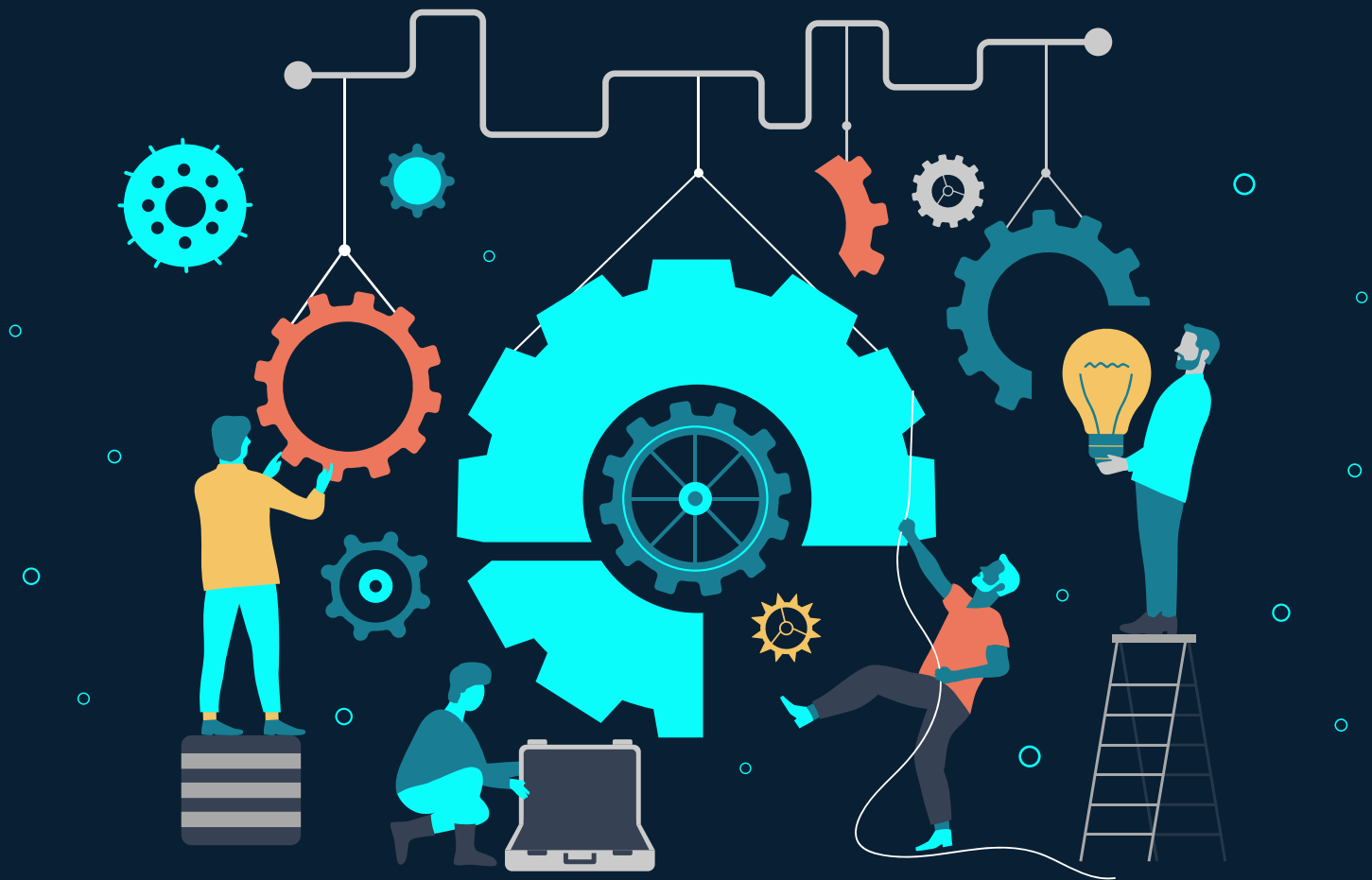




The next mandate for industrial GCC leaders: Turning engineering scale into enterprise value

AI, software-defined products, and digital engineering are reshaping how industrial GCCs (Global Capability Centres) are increasingly being asked to do more than deliver engineering capacity. They are expected to influence product strategy, AI adoption, and company-wide transformation in ways that directly shape business competitiveness.

Many organisations are responding by building capabilities across multiple frontiers simultaneously — from digital engineering and Industry 4.0 to AI, advanced analytics and energy transition. Yet the challenge is no longer simply capability building. Increasingly, it is deciding where India can create differentiated strategic value and develop genuine global ownership.

Drawing on our conversations with industrial GCC leaders, success in this next phase depends on three things: operating models that support genuine ownership, governance structures that scale AI responsibly, and leadership pipelines equipped for increasingly complex mandates.

Product ownership requires more than organisational redesign

Many industrial GCCs are taking ownership of platforms, modules and engineering programmes, rather than simply supporting product organisations through execution.

Yet ownership is not created through organisational redesign alone. While responsibilities are increasingly moving to India, decision-making authority has not always expanded at the same pace. In many organisations, decisions around architecture, investment priorities and product direction continue to sit elsewhere. This creates a growing disconnect between accountability and authority, limiting the ability of GCC teams to operate with the speed, accountability and strategic influence that genuine product ownership requires.

In practice, the journey from delivery centre to product owner is often less an operating model challenge than a trust challenge. Companies can redesign structures and reporting lines relatively quickly, but transferring decision-making authority requires confidence in local leadership and alignment on outcomes.

The industrial GCCs making the greatest progress are:



Aligning incentives with product outcomes

Moving beyond delivery metrics to measure success through innovation, customer impact and business performance, with outcome-oriented metrics that connect India teams directly to product success.



Embedding Indian leaders into enterprise decision-making

Increasing participation in global product planning, technology roadmap discussions and strategic investment decisions.



Transferring authority alongside accountability

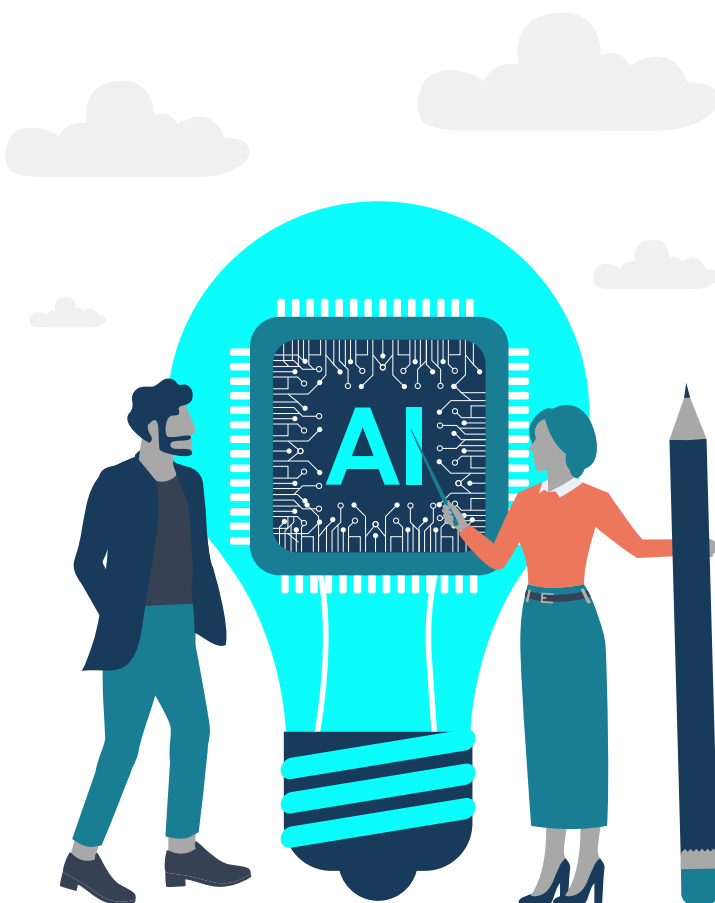
Ensuring teams responsible for outcomes have the decision-making rights required to shape product direction and execution.

AI is accelerating the shift toward intelligence ownership

AI is accelerating the shift from what many leaders describe as labour arbitrage toward intelligence ownership.

As routine work automates, industrial GCCs are contributing not only to efficiency, but also to innovation, product differentiation and enterprise transformation. Many organisations have already moved beyond experimentation, with AI embedded across engineering, predictive maintenance, intelligent automation and advanced analytics are increasingly becoming part of day-to-day operations.

AI is also beginning to reshape the structure of GCCs themselves, compressing traditional hierarchies, enabling smaller and higher-skill teams, and creating more direct engagement between India leaders and global CXOs as AI initiatives become board-level priorities. This shift places greater responsibility on GCC leaders, who are increasingly expected to make decisions about AI investments, governance, talent and product direction rather than simply oversee execution.



However, the greater challenge is that AI is scaling faster than governance maturity. As adoption accelerates, many GCCs are still working to establish the structures required to manage explainability, accountability and operational readiness at scale.

In industrial environments, governance is becoming more deeply integrated into development processes through model validation, explainability, cybersecurity, data quality controls and human oversight rather than being treated as a separate control function. Beyond sponsoring AI initiatives, leaders are expected to define risk appetite, establish governance expectations and create the confidence required for broader AI adoption.



Governance must move beyond policy to embed ethics, safety and risk management at every stage of the AI lifecycle.

— Industrial GCC leader

The organisations moving fastest are not necessarily those deploying the most AI. They are often the ones building the leadership discipline, governance maturity and organisational readiness needed to scale it with confidence:



Establishing clear accountability for AI deployment

Creating ownership through AI councils, steering committees, model owners and governance structures responsible for safe and ethical deployment.



Embedding governance into operational workflows

Integrating model validation, auditability, compliance and domain-specific safety requirements directly into development and deployment processes.



Building AI ecosystems beyond the enterprise

Strengthening capabilities through partnerships with hyperscalers, technology providers and emerging AI innovators to accelerate adoption while maintaining governance standards.

The talent model has changed faster than the leadership pipeline

The common thread running through product ownership and AI adoption is leadership. In each case, the challenge is no longer primarily technical. Industrial GCCs increasingly require leaders who can connect engineering, software, AI, product strategy and enterprise priorities — capabilities that remain in short supply across the market.

As industrial organisations operate across technology, AI and product strategy simultaneously, the leadership profile required to run a GCC has expanded significantly.



The real gap is in integrators who can translate between hardware, cloud, data and business value creation.

— Industrial GCC leader

Many of today's leadership pipelines were built to develop functional experts and delivery leaders. The next generation of GCC leaders, however, must act as integrators — bringing together hardware, software, data, AI and business priorities across increasingly complex global ecosystems.

They must connect engineering, product strategy, technology and business outcomes across multiple geographies and stakeholder groups. They are expected to lead through ambiguity as AI, operating models and governance frameworks continue to evolve.

The leadership role is shifting toward an orchestrator of interconnected digital ecosystems rather than a head of engineering operations.

— Industrial GCC leader

This shift is also redefining what future GCC CEOs look like. Increasingly, companies are looking for leaders who can operate as enterprise builders rather than functional specialists, moving comfortably between business strategy, technology and product decisions while influencing stakeholders across global markets.

Recognising that these capabilities do not emerge organically, leading GCCs are taking a far more deliberate approach to leadership development:



Investing in future-critical skills

Many firms are strengthening leadership capabilities in AI, cloud, cybersecurity and digital product development to prepare leaders for increasingly technology-driven operating environments.



Building broader leadership experiences

Organisations are creating cross-functional exposure through rotations, global mobility and earlier involvement in product, strategy and governance decisions.



Developing enterprise leadership capabilities

Beyond technical expertise, leaders are increasingly expected to demonstrate systems thinking, data literacy, change leadership and the ability to influence stakeholders across headquarters and India.



Hiring selectively from adjacent ecosystems

Bringing in leaders from product-technology and SaaS companies where the integrated business-technology orientation is already embedded.

Where the advantage is won

Industrial GCCs have already demonstrated their ability to deliver engineering scale. The next phase of their evolution will be defined by something far more complex: their ability to create and govern organisational intelligence.

As ownership expands across products, platforms, AI-enabled capabilities and enterprise transformation initiatives, competitive advantage will increasingly depend on leaders who can integrate engineering, technology, and business strategy while exercising genuine decision-making authority.

India's talent advantage is already well established. The GCCs that succeed will not be those that build every capability, but those that make deliberate choices about where India can create distinctive strategic value — and empower leaders to own that mandate end-to-end.



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