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★ Top Admired
Leaders
of 2025

Empowering
Leadership
through the Clouds:
The Vision and Impact of

Pat
Martinez



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Charlotte

Sr. HR Administrator

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Vacation | Sick Days

Vitals

801-724-6600 x1272
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cabbott@efficientoffice.com
Full Time
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Western States
Western States

Hire Date

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87 - 4m - 4d

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\$2,550.00	\$818.29 (32%)	\$0.00 (0%)
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The Future Is Here

Top Leaders Who Inspire, Influence, and Impact

In today's fast-evolving world, leadership is no longer defined solely by corporate titles, quarterly results, or expansion metrics. The true measure of a leader lies in their capacity to inspire, innovate, and create meaningful impact—within organizations and beyond. As we navigate 2025, *Iconic Success* is proud to shine a spotlight on those extraordinary individuals who have done exactly that.

2025's Most Admired Leaders are more than executives; they are catalysts of change. They lead with empathy in boardrooms, foster collaboration in digital spaces, and turn visions into purpose-driven realities. What unites them is not just their success, but the way they empower others to thrive. These leaders understand that legacy is not built on profits alone—it is built on people, progress, and principle.

In curating this year's edition, we observed a powerful theme: **authentic leadership is rising**. These admired figures have faced adversity not as obstacles but as

opportunities to grow, listen, and lead differently. They have built inclusive cultures, redefined business models, and elevated the voices of those around them. Whether it's a healthcare executive revolutionizing access, a tech innovator driving human-centered AI, or a financial strategist championing diversity at the top—they each embody a leadership style rooted in resilience and respect.

What makes them admired? It's their unwavering commitment to values. It's the ability to lead with vision and vulnerability. It's the courage to make tough decisions while staying true to their mission. These leaders aren't just moving markets—they're moving hearts, communities, and entire industries.

As the workplace continues to evolve—hybrid, remote, borderless—these leaders are also shaping the future of work. They are creating agile, inclusive environments where innovation flourishes and people feel seen, heard, and valued.

From the Editor Editor Letter

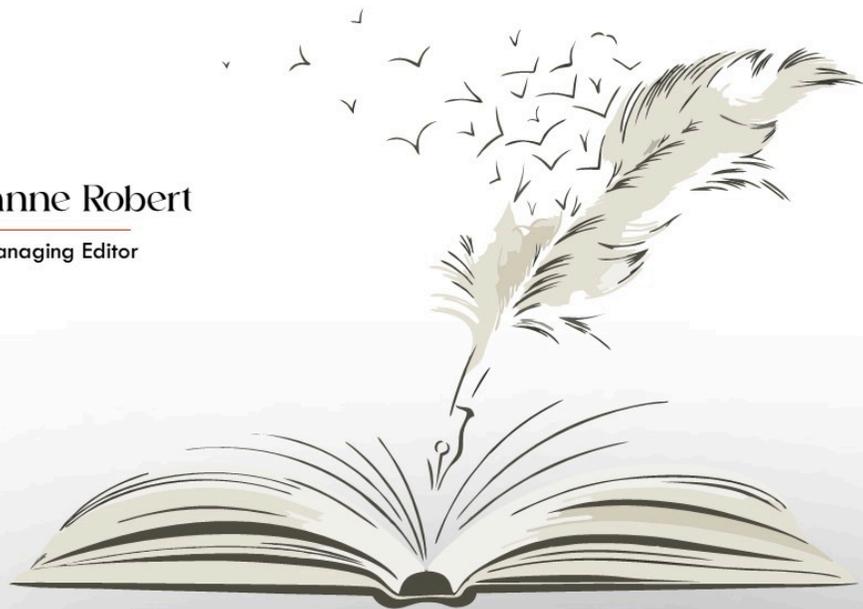
And they are doing so with transparency, creativity, and a fierce determination to do what's right over what's easy.

At *Iconic Success*, we believe these individuals represent the gold standard of leadership today—and a beacon for the future. They remind us that greatness is not defined by individual achievement, but by collective elevation.

We invite you to explore their stories, discover their insights, and be inspired by the impact they're making. Here's to the leaders of today—and the legacies they're building for tomorrow.

Suzanne Robert

Managing Editor



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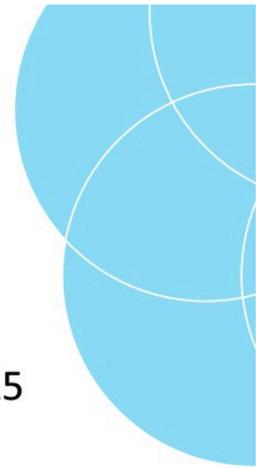
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The Iconic Success is bringing forth a medium through which the C-level executives of organizations can make their decisions better on adopting the technology.



Project
Listing

Top Admired Leaders of 2025



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Care Advocates

Patient advocacy, healthcare
innovation

**Reflections
Rehab**

Behavioral health, transformational
leadership

**Southpoint
Financial Services**

Financial services, culture building,
people-first mindset



Cover Story



10

**Empowering Leadership
through the Clouds:**

The Vision and Impact of

Pat Martinez

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**Empowering Leadership
through the Clouds:**
The Vision and Impact of

Pat Martinez



LEADERSHIP
IN THE CLOUDS™



Pat Martinez is the visionary force behind Leadership in the Clouds™ (LITC), an organization dedicated to democratizing leadership training and empowering professionals to flourish in their careers. Her journey, shaped by a profound understanding of leadership and a commitment to community engagement, reflects an inspiring tale of resilience, innovation, and empathy. From crafting unique training programs to overcoming challenges as a Latina leader in a predominantly male industry, Martinez has established herself as a trailblazer who embodies emotional intelligence and servant leadership.

Martinez is a trailblazer in organizational transformation and leadership development. With over 25 years of expertise spanning leadership, business development, and nonprofit management, Martinez has established herself as a trusted advisor across industries. Her boutique consulting firm, Leadership in the Clouds™, empowers businesses and individuals to thrive in today's

fast-paced world by providing innovative tools and strategies.

The pioneering leader's approach is deeply rooted in servant leadership and emotional intelligence. She emphasizes active listening, empathy, and trust-building to foster inclusive environments where individuals can flourish. Her programs, such as "A Game Plan for Life©," address inequities, enhance cultural awareness, and promote community engagement. Through higher collaboration and community participation, Martinez believes in transforming lives and preparing the next generation of leaders.

As a lifelong learner, Martinez stays ahead of leadership trends by following renowned experts and embracing innovative ideas. Her commitment to social capital building and community engagement reflects her belief that leadership is not just about inspiring others but also about creating avenues for positive change. Under her guidance, Leadership in the Clouds™ continues to ignite innovation and create environments for success.



We help people transform which increases team productivity and business success.

Top Admired Leaders of 2025

The Inspiration and Mission Behind Leadership in the Clouds™

Martinez's inspiration for creating Leadership in the Clouds™ came from her experiences attending CEO forums and top-level leadership conferences. She often wondered how industry leaders shared the valuable insights gained at such events with their teams. Observing the budget constraints and logistical challenges that limited participation in traditional leadership training, Martinez envisioned the virtual world as a solution—offering everyone a front-row seat at the virtual table.

The mission of Leadership in the Clouds™ is to equip individuals and organizations with essential leadership skills while fostering self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Martinez firmly believes that before anyone can lead others effectively, they must understand their own leadership style. By incorporating emotional intelligence (EQ) and stress management (SQ) into training, LITC helps individuals develop a holistic approach to

leadership. To realize her vision, Martinez built a team of twenty subject matter experts, seven of whom play pivotal roles in the organization's core programs. Together, they create synergies that empower clients to elevate their skill sets and achieve tangible results.

As a natural motivator, Martinez's background in community leadership profoundly influences her approach to leadership training and development. Her philosophy centers on inspiring individuals to take action and allowing them to thrive within supportive environments. This perspective is evident in LITC's programs, which emphasize collaboration and fostering personal growth.

Key Programs and Services of Leadership in the Clouds™

LITC offers an array of programs tailored to meet the diverse needs of professionals and organizations. The offerings are divided into three key areas:



Top Admired Leaders of 2025

A) Leadership Development Workshops:

The workshops utilize LITC's 3-point process, proven to help individuals and groups enhance soft skills and achieve real results. By investing in learning and development, companies can catalyze positive outcomes and improve their bottom line. The workshop components include:

1. Assessments and Self-Development: Available in English, Spanish, and other languages.
2. 1:1 Debriefing and Coaching: Personalized sessions offered in English and Spanish.
3. Group Engagements: Interactive workshops and webinars tailored to client needs.

B) LeadingUp and Adelante Program:

This interactive and virtual program spans four weeks, with sixteen hours of transformation-focused programming delivered in real time. Participants benefit from assessments, coaching, and group engagements designed to elevate their leadership abilities.

C) EVOLVE eLearning© Program:

EVOLVE eLearning© is a talent optimization curriculum aimed at transforming individuals into successful leaders and thriving business owners. By prioritizing self-development, the program ensures participants reach their full potential.

Overcoming Challenges with Resilience and Innovation

Martinez's career has been marked by challenges, including navigating the professional landscape as a Latina woman. Often the only Latina and one of few women in male-dominated spaces, she overcame initial apprehension by embracing her authentic self and engaging in meaningful conversations. Her ability to focus on objectives—whether building

connections or acquiring knowledge—helped her establish a presence and gain respect.

Starting LITC presented its own hurdles. In 2013, virtual training faced skepticism, with most clients preferring in-person sessions. Martinez advocated for the time efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and goal-oriented benefits of virtual training. Gradually, she convinced clients of the value of her approach. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the necessity of virtual training, cementing her status as a pioneer in the field.

Integrating Emotional Intelligence and Servant Leadership

Martinez's leadership strategies are rooted in emotional intelligence and servant leadership principles. She emphasizes active listening, empathy, self-awareness, and trust-building while prioritizing the growth and needs of others. By fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, she ensures that her professional and personal interactions align with these values.

Self-care is a vital aspect of Martinez's philosophy. She practices what she preaches, taking moments to reassess and recalibrate whenever she feels overwhelmed.

Technology as a Catalyst for Modern Leadership Development

Martinez has been an advocate for technology since 1987, embracing it as an ally to enhance productivity and efficiency. Her commitment to technological innovation is reflected in LITC's hybrid conferences, which offer participants an enriched experience by combining virtual and in-person elements. For Martinez, technology is not a barrier but a tool that enables smarter, more effective work.

Pat Martinez

*CEO & Leadership Strategist,
Leadership in the Clouds™*



Top Admired Leaders of 2025

Success Stories of Leadership Transformation

LITC has played a transformative role in numerous organizations, often starting by addressing group dynamics and trust issues. Toxic environments are common discoveries during initial assessments, and Martinez's team begins with thorough evaluations to uncover strengths and areas for improvement.

Through four weeks of strategic collaboration, participants enhance communication and develop action plans for both short-term and long-term success. Individuals undergo self-assessments to evaluate behavior, driving forces, and emotional intelligence. They receive comprehensive reports detailing assessment results and actionable recommendations.

Participants create priority lists and engage in discussions to understand the collective value they bring to their organizations. Activities focused on team building and social capital

further underscore the importance of collaborative success. Martinez and her team's dedication to research, 1:1 coaching, and strategic planning ensures that clients achieve personal and professional growth.

Staying Ahead in Leadership Trends and Best Practices

Martinez remains a lifelong learner, continually updating her knowledge by reading and attending conferences. Her dedication to staying relevant is evident in her willingness to embrace innovative ideas and adapt to changing circumstances. By following renowned leadership experts such as John C. Maxwell, Sally Helgesen, Simon Sinek, and others, she gains insights that inform her approach to training and development. By championing emotional intelligence, community engagement, and technological innovation, Martinez has created a legacy of empowering leaders and fostering transformative growth across industries.



Leadership in the Clouds™ also develops established and prospective leaders through education, creating spaces for diversity, inclusion and equity.

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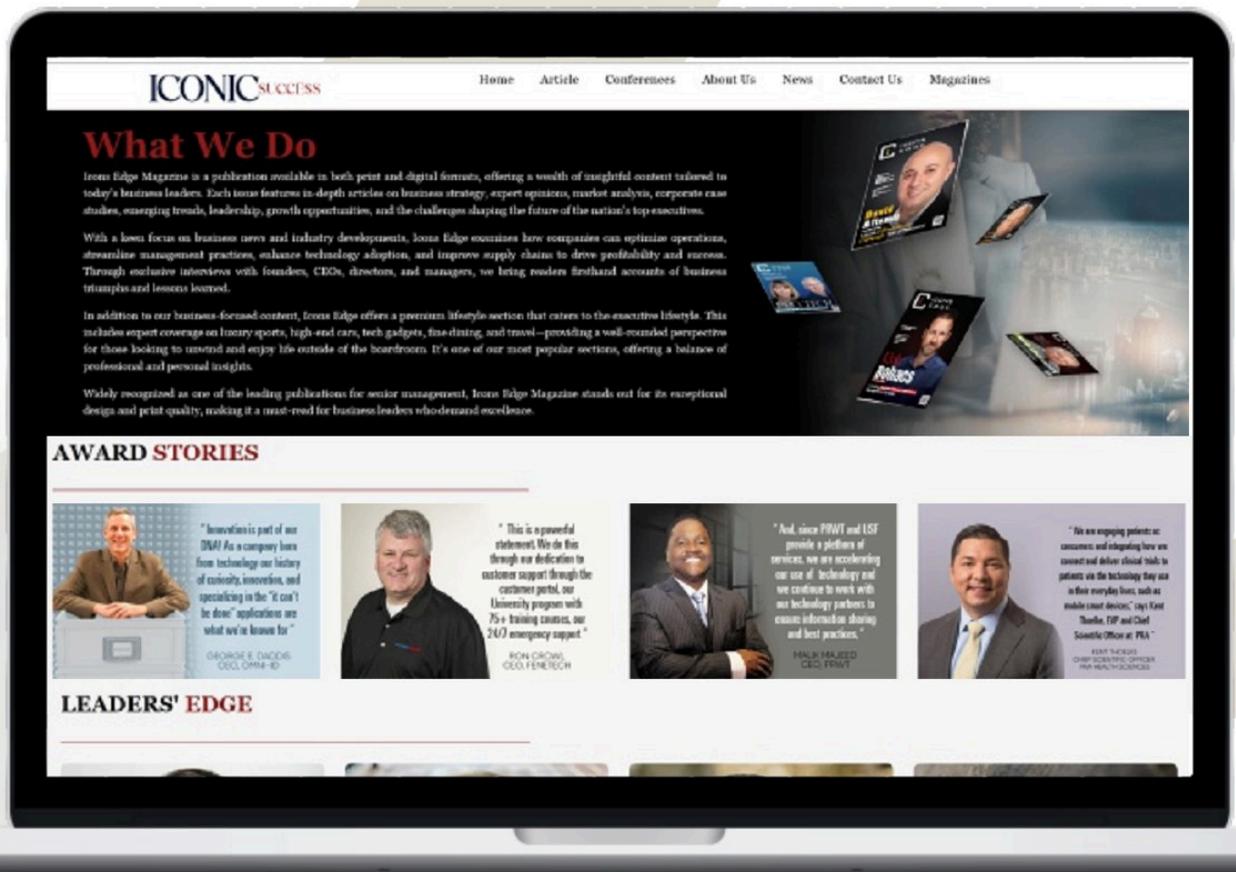
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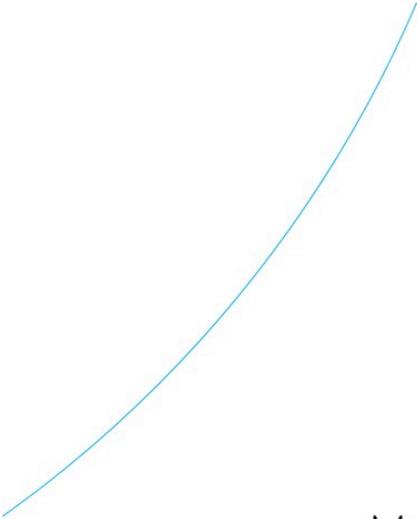
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The Evolution of Big Data

Modern Applications and Insights

The Scale of Big Data Today

Here are some current data statistics from leading tech giants:

- **Google** processes over **8.5 billion searches per day**.
- **Amazon** uses big data to personalize recommendations for over **310 million active users**.
- **Meta (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp)** generates **4 petabytes of data per day**.
- **Netflix** leverages data to power its recommendation engine, which influences **80% of viewed content**.
- **Tesla** collects and analyzes driving data from **over 4 million vehicles** to enhance its autonomous driving capabilities.

As businesses increasingly rely on data-driven insights, Jay Parikh's statement still holds:

"If you aren't taking advantage of big data, then you don't have big data—you just have a pile of data."

The Big Data Equation: Collection vs. Utilization

While companies are investing heavily in data storage solutions, the real challenge lies in extracting actionable insights.

The global big data market is expected to reach **\$103 billion by 2027**, signaling massive opportunities for businesses that can effectively

harness this resource.

The Growth of Useful Data

A large portion of collected data remains underutilized. However, advancements in AI and machine learning are rapidly changing this landscape. According to IDC, by 2025, over 60% of big data will be useful to businesses, compared to just 22% a decade ago. This increase is fueled by innovations in predictive analytics, automation, and real-time data processing.

Companies Leveraging Big Data Today

Big data is the foundation for business intelligence across industries. Here are some modern examples of companies utilizing big data:

- **Amazon:** Uses machine learning for dynamic pricing, optimizing inventory, and personalized recommendations.
- **Tesla:** Enhances its Full Self-Driving (FSD) system by analyzing real-world driving data.
- **Spotify:** Uses AI-powered data analysis to curate personalized playlists and predict user preferences.
- **Zillow:** Uses predictive analytics to estimate home values and improve real estate recommendations.
- **Starbucks:** Leverages big data to optimize store locations, predict trends, and personalize marketing.

Clients Name
Designation,
Company



The Relationship Between Big Data and Analytics

Big data serves as the "horse" that pulls the "cart" of **analytics and predictive modeling**. Businesses must focus on filtering and analyzing data that aligns with their key performance indicators (KPIs). Note: Machine learning is evolving so quickly, I expect to update this article accordingly.

Data Processing & Transformation

Raw data, in its original state, is often unstructured and needs to be cleaned, categorized, and formatted before it can provide useful insights. **Data transformation** is a critical step where companies utilize tools like **ETL (Extract, Transform, Load) pipelines, data lakes, and real-time processing frameworks** to convert raw data into structured information suitable for analysis.

Analytics: The Engine of Big Data

Analytics is the mechanism that makes sense of big data, driving strategic decisions. It encompasses:

Descriptive Analytics: Helps organizations understand what has happened using historical data.

Diagnostic Analytics: Identifies causes behind past trends and behaviors.

Predictive Analytics: Uses AI and machine learning to forecast future trends based on historical patterns.

Prescriptive Analytics: Recommends actions based on predictions to optimize business outcomes.

The Role of AI & Machine Learning

AI and machine learning are revolutionizing how companies analyze big data. Algorithms can identify hidden patterns, generate actionable insights, and automate decision-making at scale.

Technologies like **deep learning**, **natural language processing (NLP)**, and **computer vision** further expand the capabilities of big data analytics.

Real-Time vs. Batch Processing

Businesses today must decide between **real-time analytics**, which enables instant insights and action, and **batch processing**, which is useful for handling large datasets over longer periods. Industries such as **finance**, **e-commerce**, and **healthcare** heavily rely on real-time data to make split-second decisions that improve efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Visualization & Business Intelligence (BI) Tools

Translating complex datasets into understandable insights requires **data visualization tools**. Platforms like **Tableau**, **Power BI**, and **Google Data Studio** enable businesses to create interactive dashboards that present insights in a user-friendly format. These tools help decision-makers identify trends, patterns, and anomalies quickly.

Modern Third-Party Big Data Solutions

Given the complexity of big data, many companies opt for third-party solutions to manage and analyze data efficiently. Some leading solutions include:

- **Snowflake**: A cloud-based data warehouse that enables businesses to store and analyze big data efficiently.
- **Palantir**: Provides advanced data analytics for government agencies, financial institutions, and healthcare.
- **Databricks**: Offers AI-driven analytics and machine learning capabilities.

- **Google BigQuery**: A fully-managed data warehouse for real-time analytics.
- **AWS Redshift**: Amazon's cloud-based data analytics service for large-scale data warehousing.

Building In-House Big Data Solutions

For businesses looking to develop their own big data capabilities, the following tools are commonly used:

- **Apache Hadoop**: A framework for processing large datasets.
- **Apache Spark**: A powerful analytics engine for large-scale data processing.
- **NoSQL Databases (MongoDB, Cassandra, etc.)**: Ideal for managing unstructured data.
- **In-House Large Language Models (LLMs)**: Businesses can now deploy their own LLMs to process vast amounts of data internally. This setup involves:
 - **Data Preprocessing Pipelines**: Cleaning and structuring raw data.
 - **Model Training on Enterprise Data**: Using frameworks like TensorFlow, PyTorch, or Hugging Face Transformers.
 - **Fine-Tuning for Domain-Specific Insights**: Enhancing models to provide industry-specific outputs.
 - **AI-Driven Decision-Making Systems**: Integrating LLMs with real-time dashboards and automated workflows.
- **On-Premise vs. Cloud Deployment**: Depending on security and scalability needs, businesses can choose between on-premise LLMs (via high-performance computing clusters) or cloud-based services like OpenAI's API, Google Vertex AI, or AWS SageMaker.

How to Implement a Big Data Strategy

To successfully leverage big data, businesses should follow these key steps:

Step 1: Define the Problem

Start by identifying the key business challenge you aim to address, such as:

- Increasing customer retention
- Optimizing pricing strategies
- Enhancing supply chain efficiency

Step 2: Establish a Data Strategy

Develop a structured approach to data collection, ensuring that the data aligns with business goals.

Step 3: Choose the Right Data Sources

Not all data is useful. Businesses should focus on collecting relevant and high-quality data to drive actionable insights.

Step 4: Start Small and Scale

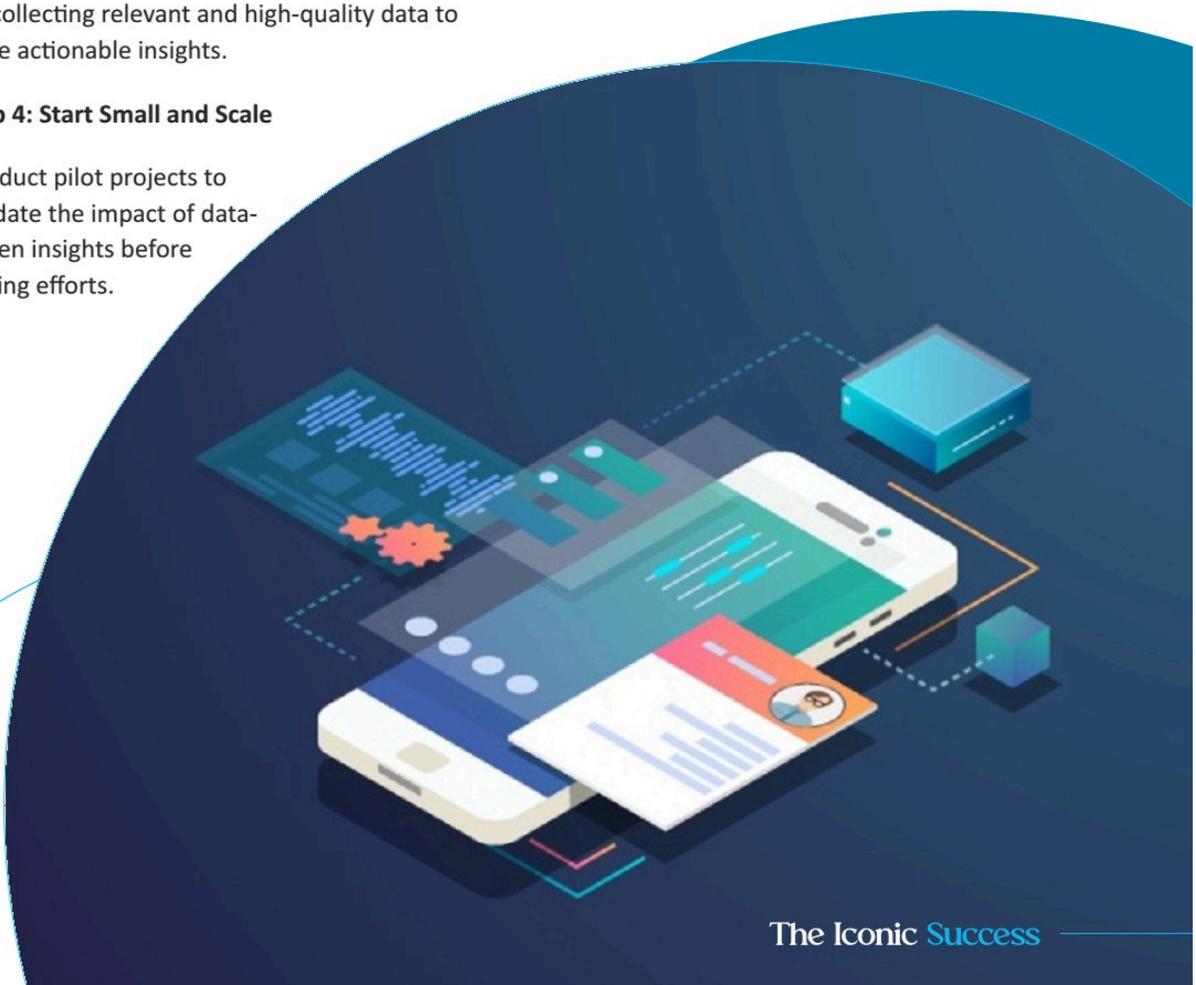
Conduct pilot projects to validate the impact of data-driven insights before scaling efforts.

Step 5: Foster a Data-Driven Culture

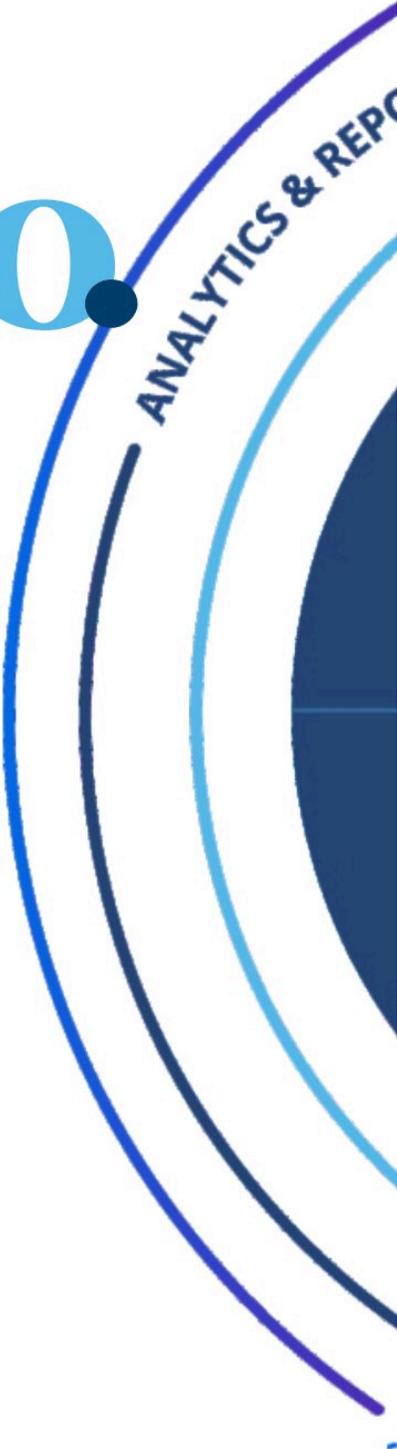
Ensuring that all stakeholders—from executives to frontline employees—understand and use data effectively is crucial for long-term success.

The Future of Big Data

Big data is rapidly evolving, with new technologies such as edge computing, blockchain, and AI-driven automation shaping its future. Companies that embrace real-time analytics, predictive modeling, and AI-enhanced decision-making will have a competitive edge.



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AI & AUTOMATION

Why "Savings-Only"

*is the Mortal Enemy of
Marketing Procurement*



Overview

In our category of marketing procurement, living with a traditional "savings-only" mentality is a painful place to be! This approach, driven by the dominant KPI of cost-savings, often overshadows crucial metrics like creative quality, brand performance, and strategic value. Underfunded projects lead to rushed work and frustrated marketers, while agencies are forced to compromise on talent and time, reducing their ability to deliver high-quality work. Marketing procurement ends up having to prioritize cost-cutting over optimizing outcomes, eroding trust with both marketers and agencies.

The good news is that the 'Sweet Spot Framework' discussed in this series offers a balanced approach that redefines success as spending wisely and enabling outcomes. By understanding the **Law of Diminishing Returns** and identifying the optimal range of agency fees, marketing procurement can help achieve better results for all parties involved!

The vicious cycle of "savings-only"

I could have extended the title of this article to be even longer: **Why "Savings-Only" is the Mortal Enemy of Marketing Procurement...and Marketing...and Our Agencies!** The reason? Because in many organizations Marketing Procurement is incentivized by a dominant KPI: cost-savings. This "savings-only" mindset treats

cost reduction as the critical goal, overshadowing other outcome-focused metrics like creative quality, brand performance, and strategic value. But unlike many other categories of spend, where cutting costs is pretty much always a win for the organization, in marketing, this approach can end up hurting all parties:

- For **Marketing**, underfunded projects lead to rushed work, limited exploration, and diminished quality. Marketers are left frustrated, unable to achieve their brand goals and deliver the results their campaigns demand. It can also be difficult to attract the best agency talent to work on their business.
- While for **Agencies**, the pressure to lower fees forces them to make compromises, such as using less experienced talent, reducing time spent on projects, or prioritizing volume over quality. This diminishes their ability to deliver their best work.
- And for **Marketing Procurement**, they are forced to prioritize cost-cutting over optimizing outcomes. This undermines their ability to act as strategic partners and erodes trust with both marketers and agencies.

A "savings-only" approach creates a vicious cycle of inefficiency and dissatisfaction. Campaigns underperform, trust breaks down, and all parties are left struggling to meet their objectives. It's clear that there must be a more productive way forward!

The Sweet Spot Framework to the Rescue!

Enter the **Sweet Spot Framework**, which provides an improved methodology for Marketing Procurement. It is a forward-looking approach that balances cost, quality, and outcomes. Instead of focusing solely on savings, the Sweet Spot Framework ensures that agency fees are allocated where they can deliver the most value.

This approach challenges marketing procurement's status quo by redefining success:

- Success is no longer about spending the least; it's about spending wisely.
- Success is no longer about forcing savings; it's about enabling outcomes.

The Sweet Spot Framework isn't just better for marketers, it also benefits agencies. They are given the resources they need to do their best work, fostering a sense of collaboration and bi-directional trust. Meanwhile, Marketing Procurement teams are transformed from being seen as purely cost cutters, to acting as strategic enablers, generating value for the entire organization.

Why This Matters Now

Today's marketing environment is more complex and competitive than ever. Organizations can no longer afford the inefficiencies of a purely savings-driven mindset. They need smarter, data-driven strategies that maximize the impact of every dollar spent on their agency partnerships.

Richard Benyon
Chief Evangelist & Co-founder
Decideware



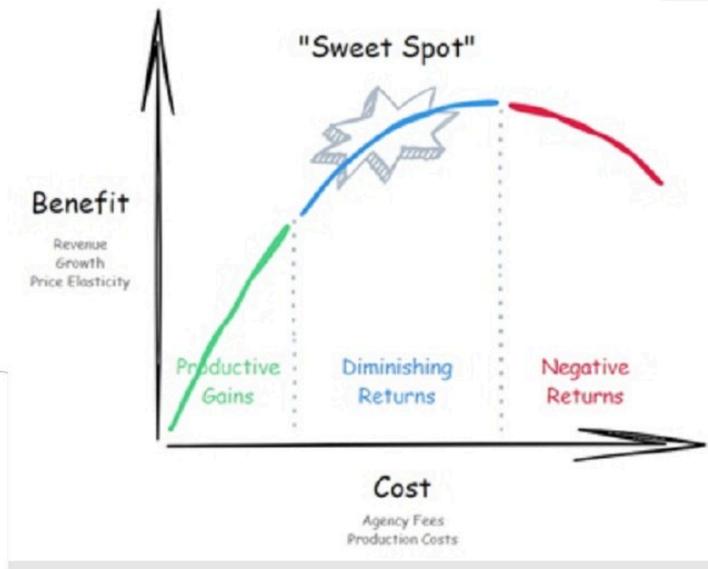
The Sweet Spot Framework offers a balanced way forward. By adopting this approach, organizations can create a “win-win-win” scenario:

- **For Marketing:** Appropriately funded campaigns, all contained within the brand's existing marketing budget, drive brand results and achieve strategic goals.
- **For Agencies:** Suitably resourced projects with appropriate margins lead to stronger work, deeper relationships and better financial outcomes.
- **For Marketing Procurement:** A balanced, value-driven approach elevates the function to be viewed as a critical enabler within the organization.

Understanding the Cost-Benefit Relationship

At its core, the Sweet Spot Framework uses a well-known business hypothesis, the '**Law of Diminishing Returns**', as its foundation. What this means in our context is that the relationship between agency fees and marketing outcomes is not linear. Instead, it follows a logarithmic curve, shaped by the general law of diminishing returns. This law states that as investment in an input increases, the incremental gains in output eventually decrease – that is assuming other factors remain constant.





- A \$100K investment might fund a basic strategy process, including competitor analysis and audience insights.
- Increasing to \$125K allows for deeper research, multiple stakeholder workshops, and more senior strategic agency resources which lead to better results.
- But at \$150K, the additional budget might only add unnecessary complexity, overstaffing or duplicative research. In this case the funds do not provide a meaningful increase in impact.

As it applies to our domain, the curve demonstrates how marketing campaigns and deliverables benefit from investments in resources, like time, talent, and senior oversight.

- **Initial Investments:** Allocating enough budget to fund essential work, such as research, strategy development, and ideation of the core creative concepts, yields significant improvements in quality and effectiveness.
- **Mid-Level Investments:** Adding more budget to fund refinements, such as extra rounds of revisions, and additional senior input delivers noticeable but smaller improvements.
- **High-Level Investments:** Beyond a certain point, additional fees yield diminishing returns. For example, including multiple extra iterations or adding more senior resources, may not provide proportional benefits.

To bring this to life, let's look at some pragmatic examples of the curve in action. Firstly, a brand strategy campaign example:

And secondly an example of a creative production deliverable:

- An initial \$15K investment might deliver basic creative assets with minimal polish.
- By taking the spend to \$25K, the assets are far more refined and tailored for maximum impact.
- But increasing to \$35K only adds unneeded additional iterations and "extras" that only marginally improve quality.

The Role of the Sweet Spot

The Sweet Spot exists where agency fees deliver optimal results — without overinvestment! It's that range on the cost-benefit curve where outcomes are maximized relative to cost. Marketing Procurement should help identify this range and guide marketers toward making informed decisions on their appropriate level of investment. Naturally, the final decision as to what point in the Sweet Spot Range is finally selected is made by the budget holder (generally marketing), with Marketing Procurement providing expert guidance.

The Sweet Spot Range varies by the type of work (i.e. channel or deliverable type). Factors to consider include:

Deliverable Complexity:

- High-complexity projects (e.g. rebranding, product launches) typically require higher investment to reach the Sweet Spot.
- Simpler deliverables (e.g. email campaigns, adaptation work) will achieve their optimal point with less budget.
- The type of work also dramatically affects the sweet spot, namely Origination vs Adaptation vs Localization / Transcreation.

Strategic Importance:

- High-stakes deliverables that align with key business goals justify spending toward the upper end of the Sweet Spot.

Role of Seniority:

- Senior team members can elevate deliverables more quickly but increase costs. Ensuring the right balance is key to reaching the Sweet Spot efficiently. This will be explored in more detail in the next article in this series.

The cost-benefit curve illustrates why marketing investments must be made thoughtfully. Understanding where the Sweet Spot lies for each type of deliverable, Marketing Procurement can help marketing achieve its goals both effectively and efficiently.

Identifying the Sweet Spot Range

The Sweet Spot Range is the level of agency fees

where investments yield the best balance of cost and benefit. Marketing procurement teams are responsible for identifying this range for different types of deliverables and guiding marketers in their decision-making.



So how can you help identify the appropriate upper, lower and middle points in the Sweet Spot range?

Firstly, you should start with your best friend, **internal historical data**. An important aspect of this is to use these internal comparatives to highlight the median, high and low points for each type of deliverable. If possible, Marketing Procurement can also work with Marketing to review past projects to understand the correlation between agency fees and deliverable performance - using this to identify the fee ranges that have consistently delivered strong results.

Secondly, and obviously, you should **collaborate with your agencies**. Marketing Procurement should engage their agency partners in refining realistic Sweet Spot ranges based on collective agency experience and expertise. During this process, you should discuss the historical

resource requirements that have been required for different levels of quality and complexity.

Finally, look at supplementing your data with **external comparatives** (yep, benchmarking, that dreaded word!) against industry standards. By this I mean Marketing Procurement can access and compare agency fees, hours and resource mix to industry norms for similar types of work. This is especially useful if your internal historical data set is smaller. But be sure to sanity-check these external benchmarks with your internal ones and specifically ensure that the comparative group used for the benchmark is in line with your portfolio of agencies.

Benchmarks are not evil, but using them incorrectly can be.

Challenges in Defining the Sweet Spot

By no means is this a simple exercise. And keep in mind that particularly for high-priority, high-value, and complex projects (like product launches or brand refreshes), these will have a much wider Sweet Spot range compared to lower-complexity, tactical deliverables (like email campaigns or adaptations). Their price

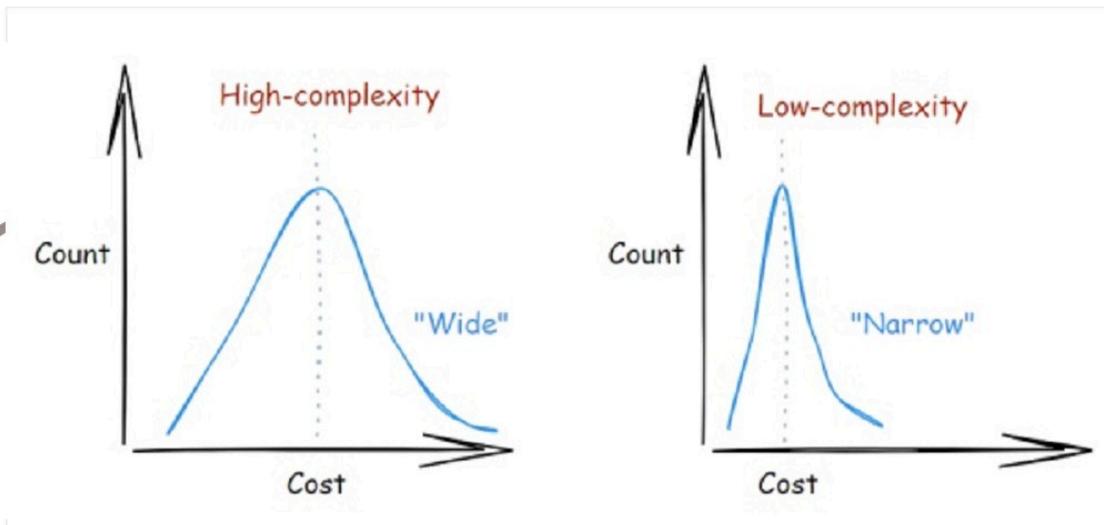
distribution means that the high and low points on the curve are much more pronounced.

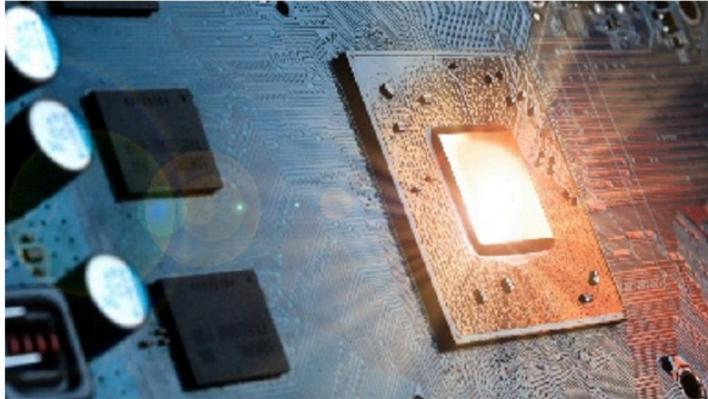
Note the graphs below illustrate price distribution i.e. the number of deliverables that fall at a specific cost, different to the Cost - Benefit curve above.

A key factor adding complexity to this process is that we are in a time of rapidly evolving marketing workflows. AI and other technologies are transforming how creative work is ideated, produced, and distributed to our audience. Improvements in process efficiency are already having a significant impact in shifting the Sweet Spot, and I predict that this will accelerate over time.

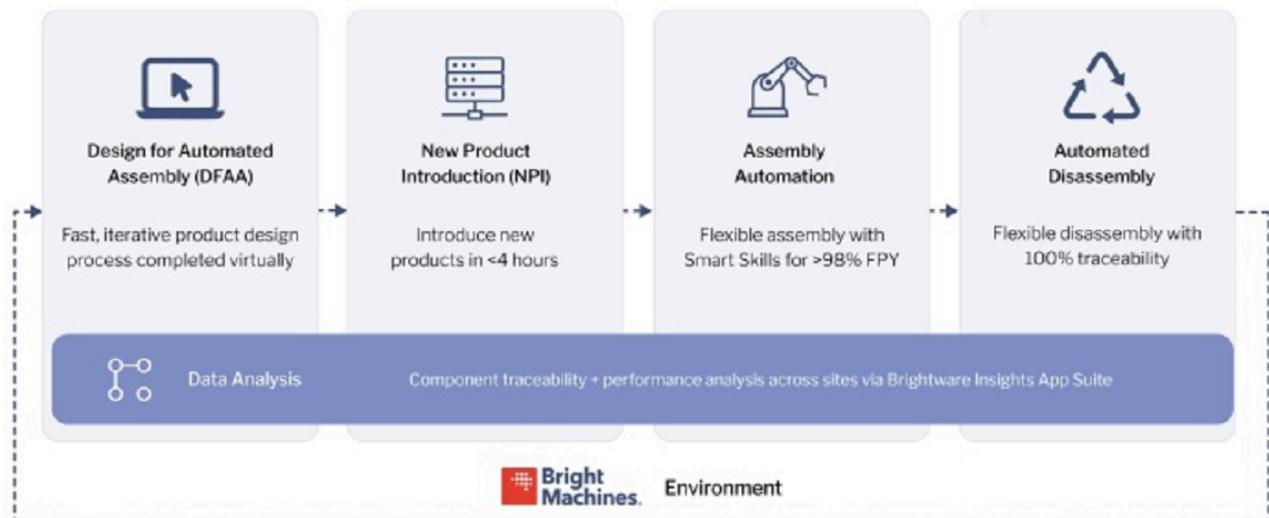
Wrap Up

Wrapping up this first article in the mini-series, we may well find that in the future AI will be able to assist with Sweet Spot Range identification. This is especially true if techniques around machine learning can help us link the cost of work with its results and find correlations between the two – this would be the holy grail for Marketing Procurement!!!





Robotics and AI Building the AI Backbone



PROCUREMENT MUST EVOLVE NOW.

Here's what you
need to know.

For too long, procurement has been stuck in a 'back-office perception trap'—seen as a function that slows down business processes rather than accelerates or optimizes them.

Fortunately, this perception is finally changing, thanks to changes from new forward-looking leaders. As business demands a new kind of procurement, we need to evolve our function into one that is more strategic, enabled by continually advancing technology, and increasingly user-friendly.

A new report by [Harvard Business Review](#), '[Procurement at a Crossroads: Evolve or Be Left Behind](#),' lays out the reality: if you're not actively transforming procurement at your company, you're putting your team's future at risk.

The problem: Procurement is changing, but many teams aren't keeping up

Procurement's traditional mandate—cost savings, category management, supplier negotiations, etc.—is not enough. Executives want more. They expect procurement to:

- **Enable seamless purchasing experiences** that feel intuitive and consumer-like for every employee at intake.
- **Design a procurement operating model** that adapts to the shifting global environment, and experiments with AI-powered automations.
- **Orchestrate spending across the business**, so the company can procure faster, with less risk and more value.

Yet the reality? **Only 35% of the top S&P 500 companies have a Chief Procurement Officer (CPO)** or equivalent in the leadership team!

Many procurement teams remain trapped in an outdated, purely transactional mindset—content to simply keep doing the job, business as usual.

Unfortunately, as **HBR** points out, unless they evolve quickly, this is going to cost far more than the price of digital transformation.

In the [HBR report](#), we hear from thoughtful and strategic procurement leaders from



[Coinbase](#), [Deloitte](#), and [Dollar Tree Stores](#), who are embracing a new model of procurement—one that's agile, data-driven, and fully orchestrated.

From spend management to spend orchestration: Traditional procurement tools focus on cost control. However, modern procurement leaders are leveraging [spend orchestration](#) to unify data, improve transparency, and streamline decision-making across teams.

From gatekeepers to strategic partners: Procurement leaders who embed themselves early in business decisions *drive more value and innovation* rather than being pulled in at the last minute to “approve” purchases.

From manual work to AI-powered efficiency: AI and automation are eliminating procurement's paper-pushing past, enabling teams to focus on strategy and making smarter, faster decisions.

The risk of staying still

[Brad Pittman](#), VP of Procurement at [Dollar Tree Stores](#), put it bluntly in the report:

“The cost of not doing transformative work in sourcing and procurement is likely higher than we can probably even quantify because you're going to lose ground to competitors who are unlocking value you aren't.” - [Brad Pittman](#)

This is procurement's moment. At [Zip](#), we know that it's the teams that step up, embrace orchestration technology, and be bold enough to reimagine their role at a high level, are the ones that will lead their organizations into the future.

The **JOY** Factor

How Pursuing Your Passions Outside of Work Makes You a Better **HR Professional**

Let's be honest. Working in HR can be a lot. You're juggling strategy, compliance, employee relations, and all the other moving parts that keep an organization running smoothly. It's fulfilling, but, at times, it can be a huge undertaking. And when we get caught up in the grind, we can end up missing out on one of the most powerful tools for professional success... joy.

As HR professionals, we spend so much time helping others thrive that we sometimes forget to nurture our own well-being. But here's the thing. Making time for the stuff that genuinely lights you up isn't just a nice bonus. It's essential.

For me, that joy comes from creative writing. Crafting stories, building characters, and shaping narratives gives me a creative outlet beyond the workplace. It recharges me, sharpens my skills, and honestly, it makes me a better HR leader.

But why does joy even matter at work? And how does it tie into employee engagement? Let's break it down.

The Link Between Personal Fulfillment and Professional Excellence

When you do things you love, you're basically refueling your energy, creativity, and overall happiness. You come back to work feeling refreshed, motivated, and ready to tackle whatever's on your plate. And it's not just you who benefits... it's your whole team.

Studies show that employees who feel fulfilled and supported in their personal lives are more engaged, productive, and motivated at work. When HR leaders actively pursue their own passions, it sends a powerful message that work-life balance matters. And when employees feel encouraged to do the same? That's where real engagement and loyalty start to build.

How Creative Outlets Improve HR Leadership

For me, writing fiction isn't just a hobby. It's a creative exercise that makes me better at my day job. Here's how:

- **Empathy:** Creating believable characters means putting yourself in someone else's

shoes. It's the same skill I use to understand diverse employee perspectives and advocate for their needs.

- **Communication:** Whether I'm writing dialogue or drafting an important HR message, clarity is everything. Writing pushes me to communicate ideas clearly and effectively.
- **Creative Thinking:** Writing plots and solving narrative problems keeps me flexible and innovative. These skills come in handy when crafting HR strategies that actually resonate with people.

Bringing Your Best Self to Work

When you make space for what brings you joy, you show up to work as your best self. You're more energized, motivated, and ready to make an impact. It's not just about being more productive; it's about being more present and fulfilled. And when you feel good, it shows in your work.

By embracing what you love outside of work, you're setting an example for others to do the same. It's a powerful way to build a culture where creativity, authenticity, and engagement can thrive.



Qiana London
MBA, SPHR

"HRAI"

The importance of HR data in AI

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Human Resources (HR) is transforming the way organisations manage their workforce. From recruitment and selection to training and development, succession planning, payroll, and even company culture, AI is making a significant impact across various

facets of HR. This article looks at how it is affecting different areas and also the underlying requirement that we need to focus on first.

Recruitment and Selection

One of the most prominent applications of AI in HR is in the recruitment and selection process.

Client Name
Designation
Company



AI-powered tools are being used for selection testing and candidate profiling, helping organisations identify the best fit for their roles more efficiently. These tools can analyse vast amounts of data from resumes, social media profiles, and other sources to shortlist candidates who match the job requirements.

Training and Development

AI is also revolutionising training and development by personalising learning experiences for employees. AI-driven platforms can assess individual learning styles and preferences, tailoring training programs to meet the unique needs of each employee. This not only enhances the learning experience but also improves retention and application of new skills.

Succession Planning and Strategic HR

In the area of succession planning and strategic HR, AI can play a crucial role in identifying and nurturing talent. By analysing performance data, career progression, and other relevant metrics, AI can help HR professionals identify potential leaders and create development plans to prepare them for future roles.

Payroll, Time, and Attendance

AI-powered systems are streamlining payroll, time, and attendance management. These systems can automate routine tasks, reduce errors, and ensure compliance with employment laws, regulations and awards. This not only saves time but also enhances accuracy and efficiency in HR operations.

Culture and Engagement

AI can also be used to analyse employee engagement surveys and other cultural metrics.

By identifying trends and patterns, AI can provide insights into employee satisfaction and areas for improvement. This enables HR professionals to take proactive measures to foster a positive work environment and enhance employee engagement.

The Importance of Data in HR

For AI to be effective in HR, it is essential to have high-quality, error-free data. Data is the fuel that powers AI, and the more accurate and comprehensive the data, the better the outcomes. Organisations must ensure that their HR data is well-maintained and integrated across various systems. This allows AI to analyse and interpret the data holistically, providing meaningful insights and supporting strategic decision-making.

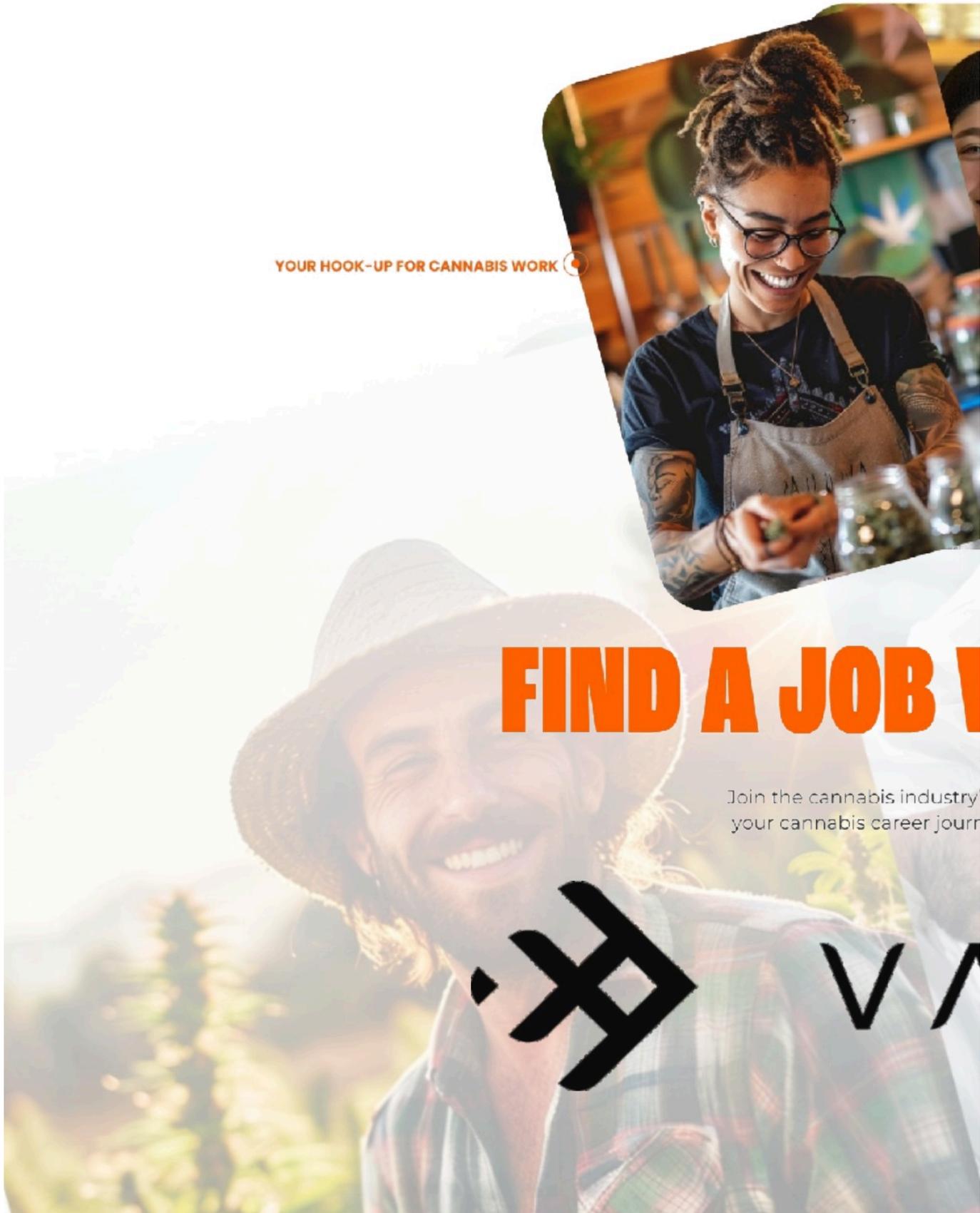
Whether it's a simple spreadsheet tracking work anniversaries or a comprehensive data lake containing engagement surveys, training reports, development plans, and succession plans, the importance of good data cannot be overstated. As highlighted in a recent webinar by the [Australian HR Institute \(AHRI\)](#), [Michael Kim](#) Head of HR JAPAC& SAMEA at Spotify emphasised the critical role of good data in HR and the need for well-designed systems to enable AI to process and present this data effectively without losing sight of the human decision making and context needed.

YOUR HOOK-UP FOR CANNABIS WORK 



FIND A JOB W

Join the cannabis industry/
your cannabis career jour





TURN YOUR WEED WISDOM
INTO PAYING GIGS

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