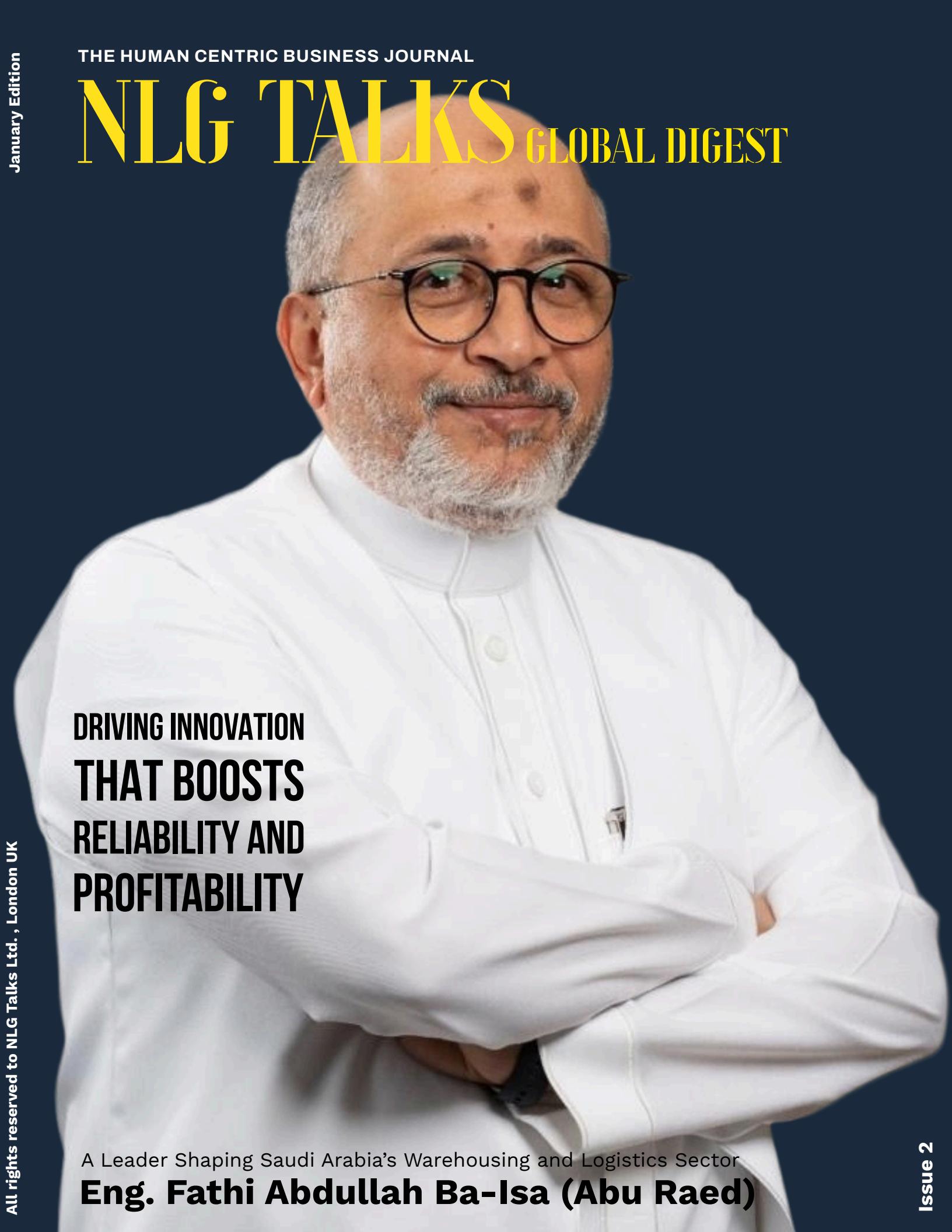


THE HUMAN CENTRIC BUSINESS JOURNAL

NLG TALKS GLOBAL DIGEST



DRIVING INNOVATION
THAT BOOSTS
RELIABILITY AND
PROFITABILITY

A Leader Shaping Saudi Arabia's Warehousing and Logistics Sector

Eng. Fathi Abdullah Ba-Isa (Abu Raed)

From the

Editor

Dear Reader,

Wishing you a very Happy New Year 2026!

Welcome to the second edition of NLG Talks Global Digest, a human-centered business journal, dedicated to delivering insightful perspectives, emerging trends and practical wisdom across Supply Chain, Sustainability, HR, Leadership and Innovation. Each article in this edition is thoughtfully curated with one purpose, *"to help you learn, grow, and lead with meaningful impact".*

NLG Talks Ltd, a registered entity in the UK, serves as the official communication platform of The Networking and Learning Group™. What began as a simple vision to connect people across continents has evolved into a podcast, a business magazine and a completely new level of ecosystem of thought leadership and learning. NLG Talks is now a space where transformative ideas are shared, impactful learning occurs and remarkable individuals who quietly shape industries around the world tell their stories.

Over the years, NLG has been connecting professionals across geographies and sectors. Through our communities, conversations, workshops and now this magazine, our mission remains steadfast, *"to empower individuals at every stage of their professional journey."* The overwhelming response to our first edition focused on Leadership 4.0, a critical area for strategy and future-ready organizations, has inspired us to bring you this next edition.

Theme of this Edition: Reinventing Supply Chains — Agility, Intelligence, and Sustainability

Today, supply chains are no longer just operational necessities; they are strategic differentiators. Organizations face unprecedented challenges from geopolitical shifts and fluctuating demand patterns to climate risks and technological disruptions. To thrive, modern supply chains must be agile, intelligent and sustainable.

Agility is no longer optional. Businesses need supply networks that can respond swiftly to changes, pivot strategies and maintain continuity even in times of crisis. Agility empowers organizations to seize emerging opportunities while mitigating risks associated with global volatility.

"In a world of constant change, true leadership lies in building agile, intelligent, and sustainable networks — empowering individuals, organizations, and communities to learn, grow, and lead with lasting impact."

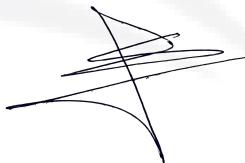
Intelligence drives smarter decision-making. By leveraging data analytics, artificial intelligence, and predictive modeling, companies can anticipate disruptions, optimize inventory and streamline logistics. Intelligent supply chains transform raw data into actionable insights, enabling leaders to make informed, proactive decisions.

Sustainability has become a central imperative. Beyond compliance, organizations are recognizing the economic and societal value of green and responsible supply chains. Sustainable practices from reducing carbon footprints and ethical sourcing to circular economy initiatives are now integral to long-term resilience and brand credibility.

In this edition, we showcase stories, case studies, and expert perspectives from organizations that are redefining supply chain excellence. Readers will discover how forward-thinking leaders integrate agility, intelligence, and sustainability to create resilient, future-ready supply networks that drive innovation, efficiency and impact.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Eng. Fathi Abdullah Ba-Isa (Abu Raed), Managing Director of United Warehouse Company Limited (UWC), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for generously sharing his expertise in this second edition of NLG Talks Global Digest. I also take this opportunity to thank all our global leadership voices and contributors whose insights, experiences, and articles have made this edition truly exceptional. As we have stepped into 2026, may this edition inspire you, spark meaningful conversations, and empower you to lead with vision, agility, and impact.

Wishing you a prosperous and transformative year ahead.



Jaison Abraham
Founder & Editor
NLG Talks Ltd.





Tom Field is the founder of Bearhug Pallet Wraps, a company gaining significant recognition across Europe for its innovations in sustainable packaging. [Read more on Page 13](#)



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The Networking and Learning Group

Eng. Fathi Abdullah Ba-Isa (Abu Raed)

Managing Director of United Warehouse Company Limited (UWC), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)



In the dynamic world of warehousing and logistics, few leaders have left as indelible a mark as Eng. Fathi Abdullah Ba-Isa, Managing Director of United Warehouse Company Limited (UWC). Over nearly four decades, Abu-Raed has transformed not only the companies he has led but also the industry landscape across Saudi Arabia. His story is one of operational discipline, strategic foresight and a relentless drive to integrate innovation with human leadership.

From Engineer to Logistics Visionary

Abu Raed's career began in the technical trenches, working as a Project Engineer in food production and packaging. It was here that he learned the fundamentals of operational excellence, process optimization and the importance of meticulous execution. Over time, he led large-scale greenfield developments, capacity expansions and full-scale plant turnarounds across multiple manufacturing sectors, including corrugated cartons, plastics and food production. His transition into logistics leadership came naturally. Early stints at United Warehouse, followed by his tenure as Assistant

General Manager at Al Taufiq Plastic, exposed him to lean operations, supply chain optimization, and commercial growth strategies. In 2019, Eng. Fathi assumed leadership at UWC, steering the company toward a vision of a fully integrated logistics provider encompassing freight forwarding, customs clearance, transportation and e-commerce fulfillment.

“

Logistics is not just about moving goods; it's about orchestrating an ecosystem where speed, accuracy and reliability meet innovation.

Redefining Warehousing and Logistics

When Abu Raed took the helm, UWC was primarily a 2PL operator with dry storage capabilities. The strategic pivot under his leadership was ambitious: *transform UWC into a fully integrated 3PL and contract logistics provider, with capabilities in temperature-controlled, chilled, frozen, and DG (dangerous goods) storage*. This transformation demanded substantial capital investment, regulatory alignment, operational restructuring and talent development. Today, UWC serves FMCG, Food, Pharma, Chemicals and E-Commerce sectors, positioning itself as one of the most diversified logistics service provider in the region.

"The shift from a conventional warehouse operator to a multi-vertical logistics solutions provider was our defining inflection point. It strengthened customer relationships, accelerated growth and allowed us to scale with confidence," he explains.

Leadership Lessons from the Warehouse Floor

For Abu Raed, the cornerstone of success lies in collaboration. *"Sustainable growth in logistics is built on partnerships, not competition," he notes.* By fostering trust, transparency and shared objectives with clients, vendors, and stakeholders, UWC creates long-term value that extends beyond short-term profits. Equally crucial is continuous improvement. Abu Raed emphasizes investing in infrastructure, technology and process excellence to exceed customer expectations. *"Our dual focus on partnership-driven growth and relentless service enhancement ensures that our clients stay ahead in a rapidly evolving market," he adds.*

Solving Complex Market Challenges

UWC addresses one of the industry's most persistent problems: fragmented logistics execution. By offering end-to-end solutions under one platform, UWC eliminates the need for clients to juggle multiple service providers. What sets the company apart is a combination of infrastructure depth, operational agility and technology-driven execution. UWC operates across dry, AC, chilled, frozen, and DG environments, enabling seamless scaling across compliance regimes. Key differentiators include:

- Rapid onboarding and speed to market through ready infrastructure
- Regulatory compliance leadership across SFDA, Civil Defense, DG, and municipal authorities
- Technology-enabled operations using SAP WMS and in-house developed logistics portal, "Logi-Arm" and a robust KPI-driven governance.
- Partnership-led execution, positioning UWC as an extension of the client's supply chain

Proprietary Processes and Strategic Edge

UWC's strategic advantage lies in localized, proprietary frameworks. These include:

- Zoned warehouse engineering, allowing dynamic space conversion across temperature and compliance requirements

- Throughput-driven manpower planning, aligning labor costs with activity volumes
- Compliance-by-design, integrating regulatory requirements at the design stage
- Partner integration playbooks, ensuring seamless coordination of transporters, forwarders, and brokers

These frameworks enable rapid scaling, regulatory compliance, cost control, and consistent service reliability —elements that have propelled UWC ahead of conventional warehouse operators.

Industry Trends Shaping 2026 and Beyond

Abu Raed identifies several trends reshaping warehousing and supply chain management:

- Explosive growth in temperature-controlled logistics for food, pharma, biotech and e-commerce.
- Automation and AI-led decision systems for predictive demand, labor optimization and WMS/TMS efficiency.
- Stricter regulatory frameworks, including ESG compliance, carbon tracking and traceability.
- The rise of omni-channel fulfillment, integrating B2B, B2C and retail under one roof.
- Shift from asset-heavy to flexible capacity models, driven by on-demand customer needs.

"The leaders of tomorrow will treat logistics as a strategic growth enabler, not a cost center," Abu Raed emphasizes.

Looking ahead, Abu Raed predicts

- AI-driven autonomous operations in picking, sorting and inventory forecasting.
- Mandatory carbon-neutral and ESG-compliant warehouses.
- Micro-fulfillment hubs to enable same-day delivery.
- Cross-border logistics optimization across GCC, Africa, and South Asia.
- The integration of financial instruments into 3PL ecosystems, from trade finance to supply chain credit.

Awards, Milestones, and Client Success

Under Eng. Fathi's leadership, UWC has achieved several key milestones:

- Regulatory leadership in SFDA, Civil Defense and DG compliance.
- Successful partnerships with major brands, including Unilever, Bawazeer Coffee and others, demonstrating UWC's ability to deliver operational excellence at scale.

Trust, Transparency, and Operational Discipline

Trust is not an abstract principle at UWC, it is engineered into every operational layer.

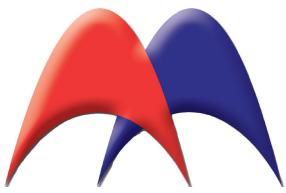


From KPI-driven accountability to real-time WMS visibility, the company ensures transparency, compliance, and quality at every step. *“Ethics and operational discipline are embedded at the design stage, not retrofitted after audits,”* Abu Raed says. Continuous internal audits, corrective action frameworks and structured customer feedback cycles reinforce this commitment.

Open Letter to Future Leaders

“To the next generation of logistics leaders: master the fundamentals before chasing titles,” Abu Raed advises. *“Spend time on the warehouse floor, understand compliance, safety, inventory discipline and customer expectations in real conditions. Build your career on credibility, not shortcuts. Embrace technology, but never abandon people. Leadership will always remain human.”* He concludes: *“Logistics is not an overnight success story. True leadership is built through consistency, learning from failure, adapting to change and staying disciplined when growth is slow. The future belongs to leaders who combine operational depth, ethical strength and strategic vision.”*





شركة المخازن المتحدة المحدودة
United Warehouse Co Ltd

REDEFINING LOGISTICS EXCELLENCE SINCE 2007



Reinventing Supply Chains: Agility, Intelligence & Sustainability



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United Kingdom

Across global markets, supply chains are being fundamentally reinvented. What was once designed primarily for efficiency and cost reduction is now expected to deliver resilience, intelligence, sustainability and customer value, simultaneously, sadly disruption is no longer an exception; it is the operating environment. Geopolitical instability, climate risk, inflationary pressure, labor shortages, ESG regulation, digital acceleration and shifting customer expectations are converging at unprecedented speed. In this environment, traditional linear supply chain models are no longer fit for purpose.

After more than three decades working across procurement, logistics, and end-to-end supply chain transformation, supporting organizations in the UK, Europe, the Middle East and globally, one reality has become clear: *Future-ready supply chains are not built on optimization alone, they are built on agility, intelligence, and sustainability, working together.*

1. Agility is no longer optional, it is a strategic capability - Supply chain agility is often misunderstood as “speed” or “flexibility” but in reality, it is about decision velocity, structural adaptability and the ability to pivot without losing control. The organizations performing best today are those that have moved beyond rigid, forecast-driven models and embraced:

- Modular supply chain design
- Scenario-based planning rather than single forecasts

- Multi-sourcing and regional diversification
- Flexible logistics and fulfillment strategies
- Faster governance and decision escalation routes

In practical terms, agility shows up as the ability to re-route supply, re-balance inventory, adjust service levels, or renegotiate commercial terms quickly, without chaos. In transformation programs I have led, the greatest gains in agility have not come from technology alone, but from operating model clarity:

- Clear ownership of decisions
- Defined trade-off rules (cost vs service vs risk)
- Cross-functional alignment between procurement, logistics, operations, finance, and sales

Agility is not reactive firefighting; it is all about designed responsiveness.

2. Intelligence is the new competitive advantage

- Modern supply chains generate vast amounts of data, yet many organizations still struggle to convert data into actionable insight...why? True supply chain intelligence goes beyond dashboards and KPI's, it enables leaders to:

- Anticipate disruption before it occurs
- Understand total landed cost in real time
- See risk exposure across tiers of supply
- Link commercial decisions to operational impact
- Make faster, better trade-offs under pressure

High-performing organizations are now investing in:

- Predictive analytics and scenario modeling
- Demand sensing and signal-based forecasting
- Supplier risk intelligence and early-warning indicators
- Integrated performance views across procurement, logistics, and inventory

However, intelligence only creates value when people trust it and know how to act on it. This is why capability development remains critical, supply chain professionals must be able to interpret insight, challenge assumptions, and make confident decisions rather than defer to “the system”. Intelligent supply chains do not remove human judgment, they amplify it.

3. Sustainability has moved from ethics to economics

- Sustainability is no longer a peripheral initiative or a corporate reporting exercise.

It is now a core driver of supply chain design, risk management and commercial strategy. Across industries, sustainability is directly influencing:

- Supplier selection and qualification
- Cost structures and long-term pricing
- Access to capital and investor confidence
- Regulatory compliance and license to operate
- Brand reputation and customer loyalty

Progressive organizations are embedding sustainability into:

- Category strategies and sourcing decisions
- Supplier relationship management (SRM)
- Logistics network design
- Inventory and waste reduction initiatives
- Lifecycle cost and value assessments

Crucially, sustainability leaders are moving beyond compliance toward value creation:

- Reducing energy and transport costs
- Improving supply continuity
- Increasing innovation with strategic suppliers
- Strengthening long-term resilience

Sustainable supply chains are not weaker or slower, they are more robust, more trusted, and more future proof.

4. Procurement and logistics are converging as strategic engines

One of the most significant shifts I see globally is the convergence of procurement and logistics decision-making, historically treated as separate functions, their integration is now essential for:

- Managing total cost of ownership and / or acquisition, rather than unit price
- Improving service and customer experience
- Reducing risk across end-to-end flows
- Supporting omni channel and complex fulfillment models

The biggest performance improvements consistently come when organizations align:

- Category strategy with logistics strategy
- Supplier contracts with operational realities
- Service level agreements with customer promises
- Inventory policy with demand volatility

When procurement and logistics operate in isolation, value leaks.

When they operate together, supply chains become strategic assets.

5. Leadership is the decisive factor - Technology, data, and frameworks matter, but leadership determines success. Reinvented supply chains require leaders who can:

- Balance cost, service, risk, and sustainability
- Influence without formal authority
- Lead cross-functional and cross-cultural teams
- Make decisions under uncertainty
- Drive change while maintaining operational stability

In every successful transformation I have supported, leaders who have demonstrated:

- Commercial credibility
- Strong stakeholder communication
- Clear strategic intent
- The courage to challenge legacy thinking

The future belongs to supply chain leaders who can think systemically, act decisively, and lead collaboratively.

Conclusion: Reinvention is not a project, it is a mindset - Supply chain reinvention is not a one-off transformation program. It is an ongoing capability built through agility, intelligence, and sustainability working in balance. Organizations that invest in this mindset will achieve:

- Greater resilience to disruption
- Better commercial outcomes
- Stronger supplier partnerships
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Sustainable long-term value

Those that do not will continue to firefight, always reacting, never leading.

My name is **Andy Neilson**; I am a procurement and supply chain practitioner supporting clients and organizations globally. How I can help your business? I provide procurement and supply chain consulting services that help businesses: Transform procurement functions into value-adding strategic assets, Build supply chain resilience to withstand disruptions, Optimism supplier relationships for innovation and cost efficiencies, Integrate sustainability and ESG principles into procurement strategies and Leverage digital procurement tools for automation and data-driven decision-making. This article is written and submitted to NLG to be published in the upcoming magazine.

Expanding or Building New 3PL Warehouses in Saudi Arabia

A practical, market-led blueprint for KSA warehouse strategy, design, compliance, and execution



Daipayan Adhikari

Head of Strategic Projects & Logistics Solutions
United Warehouse Company Limited (UWC)
Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's logistics market is no longer "**build space and they will come.**" Customers are segmenting their demand by temperature regime, service level, integration capability, and compliance readiness. At the same time, government is raising the bar on safety, food and drug traceability, and facility licensing while pushing national logistics transformation under Vision 2030. For 3PLs, warehouse expansion is now a strategic investment decision that must balance market demand, regulatory compliance, operational throughput, technology integration, and scalable cost-to-serve. This report is a structured guide to what to keep in mind when expanding or building new 3PL facilities in the KSA market. It covers warehouse types, customer categories (B2B, B2C, ecommerce), operating models (inbound, outbound, throughput), shift strategies (single shift to 24/7), layout and engineering decisions (racking, height, docks, staging), MHE selection, regulations, demand drivers, and execution risks. The lens is practical. The goal is to help you build assets that are commercially attractive, compliant, and operationally resilient.

Discover below :

- Start with the business case, not the building.
- Warehouse types in KSA - what sells and why.
- Customer categories - B2B, B2C, and e-commerce are different machines.
- Operation types - inbound, outbound, and throughput design.
- Shift strategy - one shift vs 24/7 and how it changes design.
- Building engineering decisions that create or destroy productivity.
- Docks, staging, and yard - the throughput backbone.
- Racking strategy - density vs speed vs flexibility.
- MHE selection - match equipment to flow, not preferences
- Layout zones you must not forget.
- Technology stack - WMS is table stakes, integration is the differentiator.
- Government regulations and compliance readiness in KSA
- Market demand - what is driving warehouse expansion in KSA.
- Commercial model design - pricing and contracts that match your warehouse.
- Expansion execution - how to de-risk the project.
- A practical checklist for KSA 3PL warehouse build decisions.

Saudi Arabia's 3PL warehouse expansion is no longer a simple real estate decision but a strategic investment shaped by segmented customer demand, tighter regulation, and Vision 2030 logistics ambitions. Customers now differentiate by temperature regime, service complexity, integration, and compliance readiness, making it essential to start with a clear business case—defining the target customer, operating model, and cost-to-serve—before designing the building. Different warehouse archetypes (dry, controlled ambient, cold chain, DG, bonded, and e-commerce fulfillment) serve distinct markets, while B2B, B2C, and e-commerce operations function as fundamentally different machines with unique flow and productivity drivers. Performance is determined by flow-based layouts, shift strategy, location selection across Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam, and strong engineering fundamentals such as clear height, floor quality, docks, and staging. Racking, MHE, and WMS integration must align to SKU velocity and service levels, with technology now a revenue enabler rather than a cost center. Ultimately, winning KSA 3PLs build modular, compliant, and elastic warehouses that can scale throughput, adapt to market shifts, and remain commercially resilient.

Read the full article on our website

<https://www.nlgtalks.com/group-page/supply-chain-logic-s-professionals-group/discussion>

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP VOICES

7 ICONIC LEADERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

In this edition of NLG Talks – Global Digest, we proudly feature seven powerful Global Voices — leaders, innovators and change makers from around the world who are redefining the future of Human Resource, Supply Chain, Sustainability, Leadership and Innovation. Each voice brings unique insights, lived experiences and forward-looking perspectives that inspire action, spark dialogue and elevate global understanding. This curated collection reflects our mission: *to amplify diverse expertise, spotlight untold stories and connect our community to ideas that drive real-world impact.*



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Chairman of Al Galal Group, Egypt



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Sajna Samad, CSCP
Delivery Manager - Inception, Dubai



Ahmed Galal ElDin

Chairman of Al Galal Group, Egypt

Leveraging Undisruptable Advantages: Trust, Access, and Decades of Consistent Engagement - While the business world obsesses over disruption and scale, Ahmed Galal ElDin has quietly pursued a different strategy: building deep, trust-based relationships with over 1,020 of the world's most influential decision-makers across six continents. While tech disrupts traditional business models, Ahmed Galal ElDin has demonstrated that some advantages can't be disrupted: deep relationships with decision-makers, accumulated trust, and knowledge that only comes from decades of consistent engagement. His Elite Platform operates on a principle entirely different from algorithms or user acquisition: over 1,020 carefully curated members spanning 115+ countries, including current and former cabinet ministers, a former head of state, presidential advisors, and owners of enterprises generating billions in annual revenue. It's a network where a single phone call can unlock markets that would take others years to penetrate. "Most people collect contacts. I cultivate relationships," Galal ElDin explains. "When a finance minister in Senegal has a problem, he doesn't scroll through LinkedIn. He calls someone he trusts, who connects him with someone equally trusted. That's the network I've built."

Strategic Expansion: Tapping the Global Power of BRICS -

In a significant move that enhances his global influence, Ahmed Galal El-Din recently accepted an invitation to join the Board of Trustees for the Committee on Foreign Economic Activities of the NGO Joint BRICS Business Cooperation Center. This appointment is not merely a title; it strategically places him within one of the world's most powerful economic and geopolitical frameworks. Joining the BRICS structure provides a critical, high-level platform to:

- Accelerate Global Market Access: Directly link the Al Galal Group and the Elite Platform network to key economic decision-makers and high-growth markets within the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).
- Influence Policy and Cooperation: Leverage the platform to advance initiatives that support Egyptian, Arab, and African business interests, particularly in areas of trade, manufacturing, and investment, aligning with the BRICS mandate for expanded economic cooperation.
- Validate Global Stature: The role serves as a powerful confirmation of his international standing, enabling him to operate under the umbrella of a major global economic bloc.

"I am honored to join the Board of Trustees. This role presents a vital opportunity to leverage my network and experience to advance the BRICS mandate, translating global economic cooperation into tangible opportunities for our partners and the broader region," Galal El-Din stated.

The Foundation: Mastering Global Commerce Intelligence

- Galal El-Din's path began as an administrative engineering student in early 1990s Egypt. Working at an international company, he saw something more valuable than job security: a masterclass in how global commerce actually functions—navigating cultural differences, managing complex logistics, and building trust across borders. While still completing his degree, he and several classmates entered the steel rebar business. By 1995, he had founded his first official venture. Within several years, his operations had expanded to approximately 20 countries, competing successfully against entrenched incumbents. The competitive advantage wasn't pricing or product differentiation—it was superior network intelligence. "I realized early that information asymmetry creates opportunity," he reflects. "Knowing which manufacturer had excess capacity, which market had unmet demand, which regulatory change was coming—that intelligence was worth more than any cost advantage." Al Galal Group: The Multi-Vertical Intelligence Node. Today, Al Galal Group operates across four verticals: international paper trade, medical tourism (with headquarters in Cairo and Istanbul), real estate investment, and international business consulting including high-level forums and conferences. Look deeper, and a sophisticated strategy emerges: each vertical functions as an intelligence-gathering node in different industries and geographies. The paper trade creates touchpoints with manufacturing ecosystems across Europe and Asia. Medical tourism builds relationships with healthcare ministries and affluent individuals. Real estate provides insight into capital flows. Business consulting offers direct access to C-suite thinking and government policy at the highest levels.

Pushing Information Isn't Customer Service



Sherleen Modesti,
General Manager, Cargo Express Logistics

In global freight, a shipment can move thousands of miles in a matter of hours — but one vague email or alert can still trigger a crisis in a local office. I've spent more than a decade coordinating and managing air freight operations. I've seen how a simple status update like "Shipment delayed due to airline backlog" can set off a chain reaction of panic calls, internal escalations and frustration on the customer's side. The cargo might be safe. The delay might be manageable. But the way we communicate can turn a manageable operational issue into a full-blown crisis. Over the years, I've arrived at a simple conclusion: *Pushing information does not deliver clarity*. And when we fail to deliver clarity, we damage our own reputation as freight forwarders — often more than we realize.

Global Freight, Local Panic

Our customers are not sitting in our warehouse. Many are in another country, another time zone and under different regulatory, cultural and business pressures. A "simple" alert like "Service disruption due to regional situation" might be our internal shorthand for airspace restrictions, geopolitical tension, or network disruption. But for the customer, it sounds more like:

"Something big is happening in the world. My cargo is

caught in the middle and I have no idea what this means for my delivery, my production, or my own clients."

That's how global freight becomes local panic:

- A planner has to answer to their boss with incomplete information.
- A sales team doesn't know what to promise their own customers.
- A consignee panics because no one can clearly explain what is going on.

The irony is that, on our side, we often do know more. We know which flight was missed and why, when the next possible departure is and the realistic delay window for door delivery. We just don't always translate that knowledge into a message that makes sense to the audience reading the alert.

Going the Extra Mile: Using Our Network for Their Clarity - We sit in the middle of a global network — airlines, ocean carriers, truckers, warehouses, customs brokers, overseas agents and colleagues. They give us access to information our customers often cannot see directly. Going the extra mile means asking ourselves:

- What do we know (or could we find out) that would actually help this customer plan?
- How do we turn that into a message that reduces their uncertainty, rather than just filling their inbox?

When we operate from that mindset consistently, we stop being "just the forwarder" and start becoming a trusted advisor and risk manager. True clarity occurs when the customer understands:

- What happened
- What it means for their business
- What is being done about it
- What options they have

Yet many updates still fail to even explain why the original booked schedule was missed in the first email or alert. The result is more questions, more noise and less trust.

A Long-Standing Industry Issue:

Communication without Accountability. This is not just about one poorly written email. It's a long-standing industry issue rooted in how many companies treat customer service.

In too many freight forwarding environments, communication quality is not enforced with the same discipline as cut-off times, compliance, on-boarding stage, or billing accuracy. Work ethics around follow-through, humility and empathy are treated as a “soft skill” and left to individual personalities instead of being built into the company’s standards.

As long as someone “replied,” the box is considered checked — even if that reply creates more confusion than clarity.

When companies don’t enforce a high standard of customer service performance, they unintentionally allow poor habits to become the norm. Over time, this erodes trust and harms the forwarder’s reputation far more than any single delay ever could.

After many years in this industry, my thinking has landed on a simple phrase:

Flights and ships move cargo. Communication moves trust.

A Simple Framework:

From Status Updates to Clarity

We don’t need a 50-page manual to raise the standard of customer service. We can start with one clear framework for every meaningful update we send to a shipper, consignee, or partner:

1. Say what happened - Provide a clear, factual description of the event — including relevant dates, flights, milestones and any missed connections or delays.
2. Explain the impact - Translate that event into customer language: how it affects delivery windows, transit times, service commitments and potential risk to their operations or clients.
3. Describe what you are doing about it - Outline the concrete actions you are taking — such as rebooking on a specific flight, exploring alternative routes, coordinating with partners, or requesting priority handling.
4. Offer choices - Present practical options the customer can act on — for example, upgrading a portion of the shipment, accepting a revised delivery window, adjusting future cut-offs, or balancing cost versus speed.

Applied consistently, this simple structure turns routine status updates into decision-ready

information. It shows the customer that we are not just reporting problems — we are actively managing them and inviting them into the decision-making process.

Beyond Information: Committing to Clarity

If we want to protect our reputation as freight forwarders and truly serve our customers, we must move beyond pushing information and commit to delivering clarity — with ethics, humility, empathy, and an advisory mindset at the center of our customer service.

That is the standard I believe our customers deserve.

And it is the standard that will keep our role relevant in a world where rates and transit times alone are no longer enough to differentiate us.

Reinventing Supply Chains: What Global Retailers Are Learning the Hard Way



Subhash Ravindran FCILT

Logistics & Supply Chain Learning Specialist
Aviation Training Center, Dubai

For years, retail supply chains were engineered for stability. Demand was forecast months ahead, suppliers were locked in early, inventory was pushed downstream, and success was measured by cost per unit. That model delivered scale. It did not deliver resilience.

The last few years have forced a reset. Not through white papers or boardroom theory, but through stockouts, excess inventory, missed delivery promises, and frustrated customers. Retailers are now reinventing supply chains around three practical realities: they must move faster, think smarter, and waste less. Agility, intelligence, and sustainability are no longer strategic ambitions. They are operational necessities.

What is changing is not the language, but the behaviour.

Agility: Zara's Lesson Was Never About Fashion

Zara is often cited as a fast-fashion success story, but the deeper lesson is about supply chain design. While many apparel retailers commit volumes six to nine months in advance, Zara deliberately keeps a large portion of production flexible. Designs are finalized late, batches are small, and replenishment is based on what sells, not what planners hoped would sell.

This approach is expensive on paper. Unit costs are higher, and production is closer to market. Yet it protects the business from large markdowns, which are far more damaging to profitability than slightly higher sourcing

costs.

Mainstream retailers are now adopting similar thinking. Brands that once chased forecast accuracy are shifting focus to recovery speed. They accept that forecasts will be wrong and design systems that limit the damage when they are.

In grocery retail, this shift shows up in network design. Walmart, for example, has invested heavily in cross-docking and store-level replenishment capabilities that allow it to move goods through distribution centers quickly, rather than holding excess stock centrally. The goal is not perfection, but responsiveness.

Agility today means admitting uncertainty upfront and building supply chains that can adapt without panic.

Intelligence: Amazon Changed Expectations, Not Just Delivery Speed -

Amazon did not win because it moved boxes faster. It won because it made better decisions at scale.

Behind every “Delivered Tomorrow” promise is a set of real-time choices: where to hold inventory, which node should fulfil the order, and how to balance speed against cost. These decisions are constantly adjusted based on demand patterns, capacity constraints, and customer behaviour.

Traditional retailers are now catching up, not by copying Amazon’s technology, but by clarifying decision ownership. Many are redesigning planning processes, so systems recommend actions, not just report data. Inventory teams are no longer rewarded for hitting stock targets alone, but for improving availability and reducing write-offs simultaneously.

Target offers a good example. Its investments in demand sensing and store-level data allowed it to turn stores into fulfilment points for online orders. But the real shift was cultural. Store inventory stopped being “store-owned” and became part of a shared enterprise pool. That change required trust, new KPIs, and uncomfortable conversations between merchandising, operations, and e-commerce teams.

Intelligence in retail supply chains is less about artificial intelligence and more about decision clarity. When teams know what trade-offs matter, systems start adding real value.

The Last Mile: Why Speed Is No Longer the Only Promise

Few areas expose supply chain weaknesses faster than last-mile delivery. Retailers learned this painfully during the surge in online orders. Free shipping and fast delivery looked attractive until costs exploded and service failures became visible.

Companies like IKEA responded by rethinking promises rather than chasing unrealistic standards. In many markets, IKEA now nudges customers toward click-and-collect or scheduled delivery windows that align with operational efficiency. The customer still gets transparency and reliability, but the business regains control over costs.

Grocery retailers have taken a similar path. Tesco and Carrefour have refined slot pricing, order cut-off times, and fulfilment locations to balance service and profitability. The result is not the fastest delivery everywhere, but consistent delivery where it makes sense.

The lesson is simple. Customers value reliability more than speed. Retailers that design last-mile operations around this insight outperform those that chase headline promises.

Sustainability: Unilever's Quiet Operational Advantage

Sustainability discussions in retail often focus on commitments and targets. The real progress happens in operations.

Unilever's supply chain teams have spent years reducing waste through better demand planning, improved packaging design, and smarter transport decisions. Fewer emergency shipments mean lower emissions and lower costs. Lighter packaging reduces fuel usage and improves shelf efficiency.

These changes were not driven by marketing. They were driven by operational discipline.

Other retailers are following suit. Inditex evaluates suppliers on energy use and compliance, not just price. Patagonia designs products with repair and reuse in mind, reducing reverse logistics waste. Even mass retailers are rethinking returns processes to recover value instead of writing off products.

Sustainability, in practice, rewards companies that plan better, execute calmly, and avoid firefighting. It is not a separate initiative. It is a byproduct of good supply chain management.

The Human System Behind the Supply Chain

What often gets missed in transformation stories is the human pressure behind daily decisions. Supply chain teams absorb the impact of late supplier shipments, inaccurate forecasts, system limitations, and customer escalations. Technology helps, but it does not remove accountability.

Retailers that succeed invest in decision training, not just tools. They clarify who decides, when to escalate, and what trade-offs are acceptable. Cross-functional alignment matters more than perfect dashboards.

Costco's reputation for operational consistency comes from this discipline. Limited assortment, strong supplier relationships, and clear internal rules reduce complexity. Fewer decisions are needed, and the decisions that remain are easier to make well.

The Real Reinvention

Retail supply chains are not being reinvented through slogans. They are being reshaped by painful lessons and practical adjustments. Agility is about limiting downside, not chasing trends. Intelligence is about better decisions, not more data. Sustainability is about discipline, not declarations. Retailers that understand this are turning supply chains into competitive advantages again. Not by being the loudest, but by being the most realistic. That is what reinvention looks like when it is grounded in the real world.

Subhash Ravindran is a supply chain and retail operations professional based in Dubai, currently working with Aviation Training Center. He has hands-on experience in sourcing, inventory management, warehousing, last-mile delivery, and international trade.

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The Digital Crossroads: The GCC's Ambitious Drive to Redefine Global Logistics



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Mohammed Saad is a senior supply chain leader with over 20 years of experience driving end-to-end supply chain strategy, transformation, and operational excellence across manufacturing, EPC, FMCG, healthcare, and large-scale distribution sectors in the Middle East. He specializes in building high-performance supply chain organizations that align procurement, planning, logistics, and inventory management with business growth and financial objectives.

Known for his results-driven leadership, he has delivered sustained cost reductions, improved service levels, optimized working capital, and strengthened supply resilience through disciplined governance, global sourcing, and data-driven decision-making. His expertise spans international procurement, complex logistics, regulatory compliance, and supply chain digitalization. A strong people leader, Mohammed is recognized for developing capable teams, establishing KPI-led cultures, and leading large-scale transformation initiatives that enable scalable and resilient operations. He continues to focus on senior leadership and advisory roles where supply chain excellence is a strategic differentiator.

The logistics landscape of the 21st century is undergoing a remarkable metamorphosis, with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) emerging as pivotal players in the global trade arena. Traditionally seen primarily as Crude Oil and Natural Gas commodity exporters, these nations are now strategically positioning themselves to reshape their roles as essential connectivity hubs. This transformation is fueled by ambitious economic diversification initiatives, most notably Saudi Vision 2030, the UAE's 'We the UAE 2031', Oman Vision 2040, and Qatar National Vision 2030. This shift extends beyond mere rebranding; it represents a comprehensive effort to build a digital-first logistics powerhouse characterized by advanced technological integration, extensive infrastructure improvement, and regulatory enhancements. Significant investments are being funneled into modernizing port facilities, expanding airport capacities, and developing state-of-the-art logistics parks. Notably, the integration of cutting-edge technologies—including artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data analytics—plays a crucial role in this evolution, promising significant advantages for businesses and consumers alike.

A Geopolitical Anchor: The Strategic Advantage - One of the GCC's most compelling strengths is its strategic geographical location at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe. This central positioning not only facilitates trade but also allows GCC countries to provide resilient, high-speed, multi-modal connectivity that appeals to global partners seeking to mitigate risks and add efficiency to their supply chains. Each GCC nation has embarked on ambitious plans to elevate its logistics capabilities and expand its global influence:

• Saudi Arabia (Vision 2030): The

Kingdom is setting its sights on becoming a top 10 global logistics hub by focusing on transformative mega-projects such as OXAGON in NEOM—envisioned as a fully automated, sustainable port city. Additionally, the establishment of a network of 59 logistics zones aims to drastically reduce customs clearance times from several days to mere hours through digitized platforms like Fasah, enhancing trade flow and drawing foreign investment.

• UAE (We the UAE 2031): As a leading logistics player—ranked 11th globally in the Logistics Performance Index—the UAE is emphasizing a dual approach of digital and green transformation. This involves not only enhancing existing integrated logistics hubs like Jebel Ali Port but also spearheading the rapid development of the Etihad Rail network, which will serve as a vital land bridge spanning the Gulf region and fostering seamless trade connections.

• Oman (Logistics Strategy 2040): Oman is targeting an impressive fourteen-fold increase in the logistics sector's contribution to its GDP by 2040. By leveraging its strategic position outside the vital Strait of Hormuz, Oman is constructing a comprehensive logistics ecosystem around its key ports, such as Salalah—a critical transshipment hub and gateway for international shipping—and Sohar, which is being developed into a major industrial zone. This strategic direction focuses on diversifying trade routes and nurturing a workforce equipped with job-ready skills.

• Qatar (Vision 2030 and MOT Strategy 2025-2030): Building on the world-class infrastructure established for high-profile sporting events, Qatar is prioritizing operational excellence and sustainability. Investments in projects like Hamad Port,

designed as a sophisticated deep-water facility, showcase a commitment to optimizing logistics capabilities. A significant component of its strategy involves integrating smart technologies and committing to 100% electrification of public transportation by 2030 to align with global sustainability goals.

The Digital DNA of Gulf Logistics - The real innovation driving the GCC's logistics evolution lies in the accelerated digital transformation being embraced across the region. This approach shifts the focus from traditional automation to a holistic framework of 'Smart Logistics' that redefines operations.

Key Technologies in GCC Logistics:

- Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning:** These technologies are being applied in various aspects of logistics, including route optimization for cross-border trucking services, predictive maintenance for port equipment, and automation of warehouse operations. The result is a potential reduction in operational costs by up to 30%, along with enhanced asset reliability and accelerated delivery times.
- IoT & Sensors:** In the context of regional climate challenges, IoT devices are vital for real-time monitoring of cold chains in the pharmaceutical and food sectors. By gathering and analyzing data streams, companies can improve product integrity, reduce waste, and ensure compliance with stringent international standards.
- Blockchain & Single Window Platforms:** The GCC countries are piloting advanced digital trade tools, such as secure Blockchain systems for trade finance and Bills of Lading in the UAE, coupled with unified Single Window systems across the region to streamline customs processes. This ensures frictionless cross-border trade, faster clearance

times, and enhanced security and transparency in trade documentation.

- Natural Language Generation (NLG):** This emerging technology holds great promise for managing complex regulatory obligations. By converting multilingual customs and trade data into coherent, structured reports, NLG applications can eliminate administrative delays, boost data accuracy, and support the rapid scalability of compliance documentation.

In addition to these technologies, the ambitious unification of the GCC Railway Project promises to eliminate redundant border checks, creating a highly efficient land bridge that will serve as the digital backbone of regional trade.

Implications for the Global Economy

The GCC's logistics transformation presents three critical benefits that resonate beyond the region:

- Supply Chain De-Risking:** By establishing highly efficient and technologically sophisticated logistics corridors that circumvent traditional chokepoints, the GCC offers an essential alternative for East-West trade, providing a geopolitically stable option to companies exploring strategies like "friendshoring" and "nearshoring."
- A Global Live-Lab for Logistics 4.0:** The immense scale of investment in smart, sustainable infrastructure establishes the GCC as a test-bed for innovative logistics solutions. Successful implementations of autonomous transport and AI-driven customs processes can provide blueprints for other emerging and established trade corridors worldwide.

In conclusion, the GCC is not simply redefining its logistics capabilities; it is fundamentally influencing global trade dynamics. By harnessing cutting-edge

technology, strategic positioning, and a commitment to transformative infrastructure projects, the region is crafting a future where its logistics hubs will be integral to the fabric of international supply chains, ensuring efficiency, sustainability, and resilience in an ever-evolving global marketplace chokepoints. This stability is especially appealing to companies exploring "friendshoring" and "nearshoring" strategies.

Africa Women Forum to Open the Africa Economic Forum in Kinshasa, February 26–27



Dr. Billy Issa - Visionary Leader | Founder & Host – Africa Economic Forum & Global Inspiration Awards

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo – The Africa Women Forum (AWF) will officially inaugurate the Africa Economic Forum (AEF) with a high-level gathering in Kinshasa on February 26–27, positioning African women's leadership at the center of Africa's renewed global engagement. The Forum will convene Heads of State, government leaders, international institutions, investors, businesses, media, and civil society to mobilize investments and partnerships for African women-led projects and initiatives.



As Africa's sovereign table for global dialogue and cooperation on gender, the Africa Women Forum connects global capital with African women founders, project developers, and governments to shape policies, alliances, and economic partnerships aligned with African priorities. The Africa Women Forum precedes the official launch of the Africa Economic Forum Annual Meeting, scheduled to take place in Luanda on April 14–15, marking a new era of strategic cooperation, investment, and transformation between Africa and global partners.

The AI Paradox: Why Your Humanity Is Your Most Valuable Asset



Sajna Samad, CSCP
Delivery Manager - Inception

Sajna Samad stands at the powerful intersection of AI innovation and empathetic leadership. As the Delivery Manager at Inception by G42, she orchestrates AI-enabled solutions across procurement and supply chain while advocating for women's advancement in artificial intelligence. A TEDx speaker and certified coach (Jay Shetty Life Coach, John Maxwell Leadership), she's authoring "Are You the One? Decoding Habits of Successful Women Leaders" and hosts two podcasts: Lead 2 Impact and Catalyze Your Career. With 18+ years spanning Oracle, Cisco, and Infosys in the Supply Chain Cloud & AI space, she previously spearheaded transformative women's initiatives including sAldaty and She Leads Tech at Oracle. As an advisory board member at Amity University, she collaborates with the Ministry of Higher Education to prepare universities and students for an AI-enabled future. Recognized as a Leading Voice in Tech by Edge Middle East, Sajna demonstrates that when technical mastery meets emotional intelligence, extraordinary leadership emerges.

How executives and professionals can actually thrive when machines do the heavy lifting

We've all heard the headlines: "AI is replacing jobs," "Automation will disrupt 800 million roles," "Learn to prompt or perish."

But here's a not-so-popular opinion: AI is not just taking jobs, it's also changing how value is measured in the workplace. In other words, it's not what you do, it's how human you are while doing it. I walk into boardrooms every week, and the conversation is remarkably predictable. Someone mentions AI. Everyone leans forward. Within ten minutes, someone's saying, "We need an AI project." Don't get me wrong, those conversations matter. AI adoption is critical. But there's a blind spot in every single one of these discussions that's costing organizations millions in missed opportunities and strategic missteps. Everyone's asking "How do we use AI?" Almost nobody's asking "What can AI not do?" And that second question? That's where the real competitive advantage lives. The executives and teams winning right now aren't just the ones deploying AI fastest. They're the ones who figured out the boundaries; where AI excels, where it fails, and most importantly, where uniquely human capabilities create value that no algorithm can replicate. Understanding that distinction changes everything about how you, as a leader, build teams, develop talent, and position yourself in the market.

The Story No One's Telling: AI Takes Tasks, Not Careers. Let's be honest about what's actually happening. AI is phenomenal at specific things: churning through data, drafting emails, generating code snippets, spotting patterns. But it's terrible at others. It can't read a room. It can't sense when a team member is struggling. It can't make the gut call that saves a partnership or wins a deal. What we're seeing isn't job elimination, it's job transformation. The grunt work is disappearing. And that sounds great until you realize: entry-level positions used to be training grounds. They were where you learned to think like a professional, made mistakes in low-stakes situations, and built foundational skills. Now? Organizations expect people to operate at mid-level complexity immediately. And most aren't ready for that jump. The other shift nobody talks about: skills that seemed "nice to have" are becoming critical. You know what's becoming rare? The ability to think across systems. To ask, "How does this automation affect sales and customer retention and compliance?" Most professionals are trained to focus narrowly on their function. But in an AI-saturated world, the people who can zoom out and connect dots are the ones running things. That's not prompt engineering. That's strategic thinking. And it's a lot harder to teach.

The Silent Skill Crisis: We're Losing the Ability to Think . Here's something that keeps me up at night. We're outsourcing our thinking, and we're not even noticing it happen. I was working with a team last quarter, and I watched someone use AI to draft literally every email. Every. Single. One. On the surface, that sounds efficient. But here's what I realized: that person wasn't learning how to write. They were becoming dependent on a tool for a core professional skill.

This is what researchers call "cognitive debt" and it's real. Think about it like this: if you use a calculator for every math problem, eventually you forget how to do basic arithmetic. The mental muscle atrophies. Same thing happens when we outsource thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving to AI. We get faster in the short term. We lose capability in the long term. And organizations are starting to feel this. Teams that relied too heavily on automation for analysis are finding they can't spot anomalies anymore. Leaders who use AI to write every message are losing the ability to communicate with nuance. Marketers who let algorithms handle all creative work are struggling when they need to break new ground. The irony? As AI gets smarter, human intelligence becomes more valuable. Not less.

Why Emotional Intelligence Just Became Your Competitive Edge?

Let me ask you something: When was the last time you felt genuinely heard by an AI? Never, right? Because it can't actually understand you. It can simulate empathy. It can respond appropriately. But the authenticity is missing. Now think about the best leader you've worked for. What made them different? They probably read the room. They knew when someone was struggling even if they didn't say it. They made you feel like your work mattered. That's emotional intelligence. And it's increasingly rare in the workplace. Here's what's happening: As more routine interactions get automated, the human interactions that remain become more important, not less. When you call customer service and get stuck in an IVR hell, what do you want? To reach a person. Why? Because you want to feel heard. It's the same in professional settings. Yes, AI can write reports and analyze data. But can it inspire a demoralized team? Can it navigate a political minefield? Can it build the trust required to ask someone for a difficult favor three years down the road? No. And executives are starting to figure this out. Some of the best hiring managers I know now say: "We can train technical skills. What we can't train is someone's ability to actually listen and genuinely care about the outcome for someone else." That's EQ. And it's worth more than it's ever been.

Six ways to build irreplaceable professional value.

So if the playbook is changing, what do you actually do about it? Here's what's working:

1. Treat AI as your intern, not your replacement - Use it to draft, summarize, outline, brainstorm. But don't hand it the keys. Review everything. Question its logic. Understand why it made certain choices. The goal is to stay sharp while it handles the grunt work. Think of it as maintaining decision-making muscle while outsourcing busywork.

2. Double down on emotional intelligence - This is non-negotiable. Practice genuine listening, not the kind where you're planning your response while someone talks. The kind where you're actually curious. Get comfortable with uncomfortable conversations. Learn to read people. Build relationships that aren't transactional.

Join groups, have coffee with peers, mentor someone. These interactions aren't soft skills anymore; they're strategic assets.

3. Have real conversations again - Pick up the phone instead of sending a Slack message. Show up to networking events in person. Make eye contact. Listen more than you talk. I know this sounds basic, but I'm serious these skills are atrophying. Most professionals under 30 have never done a real networking event. And the ones who do? They stand out immediately because they actually know how to have a conversation without a screen buffer.

4. Build a personal brand that's actually you - AI is democratizing skills. Everyone can generate decent writing, decent ideas, decent presentations now. So what sets you apart? Your perspective. Your story. Your values. Your point of view. Get visible on LinkedIn, podcasts, industry conferences, online communities. But be real about it. Share what you actually think, not what you think people want to hear.

5. Get comfortable failing in public - The landscape is shifting fast. The professionals crushing it right now are the ones who experiment constantly, fail quickly, and learn faster than everyone else. Stop waiting until you have the "perfect" approach. Try things. Write that article. Start that project. Launch that initiative. Most will go nowhere. Some will open doors you didn't know existed.

6. Build learning communities with people you actually trust - Find peers who are thinking about this stuff too. Start a learning group. Meet monthly. Talk about how to use AI strategically, not just how to use it better. Share what's working, what's failing, what you're scared of. The complexity of this shift is too much for any individual to navigate alone. The leaders winning are the ones who built networks of smart people thinking out loud together.

The Thing Nobody Wants to Admit

Here's what I keep coming back to: We've been taught to fear AI. To see it as this existential threat. But the real threat? It's way more subtle. AI is becoming so good at things that we stop trying. We stop thinking critically because the tool does it for us. We stop having difficult conversations because we can hide behind screens. We stop building relationships because we're optimizing for efficiency. And in that process, we stop being the thing that actually matters: human. AI is learning to sound more human every day. To write like us, think like us, respond like us. But it can't actually be us. It can't have conviction. It can't take a principled stand. It can't inspire people to do something brave. You can. **The professionals and leaders who thrive in the next decade won't be the ones who out-code the bot or out-prompt the AI. They'll be the ones who out-think, out-relate, and out-lead.** The ones who remember that the competitive advantage in an age of artificial intelligence is still, and will always be, authentic humanity.

That's actually good news. Because that's something only you can provide.

P.S: The question isn't "Will AI take my job?" The real question is: "What am I going to do with my humanity that no machine ever could?"

The Character Foundation of Leadership: It's not 'WHAT' you Build; It's 'ON WHAT' you Build"



Shawn Naidu

Founder & CEO | "All Things Are Possible Group" (Pty) Ltd – ATAP

1. Contrary to what many believe, we do NOT have a CORRUPTION Problem!!! We have a CHARACTER Problem!!! CORRUPTION is merely the SYMPTOM!!! When Character is not PRESENT, there will be an ABUNDANCE of the PRESENCE of Corruption, Unethical Behaviour, Mismanagement, Bullying & the ABUSE of Position, Power & People. When CHARACTER is COMPROMISED, there WILL be NO 'RESISTANCE' to Unethical Behaviour, Immoral, Dishonest, Fraudulent Conduct, Corruption and Mismanagement. However, when CHARACTER IS PRIORITIZED, it BUILDS a 'SELF-IMPOSED' RESISTANCE to ALL forms of UNETHICAL Behaviours in Leadership. *Character that is NOT PREPARED to deal with Corruption is Character that entertains & SUCCUMBS to Corruption!!!

2. Do NOT expect Leaders to be 'Leaders of Character', if they are not first People of Character. One of the most dangerous and counter-productive Leadership Development approaches and practices is to train, skill, and empower Leaders to be better Leaders, instead of

empowering them to be better People!!! Let me explain:

Leadership is WHAT you DO. It's not WHO you ARE!!! You ARE your Character. WHO a Person is in their Character, is WHO they are in their Leadership, their Values, Ethics, and Humanity. Character is ONLY present IN the Leader, if Character is present IN the Person, who is the Leader. Character is Personal before it is Public. Personal Character is revealed in Public Leadership. Humanity in Leadership is rooted in the Character of the Human in Leadership. You get Better Leadership from a Leader who wants to be a Better 'Person', than wanting to be a Better 'Leader'. If your Company is appointing Leaders to Leadership who are NOT 'People of Character', you are NOT appointing LEADERS to Leadership, you are appointing PROBLEMS to Leadership.

3. Leaders are Advancing Academically, Intellectually, and Technologically, but Regressing Morally and Ethically. Questions for Company Executives and those responsible for their Skills, Leadership, and Youth Development: Are you and your Company reading the warning signs regarding Leadership, or are you oblivious to it? Are you aware, or are you blinded to the moral decay & degeneration in Leadership and its impact on societies? Are you aware that Leaders are advancing Academically and Intellectually, yet Regressing Morally and Ethically? Do you realise that the levels of Greed, Corruption, Mismanagement, Unethical Behaviour, Bullying, and the Abuse of Position, Power, and People BY Leaders, are at an all-time high, and are worsening daily? So, if your Company is still stuck doing the Outdated, Generic, Conventional, Academic, Theoretical, and Curriculum based Leadership & Youth Development trainings where the same old content is regurgitated, then your Leaders are going to be a high risk and a threat to Leadership Positions, Companies, and the People they lead.

Gone are the days of:

- Prioritizing Skills and Ignoring Character.
- Overvaluing Skills but Undervaluing Character.
- Producing Skills-Strong Leaders over Character-Strong Leaders.
- Assuming the Presence of Strong Skills equals the presence of Strong Character.

We cannot train, skill & develop Leaders the way we always have because we live in a different society from what we had. Strong Skills have never prevented the escalation of Greed & Corruption, and neither will the continued. Prioritization of Skills over Character stop it. It's time to get our heads out of the sand to see the realities of the threats, temptations & dangers Leaders are facing, and their impact on those they lead.

If your Company is investing in Youth/Leadership Development but ignoring their Character, then you are failing to future-proof yourself & your Leaders, and they are at a great risk of being Unprepared for the Moral, Ethical, and Character obligations of Leadership.

4. Be more concerned with the Character you bring TO the Table, than merely desiring a Seat, AT the Table!!!"

WHO is SEATED at your Government, Corporate, and Societies Leadership Tables? The Character that you bring TO the Table determines if you will be involved in activities UNDER the Table. The Temptations, Enticements, and Opportunities for Corruption, Fraud, and Unethical Behaviour are at their Strongest when seated AT the Table. A Seat AT the Table does not exempt you from the Temptations for Deals UNDER the Table; rather, it Exposes you to them. So it really does not matter what 'Qualifies You' to have a Seat AT the Table; if Greed 'CONTROLS YOU', then activities UNDER the Table activities will 'CONSUME YOU'. The Greatest Test for a Leader is not in 'Making' it TO the Table, but in 'Maintaining' their Integrity while Seated, AT the Table. The ONLY Protection against deals done UNDER the Table, is the Character of those Seated, AT the Table.

5. You cannot separate Character-Preparation from Leadership-Preparation.

To do so is like preparing to build a Building without preparing to lay its Foundation. The Result? An inevitable collapse and disaster of WHAT you Build. It's Reckless to attempt to build anything without first laying the Foundation on which everything rests.

The Character Foundation of Leadership, as with ANY Building Foundation, is never:

- An option
- A waste of time
- An Inconvenience
- An unnecessary Expense

Those who treat it as such have a fundamental misunderstanding of Leadership Development.

It's time to Stop:

- Ignoring the Foundation
- Disregarding the Foundation
- Being Casual about the Foundation

Prioritise the Foundation, and the Foundation will Protect you. In a world consumed with Building, Developing, and Elevating Leaders and their Leadership, it's time to focus on Grounding Leaders. Because it's not 'WHAT' you Build; It's 'ON WHAT' you Build".

6. The problem is not a Lack of knowledge, awareness, information, skills or education to KNOW right from wrong.

The Corrupt are Corrupt, NOT because they do not KNOW

that it's WRONG to be Corrupt. The Unethical are Unethical, NOT because they do KNOW that it's WRONG to be Unethical. The Fraudsters are Fraudulent, NOT because they do not KNOW that it's WRONG to be Fraudulent. The Abusers of Power, Position & People are Abusive, NOT because they don't KNOW it's WRONG to be Abusive. These people do NOT have a 'Lack of Knowledge' Problem!!! The problem is a Lack of Character, to 'DO' what they KNOW is RIGHT, when confronted with the WRONG. Being Knowledgeable, Informed, Smart, Intelligent, and Educated is never enough to compensate for the Lack of Character. There are Leadership and Company Culture Problems that do NOT require a Skills Solution, but rather, a Character Solution.

7. We CANNOT expect Leaders to STAND for what is RIGHT if they do NOT have the Character to DO what's RIGHT.

GOOD Governance is NOT Possible, where BAD Character is PRESENT. Corporate Governance is ONLY as GOOD as the CHARACTER of those Governing. GOOD GOVERNANCE is ONLY Possible when the CHARACTER of those who GOVERNING, is STRONG enough to provide GOOD GOVERNANCE. When POOR Governance, Corruption, Greed, Abuse of Power, and Mismanagement are PRESENT, it's ONLY

because Strong PERSONAL CHARACTER, is NOT!!!"

Leaders cannot STAND for what is Moral and Ethical in Leadership, if there is NO FOUNDATION of Character ON which to STAND. The ONLY thing WORSE than Leaders 'DOING' what is Morally and Ethically WRONG, are other Leaders who WITNESS the WRONG but remain SILENT to the WRONG.

8. If you will never TRUST a person whose Character CANNOT be TRUSTED, why then are we ENTRUSTING Position, Power, People, and Resources to Leaders, whose Character has never been PREPARED for Leadership?

- Having Strong Charisma, does NOT mean you have Strong Personal Character.
- Having a Strong Personality, does NOT mean you have Strong Personal Character.
- Having Strong Leadership Skills, does NOT mean you have Strong Personal Character.
- Having Strong Talents and Gifts, does NOT mean you have Strong Personal Character.
- Having Strong Academic Qualifications, does NOT mean you have Strong Personal Character.
- Having a Strong Sense of Fashion and being Attractive, does NOT mean you have Strong Personal Character.

The 'GREATEST DECEPTION' in Leadership, is to believe that Leaders who have STRONG Leadership Skills, Talents, Experience, Charisma, and Qualifications, also have STRONG PERSONAL CHARACTER!!!! Often, the greatest CAMOUFLAGE for WEAKNESS of Character, is STRONG Skills, Talents, Charisma, and Qualifications. It does NOT matter WHAT you have, if you do NOT have STRONG Personal Character, your Leadership is COMPROMISED. 'NOTHING' COMPENSATES for the LACK of Personal Character."

9. The Moral Decay, Ethical Failure, and Greed in Leadership, is not proof that we have a 'Leadership Crisis'.

It's proof we have a 'Character Crisis'.

***If we make NO Changes in HOW we Train, Develop, and Empower Leaders, there will be NO Change in the quality and calibre of our Leaders!!! If the global crisis of Corruption, Mismanagement, Unethical Behaviour, and the Abuse of Position, Power, and People by Leaders, is not proof that we do NOT have a 'Corruption Problem' in Leadership, but rather, a 'Character Problem' in Leadership, then these cycles of Corruption, Mismanagement, Unethical Behaviour, and the Abuse of Position, and Power, are bound to be REPEATED, REPRODUCED, and PERPETUATED by our future Leaders.

If this current global crisis is not a clear indicator that we no longer need 'Leaders', but rather, 'Leaders of Character', then we are blind to the ROOT Problem in Leadership. The Moral Decay and Failure in our Present Leadership, and its threat to our Future Leadership, is evidence that the generic, conventional, academic, theoretical, and curriculum-based Leadership and Youth Development approaches and offerings are failing to produce the calibre of 'Leaders of Character' that society needs.

Because we have a Character-Problem, this DEMANDS a 'Character-Solution'!!!

THIS, is why I speak on Character and why I created the ATAP Group's 'Leaders of Character' (LOC) Leadership Development program offerings: Because part of the most effective (yet neglected) Solutions to combating and preventing corruption and Poor Leadership, is not only through anti-corruption

policies, processes, systems, ethics awareness, and generic Leadership & Skills Development Solutions, but through a 'Character-Solution' that is intentional in producing 'Leaders of Character' (LOC). ATAP's LOC Solution is not just Leadership Development; It is Leadership Re-Development!

*** This Article is from my upcoming Leadership Book: "The Character Foundation of Leadership: It's not 'WHAT' you Build; It's 'ON WHAT' you Build"

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Cape Town, South Africa

Flagship Program:

'Leadership and Character Development' (LCD)

<https://youtu.be/CROQTuFxwPQ>

Entrepreneurs of the month



BEARHUG

Tom Field & Max Higgins

Aussie start up expands to Europe, driving Reusable Pallet Wrap

Adoption ahead of 2030 EU PPWR Legislation.



Founder, Tom Field, spent 4 years as a truck driver in Sydney, wasting half a kilogram of pallet wrap every day. At the end of his time studying Business and Innovation at the University of Technology Sydney, Tom teamed up with classmate and consultant Max Higgins, to bring the reusable pallet wrap to the Australian market. They've since grown to support over 140 businesses in moving away from single-use pallet wrap, expanding into the USA and Europe, with Max relocating to Germany. Bearhug's reusable pallet wraps are designed to last 1,000 uses, are 10x cheaper than traditional plastic wrap, and have been independently tested to outperform plastic in strength and durability, reducing breakage and ensuring products reach shelves in perfect condition. Each wrap also replaces 1 tonne of CO₂ emissions over its life while being faster and easier to apply than single-use alternatives.

After saving 15 tonnes of soft plastic in Australia, Bearhug is launching in the Netherlands and Germany ahead of the EU's proposed 2030 single-use pallet wrap ban Legislation (PPWR). Tired of wasting kilos of plastic daily as a part time truck driver, Bearhug Pallet Wraps (Sydney, Australia) was founded in 2023 by university students Tom Field and Max Higgins to tackle the global problem of pallet wrap waste, 2.8

million tonnes annually worldwide, including over 50,000 tonnes in Australia, and 567,000 tonnes in Europe. Bearhug is a packaging startup working to replace single-use pallet wrap, which is responsible for 1.5% of the world's plastic waste, with a reusable alternative. A Bearhug wrap replaces 350kg of plastic over its 1000-use life, at up to a tenth the cost. Bearhug's European launch is timely, aligned with the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), which is set to mandate 100% reusable B2B transport packaging for domestic pallet transport and 40% for transport between EU member states, by 2030 though strong exemptions to this regulation are now likely. With demand growing among FMCG and logistics leaders, the launch positions Bearhug to pioneer reusable pallet wraps in a market nearly ten times the size of Australia.

The EU rollout will include

- Reusable Pallet Wrap / RRP€110
- Reusable Belly Band / RRP€30
- Reusable Keg Wrap / RRP€60
- Reusable Batten Strap (Poly-Strap alternative) / €30

Problem

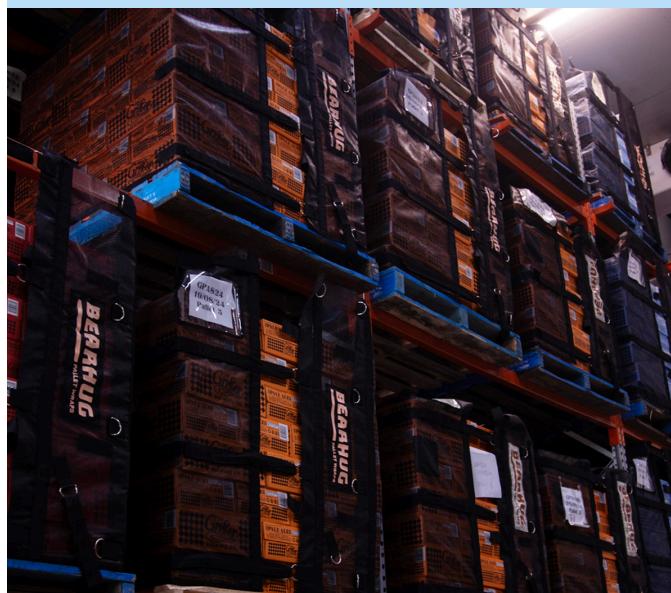
- Each time one of the world's ~5 billion pallets is moved = ~350 g plastic / ~40 m film is used.
- Enough pallet wrap is produced to wrap around the Earth ~16,500 times each year.
- Only 30% of pallet wrap is recycled in the EU.

Existing solutions

- Compostable pallet wrap can produce up to 7x the emissions when landfilled.
- Recycling LLDPE pallet wrap generally only provides one additional life.

Bearhug's solution

Reusable wraps were already in use with some major companies before we emerged, but they have always been limited to manual application, with 60% of global pallet wrapping being done by automated machines, and the vast majority of pallet movement being between different companies and hence requiring a pooled system. Bearhug is building these 2 innovations to make reusable wrapping viable, with the automated wrapper launching in Europe and Australia in June 2026.



Bearhug is making reusable pallet wrapping viable for use in the EU's most complex, automated warehouses. Today, without automation and pooling, reusable pallet wrapping is viable for only ~5% of global logistics. To solve this, Bearhug is developing



automated machinery that wraps pallets with reusable wrapping in a third the time of plastic, and is now trial-ready in Australia. Bearhug also already runs a pooling/return network with 15 Australian companies, mimicking the systems used by CHEP pallets, proof that Bearhug is leading the category worldwide. Bearhug expanded into the US earlier this year. Now, Europe is next: the brand officially launched on 10 November 2025 at the Sustainable Packaging Summit in the Netherlands, with initial focus markets in the Netherlands and Germany, hubs chosen for their dense logistics networks and progressive reuse policies.

With over 140 customers globally, including Amazon and trials with Coca-Cola, Bearhug is proving that reuse, not recycling, will deliver environmental and commercial value at scale. "Millions of businesses still secure one-tonne loads with layers of cling film, only to throw it out after one use. With the EU banning single-use stretch wrap by 2030, more companies are looking to get ahead and switch to a smarter, reusable solution," Tom Field, Bearhug Founder. Bearhug's EU expansion marks a pivotal step in its mission to eliminate single-use pallet wrap worldwide, bridging logistics, sustainability, and cost efficiency across industries.

“

Millions of businesses still secure one-tonne loads with layers of cling film, only to throw it out after one use. With the EU banning single-use stretch wrap by 2030, more companies are looking to get ahead and switch to a smarter, reusable solution.

Tom Field - Founder, Bearhug

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SUSTAINABILITY LEADER

of the month

Dr. Jacinta Dsilva
Co-Founder & CEO
InLabs Group

Shaping
Future-Ready
Institutions through
Sustainability, AI &
Circular Innovation

Driving Net-Zero
Research, Living
Labs & Global
Academic-Industry
Partnerships



HUMAN RESOURCE LEADER

of the month

Ashwini Pujari
Founder
Letfield Solutions

Enabling
organizations across
the Middle East, Asia,
Europe, and North
America to become
future-ready

Dedicated to
building leadership,
capability & people
strategy that make
transformation real
and sustainable



Ashwini ("Ash") — Founder & Managing Partner, LeftField

Ash is the founder of LeftField helping organisations navigate transformation through leadership, capability, and people strategy. Ash has worked across MNCs, startups, and government organizations in deep tech, cybersecurity, and technology sectors, building IP-focused teams and driving growth through impactful strategies across the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and North America. As Managing Partner of LeftField, she partners with sovereign entities, ministries, and high-growth private companies to build future-ready organizations. Her work spans executive search, People Strategy, and large-scale capability-building, anchored in a simple principle: transformation succeeds only when people are equipped, empowered, and aligned.

People at the Centre: The Real Engine of Organizational Transformation

In today's GCC landscape, marked by digital acceleration, national transformation agendas, and new economic frontiers, organizations often assume that structure, technology, and investment are the primary levers of change. Yet time and again, the evidence shows that the true determinant of transformation success is people: their capabilities, their confidence, and their willingness to adapt. Whether we are implementing AI, redesigning operating models, or building national workforce strategies, the starting point is always the same: Do our people have the mindset, skills, and support required to absorb and sustain change? Technology elevates performance, but people enable it. Strategy provides direction, but people give it momentum. Culture shapes behavior, but people bring it to life every day. Transformation is not a project; it is a behavioral shift at scale. It requires leaders who communicate with clarity, teams who understand their evolving roles, and organizations that actively invest in capability-building, not as a training initiative, but as a strategic architecture. The most successful entities across the region are those that treat capability as infrastructure: well-designed, future-oriented, continuously strengthened, and deeply embedded across every function.



At LeftField, we see this across national programs, regulators, financial institutions, and high-growth companies. When people feel prepared, supported, and included, transformation accelerates. When capability development is intentional, performance elevates. And when leadership creates psychological safety and alignment, organizations become resilient, capable of navigating complexity with confidence.

The future of transformation in the Middle East will not be defined solely by technology or investment. It will be shaped by the leaders who put people at the center, and by organizations that recognize capability as their strongest competitive advantage. Sustainable transformation happens when people grow with the organization, not after it, not around it, but with it.



SUPPLY CHAIN LEADER

of the month

Vera Rozanova
MEng (Hons), MBA,
FCILT, MCIPS Chartered
Consultant I CPO

Transformational CPO
Driving \$120M+ Value
Through Digital, ESG &
Resilient Supply Chains

Global Procurement
Leader Turning
Complexity into
Competitive Advantage





How Organizations Must Reinvent Supply Chains for Growth, Resilience and Strategic Advantage in 2026 and Beyond

Vera Rozanova MEng (Hons), MBA, FCILT MCIPS Chartered Consultant | CPO | Procurement Director , Dubai

- Trade tensions persist, but new regional corridors are expanding — particularly across India–GCC–Africa, supported by free zones, neutral logistics hubs, and regional trade agreements.
- Fiscal and monetary policies increasingly support capital investment in infrastructure, AI, energy transition, and logistics platforms.
- Capital expenditure on digital supply chain technologies is accelerating, even as global trade remains structurally fragmented by geopolitical and technological decoupling.
- Demand growth is recovering, though unevenly across regions, income groups, and product categories.

Strategic implication: This is not a return to pre-crisis globalisation, but the emergence of a more regionalised, security-aware, and diversified trade architecture — one that rewards adaptability over scale alone.

In-Country Value (ICV): From Compliance to Strategic Leverage ICV has become a defining strategic lever in the GCC — not a procurement checkbox:

- Policies influence supplier selection, tender awards, and partnership structures, embedding localisation into core supply chain and investment decisions.
- In Saudi Arabia, local content policy continues to evolve toward deeper value creation, with mandatory product lists expanding and strategic technology sectors increasingly prioritised in localisation programmes, shaping access to public, industrial, and giga project

contracts.

- In the UAE, ADNOC's In Country Value (ICV) program is strengthening the integration of local manufacturers and SMEs into its supply network through strategic partnerships, industrial capacity expansion, and enhanced financial support, helping build deeper domestic capability and competitiveness.

Insight: ICV is evolving from cost localisation into a resilience and sovereignty mechanism, reducing external exposure while strengthening domestic capability, innovation, and employment. The strategic frontier is no longer how much spend is local, but which capabilities are deliberately built and protected.

2 | Agility: Designing for Continuous Disruption - The supply chains that outperform will not be optimised for a single forecast, but designed to adapt continuously. Leading organisations are shifting:

- From rigid annual planning → to continuous, scenario-based planning
- From single-point forecasts → to probabilistic, multi-scenario decisioning
- From fixed sourcing models → to modular, diversified supplier portfolios

GCC Insight: Optionality as Strategic Resilience

- Multi-regional sourcing across Asia, Europe, and Africa reduces dependency risk.
- Logistics flexibility is enabled by world-class ports, free zones, and cross-border corridors.
- Manufacturing agility is achieved through co-packers, tolling partners, and postponement hubs.

In 2025, a CEO's most critical strategic asset isn't listed on the balance sheet. It is their supply chain. The doctrine of "efficiency-at-all-costs" lies shattered by a decade of shocks. In its place stands a new imperative: Resilience through intelligence, agility, and strategic design. For organisations worldwide, and decisively for the GCC, this is not an operational upgrade—it is the core of future competitiveness. The GCC occupies a unique inflection point: a convergence of sovereign capital, political will, and greenfield opportunity unmatched globally. Here, supply chains are being reimagined not as backend logistics, but as primary instruments of national vision—from Saudi Vision 2030 to the UAE's Operation 300bn. They are the engines of diversification, industrial capability, and geopolitical relevance. Looking toward 2026 and beyond, organisations are not preparing for a cyclical recovery, but for a permanently altered operating model — one where uncertainty is structural, and resilience, intelligence, and optionality define the winners. As Safaa El Tayeb El Kogali, World Bank Division Director for the GCC, notes: *"Diversification and digital transformation are no longer optional. Strategic investments in non-oil sectors and innovation will be critical to sustaining growth and stability."* **The region is not adapting to a new world order. It is building it.**

1 | A Turning Point for Growth, Trade, and Strategic Design - Global conditions in 2026 create a narrow but powerful window for strategic repositioning:

Infrastructure assets such as Jebel Ali, Khalifa Port, and Ras Al Khaimah terminals allow rapid reconfiguration of flows, positioning the GCC as a global pivot rather than a peripheral node.

3 | Intelligence: Turning Data into Better Decisions - Digitisation improves speed; intelligence improves judgment. As Gartner's 2025 Global Supply Chain Top 25 report highlights: "Leaders are differentiating themselves from the pack by integrating the latest AI, developing autonomous operations and stewarding resources." — Simon Bailey, VP Analyst, Gartner Supply Chain Practice. Modern supply chains are increasingly powered by:

- AI-driven forecasting and scenario modeling
- Digital twins simulating disruptions, policy shifts, and climate events
- Smart sensors providing real-time operational signals
- Autonomous inventory balancing across networks

Architectural shifts include:

- From descriptive → predictive and prescriptive intelligence
- From ERP-centric control → AI-enabled control towers
- From lagging KPIs → leading risk and opportunity indicators

GCC Advantage: With advanced cloud infrastructure, widespread 5G, and sovereign AI investments, GCC organisations can leapfrog legacy systems and deploy AI-native supply chains, while enforcing data sovereignty and zero-trust cybersecurity models.

Example: At Jebel Ali Port, long-term strategic collaboration between DP World and partners such as Maersk enhances operational efficiency and visibility, including real-time information tools that improve supply chain planning and responsiveness.

Emerging initiatives at ports like Jebel Ali are exploring quantum and AI-driven logistics optimisation through research collaborations and smart freight hub proposals, reflecting the region's ambition to embed cutting-edge intelligence into future trade infrastructure.

4 | Sustainability & Climate-Resilient Supply Chains - Sustainability is no longer a reporting exercise — it is core to resilience and value creation.

Future-ready supply chains integrate:

- Environmental priorities: carbon reduction, water stewardship, renewable raw materials
- Social responsibility: labour standards, supplier inclusion, community impact
- Economic resilience: total cost of ownership and continuity of supply

Circular models, including reverse logistics and product-as-a-service, increasingly prove to be cost-effective risk mitigators, not constraints.

GCC Perspective: Sustainability intersects national priorities:

- Food and water security
- Energy transition and logistics de-carbonization
- Local industrialization and workforce nationalization

Water stewardship emerges as a critical frontier of ESG and resilience, particularly in GCC supply chains for food, energy, and industrial sectors. ESG compliance now influences contracts, routing, and access to capital, strengthening accountability and reducing systemic risk.

5 | Ecosystems: From Linear Chains to Connected Networks - Supply chains are evolving into interconnected ecosystems, linking suppliers, technology partners, financiers, regulators, and customers.

Leading organisations are moving away from transactional relationships toward:

- Shared digital platforms for visibility and coordination
- Aligned incentives and co-investment models
- Collaborative innovation across partners

GCC Enabler:

Public-private collaboration and regional agreements, such as mutual certificates of origin between Oman and Saudi Arabia, reduce friction and deepen industrial integration. The GCC increasingly acts as a neutral orchestration layer in global trade.

Example: Under the I2U2 partnership

(India, Israel, UAE, USA), proposals such as a food security corridor demonstrate how multi-country cooperation can strengthen agricultural supply chains and build deeper trading partnerships across regions.

6 | Workforce Evolution & Human-Tech Synergy - Technology accelerates performance, but people determine outcomes.

Advanced supply chains invest in:

- Skills blending operational depth with digital fluency
- Cross-functional leaders connecting strategy and execution
- Continuous learning cultures suited to rapid change

Future leaders must:

- Define decision rights between humans and machines
- Govern AI ethically and transparently

Intervene where judgment, context, and accountability matter most.

ICV linkage: ICV-linked workforce initiatives in the UAE and Saudi Arabia are strengthening talent resilience by increasing national participation, skills development, and private-sector integration. Emiratization and Saudization programmes have expanded opportunities and local capabilities, while policy emphasis on gender inclusion and STEM education supports broader workforce diversification, even as deeper representation in senior STEM leadership continues to evolve.

7 | Demand-Driven Value Chains: Shaping Value, Not Just Forecasts

The next evolution of supply chains is about demand-driven value chains that actively shape revenue, loyalty, and strategic advantage.

Supply chains must be:

- Modular: designed for late-stage differentiation and rapid reconfiguration
- Regionally distributed: positioned to capture local demand while optimising cost and resilience

- Intelligence-led: continuously sensing real-time behavioural, geospatial, and platform signals

Operational shifts:

- Inventory positioned closer to demand pools to protect revenue
- Postponement strategies replace inflexible global production runs
- Last-mile optimisation becomes a strategic capability
- Planning evolves from historical sales to probabilistic scenario modeling.

GCC Reality Check: Dense urban hubs, digitally native consumers, and platform-based commerce make demand-driven models viable — but organizations must accept higher complexity, redesign planning logic, and abandon global standardization where it erodes value.

Uncomfortable truth: Demand-driven supply chains are more complex, not more efficient; companies unwilling to manage this risk lose relevance faster than they lose margin.

8 | Key Implementation Hurdles: Where Strategy Meets Reality

The Vision is Clear. The Path is the Battlefield.

The blueprint for a future-ready supply chain is no longer a mystery. The decisive competitive differentiator will not be strategy, but execution. Transforming a legacy, linear chain into a resilient, intelligent, and value-generating platform is a profoundly complex undertaking— inherently risky, and littered with entrenched hurdles. The organisations that will win are those that recognise these hurdles not as IT or operational problems, but as the core strategic priorities to be mastered.

Key hurdles:

1. Legacy systems & technical debt — ERP and old infrastructures hinder AI, real-time decision-making, and network optimisation.
2. Data sovereignty & cross-border restrictions — misaligned regulations can limit insight or cause compliance risk.

3. Cybersecurity exposure — hyper-connected ecosystems expand attack surfaces; zero-trust, threat intelligence, and secure digital twins are essential.

4. Talent gaps — AI governance, predictive analytics, systems thinking, and scenario planning remain scarce; GCC initiatives like Emiratization and Saudization are critical.

Over-automation without oversight— human judgment is still vital for exceptions, disruptions, and high-impact decisions.

Strategic implication: Transformation risks are strategic imperatives, not technical nuisances. Organisations that govern risk, talent, technology, and ethics move faster and convert complexity into advantage.

9 | Advanced & Emerging Opportunities

The next wave of supply chain innovation offers strategic leverage, allowing GCC organisations to evolve from logistics executors to trade architects.

Key capabilities:

- **Agentic AI:** Identified by Gartner as a key emerging trend enabling autonomous decision making.
- **AI Driven Optimisation:** Advanced AI and optimisation models are evolving, including research into quantum enhanced techniques (forward looking).
- **Autonomous & Aerial Logistics:** Infrastructure and pilot initiatives (e.g., Dubai vertiports, Neom drone plans) signal future capability.
- **AR & IoT Operations:** Real time visibility and sensor driven operations are part of supply chain digitalisation trends.
- **Water Stewardship & ESG:** Water strategy is recognised by Gartner as a resilience priority among top supply chains.
- **Embedded Finance / Digital Trade Solutions:** Tools like HSBC's TradePay enhance liquidity and are part of fintech enabled supply finance evolution.
- **Resilience Linked Metrics:** Analysts encourage linking resilience,

ESG/ICV, and optionality metrics to enterprise value (emerging practice).

GCC Opportunity: Deploying these capabilities allows hubs to set regional standards, optimise capital allocation, and maintain resilience, transforming supply chains into platforms of competitive and national advantage.

10 | A Strategic Agenda for the GCC: Five Priorities + Measuring What Matters

The GCC sits at a unique convergence of capital, political will, and greenfield opportunity. Few regions can combine sovereign vision, infrastructure scale, and digital leadership to reinvent supply chains from the ground up.

Five Strategic Priorities:

1. Design for disruption, not efficiency alone — absorb shocks, reroute flows, adapt to volatility.
2. Invest in intelligence before automation and scale — scenario modelling, predictive sensing, and control towers first.
3. Embed sustainability and ICV into value creation — build capability clusters, not compliance scores.
4. Orchestrate ecosystems, not vendors — coordination, aligned incentives, co-investment.
5. Develop human-digital leaders who think in systems — govern complexity, define decision rights, intervene strategically.

Redefine Success: Measure What Matters

- **Resilience Premium:** link supply chain robustness to valuation and investor confidence.
- **Cost of Disruption vs Redundancy:** optimise strategic optionality without waste.
- **ESG & ICV Contribution:** quantify impact on employment, industrial depth, and economic sovereignty.
- **Regional Specialisation:** leverage GCC clusters, logistics hubs, and digital platforms for collective resilience.

The Capital Allocation Paradox

In a region defined by abundant capital, the greatest strategic risk is not underinvestment, but misallocation. The transformative truth is that not all spending builds resilience. Future-ready organisations must resolve a critical paradox:

- Prioritise intelligence over idle assets. Invest in AI-driven control towers and scenario modelling before expanding warehouse square footage.
- Choose orchestrated networks over outright ownership. Capability and optionality often reside in partnered ecosystems, not owned verticals.
- Fund strategic optionality over mere redundancy. Building agile re-routing capability is smarter than duplicating brittle nodes.

Capital deployed on the wrong side of this paradox does not buy advantage—it purchases costly inertia. In the GCC, where investment scale is a given, investment wisdom becomes the ultimate competitive edge.

11 | The Financial Spine: Liquidity, Risk, and Working Capital

Resilience - Future-ready supply chains optimise goods, cash, credit, and risk.

Key shifts:

- AI-driven working capital optimisation and dynamic inventory financing
- Embedded trade finance, risk-sharing platforms, and supplier liquidity support
- Real-time visibility of cash flow across the supply network

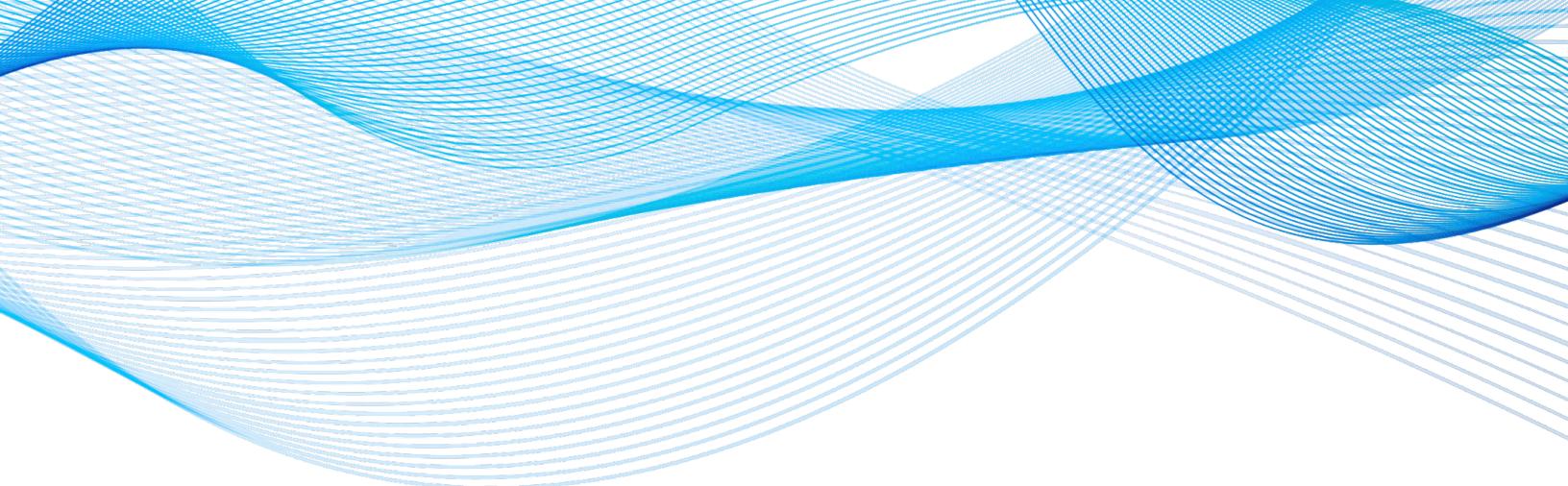
GCC Opportunity: GCC financial hubs such as DIFC and ADGM are establishing world class fintech and digital asset ecosystems with regulatory clarity, sandbox platforms, and innovation frameworks that enable blockchain experimentation, tokenisation, and digital trade finance solutions. These foundations support enhanced settlement efficiency, improved liquidity tools, and innovative financial services — positioning the region to strengthen supply chain finance resilience and responsiveness.

Conclusion:

Supply Chains as Strategic Platforms
 Growth is re-emerging, but uncertainty is permanent. Supply chains that are agile, intelligent, resilient, financially integrated, and strategically orchestrated define both competitive advantage and national influence. They are no longer hidden operational functions—they are the platforms that shape value, sovereignty, and global

standards. For GCC nations, the question is no longer if they will build the supply chains of the future, but whether they will own the platforms, set the standards, and control the intelligence that governs them globally. Those who fail to act decisively will be forced to play catch-up in a world they helped define.





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