LEADERS TRANSFORMING PATIENT CARE

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COVER STORY

LILIAN YEW SIEW MEE

Carrying care from the bedside to the boardroom

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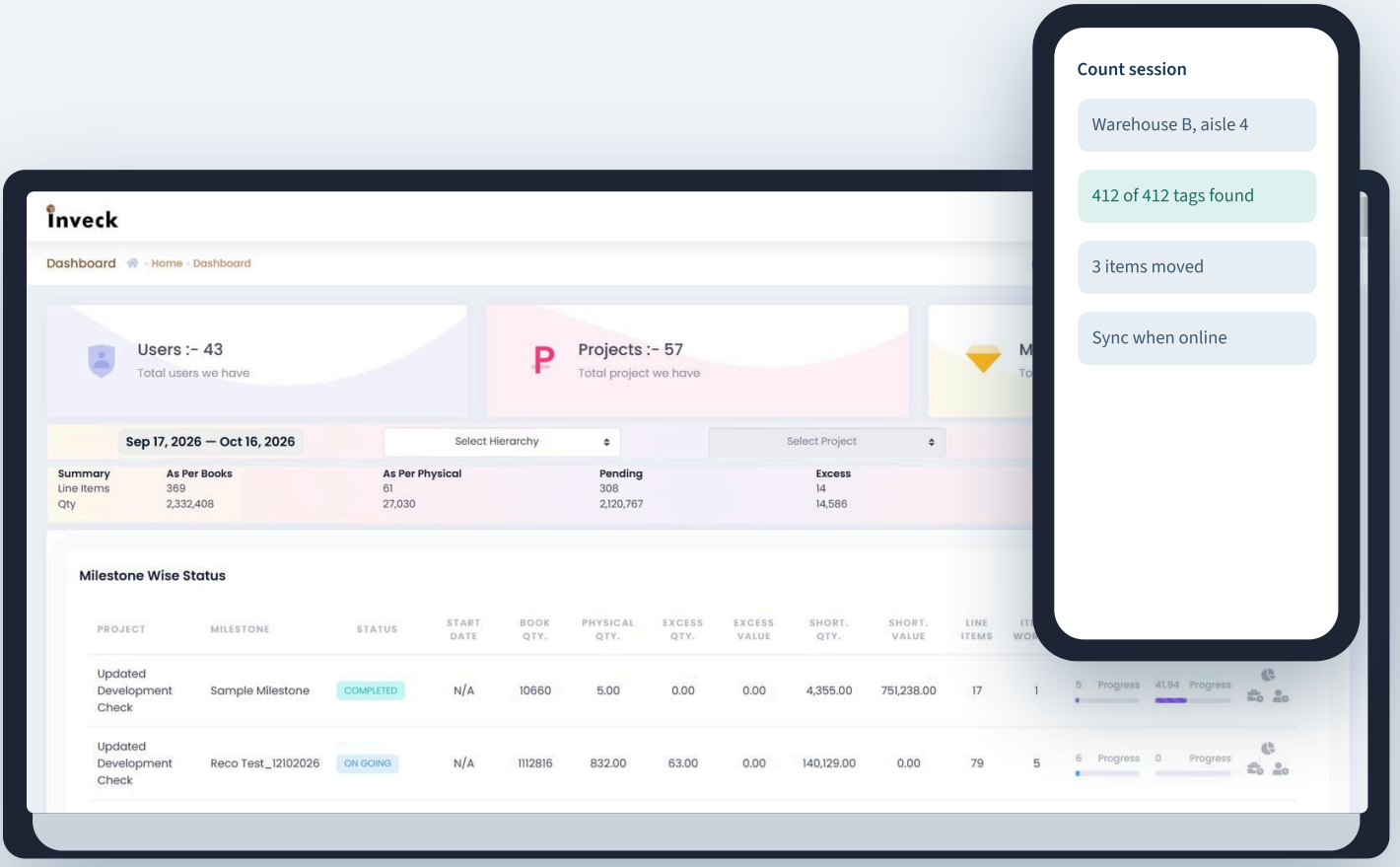

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FROM THE EDITORS

Editor's note

Leaders Transforming Patient Care

We choose our cover stars for one reason: a reader in a similar seat could learn something from them. Lilian Yew Siew Mee, Raffles Hospital, is a clear case.

Shaped by her formative years at Singapore General Hospital, Lilian Yew Siew Mee on taking a clinician's compassion into healthcare leadership.

Our cover story follows Lilian through the choices that shaped the work, from the early years to the decisions being made now, and asks what other leaders can take from them.

Also in this edition: Who pays for AI? How finance and technology chiefs can share the budget. AI spending sits awkwardly between capital budgets, operating budgets and the departments that want it. A joint fund with two signatures, and the rules that make it work.

Plus: Mary Barra and the long road to an electric GM. A safety crisis in her first weeks, then a decade-long attempt to move a century-old carmaker to electric and software-defined vehicles. Why separating direction from pace keeps a transformation alive.

Read it with a pencil in hand. We hope at least one idea makes it back to your own table. ■

The Editors



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About us

THE
CIO TABLE

Where leaders sit down to talk.

The CIO Table is an international magazine for the people who run large organisations: chief information officers, chief technology officers, chief executives, finance chiefs and security leaders. We publish interviews, essays and analysis about the decisions they make, online and in this magazine.

Most coverage of senior leaders is either promotional or adversarial. We aim for something more useful: a serious conversation about how a decision was made, what it cost, what it changed and what the person would do differently. ■

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Lilian Yew Siew Mee

Carrying care from the bedside to the boardroom

RAFFLES HOSPITAL

Shaped by her formative years at Singapore General Hospital, Lilian Yew Siew Mee on taking a clinician's compassion into healthcare leadership.

Compassion is the quiet force that sustains healthcare when systems are strained and outcomes are uncertain. It lives in moments that rarely make headlines. A steady hand during fear. A listening presence when answers are unclear. Long before protocols, technology, or policy shape a hospital, care begins with the willingness to see the person behind the condition. True healthcare excellence is built on this foundation. Skill sharpens it. Knowledge strengthens it. But compassion gives it meaning, anchoring every decision in dignity, trust, and human connection.

Lilian Yew Siew Mee's career has been guided by this belief. As Chief Nurse at Raffles Hospital Pte Ltd, she has spent decades demonstrating how compassion can be carried from the bedside into the boardroom without losing its essence.

Where Compassion First Found Its Voice

Lilian's journey into nursing was guided by a profound desire to serve humanity with compassion and purpose. Her formative years at Singapore General Hospital played a defining role in shaping both her clinical expertise and emotional resilience. Immersed in a demanding and fast-moving healthcare environment, she learned the importance of precision, ethical practice, and patient-centered care. The mentorship she received from experienced nurses, combined with the trust placed in her by patients, reinforced the values that would later define her leadership philosophy.

For Lilian, her time at Singapore General Hospital was more than an early career experience. It was a transformative chapter that taught her how to lead through direct patient care, uphold dignity and respect for every individual, and remain committed to lifelong learning. These early lessons ignited her passion for strengthening care systems and nurturing future nursing leaders. It was also during this period that she found the confidence to envision a broader impact beyond the ward, motivating her to explore new professional pathways that would allow her to influence healthcare at strategic and global levels.

Learning Beyond the Ward

Completing her Bachelor of Health Science in Nursing with Distinction through the University of Sydney and SIM marked a pivotal milestone in Lilian's professional growth. The program broadened her understanding of global healthcare systems and reinforced her commitment to evidence-based practice. Balancing full-time clinical work with academic demands strengthened her discipline, perseverance, and time management skills, while also sharpening her analytical thinking and communication abilities.

The academic experience deepened her appreciation for cultural awareness and patient-centered care, equipping her to translate theory into sound clinical



Lilian Yew Siew Mee

RAFFLES HOSPITAL

Photo: courtesy of sydney.edu.au

decision-making. Lilian remains deeply grateful to Singapore General Hospital for sponsoring her studies, as the opportunity opened doors to meaningful research and international collaboration.

Her academic journey was complemented by significant research contributions. She co-presented a published nursing research paper on dysphagia screening reliability at the International Council of Nurses Congress in Taiwan and later showcased it at a Ministry of Health international nursing conference. She also contributed to comparative research on perceptions of stroke patient positioning, sharing findings through oral and poster presentations at SingHealth scientific and nursing conferences. These experiences strengthened her confidence, sharpened her scholarly voice, and laid the groundwork for future leadership roles in education, policy development, and strategic healthcare leadership. More than a qualification, the degree represented a turning point that helped her evolve from a skilled practitioner into a reflective and purpose-driven leader.

Expanding the Nursing Lens to Shape Systems

Lilian's decision to pursue a Master of Health Science Management stemmed from a desire to bridge clinical expertise with strategic and systems-level leadership. She sought to better understand how healthcare organizations function beyond bedside care and how leaders can influence sustainable outcomes across complex systems. Receiving a scholarship from the University of Sydney affirmed her commitment to professional growth and lifelong learning.

The program proved transformative, offering practical tools that reshaped her leadership approach. Through the study of organizational behavior and management, Lilian gained insights into building effective teams and fostering positive workplace cultures. Health economics and financial management strengthened her ability to make informed decisions that balance quality care with sustainability. Courses in leadership, strategic planning, and change management equipped her to navigate reform and drive innovation, while studies in marketing and human resource management deepened her understanding of patient engagement and workforce dynamics.

These learnings empowered Lilian to lead with vision, empathy, and clarity. The qualification strengthened her confidence to influence policy, mentor emerging leaders, and advocate for the critical role of nursing in shaping healthcare systems locally and globally. For Lilian, leadership is not about authority or control. It is about creating environments where people can thrive, grow, and deliver the highest standard of care. Completing the program was not simply an academic achievement but a defining moment that reinforced her commitment to leading with purpose, compassion, and lasting impact.

A Leadership Journey Built on Trust and Transformation

Lilian's progression from Deputy Director to Director and ultimately to Chief Nurse in 2016 reflects a journey shaped by resilience, learning, and service. In her role as Deputy Director, she focused on strengthening operational excellence while supporting her teams in achieving shared clinical and organizational goals. This phase laid the groundwork for her leadership style, one rooted in collaboration, accountability, and trust.

Stepping into the role of Chief Nurse marked a significant shift in scope and responsibility. Lilian embraced the challenge of driving transformation across nursing education, leadership development, and care delivery. She spearheaded initiatives such as the Raffles Nurse Leaders Programme to build leadership capability and elevate patient outcomes. Along the way, she championed global collaborations, guided the organization through multiple successful accreditation journeys, and advocated for policies that influence the future of nursing practice.

> **Lilian's journey into nursing was guided by a profound desire to serve humanity with compassion and purpose.**

Navigating change and aligning diverse teams were not without complexity. Yet, Lilian viewed each



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challenge as an opportunity to inspire innovation and create meaningful impact. Milestones such as receiving the Global Woman of Influence Award in 2024, being inducted into the Hall of Fame as a Global Woman of Influence in 2025, and leading the organization to achieve ANCC NCPD Accreditation as a Provider with Distinction in both 2020 and 2022 reaffirmed her purpose. Her recognition as a Top Ten finalist for the Aster Guardian Global Nursing Award in 2023 further reflected the significance of her contributions to nursing leadership and education. Each role deepened her commitment to serving others and nurturing growth, reinforcing her belief that leadership is a continuous journey shaped by humility, learning, and impact.

Holding the Line Between Care and Command

In her current role, Lilian places strong emphasis on balancing clinical expertise with administrative and leadership responsibilities. She remains closely connected to frontline care through regular ward visits and open dialogue with nursing teams. These interactions provide real-world insights that ground her decisions and reinforce the centrality of human connection in nursing.

From an administrative perspective, Lilian applies data-driven thinking, fosters collaboration, and aligns policies to support sustainable improvement. She prioritizes mentorship, staff wellbeing, and professional development to ensure leadership remains empathetic and responsive. By supporting systems that empower nurses to lead at every level, she is able to blend clinical insight with strategic vision. This approach creates environments where nurses feel respected, patients receive high-quality care, and healthcare systems evolve with clarity and purpose. For Lilian, leadership is not defined by hierarchy, but by harmony between service, responsibility, and precision of care.

Passing Purpose Forward

Mentoring and developing future nursing leaders is one of Lilian's deepest passions. She approaches this responsibility through personalized coaching, reflective practice, and experiential learning, encouraging nurses to grow with confidence and intention. Through

initiatives such as the Raffles Nurse Leaders Programme and her role as a 2025-2026 scholar with the International Council of Nurses Global Nursing Leadership Institute, she engages in leadership exploration, policy development, and global exposure.

Lilian actively promotes storytelling, peer mentoring, and cross-functional projects to strengthen critical thinking and self-belief. Emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and resilience remain central themes in her mentoring philosophy. By fostering a culture of curiosity and courage, she enables young nurses to discover their voice, recognize their strengths, and lead with authenticity in a rapidly changing healthcare environment.

She believes every nurse carries a story worth sharing and potentially worth cultivating. Her role is to guide, challenge, and celebrate their journey, knowing that leadership is not merely taught but inspired. As nurses step into leadership roles, Lilian sees them not only improving care delivery but also actively shaping the future of healthcare systems and the lives they touch.

Strength Forged Through Purpose and Motherhood

During her pregnancy with her eldest child, Lilian pursued higher education while continuing her professional responsibilities, an experience that demanded intention, emotional strength, and unwavering resolve. This period of her life reflected discipline guided by purpose. She structured her studies around quiet hours, leaned deeply on her faith, and remained motivated by the belief that she was investing in a stronger future for both her family and her profession.

Balancing work, academic commitments, and motherhood strengthened her inner resilience and sharpened her focus. The experience reinforced her understanding that women are capable of extraordinary achievements when supported by purpose and a strong support system. It also deepened her empathy toward working mothers in healthcare, shaping her advocacy for inclusive leadership opportunities and supportive professional environments. For Lilian, this chapter stands as one of her proudest accomplishments, a reminder that leadership is not about perfection, but about perseverance, presence, and leading with heart.

The Quiet Discipline of Staying Whole

Sustaining growth and resilience in a demanding profession like nursing requires deliberate and consistent habits. Lilian begins each day with gratitude and reflection, practices that help her remain grounded and focused. She actively pursues continuous learning through reading, participation in international forums, and meaningful professional dialogue, ensuring her thinking evolves alongside the healthcare landscape.

Equally important to her approach is the establishment of clear boundaries that protect her energy. She prioritizes time for family, mentorship, and self care, recognizing that leadership cannot thrive without personal well-being. These routines enable her to manage stress, maintain clarity, and stay motivated over the long term. Lilian views resilience not merely as a skill, but as a defining characteristic of the nursing profession. Through courage, adaptability, and intentional leadership, she remains grounded and able to lead with confidence, empathy, and a steadfast commitment to excellence.

> **The academic experience deepened her appreciation for cultural awareness and patient-centered care, equipping her to translate theory into sound clinical decision-making.**

Elevating Care Through Accreditation and Accountability

Lilian's work with accreditation programs has played a vital role in advancing nursing standards and strengthening patient care. Through her leadership in nursing professional development and engagement with international accreditation frameworks, she has guided teams toward evidence-based practice, lifelong learning, and continuous quality improvement. For her, accreditation extends far beyond compliance. It fosters

cultures of accountability, pride, and innovation, where nurses feel empowered, and patients benefit from safer, more compassionate care.

Among the most meaningful milestones in her journey was leading her organization to achieve ANCC Nursing Continuing Professional Development (NCPD) Accreditation as a Provider with Distinction on two occasions, a recognition that underscored a shared commitment to excellence. She also helped guide the institution in earning the prestigious ANCC NCPD Premier Award™ twice, reflecting sustained leadership in education and practice advancement.

Lilian views accreditation as a powerful framework for evaluating performance, identifying gaps, and celebrating progress. It encourages reflective practice and empowers nurses to take ownership of their professional growth. The true impact, in her view, lies in witnessing shifts in mindset, stronger teams, and tangible improvements in patient care. These programs affirm nursing's capacity to lead change, build trust, and elevate healthcare standards, values she continues to champion with purpose and pride.



The Forces Shaping Tomorrow's Nursing Leadership

Lilian sees the future of nursing leadership being shaped by three powerful forces: digital innovation, sustainable healthcare, and collaborative practice. She believes technology will continue to transform care delivery by enhancing patient engagement, streamlining clinical processes, and expanding access through telehealth and virtual models of care. At the same time, she emphasizes that environmentally responsible healthcare is no longer optional. Leaders must design systems that are resilient, ethical, and mindful of their impact on the planet.

Equally important, in her view, is strong interprofessional collaboration. As healthcare systems become more integrated and complex, leadership will rely less on hierarchy and more on influence. Lilian believes nurse leaders must be agile, inclusive, and visionary, capable of navigating uncertainty while championing innovation and equity. Emotional intelligence, cultural competence, and a deep commitment to health equity will be defining qualities of effective leadership.

Her completion of Module Two of the Global Nursing Leadership Institute reinforced this perspective. Through this strategic policy leadership program, Lilian deepened her understanding of how nurses can influence health policy at national, regional, and global levels. The program's focus on global priorities such as sustainable development goals, universal health coverage, and future strategic directions for nursing strengthened her conviction that nurse leaders must understand political systems, advocate for systemic change, and build networks that extend beyond borders.

Voices That Shape the Future of Care

Lilian believes that leadership begins with recognizing the value of one's own voice. She encourages young nurses to approach leadership with self-awareness, courage, and openness to growth. For her, every stage of a nursing journey holds meaning, and no experience

is wasted. She urges aspiring leaders to seek mentors who both guide and challenge them, and to embrace learning opportunities even when they feel uncomfortable, as these moments often spark the greatest growth.

Kindness, integrity, and curiosity form the foundation of her advice. Lilian emphasizes that leadership is not defined by titles but by the ability to make a difference. She encourages nurses to speak up for patients, support colleagues, and advocate for the profession. Building strong relationships, listening with empathy, and committing to lifelong learning are, in her view, essential to meaningful leadership.

She also believes deeply in the power of storytelling to amplify nursing voices and create impact. Whether at the bedside, in management, or on global platforms, she reminds nurses that leadership can take many forms. By trusting themselves, embracing opportunities, and allowing passion to guide their actions, nurses can shape the future of healthcare. Lilian lives by the belief that leadership is a journey of influence and impact, one that begins wherever a nurse stands today.

Purpose, Impact, and a Career That Continues to Inspire

Looking back on her career, Lilian finds the greatest reward in witnessing nurses grow in confidence, step into leadership roles, and create meaningful change in patient care. Each success story reinforces her belief in the transformative power of nursing leadership. What continues to motivate her is the opportunity to shape systems, inspire progress, and establish standards of excellence that endure.

She remains driven by a vision of healthcare where nurses are empowered, respected, and equipped to lead at every level. Challenges, in her view, are invitations to innovate, while each professional connection serves as a reminder of shared humanity. Nursing is not just her profession, but her calling, and her commitment to its future remains unwavering.

Inspired by the resilience of her colleagues, the trust of her patients, and the promise of the next generation, Lilian continues to lead with heart. For her, leadership is never about personal recognition. It is about collective impact, sustained progress, and the responsibility to improve lives and systems wherever possible. ■

NAME	ROLE	ORGANISATION
Lilian Yew Siew Mee	**Leader**	**Raffles Hospital**



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ANALYSIS

Who pays for AI? How finance and technology chiefs can share the budget

BY THE CIO TABLE EDITORS



AI spending sits awkwardly between capital budgets, operating budgets and the departments that want it. A joint fund with two signatures, and the rules that make it work.

Artificial intelligence refuses to sit in one place on the books. The build looks like a project, the run looks like a utility bill, and the benefit turns up in somebody else's department. Left alone, the ambiguity produces pilots paid for from budgets nobody tracks, run costs that land on the IT line after launch, and savings that several parties claim and none banks.

The remedy is a set of agreements between the CFO and the CIO, made early, while the sums are still small.

Why the usual lines do not fit

Traditional software investment had a familiar shape: a capital project, a go-live date, a predictable maintenance charge. AI spending rarely behaves that way. Much of it is cloud consumption and subscriptions, which are operating costs, and under IFRS the work of configuring and customising cloud services is often expensed rather than capitalised. Some internal development may qualify as an intangible asset, but the criteria are demanding and the judgement belongs to finance, not to the project sponsor.

Usage-based pricing adds a second complication: running costs grow with adoption, so success costs more than failure, and a fixed annual budget copes poorly with a cost that rises precisely when the project works.

The third complication is organisational. The benefit of an AI tool in claims handling accrues to the director who runs claims. The cost, unless someone intervenes, accrues to the CIO.

One fund, two signatures

A practical answer is a single AI investment fund, set annually, that needs both the CFO's and the CIO's signature to release money. Business units bid into it. Neither chief can approve a project alone: the CFO tests the value case, the CIO tests feasibility, data readiness and risk. It pays for pilots and early scaling; nothing reaches production without passing through it.

The price is speed, and a heavy process pushes experiments into shadow budgets. A small allowance below a set threshold helps, limited to approved tools and non-sensitive data, provided every experiment is registered.

Gates agreed before the money moves

The fund should release money in tranches, from pilot to limited production to scale, with each gate's criteria written down before the pilot begins: a quality threshold measured on a test set the business owner accepts, an adoption level among intended users, a unit cost per transaction below an agreed ceiling, and sign-off on risk, including data protection and whether the use case falls into a category the EU AI Act treats as high-risk.

Fixing criteria in advance matters because a team that has spent months on a model will always find a reason to continue. Criteria agreed at the start give both chiefs a neutral basis for saying no.

Agree what counts as a saving

The most common dispute about AI value is definitional. Is an hour saved a saving if no cost disappears? Do avoided hiring and redeployed capacity count, and at what rate? Answer them in writing before the pilot starts.

A workable convention separates cash savings, which reduce a budget line, from capacity released, which is reported but not banked until it becomes a budget change. Finance should own the baseline and measure it before the tool arrives, because baselines reconstructed afterwards flatter the result. The business owner should own delivery, and once a saving is booked, the relevant budget should fall. A saving that never leaves anybody's budget was not a saving.

Who owns the run cost

After launch, three costs persist: inference, which varies with usage and the choice of model; data, covering pipelines, storage, quality checks and labelling; and people, for monitoring, evaluation, retraining and support. The last is most often missing from the business case.

A sensible split keeps the shared platform central: contracts with model providers, common infrastructure, security and evaluation tooling. At the scale gate, the run cost of each application moves to the business unit that books its benefit, through a usage-based chargeback. To encourage adoption, the centre can subsidise run costs for a fixed period, provided the end date is set in advance. Each application should carry a unit cost target and spending alerts, so changes show up in weeks, not at year end.

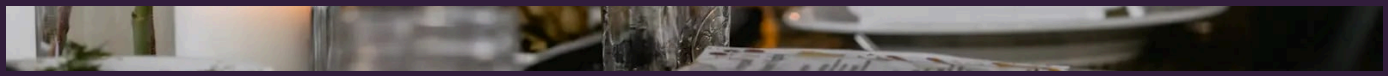
Stopping gracefully

A portfolio in which every pilot survives has no discipline. Stop criteria belong in the same document as gate criteria: a project that misses its gate twice, or whose unit cost cannot be brought below the value it creates per transaction, ends.

Ending well is a process. Switch off endpoints and integrations, close supplier commitments, delete or archive data under retention rules, and record which components can be reused. Unspent money returns to the fund. A team that stops a weak project early should be treated no worse than one that ships a strong one, or nobody will stop anything.

What the board should see

Boards do not need model metrics. They need one page, updated quarterly: total AI spending split between build and run; the portfolio by stage; savings agreed against savings realised, confirmed by finance; unit cost trends for the largest applications; material risk and regulatory issues; and projects stopped, with the money returned to the fund. That last line is most often left out, and it is the clearest evidence that the gates are real. ■





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LEADERS IN FOCUS

Mary Barra and the long road to an electric GM

BY THE CIO TABLE EDITORS



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A safety crisis in her first weeks, then a decade-long attempt to move a century-old carmaker to electric and software-defined vehicles. Why separating direction from pace keeps a transformation alive.

Mary Barra joined General Motors at 18 as a co-op student at a Pontiac plant. In January 2014 she became its chief executive, the first woman to lead a major global carmaker. Her tenure has been defined by two very different tests: a safety crisis in her first months, and a decade-long attempt to move a century-old manufacturer towards electric and software-defined vehicles.

A crisis on day one

Weeks after Barra took over, GM recalled millions of cars over a faulty ignition switch linked to deaths. She testified before the US Congress, commissioned an internal investigation and accepted its findings publicly. The episode set a tone: the company would name its own failures rather than wait for others to do it.

Shrinking to focus

Barra then made a string of decisions that made GM smaller and more focused. It sold its European Opel and Vauxhall brands in 2017 and pulled out of several markets where it could not earn a return. In 2021 it set a goal of eliminating tailpipe emissions from its new light-duty vehicles by 2035 and invested heavily in its own battery and electric-vehicle platform.

Not every bet paid off on schedule. Electric-vehicle demand grew more slowly than many forecasts, and GM ended funding for its Cruise robotaxi business in 2024 after a serious incident and regulatory scrutiny. Barra's approach has been to adjust the pace without abandoning the direction.

What other leaders can take from it

For technology leaders running multi-year modernisation programmes, the GM story is a reminder that the plan will meet reality; what the board needs to hear is which parts are fixed and which can bend.



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