

Region's HR leaders say the next 12 months will be defined by execution, not experimentation

HR Tech MENA Summit 2026 Brings Together the Voices Shaping AI's Role in HR

DUBAI , UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, August 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As AI moves from pilot projects to daily practice across the GCC, the question facing HR leaders is no longer whether to adopt it, but whether their organizations are built to execute at the pace it demands. That question sits at the heart of The Era of Execution: Where AI Gets Human, the theme of the 12th Annual HR Tech MENA Summit 2026, taking place 9-10 September 2026 at the Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah.

Opening the summit is Arthur Carmazzi, the World's #1 Thought Leader in Organizational Culture, setting the tone for two days of conversation on what it actually takes to turn AI ambition into human-centered results.

"The HR Tech MENA Summit will continue to take centre stage in addressing the emerging challenges of the future of work. With each annual, we try to bring together the industry leaders to discuss and align the strategies with the vision of the nation. Businesses have witnessed considerable transformation, and this year we expect to



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indulge in conversations where business leaders can get a strategic view of trends to take back and apply in their respective workplaces," said Sidh NC, Director, QnA International.

That conversation will be carried by a roster of CHROs, CHCOs, and HR and technology leaders, from leading organisations from across the region including Emirates NBD, Miral, First Abu Dhabi Bank, Department Of Finance, Dubai Government),Elsewedy Electric, Gulf Cryo, Hilton, Aster DM Healthcare, KFC - Yum! Brands , Aafaq Islamic Finance PSC, United Arab Bank, Pure Harvest Smart Farms, Idealz Holding / Dream Dubai, UAE Space Agency amongst many others.

Ahead of the summit, several of them shared a preview of what execution actually looks like in their organizations.



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EXECUTION OVER EXPERIMENTATION

"The biggest shift will be the move from AI-assisted HR to Agentic AI. We are moving toward AI agents that can understand a business requirement, connect information across different systems, recommend actions, and orchestrate an entire HR process from end to end, with the right human oversight," said Khalid Ahli, Head of Human Resources Department, UAE Space Agency.

"The shift is real from AI as a support tool to AI as an execution engine. HR leaders who are still 'exploring AI' will be outpaced by those actively redesigning roles, workflows, and accountability structures around it. The question is no longer whether to adopt, it's whether your HR function is built to execute at the speed AI enables," said Walid Tayel, Group CHRO, Elsewedy Electric from Egypt.

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Mustafa Jama, Former CHRO at Ghassan Aboud Holding, frames the same shift in terms of what HR is fundamentally for: "The shift from HR as a process function to HR as an AI-enabled talent orchestration function. Skills, not roles, become the fundamental unit of work. The difference between organizations that thrive and those that stall will come down to how quickly they make that transition, and in this region, the clock is moving faster than most realize."

THE REAL CHALLENGES

For Jacob Jacob, Group CHRO at Aster DM Healthcare, the barriers to HR tech adoption in the GCC are practical, not conceptual: "First, integration complexity. Many organisations are still managing fragmented systems that do not communicate effectively with one another. Second, change adoption. Technology implementation is rarely the hardest part; securing employee and leadership buy-in remains a significant challenge. Third, capability gaps. HR teams need new skills in analytics, AI literacy, and digital fluency to maximise the value of these investments."

OLD BELIEFS, CHALLENGED

Several speakers plan to use their sessions to push back on comfortable assumptions. "One belief I'd like to challenge is that technology alone creates transformation. Digital tools can certainly improve efficiency, but they don't automatically improve performance, engagement or culture. Sustainable transformation happens when organisations invest equally in people, leadership and capability. Technology enables change; people deliver it," said Natalie Gleeson, Vice President Human Capital, Pure Harvest Smart Farms.

Liesbeth Schiavo, HR Director at Khansaheb Bespoke Contracting, is taking aim at a different assumption: "I would challenge the idea that flexibility is mainly about working from home. In industries such as facilities management, security, hospitality and healthcare, most employees need to be physically present at their workplace. But this does not mean that flexibility cannot exist... Technology can help us offer practical flexibility to frontline employees without compromising service delivery."

AI IN PRACTICE

Beyond the hype, speakers are already putting AI to work. "AI is helping me source information, brainstorm, create and analyze. At the same time AI saves me time that I can redistribute towards leader and talent engagement, interaction and advisory," said Marie-Louise Ek, Vice President HR Middle East & Africa, Hilton.

Junaid Alam, Global Head of People & Culture at Idealz Holding / Dream Dubai, put it plainly: "At Idealz, we're not using AI to replace judgment, we're using it to compress the redundant parts of scale. Candidate screening and shortlisting across multiple geographies simultaneously, compensation benchmarking that used to take days now takes hours... The real unlock isn't 'AI makes decisions,' it's 'AI gives HR leaders their time back to do the judgment-heavy work: culture, leadership calibration, and conflict resolution.'"

WHY IT MATTERS

For many of this year's speakers, the value of the summit goes beyond any single technology. "My personal perspective and humble view: AI is an accelerator, not the transformation itself. Leadership, culture, and organizational capability determine whether AI creates business value. Humanizing AI is key to make it effective and successful," said Samar Samy, Regional HR Partner, Gulf Cryo.

Yusra Baqi, Chief Human Capital Officer at Aafaq Islamic Finance PSC, sums up the stakes for the

region: "The future of HR is not about replacing people with technology; it is about empowering people through technology. Organizations that combine AI-driven insights with a strong human-centered culture will define the next generation of workplace success in the GCC."

EVENT DETAILS

Event: 12th Annual HR Tech MENA Summit 2026

Theme: The Era of Execution: Where AI Gets Human

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Register: hrtechmena.com

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