

CHAPTER 2

Understanding the Business

*Thinking Like an Executive Before Designing
Like an Architect*

*“Technology should never be the
starting point. Business problems are.”*

— Sazzad Khan

EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Trusted Advisors do not begin with architecture diagrams, cloud services, or technology roadmaps. They begin with the business: how it creates value, where that value is being lost, and which capabilities must improve for the strategy to succeed.

Technology is never purchased in isolation. It is hired to perform a job: remove a constraint, reduce risk, accelerate growth, improve resilience, or create an advantage that the organisation could not achieve through its current operating model.

For Nordic Ventures Group, the ambition is not simply to migrate infrastructure. The business needs to protect future competitiveness, simplify operations, meet regulatory obligations, improve manufacturing performance, and expand internationally without reproducing today’s complexity in every new market.

TRUSTED ADVISOR INSIGHT

Executives do not buy cloud services. They invest in stronger business capabilities and measurable outcomes.

This chapter presents a disciplined approach to understanding the business before recommending technology. It brings together five complementary perspectives: Jobs to Be Done, the Theory of Constraints, value innovation, regulatory context, and the protection of existing investments.

After completing this chapter, the reader will be able to:

- Identify the business job behind a technology request.
- Distinguish symptoms from the constraint limiting enterprise performance.
- Connect cloud strategy to growth, resilience, compliance, and operating efficiency.
- Protect and extend the value of existing SAP, Dynamics 365, and Microsoft 365 investments.
- Define measurable outcomes before selecting architecture or services.

1 START WITH THE JOB TO BE DONE

Why Organisations “Hire” Technology

The Jobs-to-Be-Done framework offers a simple but powerful idea: customers do not merely purchase products; they “hire” them to make progress in a particular situation. The same principle applies inside enterprises. Organisations do not adopt Azure because cloud technology is inherently desirable. They adopt it because the current operating model can no longer perform an important job well enough.

The surface request may sound technical: “We need a landing zone,” “We must modernise identity,” or “We should move our applications to Azure.” A Trusted Advisor looks beneath the request and asks what progress the business is trying to make.

For Nordic Ventures Group, technology is being hired to perform five strategic jobs:

Protect competitiveness: Create the digital capabilities required to compete in markets where speed, data, and customer responsiveness increasingly determine success.

Reduce operational complexity: Replace fragmented local solutions and duplicated platforms with an enterprise foundation that is simpler to govern and easier to evolve.

Strengthen trust and compliance: Build security, privacy, resilience, and regulatory evidence into the operating model rather than treating them as late-stage controls.

Improve manufacturing performance: Use connected data, analytics, automation, and AI to increase reliability, quality, and decision speed across five production facilities.

Enable international growth: Allow new markets, acquisitions, users, and workloads to be integrated without rebuilding the technology environment each time.

The distinction matters because the same technology can serve very different jobs. Azure Virtual Desktop might support secure contractor access, accelerate an acquisition, enable remote engineering, or reduce the operational burden of local desktops. The service is identical; the business meaning is not.

Framework 2.1

The Business-First Discovery Chain

1. Strategic ambition	What must the organisation achieve?
2. Job to be done	What progress is the business hiring technology to make?
3. Constraint	What currently prevents that progress?
4. Capability	What must the enterprise become able to do consistently?
5. Outcome	How will leaders know that the capability has improved?
6. Technology response	Which architecture and services best support the outcome?

When this sequence is reversed, technology drives the initiative and business value is added later as justification. When it is followed correctly, technology

becomes a traceable response to an agreed business need.

2 IDENTIFY THE CONSTRAINT

Lessons from The Goal

Eliyahu Goldratt's Theory of Constraints demonstrates that the performance of a system is limited by its most significant constraint. Improving non-constraints may create local efficiency, but it does not necessarily improve the performance of the whole organisation.

For Nordic Ventures Group, the visible problem is a large and ageing technology estate: twelve distributed datacentres, approximately 180 applications, around 140 legacy systems, and operations spanning fourteen countries. Yet the true constraint is not the number of systems alone. It is the organisation's limited ability to change safely and consistently across that landscape.

That constraint appears in several forms:

- New factories and acquisitions take too long to integrate.
- Business units create local solutions because enterprise platforms respond too slowly.
- Security and compliance controls vary by geography and system generation.
- Engineers spend disproportionate time maintaining legacy dependencies.
- Executives cannot obtain a reliable enterprise-wide view of cost, risk, or performance.

A migration programme that merely moves workloads to Azure could preserve every one of these limitations. The infrastructure location would change, but the constraint would remain. The programme must therefore be positioned as an operating-model transformation: standardise the platform, reduce exceptions, automate governance, improve decision rights, and create reusable capabilities for future change.

EXECUTIVE REFLECTION

If every server were migrated tomorrow, which business constraint would still remain?

The question forces the programme to distinguish movement from progress. A completed migration is an output. A reduced constraint is an outcome.

3 CREATE NEW VALUE, NOT ONLY LOWER COST

Lessons from Blue Ocean Strategy

W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne argue that organisations create strategic advantage by developing new value rather than competing exclusively on existing terms. Applied to enterprise cloud transformation, this means the objective should not be limited to operating today's business more cheaply. The platform should make tomorrow's business possible.

For NVG, the cloud can create value in three ways:

AI-driven insight A governed data foundation can support predictive maintenance, production-quality analysis, demand forecasting, and faster executive decisions.

Speed as a competitive capability Reusable platforms, automated controls, and standardised delivery patterns can reduce the time required to launch products, integrate acquisitions, and enter markets.

Digital operating leverage Shared capabilities can be reused across countries, factories, and business units, allowing growth without a proportional increase in complexity and cost.

This is where the Trusted Advisor changes the executive conversation. Instead of asking only, "How much can we save?", the advisor asks, "Which capabilities can we create that our current operating model makes impossible?"

Framework 2.2

Value Innovation Questions

ELIMINATE	Which duplicated platforms, approvals, and manual controls no longer create value?
REDUCE	Which forms of complexity, technical debt, and local variation should be deliberately reduced?
RAISE	Which capabilities—security, resilience, data quality, delivery speed—must exceed today’s standard?
CREATE	Which new services, insights, or operating capabilities should the transformation make possible?
MEASURE	Which business indicators will prove that new value has been created?

4 UNDERSTAND THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Regulation Is a Business Constraint—and a Source of Trust

Understanding the business also means understanding the forces acting upon it. For NVG, NIS2 and GDPR are not simply technical requirements delegated to security and legal teams. They affect market access, customer confidence, board accountability, operational resilience, and the organisation’s ability to expand across Europe. A weak compliance posture can delay acquisitions, restrict data use, complicate customer contracts, increase incident impact, and damage reputation. A strong posture does more than reduce risk. It creates confidence that the organisation can grow without losing control.

Trusted Advisors therefore translate regulation into architecture capabilities:

- Consistent identity and access governance.
- Asset visibility and ownership.

- Data classification, protection, and retention.
- Centralised monitoring and incident response.
- Documented resilience, recovery, and continuity practices.
- Evidence that controls operate consistently across countries and business units.

The goal is not to create a separate “compliance architecture.” The goal is to make compliant behaviour the default outcome of the platform and operating model.

5 PROTECT AND AMPLIFY EXISTING INVESTMENTS

Transformation Without Unnecessary Replacement

Business understanding requires respect for the investments that already create value. NVG has significant commitments to SAP, Dynamics 365, Microsoft 365, factory systems, specialist applications, and the skills of employees who operate them. A transformation strategy that ignores these assets may be technically ambitious but economically irresponsible.

Azure should not be positioned as a reason to replace everything. Its role is to provide a secure and scalable foundation that integrates, protects, and extends what the organisation already does well.

Existing investment	Business value to protect	Cloud opportunity
SAP	Core finance, supply chain, and production processes	Improve resilience, integration, analytics, and operating visibility.
Dynamics 365	Customer and business-process capabilities	Connect data and workflows across sales, service, operations, and reporting.

Existing investment	Business value to protect	Cloud opportunity
Microsoft 365	Productivity, collaboration, and identity ecosystem	Strengthen secure collaboration, information governance, and employee experience.

The best transformation strategies do not confuse novelty with value. They retain what differentiates the organisation, simplify what creates friction, modernise what limits progress, and retire what no longer serves a clear purpose.

6 THE BUSINESS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Five Questions Before Architecture Begins

Before recommending Azure services, a Trusted Advisor should be able to answer five questions in language that the executive team recognises as its own.

1. Where is value being lost?

Identify avoidable cost, delayed revenue, operational waste, risk exposure, customer friction, and time spent sustaining obsolete complexity.

2. What constrains growth?

Determine which systems, decisions, skills, dependencies, or governance structures prevent the organisation from scaling or adapting.

3. Which external forces shape the business?

Understand regulation, market conditions, customer expectations, supplier dependencies, and competitive pressure.

4. Which investments and strengths must be protected?

Identify systems, data, capabilities, relationships, and institutional knowledge that already create strategic value.

5. What outcomes define success?

Agree measurable evidence of improved capability before architecture and delivery decisions are made.

Returning to Nordic Ventures Group

The First Business Review

After several weeks of interviews, factory visits, financial analysis, and technology discovery, the consulting team returns to the Executive Leadership Team. Many executives expect a presentation filled with Azure services and architecture diagrams.

Instead, the first slide contains a single question:

“How does Nordic Ventures Group create value—and what prevents it from creating more?”

The room changes. The CFO describes the cost of duplicated platforms. The COO explains delays in opening production capacity. The CISO connects inconsistent controls to expanding regulatory exposure. Sales leaders describe opportunities that cannot be supported quickly enough. Factory managers explain where unreliable data limits decisions.

For the first time, the technology programme is not being discussed as a collection of systems. It is being discussed as a set of business constraints and capabilities.

The CEO listens, then says:

“This is the first technology meeting we have held that actually began with our business.”

Only then does the team begin to discuss architecture. Every recommendation now has a purpose, an owner, a measurable outcome, and a clear connection to strategy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Find the job	What progress is the organisation hiring technology to make?
Find the pain	Where is value leaking through cost, delay, risk, or customer friction?

Find the job	What progress is the organisation hiring technology to make?
Find the constraint	What most limits growth, agility, resilience, or decision speed?
Understand external forces	Which regulations, markets, customers, and dependencies shape the strategy?
Protect existing value	Which investments, capabilities, and strengths should be amplified rather than replaced?
Define the outcome	What measurable evidence will prove that the transformation succeeded?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the three most important business objectives for your organisation this year?
2. What is the single greatest constraint preventing progress?
3. How does the current cloud strategy directly support those objectives?
4. Which existing investments create the most value and therefore deserve protection?
5. If you were CEO of Nordic Ventures Group, would you address platform complexity or invest in AI first—and what evidence would shape your decision?
6. What job is your organisation hiring technology to perform?

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