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How are global companies rethinking their GCC operating models in India and what legal considerations are shaping their expansion strategies?

India is no longer viewed merely as a source of capacity and cost efficiency. GCCs are increasingly expected to own products, platforms and business outcomes, including product engineering, enterprise AI, data, cybersecurity and digital transformation. This gives Indian teams greater decision-making authority and brings them closer to global leadership.

Companies may expand through a wholly owned centre, a build-operate-transfer model, a joint venture, an acquisition or a partner-led model brought in-house over time. The appropriate structure depends on speed, control, access to talent and the strategic importance of the capability.

Legally, the operating model, intercompany arrangements, transfer-pricing position and IP framework must reflect the Indian team's actual functions. In acquisitions, carve-outs and BOT transitions, key issues include ownership of IP, code and data, employment arrangements, cybersecurity, data flows, localisation and transition rights. Flexibility to scale, separate or bring the operation in-house should be built in from the outset.

As GCCs take greater ownership of AI, data, and product development, what legal challenges are becoming more prominent for enterprise leaders, and how can they address these risks proactively?

As GCCs take greater ownership, their legal exposure moves beyond traditional service delivery. Key issues include ownership of software, algorithms, datasets, model outputs and other IP; privacy, data-localisation and cross-border transfer requirements; protection of confidential information; and accountability for AI-related bias, inaccuracies and automated decisions.

Leaders should align the GCC's legal mandate with its actual functions, and update employment, vendor and intercompany arrangements to secure IP ownership, confidentiality and audit rights. They should maintain an inventory of material AI systems and datasets, conduct documented privacy, security and IP assessments, introduce approval gates before deployment, and assign clear business, technical and compliance ownership for each material AI use case.

What trends are you seeing in the types of mandates global companies are assigning to their GCCs, and how is this changing the way they operate in India?

Mandates are increasingly moving towards product engineering, AI and data platforms, cybersecurity, R&D, digital operations and enterprise transformation. GCCs are now expected to own full workflows and measurable business outcomes, from product architecture and development to deployment and ongoing product management.

This is changing the Indian operation from a functional support centre into a strategic business unit, with senior leadership, deeper domain expertise and closer integration with global business teams. It requires outcome-based governance, accelerated reskilling, stronger third-party controls and deliberate talent-retention strategies. Indian leaders need sufficient decision rights, while the group retains clear controls over risk, data and IP.

GCCs with scarce engineering, AI or cybersecurity capability may also become meaningful transaction assets, affecting valuation, integration and future separation planning. ■