



# REVITALISATION & TRANSFORMATION

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[kennedymaraj@amchamtt.com](mailto:kennedymaraj@amchamtt.com)

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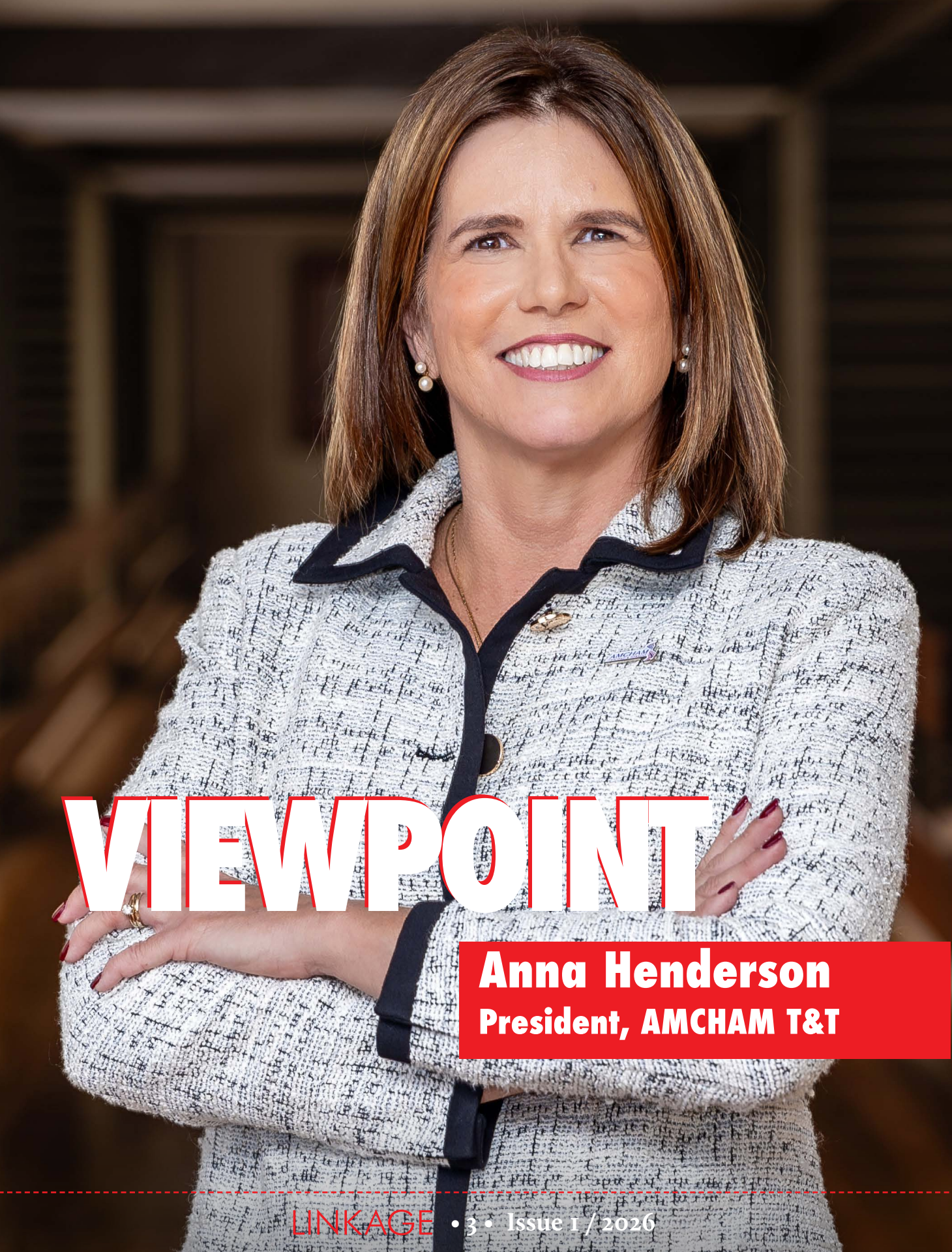
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# VIEWPOINT

**Anna Henderson**  
**President, AMCHAM T&T**

# VIEWPOINT

By Anna Henderson

AMCHAM T&T PRESIDENT

T

**Trinidad and Tobago is at a critical inflection point.**

Much of the national discourse has centred on familiar pressures: from FOREX constraints, to crime, to the uncertain global environment. These challenges are real, and they directly influence investment decisions, operational strategy and long-term planning. Yet beyond these constraints lies a more consequential consideration for the business community: how we respond, adapt and position ourselves for what comes next.

This issue of LINKAGE explores **Revitalisation and Transformation**. While these concepts are often discussed in various public fora, they are, at their core, deeply personal. Transformation does not begin in boardrooms or balance sheets—it begins with people. Each of us must confront how changing conditions affect our roles, relevance and responsibility. Where established models are under pressure, revitalisation becomes a personal question: how do we rethink our skills, our assumptions, and the way we create value?

Transformation, then, is about how we get there.

It is about doing things differently. Thinking differently. Acting with greater intention. This requires a shift in mindset. A willingness

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to explore new industries, adopt new technologies, and invest in new ways of working. It asks us to move beyond what is familiar and embrace what is possible.

There is no shortage of talent in Trinidad and Tobago. No shortage of ideas. And certainly, no shortage of opportunity. From tourism to manufacturing, from energy to the expanding digital economy, the possibilities are significant. Entire industries are evolving before our eyes, creating pathways that did not exist a decade ago.

The question is whether we are prepared to move with that change.

Revitalisation requires us to strengthen what we already have. To make the tough decisions that will improve our performance in our existing sectors.

This is not only the responsibility of government *or* the private sector. It is a *shared* responsibility. As business leaders, we must invest, innovate and lead. As citizens, we must demand accountability while also contributing to progress. As a society, we must choose collaboration over division, and action over inertia.

The reality is this: the future we want for our businesses, our communities and our children will not happen by chance. It will be built through deliberate choices.

*The future we want for our businesses, our communities and our children will not happen by chance. It will be built through deliberate choices.*

At AMCHAM T&T, we remain committed to supporting this process. We will continue to advocate for a more enabling environment, one that supports growth, investment and competitiveness. But just as importantly, we will continue to create platforms for dialogue, partnership and action.

Revitalisation and transformation are not abstract concepts. They are practical, achievable outcomes. They begin with how we think. They are shaped by what we do.

If we adjust our mindset and commit to the work ahead, there is no limit to what Trinidad and Tobago can achieve. The potential is here. Now is the time to act. ■



**WELCOME**

**Nirad Tewarie**  
CEO, AMCHAM T&T

# WELCOME

By Nirad Tewarie

AMCHAM T&T CEO

**B**y the time you read this, the global situation may already have changed. Conflicts unfolding in the Middle East, including the ongoing tensions involving Iran, remind us how quickly the global environment can shift. Energy markets are reacting. Supply chains are adjusting. And small, open economies like ours feel these shocks almost immediately.

It is a sobering reminder of one simple truth. We must build an economy that is not only productive, but resilient. That is why this issue of LINKAGE focuses on **Revitalisation and Transformation**.

At home, we are navigating our own set of challenges. Crime continues to impact business confidence and daily life. Foreign exchange constraints remain a real concern for many companies. And in key sectors, particularly energy, we are managing the effects of declining output and global uncertainty.

*There is still potential to strengthen our energy base. We must approach these opportunities with clarity and purpose.*

But this is not a moment for retreat. It is a moment for reset.

There are signals—both locally and regionally—that point to opportunity. Developments around cross-border energy collaboration suggests that there is still potential to strengthen our energy base.

We must approach these opportunities with clarity and purpose. Not as short-term fixes, but as part of a broader strategy to secure long-term energy stability and economic growth.

At the same time, transformation must go beyond energy.

We need to accelerate digital adoption across industries. Too many businesses are still operating below their potential because they are not fully leveraging technology. Digital transformation is no longer optional. It is essential for competitiveness.

We must also continue working toward a more enabling environment—one that allows ideas to move from concept to execution more efficiently. Reduced bureaucracy. Better systems. Clarity and transparency of process.

Revitalisation means getting more out of what we already have. It means improving productivity. Strengthening institutions. Fixing inefficiencies. Transformation, on the other hand, requires us to think differently. To challenge legacy systems. To invest in new sectors. To build an economy that is more diversified and less vulnerable to external shocks.

This cannot be done by any one group alone.

The private sector has a responsibility to lead through investment and innovation. The public sector must create the conditions that allow businesses to grow. And both must work together in a more deliberate and coordinated way.

*This issue of LINKAGE brings together perspectives on how we can move forward. It challenges us to think about what kind of economy we want to build.*

Collaboration is a requirement. At AMCHAM T&T, we continue to advocate for policies that support growth, competitiveness, and sustainability. We also remain committed to creating platforms where these important conversations can take place—and where solutions can emerge.

This issue of **LINKAGE** brings together perspectives on how we can move forward. It highlights opportunities in digital transformation, energy evolution, entrepreneurship, and investment. More importantly, it challenges us to think about what kind of economy we want to build. The question: are we prepared to work together and act? ■

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We see the future as having unique opportunities and exciting challenges. We are committed to meeting those challenges with the same energy and resolve that has made us an industry leader for over half a century.

The group organically expanded due to the demands of the industries we serve and now include three separate yet complimentary companies that take our products and services offering to an entirely new level – Balroop's Sound Systems, Vistrac, and Powermac.



A photograph of Anand Ragbir, CEO of Proman Trinidad, speaking to a group of people. He is wearing glasses and a dark blue shirt, gesturing with his right hand. The background shows several other people, some in high-visibility vests, in what appears to be an indoor setting.

CEO's Perspective:

Anand Ragbir  
Executive Director  
Proman Trinidad

# STEPPING UP TO THE CREASE:

A LEADERSHIP MINDSET GROUNDED IN  
DISCIPLINE, TRUST AND PEOPLE

## FIRST INNINGS: STEPPING UP TO THE CREASE

# C

ricket teaches you early that not every ball is there to be played. Some you defend.

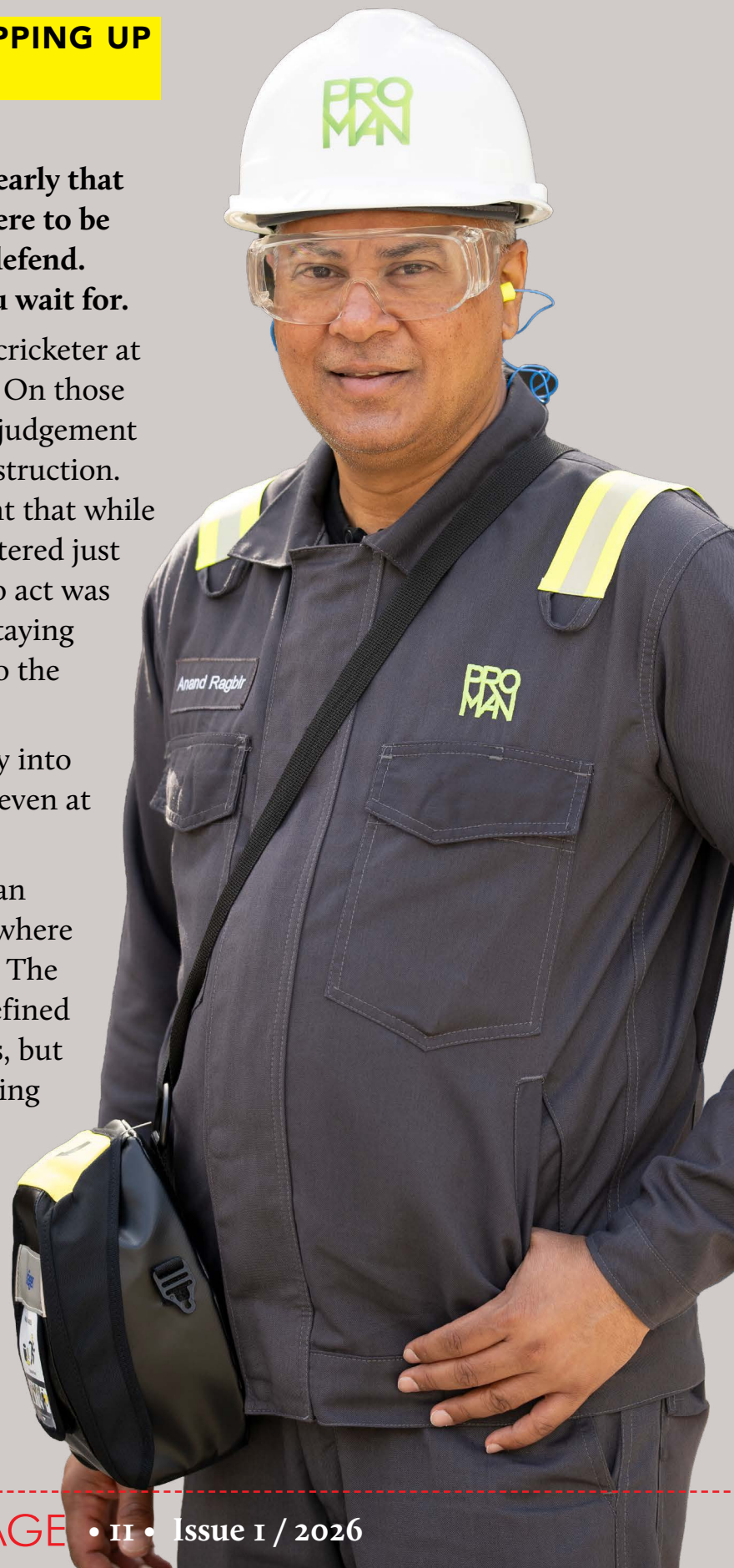
Some you leave. And some you wait for.

I learnt that lesson as a young cricketer at Hillview College in Tunapuna. On those fields, discipline, patience and judgement became instinct rather than instruction. At the crease, you quickly learnt that while timing mattered, restraint mattered just as much. Knowing when not to act was often the difference between staying at the crease or walking back to the pavilion.

It is a mindset I still carry today into boardrooms, negotiations and even at home navigating family life.

As Executive Director of Proman Trinidad, I operate in a sector where conditions can change quickly. The energy industry is no longer defined by predictable long-term cycles, but by geopolitical pressures, evolving energy demands and tighter supply dynamics. As a result, the sector is faster-paced and more volatile than at any point in recent memory.

In moments like this, the instinct is often to react, to chase every ball.



Instead, over time, I have learnt to pause, to read the conditions and to respond deliberately. My approach to leadership, like batting, begins with stepping up to the crease and understanding what is required in that moment. It is about taking in the field, the conditions and the context, anticipating what may come, drawing on experience, trusting your judgement and your team and executing with clarity and purpose when it matters most.



## **SECOND INNINGS: READING THE FIELD**

**T**

hat perspective did not come overnight. The way I lead today is the sum

of many experiences. Some of them, at the time, felt unplanned or even disconnected, but together they shaped me into what cricket would describe somewhat as an all-rounder.

My professional journey began in auditing at Deloitte. I was drawn early to accounting and comfortable with numbers and structure. Although I never practised as an accountant, the discipline it instilled—including the rigour, attention to detail and respect for governance—became a cornerstone of how I approach both work and life.

From there, I moved into the commercial side of the energy sector on a journey that took me through PCS Nitrogen, bp

where I spent a decade, the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago where I served as Chief Financial Officer, and Atlantic LNG where I was Vice President Commercial and Finance, before eventually joining Proman.

Looking back, that journey reflects exactly what my mother taught me growing up.

My father passed away when I was thirteen years old. My mother then raised four children on her own and placed strong emphasis on education, discipline and trust.

She believed education went beyond formal schooling. She was clear that some of the most important lessons in life are learnt in the field through trying, failing, observing others and paying attention. Those lessons could never be fully taught in a classroom.

Over time, my career allowed me to learn in exactly that way. Working across the upstream, midstream and downstream segments of the energy sector gave me a different vantage point and a deeper understanding of how the entire energy value chain works.

There are not many people in this industry who have worked across the full value chain in such significant roles. That exposure helped me see how everything connects, where pressure builds, where it eases and how decisions in one part of the system inevitably affect the rest.

Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector is not a collection of isolated operations. It is a deeply interconnected ecosystem. When one part of the value chain is under strain, everyone feels the impact. That is why collaboration matters and why trust becomes essential when navigating competing interests across the field.

This perspective is especially important as gas constraints continue to test the system. While the challenges are real, there is room for cautious optimism, supported by a clearer line of sight on gas availability. In the meantime, the focus must be on managing in the interim, keeping people employed and plants operating across both upstream and downstream, so that when conditions improve, the country is ready to benefit.



supported by more than US\$5.1 billion in capital investment, with an estimated contribution of US\$12.6 billion to the national economy over the past decade. More than 1,200 people form part of that workforce, 99 per cent of them local, with thousands more supporting operations through our local energy service companies.

Our presence also extends beyond downstream operations. Through Proman Energy, the Group has expanded upstream, strengthening our role across the value chain and reinforcing our responsibility within the broader energy system.

There is also a sustained commitment to community investment. Through our CSR initiatives, we have invested more than US\$10 million in the past decade in programmes focused on education, youth

development and social support. Since its establishment in 2022, the Proman Foundation has reached over 12,000 beneficiaries across more than 70 communities.

For me, these figures are not abstract. With that scale comes responsibility to the business, to our people and to the country. Leadership at this level requires an understanding of the role you play within the wider system and the consequences of the decisions you

### THIRD INNINGS: WHERE LEADERSHIP IS FORMED

**A**

t Proman, this way of thinking carries real responsibility.

As the largest downstream investor and largest tenant at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, Proman's footprint in Trinidad and Tobago is significant. Our operations span 14 petrochemical plants,

*As both the eldest child and the eldest grandchild on either side, I became the one others turned to. I have always been the first to know—good, bad or indifferent.*

make. It recognises that you can't do it alone and success comes through collaborating internally and externally, with government and industry partners.

That sense of responsibility began long before my professional career. As the eldest of four siblings, I stepped early into a leadership role at home. It meant discipline, sacrifice and learning to do without while ensuring my younger siblings understood what was expected of them.

That role extended beyond my immediate family. As both the eldest child and the eldest grandchild on either side, I became the one others turned to. I have always been the first to know—good, bad or indifferent.

Much of how I approach leadership today comes from my mother. She was caring and nurturing, but clear when it mattered. That balance shaped my sense of discipline and accountability and my belief that leadership, at its core, is about people.

## FOURTH INNINGS: THE CAPTAIN AT THE CREASE

T

hat foundation carries directly into how I lead today.

I am a husband and a father of two and I bring the same sense of responsibility and care into my family life as I do into my professional role. Over time, I have learned that leadership goes beyond systems, strategies and controls. It is not about being liked or avoiding difficult decisions. It is about being present, accountable and steady when scrutiny comes.

There is a quotation from Shakespeare that has stayed with me:

**“Love me or hate me,  
both are in my favour.  
For if you love me,  
I will always be in your heart.  
If you hate me,  
I will always be in your mind.”**

I do not interpret this as defiance, but as acceptance. Leadership is also about understanding that decisions will be felt, questioned and sometimes challenged. What matters is clarity of purpose and responsibility to the people you serve.

I want people to know that they matter, that they have a role to play and that they understand how their work contributes to the whole. Leadership, for me, is about

energy and ownership. It is about creating environments where people feel trusted to bring their ideas forward, where their spirit is ignited and where they take pride in the solutions they help create.

That requires transparency and trust. When people feel valued, they are more willing to contribute, particularly in a sector facing sustained pressure. Sustaining a business is not only about assets and operations. At its heart, it is about people.

There is a consistency in how I lead, whether at home or at Proman. I do not try to control every moment. I try to understand it. I read the field, position the team and stay steady when conditions shift.

In many ways, it is the mindset of a Test player in what often feels like a T20 world.

Leadership is not about responding to every ball. It is about staying at the crease, reading the game as it unfolds and seeing the innings through, together with your team. ■

*I do not try to control every moment. I try to understand it. I read the field, position the team and stay steady when conditions shift.*



# CROSSWINDS TO OPPORTUNITIES

Navigating the Business Landscape in 2026

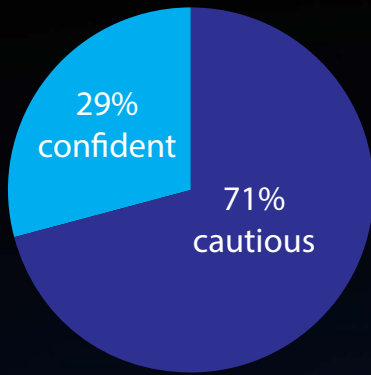
By AMCHAM T&T Staff Writer



At the centre of AMCHAM T&T's Economic Outlook Forum 2026 was the AMCHAM T&T / EY Economic Outlook 2026 Survey, presented by Melanie Tom, Associate Partner – Strategy & Execution at EY.

The survey reflects a strong cross-section of leadership, with 72% of respondents from private companies, 28% from publicly listed organisations, and 40% identifying as CEOs—ensuring that the findings capture perspectives from top decision-makers.

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## A Cautious but Pragmatic Outlook

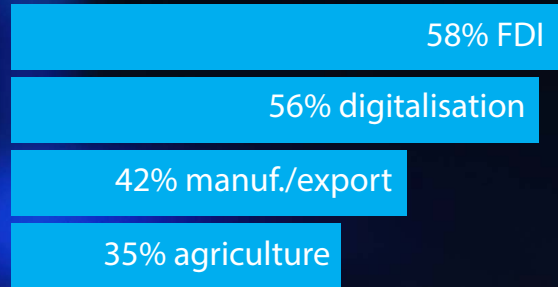
### Key results

Businesses are entering 2026 with measured expectations. While 29% of respondents express confidence in the economy, the majority (71%) remain cautious. This represents an improvement from 2025 (21%), but confidence is still well below levels seen in earlier years.

That caution is grounded in persistent structural challenges. Concerns such as tightening margins, economic constraints, and unclear development plans (all at 69%) dominate sentiment, alongside geopolitical risks (51%) and ongoing issues around public sector effectiveness and crime (both 44%).

Yet, confidence—where it exists—is not without basis. Among the minority who are optimistic, 67% point to the suitability of government plans, while others highlight positive public sector signals (50%) and expectations

of increased gas supply (39%). This suggests that confidence is closely tied to expectations of improved execution and coordination.



## Policy Signals and Execution Gaps

The private sector is clear on where policy support is needed. Priorities such as encouraging foreign direct investment (58%) and digitalising government services (56%) stand out, alongside calls to strengthen manufacturing and exports (42%) and invest in agriculture (35%).

However, confidence in the Government's broader economic blueprint remains mixed. Only 39% of respondents are optimistic about the Trinidad and Tobago Revitalisation Blueprint, with concerns driven largely by execution risks—particularly lack of clarity on funding (79%), limited confidence in government (76%), and bureaucratic constraints (66%).

At the same time, those who are optimistic see clear potential, with

78% believing the plan could drive diversification and investment, reinforcing the idea that the challenge lies less in vision and more in delivery.



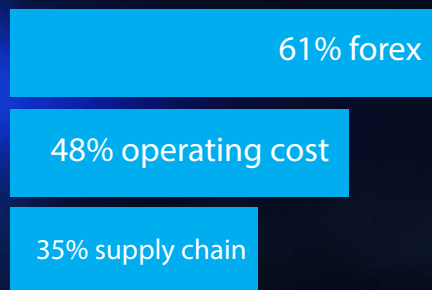
## Building Resilience Through Talent and Strategy

Organisations are responding to uncertainty by strengthening internal capabilities. A clear majority (61%) are focussed on reskilling and retooling existing employees, far outpacing other approaches such as outsourcing (26%) or sourcing talent internationally (23%).

This focus aligns with future skill needs, where digital capabilities (61%) and agility (54%) are seen as essential for competitiveness. Notably, workforce migration pressures appear contained, with 57% of firms reporting minimal movement (0–5%).

At the strategic level, disruption is expected to come primarily from emerging technologies, including

AI (54%), as well as geopolitical developments (51%) and shifting customer expectations (49%). While most companies (79%) believe they are responding, they largely describe their approach as moderate rather than leading, suggesting room to accelerate execution.



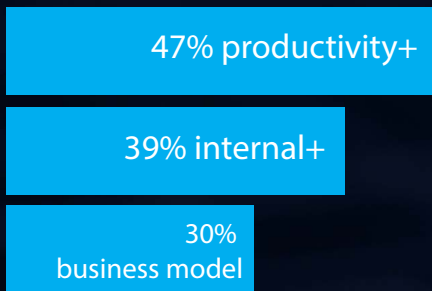
## Geopolitics and Foreign Exchange: Immediate Pressures

Geopolitical developments are no longer abstract risks—they are directly affecting operations. The most significant impact reported is difficulty accessing foreign exchange (61%), followed by increased operating costs (48%). In addition, 35% of firms report supply chain disruptions, while the same proportion say uncertainty is delaying investment decisions.

Foreign exchange challenges remain particularly acute. 70% of businesses rely heavily on forex, yet access has not improved—45% report no change, and another 45% say it has worsened. In

response, companies are diversifying how they source foreign exchange, relying less exclusively on traditional banking (50%) and increasingly on alternatives such as export revenues (28%).

Despite these pressures, there is a degree of resilience in forward planning. 75% of organisations indicate plans to invest or expand in 2026, suggesting that businesses are choosing to move forward, even amid uncertainty.



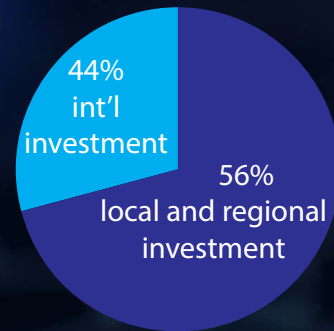
## Technology: From Adoption to Impact

Generative AI is beginning to deliver tangible results. Nearly half of respondents (47%) report improvements in productivity and efficiency, while others highlight its impact on internal operations (39%) and business models (30%).

Looking ahead, expectations are even stronger, with 49% anticipating revenue growth and 44% expecting gains in innovation within the next one to two years. However, adoption remains uneven, with up to 21% indicating no

investment or relevance, pointing to a widening gap between early adopters and those still on the sidelines.

Cybersecurity remains a parallel priority. Companies are focussing on resilience and recovery (44%), alongside cloud security (37%) and data privacy (32%). At the same time, barriers to adopting emerging technologies persist, particularly financial constraints (25%) and skills gaps (18%), reinforcing the need for both investment and capability development.



## Investment and Operating Realities

Investment strategies are becoming more regionally focussed. While 44% of companies have deployed capital outside Trinidad and Tobago, most (56%) remain cautious. The Caribbean (40%) and Trinidad and Tobago (36%) are the top priorities, with limited interest in markets such as the United States (9%) or Latin America (10%).

At the operational level, safety and governance issues continue to shape

the business environment. 11% of respondents report instances of bribery, while crime is driving increased costs for 53% of companies and contributing to client losses (11%) and reduced productivity (9%).

## Turning Crosswinds into Opportunity

The data points to a business community that is not disengaged, but disciplined and pragmatic—clear about the risks, selective in its optimism, and deliberate in its response.

The defining question for 2026 is not whether disruption will continue, but how effectively organisations will respond. From managing geopolitical exposure and foreign exchange risk to and technology, the path forward will require sharper execution and stronger alignment between public and private sectors.

In a landscape defined by uncertainty, those that act with clarity and conviction will be best positioned to turn crosswinds into opportunity. ■

*The defining question for 2026 is not whether disruption will continue, but how effectively organisations will respond.*





## A Call for Transformation and Global Engagement

By AMCHAM T&T Staff Writer



At AMCHAM T&T's Annual Economic Outlook Forum 2026, held on January 21 at the Hyatt Regency under the theme "Crosswinds to Opportunities", senior business leaders, policymakers and stakeholders gathered to examine the forces reshaping Trinidad and Tobago's economic future. The discussions underscored a critical message: while global and domestic challenges persist, they also present meaningful opportunities.

Photo: The Hon. Jearlean John, Minister of Works and Infrastructure



AMCHAM T&T President Anna Henderson

**D**elivering the Keynote Address, Minister of Works and Infrastructure the Hon. Jearlean John emphasised the importance of strengthening international partnerships and positioning Trinidad and Tobago as an attractive destination for investment. Referencing the upcoming visit by a United Arab Emirates delegation led by Minister of State Noura Al Kaabi, who visited Trinidad and Tobago from January 23-26, 2026, the Minister noted, “She’s going to visit some of our projects... that is a kind of validation visit,” highlighting the significance of on-the-ground engagement in building investor confidence.

The Minister underscored that this visit forms part of a broader national strategy to drive economic diversification and unlock new opportunities through foreign direct investment.

**S**etting the tone for the Economic Outlook Forum, AMCHAM T&T President Anna Henderson, in her Opening Remarks, noted that ‘Crosswinds to Opportunities’ was not simply descriptive, but intentional. “We must be deliberate in how we respond to the challenges before us,” Henderson stated, “Change is no longer cyclical. Instead, rapid change is now the norm, and the pace of disruption is accelerating across industries and economies.”

She also pointed to the importance of strengthening national systems and improving the ease of doing business, noting that “efficiency, transparency, and accountability must be at the core of how we operate.” Her remarks ultimately called for bold, collaborative leadership. Meaningful progress will require sustained partnership between government, business and civil society.

The perspectives shared at this year’s Economic Outlook Forum reflected a unified call to action. Trinidad and Tobago has the opportunity to navigate economic “crosswinds” and emerge stronger better positioned for sustainable growth. ■

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Photo: Panellists at the Economic Outlook Forum.

L-R: Moderator: Nirad Tewarie, CEO, AMCHAM T&T; Adrienne D’Arcy, Country Managing Partner, EY; Paul B. Scott, Chairman & CEO, Musson Group; Prof. Roger Hosein, Economist & Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics, UWI.

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## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



# #GIVETOGAIN

### Setting the Tone for Leadership, Impact and Inclusion

By AMCHAM T&T Staff Writer

**O**n March 13, 2026, over 650 attendees gathered at the Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain, for AMCHAM T&T's 12th Annual Women's Leadership Conference—the largest in its history and notably, one that welcomed its highest number of male participants, with more than 50 men in attendance.

Photo: Randal Cezair, Regional Director, Corporate and Commercial Banking at Scotiabank; AMCHAM T&T President Anna Henderson; MC Hema Ramkissoon

Held under the theme #GiveToGain, the Conference opened with powerful remarks that set the tone for a day of bold conversation, reflection and action—anchored in a central idea: that meaningful progress requires intentional investment in people.

**“THIS IS NOT A TALENT ISSUE. IT IS A STRUCTURAL ISSUE.”**

In her Opening Remarks, AMCHAM T&T President Anna Henderson (opening photo) delivered a compelling message that reframed women’s advancement not as a social issue, but as an economic imperative. Her address challenged traditional thinking, highlighting that while women are present across industries, they remain underrepresented in decision-making spaces. She called for systemic change to expand access to leadership, capital and opportunity.

Central to her message was the shift from mentorship to sponsorship—an intentional act of advocacy. As she noted: “A mentor advises you, but a sponsor advocates for you when you are not in the room.”

Henderson underscored that unlocking the full potential of women is essential to national development, reinforcing that future growth will depend on how effectively societies leverage all available talent.

“We need more companies today to move beyond conversation and commit to actively opening doors, championing talent, and creating clear pathways for women to step into leadership and decision-making roles. When leaders give advocacy, organisations gain stronger succession, innovation, and performance.”

Henderson also brought the #GiveToGain theme into sharp focus by addressing a critical but often unspoken dimension of leadership—the importance of women confidently claiming the value of their contributions. She urged attendees to reject the notion that ambition should be muted or apologised for. “Women should never feel embarrassed or afraid to proudly state what they hope to gain from the sacrifices they make. To want growth is valid. To want leadership is valid. To want opportunity, stability, fulfillment is valid.”

**S**he reinforced that giving—whether through time, effort, or leadership—should not come at the expense of visibility or advancement. “Giving should never require disappearing. When women give, they are investing—and every investment deserves a return.” Encouraging boldness and self-advocacy, she left the audience with a powerful

# #GiveToGain



CEO Nirad Tewarie recognising Estelle Narine from Scotiabank, Chair of the Chamber Experience and Imaging (CEI) Committee, who has been spearheading the organisation of the Conference from the Sponsor's side for several years. At right CEI Committee member Jason Patrick.

call to action: “If you take away just one message from this conference, let it be this: never be afraid to speak up for what you know you deserve after you have given so much to so many. Ask for what you want. Be strategic, but go for it. And if in doubt, ask yourself—would my male colleague hesitate like this?”

## FROM COMMITMENT TO ACTION: A SPONSOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Delivering the Sponsor Remarks, Randal Cezair, Regional Director, Corporate and Commercial Banking at Scotiabank, reinforced the importance of sustained commitment to advancing women in leadership.

As the Platinum Sponsor of the Women's Leadership Conference for the past 12 years, Scotiabank's longstanding



*The strong presence of men at this year's Conference signalled a meaningful shift—recognising that advancing gender equity is a shared responsibility.*

partnership reflects more than support—it signals a deep, institutional commitment to inclusion, leadership development, and equitable opportunity.

In his remarks, Cezair highlighted Scotiabank's ongoing efforts to build diverse leadership pipelines and create environments where women can thrive. He spoke to the organisation's progress in advancing women into senior leadership roles, as well as its focus on talent development and inclusive workplace policies.

Panellists at the Women's Leadership Conference

Importantly, he emphasised that progress is not accidental—it is the result of deliberate action, accountability and sustained investment. His message echoed the spirit of the Conference theme: that organisations must actively “give” opportunity and advocacy in order to “gain” long-term success.

He also underscored the role of corporate leadership in shaping culture, noting that creating inclusive environments requires both intention and consistency across all levels of an organisation.

### **FROM PRESENCE TO POWER**

The Opening Ceremony also highlighted the importance of moving beyond representation to real influence. Equally important was the call for allyship. The strong presence of men at this year's Conference signalled a meaningful shift—recognising that advancing gender equity is a shared responsibility.

## A CONFERENCE THAT CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

Now in its 12th year, the Women's Leadership Conference continues to grow—not only in size, but in relevance and impact. WLC 2026 reflected a broader evolution in the conversation—one that moves beyond awareness toward action and accountability.

As highlighted in the Opening Remarks, the focus is no longer simply on representation, but on “the conditions that determine how safely, confidently, and sustainably women can lead.”

WLC 2026 did more than launch a conference—it issued a challenge.

- **To organisations:** move beyond conversation and take intentional action.
- **To leaders:** advocate, sponsor, and create pathways.
- **And to all stakeholders:** recognise that progress is not achieved in isolation, but through collective effort.

Because in the spirit of #GiveToGain, when we invest in others, we don't just uplift individuals—we strengthen the future. ■



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# #GIVETO GAIN

## Leadership, Freedom and the Courage to Act

By AMCHAM T&T Staff Writer

**A**t the Opening Ceremony of AMCHAM T&T's 12th Annual Women's Leadership Conference, Dr. Jenifer Neidhart de Ortiz (photo above), Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain, delivered a keynote that was both deeply personal and globally resonant.

Addressing a packed audience at the Hyatt Regency on March 13, 2026, her message reflected the essence of the Conference theme, #GiveToGain: that leadership is not only about what we achieve, but what we are willing to stand for—and give to others.



Photo: Dr. Neidhart de Ortiz with three women of AMCHAM T&T: Melissa Pierre, Hema Son Son and Anna Henderson

## **TITLE IX: "THE FLOOR HAD BEEN RAISED FOR ME, AND SO HAD THE CEILING."**

Dr. Neidhart grounded her perspective in personal experience, tracing her leadership journey back to a transformative moment in U.S. history—Title IX (Title IX is a landmark federal civil rights law of 1972 which prohibits sex-based discrimination in any school or any other education programme that receives funding from the federal government.) She explained how a single law reshaped opportunity for women and girls. Her reflection underscored a central theme: that structural change—not just individual effort—is what unlocks leadership potential.

## **"NOT ALL LAWS ARE CREATED EQUAL."**

From leading on the sports field to navigating complex geopolitical environments, Dr. Neidhart shared the depth of her 22-year diplomatic career. Her experiences were not without risk. As she revealed, she had been "surveilled, harassed, intimidated and threatened" while advocating for human rights.

She also spoke of negotiating the release of political prisoners and witnessing firsthand the consequences of oppression—offering a sobering reminder that leadership often requires courage in the face of adversity.

At the heart of these experiences was a critical insight that not all laws are created equal. Some, she noted, are "oppressive, discriminatory and designed to protect powerful people."

## **"WHEN WOMEN ARE EMPOWERED, SOCIETIES FLOURISH AND ECONOMIES GROW."**

Central to her address was a clear and compelling message: the advancement of women is inseparable from the advancement of societies. Drawing on global examples, she highlighted the difficult realities faced by women in restrictive environments—from athletes forced to choose between safety and principle, to activists facing repeated harassment for demanding basic rights.

These stories were not distant—they were a call to awareness and action.

### **“THE CALL TO ACTION IS A CALL TO ALLOW YOURSELF TO SEE, AND TO ACT.”**

Bringing the message closer to home, she acknowledged the importance of speaking out against injustice and standing in solidarity with those who cannot. Her words were both a challenge and an invitation: “May we all find the courage to speak out in solidarity with those who are beaten down when they try to speak out for themselves.”

In the spirit of #GiveToGain, she urged leaders to recognise the privilege of operating in free societies—and the responsibility that comes with it: not to remain passive, but to act. Importantly, she clarified that action does not always require grand gestures.

### **RECOMMITTING TO PROGRESS**

Against the backdrop of International Women’s Day and Women’s History Month, Dr. Neidhart called for a renewed commitment to advancing women’s leadership globally.

She framed this moment as both a reflection and a responsibility—particularly for those in positions of influence. “As women in leadership

blessed to be in free and open countries, we renew our commitment to championing the rights and leadership of women everywhere.”

Her message reinforced that progress is not inevitable—it must be protected, advanced and shared.

### **“LET’S BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE, STANDING IN SOLIDARITY AS WE GIVE TO GAIN.”**

Closing her address, she returned to the central theme of the Conference—#GiveToGain—not as a slogan, but as a principle of leadership.

### **A MESSAGE THAT RESONATES**

Dr. Neidhart’s keynote did more than open a conference—it reframed leadership as responsibility.

Her message was clear: leadership is not only about rising, but about lifting others; not only about opportunity, but about ensuring access; and not only about success, but about standing firm in the face of injustice.

In a world where progress is uneven and often fragile, her call to action remains urgent—reminding all in attendance that when we give—through advocacy, courage and solidarity—we create the conditions for lasting, meaningful gain. ■



# AN EVENING OF DIPLOMACY AND PARTNERSHIP

AMCHAM T&T–U.S. Embassy Annual  
Partnership Reception 2026

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**Photo: Anna Henderson - President (AMCHAM T&T), Nirad Tewarie - CEO (AMCHAM T&T) and Scott Hansen - Ag. Deputy Chief of Mission (U.S. Embassy) alongside senior government ministers and members of the diplomatic corps**



Scott Hansen



**On January 29, 2026 AMCHAM T&T hosted its annual AMCHAM T&T-U.S. Embassy Partnership Reception at the U.S. Ambassador’s Residence on Flagstaff Hill.**

The event brought together senior government officials, members of the diplomatic corps and executives from many of AMCHAM T&T’s 300-member companies. The reception, which was organised in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain, served as a celebration of AMCHAM T&T’s member companies and the vital role they play in driving economic growth, trade and investment.

Delivering welcome remarks on behalf of Dr. Jenifer Neidhart de Ortiz, Chargé d’Affaires at the U.S. Embassy was Scott Hansen, Ag. Deputy Chief of Mission, who emphasised the longstanding ties between both nations and said “We will always prioritise T&T.”

AMCHAM T&T President Anna Henderson highlighted the importance of sustained collaboration and underscored the significance of long-standing diplomatic and commercial ties, reinforcing the need for continued engagement between business leaders, policymakers and international stakeholders. “AMCHAM T&T remains committed to creating spaces for dialogue, collaboration and meaningful engagement,” she stated. Her remarks also reinforced the Chamber’s role as a bridge between sectors, advocating for stronger public-private collaboration.

The reception underscored AMCHAM T&T’s continued commitment to facilitating high-level engagement and strengthening public-private collaboration. By bringing together key stakeholders in an atmosphere of dialogue and partnership, the event reinforced the Chamber’s role as a bridge between business, government, and international partners—working collectively toward shared progress and sustainable economic development. ■



Anna Henderson

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**Gov. minister the Hon. Wilfred Morris and  
AMCHAM T&T CEO Nirad Tewarie**



**Gov. ministers the Hon. Khadijah  
Ameen and the Hon. Dominic Smith**



**Nirad Tewarie; Aliyah Hamel Smith, ExeQtrust Limited;  
Angelo Daniel Austin, Xtra Foods; Patricia Ghany, Esau  
Oilfield Supplies; and James McLetchie, Massy Group**



**Melissa Pierre, AMCHAM T&T; Renee  
Ferguson, Kenson Group; Vitra Gopee and  
Gerard Rajkumar, Sygma Environmental**



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Boodoo, Southern Sales and Services**



**Ugo Blanco, Resident Representative for  
the UNDP Multi-Country Office and  
His Excellency Michael Ryan Callan,  
Canadian High Commissioner**



**AmCham T&T Presidents Anna  
Henderson and Stuart Franco**



Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/mdgodad>

# AMCHAM T&T ON THE MOVE

## Highlights of Key Events and Initiatives in 2026

**F**rom regional engagement to national resilience-building, AMCHAM T&T continues to play an active role in shaping, strengthening and advancing business and economic development.

These engagements reflect AMCHAM T&T's continued focus on connecting local priorities with regional and global conversations—ensuring that the private sector remains a key partner in driving resilience, innovation, and sustainable growth.



## **NATIONAL BUSHFIRE WORKSHOP 2026**

Trinidad and Tobago | February 24, 2026

AMCHAM T&T participated in the national workshop “Bushfires Destroy Lives, Livelihoods and Productivity in Trinidad and Tobago,” bringing together public and private sector stakeholders to address one of the country’s most pressing environmental challenges.

Representing AMCHAM T&T, Dr. Marissa Nimrod and Skyle Baptiste delivered presentations on the public health and economic impacts of bushfires. Their contributions highlighted the risks to vulnerable communities, the disruption to business operations, and the urgent need for coordinated, multi-sectoral action.



## **HSE LEARNING TABLE: PREPARING FOR ISO 45001 UPDATES**

February 26, 2026

As part of its ongoing commitment to workplace safety, AMCHAM T&T’s HSE Committee hosted another Learning Table session focused on upcoming changes to the ISO 45001 Standard.

Led by Gail Figaro, Principal Consultant at Phi-Onyx Services Ltd., the session provided valuable insights into evolving occupational health and safety requirements and what they mean for organisations preparing for implementation and certification.

These sessions continue to build awareness and to foster collaboration among members as they work toward higher standards of HSE performance.



## Strengthening Private Sector Engagement in Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS) in the Caribbean | Barbados 24-25 March 2026



### STRENGTHENING PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Barbados | March 24–25, 2026

Melissa Pierre, Manager – Projects & Initiatives at AMCHAM T&T, represented ARISE Trinidad and Tobago at the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction workshop on Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems.

The workshop brought together regional stakeholders to strengthen private sector engagement in disaster preparedness and response. Melissa highlighted AMCHAM T&T's ongoing initiatives, including business continuity planning training and bushfire preparedness efforts in collaboration with national agencies.

As the lead for ARISE Trinidad and Tobago, AMCHAM T&T continues to champion practical, collaborative solutions that enhance resilience across the business community and the wider Caribbean. ■

# STRENGTHENING HEMISPHERIC PARTNERSHIPS AT AACCLA 2026

**I**n February 2026, AMCHAM T&T CEO Nirad Tewarie joined regional business leaders, policymakers and industry experts in Miami, USA, for the Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America and the Caribbean (AACCLA) “Outlook on the Americas Conference and Strategic Priorities Meeting”—one of the hemisphere’s leading fora on trade, investment and economic collaboration.

Nirad Tewarie with Iman Cummings, President of AmCham Guyana (l) and Richard Leo, CEO of AmCham Guyana (r)



Held annually, the conference convenes representatives from American Chambers of Commerce across more than 20 countries, providing a platform to examine the economic and political trends shaping the region and to advance strategies for growth and innovation.

During the engagement, Tewarie met with Isabella Cascarano, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere at the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. Their discussions focused on Trinidad and Tobago's Revitalisation Blueprint—launched by the Government in November 2025—and the potential to mobilise U.S. capital and private sector participation in priority development projects.

They also explored opportunities surrounding the Government's concept of special economic zones, particularly in relation to supporting increased private sector activity in Venezuela as part of its rebuilding phase.

Beyond bilateral discussions, the conference provided an opportunity to strengthen ties across the AMCHAM network. Tewarie engaged with several regional counterparts, including Neil Herrington of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Amaru Liendo and José Antonio Apostolico of AmCham Venezuela, as well as Iman Cummings and Richard Leo of AmCham Guyana.



Nirad Tewarie and Isabella Cascarano (Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere at the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce)

These engagements underscore the importance of regional collaboration at a time when the Americas are navigating shifting economic dynamics. As countries seek to attract investment, enhance competitiveness and drive sustainable growth, platforms like AACCLA continue to play a critical role in connecting stakeholders and shaping the future of hemispheric trade.

For Trinidad and Tobago, participation in these high-level dialogues reinforces its commitment to building strategic partnerships, unlocking new opportunities and positioning the country within a more integrated and forward-looking regional economy. ■

REVITALISATION & TRANSFORMATION

# BRIDGING INNOVATION AND APPLICATION

AMCHAM T&T and The UWI Partner  
to Advance AI in the Caribbean





At the MOU Signing Ceremony on April 14th at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

(L-r) Dr. Arvind Singh - Principal Investigator, intelliGRID | AIIC, Dr. Craig Ramlal - Executive Director (Chair) | AIIC, Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine - Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor | UWI, St. Augustine Campus. Nirad Tewarie - CEO | AMCHAM T&T and Professor Bheshem Ramlal - Dean of the Faculty of Engineering | UWI

**I**n a significant move to strengthen the region's digital future, AMCHAM T&T and the Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre (AIIC) at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, have formalised a strategic partnership through the signing of an MoU.

More than a ceremonial agreement, this partnership signals a deliberate shift toward deeper collaboration between industry and academia—one that aims to accelerate the adoption, development and governance of AI in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean.

At its core, the collaboration is designed to bridge a longstanding gap: translating innovation into practical, real-world application. By aligning the strengths of the private sector with academic expertise, the partnership creates a platform for advancing AI in a way that is both commercially relevant and socially responsible.

## FROM POTENTIAL TO PRACTICE

The scope of the MoU reflects a comprehensive and forward-looking agenda. Joint initiatives will span research and development, corporate AI and cybersecurity policy frameworks and national policy recommendations focused on AI governance and digital trade. The partnership also prioritises capacity-building through training programmes, micro-credentials and public education campaigns, ensuring that businesses and professionals are equipped to engage meaningfully with emerging technologies.

**I**mportantly, the collaboration extends beyond theory. Co-hosted events, technical workshops and innovation showcases—integrated with AMCHAM T&T’s Tech Hub Islands Summit (T.H.I.S.)—will create opportunities for dialogue, demonstration and experimentation. The inclusion of pilot projects and industry-led AI solutions further reinforces the focus on execution and measurable impact.

Speaking on the significance of the partnership, AMCHAM T&T CEO Nirad Tewarie highlighted the untapped potential of closer collaboration between academia and industry:

*“A closer partnership between industry and academia represents a powerful but still largely untapped opportunity to bridge the gap between innovation and real-world application. This collaboration will enable our members and the wider private sector to better understand, adopt and scale AI-driven solutions in a practical and responsible way.”*

## A REGIONAL IMPERATIVE

For The UWI, the partnership reflects a broader ambition—to reposition the Caribbean as a creator of technology, rather than a consumer.

Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the St. Augustine Campus, underscored this shift: “This partnership represents a deliberate shift to becoming creators of responsible, indigenous AI solutions shaped by our own realities, ensuring that AI development in the Caribbean is grounded in innovation, ethics and impact.”

The AIIC has emerged as the Caribbean’s leading hub for artificial intelligence research and innovation. Since its establishment in 2018, the Centre has grown into a multidisciplinary network of over 50 members, with more than 35 active projects and partnerships across 20 institutions. Its work spans critical areas such as cybersecurity, agriculture, climate resilience, digital humanities and AI governance.

### **STRENGTHENING THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM**

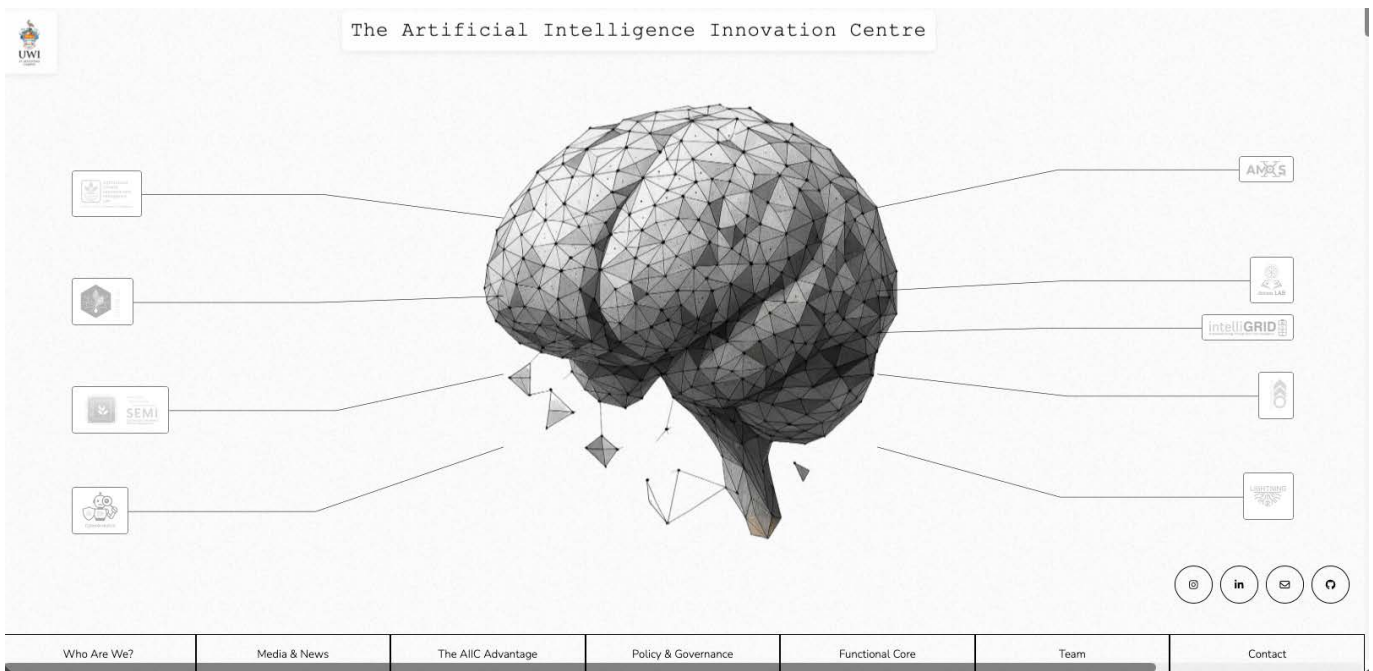
While the region has made progress in digital adoption, one of its persistent challenges has been translating research into commercial outcomes. This partnership seeks to address that gap directly.

Dr. Craig Ramlal, Executive Director of the AIIC, emphasised the importance of strengthening the link between ideas and implementation:

*“In the face of a poor research to commercialisation ethos throughout the region, the AIIC remains committed to developing the relationship between cutting edge ideas and digital products and goods and we hope that this partnership will play a pivotal role in reversing this.”*

He also highlighted the role of policy and capacity building in driving meaningful adoption:

“We emphasise the importance of policy as an integral part of AI in the business sector. Through this partnership, we are also exploring what an AI and Policy guidebook can look like for companies and organisations.”



Website of the Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre <https://www.aiicentre.com>

## DRIVING A DIGITAL FUTURE

The implications of the partnership extend beyond the institutions involved. For businesses, it provides direct access to cutting-edge research, practical tools for AI integration and opportunities for upskilling and engagement with leading experts. For the national and regional ecosystem, it strengthens the foundation for evidence-based policymaking, supports digital transformation and fosters a more inclusive and resilient innovation landscape.

Ultimately, the MoU establishes more than a framework, it sets a direction that brings together industry insight and academic expertise to drive technological advancement, enhance workforce readiness and position Trinidad and Tobago as a competitive, digitally enabled economy.

As the pace of technological change accelerates, partnerships like this will play a critical role in ensuring that the Caribbean is not only keeping up, but actively shaping the future of AI. ■

REVITALISATION & TRANSFORMATION

# FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT IN TIMES OF CHANGE

Building Resilience  
and Bridging Realities



Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/dcstudio>

**F**inancial empowerment has become less of a luxury and more of a necessity. For individuals in Trinidad and Tobago, the stakes are particularly high. As a small, energy-dependent economy navigating both domestic constraints and global volatility, the need for disciplined financial management and wealth-building strategies has never been greater.

## **A CHANGING ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE**

Trinidad and Tobago's economy stands at a pivotal crossroads. Historically driven by oil and gas, the country now faces declining energy production and the urgent need for diversification. Recent estimates suggest GDP growth remains modest, hovering around 0.7–1.0%, while unemployment has inched upward to approximately 4–5%. Inflation, though relatively low overall, continues to exert pressure where it matters most, food and everyday essentials.

Behind these numbers are real people making real adjustments. Consider Michael, a mid-level employee in the energy sector. For years, his income felt secure. Bonuses were predictable and financial planning could wait. However, as projects slowed down and restructuring began, his 'overtime'



By Jarod Perryman  
Managing Director  
ScotiaLife Trinidad & Tobago Ltd

disappeared. Suddenly, everyday expenses required tighter control. What once felt stable became uncertain. Then there is Anika, a young professional in Port of Spain. Recognising earlier that one income stream was not enough, she began selling baked goods online. What started as a side hustle evolved into a steady second income. More importantly, it shifted her mindset from dependence to empowerment. These stories are increasingly common, and they highlight a deeper truth: financial empowerment begins when individuals take ownership of their financial future.

Financial empowerment is not simply about earning more income. It is about gaining control over spending, saving, investing and long-term planning. At its core, it rests on three pillars, effective

money management, strategic wealth creation and adaptability to change.

## **MANAGING FINANCES AND BUILDING WEALTH**

The foundation of empowerment begins with disciplined financial management.

**Intentional budgeting:** A structured budget ensures income is allocated with purpose. Many households are now revisiting their spending habits, identifying ‘silent leaks’ such as subscriptions and non-essential expenses.

**Emergency preparedness:** Financial advisors recommend maintaining 3–6 months of expenses in liquid savings. In practice, this has become a critical lifeline for individuals facing reduced income or job transitions.

**Debt discipline:** Debt should be a tool, not a burden.

While managing money is essential, building wealth is transformative. Individuals are increasingly turning to mutual funds, equities and government securities. There is also growing interest in international investments, enabled by digital platforms. However, that divergence is somewhat impacted by the country’s foreign exchange constraints.

Property ownership remains a cornerstone of wealth creation, particularly where rental income can supplement earnings. Furthermore, given

## *Property ownership remains a cornerstone of wealth creation.*



Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/theyuriarcurscollection>

the country’s push toward diversification, individuals should consider developing additional income streams. From small businesses to digital services, the ability to generate multiple sources of income is a key hedge against economic volatility. Across Trinidad and Tobago, there has been a visible rise in micro-entrepreneurs, individuals monetising skills in catering, tutoring, graphic design and e-commerce. Many began out of necessity but have evolved into sustainable ventures.

## **ADAPTING TO A SHIFTING REALITY**

Adaptability is now a financial skill. Walking the path of continuous learning is no longer a ‘nice’ to have, but a ‘need’ to have. Professionals are investing in digital and technical skills to remain

# *Global income opportunities through avenues of remote work and freelancing are enabling individuals to earn beyond the local economy.*



Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/andreas>

competitive. Global income opportunities through avenues of remote work and freelancing are enabling individuals to earn beyond the local economy. As Trinidad and Tobago slowly transitions away from energy dependence, individuals must align themselves with emerging sectors.

Ultimately, what separates those who struggle from those who thrive is often mindset. Financial empowerment is not just about numbers, it is about behaviour, discipline and vision. Michael's story could have ended in financial distress. Instead, it became a turning point, prompting him to budget, invest and plan. Anika's side business may have started small, but it represents a larger shift toward independence and resilience.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

Financial empowerment in times of change requires more than awareness, it requires action. It demands discipline, diversification and adaptability. For many, the shift has already begun. From passive earning to active financial management. The future may be uncertain, but those who take control of their finances today will be best positioned to navigate and thrive in the changes ahead. ■

REVITALISATION & TRANSFORMATION

# THE MISSING LINK:

Rethinking Networks to Bridge the Connection  
Gap in Economic Transformation

Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/rawpixel-com>

# W

e often look to innovation, investment and policy as the primary drivers of economic

transformation. These are critical levers, shaping direction, unlocking capital and creating the conditions for growth.

Yet across many economies, including Trinidad and Tobago, progress continues to fall short of potential. High-quality ideas and projects stall, capable organisations struggle to scale and promising opportunities remain underleveraged.

This is not a question of capability; increasingly, it is a question of connection. The real constraint is rarely the absence of talent, resources or ambition. It is the absence of intentional, high-value networks that align these elements toward shared outcomes. This is the connection gap and bridging it may well be the missing link in economic transformation.

## THE CONNECTION GAP IN CONTEXT

Research in economic development consistently highlights the role of networks in driving growth. The World Bank has long argued that productivity and innovation are shaped not only by firm-level capability, but by how effectively firms connect within broader



By Andrea Davis  
CEO, Anai Business  
Solutions Ltd.

ecosystems. Collaboration across firms, institutions and sectors is a defining feature of high-performing economies.

In many small and developing economies, however, those connections remain fragmented. Industries operate in silos. Small and medium-sized enterprises struggle to access the networks that provide market reach, financing and technical expertise. Public and private sector initiatives often run in parallel rather than in partnership. Value exists, but is not fully activated.

Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector offers a clear local illustration of what the alternative looks like. The country's position as a leading regional producer of liquefied natural gas has rested not only on resource availability, but on the integration of operators, service



providers, regulators and international partners. Collaboration between multinational energy companies, local suppliers, technical institutions and government agencies has enabled knowledge transfer, local capacity building and the growth of downstream industries—a reminder that sustained performance is rarely driven by individual actors alone, but by how effectively they are connected within a broader system.

### **FROM NETWORKING TO NETWORK DESIGN**

Part of the challenge lies in how networking itself is understood. Traditionally, networking is treated as an activity: limited to attending events, making introductions, exchanging contacts. While useful, this approach is largely informal and dependent on chance, it rarely produces consistent, system-level outcomes.

What is required instead is a shift from networking as activity to network design as strategy. Network design is intentional: it begins with a clear understanding of desired outcomes—market expansion, innovation, policy development, sector growth—and

works backward to identify the actors, capabilities and relationships required. American sociologist Mark Granovetter captured part of this insight decades ago in his concept of the ‘strength of weak ties’: access to diverse, extended networks dramatically improves access to opportunity and information. In high-performing environments, networks are not accidental. They are by design.

### **THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF STRATEGIC CONNECTION**

When networks are intentionally designed, their impact extends well beyond any single transaction. This is what I call the Ripple Effect: the principle that one well-aligned connection rarely stays contained. It moves outwards, unlocking access to new markets, partnerships and capabilities. Over time, those connections compound, expanding opportunities not only for the individuals or organisations directly involved, but for the broader ecosystem around them.

This is evident in global innovation hubs such as Silicon Valley, where dense networks between entrepreneurs, investors, universities and corporations have enabled rapid scaling of ideas. Singapore offers a different model: a



deliberate, state-led effort to integrate government, industry and academia into a tightly coordinated ecosystem.

In each case, success is not solely a function of resources or policy, but of the strength and intentionality of the networks underneath.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR BRIDGING THE CONNECTION GAP

The Ripple Effect describes what intentional networks make possible; the next question is how to design them in practice. The Ripple framework offers five working elements:

1. **Intent:** Define the outcome the network is meant to achieve. Clarity of purpose distinguishes a strategic network from a contact list.
2. **Access:** Identify the gaps. Which capabilities, perspectives or stakeholders are currently missing from the conversation?
3. **Alignment:** Build around shared value. Resilient networks are those where participants have complementary strengths and a genuine stake in collective success.

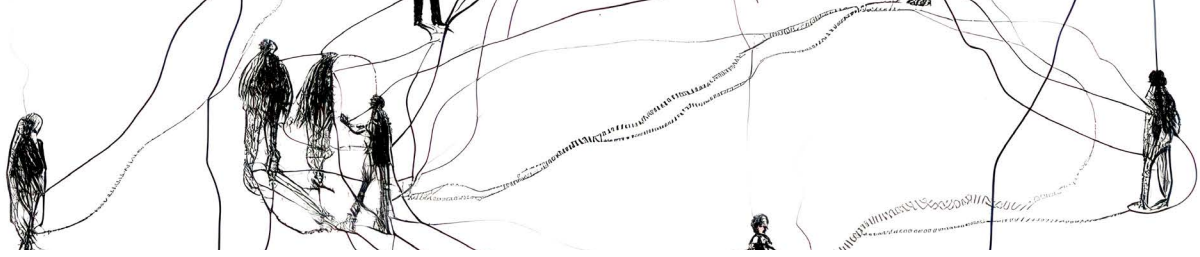
4. **Value Creation:** Move beyond exchange. Effective networks are measured not by the contacts they hold, but by what they build together.
5. **Activation:** Convert connection into outcomes. Relationships must lead to action and measurable impact, or the network remains potential rather than performance.

A network's effectiveness is rarely a function of its size, but of its relevance, diversity and ability to mobilise the right relationships toward a shared goal.

## NETWORKS AS ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Viewed strategically, networks function as a form of economic infrastructure. They enable the flow of information, capital and opportunity. They reduce friction between sectors, accelerate innovation and improve resilience in the face of disruption.

Germany offers a powerful illustration. The strength of its 'Mittelstand'—the country's economic backbone of small and medium-sized firms driving much of the country's export economy—rests on



dense networks linking firms to research institutions, industry associations and global markets. Individually, these firms would be modest players. Collectively, they form one of the most competitive industrial bases in the world.

The lesson is clear: economic strength is not only a function of individual performance, but of system-level connectivity.

## **THE LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVE**

Bridging the connection gap is not a passive process. It requires deliberate leadership, and it operates at every scale. The same logic that shapes economies shapes organisations, and the same logic that shapes organisations shapes careers.

Leaders shape networks through the spaces they create, the relationships they prioritise and the connections they choose to enable. Every introduction, partnership and collaboration contributes to how opportunities flow within a team, an organisation and ultimately an economy. The same principle applies at the individual level. Intentional networks are often

the difference between competence that goes unnoticed and competence that compounds into opportunity, opening doors to mentorship, increasing visibility, and translating, over time, into promotions, new business and expanded influence. The strongest careers, like the strongest economies, are rarely built in isolation.

This places a responsibility on leaders to move beyond internal management and take an active role in ecosystem development, and on every professional to think more deliberately about the networks they are building. The questions are the same in either case:

- Who is not currently connected, but should be?
- Where are opportunities for collaboration being quietly missed?
- What platforms can bring diverse stakeholders into the same conversation?

In an increasingly interconnected world, leadership extends beyond organisational boundaries to the ability to connect, align and activate networks that drive impact beyond the firm.



## HOW DOES THIS TRANSLATE?

In practice, this is what I see consistently: the leaders and organisations that move fastest are not necessarily those with the most contacts, but those who are most deliberate about which relationships they cultivate. Networks designed around clear intent and complementary capability behave less like address books and more like infrastructure, quietly enabling everything that flows through them.

## DESIGNING WHAT COMES NEXT

Organisations such as AMCHAM T&T already understand this intuitively. The very name of this publication—**LINKAGE**—points to what is most needed in this moment: not more isolated effort, but more deliberate connection between the people, sectors and institutions that will shape the next phase of growth.

As Trinidad and Tobago pursues revitalisation and transformation, the focus must extend beyond building capacity to connecting it. The talent, the resources and the ambition all exist.

*As Trinidad and Tobago pursues revitalisation and transformation, the focus must extend beyond building capacity to connecting it. The talent, the resources and the ambition all exist.*

What remains is the discipline to align them through intentional, high-value networks—and the leadership to make those connections deliberate rather than accidental.

Because transformation is not simply about what we build. It is about how effectively we connect what already exists, and how intentionally we design those connections.

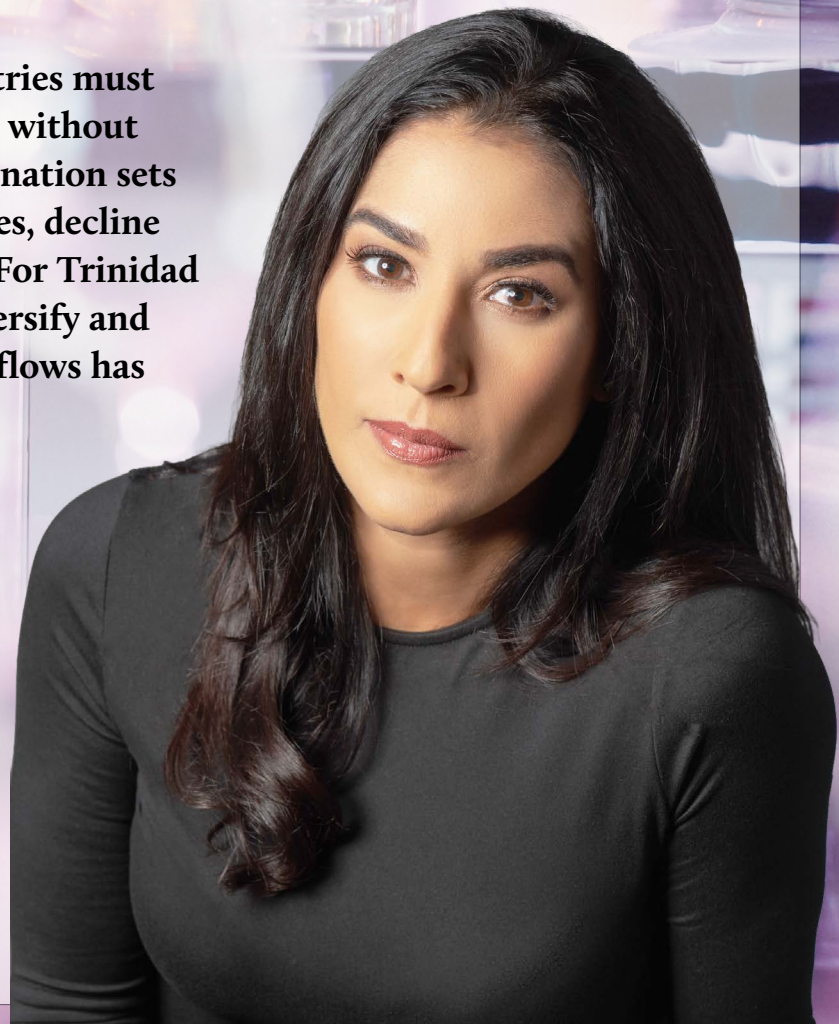
Bridging the connection gap may well be the missing link that unlocks the next phase of growth. ■

# AN UNDERLEVERAGED EVENT ECONOMY

**E**conomies and industries must continuously evolve; without transformation, stagnation sets in—and in many cases, decline becomes inevitable. For Trinidad and Tobago, the urgency to diversify and strengthen foreign exchange inflows has never been greater.

One of the country's most powerful yet underleveraged assets is not just a single festival, but an entire event-driven economy. At its peak sits Trinidad and Tobago

By Amanda Jardine  
Event Coordinator,  
Image Matters



Carnival, contributing nearly TT\$1 billion annually, or roughly 4% to 6% of GDP. But Carnival should be understood not as the product itself, but rather as the proof of concept.

The real opportunity lies in scaling what Carnival represents.

## EXPORTING THE INDUSTRY, NOT JUST THE EXPERIENCE

What Trinidad and Tobago has developed is not just events but event expertise.

The production ecosystem behind Trinidad and Tobago Carnival has created professionals skilled in project management, lighting architecture, large-scale logistics, creative direction, live experience design: globally relevant, high-value services. With structure and certification, this talent pool could be exported, supporting events worldwide. Trinidad and Tobago could position itself not just as a destination, but as a supplier of world-class event production services.

Carnival exists in a compressed timeframe, but its economic potential does not have to. Millions are spent annually producing breathtaking King and Queen costumes for Dimanche Gras—intricate works of art that, in most cases, are abandoned shortly after Carnival Tuesday. These creations represent not just cultural expression, but economic opportunity lost. A structured initiative to preserve and

monetise these assets could transform this reality. Imagine a permanent or rotating exhibition of top costumes available year-round for visitors. These could be housed in a dedicated cultural centre with historical artefacts, wax sculptures honouring local icons serving as both a tourist attraction and a preservation mechanism for our artistic heritage.



Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/theyuriarcurscollection>

**B**eyond local display, there is untapped export potential. Strategic partnerships could facilitate the sale or leasing of these costumes to international festivals, exhibitions and event producers, generating foreign exchange while promoting the Trinidad and Tobago brand globally.

## EXPORTING EXPERTISE: THE EVENT INDUSTRY ADVANTAGE

But beyond exporting talent, there is a parallel opportunity to deepen and diversify the local events calendar itself. Our proven ability to produce

unforgettable experiences could be leveraged to create a more consistent inflow of visitors and foreign exchange.

Historically, events like Great Race in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated the drawing power of well-executed, high-energy experiences. More recently, Island Crashers has emerged as a modern example, effectively functioning as a Caribbean version of spring break. Yet its reach remains limited by insufficient regional and international marketing.

This is where strategic coordination becomes critical. Airlines, tourism authorities, and private promoters must collaborate to create travel packages, incentives, and targeted campaigns that position these events as must-attend experiences across the Caribbean and diaspora markets. Without this alignment, strong products will continue to underperform on the global stage.

There is a clear precedent for success. Miami transformed itself into a global nightlife capital, much like Ibiza, by anchoring its brand around Ultra Music Festival, now one of the premier electronic dance music events in the world, generating around US\$200 million in economic revenue for Miami. That transformation was the result of deliberate branding, consistent investment and ecosystem development.

*Trinidad and Tobago already possesses a key competitive advantage that cannot be easily replicated: its people.*

*Our “vibes” that define our events are organic and culturally embedded. Unlike infrastructure or marketing budgets, this core asset comes at no cost yet delivers immense value.*

The challenge, then, is not creation but coordination—aligning stakeholders, investing strategically, and treating the event sector not as entertainment, but as a serious economic pillar capable of driving sustained growth and foreign exchange earnings.

## PROTECTING AND EXPANDING FOREIGN EXCHANGE INFLOWS

The inflows generated by Carnival are not guaranteed. Increasing airfare, limited accommodation and rising event costs are forcing repeat visitors to reconsider their options. Competing festivals worldwide are becoming more accessible and better marketed.

To remain competitive, both government and private sector must collaborate to protect and expand this revenue stream. This requires not only cost management strategies but also product diversification—giving visitors more reasons to choose Trinidad and Tobago beyond Carnival week. Events should not stand alone; they should anchor broader visitor experiences.

ourism offerings can be expanded beyond traditional beach visits such as Maracas Beach to include curated cultural and environmental experiences. Monthly panyard, tassa, rhythm sessions, immersive workshops in costume-making and cooking, and interactive showcases of steelpan and extempo can extend the life of the event product.

Other Caribbean nations have successfully developed boutique, experience-driven eco-tourism offerings. Trinidad and Tobago can do the same without requiring massive capital investment. Small-scale eco-experiences—river activities, rainforest trails, culinary stops—can be integrated into event itineraries, creating multi-day, high-value visitor journeys.

These experiences do not need to be extravagant; they need to be authentic, safe and well-packaged.

Trinidad and Tobago stands at a pivotal moment. The country already possesses the raw materials for economic transformation: a globally recognised festival, a deeply rooted culture of celebration, highly skilled creatives, and a natural flair for producing unforgettable experiences.

## WHAT IS REQUIRED NOW IS A SHIFT IN MINDSET

The event sector must be treated not as entertainment, but as industry. The “vibes” that define Trinidad and Tobago are more than a cultural trait—they are a competitive advantage. They are authentic, exportable, and impossible to replicate.

The task ahead is clear: organise, invest and scale. Transformation is not optional. It is the pathway to sustained economic momentum. ■

# INNOVATE OR STAGNATE

## How Trinidad and Tobago's SMEs Are Turning Pressure into Possibility

**I**n today's business environment, standing still is no longer neutral; it signals decline. For firms in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, innovation is not a luxury or a future ambition. It is a present-day requirement for survival, growth and relevance.

And yet, for years, the national conversation around business has circled the idea of diversification as if it can occur independently of innovation. It cannot. Without innovation, diversification is simply doing the same things in different sectors.



By Dr Priscilla Bahaw  
Lecturer and Researcher in  
Entrepreneurship, The University of  
the West Indies

Entrepreneurship alone is not enough. Starting more businesses will not transform an economy if those businesses are doing the same things, in the same ways, for the same markets. What drives real economic change is what the economist Joseph Schumpeter described as “creative destruction”.

It is the process by which new ideas, new models and new ways of doing

business disrupt the old and create entirely new sources of value.

The question, then, is not whether Trinidad and Tobago has entrepreneurs. It does. The question is whether those entrepreneurs and the firms they build are innovating enough to compete in a rapidly changing global economy.

## A QUIET WAVE OF BUSINESS INNOVATION

To suggest that innovation is absent would be inaccurate. It is happening, just not always in ways that are measured, visible, or formally recognised. Across sectors, businesses are adapting in response to shifting consumer demands, rising costs and rapid technological change.

**I**n the food and beverage industry, for instance, innovation is increasingly rooted in cultural creativity. Traditional offerings are being reimaged and combined to create new products tailored for modern consumption patterns, tourism markets and event-based models.

### Meat Doubles

Consider the emergence of a “meat doubles”; a hybrid that blends the familiar channa doubles with elements of the Trinidadian roti. This is not invention in the traditional sense, but

rather a recombination of existing products into something new and valuable for a specific market. These are not trivial adjustments; they represent market-responsive innovation, where firms leverage identity, culture and customer insight as strategic assets. Importantly, innovation does not always require significant financial investment or advanced technology. Reconfiguring existing inputs into new offerings (what we might call combinative or synthesis innovation) is equally valid and often more accessible for SMEs.

### The Smartphone

In many ways, this is how some of the most impactful innovations emerge. The smartphone, for example, is not a single invention but a convergence of existing technologies i.e. a phone, camera, clock, GPS and computing device integrated into a unified, value-enhancing product. The principle is the same: innovation is not always about creating from scratch, but about connecting what already exists in new and meaningful ways.

### Packaging Innovations

We see also packaging innovations are also emerging. The movement from traditional glass bottles to flexible pouches and alternative packaging formats reflects more than convenience.

It signals efforts to improve cost efficiency, logistics and product accessibility.

### AI in Processes

At the process level, firms are beginning to integrate digital tools, including generative artificial intelligence, into their operations. From marketing content creation to product ideation and customer engagement, AI is quietly reshaping how businesses think, plan and execute.

### Agriculture and Agro-processing

In agriculture and agro-processing, we are seeing early adoption of circular and regenerative approaches for reducing waste, reusing materials and aligning with sustainability demands. Some firms are even reconfiguring their operational models, incorporating remote or hybrid work structures to reduce costs and carbon footprints while reallocating resources toward innovation and growth.

These examples point to a broader reality: innovation in Trinidad and Tobago is not absent; it is evolving, adaptive and often incremental. But incremental innovation alone is not enough to drive national transformation.

## THE INNOVATION GAP: ACTIVITY WITHOUT ADVANCEMENT

Despite these encouraging signs, the broader data reveals a more complex challenge.

The *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report* (2014) highlights that while Trinidad and Tobago demonstrates relatively strong entrepreneurial intent and confidence, much of this activity remains replicative rather than innovative. In other words, businesses are being created but many are not introducing significantly new products, services, or processes.



imilarly, global competitiveness assessments have historically pointed to limitations in the country's innovation capacity, particularly in areas such as technological adoption, research and development and product differentiation.

Firm-level evidence reinforces this concern. A study published in 2017 examining SMEs in Trinidad and Tobago found consistently low levels of product, process, marketing and organisational innovation, alongside barriers such as organisational culture, limited financing, skills gaps and weak collaboration networks. See link to study [Innovation implementation by SMEs in Trinidad and Tobago](#)

This creates a critical imbalance. There is entrepreneurial activity but not enough innovation intensity.

And without innovation intensity, businesses struggle to scale, compete internationally, or contribute meaningfully to economic diversification.

## FROM REPLICATION TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

In traditional economic thinking, countries compete based on comparative advantage i.e. producing goods more efficiently or at lower cost. But in a globalised and technology-driven economy, this is no longer sufficient.

**I**nnovation shifts competition toward value creation. Firms that innovate are able to differentiate their offerings, command higher margins and access new markets. They move beyond competing on price and instead compete on uniqueness, relevance and experience.

### Chubby

Trinidad and Tobago has already demonstrated glimpses of this potential. One of the most enduring examples is SM Jaleel's **Chubby** brand; a product that illustrates how innovation in design, branding and market positioning can transform a simple beverage into an internationally recognised offering.



The success was not just in the product itself, but in how it was conceptualised and delivered to a specific audience (children).

*This is the essence of business innovation: not necessarily inventing something entirely new, but reimagining value in a way that resonates with the market.*

# *Innovation is not simply a firm-level challenge. It is an ecosystem challenge.*

## **THE STRUCTURAL BARRIERS WE CANNOT IGNORE**

If innovation is so critical, why is it not happening at the scale required? The answer lies less in creativity and more in conditions. Evidence points consistently to systemic barriers:

- Limited access to finance for innovation-driven activities
- Shortages of skilled and specialised talent
- Weak linkages between firms, universities and research institutions
- Organisational cultures that do not incentivise experimentation or risk-taking

**P**erhaps most telling is the gap between the availability of support mechanisms and their utilisation. Despite the presence of agencies and programmes designed to support entrepreneurship, awareness and engagement remain low.

This suggests that innovation is not simply a firm-level challenge. It is an ecosystem challenge.

## **THE UNTAPPED STRENGTH OF SMEs**

There is, however, a significant advantage that is often overlooked. SMEs in Trinidad and Tobago are inherently agile. They can make decisions quickly, test ideas with minimal bureaucracy and respond directly to customer feedback. In uncertain economic conditions, this flexibility becomes a powerful competitive tool.

We are already seeing firms pivoting such as adopting digital platforms, entering new markets and experimenting with new business models. But these efforts are often fragmented and difficult to scale without stronger support systems.

The opportunity, therefore, is not just to encourage more innovation, but to enable existing innovation to grow, connect and multiply.

## **A NECESSARY SHIFT IN THE DIVERSIFICATION CONVERSATION**

If there is one uncomfortable truth that must be acknowledged, it is this: Trinidad and Tobago cannot diversify its economy by replicating existing business models across new sectors.

# *Innovation is not just about adding to the economy. It is about transforming it.*

Diversification requires difference. It requires businesses that offer something new, solve problems in novel ways, compete beyond local markets and continuously adapt to change.

This is where Schumpeter's idea of creative destruction becomes particularly relevant. For new industries to emerge, old ways of doing business must be challenged, reworked, or replaced.

Innovation is not just about adding to the economy. It is about transforming it.

## **CONCLUSIONARY REMARKS**

For SMEs in Trinidad and Tobago, the message is clear. Innovation is no longer optional. It is the mechanism through

which firms reduce costs, create new revenue streams, enter new markets and build resilience in uncertain times.

The foundations are already there: entrepreneurial energy, cultural creativity and emerging pockets of innovation across sectors.



What is needed now is intention. A deliberate shift from replication to innovation. From activity to impact.

From surviving to competing. Because in today's business landscape, the firms that will lead are not those that do more. They are the ones that do things differently and do them well. ■

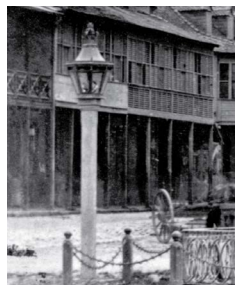
## **SOME TRINIDAD & TOBAGO INNOVATIONS IN HISTORY**



The Steelpan  
(20th c)



Cobalt radiation therapy  
(Andre Cipriani, 20th c)



First kerosene distilled from La Brea asphalt (Gesner, 19th c)



Vaccine for smallpox  
(Jean de Boissière/Edward Jenner, 18th c)



The Buffalypso  
(Dr. Stephen Bennet, 20th c)

# AI + WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

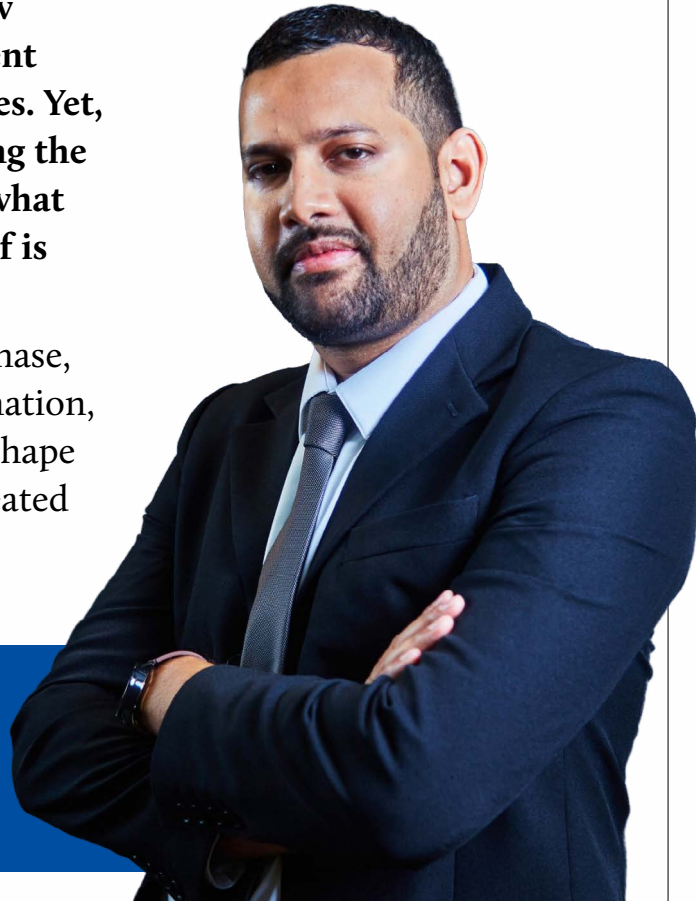
Preparing Trinidad and Tobago  
for the Augmented Economy



**A**s Trinidad and Tobago seeks to revitalise its economy, the focus is often placed on new industries, capital investment and diversification strategies. Yet, one of the most profound forces shaping the future of economic growth is not just what industries we build, but how work itself is being redefined.

The global economy is entering a new phase, one defined not just by digital transformation, but by labour transformation. AI will reshape how work is structured, how value is created and how countries compete.

By John Outridge  
Director Innovation,  
SITAL College





For Trinidad and Tobago, the opportunity is not to catch up, but to leap forward. By focusing on task-level transformation, workforce augmentation and real-world application of AI, the country can build a more resilient, competitive, and inclusive economy.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the implications are clear: the next phase of economic transformation will be driven not just by adopting AI, but by re-engineering the workforce around it.

### **FROM JOBS TO TASKS: THE REAL IMPACT OF AI**

A defining insight from global research is that AI does not eliminate entire jobs, it targets tasks within jobs. Every role is a bundle of activities, such as

administrative and repetitive tasks, analytical and data-driven tasks and human-centred and judgment-based tasks.

AI is highly effective at automating the first two categories, but far less capable in the third. This means the future of work is not about job loss, it is about task redistribution.

For Trinidad and Tobago, this reframes the national question: how do we redesign jobs so that humans focus on higher-value work while AI handles the rest?

Source: <https://chamath.substack.com/p/deep-dive-ai-effect-on-labor-market>

## **THE PRODUCTIVITY MULTIPLIER: WHY AI EXPANDS OPPORTUNITY**

Evidence globally shows that AI adoption correlates with higher productivity, faster company growth and increased demand for skilled workers. AI is not just a cost-cutting tool, it is a capability multiplier. A single worker, augmented by AI, can now process more data, serve more customers and make faster and better decisions.

For a small, open economy like Trinidad and Tobago, this is transformative. It allows local firms to compete globally without scale disadvantages.

## **THE UNEVEN IMPACT: A TWO-SPEED LABOUR MARKET**

AI's impact is not uniform.

### **Roles most exposed:**

- Administrative and clerical work
- Entry-level finance and reporting
- Structured customer service

### **Roles more resilient:**

- Skilled trades and physical work
- High-touch services
- Strategic and leadership roles

This creates a two-speed labour market: on the one hand, rapid transformation in knowledge work, and on the other, gradual augmentation in physical and service sectors.

*AI is not just a cost-cutting tool, it is a capability multiplier. A single worker, augmented by AI, can now process more data, serve more customers and make faster and better decisions.*

For Trinidad and Tobago, this means the services economy will transform first, particularly financial services, government operations and business process outsourcing and shared services.

## **THE RISE OF THE AUGMENTED WORKER**

The defining worker of the next decade will not be replaced by AI, but amplified by it. The “augmented worker” will use AI tools to enhance productivity, focus on higher-value decision-making and combine domain expertise with digital capability.

This is already happening. For example, analysts use AI for real-time insights, customer service agents are supported by AI copilots and engineers leverage predictive tools.

### **THE SKILLS SHIFT: FROM EXECUTION TO ORCHESTRATION**

The future workforce does not require everyone to be engineers. Instead, it requires AI fluency across all roles.

Key shifts include those from manual execution to AI-assisted workflows, from

*Core skills for the future will be digital and data literacy, AI tool usage and interpretation, critical thinking and decision-making and communication and adaptability.*

data collection to data interpretation and from task completion to task orchestration.

Core skills for the future will be digital and data literacy, AI tool usage and interpretation, critical thinking and decision-making and communication and adaptability.

### **LOCAL CASE STUDIES: CARIBBEAN INNOVATION IN ACTION**

While much of the AI conversation is global, there are already powerful examples emerging from Trinidad

and Tobago demonstrating that the augmented economy is not theoretical, but already underway. One of these examples is an industry member of AMCHAM T&T, **Ramps Logistics**, which diversified from being a logistics company to becoming an AI platform builder. Ramps Logistics provides one of the clearest examples of local transformation.

The company has developed multiple AI-driven platforms, including **MAWI**, a machine-learning customs brokerage system and **CUBBY Cargo**, an

AI-powered logistics platform integrated with WhatsApp.

These platforms reduce customs clearance times from hours to minutes (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday), provide real-time global shipping rates and booking in minutes (Energy Chamber of Trinidad and Tobago), and enable SMEs to access global trade with minimal friction

This represents a fundamental shift from a service provider to a technology-enabled platform company. More importantly, it signals that high-impact

AI products can be built in Trinidad and Tobago and exported globally.

Another example from the AMCHAM T&T ecosystem is **Vijay Pradeep**. Vijay is the founder of **Virtana**, a locally based technology company focused on robotics that operates out of The UWI and employs all local talent to develop robotics solutions for international customers such as Amazon. Pradeep, a former AMCHAM T&T T.H.I.S. conference panellist, is now co-founder of **Anvil Robotics**, a cutting-edge physical AI company.

Anvil Robotics is building a platform for custom AI-driven robots (Crunchbase News), focused on lowering the cost and complexity of robotics development and enabling teams to train and deploy robots rapidly using modular systems. Its approach has been described as creating “Legos for robots”, making advanced robotics accessible to a wider market (raising.fi). Within months, the company has shipped 100+ units, achieved early revenue traction and secured millions in venture funding.

## **KEY INSIGHT FROM THESE CASE STUDIES**

Across both examples, a consistent pattern emerges:

1. AI is embedded into core business models, not treated as an add on

2. Technology is enabling global scalability from small markets
3. Talent, not geography is becoming the primary competitive advantage

For Trinidad and Tobago, this reinforces a powerful reality, the country does not need to import innovation, it already has the capability to create it. These case studies point to a broader national opportunity. Trinidad and Tobago can position itself as a hub for AI-enabled services, a source of globally competitive digital talent and a platform for building scalable technology products.

Key sectors that have the greatest opportunity for AI include fintech and payments, logistics and trade platforms, BPO and digital services and robotics and automation.

In a world of remote work, talent becomes a tradable asset. Despite the opportunity, there is a critical risk. If AI adoption outpaces workforce capability productivity gains will stall, inequality may increase and businesses will underutilise technology.

The lesson from global markets is clear: AI delivers value only when the workforce is equipped to use it effectively.

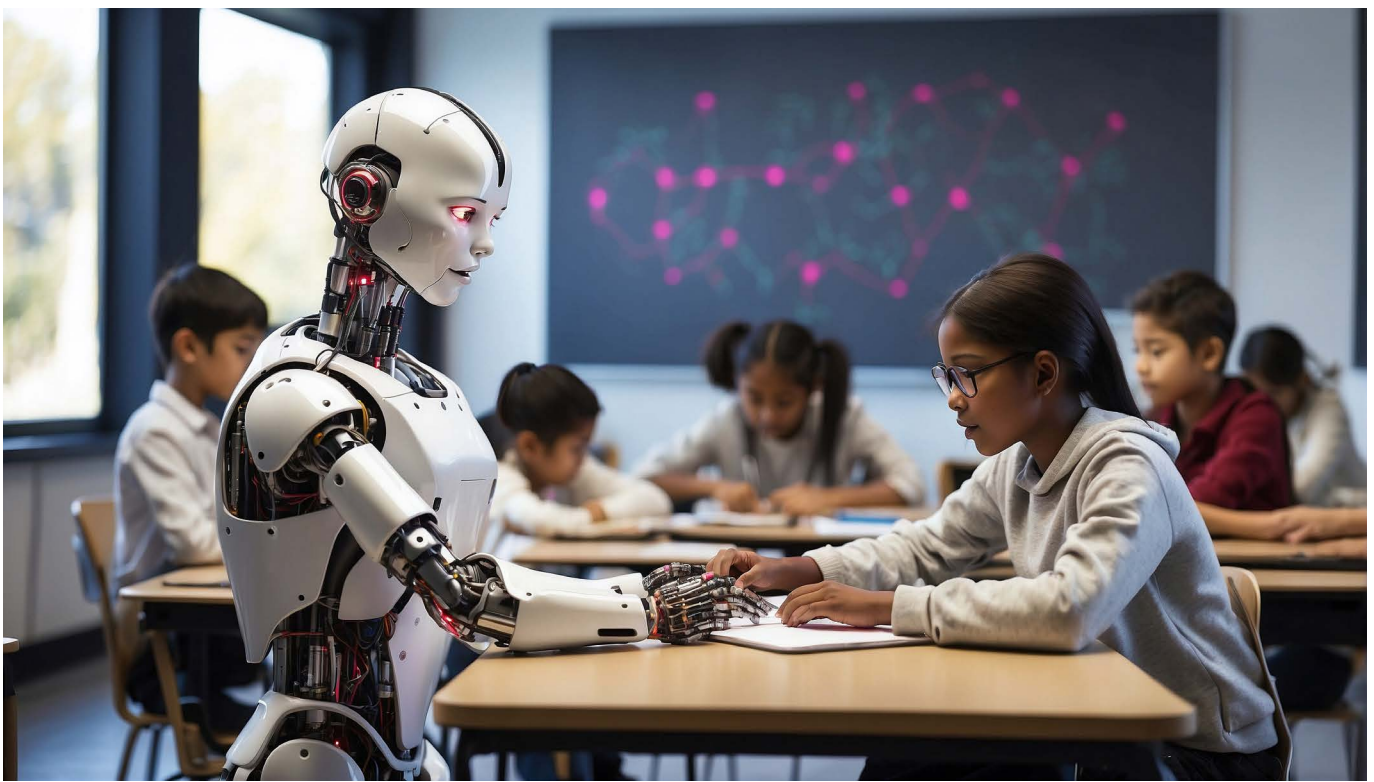


Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/natalielaf>

## **THE WAY FORWARD: A WORKFORCE-CENTRIC STRATEGY**

To fully capture the benefits of AI, Trinidad and Tobago must adopt a workforce-first transformation strategy.

### **1. Embed AI into Education and Training**

Introduce AI literacy at all levels, promote modular, industry-aligned programmes and expand finishing school and applied learning models

### **2. Incentivise Corporate Upskilling**

Encourage continuous workforce development, align incentives with productivity gains and support employer-led training ecosystems.

### **3. Strengthen Public-Private Collaboration**

Align policy with workforce needs, build digital infrastructure and support innovation hubs and startups

The future of work is not about replacing humans. It is about unlocking their potential at scale.

And that is the true promise of a TT based augmented economy. ■

# TRANSFORMING THE LAW ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

## INTRODUCTION

In the Caribbean sexual violence against women and girls is “*normalised, widespread and of pandemic proportions*”.<sup>1</sup> This unfortunate phenomenon is reflected in the workplace where sexual harassment is “*a not too unfamiliar scenario*” that disproportionately affects women.<sup>2</sup> Globally, 1 in 5 persons have experienced violence and harassment at work.<sup>3</sup> Regional data pegs the figure at 24.1% of women, with 13% of women in Trinidad and Tobago reported



By Ria Mohammed  
Attorney-at-Law

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- 1 Rashida Manjoo and Tracy Robinson, UN Caribbean Study Visit Report (2016).
  - 2 Madam Justice Desiree Bernard, ‘Confronting Gender-based Violence in the Caribbean’ (2006).
  - 3 International Labour Organisation, *Experiences of violence and harassment at work: A global first survey* (2022)

to have experienced harassment within a 12-month period alone.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these numbers, there is no national sexual harassment legislation on our statute books. Persons who experience sexual harassment are left to navigate a maze of legal options, none of which are ideal. The time has therefore come to rethink and transform the law on sexual harassment.

## WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment is any behaviour of a sexual nature that affects the dignity of women and men, which is considered as unwanted, unacceptable, inappropriate and offensive to the recipient, and that creates an intimidating, hostile, unstable or offensive work environment. It can take the form of a *quid pro quo* (this for that), physical touching, suggestive body language, comments with sexual overtones or invitations to go out. In the Caribbean it is often difficult to identify harassment because risqué behaviour is treated as “*part of our normal social intercourse*.”<sup>5</sup> Beyond being normalised, if a person experiences sexual harassment and wants redress, there is no singular legal option at their disposal.

4 UN Women, *Violence and Harassment in the Workplace: Data from National Prevalence Surveys on Gender-Based Violence* (2019)

5 Bernard, *supra* note 2.

## LEGAL REDRESS FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

### Assault and Battery

One option for redress is a civil claim for assault and battery. This was done in *Lequay v Bruce*,<sup>6</sup> one of the earliest reported sexual harassment cases. Here the claimant sued the defendant, her immediate supervisor, after he put his arms around her at a staff Christmas party and said he should “*rape her because she looked quite attractive*.” This behaviour was sharply condemned by de Iles J who held that defendant had “*violated the person of the plaintiff in the most disgusting manner*” and “*had abused his position of authority over her*.” The claimant was awarded \$12,000 in damages to “*express the Court’s utter displeasure ... and ameliorate in some small measure the gross indignity*.”

### Trade Dispute

A second option is pursue a trade dispute at Industrial Court as occurred *Bank Employees Union v Republic Bank Limited*.<sup>7</sup> Ironically this case was brought by a trade union on behalf of a perpetrator of harassment who was dismissed after he was accused of, and admitted to, kissing a female employee on the cheek, touching another on the bottom and putting both hands on hips of a third. His explanation was that he had a close rapport with the female employees in question, such that

6 Claim No. 1084 of 1978.

7 TT 1996 IC 13.

they were like brother and sisters. His challenge that his dismissal was contrary to good industrial relations practice was unsuccessful. The Court held that his conduct amounted to sexual harassment which was defined as “*sexual misconduct, directed, in the workplace, at an unwilling victim to whom that misconduct is offensive, unsettling, upsetting, psychologically damaging or otherwise stressful.*” The egregious nature of the conduct, the nature of the business of a commercial bank and the defendant’s position of authority, warranted dismissal.

On the flipside, in *All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union v Aquí Chung Ltd*<sup>8</sup> a claim was brought by an employee who alleged that she was forced to leave her job as a result of sexual harassment by her employer including unwanted touching, suggestive comments and lewd phone calls. She alleged that when she complained, she was transferred, refused vacation leave, accused of theft and had her actions monitored by fellow employees. However, her claim did not succeed due to a lack of evidence. Great store was placed on the fact that a co-worker who had witnessed one of the incidents was not called as a witness, the employee did not take immediate steps to leave the job, failed to particularise the details of her denial of vacation and did not provide sufficient evidence to substantiate her claims of being monitored.

## Equal Opportunity Act

A third option is to pursue a complaint under the Equal Opportunity Act which prohibits, *inter alia*, sex discrimination in the sphere of employment. There is precedent for such action in *Rishi Persad Maharaj v Cascadia Hotel Limited*,<sup>9</sup> where a male employee sought damages for sex discrimination after he was dismissed from his position as a quality control manager. He alleged that he was subjected to unwanted advances and inappropriate language by his female manager who called him “sexy”, “baby” and “bae”, slapped him on the buttocks and pinched him on the waist. After making verbal and written complaints, he began to receive complaints about his job performance and was eventually terminated for redundancy. The Equal Opportunity Tribunal dismissed the complaint on the basis that sexual harassment did not fall within the scope of the Act. This finding was reversed on appeal. The Court of Appeal held a sex discrimination claim based on less favourable treatment could be grounded on alleged sexual harassment.<sup>10</sup>

## CRITIQUE OF THE CURRENT LEGAL OPTIONS

These three options to address sexual harassment in our current legal landscape are far from ideal. A civil claim for assault and battery can only be maintained where the alleged harassment takes

<sup>9</sup> E.O.T. No. 1 of 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Civil Appeal No. P407 of 2019.

specific forms. Also, on a normative level, viewing sexual harassment through the prism of tortious action is problematic. As Catharine McKinnon explains “to see sexual harassment as an injury to morality is to turn it into an extreme case of bad manners, when the point is that it is the kind of bad manners almost exclusively visited upon women by men with the power to get away with it.”<sup>11</sup>

Pursuing action before the Industrial Court raises questions of standing because a trade dispute must be brought by union on behalf of a worker. Additionally, these claims are most frequently pursued where the employee has paid the ultimate price, namely loss of employment.

Under the Equal Opportunity Act, the problem centres on the fact that discrimination is defined as less favourable treatment. This definition is rooted in a formal version of equality, i.e. treating like alike. The problem is that this conception of discrimination does not preclude equally bad treatment. Therefore, if the female manager in the *Cascadia* case were an equal opportunity harasser who harassed both male and female employees, there would be no infringement of the Act.

## MAKING THE CASE FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT LEGISLATION

The shortcomings of the legal options coupled with the reported data makes a compelling case for the enactment of national sexual harassment legislation.

In effecting this transformation, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Legislation already exists in The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana and Jamaica. The 1991 CARICOM Model Law ‘Protection against Sexual Harassment Act’ is also a useful resource.

National legislation will provide a legally binding definition of what amounts to sexual harassment, create safe reporting mechanisms, protect victims from retaliation and require employers to take proactive and preventative steps to combat harassment. Reshaping the law in this area will send a strong message that sexual harassment is unacceptable and has no place in corporate Trinidad and Tobago. ■

<sup>11</sup> McKinnon, ‘Sexual Harassment of Working Women’ in Graygar and Morgan *The Hidden Gender of Law* (Federation Press 2002)

# THE HIDDEN COST OF MENOPAU\$E

Why Supporting Women in Midlife is the Key to  
Productivity, Retention and Sustainable Growth



Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/rawpixel-com>

# W

hat if one of the most significant untapped opportunities for economic growth in the Caribbean is not

a new industry or a digital shift, but the health and retention of the women already leading your organisation?

Across many organisations, experienced women form the backbone of the corporate landscape. They lead boardrooms, manage complex supply chains and mentor the next generation. Global labour trends consistently show that women in their forties and fifties are often at the peak of their careers. They bring institutional knowledge, sound judgement and a steady presence that supports business stability.

*With over 100 potential symptoms, perimenopause and menopause can affect energy, focus, mood and overall capacity, yet the topic remains largely absent from most workplace conversations.*



By Lisa Feveck

Director, Natural Beauty Ltd.

Supporting women through this transition is not just a wellness initiative, it is a strategic economic decision that directly affects productivity, retention and long-term organisational performance.

### **A NEW ERA OF CORPORATE RESILIENCE**

The transition through menopause is often described as a period of change, but for an organisation, it should be viewed as a period of revitalisation. When we support women through this phase, we are not just helping them 'get through' it. We are ensuring that they emerge on the other side as the most powerful and effective versions of themselves.

Women who navigate perimenopause and menopause with the support of their employers often develop a deeper sense

of commitment and resilience. They are the leaders who will guide organisations through the next decade of economic change. By recognising the link between women's health and 'the bottom line', organisations can build workplaces that are modern, inclusive and high-performing.

### **THE SHIFT AFFECTING PRODUCTIVITY**

To understand the economic impact of menopause, it is important to recognise the biological reality behind it. Menopause is a natural, universal life stage that all women will experience, though no two experiences are the same. It is a systemic hormonal transition that affects both the brain and body, and its effects do not stay at home when a woman comes to work.

As hormone levels shift during perimenopause and menopause, women may experience a wide range of physical, cognitive and emotional changes. These can influence energy levels, concentration, mood, sleep and overall capacity. When these changes are combined with ongoing workplace demands, many women find themselves working harder just to sustain their usual output, often without recognition or support.

*As hormone levels shift during perimenopause and menopause, women may experience a wide range of physical, cognitive and emotional changes.*

The work still gets done, but the internal cost to the individual is significantly higher. Tasks that were once routine now demand greater concentration, and confidence can dip in situations that previously felt straightforward. When multiple women across an organisation experience this at the same time, the cumulative effect can influence team dynamics, decision-making speed and overall morale.

Transformation begins when we stop viewing these challenges as individual shortcomings and recognise them as a physiological factor affecting workforce performance.

## THE INVISIBLE ECONOMIC DRAIN

Ignoring menopause carries measurable financial consequences. The loss of an experienced professional extends far beyond recruitment costs. It includes the loss of institutional knowledge, the time required to train a replacement and reduced productivity during transition periods.

Many women reach a point where the absence of support makes their roles unsustainable. They do not step away due to a lack of ambition. They step away because the environment does not adapt to their changing needs. At the very stage when a woman is poised to move into senior leadership, unmanaged symptoms combined with workplace silence can result in her scaling back or leaving altogether.

From a national perspective, this represents a significant economic loss. Mid-career women play a critical role in maintaining a stable and skilled labour force. When they exit prematurely, we lose mentors and visionaries meant to drive our economic future.

If a country is focused on sustainable growth, retaining this level of expertise is not optional, it is a requirement for competitive performance in a global economy.

## WHY MANY WOMEN STAY SILENT

In our culture, there is still a palpable stigma attached to menopause. It is often dismissed with light-hearted jokes or viewed as a private, 'women's issue' that has no place in a professional setting. This silence is expensive.

Many women worry that if they spoke up about their symptoms, they would be perceived as being less capable, and that they could get passed over for promotions. After decades of building credibility, the risk of being seen as 'diminished' is too high. As a result, many choose to manage quietly. They adjust their schedules, drink more coffee, and carry the weight of their symptoms alone.

However, a revitalised workplace takes a different approach, one where psychological safety is prioritised. When managers are trained to understand the menopause transition, the stigma begins to dissolve. Simple adjustments can also make a meaningful difference. The ability to schedule demanding tasks at times of peak focus, or to request flexibility after a poor night's sleep without judgement, supports sustained productivity and reinforces a more adaptable, responsive working environment.

Progress lies in moving from a culture of managing around menopause to one that works with it.

## POLICY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS FOR A MODERN WORKFORCE

There is a clear opportunity for organisations willing to respond with intention. Supporting women through menopause does not require a complete restructuring of the workplace. Instead, it starts with recognising this stage of life as part of the employee experience. From there, it becomes about implementing practical measures that allow women to continue performing at a high level.

Organisations should consider the following three pillars as part of their transformation strategy:

1. **Workplace environment and flexibility:** Small adjustments can have a major impact. This can include providing access to temperature-controlled rooms or ensuring that uniforms are made from breathable fabrics. More importantly, flexible working arrangements, such as the ability to work from home on days when symptoms are particularly acute, allow women to remain productive without compromising their wellbeing.
2. **Formal menopause policies:** A clearly defined policy signals that an organisation values and supports its people. It should outline available resources, such as wellness days or flexible scheduling, and provide clear guidelines for how managers should handle disclosures. This removes the



Image: <https://www.magnific.com/author/theuriarcurscollection>

- guesswork and ensures that support is consistent across all departments.
3. **Education and specialist access:** Providing access to menopause education and professional support can transform outcomes. This should extend beyond women themselves to include their colleagues and managers, ensuring a broader understanding of the menopause transition within the workplace. Through workshops, coaching and specialist consultations, organisations can equip women with practical, evidence-based strategies to manage symptoms and maintain performance, while also fostering empathy, awareness and more effective support from colleagues and leadership.

Progress does not require large-scale change. It begins with conversation, practical action, and recognising that when women are supported through every stage of their careers, everyone benefits. ■

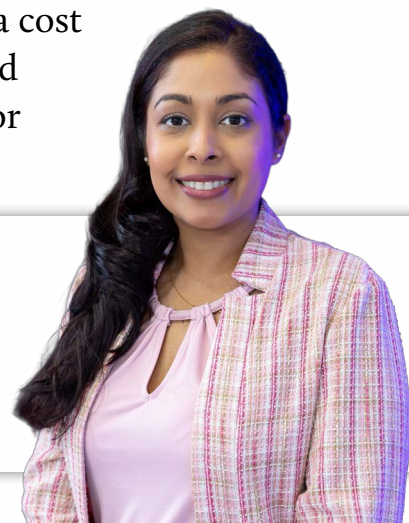
# WORKPLACE WELLNESS: FROM COST CENTRE TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

## The Business Case for Workplace Wellness

**F**or decades, workplace wellness has existed on the periphery of corporate strategy often treated as a discretionary expense, a “nice-to-have” benefit or an HR-led initiative aimed primarily at employee satisfaction.

In many organisations, wellness initiatives were sometimes little more than a tick-the-box exercise, implemented for compliance or optics rather than impact. Viewed through this narrow lens, wellness was positioned as a cost centre with unclear and often underestimated returns and was mostly viewed as a benefit for the employees.

By Lisaan Dipchan  
Managing Director/Executive Coach  
– Mindful Resolutions



That perspective is rapidly becoming outdated.

Today's most resilient, competitive and future-ready organisations are reframing workplace wellness not as a cost to be managed but as a strategic investment, one that directly influences performance and long-term sustainability. In an era marked by rising mental and physical health-related costs, increasing complexity and cognitive load as well as constant disruption, wellness has emerged as a critical driver of business outcomes.

The question facing leaders is no longer whether workplace wellness matters, but whether their organisation can afford to ignore it.

## **THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF WORK**

The nature of work has fundamentally changed and the impact is measurable. Burnout, stress-related illness, disengagement, presenteeism, absenteeism, and turnover are quietly eroding organisational performance across industries. According to global workforce data, poor mental and physical wellbeing is now one of the leading contributors to lost productivity, often exceeding the impact of traditional operational risks.

What makes this challenge particularly complex is that its effects are not always immediately visible on financial statements. Instead, they surface over time. This signals an important shift: wellness is no longer a people issue alone, it is a business risk and a business opportunity.

## **WELLNESS AS A PERFORMANCE LEVER**

Organisations that treat wellness strategically do not approach it as a collection of isolated programmes or perks. Instead, they recognise wellness as a performance enabler, one that influences how people think and behave. Healthy employees bring clarity, energy, emotional regulation, creativity, and resilience to work. These qualities directly impact the business.

At the leadership level, the stakes are even higher. Leaders operating under chronic stress or fatigue are more prone to reactive decision-making and diminished capacity. Over time, this shapes organisational outcomes.

Conversely, organisations that invest in wellbeing at both employee and leadership levels consistently report positive results. Wellness fuels performance and performance fuels competitiveness.

## **THE FINANCIAL CASE: MOVING BEYOND SOFT METRICS**

The financial implications of workplace wellness are both tangible and significant. Strategically designed wellness initiatives have been shown to:

- reduce health-related costs over time
- improve retention of high-performing talent
- protect organisational knowledge and capability
- enhance productivity and output consistency
- deliver return on investment through risk reduction, performance stability, and sustained leadership capacity
- create stable, high-performing teams

Can you afford NOT to invest in wellness?

## **TALENT, REPUTATION, AND THE EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION**

High-performing professionals, leaders and those with rare technical talent are evaluating employers based on culture, leadership quality and wellbeing practices. The latter has become a defining element of the employer value proposition.

Organisations that visibly prioritise wellness powerfully signal: people matter here. This is a matter of governance, and key stakeholders are scrutinising how organisations manage people risk, shape leadership behaviour, and build sustainable performance for the future.

Wellness, in this context, becomes a marker of organisational maturity and strategic foresight.

## **LEADERSHIP WELLNESS: THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT**

While employee wellness is critical, leadership wellness deserves particular attention. Leaders set the tone for culture, behaviour, and performance norms. Their wellbeing or lack thereof creates a ripple effect throughout the organisation.

When leaders are supported to develop emotional intelligence, self-regulation, resilience, and clarity under pressure, organisations benefit from:

- Stronger leadership presence and credibility
- Improved communication and trust
- Better conflict management and decision-making
- More resilient teams

Conversely, when leaders operate in survival mode, stress cascades downward, impacting morale, engagement, and performance across entire systems.

Organisations that invest in leadership wellbeing are not indulging executives, rather they are protecting one of their most critical strategic assets; their leadership.

### **BEYOND PROGRAMMES: EMBEDDING WELLNESS INTO BUSINESS STRATEGY**

The most successful organisations understand that wellness cannot be solved through isolated initiatives alone. Gym memberships, wellness days, or occasional workshops while useful are insufficient without strategic integration.

Effective workplace wellness is:

- Embedded in leadership behaviour and expectations
- Aligned with organisational values and strategy
- Supported by policies, systems, and role modelling
- Measured through meaningful performance and engagement indicators

When wellness becomes part of how an organisation operates rather than something it offers it transitions from cost centre to competitive advantage.

### **A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE FOR THE FUTURE**

As organisations navigate increasing complexity, uncertainty, and change, the ability to sustain high performance over time will distinguish those that merely survive from those that thrive.

Workplace wellness sits at the intersection of people, performance, and profitability. It influences how work gets done, how leaders lead, and how organisations respond under pressure.

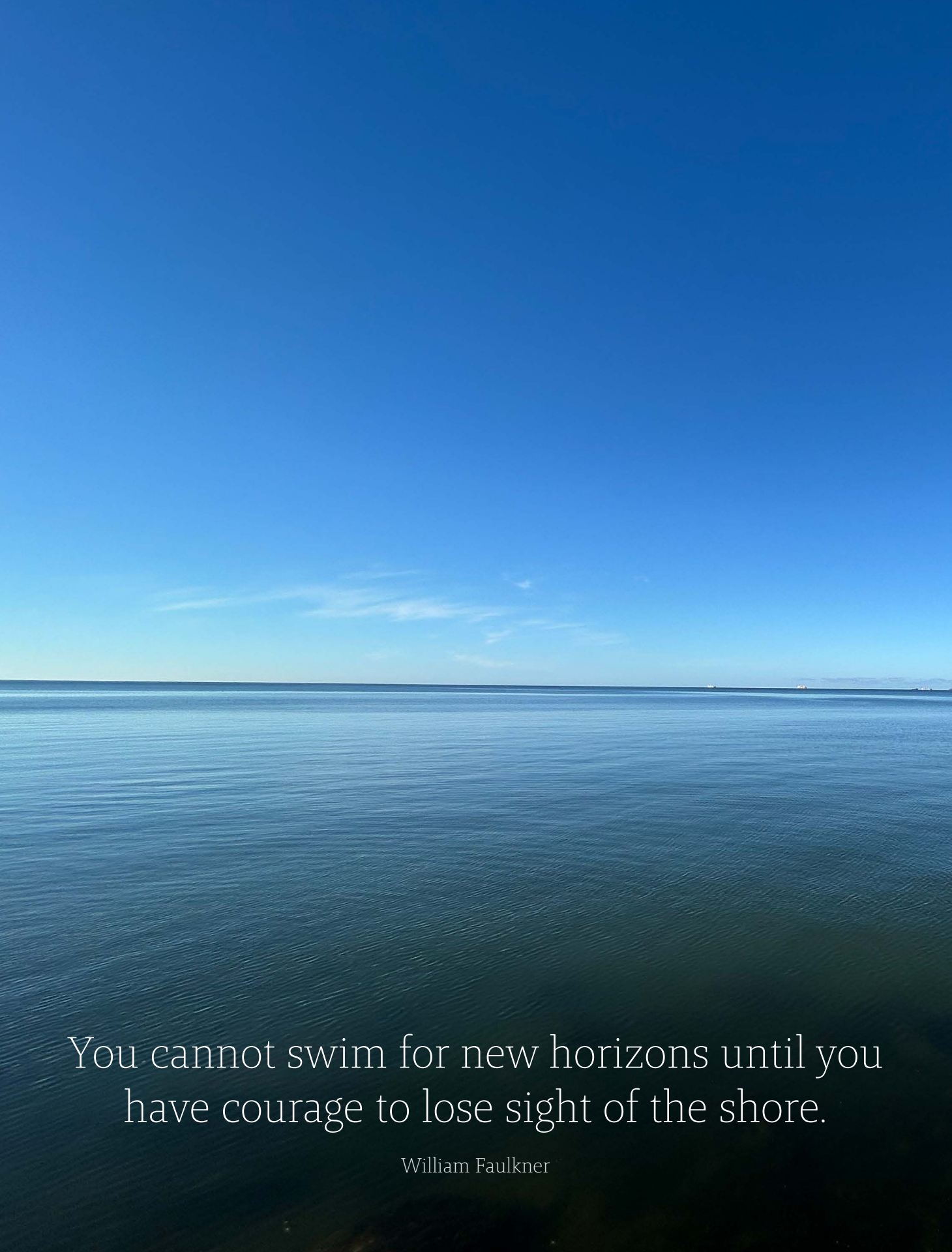
For senior executives, board members, and policymakers, the message is clear: Wellness is not an HR initiative.

It is not a short-term trend.

And it is certainly not a soft issue.

It is a strategic lever, one that when intentionally designed and embedded, strengthens organisational resilience, sharpens competitive edge, and delivers sustainable value.

The organisations that recognise this today will be the ones best positioned to lead tomorrow. ■



You cannot swim for new horizons until you  
have courage to lose sight of the shore.

William Faulkner



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