



Press Release

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**PwC at the World Government Summit
Governments must adapt in the age of disruption - here's how.**

Dubai, UAE - The World Government Summit - 10 February 2019 : Many of the factors driving today's seismic shifts - the Megatrends - of which PwC has identified five - are interconnected. They include changes in demographics, shifts in global economic power, large-scale urbanization, natural resources scarcity and climate change. But by far the most dramatic changes are happening in technology, digitization and science, where the disruption is exponential.

To survive all of these challenges and take advantage of a unique moment in history, policymakers in the Middle East must set the agenda so that they can realise the opportunities, mitigate the risks and bring citizens along with them. Doing so requires a preparedness to change and a willingness to engage in new forms of governance and a new kind of citizen engagement. Public sector leaders must adapt or be disrupted. A new study by PwC launched in collaboration with the World Government Summit "Public Sector Readiness in the Age of Disruption" calls on governments and policymakers to rethink what it means to lead in an age of disruption, highlighting the seven key imperatives to help public sector leaders navigate through these uncharted waters.

David Suarez, Partner at PwC Middle East and co-author of the report emphasizes:

"Given the unique place that the Middle East has, where the old world meets the new, policy makers have a golden opportunity to set the agenda so that they can realise the opportunities, mitigate the risks and bring citizens along with them. This report is our call to action for leaders to help them take the necessary actions to adapt to this disruptive age. Our Public Sector Readiness Index will help those leaders understand where they are on their journey toward transformation."

Enabling trust and transparency

A core objective is to build trust and transparency in public sector organizations, which can be achieved by utilising AI and big data to using technology to place control back in to the hands of the citizen. Governments must raise the level of public awareness and knowledge about how their data is being used and how data privacy laws protect them. Data must also be made publicly available and transparent – and the government must share its AI agenda with the public.

Building disruptive public-private partnerships

Rethinking the partnerships between the public and private sectors means that public sector leaders must



identify data sources collected by either side (private and public) to gain further insights, share knowledge across the board, while placing citizen needs front and centre.

Balancing innovation and regulation

One of the toughest challenges government and public sector organizations face is to strike the right balance between regulation and innovation – over regulation risks further eroding trust. From an innovation perspective, public-sector entities can foster it by building the right ecosystem and environment, both within their own organizations, as well as across the partners, suppliers, citizen groups, and other government and public-sector bodies that they interact with.

From a regulatory perspective, public-sector entities need to evolve the regulatory frameworks they control to ensure they are as flexible as possible, establishing clear “red lines” that cannot be crossed, but within which there is flexibility and multiple ways for stakeholders to play. Regulation should become more principles-based), ensuring adaptability is built in. This means developing regulations with industry input, with the spirit of setting standards in the interests of elevating quality and reducing costs for the private sector.

Making decisions enabled by Big Data

If a core objective is to build trust and transparency in public sector organizations, the use of AI and big data can help by placing power and control back in to the hands of the citizen. Applying Big Data enables citizens to access real-time updates on things like pensions or other public sector services. At its full potential, Big Data promises real-time access and analysis across both structured and unstructured data sets, including text, images, audio, video, graphs, and more. The possibilities are endless. Public sector leaders must, however, begin by focusing on data quality. They must also shift to an open-date mindset – that can be daunting because it means making data available and removing data silos. Crucially, multiple relevant stakeholders should be involved from the private sector and communities so that citizens can be confidently brought along.

Being digital

Digital disruption presents unprecedented opportunities for government entities to serve citizens better.

Dr. Ehssan Abdallah Ph.D., PwC Middle East Lead - Leadership & Culture Center of Excellence and co-author of the report notes:

“Being Digital’ is how public sector leaders are able to think, feel and act. As a starting point, Dr. Abdallah maintains that *“public sector leaders should develop a digital agenda for the organization, which addresses needs such as purpose, upskilling, behaviours and the outcomes desired.”* Importantly, they must encourage a wider digital-centric culture that invites challenges and debate, looks for opportunities to enhance service delivery and works fluidly across public sector entities.

Building renaissance talent

On talent and upskilling, Dr. Abdallah says:



“One of the greatest jobs for the public sector, however, is to focus on upskilling and laterally developing their workforces to accommodate job displacement. Roles and career progression should focus on the long-term picture of the government entity beyond a job-for-life mindset. Again, this means being open and transparent – and placing information and power in to the hands of the individual. Here, AI and digital disruption allows for greater engagement and opportunity as careers progress and life-long learning becomes fundamental.”

In closing, Mr. Suarez emphasizes:

“Public sector organizations have a critical responsibility to serve citizens by balancing the opportunities created by technological advancements and the threats that are also enabled by them. Crucially, for leaders to successfully navigate these challenging waters, the citizen has to be placed right at the centre.”

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Established in the Middle East for 40 years, PwC has 22 offices across 12 countries in the region with around 5,200 people. (www.pwc.com/me).

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