



Center of Excellence Arabia Dialogues

ROUNDTABLE PODCAST SERIES – EPISODE FIVE

SPECIAL REPORT

***How Can the Data Economy and Digital Infrastructure
Drive Global Competitiveness in the AI Era?***



PARTNERS:



Microsoft



وزارة الاتصالات
وتقنية المعلومات
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Infosys®

AI Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



VIEWS YOU CAN USE



Zainab Al Amin
Vice President of National Digital Transformation
Microsoft Saudi Arabia

Trusted Data Is the Foundation of AI Competitiveness

Artificial intelligence is often discussed through the lenses of models, algorithms, and infrastructure. Yet the true determinant of competitiveness in the AI era is not simply access to technology—it is the ability to transform data into trusted economic value. Data has become a strategic national asset. However, data volume alone does not create advantage. Economic value emerges when data is governed effectively, shared responsibly, and applied at scale across sectors. Trust is therefore not a secondary consideration; it is the foundation upon which every successful AI ecosystem must be built. Saudi Arabia’s digital transformation journey demonstrates how policy, governance, and infrastructure can work together to create long-term competitiveness. Through initiatives aligned with Vision 2030, the National Strategy for Data and AI, cloud adoption policies, and investments in digital government capabilities, the Kingdom is establishing the conditions required to become a global leader in AI adoption and innovation.

Infrastructure Creates Ecosystems

Digital infrastructure should not be viewed solely as a technology investment. Every data center, cloud region, and AI platform creates an ecosystem of partners, talent, jobs, innovation opportunities, and economic activity. Infrastructure therefore becomes an enabler of national competitiveness when it supports broader economic development.

Scaling Through Trust

The challenge for every nation is balancing sovereignty with collaboration. Data sharing at scale is possible when systems are designed around sovereignty, trust, and interoperability from the outset. Clear governance frameworks, consent mechanisms, accountability structures, and common standards allow organizations to collaborate while preserving confidence and control. Ultimately, competitive advantage in the AI era belongs to countries that can make data trusted, connected, and purposeful. Technology creates possibilities, but governance creates value. The nations that successfully combine both will be the ones that lead the next phase of the global digital economy. ■

AI Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



TOP 9 TAKEAWAYS



BUILDING TRUSTED DATA ECONOMIES
Zainab Al Amin
Vice President of National Digital Transformation
Microsoft Saudi Arabia

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1.
Turning data into services, productivity gains, and faster decision-making creates long-term economic value. Competitive advantage comes not from data collection alone but from effective application. | 2.
Data becomes a trusted economic asset when supported by strong governance frameworks. Trust, interoperability, and usability determine whether data can generate scalable value. | 3.
Vision 2030, national AI strategies, and digital government initiatives position Saudi Arabia to become both a leading AI adopter and exporter of AI talent. |
| 4.
Investments in local cloud regions and data centers create broader innovation ecosystems, generating jobs, partnerships, skills development, and long-term economic growth. | 5.
Countries can scale data sharing while preserving sovereignty through policies that prioritize trust, consent, security, accountability, and interoperability from the outset. | 6.
Organizations only share data confidently when governance frameworks establish transparency, accountability, and confidence in how information is used and protected. |
| 7.
Competitive digital economies require standards that allow public and private sector data systems to communicate seamlessly across organizations and industries. | 8.
Digital infrastructure creates value only when aligned with sector priorities, measurable outcomes, workforce development, and real-world business transformation initiatives. | 9.
In the AI era, data becomes a competitive advantage only when it is trusted, connected, governed effectively, and applied with clear economic purpose. |

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



60-SECOND

CLICK HERE TO VIEW



"Data becomes a competitive advantage only when it is trusted, connected, and applied with purpose. Governance transforms data from a resource into an economic asset."

Zainab Al Amin
Vice President of National Digital Transformation
Microsoft, Saudi Arabia

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues



SOUNDINGS



"Saudi Arabia's investments in digital infrastructure are creating the foundations needed to accelerate innovation, strengthen competitiveness, and support long-term economic diversification."

Zainab Al Amin
Vice President of National Digital Transformation
Microsoft, Saudi Arabia



Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:





Panos Tsiakis

Partner, Infosys Consulting

Data Quality Is the Real Competitive Advantage

The conversation around artificial intelligence often focuses on the scale of available data. Yet organizations are increasingly discovering that competitive advantage is not determined by how much data they possess, but by how effectively they govern and utilize it. Data has become as strategically important as energy, capital, and infrastructure. Every industry now depends on data-driven decision-making to improve productivity, strengthen resilience, and create economic value. However, the assumption that larger datasets automatically produce better outcomes remains one of the most persistent misconceptions in the AI economy. The reality is simpler: quality matters more than quantity. Organizations routinely collect enormous volumes of information, yet only a fraction of that data contributes directly to operational performance or business outcomes. Without governance frameworks that establish consistency, quality standards, and accountability, AI systems simply amplify existing inefficiencies.

Governance Turns Information Into Value

Governance is often viewed as a constraint. In practice, it is an enabler. Well-designed governance frameworks ensure that data is collected consistently, validated properly, and made available in ways that support trustworthy decision-making. The principle remains unchanged across industries: poor-quality inputs produce poor-quality outputs. Organizations that fail to address governance challenges inevitably encounter scaling limitations when attempting to operationalize AI.

Collaboration Requires Trust

The future of AI will depend increasingly on collaboration across organizations and sectors. Federated architectures, shared standards, and secure data-sharing frameworks will enable participants to exchange information while protecting commercial interests and maintaining trust. Success will not come from indiscriminate investment or technology adoption. It will come from disciplined execution, selective deployment, and proving value before scaling. The organizations that lead in the AI era will not necessarily be those with the largest datasets. They will be those with the strongest governance, the highest data quality, and the ability to convert information into decisions that create measurable value. ■



Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:





Panos Tsiakis

Partner, Infosys Consulting

TOP 9 TAKEAWAYS

TURNING DATA INTO DECISIONS

1.

Data has become as important as capital, infrastructure, and energy. Nations and organizations increasingly depend on it to guide critical decisions and competitiveness.

2.

Collecting massive datasets alone delivers little value. Competitive advantage emerges when organizations focus on data quality, relevance, governance, and usability.

3.

AI systems only deliver meaningful outcomes when supported by governance frameworks that standardize collection processes and improve data reliability.

4.

Organizations cannot achieve successful AI outcomes without high-quality inputs. Poorly governed data inevitably produces poor decisions and weak results.

5.

AI and data ecosystems are advancing rapidly, requiring governance frameworks to continuously adapt to emerging technologies and operational realities.

6.

Organizations should start with pilot programs, validate outcomes, establish trust, and then scale AI initiatives through proven governance frameworks.

7.

Data-sharing ecosystems require industry-wide standards and architectures that enable organizations to collaborate securely while protecting competitive advantages.

8.

Energy companies increasingly rely on federated architectures that allow secure data exchange while maintaining confidentiality, trust, and operational control.

9.

Successful organizations invest selectively, validate economic outcomes, and scale only after demonstrating measurable business value from technology investments.

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

Microsoft

GI Publishing Intelligence Consultancy

Infosys

60-SECOND

CLICK HERE TO VIEW



"Data is becoming as important as capital, energy, and infrastructure. Competitive advantage depends on how effectively organizations govern and use it."

Panos Tsiakis
Partner, Infosys Consulting

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

Microsoft

GI Publishing Intelligence Consultancy

Infosys

SOUNDINGS

"Data has become as strategically important as capital, infrastructure, and energy in determining how organizations and nations compete in the AI economy."

Panos Tsiakis
Partner, Infosys Consulting





Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:





Xi Liang

Head of Artificial Intelligence Mashreq

AI Success Depends on Connected Data Ecosystems

The race to build artificial intelligence capabilities is often framed around infrastructure investments, cloud capacity, and computing power. While these elements remain important, the real determinant of AI success is whether organizations can connect fragmented systems and transform data into actionable intelligence at scale. Many organizations continue to struggle with disconnected architectures, isolated databases, and incompatible systems. These challenges create barriers that limit AI deployment regardless of how advanced the underlying technology may be. The problem is not necessarily a lack of data. It is the inability to create a unified environment where information can flow consistently across the enterprise. For AI to deliver meaningful outcomes, infrastructure and data strategies must evolve together. Organizations that treat them as separate initiatives often find themselves investing heavily in technology without achieving proportional business value.

Data Quality Determines AI Outcomes

One of the most overlooked realities in AI deployment is that infrastructure alone cannot compensate for poor-quality data. Competitive advantage increasingly depends on structured, governed, and contextualized information capable of supporting repeatable AI-driven decision-making. Organizations must move beyond accumulating information and focus instead on creating semantic consistency across systems. AI models need common definitions, standardized data structures, and trusted sources of information if they are expected to scale effectively.

From Experimentation to Enterprise Scale

The next phase of AI adoption will require greater discipline. Isolated pilots and individual use cases may demonstrate potential, but they rarely justify large-scale infrastructure investments on their own. The organizations generating the strongest returns are those that connect infrastructure deployment, governance frameworks, operational processes, and business objectives into a single execution strategy. Success will increasingly be measured not by how much technology is deployed, but by how effectively it improves outcomes. In the AI era, connected data ecosystems—not isolated technologies—will become the foundation of sustainable competitive advantage. ■



Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:





Xi Liang

Head of Artificial Intelligence, Mashreq

TOP 9 TAKEAWAYS

CONNECTING DATA FOR AI SCALE

1.

Organizations cannot prioritize infrastructure before data or vice versa. Both must evolve together to support scalable AI implementation.

2.

Architectural fragmentation remains one of the biggest barriers preventing organizations from operationalizing AI at scale and achieving meaningful outcomes.

3.

AI success requires governance, observability, security controls, and operational resilience to ensure trustworthy and scalable implementation.

4.

Organizations create value when data across departments shares consistent definitions, structures, and semantic meaning.

5.

Competitive advantage increasingly depends on high-quality, well-structured data capable of supporting repeatable AI deployments across organizations.

6.

Connecting fragmented systems through integrated data fabrics allows organizations to unlock insights and orchestrate AI effectively.

7.

Individual use cases rarely justify major infrastructure spending. Value emerges when organizations scale AI across multiple business functions.

8.

Governments and enterprises should measure AI success through business outcomes rather than infrastructure investments alone.

9.

Infrastructure deployment, use case development, and value generation must occur simultaneously to maximize AI investment returns.

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



60-SECOND
CLICK HERE TO VIEW



"Competitive advantage comes from high-quality, governed data that supports repeatable AI outcomes across the enterprise."

Xi Liang
Head of Artificial Intelligence, Mashreq

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



SOUNDINGS

"AI infrastructure and data strategies cannot be treated as separate initiatives. Organizations achieve scale only when technology, governance, and data foundations evolve together."

Xi Liang
Head of Artificial Intelligence, Mashreq



AI Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



VIEWES YOU CAN USE



Dr. Mohammed Al-Surf
Managing Director, Tilad Sustainability Co & Tilad Institute;
Founder & CEO, Saudi Green Building Alliance

Digital Ecosystems Will Define Future Competitiveness

The next generation of economic competitiveness will not be determined solely by physical infrastructure, natural resources, or financial capital. Increasingly, it will be shaped by a nation's ability to build trusted digital ecosystems that transform information into measurable societal and economic value. Data is becoming a defining strategic resource. Yet the real challenge is not collecting more information. The challenge is creating environments where data can move effectively across sectors, organizations, and institutions while maintaining trust, security, and accountability. Saudi Arabia has recognized this opportunity through investments in local data infrastructure, digital transformation initiatives, and national efforts to strengthen technological capabilities. These developments contribute not only to resilience and security but also to job creation, skills development, and economic diversification.

Connectivity Matters More Than Scale

Many organizations continue to struggle with fragmented systems, disconnected datasets, and isolated decision-making structures. Even where governance frameworks exist, the absence of interoperability limits the ability to generate value. Competitive advantage increasingly depends on creating connected ecosystems where industries, regulators, businesses, and technology providers collaborate around shared objectives.

Education Remains the Missing Ingredient

Technology adoption is often constrained not by infrastructure or funding, but by awareness and understanding. Decision-makers, industry leaders, and stakeholders must continuously update their knowledge as AI capabilities evolve. The pace of innovation means that yesterday's best practices may quickly become obsolete. Continuous education and engagement therefore become critical requirements for successful implementation. The ultimate objective is straightforward: convert data into productivity, resilience, sustainability, and economic growth. Nations that can connect their ecosystems, strengthen trust, and build awareness will be better positioned to unlock the full potential of AI and digital transformation. ■

AI Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



TOP 9 TAKEAWAYS



BUILDING TRUSTED DIGITAL ECOSYSTEMS
Dr. Mohammed Al-Surf
Managing Director, Tilad Sustainability Co & Tilad Institute;
Founder & CEO, Saudi Green Building Alliance

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1.</p> <p>Future competitiveness depends less on physical assets and more on trusted digital ecosystems capable of transforming information into measurable societal value.</p> | <p>2.</p> <p>Domestic data center investments improve resilience, cybersecurity, workforce development, and economic diversification while supporting national digital ambitions.</p> | <p>3.</p> <p>Competitive advantage requires interconnected systems that eliminate fragmentation and enable seamless collaboration between industries, stakeholders, and institutions.</p> |
| <p>4.</p> <p>Strong governance remains essential, but real value emerges when governance is combined with connectivity, interoperability, and ecosystem-wide collaboration.</p> | <p>5.</p> <p>Organizations must remove barriers between sectors to accelerate innovation, improve transparency, and maximize the value generated from shared knowledge.</p> | <p>6.</p> <p>Limited understanding of AI and digital transformation continues to slow adoption, making education and stakeholder engagement increasingly important.</p> |
| <p>7.</p> <p>AI can enhance sustainability reporting, ESG compliance, infrastructure optimization, and resource efficiency while creating measurable economic returns.</p> | <p>8.</p> <p>The real value of data lies in converting information into productivity gains, resilience improvements, and sustainable economic growth opportunities.</p> | <p>9.</p> <p>Leadership ambition, economic competitiveness, digital transformation initiatives, and strategic investments position Saudi Arabia strongly within the global AI economy.</p> |

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



60-SECOND

CLICK HERE TO VIEW



"Future competitiveness will be determined by trusted digital ecosystems that connect industries, people, and institutions through shared intelligence."

Dr. Mohammed Al-Surf
Managing Director, Tilad Sustainability Co & Tilad Institute; Founder & CEO, Saudi Green Building Alliance

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



SOUNDINGS

"Saudi Arabia's investments in digital transformation are strengthening resilience, cybersecurity, workforce development, and broader economic diversification efforts."

Dr. Mohammed Al-Surf
Managing Director, Tilad Sustainability Co & Tilad Institute; Founder & CEO, Saudi Green Building Alliance





Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:





Jay Sadiq

Founder & CEO

FortyGuard

The Future Belongs to Trusted Intelligence

The AI economy is often described as a race for data, infrastructure, and computational power. Yet the next phase of competition may be defined by something far more important: the ability to transform information into trusted intelligence. Possessing data is no longer enough. Organizations and nations increasingly need systems capable of validating, contextualizing, and operationalizing information in real time. Competitive advantage will come not from ownership alone, but from the ability to generate decisions, actions, and outcomes from trusted intelligence ecosystems. This shift represents a fundamental evolution in how countries should think about AI competitiveness. Nations that fail to organize and mobilize their sovereign data assets risk becoming dependent on intelligence systems built elsewhere.

Governance Must Become an Enabler

Governance is frequently viewed as a compliance exercise. In reality, governance should function as an operating system for innovation. Effective governance frameworks create confidence, accountability, and collaboration. They establish the conditions that allow organizations to share information securely, deploy AI responsibly, and scale innovation without sacrificing trust. Rather than slowing progress, governance should accelerate it by providing clear rules that enable participation across sectors.

Infrastructure Without Utilization Creates No Value

The global AI race has triggered unprecedented investments in data centers, cloud infrastructure, and computing resources. Yet infrastructure alone does not create competitiveness. Economic value emerges only when organizations actively deploy intelligent systems that solve real-world challenges. Capacity sitting idle contributes little to national productivity or innovation. The countries that lead the next era of AI will not simply be those with the largest infrastructure footprints. They will be those capable of combining trusted data, strong governance, affordable energy, skilled talent, and scalable deployment into a cohesive national ecosystem. Ultimately, the future belongs not to those who collect the most data, but to those who create the most trusted intelligence. ■



Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:





Jay Sadiq

Founder & CEO, FortyGuard

INDUSTRIALIZING INTELLIGENCE AT SCALE

1. Competitive advantage comes not from possessing data alone but from converting data into trusted intelligence and actionable outcomes.	2. Countries that fail to mobilize sovereign datasets risk becoming consumers of intelligence systems developed elsewhere.	3. Governance should function as an operating system that facilitates collaboration, accountability, and responsible innovation rather than creating bureaucracy.
4. Large data volumes alone are insufficient. Competitive advantage depends on trusted, labeled, validated, and continuously updated datasets.	5. Real-time and continuously refreshed data enables more effective decision-making than static information repositories.	6. Future competitive advantage will increasingly depend on ownership of feedback loops connecting users, organizations, governments, and AI systems.
7. Organizations should move beyond binary approaches to data sharing and focus on frameworks that create collective value securely.	8. Infrastructure alone does not generate competitiveness. Economic value emerges only when AI capabilities are actively deployed and utilized.	9. The next AI superpowers will combine sovereign data, affordable energy, advanced infrastructure, trusted deployment channels, and world-class talent ecosystems.

18

19

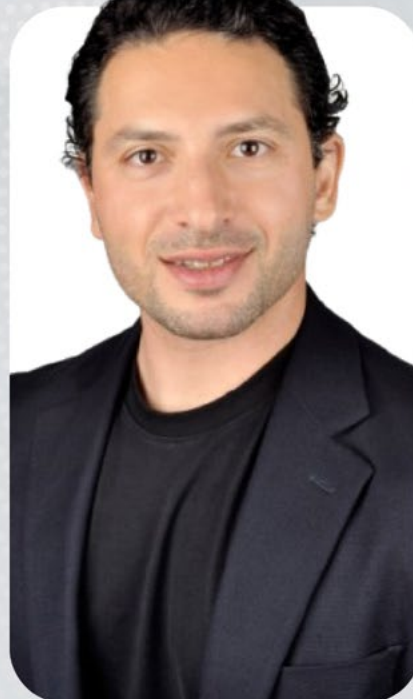
AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues

PARTNERS:



60-SECOND
CLICK HERE TO VIEW



"The next monopoly will not be data ownership alone, but ownership of feedback loops connecting governments, enterprises, citizens, and AI systems."

Jay Sadiq
Founder & CEO, FortyGuard

AI

Arabia Center of Excellence Dialogues



SOUNDINGS

"Governance should function as an operating system for innovation, creating confidence, accountability, and the conditions necessary for responsible AI adoption."

Jay Sadiq
Founder & CEO, FortyGuard





Publishing
Intelligence
Consultancy