



BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS

The Power of MySkillsLab's Integrated Solutions

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The Expansion of a Office Supplies Giant BIT's Role in Optimizing Franchise Partnerships



Geographic expansion became a key tactic to maintain sales volumes and secure better purchasing discounts for companies in the office supply business. For one leading retailer, this meant forming a franchise partnership with a multinational company in the Middle East.

The partnership had been initiated informally—a handshake deal struck by two executives during a flight to Miami. By the time the plane landed, the agreement was set, and both companies quickly assembled teams to execute the partnership without proper introductions, operational alignment, or defined processes.

Despite high visibility and oversight from senior management in both organizations, progress stalled. The lack of clear agreements and shared understanding between the franchisor and franchisee created friction, leaving both sides frustrated and unproductive.

While initial shipments seemed promising, the partnership soon hit a full standstill.

BIT conducted a thorough assessment, pinpointing the pain points in the partnership and creating a tailored business framework to resolve them.

During the initial assessment of this struggling franchise partnership, it became evident that the foundation of the collaboration was shaky at best. Through open communication, collaborative problem-solving, and the introduction of a new strategic business model, BIT revitalized the partnership, laying the foundation for long-term success.

This case study showcases the challenges faced, the solutions implemented, and the transformation achieved through BIT's expertise and strategic intervention.

Case Insights



The Challenge

The partnership was initiated informally, lacking clear agreements, processes, or shared expectations. This led to operational chaos, misaligned goals, and strained relationships between the franchisor and franchisee.

Key Gaps

- No formal partnership agreements or defined roles and responsibilities.
- Lack of alignment in business models and operational expectations.
- Inefficiencies in the supply chain, with high transport costs and mismanaged inventory.

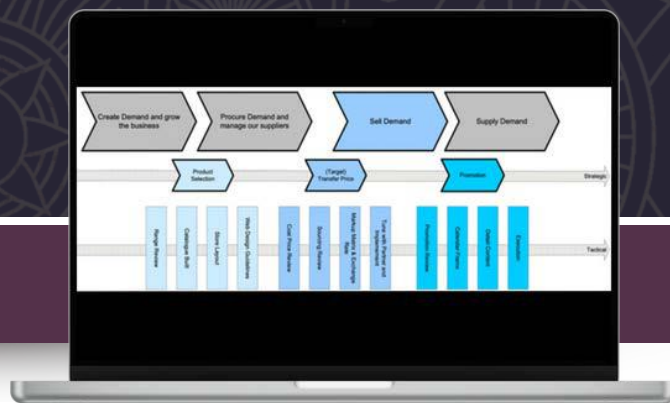
Solution

A structured approach was implemented, including workshops to align expectations, the development of a joint business canvas, and the establishment of clear governance supported by data-driven decision-making.

Outcomes

- A six-month turnaround with streamlined operations and a unified strategy.
- Improved collaboration and trust between teams, supported by transparent governance.
- Significant cost reductions through supply chain optimization and data-driven forecasting.

Assessing the Situation



ASSESSING THE SITUATION

The BIT team initiated a structured assessment to identify key gaps across three critical areas: partnership dynamics, business alignment, and assortment strategy.

Partnership Gaps

- Partnership agreements regarding roles and responsibilities.
- Misaligned expectations between franchisor and franchisee.
- Lack of defined processes, work agreements, and roles or responsibilities.
- High visibility from senior management, increasing pressure without operational clarity.

Business Gaps

- Limited knowledge of the Middle East market by the franchisor.
- Franchisee's unfamiliarity with the office supply industry.
- No operational business model or visibility into each other's business practices.

Assortment Gaps

- Stores in Kuwait, Dubai, and Saudi Arabia launched without effective use of planograms.
- Power plug incompatibilities and parallel import risks for A-brands created assortment inconsistencies.
- Small order volumes across a wide assortment caused inefficiencies.
- Product packaging, designed for B2B, failed to appeal to B2C consumers.

One of the foundational principles for a successful partnership is the "triple win" rule: ensuring that the franchisee, franchisor, and end consumer all derive tangible benefits from the collaboration. This concept recognizes that for a partnership to thrive, all stakeholders must see value in the arrangement. Without this alignment, the partnership risks becoming imbalanced or unsustainable.

To address this, the Business Intervention Team (BIT) facilitated workshops designed to explore and articulate these mutual benefits. Through open dialogue, the teams examined critical questions: What does the franchisee gain from this partnership? How does the franchisor benefit? And most importantly, what value is delivered to the end consumer? By focusing on these three dimensions, the workshop encouraged honest conversations that unveiled previously unspoken assumptions and misaligned expectations.

For the franchisee, the partnership needed to deliver operational support, scalable business models, and a pathway to profitability. For the franchisor, the emphasis was on expanding market presence, increasing brand recognition, and securing a reliable revenue stream. For the consumer, the ultimate goal was to ensure access to high-quality products tailored to their specific needs, with a seamless shopping experience.

This structured approach not only clarified each party's objectives but also fostered a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect. By aligning on the "triple win," both companies developed a shared vision and a renewed sense of purpose, creating a solid foundation for their partnership to flourish.

The Solutions

Getting insights into the business models and sharing expectations unlocked a deeper level of understanding and commitment between the two companies. This transparency revealed significant misalignments in how each party envisioned the partnership and highlighted the need for realignment.

Clarifying Business Models and Expectations

The franchisor's team, accustomed to operating in a B2B environment, had structured its business model around high-volume sales, prioritizing private-label products over OEM brands and local market favorites. This model, while effective in B2B channels, was not tailored for the dynamics of brick-and-mortar B2C stores, where consumer preferences, branding, and retail presentation are critical. Conversely, the franchisee entered the partnership expecting a "business-in-a-box" solution. Their vision involved leveraging store space as a primary asset while relying on the franchisor to handle key operational tasks such as merchandising planning, procurement, and store layout design. This assumption placed significant responsibility on the franchisor, who was unprepared to meet these specific B2C demands.

By openly discussing these differing expectations, both teams gained a clearer picture of their respective needs and limitations. This process allowed them to reassess and collaboratively evaluate the structure of their partnership.

Trust Building Through Clear Agreements and Ownership

Addressing these misalignments and working together on shared goals accelerated a stronger sense of connection and mutual respect between the teams. The open discussions created a "can-do" spirit that energized both sides and laid the groundwork for rebuilding trust.

As part of this process, the companies formalized a renewed agreement that clarified roles, responsibilities, and ownership of key tasks. This new clarity not only ensured that expectations were realistic but also instilled confidence in both teams' ability to execute the partnership effectively.

With trust re-established, senior management recognized the need to step back from day-to-day oversight. They transitioned to a governance structure that involved monthly business reviews, empowering the operational teams to focus on execution without micromanagement. This shift allowed the partnership to move forward with greater autonomy, accountability, and efficiency.

The combination of clear agreements, shared ownership, and trust-building efforts transformed the partnership dynamics. What had initially been a source of tension became an opportunity for collaboration and growth, setting the stage for long-term success.



The Solutions

Creating the Business Canvas

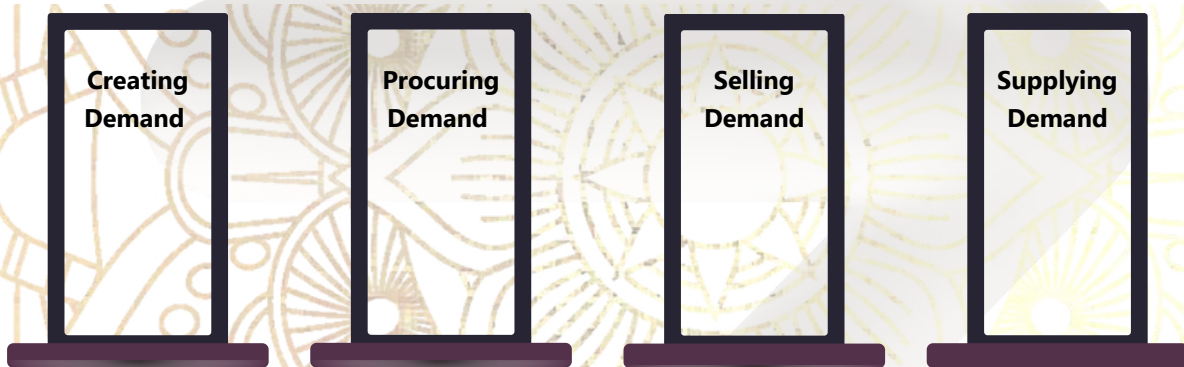
To establish a robust and sustainable partnership, a comprehensive joint business canvas was developed. This process required a clear and structured approach, grounded in a well-defined business architecture. The goal was to create a shared framework that could guide both the franchisor and franchisee toward aligning their operations, addressing market demands, and ensuring business success.

Analyzing Market Needs

The process began with an in-depth analysis of local customer behavior in the Middle East. This step was crucial, as it revealed distinct market preferences, purchasing habits, and competitive dynamics specific to the region. These insights allowed the teams to refine their value proposition, ensuring that it resonated with the unique needs of local consumers. For example, product offerings were evaluated and adapted, including redesigning packaging to suit the B2C retail environment. This step marked the transition from generic assumptions to a market-driven strategy tailored to regional realities.

Building the Business Architecture

The business architecture provided a structured framework for addressing the partnership's operational and strategic challenges. It consisted of four interconnected pillars:



1. Creating Demand and Growing the Business

This pillar focused on laying the groundwork for a successful market entry. It involved conducting a thorough market analysis to understand the landscape, assessing competitors to identify gaps and opportunities, and crafting a value proposition that could differentiate the partnership in the crowded office supply sector. This step was pivotal in establishing a clear direction for business growth.

2. Procuring Demand and Managing Suppliers

Once demand generation strategies were defined, the next step involved securing the supply chain. This included selecting reliable suppliers, organizing tenders to ensure competitive pricing, and setting up items in the system to streamline procurement processes. Ongoing item maintenance ensured that inventory remained relevant and aligned with customer expectations.

3. Selling Demand

With supply in place, the focus shifted to creating a compelling retail experience. Assortment planning was tailored to specific sales channels, ensuring that each location offered the right mix of products. A thoughtful pricing strategy was developed to balance competitiveness and profitability. Additionally, marketing calendars were introduced for each channel, driving coordinated promotional efforts and maximizing visibility among target audiences.

4. Supplying Demand

The final pillar addressed the operational backbone of the partnership—fulfilling customer orders efficiently and reliably. This included streamlining order execution and delivery processes, ensuring compliance with local regulations, and optimizing sourcing practices to minimize delays and costs. Together, these efforts created a seamless supply chain capable of meeting consumer expectations.



Operational Business Model

A collaborative effort between the franchisor and franchisee led to the creation of a unified business model that aligned operations across both organizations. This joint approach introduced integrated business planning and forecasting, which became the cornerstone of their shared strategy. By aligning forecasts with existing inventory in the supply chain, the partnership was able to optimize replenishments, ensuring that stock levels met demand efficiently. Vendor management and product sourcing processes were also enhanced, and master data alignment emerged as a recurring priority during review meetings to maintain consistency and accuracy across the supply chain.

Streamlining the Supply Chain

Significant improvements were made to the supply chain to enhance efficiency and reduce costs. Previously reliant on multiple small deliveries, the partnership implemented two key consolidation points to streamline operations and shift the majority of shipments from air freight to sea freight, achieving substantial cost savings and environmental benefits.

Private Brand Consolidation at the Source

Private-label products were consolidated directly at the Far East production source. These goods were combined into a single container and shipped directly to their destination, eliminating unnecessary fragmentation in the logistics process.

Cross-Docking Operations in Europe

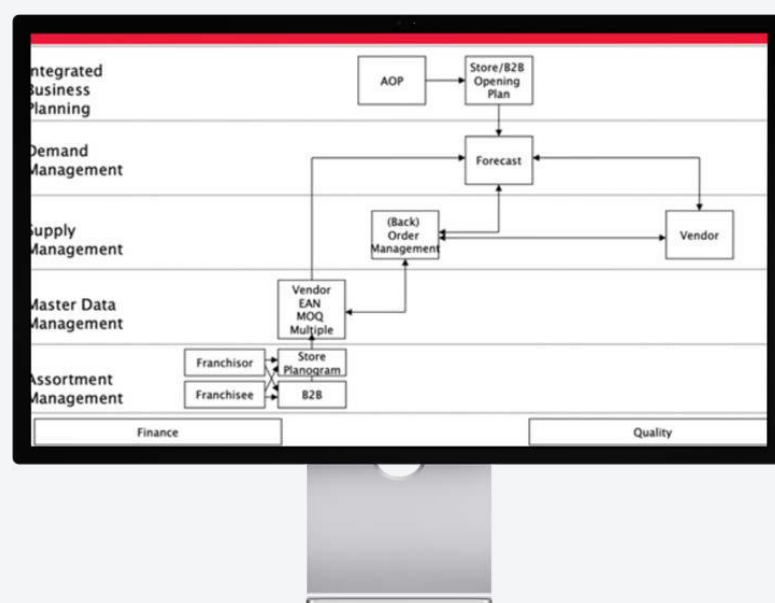
A cross-dock facility was established in Europe to handle smaller volumes of a wide assortment of products. These items were consolidated into single-container shipments before being sent to their destination. This approach ensured that even diverse product ranges could be efficiently transported without inflating logistics costs.

The Results: Transparency, Data-Driven Decisions, and Operational Excellence

With the improvements in the supply chain and business planning, the partnership reached a new level of operational maturity. Full visibility into the supply chain allowed for transparency and measurable outcomes, enabling the teams to make informed decisions quickly and effectively.

Business and Financial Insights

The franchisee began providing detailed business and financial insights, including run rates and performance metrics. This enabled the franchisor's business intelligence team to actively support and advise on key areas of improvement. Armed with these insights, the teams were empowered to make adjustments swiftly, relying on data rather than intuition. This shift not only enhanced decision-making but also built confidence between the franchisor and franchisee, reinforcing their collaboration.



Operational Business Model

Support for Promotional Activities

In addition to operational insights, the business intelligence team extended its role to include support for promotional activities. By analyzing traffic patterns and consumer behavior, the team contributed to campaigns designed to increase store foot traffic and drive sales. This proactive approach further aligned the efforts of both organizations, ensuring that marketing initiatives were data-driven and impactful.

Foundation for the Operational Model

These collaborative, data-driven processes became the backbone of the partnership's operational model. The day-to-day rhythm of shared insights, forecasting, and promotional planning established a reliable system that both parties could depend on. This structure allowed for continuous improvement, ensuring the partnership remained agile and competitive in an evolving market. By integrating business intelligence, supply chain optimization, and collaborative planning, the partnership not only reduced costs and improved efficiency but also created a scalable and sustainable operational framework. This foundation positioned the business for long-term success, with both parties leveraging shared data and expertise to achieve mutual growth.



The Change Accelerator

People and Processes: Success Starts with the Right People and a Clear Way of Working

At the heart of any successful partnership are the people who drive it and the processes that guide their work. To turn insights and progress into tangible results, it was essential to implement a new Way of Working—one that empowered the teams, provided clarity, and encouraged collaboration.

A Practical and Flexible Approach

Building on the earlier steps, the business architecture was expanded to include detailed tactical and operational guidelines, forming a comprehensive set of standard operating procedures (SOPs). These SOPs provided much-needed structure and consistency, but they were designed with a practical, flexible mindset. Rather than imposing rigid rules, the approach allowed room for entrepreneurial thinking and adaptability. This flexibility was key to addressing the dynamic challenges of the partnership, while the overarching framework helped both teams ask the right questions, manage expectations, and create mutual understanding.

Cleaning Up and Moving Forward

One of the most important steps was addressing the residual issues from the partnership's early stages. Misalignments, inefficiencies, and operational chaos had to be systematically cleaned up to make way for a fresh start. This controlled cleanup process wasn't just about fixing problems—it was about building a foundation for the future.

Building Trust Through Governance and Transparency

To ensure the new Way of Working was effective, the teams introduced clear governance supported by a balanced scorecard. This approach gave everyone visibility into key metrics and progress, creating a transparent environment where performance could be tracked in real time. Importantly, transparency wasn't used as a tool for blame. Instead, it became a shared resource—a way to unite the teams around common goals, align their efforts, and tackle challenges together. By focusing on solutions rather than assigning fault, the partnership began to thrive. Trust and collaboration grew, and both sides felt empowered to take ownership of their roles in the process.

The Impact

This new way of working transformed how the teams collaborated. It established a culture of trust, accountability, and mutual respect, creating an environment where both the franchisor and franchisee could succeed together. By equipping the right people with clear processes and a shared vision, the partnership didn't just recover—it flourished.



Key Achievements

The journey to success wasn't just about processes and plans—it was about people, collaboration, and a shared commitment to making the partnership work. Through a structured approach, open dialogue, and bold decision-making, both companies transformed their initial struggles into a resounding success story. Precious time was invested in building bridges between the teams. Honest and open discussions created a new dynamic of trust and mutual respect. The solution priorities were tackled methodically, ensuring no detail was overlooked. What started as a challenging partnership quickly evolved into a collaborative powerhouse, driven by a shared vision for success.

Rapid Results

Within just six months, the partnership was completely revitalized:

- **A Business Turnaround:** Misalignment and inefficiencies were replaced by streamlined operations, clear processes, and a unified strategy.
- **A Strong Foundation:** The groundwork was laid for both companies to move forward confidently, working as one cohesive team.
- **Positive Momentum:** The initial report-out was met with enthusiasm from both sides, affirming the proposed solutions and energizing the teams for the journey ahead.
- **Alignment and Strategy:** Both companies came together to redefine their approach, creating a joint roadmap that bridged gaps and aligned expectations.
- **Efficient Operations:** Operational chaos was replaced with measurable, data-driven processes that delivered real results.
- **Empowered Teams:** Collaboration wasn't just restored—it flourished. Teams on both sides felt empowered to take ownership of their roles and responsibilities.

...This transformation wasn't just about fixing problems—it was about creating a partnership that could grow, adapt, and succeed in the long run. By investing in people, prioritizing collaboration, and committing to data-driven decision-making, both companies ensured that their joint venture was set up for sustainable growth.

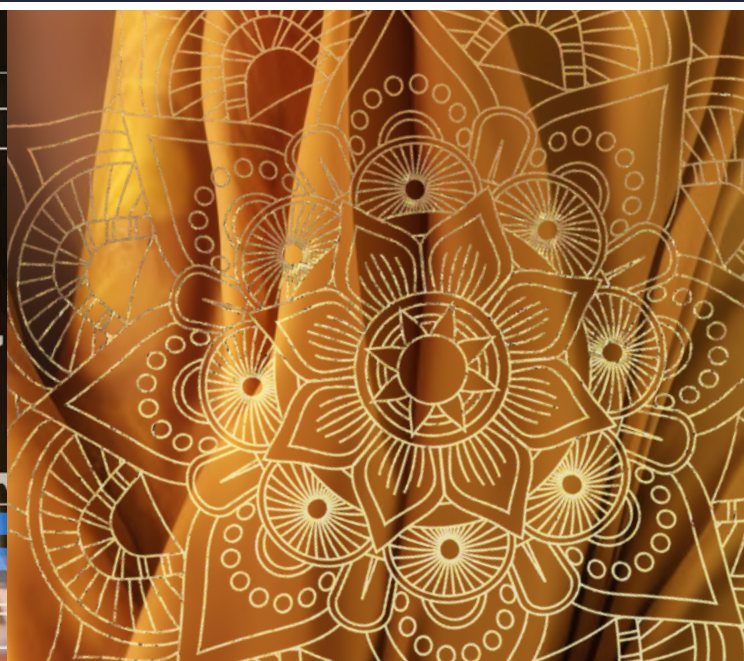
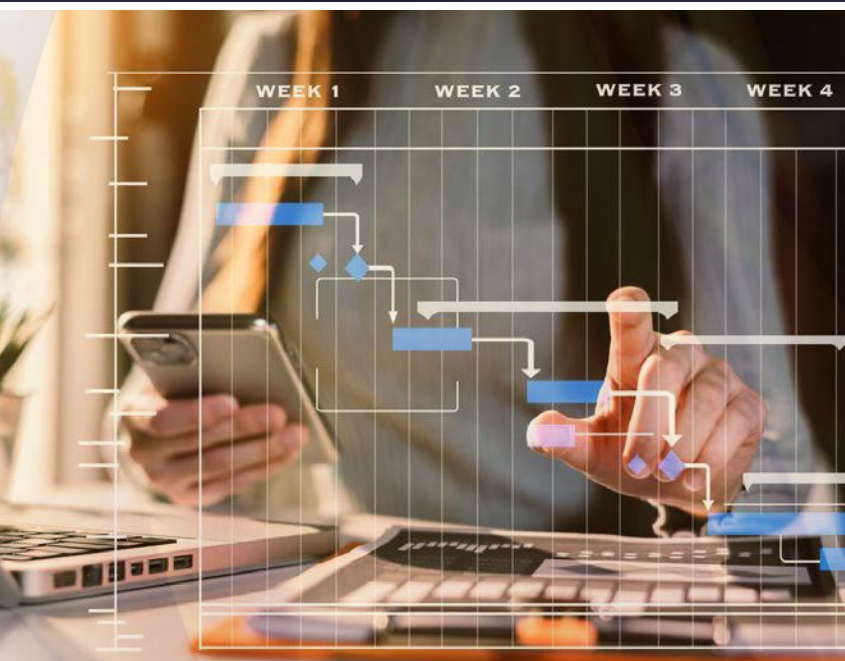
The results speak for themselves: a partnership reborn, a business turned around, and a foundation for long-term success. Together, they proved that even the most challenging situations can lead to extraordinary outcomes when tackled with the right mindset and a shared purpose.

This is more than a result—it's a testament to what's possible when two companies unite around a common goal

*Michel Ophelders
Head of BIT MySkillsLab*



ABOUT BIT



Business Intervention Team

Organizations often face challenges that hinder progress—especially during periods of complex transformation or intensive learning and development. Teams can become overwhelmed by the speed of change, the volume of new skills required, or the intricacies of navigating uncharted territory. That's where our Business Intervention Team (BIT) comes in.

By partnering with us, you eliminate the steep learning curve and significant resource investment typically required to build internal capabilities for addressing these challenges. Instead, you gain immediate access to a bespoke team of specialists, expertly aligned to meet your unique needs and objectives. Our BIT team doesn't just focus on quick fixes or surface-level solutions; we're dedicated to creating sustainable impact. We dive deep into your organization's pain points to uncover the root causes of challenges, applying precision, insight, and proven methodologies to resolve even the most complex issues.



MEANINGFUL INTERVENTIONS, WHEN TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

Our BIT team serves as your trusted partner, helping you overcome roadblocks, drive transformation, and achieve your strategic goals with confidence. With us by your side, you can focus on growth and innovation while we handle the complexity, ensuring every intervention delivers maximum value and long-term benefits.

Highlights

Tailored Expertise

Every intervention is customized, ensuring our solutions directly address your unique obstacles.

Strategic Precision

From streamlining operations to revitalizing team dynamics, we focus on impactful, measurable outcomes.

Cutting-Edge Innovation

Whether introducing advanced technologies, redefining workflows, or fostering cultural shifts, we ensure your organization is ready to thrive in a competitive environment.

Lasting Results

Beyond resolving immediate challenges, we lay the groundwork for ongoing success by strengthening your team's capacity to adapt and excel.

Why Choose the Business Intervention Team (BIT)

The Business Intervention Team (BIT) at MySkillsLab has a proven track record of supporting organizations of all sizes and industries. We specialize in stepping into complex situations, conducting thorough assessments, crafting tailored solutions, and delivering results that are fully embedded into the organization. Our success lies in our ability to adapt our toolset to meet the unique needs of each client. No two organizations are the same, and we thrive on the challenge of creating innovative, customized strategies that drive meaningful and lasting change. Your organization's challenges are distinct, and we're here to tackle them head-on. Let's collaborate to transform your constraints into opportunities for future success.

About the Authors

Michel Ophelders

Head of Business Intervention Teams

- CONSULTANT
- SCM EXPERT
- SPEAKER



Personal Profile

Michel is an established leader in Business Strategy and Organizational Development, renowned for his expertise in Total Operations Management and end-to-end solutions in complex scenarios. His extensive experience spans over two decades, during which he has effectively led operations management from strategic planning to supply chain optimization across a spectrum of environments, from Fortune 500 companies to dynamic innovative startups.

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Petra Stormen

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- FOUNDER MYSKILLSLAB
- COURSE INSTRUCTOR
- EXECUTIVE COACH
- BUSINESS CONSULTANCY
- ASSESSOR (GLA360)





Personal Profile

Petra masterfully uncovers subtle challenges during her interactions with others, intuitively guiding individuals to transformative breakthroughs. With a gentle yet determined approach, she delivers impactful results while building lasting connections. Balancing influence with humility, Petra inspires others by recognizing the powerful interplay of mind, passion, and universal forces in every transformative journey.

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How to connect with us

Reach out to us today to learn how our bespoke approach can support you and your organization. We're here to design a program that fits your needs and helps you reach your goals.



MySkillsLab

Discovery Call : MySkillsLab

🕒 15 min

📅 Web conferencing details provided upon confirmation.

Hello!

Thank you for expressing interest in connecting with us! During this short discovery call, we'll have the opportunity to discuss your specific needs and how our solutions can address them effectively. Our team is committed to providing

Select a Date & Time

< March 2024 >

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Time zone

🌐 Central European Time (14:51) ▼

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