



# The Family Office in 2026:

**Governance and Human Capital  
Strategies That Drive Growth**

# Introduction



Family offices are undergoing a profound evolution. Once dedicated primarily to wealth preservation, these entities have become dynamic entrepreneurial investment platforms and influential players in global markets.

The economic impact of family enterprises is now immense. According to the 2025 Global 500 Family Business Index, the largest 500 family enterprises collectively generated US\$8.8 trillion in revenue. If measured against national Gross Domestic Products (GDP), it would make them the world's third-largest economy.

Yet, this rapid capital growth has exposed a significant maturity gap in the operational and leadership infrastructure of many family offices. The Citibank 2025 Global Family Office Report identifies a clear disconnect between asset growth and organizational resilience, citing substantial gaps in risk management (58%), cybersecurity (58%), and succession planning (74%).

To ensure future success, family offices must adopt a governance-first architecture where leadership advisory, strategic talent mapping, and robust succession planning lay the groundwork for sustainable growth.

# 1

# How Macrodynamics Are Influencing Talent Strategy

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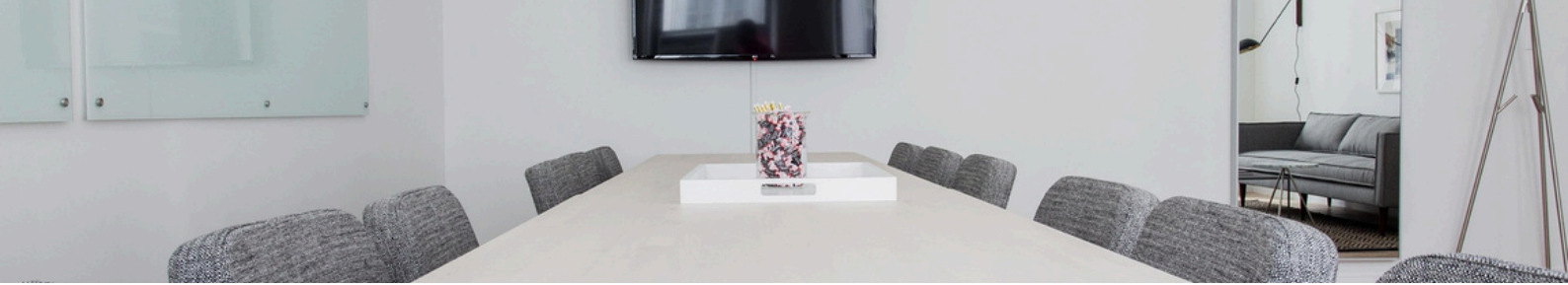
The operating environment for family offices in 2026 is characterized by a polycrisis, defined as the simultaneous convergence of geopolitical instability, inflationary pressures, and rapid technological disruption. This environment requires leadership that extends beyond traditional financial management. Here are four key macrodynamics influencing the talent strategy and organizational development needs of family offices:

**Geopolitical Risks:** Geopolitical concerns are now one of the highest-priority risks for family offices. Instead of reverting to traditional safe havens such as gold, many families are pursuing a growth-through-volatility approach by investing in real assets, including real estate, infrastructure, and operating businesses, which retain value through currency or market fluctuations. This strategy necessitates leaders with operational expertise in managing complex physical assets and the geopolitical acumen to navigate cross-border regulatory environments.

**The Private Markets Anchor:** In a prolonged high-interest-rate environment, cash holdings lose value, and public bonds yield limited real returns. As a result, family offices are increasingly allocating assets to alternatives, which now comprise nearly 60% of portfolios among those concerned with inflation (2026 Global Family Office Report, J.P. Morgan). Private equity and private debt have emerged as primary vehicles for wealth preservation, necessitating internal leadership with advanced credit underwriting and operational value-creation capabilities.

**The Great Wealth Flight:** Ultra-High-Net-Worth (UHNW) families are increasingly leaving traditional, high-tax jurisdictions for hubs offering greater tax efficiency, geopolitical stability, and enhanced lifestyle options. This cross-border migration of capital and family members fundamentally alters the family office's organizational footprint. It drives a critical need for executives with deep expertise in multi-jurisdictional tax structuring, international compliance, and global mobility, as well as the operational agility to lead decentralized, globally distributed teams.

**Cybersecurity Risks:** As family offices continue to digitize and use increasingly advanced technology, their exposure to cyber threats compounds. This vulnerability is intensified by artificial intelligence, which has increased both the volume and sophistication of attacks. Consequently, there is a growing demand for specialized Chief Technology Officers who can build resilient infrastructure to safeguard the organization.



## 2

# The Future of Family-Office Governance

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While family offices have proven their excellence in wealth management, they increasingly face complex issues that can lead to governance paralysis. Partners across our global firms have identified four primary causes of failure:

1. **Unclear Decision Rights:** Ambiguity over who has the authority to make final decisions, such as approving capital calls, setting strategic direction, and hiring staff.
2. **Family Disputes:** The bleed of personal grievances into professional operations.
3. **Lack of Accountability:** Family members employed by the office without performance metrics.
4. **No Formal Succession Planning:** The absence of planned leadership transitions and knowledge transfer threatens business continuity in the event of sudden changes.

**To professionalize, forward-thinking family offices are adopting a three-pillar governance model:**

- **The Independent Investment Committee:** Moving away from single-person decisions, 56% of offices now use Investment Policy Statements (source). Best practice involves including external, non-family experts on the committee to challenge assumptions and remove emotional bias from capital allocation.
- **The Family Council:** A forum separate from the business, dedicated to professional development, conflict resolution, and the business of the family. This body drafts a charter that defines the values and rules of engagement for the family's wealth.
- **The Advisory Board:** More family offices are creating formal boards with independent directors. These directors serve as a buffer between family owners and non-family management, ensuring the CEO has a clear mandate to execute strategy without being constrained by family dynamics.

*“Good governance costs less than family conflict.”*



**Andrew Mushore**  
Principal, GlassRatner

Crucially, establishing these governance pillars provides the framework needed to execute **robust succession planning** and mitigate the risk of business interruption. By leveraging the Advisory Board and Family Council, families can design clear roadmaps for leadership transitions, mandate knowledge documentation, and formalize mentoring programs to prepare both family and non-family successors.

This professionalization of governance structures is significantly affecting talent strategy, with increased demand for **independent board members, external committee members, and non-family executives** who can operate confidently within structured governance environments.

Given the heightened competition for talent across financial services and investment sectors, family offices with advanced, professionalized governance structures possess a distinct advantage in attracting and acquiring leadership talent.





## 3 Cultural Diagnostics

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New governance structures are unsuccessful if they clash with the family's culture. Leah McGillivray-Palko, Partner at Glass Ratner, argues that in family offices, "Cultural fit is not a component – it is the core." A governance framework that works for a risk-averse, hierarchical family office will fail in an entrepreneurial, matrixed environment.

Therefore, the first step in governance design is cultural diagnostic work. This involves mapping the family's communication style, risk tolerance, and decision-making history to build a structure that aligns with their DNA. Misalignment here is costly: trust erodes, decisions stall, and continuity is jeopardized. Thus, new hires must embody the family's values, communication style, governance expectations, and long-term vision.

Additionally, first-generation and multi-generational family offices have radically different governance needs:

- **First-generation families** prioritize investment clarity, tax strategy, and risk management.
- **Second- and third-generation leaders** need charters, councils, and structures that manage relationships as much as assets. This evolution has major implications for talent: future leaders must combine financial expertise with emotional intelligence, diplomatic skills, and the ability to navigate multi-stakeholder environments.

These risks during governance evolution and rewards when executed correctly demand that external talent acquisition partners invest in long-term relationships that evolve with families across generations.

# 4

## Global Market Insights

### Belgium: Navigating Opportunity and Complexity

Belgian family offices, whether originating from historic family-controlled holdings or recent entrepreneurial successes, exemplify the broader economic transformation underway in Europe. These organizations operate within a dual landscape that balances considerable growth potential with increasing operational complexity.

**Emerging Opportunities:** Belgium's economic ecosystem offers fertile ground for growth, particularly for family offices prepared to pivot toward contemporary sectors.

1. **Sustainable ventures are increasingly being prioritized**, with a strong emphasis on investments that comply with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria.
2. **There is a growing appetite for private equity**, particularly through direct investments in local businesses.
3. **Innovation clusters present high growth potential**, especially in specialized fields such as clean energy and biotechnology.

**Critical Risks:** Despite these opportunities, the environment is becoming increasingly volatile. Leaders must address a complex array of emerging threats.

1. **External pressures** include geopolitical uncertainty, increasingly stringent European Union regulations, and climate change-related disruptions.
2. **Internal vulnerabilities** encompass cybersecurity threats, governance deficiencies, and generational alignment challenges.

To succeed, executive leaders must extend their focus beyond asset management to include the ability to navigate volatility and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Agility, strategic foresight, and consistent leadership are essential.



*“Family offices seek leaders they can trust—not only to navigate complexity and safeguard long-term value but also to embody their core values. As specialists in executive search, we observe that sustainable talent strategies and succession planning are essential for family offices. A long-term partnership with the right executive search expert is precisely what a boutique firm like ours can bring.”*



**Hendrik Geleyte**  
Managing Partner,  
GR&Partners

## France: An Expanding and Maturing Market

The French family office landscape is undergoing a significant expansion and maturation, shifting from passive wealth management to active, professionalized investment structures. A 2025 study by the Association of French Family Offices and EY highlights this evolution, identifying five defining trends:

- 1. A Surge in First-Generation Offices:** The sector is seeing a rapid expansion of first-generation family offices. This reflects a wave of new wealth creation in France, leading to the establishment of brand-new structures distinct from historic multi-generational organizations.
- 2. High Demand for External Talent:** There is a sharp increase in demand for experienced external executives and specialized advisors to meet current challenges, professionalize operations, and guide new investment strategies.
- 3. Real Economy Impact:** French family offices are proactively shaping the country's economic landscape, driving growth and innovation across key sectors. They are moving away from fund investment toward direct private equity ownership and active governance in their portfolio companies.
- 4. Increasing Formalization:** Heightened regulatory scrutiny, along with new approaches introduced by second- and third-generation family members, is driving greater formalization of governance. The days of informal decision-making are ending, replaced by structured boards and compliance protocols.
- 5. Impact Investing:** Increasingly, French family offices are seeking social and environmental impact alongside financial return.

*"France's ecosystem reflects the broader European evolution: Family offices are no longer simple asset managers: they have become key players in the real economy. Their influence will continue to grow, particularly in the industrial and technological sectors. And in this context, talent management and governance are now strategic pillars for them."*



**Romain Girard**  
Partner, Progress Associés

## Canada: Transitioning to Second-Generation Leadership (Case Study)

### The Challenge

A prominent Canadian single-family office faced a critical inflection point: the transition from first-generation to second-generation leadership. To enable a second-generation family member to step into the CEO role, the office needed to further institutionalize and build a C-suite team to manage key strategic functions. This meant appointing a Chief Investment Officer (CIO) and a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to professionalize operations and remove the burden of daily financial and investment management from the family.

### The Solution

- **Vision-First Alignment:** Before engaging the market, GlassRatner held deep-dive sessions to articulate the family's mission, purpose, and legacy goals. This ensured the search addressed the office's *future* state, not just current gaps.
- **Organizational Design:** Following an in-depth evaluation, GlassRatner provided strategic guidance on leadership structure to align the organization with the family office's long-term objectives.
- **Targeted Talent Mapping:** The search focused on "hybrid" candidates from single and multi-family offices, identifying leaders who combined institutional investment discipline with the agility needed for a private family environment.
- **Cultural Diagnostics:** Recognizing that cultural fit is difficult to measure but critical to success, the process included detailed cognitive and personality assessments. These tools measured behavioral traits and decision-making styles to identify candidates who matched the family's entrepreneurial DNA.

## The Outcome

The search placed a CIO (formerly a Portfolio Manager at a multi-family office) and a CFO (formerly from a large single-family office). To mitigate integration risks, a common failure point, the selected executives received tailored coaching on executive presence, business strategy, and family committee integration. Three years later, both remain in their roles, delivering strategic stability and validating the importance of a governance-focused search strategy.

“At the outset of the engagement, we conducted a comprehensive analysis to determine how the organizational structure should adapt to support the transition from first- to second-generation stewardship. We focused on identifying candidates with a proven ability to thrive in entrepreneurial settings and whose investment philosophies aligned with the client’s values and long-term vision. To further ensure success, we integrated coaching into the onboarding process, reducing risks and supporting sustainable impact. This approach has resulted in a 95% success rate for our placed candidates – setting us well ahead of industry benchmarks.” – Andrew Mushore, Principal, GlassRatner



# 5

## The Role of Leadership Advisory Firms

Global trends reveal an undeniable shift: family offices are becoming more complex, connected, and influential. Executive search and leadership advisory firms provide critical value by offering:

### Family Office Needs

### IIC Partners Solutions

#### Strategic Talent Mapping

Comprehensive mapping of talent across competitor organizations and identifying emerging leadership needs (CIOs, Chief Impact Officers, etc.).

#### Governance Advisory

Supporting the creation of boards, committees, and family councils with rigor and discretion.

#### Cultural Diagnostic Work

Ensuring new hires understand the family's values, expectations, and interpersonal dynamics, while making space for a new strategic direction and input into the existing leadership and culture.

#### Long-Term Succession and Continuity Planning

Helping families build multi-generational strategies that prevent conflict, strategic drift, or indecision.

#### Access to Global Talent

Leveraging international networks to identify exceptional cross-border talent while respecting local relevance and confidentiality.

The broad spectrum of leadership and talent acquisition solutions employed demonstrates that family offices benefit from a partnership model with executive search firms.

*"Family offices need tailored executive search solutions that respect their discretion and heritage while ensuring they attract leaders capable of navigating complex global markets."*



**Nicolas Rasson**  
Managing Partner, GR&Partners



Advisors must understand their unique culture, entrepreneurial nature, risk profile, and long-term ambitions. Only after an in-depth assessment can search firms accurately articulate leadership structures, define new roles, and build governance frameworks. These in-depth, partnership-driven engagements often lead to immediate and visible impact.

*"It's not a question of just finding the right talent. It's about helping families articulate the leadership structure they require, define roles they have never hired for before, and build governance frameworks that enable continuity."*



**Leah McGillivray-Palko**  
Partner, GlassRatner

When evaluating external partners to work with your family office, ensure the firm demonstrates these key competencies:

- **Patience and attention to detail** to uncover the cultural nuances that are essential to leadership advisory solutions.
- **Comfort navigating informal structures** with the ability to create succession and continuity plans tailored to the unique makeup of the family office.
- **Sensitivity to family dynamics.** This complexity is precisely where leadership advisors make a difference—by bringing clarity, structure, and trusted processes to environments that thrive on discretion and adaptability.

# Summary

As we look toward 2030, the trajectory of the family office sector is clear. These entities are evolving into dynamic, multigenerational enterprises that are central players in the global economy. They are funding the energy transition, stabilizing real estate markets, and driving innovation through venture capital.

However, this evolution brings unprecedented complexity. The risks of 2026, including geopolitical tensions, cybersecurity threats, and critical investment gaps, cannot be managed by the administrative structures of the past.

The winners will be family offices that place human capital as their most valuable asset class. Those who implement independent boards and clear decision rights, leverage leadership advisory firms to design resilient organizations, and invest in their culture to continually evolve with new voices and strategies.

In this shifting landscape, the role of the executive search and leadership advisory firm has transformed from a vendor to a strategic partner in creating sustainable growth. In this context, consultants in the IIC Partners global network are indispensable partners, combining local expertise with global reach to help families build sustainable, future-ready leadership.



# About IIC Partners

IIC Partners is a leading provider of executive search and leadership consulting services. Our expert consultants, connected across 45 offices worldwide, partner with senior executives and board directors to transform businesses and solve complex leadership challenges.

[www.iicpartners.com](http://www.iicpartners.com)



## OFFICES

Amsterdam	Curitiba	New York
Athens	Dallas	Paris
Atlanta	Dubai	Prague
Bangkok	Dublin	Rio de Janeiro
Beijing	Frankfurt	San Francisco
Belo Horizonte	Goiânia	Santiago
Bratislava	Helsinki	São Paulo
Brisbane	Johannesburg	Singapore
Brussels	London	Stockholm
Bucharest	Los Angeles	Sydney
Buenos Aires	Luxembourg	Tokyo
Campinas	Madrid	Toronto
Caracas	Melbourne	Vienna
Chicago	Milan	Warsaw
Columbus	Monterrey	Washington D.C.
Copenhagen	Mumbai	Zurich