



2026 outlook: How procurement and supply chain leaders in the GCC can prepare for a new era of global influence

Spearheaded by the GCC, the Middle East is entering a new phase in its global role. As national transformation agendas across the GCC approach key milestones, what will 2026 bring for procurement and supply chain leaders – and how will they need to respond?

A region stepping into a new global role

National transformation efforts are advancing rapidly, with local content policies evolving in tandem. Building on the momentum of its high-profile megaprojects, there is now a strong drive to develop long-term industrial capability and diversified economic growth, underpinned by a foundation of value chain ownership, technology localisation, IP retention, and SME ecosystems that foster innovation through competition. As a part of this shift, sovereign wealth funds, particularly in Saudi Arabia, are investing heavily in developing global technology and AI infrastructure. These developments are repositioning the GCC from a historically hydrocarbons-centric region to an influential player in global value chains.

This broader economic shift is reshaping expectations of procurement, with many organizations recognizing its potential to create long-term value. We are seeing leading organizations transforming their procurement from a compliance- and transaction-focused function into a strategic driver of value, resilience, and innovation. The strong appetite for digitalization and AI is giving organizations earlier visibility into cost, risk, and supplier dynamics, prompting them to embed procurement earlier in business planning, investment decisions, and supplier performance management.

Together, these forces create a unique environment in which procurement and supply chain leaders can and must prepare their organizations to participate in increasingly complex, interconnected value chains. This backdrop sets the stage for the four major trends that will define 2026.

The trends that will shape 2026

1. Supplier performance management (SPM) will become a top priority

As AI becomes more embedded into workflows, supplier performance management, long overlooked as a strategic capability, will become one of the most impactful areas of investment next year. In critical industries, operational uptime and efficiency will usually far outweigh any benefit from negotiating marginally lower unit costs.

AI-enabled SPM will support organizations in improving outcomes such as:

-  Tracking supplier delivery, quality, and responsiveness in real time
-  Reducing cycle times and increasing throughput
-  Improving operational uptime and system availability
-  Strengthening resilience to operational disruptions
-  Fostering more collaborative supplier relationships

This is where procurement can deliver outsized value, and where many organizations will focus their transformation efforts in 2026.

2. Four-dimensional value chain mapping will become essential

Leading organizations are beginning to map their supply chains across four dimensions: not just the movement of physical materials, but the flow of information, money, and value:



By looking across all four dimensions, organizations get a much clearer picture of how their supply chains truly operate. With this visibility, they can make more strategic decisions about localization, sourcing, supplier partnerships, and innovation opportunities. They can also gain earlier insights into global risks and what mitigation actions are viable should those risks materialize.

3. Supply chain resilience will become a differentiator

The past few years alone have shown us time and time again that major disruptions are not hypothetical. Whether it's a flood in Southeast Asia impacting component manufacturing or a canal blockage affecting global logistics, organizations must be aware of:

- Where their risks sit
- What alternatives exist
- How quickly they can pivot

Tools that provide real-time visibility into supply chain nodes will be increasingly vital.

4. New collaboration and market opportunities will emerge

As organizations achieve a more complete view of how their value chains operate, they can take new approaches to collaboration. This may include:

Supporting suppliers to expand into adjacent sectors, strengthening their capabilities and improving long-term resilience

Helping local manufacturers enter higher-value markets, which can boost supplier capability or help meet localization goals, for instance

Partnering with innovators who can accelerate capability building

Exploring co-development opportunities for new technologies

These partnerships create opportunities for both buyers and suppliers, strengthening the supply base for the former and opening up new markets for the latter.

What organizations in the GCC should do now to prepare for 2026



1. Invest in advanced supplier performance and relationship management:

This is where the biggest value uplift will be – far greater than traditional cost savings.



2. Build a holistic, multi-dimensional view of the supply chain:

Move beyond physical flows to understand data, financial ownership, and where value is actually created.



3. Involve procurement in early-stage business strategy:

Elevate procurement's position to a strategic contributor, integrating it into long-range planning, investment decisions, and major transformation programs.



4. Engage deeply with government priorities and SME ecosystems:

Align with localization incentives, support SME partners, and participate in sector-level capability building.



5. Strengthen resilience through structured scenario planning:

Take advantage of the real-time insights that AI can increasingly offer to spot risks early and translate that insight into rapid, proactive decision-making.



A region redefining its global role

As the GCC deepens its role in global value chains, procurement and supply chain leaders are presented with a direction-defining opportunity. Organizations that invest in the right technology, build deeper visibility, and expand procurement's strategic role will be in a strong position to capture the benefits of the region's transformation.

2026 will not simply be another year of incremental progress. It will mark the point at which the GCC steps onto the global stage in its renewed form: a technologically-advanced, innovation-driven powerhouse within global value chains. Procurement leaders must stand at the center of that shift, with a mandate to unlock value that extends far beyond cost.

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Our focused expertise, extensive experience, and best-in-class technology set us apart in helping organizations reduce costs, streamline processes, and build high-performing procurement teams to unlock maximum value.

In the Middle East, we work closely with governments, public sector entities, and major demand centres to help them achieve critical goals: from driving end-to-end cost optimisation to sustainability improvements to localization and In-Country Value (ICV) initiatives. Our work spans diverse industries – including infrastructure, manufacturing, public sector, and giga-projects – and is always backed by a commitment to delivering impactful, sustainable outcomes for our clients.

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