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Strategic planning in the age of AI: Challenges for the global south

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Abstract

Today, organizations strategize and operate in a high VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) world (Wickremesinghe, Roshanga 2026) where strategic decisions are made, changed, reversed and different decisions are made within the same day. To be plugged into this new reality, firms must be part of feedback networks and databases that capture these changes in real time (Dmitry Plekhanov, Henrik Franke, Torbjørn H. Netland 2023). Strategic planning has fundamentally shifted from static annual cycles to continuous data-driven dialogues activity. AI serves as a powerful strategy enabler that automates high-volume data operations while leaving critical contextual and creative choices to human executives (Preeti Jain. 2025), (Prashant Kumar and VN Gupta. 2024), (Faisal Binsar Dr. a 1, Indra Wahyudi b 2, Gaguk Dwi, Prasetyo Atmoko c 3, Fitriadi Nurdin d 4, Teguh Nur Santoso e 5. 2026). English literacy acts as a foundational bridge to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) literacy because English functions as the primary global language of software, programming and digital communication. Global South faces a multilayered infrastructure gap that restricts economic growth, digital inclusion and technological sovereignty (Rosa, Fernanda. 2021). As AI capabilities accelerate at an exponential rate, significant "chasms" have emerged across global economics, corporate structures and workforce readiness (Sha Sajadieh, Loredana Fattorini, Raymond Perrault, Yolanda Gil, Vanessa Parli, Lapo Santarlaschi, Juan Pava, Nestor Maslej, Russ Altman, Erik Brynjolfsson, Carla Brodley, Jack Clark, Virginia Dignum, Vipin Kumar, James Landay, Terah Lyons, James Manyika, Juan Carlos Niebles, Yoav Shoham, Elham Tabassi, Russell Wald, Toby Walsh, Dan Weld. 2026). Key challenges that must be overcome in this new dimension of planning include reliance on legacy data that stifles innovation, the inability of algorithms to process unquantifiable human factors and significant organizational resistance to opaque data-driven decisions.

Keywords: VUCA, strategic planning, artificial intelligence

Introduction

Today, organizations strategize and operate in a high VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) world (Wickremesinghe, Roshanga 2026) ^[1] where strategic decisions are made, changed, reversed and different decisions are made within the same day. The ability to cope with this rapid change by adopting newer innovative planning techniques may define success or failure. Some have even opted for a strategy of "wait and see" as they are unable to counter this level of frequent change (Wickremesinghe, Roshanga 2026) ^[2]. This need for high-frequency adaptation alters traditional strategic management frameworks. This forces firms to transition from linear planning models to real-time, emergent strategies giving birth to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in modern strategic planning (Biloslavo, R, Edgar, D, Aydin, E & Bulut, C 2025) ^[3]. AI assisted Strategic planning is here to stay and will have a growing impact on how this management function will evolve. AI will impact at several level and stages of this function

The emerging Environment

To be plugged into this new reality, firms must be part of feedback networks and databases that capture these changes in real time (Dmitry Plekhanov, Henrik Franke, Torbjørn H. Netland 2023) ^[5]. At present, strategic planning has fundamentally shifted from static annual cycles to continuous data-driven dialogues activity. Shifting from a once-a-year planning into constant adaptive steering. This evolution moves organizations away from relying solely on intuition, employing AI as a "co-pilot" to process vast datasets (spanning from customer

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sentiment to macro indicators) for real-time insights and predictive scenarios (Sarvesh Pandey, Samta Bahadur, Ina Kapoor, Itika Kapoor and Aditya Swaroop Shukla. 2026) ^[6]. Currently, the Global North enjoys the availability of legacy systems that provide vast historical data sources as well as real-time data through modern networks and data centers.

Artificial intelligence transforms how corporate leaders perceive market signals, construct competitive advantages and deploy talent. Rather than replacing human judgment, AI serves as a powerful strategy enabler that automates high-volume data operations while leaving critical contextual and creative choices to human executives (Preeti Jain. 2025) ^[9], (Prashant Kumar and VN Gupta. 2024) ^[8], (Faisal Binsar Dr. a 1, Indra Wahyudi b 2, Gaguk Dwi, Prasetyo Atmoko c 3, Fitriadi Nurdin d 4, Teguh Nur Santoso e 5. 2026) ^[7].

The New Digital Infrastructure Gap

[English literate] → [ICT literate] → [AI literate]

The above progression perfectly maps the evolution of human communication and capabilities over the last century. It shows a clear shift from communicating with humans to operating machines and finally to co-piloting with intelligent systems (Revolusi, Prabu & Febriandy, Radians. 2025) ^[10]. This progression is strongly supported by academic research. Foundational scholars do not treat AI literacy as a separate discipline but as a multi-dimensional evolution extending directly from language and digital literacy frameworks (Bahar Memarian, 2026) ^[11]. Skill scarcity in artificial intelligence and advanced analytics is a primary barrier to the modernization of corporate strategy departments. Strategic planning now requires data-driven forecasting, predictive modeling and generative AI proficiency alongside traditional business acumen (Shakil, Muhammad & Halimuzzaman, Md & Khan, Arif. 2025) ^[16].

Global English Literacy Gap

English literacy acts as a foundational bridge to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) literacy because English functions as the primary global language of software, programming and digital communication. Individuals who possess strong English language skills find it significantly easier to navigate, interpret and master digital tools (None, M. N. N., None, D. C. V. and None, P. K. K. 2025) ^[15]. The "English Proficiency Index" (EPI) reveals that global English proficiency has declined for four consecutive years, with 60% of the surveyed countries logging lower scores. This widening gap presents severe challenges to economic mobility, international collaboration, equitable education, access to ICT, AI resources and all connected infrastructure.

ICT / Digital infrastructure Gap

While the Global North transitions to advanced 5G networks and AI-driven cloud infrastructure, the Global South faces a multilayered infrastructure gap that restricts economic growth, digital inclusion and technological sovereignty (Rosa, Fernanda. 2021) ^[12]. To reverse this investment imbalance and build resilient digital foundations, international stakeholders and local governments are pivoting toward new deployment and financing models (Dolores, Maria & Marquis, John & Graze, Ilze & McDonald, Ferdinand 2025) ^[14]. However, making digital and AI infrastructure a priority among national and local

policymakers continues to be a challenge (Kampira & Mukonza, R. M. 2025) ^[17]. While North America and Europe experience Internet penetration rates exceeding 90%, regions like Central Africa see rates as low as 12%. This technological gap directly reinforces global economic inequalities locking millions out of modern opportunities (Michael, Ilesanmi. 2025) ^[18]. The private sector digital divide between the Global North and Global South represents an even larger disparity in how businesses leverage technology and access digital infrastructure to capture value in the global data economy. While private enterprises in the Global North pioneer advanced Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing and automated supply chains, companies in the Global South frequently struggle with high connectivity costs, a lack of historical data, inadequate digital infrastructure and basic digital literacy gaps. This divide leaves businesses in developing nations increasingly vulnerable to international marginalization (Mammen, Jeffin & Devi M, Rugmini & Kumar R, Girish 2022) ^[19].

Artificial Intelligence Gap

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) gap refers to the widening disparity between rapid technological advancement and humanity's ability to adopt, govern and ethically manage these tools. As AI capabilities accelerate at an exponential rate, significant "chasms" have emerged across global economics, corporate structures and workforce readiness (Sha Sajadieh, Loredana Fattorini, Raymond Perrault, Yolanda Gil, Vanessa Parli, Lapo Santarlasci, Juan Pava, Nestor Maslej, Russ Altman, Erik Brynjolfsson, Carla Brodley, Jack Clark, Virginia Dignum, Vipin Kumar, James Landay, Terah Lyons, James Manyika, Juan Carlos Niebles, Yoav Shoham, Elham Tabassi, Russell Wald, Toby Walsh, Dan Weld. 2026) ^[8].

Conclusion

The rapid integration of AI into strategic planning has rendered traditional long-term forecasts obsolete. Planning in a high-velocity environment where agile, open-source models threaten to make established old-world corporate planning infrastructure rapidly obsolete. Key challenges that must be overcome in this new dimension of planning include reliance on legacy data that stifles innovation, the inability of algorithms to process unquantifiable human factors and significant organizational resistance to opaque data-driven decisions. Furthermore, firms face intense global competition to hire and retain elite strategic planners who possess the dual capabilities of high-level business acumen and deep technical data literacy.

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