



CEO Leadership Case Studies

How Kleidos Helped CEOs Navigate
Complex Challenges

AI and Business Model Reinvention

Case Study 1

Client Context

A multi-country professional services business with several thousand employees and a reputation for high-quality advisory.

The organisation had invested steadily in AI tools over two years, primarily focused on automation, analytics, and decision support.

However, a critical disconnect emerged between technical progress and commercial reality:

Board Pressure: The CEO was mandated to demonstrate that AI investment was improving performance, not just modernising infrastructure.

Internal Divide: While technology teams felt progress had been made, the commercial leadership remained unconvinced.

“AI existed, but it was not changing how the business competed.”

The Challenge

The core issue was not technology, but leadership confidence and clarity.

The executive team struggled to agree on what AI was actually for, leading to fragmentation:

Conflicting Views: Some saw it as a cost-saving lever, others as risk mitigation, and others as a threat to professional judgment.

Stalled Execution: Decisions were slow and cautious. AI pilots remained small and isolated while client propositions were largely unchanged.

Managerial Paralysis: Managers were hesitant to commit fully, worried about making the wrong call.

The CEO described the situation as “lots of movement, but no momentum”.

Process, Outcomes & Insight

Case Study 1: AI and Business Model Reinvention

The Process

1 Assessment

Identified leaders were skilled at optimisation but uncomfortable with reinvention. Fear of damaging revenue drove incrementalism.

2 Reframing

Shifted narrative from "tech initiative" to value story: faster/cheaper vs. valuable/differentiated vs. human judgment.

3 Alignment

Facilitated explicit trade-offs and decision rights. Surfaced quiet resistance to make decisions faster and clearer.

4 Execution

Coached CEO and leaders through rollout to ensure confidence held when early challenges emerged.

Outcomes (12 Months)

~15%

New Client Wins

Contributed by AI-enabled offerings

+5pp

Margins

Project margin improvement

-30%

Cycle Time

Faster decision making

High Single Digit %

Client Retention

Improvement in retention rates



Leadership Confidence

Marked increase in "how we use AI" scores

Why This Matters

"AI progress accelerates when leaders are clear, aligned, and confident."

Kleidos helped convert uncertainty into decisive leadership, allowing technology to translate into commercial momentum.

Growth Amidst Uncertainty

Case Study 2

Client Context

A mid-sized, listed industrial business operating across several markets, exposed to volatile input costs.

The organisation possessed a strong operational core but was entering a period of sustained external pressure and fluctuating demand.

The CEO faced a paradox of conflicting expectations that strained the organisation's focus:

Defensive Mandate: Reduce costs and protect margins against rising volatility.

Offensive Mandate: Still deliver growth despite the market headwinds.

“The organisation had to balance operational belt-tightening with a growth agenda.”

The Challenge

The greatest risk was not strategy, but leadership fatigue.

Senior leaders were stretched thin, leading to a deterioration in decision quality and speed:

Reactive Culture: Meetings became reactive rather than strategic, and decisions were often revisited repeatedly.

Wavering Confidence: Senior confidence wavered, filtering down to middle managers who felt squeezed.

Organisational Anxiety: A growing sense of anxiety permeated the workforce, threatening execution.

The CFO warned that execution risk was rising, not because of capability, but because of exhaustion and distraction.

Process, Outcomes & Insight

Case Study 2: Growth Amidst Uncertainty

The Process

1 Assessment

Identified how pressure was degrading judgment, communication, and decision quality. Highlighted where urgency was crowding out strategic focus.

2 Stabilisation

Re-established a small number of clear priorities and redesigned leadership cadence. Modeled calm, consistent leadership behaviour to shift organisational tone.

3 Execution

Supported the CEO through difficult cost and investment decisions, ensuring actions aligned with long-term health rather than just short-term relief.

The Outcomes (12Months)

~6%

Cost Reduction

Reduction in cost leakage

**Mid Single
Digit**

Revenue

Growth stabilised in flat market

+2pp

Margins

Operating margin improvement

Zero

Leadership Turnover

Senior leadership stability restored

+10 Points

Employee engagement improvement



Why This Matters

"Sustained performance under uncertainty is a leadership discipline."

Kleidos helped this CEO protect value by strengthening clarity, endurance, and decision quality.

Talent and Culture Transformation

Case Study 3

Client Context

A fast-growing international technology business with several hundred employees across multiple regions.

The organisation had experienced rapid expansion, scaling its workforce and regional footprint aggressively. However, the internal systems for managing people had not kept pace.

The leadership infrastructure—roles, expectations, and behavioural norms, lagged behind the complexity of the business.

“The CEO recognised that execution was slowing despite strong market demand.”

The Challenge

Culture was fragmenting, becoming a significant brake on growth.

As teams grew, they began operating with different norms, creating friction and misalignment. The impact was visible in key performance metrics:

Slowing Velocity: Decision-making slowed significantly as consensus became harder to reach across disjointed teams.

Rising Attrition: Voluntary attrition rose into the high teens, signaling deeper engagement issues.

Operational Impact: Product delivery timelines slipped, beginning to affect confidence and commercial momentum.

The CEO acknowledged that culture was becoming a brake on growth.

Process, Outcomes & Insight

Case Study 3: Talent, Workforce Transformation and Culture

The Process

1 Assessment

Conducted psychometric and behavioural mapping across leadership and key roles. This made culture visible, identifying specific friction points and areas of misalignment.

2 Design

Aligned behaviour with strategy. Leadership roles were clarified, behavioural expectations were made explicit, and accountability was reinforced.

3 Execution

Embedded change deeply. Culture was integrated into hiring, promotion, and performance conversations, with the CEO consistently modelling the new norms.

Outcomes (9 Months)

~20%

Faster Delivery

Improvement in product timelines

Low Teens

Attrition

Reduced from high teens

-25%

Time to Hire

Faster recruitment cycle

+15 Pts

Management Confidence

Significant improvement in scores



Business Cohesion

Regained speed and execution focus

Why This Matters

"Culture directly affects execution."

Kleidos helps CEOs turn behavioural clarity into faster delivery and lower friction, proving culture is a behavioural system, not just a values exercise.

Geopolitics and Global Volatility

Case Study 4

Client Context

An international business operating across multiple regions exposed to regulatory, political, and economic volatility.

The organisation faced a perfect storm of external pressures, requiring immediate attention from leadership:

Constant Noise: The CEO faced relentless external noise and mounting pressure to act quickly in response to shifting landscapes.

Global Exposure: Operations spanned diverse jurisdictions, each presenting unique political and economic risks.

“The CEO faced constant external noise and pressure to act quickly.”

The Challenge

Information was incomplete and emotions were high, creating a high risk of reactive leadership.

The leadership environment was characterised by confusion and urgency rather than clarity:

Conflicting Advice: Board members, investors, and advisors offered contradictory guidance, complicating decision-making.

Pressure to Retreat: There was significant pressure to exit markets or pause investment abruptly.

Reactive Risk: The primary danger was not inaction, but making hasty decisions driven by anxiety rather than strategy.

The risk was reactive leadership in an environment where information was incomplete.

Process, Outcomes & Insight

Case Study 4: Geopolitics and Global Volatility

The Process

1 Scenario Thinking

Supported the CEO through structured scenario planning to anticipate multiple futures, reducing the urge to react to immediate noise.

2 Stress Management

Implemented techniques to maintain composure, ensuring emotional reactivity didn't cloud judgment during high-pressure moments.

3 Uncertainty Frameworks

Established decision-making frameworks specifically designed for incomplete information, enabling disciplined choices amidst ambiguity.

Outcomes (18 Months)

Intentional Delay

Strategic Decisions

Major decisions delayed for better timing, not avoidance

Maintained

Market Presence

While competitors exited prematurely

+20%

Confidence

Improvement in leadership confidence scores

Strategic

Board Focus

Shifted from crisis oversight to dialogue

Why This Matters

"In volatile environments, calm leadership is a competitive advantage."

Kleidos helps leaders maintain clarity when others react, creating space to think when everything else is noisy.

Sustainability, ESG and Reputation

Case Study 5

Client Context

A consumer-facing organisation operating across multiple jurisdictions, under growing scrutiny.

The organisation faced rising pressure from regulators, employees, and the public regarding its environmental and social impact.

While the CEO understood that ESG expectations were rising, the path forward was unclear:

Expectation Gap: The need to meet external demands without over-promising or appearing inauthentic.

Complexity: Navigating diverse requirements across different international markets.

“The CEO struggled with how to lead authentically without over-promising.”

The Challenge

Stakeholders were sceptical, and trust was fragile.

The core challenge lay in bridging the gap between high-level intent and operational reality:

Internal Confusion: Managers were unsure how ESG translated into day-to-day decisions, leading to paralysis or inconsistent actions.

External Skepticism: Trust with external stakeholders was fragile, with any misstep potentially damaging the brand.

Reputational Risk: The CEO faced significant personal reputational exposure if leadership was perceived as performative rather than substantive.

The risk was reactive leadership in the face of scrutiny, rather than proactive, values-based direction.

Process, Outcomes & Insight

Case Study 5: Sustainability, ESG and Reputation

The Process

1 Alignment

Aligned leadership behaviour, values, and decision making to ensure internal consistency before external promises.

2 Clarification

Clarified personal and organisational commitments to define what authentic leadership specifically looked like.

3 Integration

Embedded commitments into leadership frameworks to guide day-to-day operations and strategic choices.

4 Coaching

Coached leaders through difficult conversations to build confidence in managing complex trade-offs openly.

Outcomes (12 Months)

+15 pts

Employee Confidence

Improvement in leadership integrity scores

Earlier

Risk Escalation

Issues managed effectively

Improved

Sentiment

Stakeholder trust stabilised

Strengthened

Credibility

Across internal and external forums



CEO Confidence

Greater confidence leading trade-offs openly

Why This Matters

"Authentic leadership builds ESG credibility and trust over time."

Kleidos helps CEOs turn behavioural clarity into trust, protecting reputation by ensuring promises match actions.



About KLEIDOS

A marketing function was actively experimenting with AI tools across content creation, analytics, and campaign optimisation. However, adoption was uneven across the department, and team sentiment remained mixed.

The CMO was determined to drive progress and modernisation but feared that a mismanaged transition could damage morale and erode the team's creative confidence.