

Argon&Co\*



WHITEPAPER

# Designing for Delivery

Operating Models & Ways of Working  
that Make ERP and AI Transformation  
Stick in the Middle East

ERP modernization and AI-enabled transformation across the Middle East is accelerating, shaped by ambitious national agendas, rising customer expectations, and a strong push for operational resilience. Yet many organizations still face a familiar gap between aspiration and execution. Initiatives multiply, governance becomes heavier, delivery slows, and adoption remains uneven.

This is especially visible in ERP programs where process standardization, data quality, controls, and change adoption must move together. As AI becomes embedded into core platforms and day-to-day workflows, the challenge is no longer simply “going digital” – it is building an operating model that can deliver ERP and AI change repeatedly, safely, and at speed.

In most cases, the constraint is not technology. It is the operating model behind delivery: How decisions are made, who owns outcomes, how teams are structured, and how work moves from idea to implementation. When the operating model stays traditional while ambition becomes ERP-and AI-led, transformation becomes a program rather than a repeatable capability.

This white paper outlines the operating model shifts and ways of working that help organizations in the Middle East move from strategy to sustained delivery, at speed, at scale, and with confidence.



## ERP and AI Transformation in Context

IDC forecasts digital transformation spending across META (Middle East, Türkiye & Africa) to grow to 88\$B by 2027. (IDC)

Gartner finds that, on average, only %48 of enterprise digital initiatives meet or exceed their business outcome targets. (Gartner)

BCG research found that only %30 of transformations met or exceeded target value and delivered sustainable change. (BCG)



### Decision speed is the new advantage

Many organizations have strong governance and high leadership visibility, and both are strengths. However, when decision rights are unclear, governance can become repetitive. The same topics circulate across multiple forums, decisions are revisited, and delivery teams pause while waiting for approvals. In fast-moving markets, decision speed becomes a competitive advantage because it protects momentum and reduces rework.



### Transformation portfolios are often crowded, and capacity is the real constraint.

In the region, it is common to run multiple initiatives in parallel, including ERP programs, digital products, platform modernization, operating model changes, data efforts, and shared services. The scarce resource

is not funding. It is subject matter expert (SME) capacity and leadership attention. When capacity is not treated as a hard limit, priorities blur, progress becomes shallow, and delivery teams end up starting many initiatives but finishing few.



### ERP and AI outcomes cut across silos

Traditional programs are typically organized around functions and workstreams. ERP and AI value rarely follows the same structure: End-to-end processes, controls, and operational outcomes cut across boundaries. Organizations that deliver consistently shift from functional workstreams to outcome-led value streams, which clarifies ownership, reduces handoffs, and accelerates delivery.



### Vendor scale must not replace internal ownership

External delivery capacity is often essential. However, when vendors effectively own the backlog, the roadmap, and key decisions, transformation becomes something that happens to the organization rather than a capability built within it. Strong operating models keep product and outcome ownership internal, while using vendors to accelerate delivery, while retaining accountability and knowledge internally.



## Adoption is multi-site, multilingual, and human

Across the Middle East, adoption frequently spans diverse workforces and multiple sites. Adoption is not solved by training alone. It requires clear frontline engagement, simple ways of working, visible leadership sponsorship, and feedback loops that translate change into how work is done day to day.



## Transformation rarely fails loudly; it drifts

Transformation initiatives do not always collapse overnight. Instead, scope grows, delivery slows, value becomes unclear, and confidence fades. This kind of drift is typically an operating model issue, driven by fragmented ownership, unclear prioritization, and governance designed for reporting rather than decision-making and learning.

## Where these Challenges show up most in the Middle East

While the themes in this paper apply across sectors, they surface most clearly in areas where execution complexity is high and where we see strong demand for support:

- **Utilities and Energy:** Large transformation portfolios with strict reliability and control requirements, often requiring operating model design, governance reset, and automation at scale.
- **Retail and Luxury:** Customer journey and omnichannel programs that depend on fast cross-functional execution, clear product ownership, and adoption-led delivery.
- **Aviation, Transport, and large enterprises:** ERP and platform modernization that requires end-to-end ownership across Finance, Supply Chain, HR, and Operations, alongside strong decision pathways.
- **Cross-sector enablers (Automation, Data/AI, Value engineering):** Initiatives that create value only when ownership, prioritization, and delivery rhythms are designed for repeatable execution.





## The DELIVER Operating Model

A region-relevant model that helps organizations make digital delivery repeatable rather than episodic.

### **D** Decide faster (through design, not pressure)

Clarify who makes which decisions, where decisions are taken, and how escalation works. The objective is not fewer controls. It is clearer, faster decisions that remain transparent and traceable.

### **E** Establish outcome ownership

Shift the focus from activities to outcomes. Assign one accountable owner for each outcome, whether it is a value stream or a product. Make adoption and benefits part of ownership, not something addressed after delivery.

### **L** Launch cross-functional delivery teams

Build stable teams around outcomes, bringing business, technology, data, risk, and change together in one rhythm. Reduce handoffs by making delivery truly end-to-end.

### **I** Integrate governance into the delivery rhythm

Governance should enable flow. Weekly delivery forums remove blockers and maintain momentum. Monthly leadership forums make trade-offs and decisions. Quarterly planning resets priorities and capacity based on what delivers the most value.

### **V** Validate value early and continuously

Measure value throughout delivery, not only after go-live. Use leading indicators such as usage, cycle time, quality, and control effectiveness before relying on lagging benefits.

### **E** Enable capabilities that sustain delivery

Product ownership, process ownership, change leadership, and data stewardship are not just roles on an organization chart. They are capabilities that need to be built through coaching, practice, and repetition.

### **R** Reduce friction (handoffs, noise, and duplication)

Simplify intake, make dependencies visible, protect focus, and remove parallel shadow backlogs. Fewer priorities, executed well, consistently outperform overloaded roadmaps.



## Implications for the Middle East

### Design decision rights for hierarchical environments

Hierarchy can accelerate delivery when decision paths are explicit. Clear delegation levels protect leadership time and prevent escalation-by-default.

### Treat SME capacity as a first-class constraint

SMEs often carry business-as-usual while supporting transformation. Sustainable delivery requires protected time, role clarity, and a cadence that reduces unnecessary engagement.

### Build vendor ecosystems without losing accountability

Vendors can scale execution, but cannot own outcomes. Strong operating models keep outcome and product ownership internal, with transparent backlogs and shared delivery rhythms.

### Make adoption locally relevant

Multi-site adoption needs a practical model: Local champions, bilingual enablement, and feedback loops that quickly translate frontline reality into backlog improvements.

## Regional example: Common Delivery Pattern (anonymized)

*In a large Middle East enterprise transformation program, delivery slowed despite clear ambition and active governance forums. Decision pathways were not always explicit, and ownership for cross-functional outcomes was split across multiple functions and delivery partners.*

***As a result, teams progressed within workstreams, but end-to-end alignment required repeated escalation and rework. Strengthening the operating model through clearer decision rights, defined outcome ownership, and cross-functional delivery teams working from a single backlog improved delivery momentum while maintaining governance and control.***



## What Leaders Should Do Next

- **Clarify outcome ownership:** Define a focused set of outcomes that matter and assign one accountable owner for each.
  - **Design decision rights:** Make decision pathways explicit, including what teams decide, what leadership decides, and how escalation works.
  - **Shift to cross-functional delivery:** Build stable teams around outcomes to reduce handoffs and speed up learning cycles.
- **Make governance a decision engine:** Use forums to make trade-offs, resolve issues, and remove blockers rather than repeating status updates.
  - **Measure adoption early:** Track leading indicators such as usage, cycle time, quality, and control effectiveness before relying on lagging benefits.



## Conclusion

ERP and AI transformation becomes sustainable when delivery is built into the organization, not managed around it. The operating model is the lever that turns ambition into execution through faster decisions, clearer ownership, stronger adoption, and benefits that are realized early and sustained over time. The goal is not simply to run a better program. It is to build a repeatable delivery capability that continues to improve long after go-live.

## Our offerings

### ERP and AI transformation strategy & delivery

Define enterprise ambition, translate it into measurable outcomes, and shape an execution approach that delivers value early and sustains it over time.

### ERP and AI operating model design

Design outcome ownership, decision rights, team structures, and governance cadence to enable faster delivery while maintaining control.

## Value stream and product delivery setup

Stand up cross-functional teams around priority outcomes, establish a single backlog, and embed adoption and benefits tracking from day one.

## Ways of working implementation

Introduce practical rhythms that improve execution, including prioritization discipline, dependency management, release readiness, and decision forums built for speed.

## Capability building

Develop product owners, process owners, change leaders, and data stewards through hands-on coaching to build real delivery muscle.

## Vendor ecosystem assurance

Use vendors to accelerate delivery while ensuring accountability, institutional knowledge, and ownership remain internal.

## Resources

1. UAE Government: The UAE Digital Government Strategy 2025.
2. Saudi Vision 2030: National Transformation Program (overview and delivery plan).
3. Qatar MCIT: Digital Agenda 2030 (strategy and full report).
4. MIT CISR: Decision Rights Guardrails to Empower Teams and Drive Results.
5. MIT CISR: Research on decentralized decision making and decision-rights guardrails.
6. McKinsey & Company: Insights on the product operating model and scaling digital delivery.
7. Team Topologies: Organizing for fast flow of value (team types and interaction patterns).
8. ISO: ISO/IEC 38500 (Governance of IT for the organization).
9. Prosci: The ADKAR Model (individual change management).
10. DAMA International: DAMA-DMBOK (data management and governance body of knowledge).
11. IDC: Digital Transformation spending forecast for META (Middle East, Türkiye & Africa), including 2024 and 2027 projections.
12. Gartner: Survey findings on the share of enterprise digital initiatives meeting or exceeding business outcome targets (%48).
13. BCG: Flipping the Odds of Digital Transformation Success (finding that ~%30 of transformations meet or exceed target value and sustain change).

# About Argon & Co

Argon & Co is a global management consultancy that specializes in operations strategy and transformation. With expertise spanning supply chain planning, manufacturing, logistics, procurement, finance, and shared services, we work together with clients to transform their businesses and generate real change. Our people are engaging to work with and trusted by clients to get the job done. We have 18 offices across Europe, Australasia, America, Asia and the Middle East.

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Bouchra has specialized experience in ERP transformation and value delivery. She supports organizations with process standardization, operating model and governance design, and data- and AI-enabled optimization to drive sustainable business outcomes.