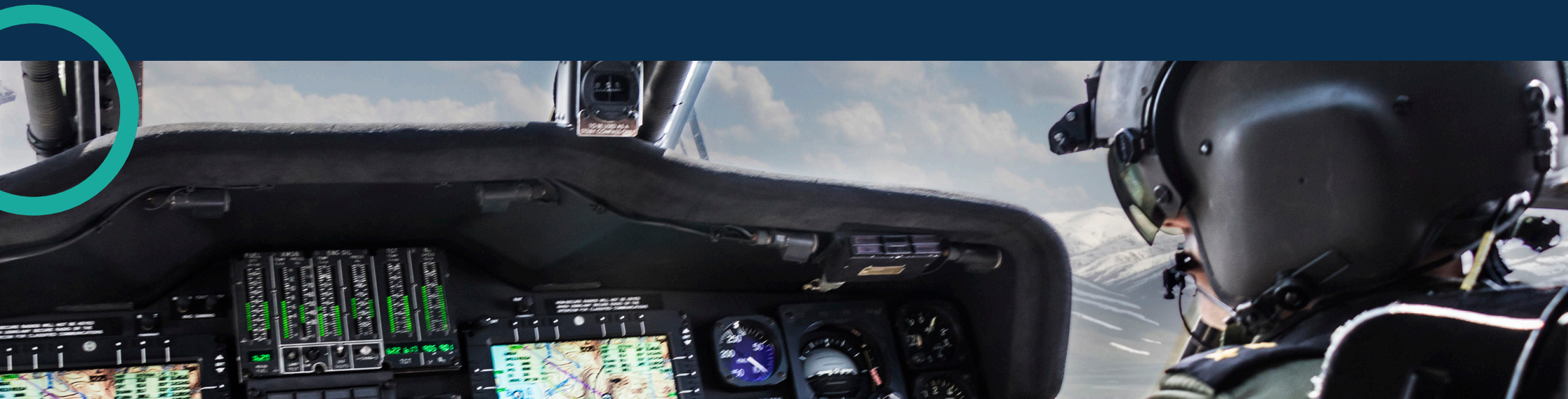
Because individual business units were interpreting the policy independently without an enterprise-wide perspective, the employee experience of this critical benefit differed depending on which part of the company they worked in. Furthermore, because this was handled by individual business units, if an employee using the tuition assistance program transferred from one unit to another, the cost of the program commitments followed them to their new assignment.

An internal audit team identified nearly twenty issues and hundreds of performance improvement observations. GP, to resolve the issues, determined the company was experiencing these moments of disconnection because the company's tuition assistance policy lacked:

- An overarching operating model
- Documented processes and procedures
- Visibility and oversight of program operations
- Training for individuals overseeing the program
- Clear roles and responsibilities

GP's role in this project was to define and implement a corrective action plan to resolve all issues. With guidance from GP, the company could improve the tuition assistance program by establishing an enterprise council, introducing an enterprise-wide operating model, documenting processes and procedures, and establishing procedural controls to add resiliency, repeatability, visibility, accountability, and oversight to the program.

Beyond the operating model, GP used the Supplier, Input, Process, Output, Customer (SIPOC) approach to align the enterprise while defining processes. This provided role clarity to the team executing the program. The process further enabled training to be developed to support consistent execution of the program and a consistent employee experience.





GP Strategies Solution

First, GP created a program charter based on the approved corrective action plan. This document outlined GP's approach throughout the engagement, provided a singular focus for the program mission, authorized and established the cross-enterprise council, and defined responsibilities and authorities. The charter built alignment with everyone involved with the project and clarified program objectives.

The cross-enterprise council that the program charter established eliminated communication siloes across business units. Further, this council engaged a lead from each business unit to update and enhance the existing policy.

GP then developed an operating model to guide operations and coached the council through its use and application. An operating model is a set of systems, processes, and principles that ensure operations are executed, governed, monitored, and managed properly. It provides clarity of operations and optimizes a program in the best interest of all stakeholders.

GP created the operating model for the tuition assistance benefit to:

- Help the team visualize and understand their role in the program and how best to support employees through the change.
- Ensure policy compliance and inform policy changes.
- Protect the integrity of the employee benefit.
- Assign responsibility to achieve the corporate goals of attracting, recruiting, retaining, and developing strategic skills and leaders.
- Ensure decision-making is fairly and consistently adjudicated across the company.
- Create predictability and transparency for stakeholders.
- Establish a protocol for consistent governance and reporting.

Process

The tuition assistance governance framework is based on GP's Maturity Model Matrix, REVAMP model, and change management methodology.

I. GP's Maturity Model Matrix

A maturity model provides a program roadmap to align stakeholders, provide actionable objectives, and optimize execution. GP's Maturity Model Matrix leverages the operating framework as its foundation. Because of this, it can be used to strategically set goals and objectives, provide stakeholders with a tool to communicate their vision, and tactically determine how a specific initiative or program can be elevated.

GP's Maturity Model Matrix involves three stages: **1) Transactional, 2) Transitional, and 3) Transformational**. The goal is always to move from a transactional mindset to a transformational mindset. For example, the company was operating in a transactional state regarding its tuition assistance program. This state can be described as, "we interpret the tuition assistance policy and operate from the point of view of a business unit." This state perpetuated a fragmented user experience across the organization.

A transitional state for this initiative would be, "We use aligned processes, procedures, metrics, and controls to manage the implementation of our new approach to the tuition assistance program." This is preferable to a transactional state, but there is still room to improve.

A transformational state—the ultimate goal—is, "we make data-driven decisions that are aligned with the organization's objectives and optimize our support solutions as we deliver on our contribution to attract, recruit, retain, and develop our workforce."

The areas of focus for the aerospace and defense company's tuition assistance governance maturity model were oversight and responsibilities; policies, processes, and procedures; analytics and reporting; communication; technology; and vendor management.

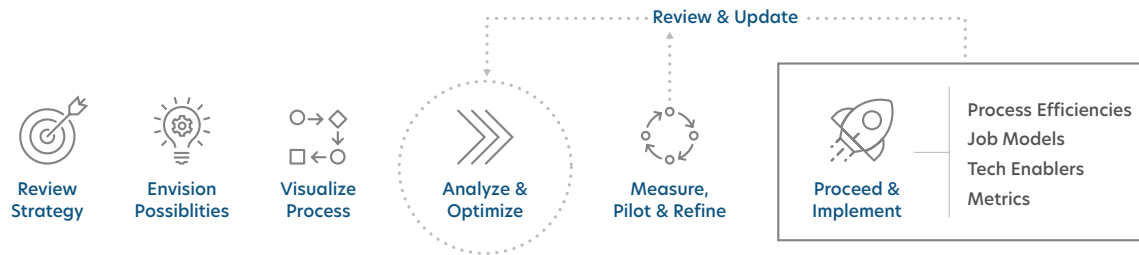
GP's Maturity Model Matrix involves three stages:

- 1 Transactional
- 2 Transitional
- 3 Transformational



II. GP's REVAMP Model

GP's REVAMP Model is a powerful business process improvement solution that helps solve problems and create reliable, repeatable, and scalable solutions.



The REVAMP Model was used to align the team on the enterprise approach during working sessions and to refine and document the process. This approach had two key outcomes. First, it brought the group together and helped them become an enterprise team, shifting the team's view from a business unit-level to an enterprise-level. Secondly, it allowed best practices across the business units to be incorporated into the enterprise processes.



We will continue
to reap the
rewards of your
work for many
years to come.

The REVAMP steps were executed as follows:

Review Strategy | To uncover the company's needs, GP first worked with project stakeholders to understand the program's strategy, intent, and future priorities.

Envision Possibilities | After reviewing the program's current state, including pain points and gaps, future needs became more apparent. Future state ideation sessions with stakeholders revealed opportunities for standardization, new ways of working, and opportunities to adopt new program management tools.

Visualize Process | The next step was to define and map each step of every process to clarify how, where, and by whom work would get done. This brought transparency into the organization, enabled optimized workflows, and standardized experiences across the business units.

Analyze & Optimize | After the strategy was determined and defined, GP identified a set of relevant and quantifiable metrics (actual program costs, record retention, and the number of applications approved, denied, or appealed; learning completions for acceptance of role; deviation requests; applications submitted; and Ph.D. requests). These metrics allowed each business process to measure output and the solutions' health and ensure the established processes remained in control.

Measure, Pilot, & Refine | GP then tested and refined the new processes to ensure they were efficient, included control measures, and produced an optimal outcome.

Proceed & Implement | Using GP's change management practices, all impacted stakeholders were informed, trained, and provided with support materials to adopt and execute the new processes and procedures successfully.

III. GP's Change Management Methodology

To communicate change and drive long-term sustainable adoption, GP's business consulting unit employed GP's change management methodology. This methodology is preventative, proactive, and responsive.

Preventative | This part of the methodology entails aligning on intent, defining success, and assessing the impact of the incoming change to prevent resistance and improve the chances of adoption. To do this, GP interviewed eleven stakeholders to fully understand areas of concern, their goals, and areas of needed support.

Proactive | Being proactive during the implementation of a significant change involves developing a change management plan to navigate the new ways of working, which took shape through the new governance framework GP developed. In the early stages, this means proactively working with stakeholders to navigate through the change while anticipating and mitigating any resistance. A tailored change management and communications plan was created to ensure each impacted stakeholder group received the information and training they needed to execute and adopt the new process and policy changes successfully. These plans also brought awareness of program enhancements and new supporting resources available to all tuition program participants.

Responsive | Being responsive involves responding to stakeholder feedback and results gathered from all data collection and surveys. Once feedback is collected, it must be acted on, adjusting processes as needed. GP deployed governance check-in surveys both during the development of the operating framework and after the leads began working within the framework. These surveys brought awareness to areas of concern to monitor going forward, such as limited bandwidth and maintaining the consistency that the team has worked so hard to create. This resulted in the leads documenting a plan to continue to monitor and adjust their progress with governance and use of the maturity model to keep themselves accountable for developing in each process area over time.



Results

Throughout this process, GP partnered with the company to resolve all issues and improvement observations identified at the beginning of the project. The primary result of implementing the tuition assistance operating framework has been a unified and consistently administered employee experience across the enterprise.

As the program begins to implement the operating model and its maturity journey, GP expects:

- Oversight and responsibilities to evolve from focusing solely on processing requests to include an enterprise view that uses data to drive decisions.
- Policies, processes, and procedures to grow from an inconsistent experience across the enterprise to a shared experience. Continuous process improvement will provide an exceptional employee and participant experience.
- Analytics and reporting to mature from a reactive, backward-looking perspective to one that proactively identifies and resolves the root cause of problems. In the transformational stage, we expect to see data used predictively to anticipate program opportunities and needs.
- Technology will expand from enabling process execution to optimization and eventually to the automation of processes.

The operating model has turned the audit into an opportunity to uplift and transform the program into something that will establish predictability for both employees and those running the program. The process improvement changes will also result in increased productivity, alignment across business areas, technology automation, program confidence, and cost savings.



No way we could have done this without you.

- Director of Learning and Development at the company

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