LEADERS TURNING DATA INTO GROWTH

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COVER STORY

# MOHSEN E HELALY

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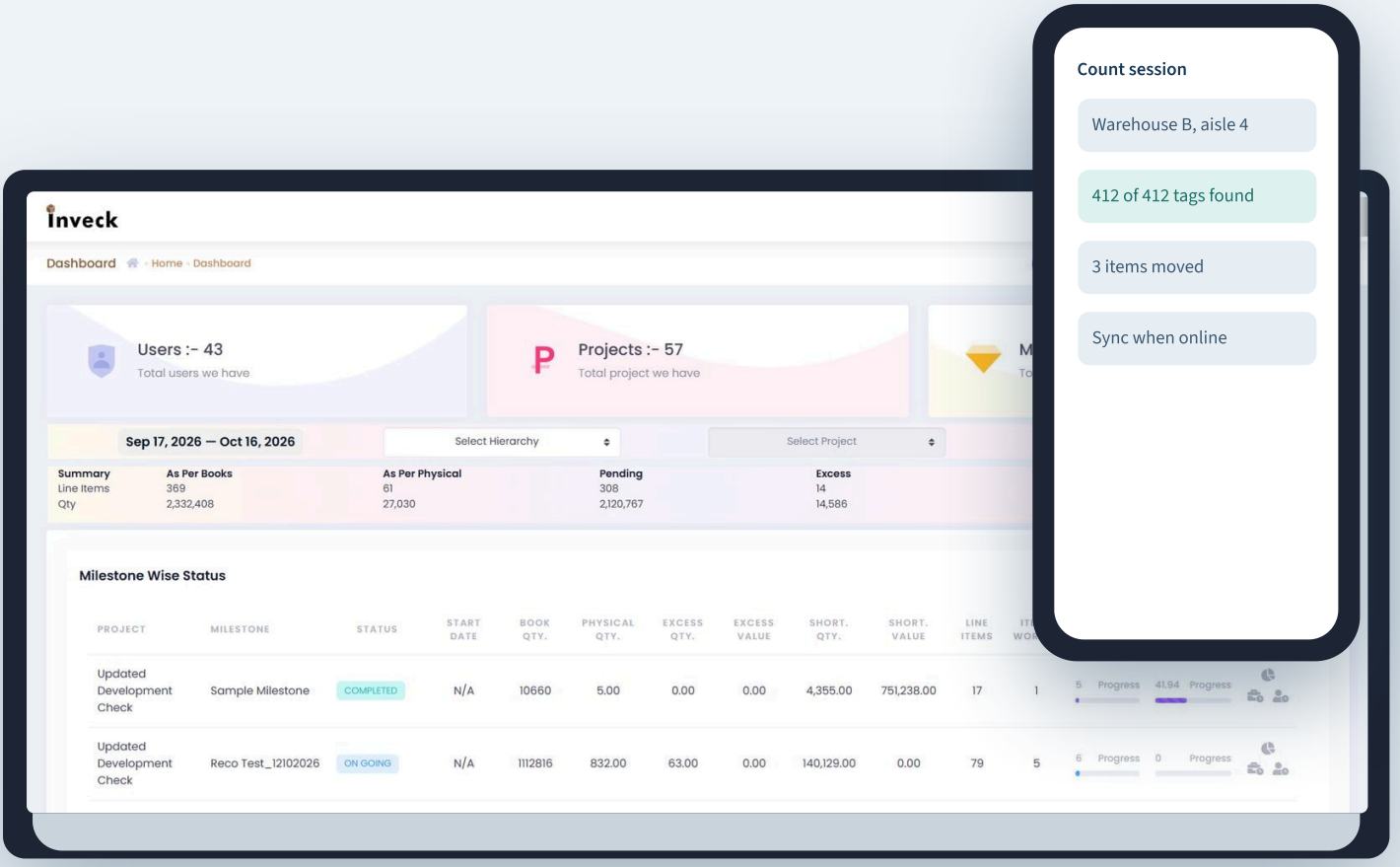


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FROM THE EDITORS

# Editor's note

## Leaders Turning Data Into Growth

We choose our cover stars for one reason: a reader in a similar seat could learn something from them. Mohsen E Helaly, Sanar, is a clear case.

At Sanar, a healthcare e-commerce business, Mohsen E Helaly turns forecasts and cash management into decisions that let a digital health company grow.

Our cover story follows Mohsen 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: Why factories are moving AI to the edge. Camera-based inspection needs answers in milliseconds, not round trips to a distant cloud region. The architecture manufacturers are settling on, and the operational problems nobody budgets for.

Plus: Sundar Pichai and the price of being AI-first. Google wrote much of the research behind generative AI, then had to prove it could ship. How Alphabet's chief executive reorganised around models while protecting the business that pays for them.

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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Long conversations about decisions, costs and trade-offs.

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# Mohsen E Helaly

## From metrics to market impact

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*At Sanar, a healthcare e-commerce business, Mohsen E Helaly turns forecasts and cash management into decisions that let a digital health company grow.*

Finance in digital commerce is no longer just about numbers on a spreadsheet. It is about understanding how money moves, how decisions shape growth, and how insights can turn challenges into opportunities. Every report, forecast, and investment carries the power to influence the direction of a business, making finance a central force that connects strategy, operations, and innovation. The field demands curiosity, clarity, and a knack for seeing patterns where others see only figures.

Mohsen E Helaly stands out in this space by turning complex financial information into clear, actionable strategies. He bridges the gap between data and decisions, using analytics, scenario planning, and smart processes to guide growth and maximize value.

### A Journey of Strategic Impact

Mohsen's career in finance has been guided by a commitment to translating numbers into strategic decisions and driving sustainable growth in fast-moving industries. He began his journey gaining experience in accounting, financial reporting, and auditing across organizations such as Rawabi Holding Group, MOVE Comprehensive Sports Medicine, and CC Plus. These roles strengthened his technical expertise and highlighted the importance of governance, transparency, and financial discipline.

Over time, Mohsen transitioned into strategic finance and performance management, earning advanced certifications including FMVA, CBCA, BIDA, CertIFR, and FPWMP. This continuous learning allowed him to move from traditional finance functions into roles focused on financial planning, forecasting, and business partnering.

His move into global finance was inspired by the dynamic intersection of innovation, data, and scalability. In the healthcare e-commerce sector, particularly at Sanar, Mohsen contributes to transforming access to medical services, where finance supports strategic decision-making, optimizes cash flow, and enables scalable growth.

### The Global Finance Playbook

Working across diverse international markets early in his career, Mohsen developed a perspective that financial leadership today must be agile, tech-driven, and integrated with business operations.

### Principles of Modern Finance Leadership

As Finance Lead, Mohsen emphasizes aligning financial discipline with business growth and maximizing enterprise value. His approach is anchored in several core principles:



**Mohsen E Helaly**
SANAR

## Finance as the Engine of Organizational Alignment

In fast-paced environments like Sanar, Mohsen ensures that financial strategy and business goals remain aligned through strategic foresight, operational integration, and continuous collaboration.

Through these practices, Mohsen enables organizations to scale efficiently while remaining strategically focused, ensuring finance drives measurable impact in the digital health ecosystem.

## Balancing Accuracy and Agility in Financial Planning

In rapidly evolving organizations like Sanar, Mohsen emphasizes the importance of balancing precision with adaptability in budgeting, forecasting, and long-range planning. He implements flexible planning frameworks that allow assumptions to be adjusted quickly as market conditions change. By using scenario-based forecasting, he provides leadership with multiple projections that account for risks, opportunities, and volatility.

Leveraging real-time data and analytics through ERP systems and dashboards, Mohsen monitors performance against forecasts to identify variances early and pivot strategies proactively. He also fosters continuous collaboration with operational teams, ensuring financial projections reflect on-the-ground realities. Finally, through iterative review and adjustment, long-range plans remain living documents, evolving alongside the business.

Mohsen believes that accuracy and agility coexist through modular, data-driven frameworks, scenario planning, and cross-functional communication, enabling confident decision-making in a fast-paced environment.

## Driving Operational Efficiency and Cost Optimization

Mohsen has led multiple initiatives to improve operational efficiency and optimize cost structures. At Sanar, he spearheaded the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics 365 to automate reporting, budgeting, and cash-flow management processes.

This transformation reduced manual workloads, allowing the finance team to focus on strategic analysis; enhanced accuracy and transparency with real-time dashboards; and enabled cost optimization by identifying unnecessary expenditures and improving resource allocation. The initiative also strengthened strategic decision-making, providing leadership with actionable insights to improve efficiency across operations.

In previous roles, Mohsen led financial process standardization and IFRS compliance projects, establishing scalable, consistent practices aligned with global standards. His approach combines automation, standardization, and data-driven insights to maximize efficiency, reduce waste, and support long-term growth.

## Leveraging Financial Analytics for Strategic Decisions

Data-driven decision-making is central to Mohsen's approach. At Sanar, he integrates data from ERP systems, operational dashboards, and market benchmarks to create a holistic financial view, assessing profitability and risk across business units.

He employs scenario modeling and forecasting to simulate potential outcomes and evaluate trade-offs before committing resources. By connecting financial performance to KPIs, Mohsen ensures investments are strategically aligned, maximizing enterprise value. Post-investment, he maintains continuous monitoring, providing feedback to adjust strategies in real-time and reinforce accountability.

In essence, Mohsen uses financial analytics as a

> **Mohsen's career in finance has been guided by a commitment to translating numbers into strategic decisions and driving sustainable growth in fast-moving industries.**



Photo: Mona Hassan Abo-Abda / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0




strategic compass, turning data into actionable insights that guide smarter investments and resource allocation.

## Maintaining Strong Governance While Supporting Innovation

Mohsen balances financial governance with business innovation by designing scalable internal controls and embedding compliance into operational processes. This proactive approach ensures new initiatives comply with regulatory and financial standards without slowing growth.

He applies a risk-based decision framework to evaluate proposals, mitigating potential compliance gaps early. Technology plays a key role, with ERP systems, automated reconciliations, and real-time dashboards providing oversight without bottlenecks. Mohsen also fosters a culture of accountability and finance literacy, encouraging responsible decision-making while allowing teams to innovate.

He believes strong governance enables innovation, ensuring rapid growth while maintaining financial integrity and regulatory confidence.

## Aligning Teams for Sustainable Growth

Mohsen emphasizes embedding finance into decision-making processes across product, operations, and commercial teams. He provides data-driven insights, including KPIs and real-time dashboards, to help teams optimize pricing, revenue recognition, and cost management.

Through scenario planning, Mohsen evaluates outcomes before key investments or product launches, aligning financial planning with operational priorities. He fosters transparent communication and accountability, establishing shared financial goals across departments. A continuous feedback loop allows projections and strategies to be refined in real-time, ensuring agility and strategic alignment.

By integrating finance into daily operations and providing actionable insights, Mohsen enables cross-functional teams to make informed, strategic decisions that drive sustainable growth and enterprise value.

## A Leadership Philosophy for High-Performing Finance Teams

Mohsen views leading and developing finance teams as a key responsibility of his role. His leadership philosophy focuses on empowerment, accountability, and continuous growth, ensuring teams deliver high performance while evolving professionally.

He emphasizes trust and responsibility, giving team members ownership of their work and autonomy to make decisions. He also ensures a clear vision and alignment, helping teams understand how their contributions tie into broader business objectives.

Continuous learning is central to his approach, with encouragement for upskilling through certifications like FMVA, CBCA, BIDA, and mentorship. Mohsen also prioritizes collaboration and open communication, ensuring finance seamlessly interacts with operations, product, and commercial teams. Recognition and feedback further motivate and guide teams, reinforcing accountability while fostering a growth-oriented culture.

For Mohsen, finance leadership is about building capable, confident, and adaptive teams that consistently deliver value while growing professionally.

## Key Trends Transforming Finance in Global E-Commerce

Mohsen identifies several trends reshaping financial management in global e-commerce:

To prepare, organizations should invest in technology, upskill teams, embed compliance frameworks, integrate ESG metrics, and foster cross-functional collaboration. Mohsen believes the future of finance in e-commerce is data-driven, agile, and strategically embedded across business functions.

## Finance as a Catalyst for Sustainable Growth

Mohsen's long-term vision positions finance as a strategic enabler of sustainable growth and transformation. He views finance not merely as a support function but as a partner in shaping long-term success, optimizing resources, and driving impactful decisions.

Key pillars of this vision include:

Mohsen aims to position finance as a catalyst for transformation, helping businesses innovate responsibly, grow efficiently, and maintain a strong foundation for long-term success. ■

| NAME | ROLE | ORGANISATION |
|---|---|---|
| **Mohsen E Helaly** | **Leader** | **Sanar** |



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ANALYSIS

# Why factories are moving AI to the edge

BY THE CIO TABLE EDITORS



*Camera-based inspection needs answers in milliseconds, not round trips to a distant cloud region. The architecture manufacturers are settling on, and the operational problems nobody budgets for.*

A camera above a production line photographs each part as it passes. A model decides whether the part is good. If it is not, an actuator further down the line must push it aside before it reaches packing. The time available for that decision is set by the speed of the line and the distance to the actuator, and on a fast line it is measured in milliseconds.

That constraint, more than any fashion in architecture, explains why manufacturers are running AI on the factory floor rather than in a distant cloud region. The same logic applies to machine control, where a model adjusts equipment settings in response to sensor readings and a late answer is a wrong answer.

## Why the cloud is too far away

A round trip to a cloud region adds delay, and the delay varies. For dashboards that hardly matters. For a reject decision with a fixed deadline, the worst case matters more than the average, and the worst case over a wide-area network is hard to bound. Many plants also sit in industrial zones or regional towns where connectivity is less dependable than at head office, and a line cannot stop because a link has dropped.

Bandwidth is the second problem. Inspection cameras produce high-resolution images continuously, often from several angles at each station. Streaming all of it to the cloud costs money in uplink capacity and data charges, and most of those images show nothing of interest. Paying to send a photograph of a good part across a network so that a remote server can confirm it is good is poor economics.

In Asia-Pacific the shape of the industry sharpens these pressures. Manufacturers often run plants in several countries, newer facilities alongside older ones, under different telecoms conditions and, in some markets, rules or customer contracts that limit where production data may go.

## A split architecture

The emerging pattern divides the work. Inference runs on the line, on an industrial computer or small server with an accelerator, close to the cameras and controllers. Training, labelling, model management and long-term storage stay in the cloud or a central data centre, where compute is elastic and data from many lines can be pooled.

Traffic between the two is selective. The edge sends back rejected images, a sample of passes, borderline cases and summary data. The centre sends down new model versions through a controlled release, with version records and the ability to roll back. If the link fails, the line keeps running on the last approved model and queues its uploads until the connection returns.

## Who owns a server bolted to a line

The harder problem is ownership, because an edge device belongs to two worlds. Operational technology teams own uptime, safety and the change windows on the line. IT teams own patching, identity, monitoring and security standards. A server on a production line is both, and unless ownership is settled explicitly, it falls to whoever is on shift when the device fails.

A workable division gives IT the standards and the remote management, and gives OT authority over when changes happen. Each device needs a named owner and an entry in the asset register. Four practices follow:

## Security on the plant network

An edge device is a bridge between the plant network and the outside world, which makes it a target. Plant networks often carry older control systems that cannot easily be patched, so the edge box must not become the way in. Place devices in their own network zone, in line with the zones-and-conduits approach of the IEC 62443 standards. Allow only outbound connections to approved endpoints, give each device its own certificate-based identity, accept only signed software and signed models, and route remote access through a single controlled point with session logging.

## What to measure

Accuracy figures from a supplier's test set say little about performance on a particular line. Measure what the plant already cares about, against a baseline taken before go-live:

Before approving the second line, ask for the false reject rate of the first, measured by the quality team rather than the supplier. ■





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LEADERS IN FOCUS

# Sundar Pichai and the price of being AI-first

BY THE CIO TABLE EDITORS



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*Google wrote much of the research behind generative AI, then had to prove it could ship. How Alphabet's chief executive reorganised around models while protecting the business that pays for them.*

In 2016, a year after becoming Google's chief executive, Sundar Pichai said the company would move from being mobile-first to AI-first. It was an easy line to say and a hard one to live by. Being AI-first meant reorganising research, rebuilding products around new models and, eventually, putting at risk the search business that pays for almost everything else.

## A product manager's path to the top

Pichai grew up in Chennai, studied at IIT Kharagpur, Stanford and Wharton, and joined Google in 2004. He made his name on products used by billions: the Chrome browser, launched in 2008, and later Android. He became chief executive of Google in 2015 and of its parent, Alphabet, in 2019. Colleagues and observers tend to describe a consensus-builder rather than a showman.

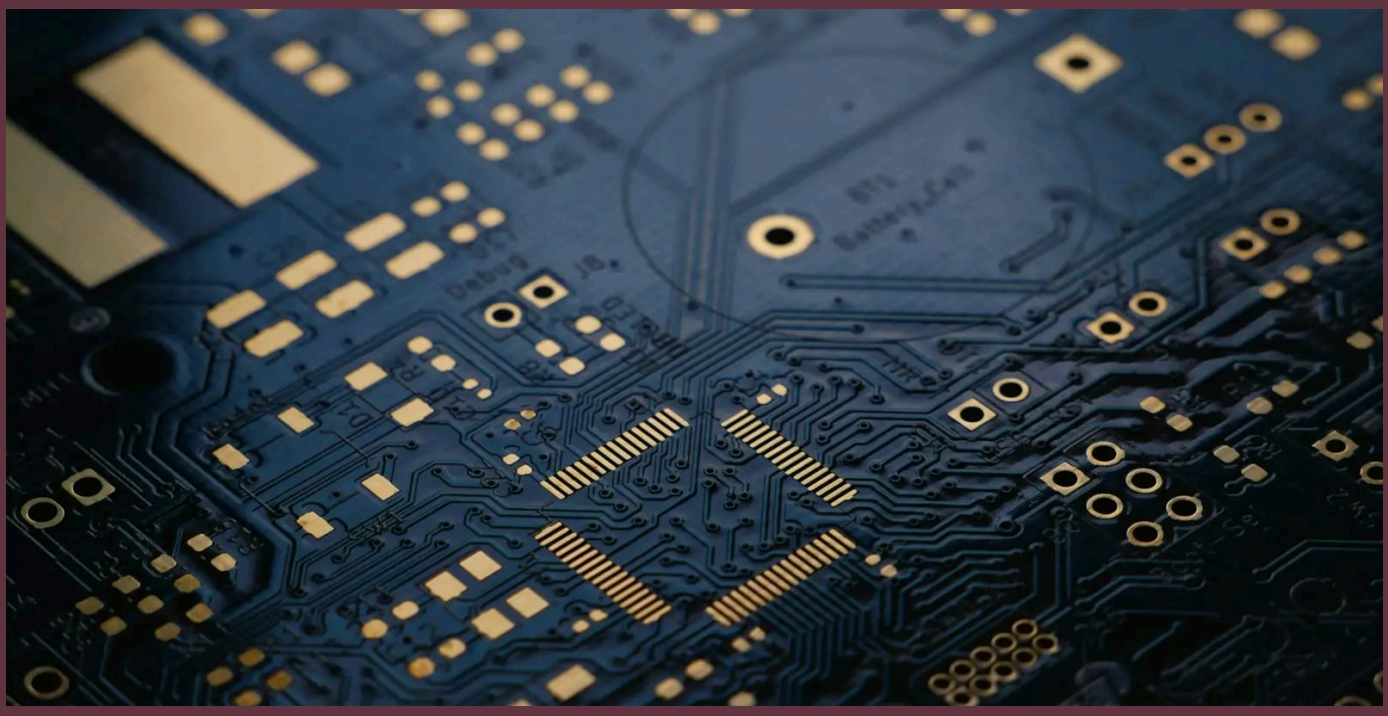
## When the research lead is not enough

Google researchers published much of the work the generative-AI boom is built on, including the transformer architecture in 2017. Yet when chatbots reached the public in late 2022, Google was widely seen as slow to ship. Pichai's response was structural: in 2023 Alphabet merged its two research groups, Google Brain and DeepMind, into a single unit, and the company began releasing its Gemini models across search, workspace tools and Android.

The tension is real. AI answers can reduce the clicks that make search advertising work, and Google has faced major antitrust cases over its search business in the United States. Leading through that means protecting a cash machine while building what may replace it.

## What other leaders can take from it

Most technology leaders will never run a company the size of Alphabet, but many face the same question on a smaller scale: which of our profitable processes will AI make obsolete, and are we willing to replace them ourselves? ■



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