

Times That Call for Bold Action

A year ago, in our [final Weekly Brief of 2024](#), we wrote about several imperatives we believed would define the year ahead: reshaping corporate portfolios for advantage, navigating an unstable geopolitical landscape, and scaling AI thoughtfully and boldly.

At the time, those themes felt important. They have become only more important over the course of this year. As we close out 2025, we find ourselves reflecting on a year of extraordinary disruption: technological, geopolitical, economic, and human. The current environment has sharpened our conviction that boldness in these areas will continue to characterize the companies that find success in 2026 and beyond.

First, welcome to agentic AI.

In the past 12 months, we've witnessed another step-change in artificial intelligence: the rapid emergence of agentic AI. Only three years after the first major breakthrough in generative AI, we are now seeing systems capable not just of producing content and insights but of taking actions, coordinating workflows, and transforming how organizations operate.

Our recent article, [How Agents Are Accelerating the Next Wave of AI Value Creation](#), shows the progress of early adopters. One shipbuilder cut engineering efforts by about 40% and design and engineering lead time by 60% by using agents to run a multistep design process. A telecommunications company deployed agentic

assistants that send more than 40,000 messages per day across mobile, broadband, and TV, resulting in a fivefold jump in digital sales. And a payroll provider resolved anomalies through a supervisor agent and specialized worker agents, improving processing speed by more than 50%.

Our analysis shows how important it is to resist the temptation to do everything at once. Instead, leaders should make moves now that will help them scale broadly in the years ahead: rebuilding critical workflows around agents; embedding the context, culture, and know-how of the company into the agents' prompts and decision trees; and building out shared platforms.

Second, corporate portfolio choices matter more than ever.

With interest rates stabilizing and the cost of capital easing in some markets, companies have an opportunity to reassess the makeup of their business portfolio. Tailwinds and headwinds are shifting fast. And as this [Weekly Brief detailed some weeks ago](#), there's no correlation between the size of portfolio shifts and value creation. What matters is how the reshaping happens.

It's not easy. But our research found that the likelihood of success increases when companies apply a combination of six principles related to timing and strategy: act early, keep the core stable, prune *and* add, move in steps, show financial discipline, and aim for businesses with high-growth potential.

The more of these principles companies apply, the greater the chances of outperformance. Among the companies we studied, 65% of those that followed five or all six practices outperformed in value creation, versus 24% that followed two or fewer. Thoughtful portfolio reshaping will be important for many leaders in the coming year. Companies with simpler, resilient portfolios will be better positioned for a fast-changing world.

Third, the geopolitical landscape continues to reshape business.

Volatility in 2025 has been extraordinary around the globe. Supply

chains have rewired further. Regulatory environments have diverged. Local realities increasingly determine global outcomes.

We've watched savvy global players respond by building geopolitical muscle. They're shoring up business plans and operations against an increasingly fragmenting business environment. They're geographically diversifying critical supply chains and manufacturing activities and establishing distinct entities to operate in different blocs. And they're navigating price volatility more nimbly while bolstering risk and cybersecurity capabilities.

It takes commitment and effort to strengthen these capabilities. It can also result in additional cost. But the cost could be higher if a geopolitical risk were to turn into a destructive disruption.

Fourth, leaders must focus more on well-being.

In our Weekly Brief one year ago, well-being did not make our list of areas where leaders needed to be bold. It probably should have. As we near the end of 2025, the human dimension of leadership is critical.

We are hearing about rising strain—emotional, economic, and professional. Young workers are anxious about what AI means for their futures. Mid-career employees wonder about relevance and reskilling. And sometimes the macroeconomic story feels disconnected from lived experience.

Leaders who succeed in 2026 will invest deeply in their people, helping their teams build new skills, find purpose amid change, and feel as grounded as possible when unsteadiness abounds. We need to be bold in our business strategy and our commitment to our people. A leader's ability to show empathy and true caring is always at a premium. That's even more true in times of uncertainty and disruption.

So as we look to 2026, our message is simple: smart, focused, human-centric, values-anchored boldness continues to be disproportionately rewarded.

We will be taking the next two weeks off from the Weekly Brief but

look forward to connecting again in early January. We wish you, your families, and your friends rest, renewal, and optimism for the year ahead.



Christoph Schweizer
Chief Executive Officer



Rich Lesser
Global Chair

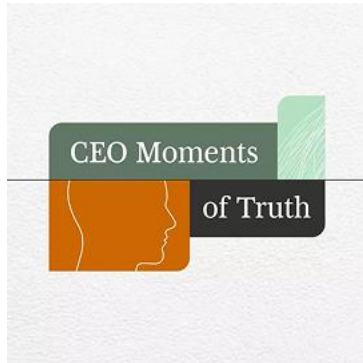
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NAVIGATE THE TOUGH CALLS



How Agents Are Accelerating the Next Wave of AI Value Creation

Here's a CEO's roadmap for scaling agentic AI—the actions to take now, the disruptions to prepare for next, and the guiding principles to always follow.

UNLOCK AI VALUE