



Pearl Initiative and startAD Spotlight Governance as a Strategic Advantage for Tech Startups in the UAE

- With UAE tech startups raising \$872M in early 2025, Pearl Initiative and startAD examine governance as a competitive edge.
 - Panel speakers stressed corporate governance as key to credibility, capital access, and resilience.
 - The event is part of Pearl Initiative's Governance in Tech & AI Programme to equip founders with practical tools for sustainable growth.
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Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates –26 June 2025: Pearl Initiative and startAD came together to convene a key panel discussion at startAD Central at New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), bringing together founders, investors, and regulatory experts to explore the evolving role of governance in the startup cycle of tech companies.

The session, titled **“Build to Last: Governance as a Competitive Edge in Tech Ventures”**, featured panelists Ashwin Joshi, Director at startAD; Timothy Land, Executive Director of Monitoring & Enforcement Registration Authority at ADGM; Amine Staali, Managing Partner and CEO of DeepMinds; Stephanie Richards, Founding Partner at BrightView Global, and Aakanksha Tangri, Founder of Re:Set, who moderated the session.

Ashwin Joshi, Director at startAD, emphasised the importance of embedding governance early to unlock long-term value, stating, *“Governance is not a roadblock, but a roadmap for sustainable growth.”* He added that *“As UAE is carving its own footprint in the global tech innovation ecosystem, UAE based startup founders can learn from the global case studies related to startup governance and leverage this know-how for building a successful future for themselves in the region.”*

Joshi also noted that establishing clear decision-making structures, reinforced by accountability mechanisms and transparent reporting, can significantly strengthen investor confidence.

The panel highlighted how robust governance helps startups navigate competitive markets by building trust, enhancing decision-making, and meeting investor expectations through frameworks like board composition and reporting structures. It stressed balancing founder control with stakeholder accountability and leveraging regulation for agility, reinforcing the Pearl Initiative's commitment to fostering transparency and accountability in the tech startup ecosystem.

Ralph Choueiri, Executive Director of the Pearl Initiative, reflected on the role of corporate governance in supporting high-growth tech startups, particularly in the UAE's thriving entrepreneurial landscape. He stated: *“We are witnessing a transformative shift in how UAE tech founders embrace governance as a strategic advantage, especially as tech startups raised \$872 million in Q1 2025 alone, reflecting a 194% surge in investor confidence. Through our Governance in Tech & AI Programme at the Pearl Initiative, we are equipping entrepreneurs with practical frameworks to foster trust, resilience, and sustainable growth in this dynamic market.”*

The UAE has solidified its position as a leading startup hub, with over 5,600 new startups registered in Q2 2024. Abu Dhabi's startup ecosystem achieved a \$4.2 billion valuation between 2021 and 2023, securing \$224 million in early-stage funding. This growth underscores the critical role of governance in sustaining the UAE's dynamic tech ecosystem.

The panel marks another step in Pearl Initiative's broader effort to embed accountability and governance as core pillars of business success in the region, with a continued focus on equipping emerging enterprises with the tools to grow with purpose and integrity.



About Pearl Initiative

The Pearl Initiative is the Gulf region's leading independent, non-profit organisation working to promote the business case for a corporate culture of accountability and transparency. Established in 2010 by regional business leaders in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Partnerships, the Pearl Initiative is the only private, non-profit Gulf business network to receive special consultative status from the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Pearl Initiative runs a series of corporate governance related programmes, including Anti-Corruption Best Practices, Diversity in Business Leadership, Governance in MSMEs, Governance in Family Firms, Governance in Tech, and Governance in Philanthropy. The organisation also conducts locally relevant research, hosts workshops and executive education training sessions, and convenes business leaders, policymakers, students, and non-profit executives to encourage a proactive approach to implementing best practices in the workplace across the Gulf region.

For more information, please visit www.pearlinitiative.org.