

Why Good Business Cases Fail

The 3R's of Strategic External Workforce Investment

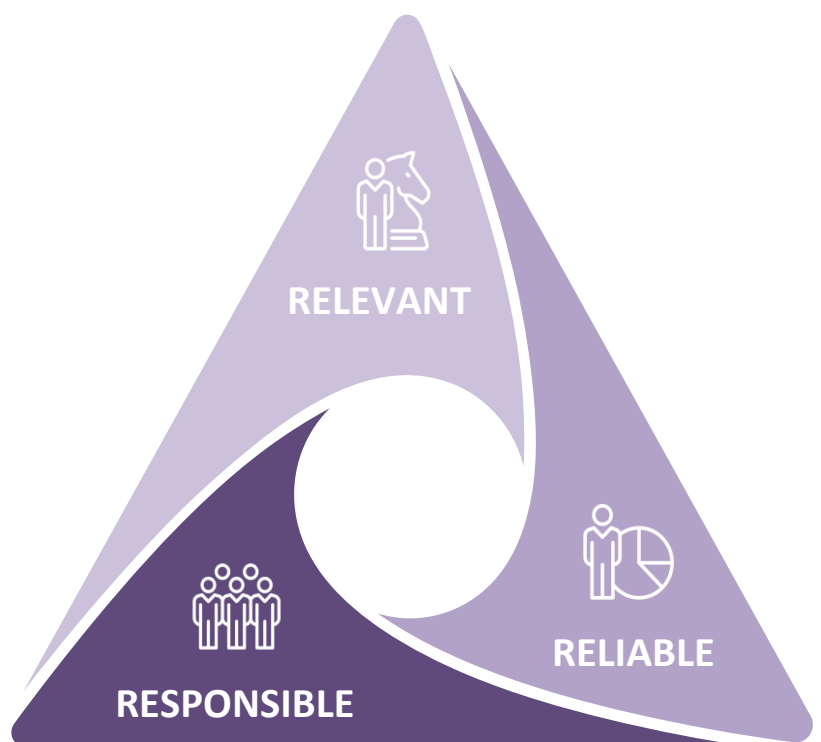
A business case does not win simply because the problem is real or the solution is logical. It wins when value is framed in a way that is relevant to strategy, reliable under scrutiny, and responsible in execution.

The 3Rs Framework

Business cases rarely fail because the problem is not real. Many are built around issues that are highly visible to the people closest to the work: rising costs, fragmented processes, poor visibility, unmanaged risk, slow access to skills or limited workforce planning maturity. More often, the case is framed too narrowly. It explains the solution from the perspective of the solution owner rather than translating the value into the language of enterprise priorities, stakeholder motivations and investment trade-offs.

That distinction matters because business cases compete for capital, executive attention, delivery capacity and change appetite. A case may be logical and still fail if it does not explain why the investment matters to the broader enterprise agenda.

This is especially true when building the business case for investment in the strategic management of the external workforce. Contractors, consultants, labour hire, service providers, statement-of-work partners and automation all play a role in how modern organisations get work done.



Relevant	Connect the case to enterprise strategy, growth and execution priorities.
Reliable	Prove the value through evidence, assumptions, financial logic and delivery confidence.
Responsible	Show the organisation can execute safely through governance, risk management and accountability.

Relevance

Lead with the business imperative

The first test is whether the business case is relevant to the organisation's strategic priorities. Executives need to see the relevance of the proposal in terms of:

- Supports organisational growth
- Improves execution;
- Increases capability;
- Reduces cost and risk; and
- Helps deliver the strategic plan

A strategic case says: "Delivering growth, transformation and productivity requires more than a view of the permanent workforce. It requires an integrated understanding of how work is delivered across employees, external workers, suppliers and specialist partners. This gives leaders the visibility and control needed to access capability faster, improve execution, manage cost, strengthen compliance and reduce risk."

This is powerful because it connects the investment to enterprise priorities. It moves the organisation beyond the question "Who do we employ?" and towards the more important question: "How does work actually get done?"

Reliability

Make the case commercially credible

Strategic alignment earns attention. It does not automatically secure approval. The case needs to be reliable:

- Supported by evidence;
- Credible assumptions;
- Clear economic logic; and
 - Delivery confidence.

A reliable case does not simply say, "This will reduce cost." It explains the mechanisms for how it will occur.

Reliability also requires a clear baseline and transparent delivery confidence. The business case should show where spend sits today, where dependency is highest, where costs are increasing, and where external capability supports business-critical work. It should also distinguish between high-confidence benefits, such as those supported by known spend or clear process changes, and benefits that are more dependent on adoption, market conditions or broader transformation outcomes.

When combined with evidence and economic logic, this transparency strengthens the case because it demonstrates commercial discipline.

Responsibility

Show safe execution

The third test is whether the business case shows the organisation can execute safely and at scale. A business case is not just a request for funding; it is a recommendation that the organisation take action. For strategic external workforce management, this is critical because the external workforce creates both value and exposure. It can provide flexibility, specialist capability and delivery capacity, but without the right structure it can also create legal, regulatory, commercial, cyber, safety, supplier, brand and operational risk.

Executives need to understand:

- How will decisions be governed consistently?
 - Where does accountability sit?
 - Can practice align to policy?
- Can the model scale without multiplying risk?
- How will visibility, control and compliance maturity improve?

A responsible case says: "As external workforce becomes more critical to delivery, organisations need governance that enables speed with control. Clear ownership, consistent pathways and visibility help the business access external capability confidently, while reducing risk."

This is powerful because it positions governance as an enabler, not a constraint. Responsibility is about creating the structure, visibility and accountability needed to move faster with confidence.

What Content Should the Business Case Include?

Once the business case has been framed through the 3Rs: **Relevant, Reliable and Responsible**. The next question is what content is needed to support the argument.

A business case for strategic external workforce management should show how the investment connects to business strategy, how value will be created, how risk will be managed, and how the organisation will make better decisions about how work gets done.

The content should help executives understand the current state, the case for change, the commercial opportunity, the risks of inaction and the investment required to move forward.

Content	3Rs	What the business case should include
Strategic Rationale	Relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment to business strategy; • Growth priorities and execution requirements; • Build, Buy, Borrow, Bot implications; • Consequence of inaction.
Cost & Spend Management	Reliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend baseline and cost drivers; • Savings and cost avoidance opportunities; • Demand, buying and rate discipline; • Investment, return and payback.
Risk & Compliance	Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility, control and accountability; • Compliance maturity; • Classification, engagement and supplier risk; • Regulatory, cyber and safety obligations.
Quality & Efficiency	Relevant, Reliable, Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery quality; productivity and time-to-value; process friction; • Supplier and worker performance; • Brand and user experience.
Technology	Relevant, Reliable, Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-for-purpose enablement; • Integration with HR, Procurement, Finance and Risk; • Workflow, data and reporting; • Adoption readiness.
Insights & Data	Reliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current-state baseline; • Market and peer benchmarks; • Supplier, category, skills and rate data; • Assumptions, confidence levels and measurement.

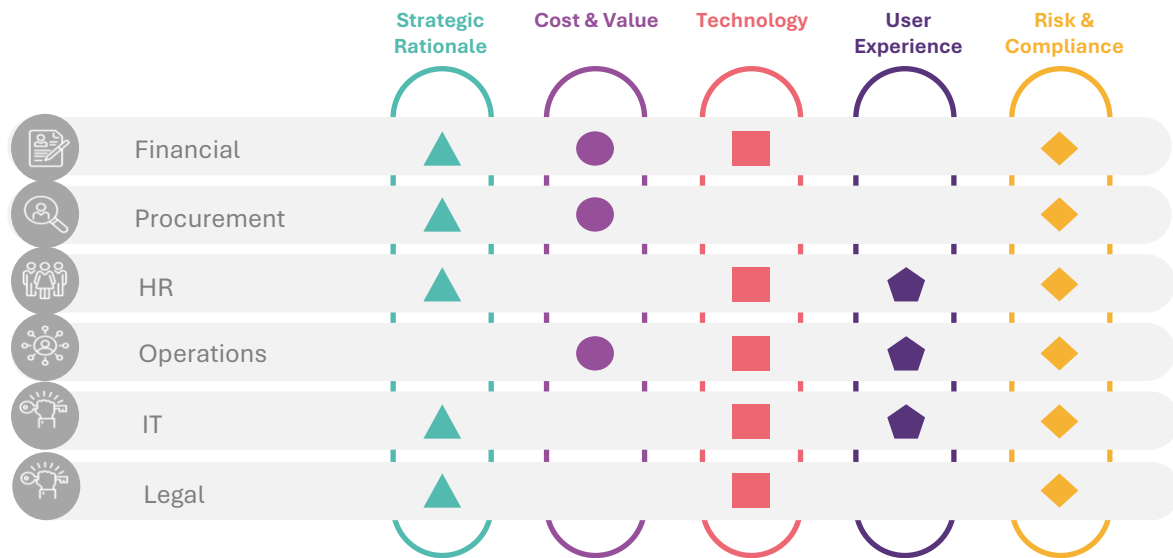
The content should not read like a checklist of activities or solution components. It should show the logic of the investment: why it matters to the business, what value it will create, what evidence supports the case, what risks are being addressed and how the organisation will know whether the investment has worked.

When these content areas are connected clearly to the 3Rs, the business case becomes more than a proposal for external workforce management. It becomes an evidence-based argument for improving how the organisation plans, governs and delivers work across its full workforce ecosystem.

Translate the Case for the Whole Room

A strategic external workforce business case will not be assessed by one stakeholder through one lens. The CEO needs to see strategy and growth. The CFO needs to see value, affordability, cost transparency and return. The COO needs to see execution and performance. The Chief People Officer needs to see the connection to workforce strategy. Procurement needs to see supplier discipline and commercial control. Legal and Risk need to see governance, compliance maturity and reduced exposure.

This does not mean writing six different business cases. It means building one integrated argument that connects the investment to the priorities of each stakeholder.

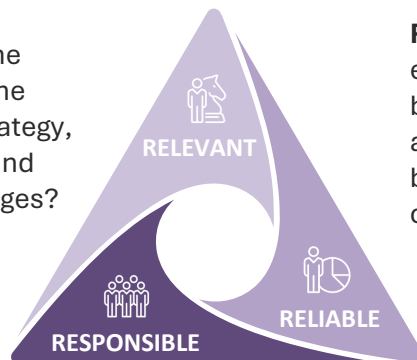


From Funding Request to Strategic Alignment

The strongest business cases do more than describe a solution. They explain why the investment matters, why the value can be trusted, and why the organisation can deliver it responsibly.

For strategic external workforce management, that means shifting the conversation away from administration and toward enterprise execution. The investment is not simply in an external workforce program. It is an investment in a more mature workforce model: one that connects business strategy with workforce strategy, integrates permanent and external workforce planning, improves access to capability, strengthens cost control, and helps the organisation move faster with greater visibility and confidence.

Relevant: Does the case connect to the organisation’s strategy, growth priorities and execution challenges?



Reliable: Are the economics supported by evidence, clear assumptions, a credible baseline and delivery confidence?

Responsible: Does the case show how the organisation will govern the model, manage risk and realise benefits safely?

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