

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES | CEO AGENDA 2035

# THE NEW CEO MANDATE IN THE GCC

***Delivering Growth, Transformation and Resilience — Simultaneously.***

*A perspective for CEOs and Boards of medium and large enterprises  
across the Gulf*



# The pressures facing GCC businesses today

CEOs are being asked to make bigger decisions, faster, with less certainty than ever before.

**All at once:**



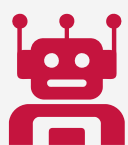
## Geopolitical & trade shocks

88% of GCC executives say geopolitics is shaping their decisions; Red Sea and Hormuz disruptions hit supply chains.



## Cost & margin pressure

Energy is the biggest cost surprise of 2026; leaders must protect margins until growth returns.



## The AI imperative

AI has moved from pilots to the P&L — yet only a few firms have turned experiments into real value.



## Talent & leadership gap

Talent is the top priority and the most fragile asset; a serious gap in next-generation leadership readiness.



## Diversification & execution

Vision programmes are shifting from big announcements to disciplined, ROI-led delivery.



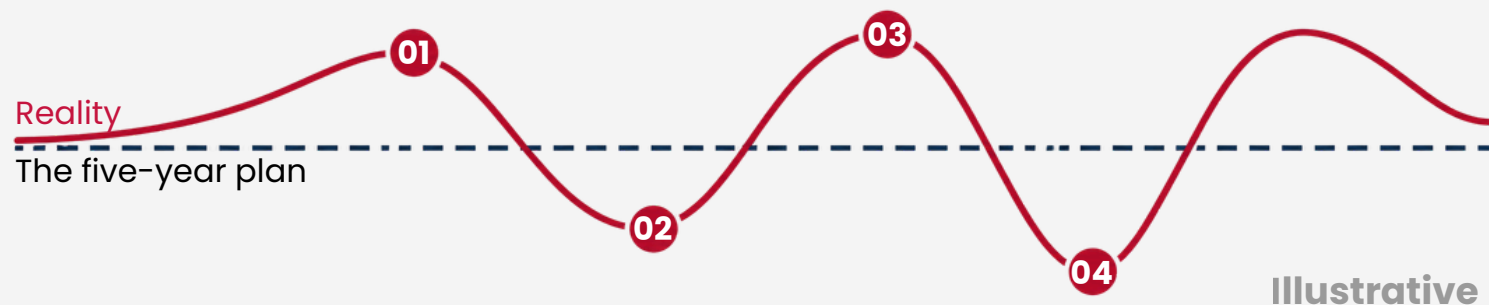
## Speed of disruption

Markets, regulation and technology are all shifting at once — the pace leaves little room for error.

## THE CORE PROBLEM

# Why traditional strategic planning is no longer enough

The old model assumes a stable world. Today's world does not sit still long enough for a five-year plan to survive contact with reality.



## Where the old model breaks



### Too slow

Annual cycles can't keep up with markets that shift in weeks.



### Built on one forecast

A single 'most-likely' future collapses when conditions change.



### Blind to disruption

AI, new competitors and geopolitics rarely fit the plan's assumptions.

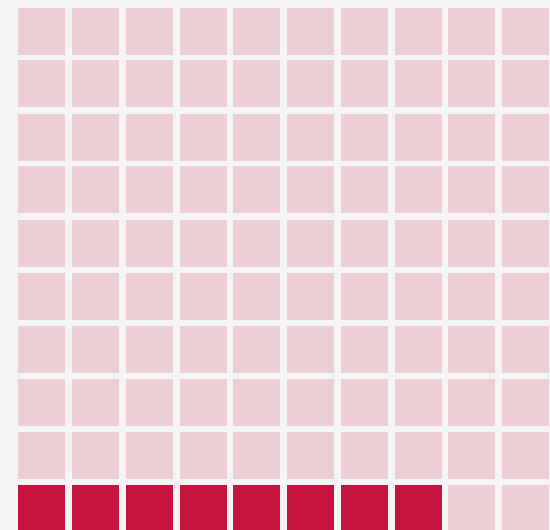


### Plan over action

Effort goes into the document, not into execution and adjustment.

## THE CORE PROBLEM

*Only*  
**8%**  
of organisations reach  
advanced maturity in  
scaling AI — most stay  
stuck in pilots and  
planning.



Advanced maturity in scaling AI



Each square represents 1% of organisations

### The AI imperative

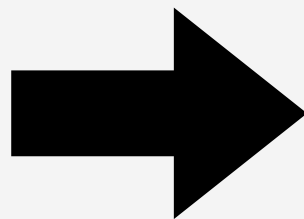
AI has moved from pilots to the P&L — yet only a few firms have turned experiments into real value.

# The shift required

From



**A FIXED PLAN**



To

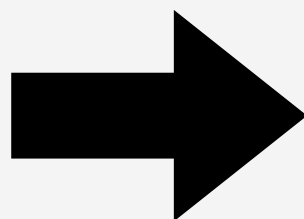


**A LIVING STRATEGY**

From



**PREDICTING THE  
FUTURE**



To



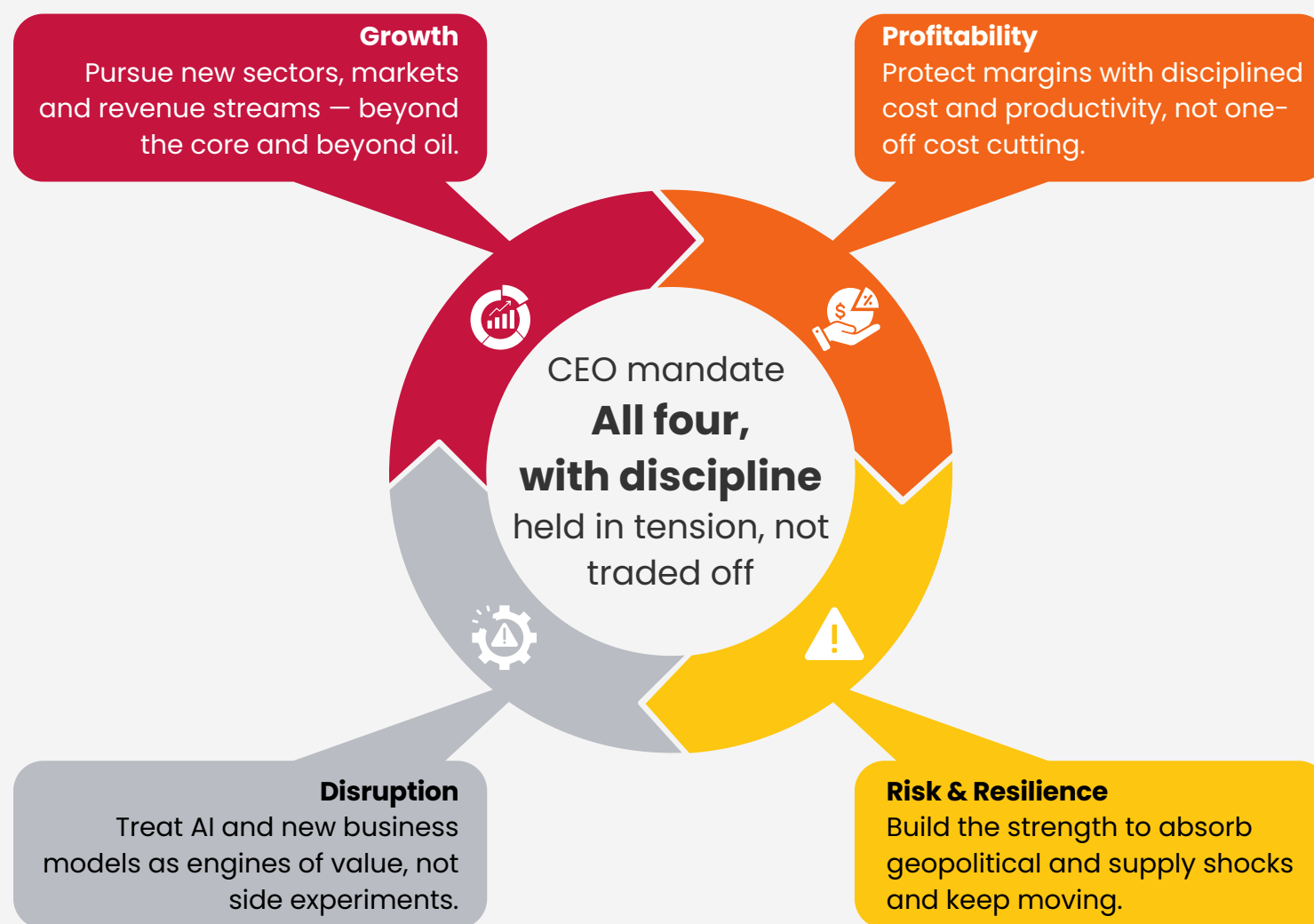
**PREPARING FOR MANY  
FUTURES**

**Why it matters:** A single 'most-likely' future collapses when conditions change.

## THE NEW DIRECTION

# Balance four forces — at the same time

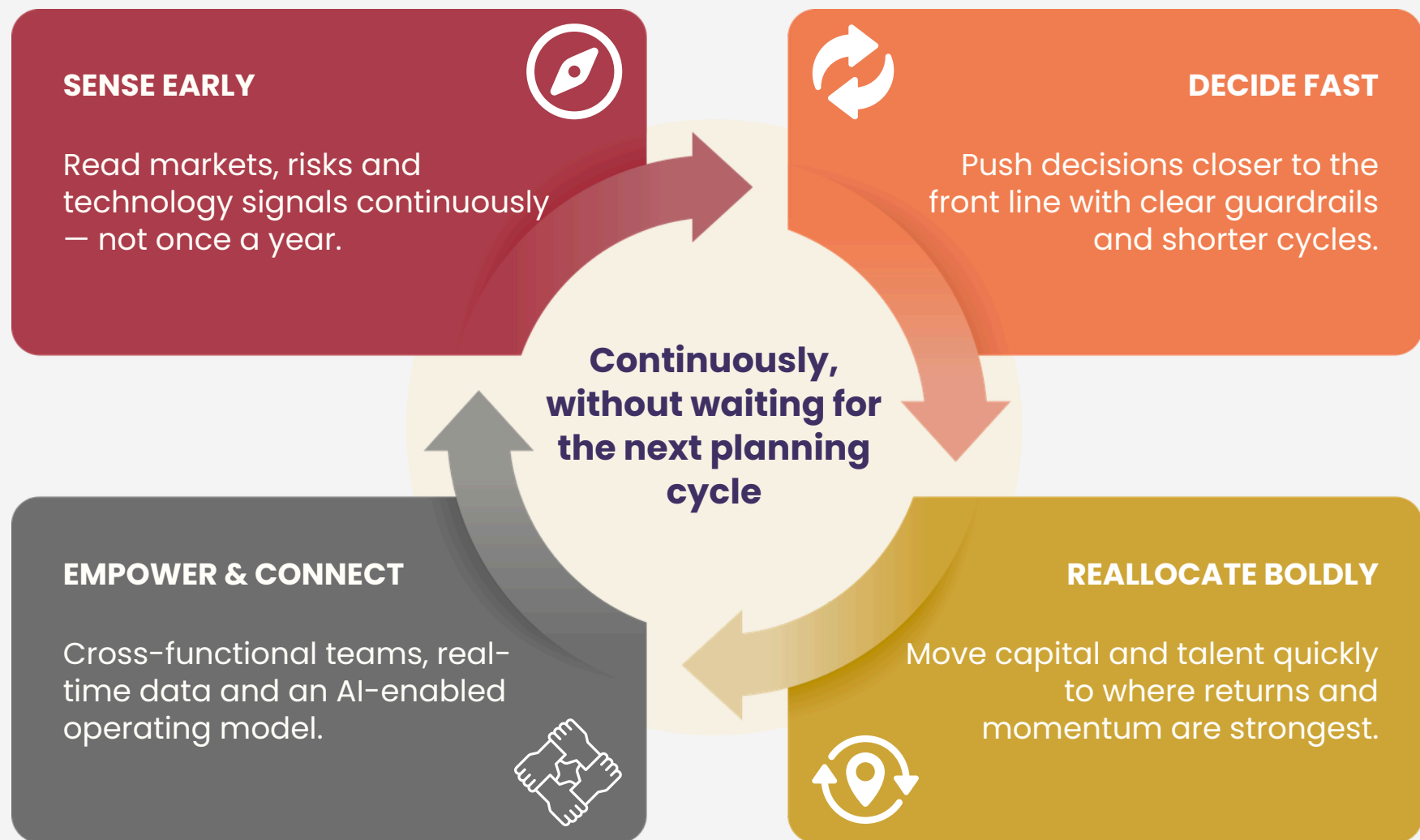
The winning CEOs no longer trade one priority off against another. They design the organisation to hold all four in tension.



*The mandate: competitive advantage now comes less from a bold strategy and more from executing all four with discipline.*

# Building the adaptive organisation

An adaptive organisation senses change early, decides quickly, and reallocates resources without waiting for the next planning cycle.



*In short: strategy becomes a capability the organisation lives every day — not a document it revisits once a year.*

## HOW TO GET THERE

# Five practical steps for CEOs

A pragmatic path to move from a fixed plan to a living, resilient strategy.

1

### Set a clear direction

Agree a simple, ambitious 'North Star' the whole organisation understands and can rally behind.

2

### Plan for many futures

Replace one forecast with 2–3 scenarios and pre-agreed moves for each — so you act, not freeze.

3

### Fund a few big bets

Concentrate capital on growth and AI priorities that matter; stop spreading resources thinly.

4

### Rewire the operating model

Shorten decision cycles, empower cross-functional teams and embed AI into how work gets done.

5

### Review often, adjust fast **Quarterly**

Move to quarterly strategy reviews with live metrics; build talent and leadership depth as you go.

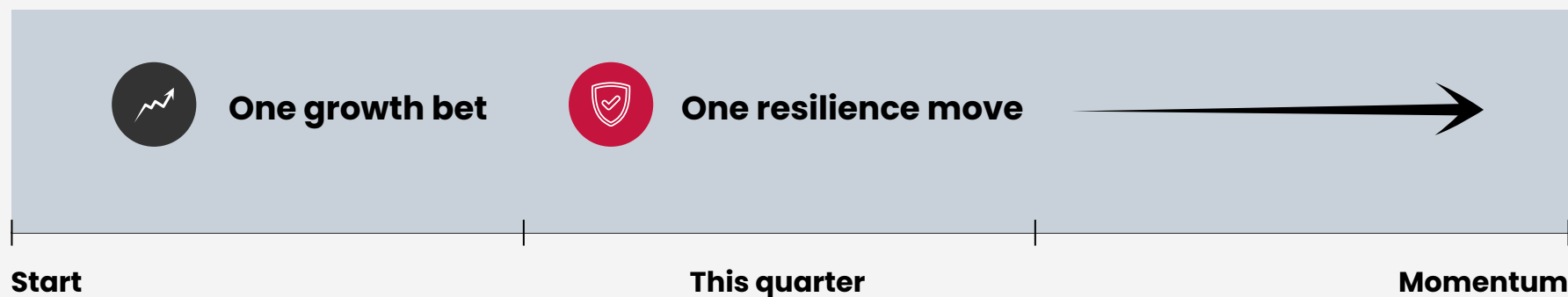
**From a fixed plan**



**to a living, resilient strategy**

START NOW

# One growth bet. One resilience move. This quarter.



**Start now:** pick one growth bet and one resilience move this quarter — momentum, not perfection, builds an adaptive enterprise.

**Momentum** ✓

**Perfection** ✗

THE BOTTOM LINE

## Growth, transformation and resilience are no longer trade-offs.

The CEOs who will define the next decade in the GCC are those who build organisations able to deliver all three at once — turning volatility into an advantage over slower rivals.



# TURN THE NEW CEO MANDATE INTO ACTION

Growth, transformation and resilience must now move together. Let's explore how your organisation can build the capabilities, operating model and strategic priorities needed to turn volatility into sustainable advantage.



FOR A WORKING SESSION  
CONTACT US AT

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