

A Futurewerk Perspective

**THREE SHIFTS
TO CONNECT GCCs
TO WHERE
INNOVATION
HAPPENS**

THE CHALLENGE
IS NOT BUILDING
A BETTER GCC.

IT IS **CONNECTING**
THE **GCC TO**
THE **CONVERSATIONS**
WHERE **INNOVATION**
BEGINS.



The distance between innovation and capability

Global Capability Centres operate some of the largest technology and operations estates in the organisation. Built over years, sometimes decades, with significant investment in talent, infrastructure, and leadership, they deliver at scale and with consistency.

Given this scale, enterprises are increasingly turning to their GCCs to drive innovation, building AI centres of excellence, data labs, and digital hubs.

That intersection sits several conversations upstream from where the GCC is typically engaged. **This distance is why enterprise innovation so rarely draws on its most scalable internal capability.**

Closing this gap requires more than adding capability. It requires a shift in how the enterprise brings business units, functional leaders who govern the GCC, and the GCC together.

Three shifts reconnect capability to where innovation begins.

First, market-facing business units must be part of GCC governance.

Second, functional leaders must connect business and execution by bringing GCC teams into business-led conversations.

Third, the GCC must evolve to engage in shaping outcomes, not just delivering them.

Yet GCCs are rarely present where innovation actually originates: at the intersection of customers and the market-facing business units responsible for commercial success.

The other part, market-facing business units, P&L owners, and commercial product leaders, operates in a different world.

Two worlds onshore

The gap is not accidental. It reflects the relationships through which the enterprise typically works with its GCC.

When GCC leaders talk about engaging the business, they typically mean their functional sponsors, most often the CIO and COO, who govern technology and operations.

That relationship works. It was designed for that purpose. But it represents only one part of the enterprise.

Their conversations centre on customers, competition, growth, and the choices that determine how the enterprise performs in its markets.

This is where innovation originates. It does not come from IT roadmaps or operations reviews. It emerges from the tension between what customers need and what the business can deliver.

The GCC has limited visibility into that world. Not because commercial leaders are unaware of the GCC, but because the operating model does not place the GCC in those conversations.

In effect, the enterprise holds two relationships with the GCC.

One is active and structured through functional leadership. The other, with commercial teams where innovation originates, remains largely indirect.

The kind of innovation enterprises increasingly need connects customer insight, operational capability, and technical execution. It requires both worlds to work together. They currently do not.

This is not a capability gap. It is a connection gap.

Innovation is becoming integrated

For most of the GCC's history, technology and operations sat behind the business as enablers.

The conversation began in the business unit, shaped by customer needs, competitive pressure, and growth priorities. Once direction was set, it moved into IT and operations, where it was translated into systems and processes.

Each part played its role. The business defined what needed to be done. Technology and operations determined how to do it. **They moved in sequence, but that separation is breaking down.**

Consider an enterprise deploying an AI agent to drive customer demand. The agent is not just a technology solution. It applies models and rules that determine which customers to target, what to offer, and when to intervene. Those choices are commercial in nature. The processes it affects, fulfillment, service, operations, sit with the COO.

This is where bringing the GCC into these conversations can help ensure that decisions are shaped with a clearer view of how they will be built and scaled.

What was once built in sequence must now be conceived and iterated as a single, integrated problem that sits at the intersection of commercial intent, operational reality, and technical execution.

This is drawing CIOs and COOs into business unit conversations earlier. They are no longer only recipients of commercial decisions.

They are increasingly present when those decisions are being shaped, contributing technical and operational judgment alongside commercial priorities.

The significance of this example is not that a commercial leader was involved. It is that commercial, operational, and technology perspectives shaped the initiative together.

For most GCCs, governance is shaped primarily through CIO and COO leadership. In this case, a commercial leader with responsibility for revenue growth played an active role in shaping GCC priorities and investment decisions.

One of the initiatives championed through this model involved moving a revenue-generating service line from the United States to India.

Cost efficiency was part of the rationale, but it was not the primary objective. **The larger concern was that established ways of working had limited the organisation's ability to innovate and scale the service effectively.**

Once the capability was established in India, the focus shifted from delivery to transformation.

Commercial leaders worked closely with technology and operations teams to redesign the service, productise key elements of the offering, and build a scalable software platform around it.

Over time, product management, platform support, and ongoing development were all operating from India.

Growth objectives, execution realities, platform capabilities, and operating model decisions were considered as part of the **same conversation** rather than in sequence.

The outcome was not simply more efficient delivery. It was the creation of a fundamentally different business capability that reduced the dependency between headcount growth and revenue growth. The product went on to become one of the most successful in the portfolio.

Ashish Sinha

Ashish has built and scaled Global Capability Centres across organisations including Flutter Entertainment, Epsilon, KPMG, and McKinsey. His experience spans technology, data, operations, and product-led transformation.

How GCCs are engaged and why it happens late

The way GCCs are engaged has not kept pace with integrated innovation. GCC involvement typically begins after the initial shaping of an initiative.

Ideas take shape within business units. At this stage, the focus is on defining the opportunity and exploring possible approaches.

As these ideas develop, they are refined further, often with the support of business unit strategy teams. The problem is framed, options are evaluated, and a direction is established.

Functional leaders are already present in these conversations. CIOs and COOs contribute to shaping the direction, bringing technical, and operational perspectives into the same discussion.

They then play another role. They translate that direction into systems, processes, and constraints. In doing so, they determine what reaches the GCC.

It is at this point that the GCC is typically engaged.

By the time a brief reaches the GCC, the original customer insight is often several translations removed.

This is by design. It reflects how the operating model has been structured.

Even as innovation becomes more integrated, this pattern holds. The GCC continues to participate at a later stage, applying its capability after decisions are shaped.

The enterprise is not underutilising the GCC. It is engaging it too late.

If this is how the enterprise is designed to operate, changing it requires deliberate shifts.



The three shifts

If the current pattern is the result of how the enterprise is designed to operate, changing it requires shifts in how the enterprise engages the GCC and how the GCC operates. These shifts build on each other.

Shift 1: Access — Business-Led Governance

Market-facing business units must become part of how the GCC is directed. Their role cannot be limited to defining demand and reviewing outputs.

Business units must influence priorities, shape the types of work the GCC takes on, and bring commercial context into how that work is framed.

This is what allows the GCC to engage earlier. Without it, involvement remains downstream, regardless of intent.

Shift 2: Connection — Bridging Leadership

CIOs and COOs are already present in business unit conversations where direction is shaped. They also govern the functions through which work is executed.

They are the only actors positioned to connect these conversations. Business unit leaders have little incentive to change how the GCC is engaged.

The change is not in mandate, but in use. From translating decisions into structured work, to integrating the teams that execute them into the conversations where those decisions are shaped.

Without this, the first shift does not hold. Business units may be part of governance, but the connection between shaping and execution remains inconsistent. With it, integration becomes sustained.

Shift 3: Evolution — Business Capability

Once business units are part of governance, the nature of engagement changes. The GCC is no longer working against fully defined requirements. It is exposed to partially formed problems, competing priorities, and evolving constraints.

To operate in this context, the GCC must evolve from within. Execution capability remains essential, but it is no longer sufficient.

Teams must develop domain understanding, business judgment, and the ability to work with ambiguity. They must contribute to how problems are shaped, not only how solutions are delivered.

This evolution also determines how the GCC is perceived by the business. Relevance is not established through positioning. It is earned through participation in real initiatives and the accumulation of shared outcomes.

This is not an incremental extension of capability. It is a structural shift in how the GCC is built and how it operates.

These shifts are not independent. Governance enables access. Access creates the conditions for the GCC to evolve. Functional leaders connect that capability to where decisions are made.

Together, they connect where innovation is shaped with how it is delivered.

One lesson became clear early in the journey. Bringing commercial leaders into GCC governance was only part of the answer.

If the GCC was expected to participate in conversations about growth, customers, and products, its people had to evolve as well.

One of the **first changes** was leadership. We deliberately hired a small number of senior technical leaders who had spent significant time working directly with customers and product organisations.

They brought a different perspective into the GCC. They could speak comfortably with commercial stakeholders, understand customer outcomes, and translate business priorities into decisions that technical teams could act on.

Just as importantly, they coached their teams to think beyond delivery and understand the customer, commercial, and financial context behind the work.

We also increased **direct exposure to the market**. High-performing employees participated in customer focus groups, client discussions, and commercial presentations. Seeing customer expectations firsthand changed how teams thought about products, priorities, and trade-offs.

The **final change** was in how performance was measured. Traditionally, success was assessed through technical capability and people leadership. We added a third dimension: business awareness and customer centricity.

Understanding the customer, appreciating commercial priorities, and recognising the business impact of decisions became part of how performance was evaluated and developed.

None of these changes happened overnight. But over time they helped create a culture that was more comfortable engaging with business problems, not just executing solutions.

Ashish Sinha



What this means for the enterprise

Enterprises are investing heavily in innovation, but not always using the capability they have already built to deliver it.

Global Capability Centres represent one of the most significant investments organisations have made in technology and operations over the past two decades.

They deliver at scale, with consistency, and with a depth of expertise that is difficult to replicate.

As innovation becomes more integrated, problems cannot be defined without considering how they will be executed.

The current model continues to function. It delivers outcomes. But it does so by keeping problem shaping and execution separate. The result is fragmentation.

Customer insight, commercial priorities, operational constraints, and technical execution come together, but not always through the same teams, and not always at the same time.

The enterprise has the capability. The question is how it is connected to where innovation originates.

This slows how ideas move from concept to scale, increases reliance on external partners for context that already exists within the enterprise, and limits how fully internal capability is used.

The shifts described in this paper change that. They connect business units to GCC governance, enable functional leaders to integrate rather than translate, and require the GCC to evolve in how it engages with the business.

As a result, problems are shaped with a clearer understanding of execution, and execution is informed by the context in which decisions are made. The transition from idea to scale becomes more continuous.

The constraint is not what the enterprise can build. It is when that capability is brought in.

The enterprise already has the capability. It must now choose to connect it.



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