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Practical AI. Measurable outcomes.

Insights 2025

The State of AI in Corporate Strategy Teams [GCC]

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Executive Summary

Corporate strategy teams across the GCC are applying AI in pockets, but meaningful value remains constrained by manual workflows, uneven skills and slow scaling.

Drawing on engagements across GCC organisations, we identify six priority workflow bottlenecks:

**Administrative
Overload**

**Brittle Market
Data Collection**

**Uneven AI literacy &
governance**

**Board
Reporting Friction**

Repetitive Content Creation

**Weak Meeting
Follow-Through**

A workflow-first approach [TIME: Time, Investment, Money, Experience] and contextual upskilling - teaching people to complete real tasks with AI, produce the fastest, most durable gains. We recommend executive sponsorship of focused discovery, hands-on upskilling cohorts and a light AI Council to enable safe scaling.

These findings align with global evidence on pilot-to-production friction [MIT, State of AI in Business 2025]. For implementers, Koshima provides a separate practical Playbook on request.



Field Context

This report summarises recurring patterns and practical needs observed by Koshima while working with corporate strategy teams across the GCC. It is grounded in anonymised workshop notes, questionnaire responses and interview summaries from GCC engagements.

The objective is practical: translate observed workflow requirements into AI-first interventions that free strategic capacity and accelerate decision-making.

To keep recommendations value focused we apply the TIME framework.

Time - how long a task takes.

Investment - resources required.

Money - financial impact.

Experience - stakeholder experience.

Where measurement is unavailable, we use qualitative T-shirt impact sizing [Low / Medium / High] and a confidence tag [High / Medium / Low] that indicates how many independent engagements support a finding.

Numeric claims are explicitly labelled “illustrative” until validated in pilots.

How to read this report:
headline cards surface the six priority findings for executives; deep dives provide evidence led summaries and recommended executive asks for implementers.



Key Findings

1

Administrative overload blocks strategic time

- Finding: **Corporate strategy teams spend significant time on repeat admin [email triage, approvals, document control] that reduces capacity for strategic work.**
- Impact [T-shirt]: **High**
- Confidence: **High**
- Suggested KPI [example]: **Admin hours saved per week**

2

Market & competitor data collection is brittle

- Finding: **Aggregating and validating internal and external market data is slow and error-prone, delaying insight cycles.**
- Impact [T-shirt]: **High**
- Confidence: **High**
- Suggested KPI [example]: **Time to produce a market insight brief**

3

Board-quality reporting is time consuming & iterative

- Finding: **Turning analysis into narrative and visuals [deck + dashboard] consumes disproportionate time and triggers multiple rework cycles.**
- Impact [T-shirt]: **Medium/High**
- Confidence: **High**
- Suggested KPI [example]: **Time to first deck draft / revision cycles**

Key Findings



4

Inconsistent AI literacy and governance hinder scale

- Finding: **Role-based skills vary; there is limited structure to approve, prioritise and scale AI use-cases across teams.**
- Impact [T-shirt]: **Medium**
- Confidence: **Medium/High**
- Suggested KPI [example]: **% of staff completing role-specific AI upskilling**

5

Content creation & stakeholder comms are repetitive drains

- Finding: **Drafting proposals, stakeholder updates and follow-ups is repetitive and variable in quality; templates and assistants cut time.**
- Impact [T-shirt]: **Medium**
- Confidence: **High**
- Suggested KPI [example]: **Avg time to draft external communications**

6

Meeting outcomes and action follow-through are inconsistent

- Finding: **Decisions captured in meetings often fail to translate into assigned, tracked actions; scheduling remains manual in many instances.**
- Impact [T-shirt]: **Medium**
- Confidence: **Medium/High**
- Suggested KPI [example]: **% action items closed on time**

Executive Overview

1. Administrative overload

Problem: Analysts report disproportionate time spent on routine administrative tasks [email triage, approvals, document control], reducing capacity for strategic analysis.

Evidence: Multiple anonymised engagements repeatedly flagged approval-chasing and meeting follow-ups as high-frequency drains.

Strategic implication: Even modest reductions in admin load free analysts to focus on scenario work and stakeholder engagement, amplifying strategic output.

Executive ask: Sponsor a targeted role-specific upskill pilot that maps one high-frequency admin workflow into a hands-on exercise and measures time reallocation.



Executive Overview

1. Administrative overload

When analysts spend their day on approvals and version control, leadership receives slower, lower-quality insight and loses capacity to act decisively.

Impact

- Delays delivery of decision-ready insight to leadership consistently.
- Erodes first-draft quality for board-level materials repeatedly.
- Increases analyst churn risk and morale decline significantly.

Evidence

- Frequent approval-chasing regularly stalls multiple deliverables across teams.
- Centralised sign-off often creates a single-point delay for outputs.
- Bilingual requirements double preparation work for key documents.



What Success Looks Like

Today: analysts spend hours stitching inputs and chasing approvals.

Better: AI-assisted workflows summarise transcripts, assign actions and free analysts to focus on interpretation and decision framing.

2. Market & competitor data collection

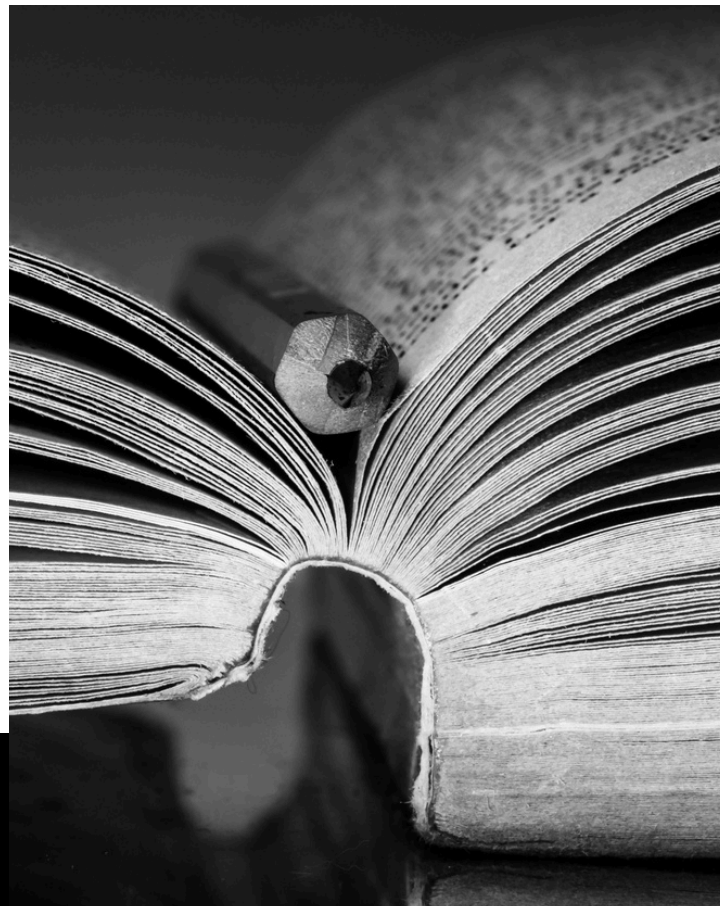
When market and competitor signals arrive late or fragmented, leadership decisions are made on partial information & strategic response windows shrink.

Impact

- Slows strategic response to competitor moves and market shifts.
- Reduces confidence in scenario planning and recommendations.
- Increases the risk of missed opportunities and reactive decision-making.

Evidence

- Data scattered across internal trackers, vendor reports and analyst notes.
- Manual deduplication and validation are common and time-consuming.
- Local-language sources and regional feeds are often unavailable via APIs.



What Success Looks Like

Today: analysts manually gather PDFs, spreadsheets & emails to build briefings.

Better: automated ingestion ranks sources, synthesises key signals, and presents ranked implications for human interpretation.

3. Board-quality reporting

When market and competitor signals arrive late or fragmented, leadership decisions are made on partial information & strategic response windows shrink.

Impact

- Multiple revision cycles delay decisions and reduce agility.
- Leadership spends time correcting presentation, not debating strategy.
- Review fatigue increases, lowering engagement in strategic discussions.

Evidence

- Analysts report repeated slide rework late in the cycle.
- Visuals and narratives are often assembled separately, causing incoherence.
- Last-minute data refreshes trigger cascading edits across decks.



What Success Looks Like

Today: analysts iterate slides through multiple reviewers before leadership sees a usable deck.

Better: templates, AI-assisted narrative framing and automated visual formatting produce stronger first drafts, reducing review rounds and accelerating decisions.

4. AI literacy & governance

Uneven AI skills and ad-hoc governance leave organisations exposed to risk and prevent promising pilots from scaling into reliable operational value.

Impact

- Inconsistent use of AI increases operational and reputational risk.
- High-value pilots stall without clear verification and approval processes.
- Uneven capability slows cross-team collaboration and scaling.

Evidence

- Skills vary widely by role; few role-specific competency paths exist.
- Governance is often reactive and lacks a fast-track for low-risk pilots.
- Verification playbooks and prompt libraries are absent or fragmented.



What Success Looks Like

Today: pilot activity is fragmented and uneven, with teams using different tools and standards.

Better: role-based proficiency frameworks, lightweight verification playbooks and a fast-track governance lane ensure pilots validate quickly and scale safely.

5. Content creation & stakeholder communications

When teams spend excessive time drafting, tailoring and chasing approvals for external and stakeholder communications, strategic messages lose clarity and speed to impact.

Impact

- Slows stakeholder alignment and decision cycles.
- Increases senior time spent editing rather than deciding.
- Produces inconsistent tone and diminished stakeholder confidence.

Evidence

- Repeated manual drafting of similar documents across teams.
- Multiple revision loops to align tone and approvals.
- Templates are under-used or poorly maintained, driving ad-hoc work.



What Success Looks Like

Today: teams manually craft and iterate stakeholder notes, briefings and proposals.

Better: reusable templates, AI-assisted drafting and approval workflows deliver near-ready comms that leaders can review and sign off quickly.

6. Meeting outcomes & action follow through

When meeting decisions fail to translate into assigned actions, execution stalls and strategic initiatives lose momentum and accountability.

Impact

- Delays project delivery and strategic milestones.
- Blurs ownership, increasing risk of missed commitments.
- Reduces confidence in leadership follow-through and execution credibility.

Evidence

- Actions recorded in slides or chat are not consistently tracked.
- No standardised handover from meeting outputs to task trackers.
- Follow-up frequently relies on manual reminders and informal ownership.



What Success Looks Like

Today: meetings end with agreed next steps but little enforcement.

Better: structured capture assigns owners, creates due dates and automatically surfaces overdue items for attention, freeing strategy teams to focus on delivery rather than policing progress.

Cross-cutting Analysis

How GCC practice aligns with global trends

Our qualitative findings mirror many of the high-level patterns identified in global research while also revealing regional nuances that shape how pilots should be designed and scaled in the GCC.

Key alignments with global research

- **Pilot > production friction:** Like broader studies, our engagements suggest many early AI experiments stall before producing measurable enterprise outcomes. This reinforces a workflow-first approach and the need for clear pass/fail criteria for pilots.
- **Learning gap & system memory:** Global evidence highlights the importance of learning-capable systems that retain feedback. Our clients similarly call out adaptation and validation as central to scaling AI safely.
- **Shadow AI & prosumer behaviour:** Employees are already using consumer-grade tools to fill real workflow gaps; our engagements show the same informal adoption patterns that global research calls the 'shadow AI economy'.

Regional divergences and practical implications

- **Evidence base & measurement:** Unlike broad global surveys that report quantitative conversion rates, our dataset is qualitative and function specific. This limits direct numerical comparisons and shifts emphasis toward defensible, evidence-led pilots rather than broad statistical claims.
- **Operational context:** GCC organisations often have distinct procurement, vendor governance and IT approval patterns; these create both friction and opportunity for structured pilot partnerships. Practically, pilots should include legal/IT checkpoints early.
- **Language & localisation:** Arabic-language workflows and bilingual documentation can add integration complexity for off-the-shelf solutions; conflating global tooling assumptions with regional reality risks governance friction.

Cross-cutting Analysis

Implications for our recommendations

Prioritise rapid, controlled pilots that produce clear workflow outcomes and include early governance checkpoints.

Focus upskilling on verification, governance and role-specific application so prosumer behaviours are channelled safely.

Use external partnerships selectively to overcome procurement and integration overheads while retaining learning loops within the organisation.

Playbook: pick, train, govern, orchestrate

Durable adoption begins with teaching work, not tools. The aim is simple: identify high-impact routine work that, when done differently with AI, frees strategic time; train people to do their real tasks with AI in practical, repeatable ways; and then enable safe, fast scale through proportionate governance and composable orchestration.

Upskilling

Find the right candidate workflows & champions

Start with a short discovery [5 - 10-days] to identify 6-9 candidate workflows and the mindset champions who will drive them.

- **Selection filter [TIME]:** score each workflow on Frequency, Current Time spent, Decision Impact and Data Availability.
- **Prioritise:** high-frequency, manual, decision-critical tasks with accessible data.
- **Champions:** identify practitioners who perform the task, are open to experimenting and can communicate wins.

Why this matters: the combination of the right workflow + the right person produces visible, repeatable wins and builds organisational confidence.

Immediate Actions

Contextual, hands-on, programmatic

Training is not feature lists - it's doing the work.

- **Task recreation:** convert the selected workflow into a short, applied exercise: current artifact > AI-enabled steps > desired artifact.
- **Micro-learning + workshop:** 10 - 20-minute micro-modules introduce goals and guardrails; followed by coached, hands-on workshops where participants complete real tasks using their enterprise productivity stack [Office 365 > CoPilot 365; Google Workspace > Gemini; plus approved third-party tools as needed].
- **Reinforcement:** weekly clinics, paired working and verification rubrics to cement practice.
- **Program design:** run as a 6 - 12-week modular capability program [modules + clinics + hands-on verification].

Outcome: fast transfer of skills, immediate time-to-value and higher retention because people practise with real work.

Playbook: pick, train, govern, orchestrate

Communicate Wins

Lightweight, evidence-led storytelling
Capture before/after evidence without overloading cohorts.

- Use the discovery baseline as the “before” record.
- Collect lightweight post-pilot measures: short 6-question survey + a 10 - 15-minute champion interview.
- Produce a concise 1-page before/after note highlighting time freed, decisions accelerated and one champion quote.

Why: short, sharable case notes accelerate adoption and create momentum across the organisation.

Governance

Lightweight, enabling AI Council

Create a minimal but effective governance forum that enables pilots, not blocks them.

- **AI Council** [light]: monthly cadence; cross-functional reps [strategy, IT, legal, operations].
- **Responsibilities:** prioritise pilots; own template/prompt library and verification playbooks; maintain a fast-track lane for low-risk pilots; make scale/no-scale decisions using the pilot retro.
- **Principle:** governance should be proportionate - protect sensitive outputs while keeping low-risk experiments moving.



Playbook: pick, train, govern, orchestrate

Measurement & Decision Rules

Keep measurement simple & aligned to TIME.

- Choose 1 primary Time-focused indicator [north star], 1 Experience indicator [satisfaction] and 1 Implementation indicator [effort].
- Use mixed evidence: lightweight self-reports + sample system signals where available.
- Declare pass/fail criteria before launch [e.g. $\geq 20\%$ time saving + positive satisfaction].

Technology & Partnerships

Orchestrate, don't replace

Match tooling to enterprise platforms and favour composable orchestration.

- **Primary productivity stack:** align to the existing platform [Office 365 > CoPilot 365; Google Workspace > Gemini].
- **Composable approach:** prioritise connectors, ingestion and orchestration layers [CoPilot Studio / Power Platform-style] to assemble agentic workflows from proven building blocks.
- **Tool mix:** accept a heterogeneous ecosystem [CoPilot + ChatGPT + specialist tools] but enforce a security-approved components list and standard connectors.



Playbook: pick, train, govern, orchestrate

Quick launch checklist [first 30 days]

1. **Run 5 - 10-day discovery**; score workflows via TIME.
2. **Select top 3 workflows and recruit champions.**
3. **Create one hands-on exercise and its 10 - 20-minute micro-module.**
4. **Schedule a coached workshop + weekly clinics.**
5. **Notify AI Council**; request fast-track approval where needed.
6. **Collect baseline measures**; run the pilot; gather post-pilot survey + champion interview.
7. **Produce 1-page before/after note and share internally.**

Risks & mitigations

- **Wrong workflow selection** > strict TIME filter and early stop criteria.
- **Training decay** > programmatic clinics and paired work to reinforce.
- **Governance friction** > fast-track lanes and limit council cadence.
- **Tool fragmentation** > mandate standard connectors and an approved tech list.



Case Examples

Accelerating market insight generation

A mid-sized corporate strategy team responsible for market monitoring and scenario planning found that preparing weekly market briefs consumed significant analyst time. Inputs were scattered across internal trackers and external reports; consolidation and validation created a lengthy pre-analysis phase.

The team undertook a hands-on upskilling program that recreated the actual market-briefing task.

Participants practised a scripted, role-based exercise covering source prioritisation, simple validation checks and a short synthesis template, reinforced by clinics and paired coaching over six weeks.

Participants reported faster briefing cycles and greater confidence; leadership received clearer, more action-ready briefs and increased scenario testing frequency.

“We stopped fighting sources and started debating options”



Case Examples

Near-board quality first drafts

A corporate strategy function regularly delivered analysis to senior leadership but struggled to produce board-ready decks within available windows. The bottleneck was shaping narrative, selecting visuals and formatting for leadership consumption.

The cohort completed a role-specific upskilling block simulating a live board request: a timed exercise to transform a dataset and briefing note into a 6-slide narrative using the organisation's primary productivity stack.



Follow-up clinics addressed blockers and refined templates.

Outcomes: stronger first drafts, fewer review cycles, earlier leadership engagement and improved capacity to handle ad-hoc requests.

“The first draft was already close to what the board needed.”

Summary

Corporate strategy teams across the GCC face six recurring challenges: administrative overload continues to reduce time available for strategic work.

Strategic Implications

1. Freeing capacity from administrative load directly amplifies strategic output.
2. Faster market insight cycles accelerate decision-making and scenario planning. Improving first-draft quality reduces leadership friction and rework.
3. Lightweight governance and targeted upskilling enable adoption without stalling organisational confidence or momentum.
4. Task-specific AI training delivers faster, more durable results than generic tool training with immediate time to value.

Recommendations

- **Workflow-first lens:** Apply the TIME framework to prioritise where AI delivers measurable impact.
- **Hands-on upskilling:** Recreate real tasks as exercises so staff learn how to complete actual work with AI tools.
- **Champion model:** Identify open, credible individuals to anchor early pilots and spread adoption.
- **Light governance:** Establish an AI Council with a fast-track lane for low-risk initiatives and shared experiences.
- **Communicate wins:** Use simple before/after evidence to showcase tangible progress and build confidence.

Executives should act now by sponsoring short discovery phases, backing role-specific upskilling pilots, and empowering lightweight governance.

Early visible wins build confidence, speed adoption, and position organisations to scale AI responsibly.

Work with Us

At Koshima, we help organisations move beyond hype and achieve measurable results with AI.

Our focus is practical: identify high-value workflows, free capacity, and build confidence through contextual, hands-on upskilling. We believe incremental gains lead to transformation, and every pilot should prove immediate value.

Our approach is simple - think big, start small, start now. By re-creating real tasks as learning exercises, we show teams how to deliver outcomes, not just use tools.

Executives sponsor clear priorities, employees learn by doing, and governance stays light so adoption never stalls.

Partnering with Koshima means embedding AI where it matters most: amplifying strategy, accelerating decisions, and improving stakeholder experiences.

If you're ready to unlock practical results and build momentum step by step, we'd be delighted to work with you.



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