Does your GBS AI strategy have a geography?

By Elias van Herwaarden – 14/10/2026

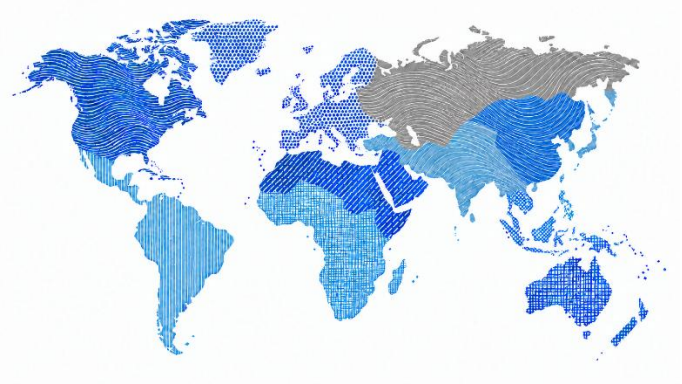
One global AI strategy. One approach?

C-suites expect their GBS to rapidly reap the benefits of AI.

But getting there requires different journeys across the corporate footprint. After all, AI reception and adaption conditions vary globally.

Some poise that corporate culture and talent management processes can bridge such differences. Of course they can. Eventually.

But with GBS needing to adopt and implement AI promptly- "eventually" is not a scheduling option.



Better to identify and tackle the challenges from the start than to costly-fix problems on an ad-hoc basis.

Not one AI canvass

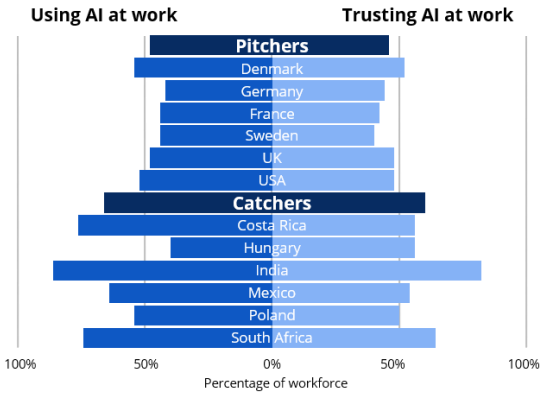
GBS AI strategy and tactics cannot be location-agnostic. Just consider that employees in six top "Pitcher" countries significantly differ from their counterparts in top "Catcher" countries when it comes to using AI at work and trusting its results.

Differences can be saliant, as illustrated opposite.

Take the USA and India, the world's largest "Pitcher" and "Catcher" locations for business services respectively

Indian GBS staff are almost twice as likely to use AI at work than their USA counterparts. They also are 70 percent more likely to trust what AI prescribes.

By order of magnitude, the differences are similar when comparing India to United Kingdom.



Data credit: Trust, attitudes and use of artificial intelligence. KPMG 2025.

Secondly, there are sharp contrasts in AI literacy levels. KPMG found that people in emerging economies report higher AI knowledge (64 vs. 46 percent) than those in advanced economies.

A third perspective on geographical AI differences comes from Bosch. Its Tech Compass 2025 survey identified that 84 and 79 percent of Chinese and Indian respondents respectively think that AI should be a standalone subject at school. Like numbers for Germany and the US are 57 and 54 percent.

The culture risk

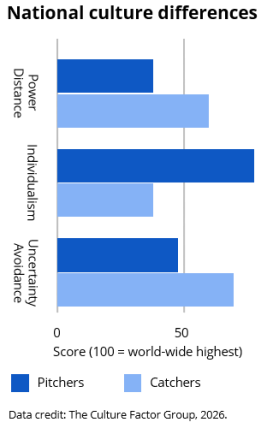
To echo EY: "Much of the AI risk conversation focuses on models, data, security and compliance. Some of the most significant risks emerge from the human behaviours that surround AI systems."

The consultancy hits the nail on the head. After all, AI is but a tool. The extent to which it can deliver corporate benefits depends on its user, much so like a chisel in the hands of a carpenter. And that "carpenter" will bring to work deep-seated values, communication norms, and expectations around authority and teamwork. All derivatives of societal values and national culture.

My take: national culture does not predict whether a GBS workforce will accept AI. Company culture comes into play as well. But AI strategy should understand how national culture impacts the workplace to effectively and efficiently rollout globally.

There are three dimensions of national culture that directly impact AI roll-out. Our Pitcher and Catcher countries differ significantly on them

- ***Power Distance*** *– This impacts the anticipations towards management endorsement as well as the extent to which employees will challenge incorrect outputs and report on those.*
- ***Uncertainty Avoidance*** *- Some teams may need clearer use cases, accountability, human review and evidence of reliability before they use AI routinely.*
- ***Individualism*** *– People in the Western hemisphere will respond more to personal skill development and autonomy whereas team outcomes and shared benefits will be more important in Asian countries.*



Beyond AI skills

When it comes to implementing GBS AI strategy, the required local skillset does not stop at AI literacy, knowledge, digital aptitudes and at least a conversational level of English. It is even more about whether employees and managers can adapt the strategy to local work: using judgment, reshaping workflows, and feeding local experience back into the roll-out.

Certainly, companies can build and install the necessary capacities through proper training and organization. But in doing so the "one-size-fits-all" approach will not suffice. Keep in mind that:

- About half of employees in our Pitcher countries state that said their organization provides responsible-AI training, governance, or an AI-supportive strategy and culture. Among Catchers' employees that proportion is 20 percent higher.
- Microsoft concludes that the biggest factor behind AI impact is not individual. It is organizational – think culture, manager support, and talent practices.

Readiness is uneven within workforces, too. PwC sorts workers into four distinct cohorts. It views that more than half (56 percent) of employees see little or no AI advantage - the so-called "engine room" group with less access to AI, learning, and opportunity. The "front-runners" (14 percent) are at the opposite end of the spectrum and combine scarce capabilities with strong AI advantage. This suggests a roll-out should account for differences among roles and employee groups as well as countries.

Key take-aways for GBS strategists and Site leaders

There's more to say on the topic than what we discussed above. But for now:

- There are significant differences between GBS Pitcher and Catcher countries in terms of AI use, literacy, national culture and the skillsets needed for successful GSB AI Strategy implementation,
- National culture does not determine whether AI implementation will succeed, but suggests attention points for localizing AI transitions.
- Therefore, roll-out of GBS AI strategy cannot be location-agnostic.
- Management, governance and training on skills and aptitudes are key success factors.

In sum, the GBS AI strategy must set the direction. Companies must enable employees and managers to determine how it works in local conditions—and what the organisation should change before the roll-out.

About LocationPerspectives

LocationPerspectives is a location strategy consultancy with experience across more than 350 cities in 48 countries. The firm supports organisations in making informed location decisions across Global Business Services, manufacturing, R&D, and logistics. It advised on over 140 GBS location searches and GBS portfolio optimisations.