

**Deloitte.**



Unleash your  
tax superhero:

4 characteristics of a better business partner

## **Expectations of the tax team have been raised.**

Many tax leaders and their team members are redefining themselves as strategic business partners. Business partners that bring tax and business strategy together, leverage important strategic relationships, convey tax's potential value in business decisions, and embrace technology that can help them advance their future.

## **They're redefining themselves as tax superheroes.**

Never fear: Being a tax superhero doesn't require you to be superhuman. You already recognize the high expectations and the strategic impact of the evolved tax leader. That modern leader is right there inside you, but maybe hasn't been unleashed yet.

It's the part of you pushing for tax to become an influencer across the organization. To advance your future as a creative, thoughtful, informed advisor. To focus more on the strategic. To understand. Communicate. Collaborate.

So what makes a tax superhero? Let's look at four key characteristics, how these superpowers show up in real-life scenarios, and practical steps you can take to develop them.



## A curious mind

Tax superheroes have an appetite for new business knowledge about their organization's priorities. Processes. Supply chain. Risk tolerance. Growth strategy. They understand that perhaps every aspect of the business has a tax implication, and that the alignment of tax and business strategy is vital. They build strategies around the products, technologies, or culture that differentiates the business from its competitors.

### How it shows up:

Your organization offers a mix of products and services, all of which carry different tax implications across hundreds of jurisdictions. As a collaborative tax leader, you work with marketing to determine competitive pricing for what you offer, operations for how the supply chain should be designed, and finance about the tax implications and benefits to each decision. And you work with accounting to determine how to bill across jurisdictions and ensure financial records support tax compliance requirements.

### Develop your superpowers today:

- **Understand who cares about what.** Develop stakeholder maps for organizational priorities and distribute them among your team.
- **Stay up to date.** Join (or implement) weekly deal calls to learn about and inform business decisions, priorities, and strategies. Disseminate information from C-suite to the team to maintain current business knowledge broadly.
- **Look for learning opportunities:** Hold informal tax team gatherings during which you attend [webcasts and other educational events](#) as a team and discuss the topic, takeaways, and how it translates to your organization.
- **Build key relationships.** Engage leaders (chief financial officer, chief legal officer, controller, etc.) to learn their priorities and pain points, and educate them on the value of aligning tax and business strategies.



## An eye for talent

The tax superhero knows it takes a team to make tax the business partner it needs to be. Tax technical abilities alone may not be enough. Aligning tax and business strategy, along with digital savvy, also demands the ability to advise and interface across the business, to redesign processes, and uncover data-driven insights. As our [2021 tax transformation trends survey](#) explains, you may not be able to find a unicorn who has all of these skills. But you can, assemble balanced and collaborative power teams that check each box.

### How it shows up:

Your power team can connect with a growing web of key stakeholders. Tax technical skills to engage with your controller, government affairs, and payroll. Digital skills to support automated taxability predictions as part of the forecasting process. Strategic skills to advise the wider C-suite, supply chain, and investor relations teams on transactions, business expansion, or incentives that could support anything from cost savings to talent retention. And leadership and influence skills for the entire organization.

They all foster valuable connections that can produce savings and growth opportunities.

### Develop your superpowers today:

- **Take inventory of your team's skills.** Identify what skills you have and what skills you need to develop or seek out to bolster your power teams.
- **Define roles & responsibilities effectively.** Infuse business partnering skills and responsibilities into your team's roles, processes, development, performance management, and recruiting practices.
- **Look for opportunities to create synergy.** Think about how you can pair and deploy team members with complementary skillsets to maximize tax's value. Many organizations offer rotational roles within tax, or even between tax and finance, to support diverse growth and development.
- **Never go it alone.** Expose your more junior team members to CFO touchpoints and other cross-business connection opportunities. Delegate accessible roles such as note-taking duty and provide valuable exposure to support learning opportunities.



## A way with words

Tax superheroes know the importance of a clear, consistent message. Their communication with the C-suite and other functions gets tax a seat at the table of major transactions and decisions early. They educate the organization about what the tax function does, why people should care, and tax's potential value. Their internal communication within tax aligns to a culture of knowledge, collaboration, and next-gen skills, and fosters an environment that values the alignment of tax and business strategy.

### How it shows up:

A new CFO is joining your organization. Your "tax playbook" helps her understand the role of the tax organization as a value driver, in addition to the perfunctory tax obligations everyone knows about. It includes a breakdown of who's who, how tax delivers and when and why finance leaders (and others) should know and care about tax—because every dollar an organization spends or earns typically has a tax implication.

The playbook includes the amount of taxes incurred, collected and remitted across jurisdictions; the organization's effective tax rate and cash effective rate; and cash savings and planning considerations. It helps new leaders get up to speed and also serves as a resource for annual audit committee updates, stakeholder meetings, deal discussions, and even onboarding for new employees.

### Develop your superpowers today:

- **Develop your tax playbook.** Consider having your more junior team members develop it. This manual for non-tax leaders would explain tax's potential value in various situations (M&A, supply chain, etc.).
- **Create a communication plan.** Set out a holistic plan for how tax professionals should engage externally across the organization and internally across the team.
- **Establish networking opportunities.** Regular touchpoints for your tax team to build relationships with other teams can further ingrain tax into the wider organization.

# A taste for tech

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The tax superhero knows all the learning, collaborating, and communicating described above can't just be added on top of repetitive, high-volume technical tax operations. Consider whether technical tasks that can be automated should be automated. By [unlocking the potential of leading-edge technologies](#) that are available to your tax team, you can delegate the tasks that computers can handle, and focus on your vision for making tax more impactful business-wide.

## How it shows up:

Your tax team monitors hundreds if not thousands of pieces of legislation in Washington DC and across state and non-US jurisdictions. Instead of manually reporting to key business stakeholders on their status and implications with frequently produced word documents and PDFs, you use automation tools to set up dynamic dashboards modeling the impact of legislative updates and related business decisions. It lets your team focus less on assembling reports, and more on assessing and advising on potential impact. This may not have been possible if you had not been able to automate quarterly financial reporting and tax compliance tasks, freeing up a considerable amount of time on your team to shift from documenting the past to forecasting the future.

## Develop your superpowers today:

- **Embrace automation.** Use technology to execute routine tasks to free up your people for strategic thinking.
- **Put data analytics to work.** Create insightful dashboards that present multiple tax scenarios for business leaders to consider during major decisions.
- **Establish internal controls.** Develop checks between tax and the other finance teams (accounts payable, payroll, etc.) as you identify and overcome the data hurdles on the path to automation.

# Engage your alter ego

You have the technology. You have the capabilities. It's time to embrace the mindset.

Your inner tax superhero can foster teaming, knowledge sharing, proactive communication, and a technology-enabled tax ecosystem, so you can be the business partner your organization wants and needs.

Ready to unleash your tax superhero? Learn more about how Deloitte's [Tax Operate](#) team can help you take business partnering to the next level and empower your tax team to do the same. For a more personalized experience, check out [Deloitte's tax transformation labs](#).



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