The 2025 Global Top 100 Innovators in Data, Analytics and AI

Highlighting the achievements of the brightest minds in the industry

business of data

Corinium

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Foreword

Welcome to the The 2025 Global Top 100 Innovators in Data, Analytics and AI – Corinium's annual celebration of the visionaries redefining how organizations harness data to shape the future.

Each year, this report shines a light on the most dynamic and forward-thinking leaders in data and analytics across the globe. The 2025 edition not only honors these 100 distinguished professionals but also features exclusive interviews that reveal how they're driving measurable impact, championing innovation, and setting new benchmarks for excellence in the field.

As always, our editorial team collaborated closely with Corinium's conference producers across the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific to identify standout leaders from our global network. We welcomed both self-nominations and peer nominations, ensuring that our list reflects a diverse, inclusive, and truly global community of innovators.

The result is a showcase of exceptional talent spanning industries, geographies, and disciplines – from those leading enterprise data transformations to pioneers pushing the boundaries of AI, governance, and analytics strategy.

While only 100 individuals could be featured, we recognize that the data and analytics community is rich with remarkable leaders whose contributions inspire progress every day.

We invite you to explore the insights shared in this year's report – and to meet many of these changemakers in person at Corinium's upcoming global events.

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Global Head of Content
Corinium Global Intelligence

The Official 2025 List

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IKEA

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Founder and CEO
DataEthics4All Foundation

Shuchi Agrawal
Head of AI Execution
SMBC Group

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Director, Data Conduct
- Responsible AI & Data Ethics
Standard Chartered

Eleanor Armiger
Head of Insight & Innovation
British Airways

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Chief Data & AI Officer Grand Public & Numérique
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Chief Data & Performance Officer
SNCF Connect & Tech

Dr. David Black
General Manager Data & Analytics
Scentre Group

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Compliance Data Officer, **Department of Water and Environmental Regulations (Western Australia)**

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Chief Data Product & Technology Officer – Enterprise
Nine

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SVP Data Science
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Vector Institute

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RCS MediaGroup

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VP, Head of Data Strategy
Early Warning

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British Gas

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Alain Afflelou Spain

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Michelin

Ankita Gupta
Head, Change and Transformation
Standard Chartered

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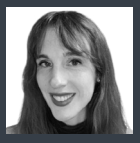
Kanika Havelia
Senior Director, Finance and AI
Paypal

Maija Hovila
Chief Data & AI Strategist
Futurice

Cindi Howson
Chief Data & AI Strategy Officer
ThoughtSpot



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Director of Data Value & Strategy
The Financial Times

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Interim Global Head of Data Office
Schroders

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Board Member and ex-Director, Data and Insights
Women's Tennis Foundation

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Chief Data and AI Officer
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Chief Data Scientist
HM Revenue & Customs

Claire Lebarz
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HM Revenue & Customs

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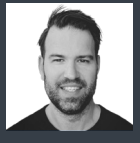

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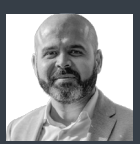

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Jam Benneth Wong
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ASA Philippines Foundation

Kelly Yoong
Chief Data Officer
Sentosa Development Corporation

Scott Zoldi
Chief Analytics Officer
FICO

Amy Lenander

Chief Data Officer
Capital One

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What led you to your current role?
I started my career as an analyst, using data to drive business decisions at Capital One, like marketing and underwriting decisions. Over time, those roles grew into general management roles at Capital One leading whole businesses, like International Credit Cards and the Auto Navigator Platform, where the heart of our decision-making is based on data-driven analysis.

Now, as Chief Data Officer, I build the data ecosystem that helps power all of our data-driven activities. My experience as a user of data helps me build out our data strategy with our core internal customers in mind.

What are the most significant achievements in your career so far, and what impact have they had on your organization?
My most significant achievement in data is rallying our organization to all converge on a common set of central data platforms to create a solid foundation for all the innovation that will come. I'm most proud of leading the company to have Data Products be a core part of our approach, to make data easy to use and well-managed. At Capital One, we're building data products that are highly curated and made up of our best data to drive operations, analysis, and innovation across the company.

> "We built a central data platform to create a solid foundation for innovation."

What challenges have you faced in driving data-driven transformation?
I'm lucky that at Capital One, being data driven is a way of life. Being data driven was the founding idea of Capital One, so it runs deep in our culture. As is common in many large enterprises, I have had to face the challenge of getting alignment on the need for investment across the company in transforming our data ecosystem. I've used a mix of carrot – showing what's possible when we transform, stick – good project management and tracking, and partnership – working hard to use technology to make the transformation as easy as possible for our lines of business, in order to overcome that challenge.

What trends or emerging technologies in data and analytics excite you most right now, and why?
AI, of course. But also, I'm excited about all the innovation in data that is happening because more people want to use data for AI. It's increased the focus on making it easier to clean and organize data.

What advice would you give to other leaders aspiring to achieve similar impact in the data and analytics field?
Always come back to what is needed by your customers to best drive the organization forward. Ultimately, data and analytics are an enabler to outcomes, so stay focused on the outcomes you want to drive and use data and analytics to achieve them.

Avinash Tripathi

VP of Analytics
University of Phoenix

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Can you share the career journey that led you to your current role, and the defining moments that shaped your approach to data and analytics?
I've been fortunate to spend over two decades in analytics, anchored by a simple belief: data is not just numbers, it's a catalyst for real outcomes and lasting impact.

My journey began at WPP, where I witnessed analytics evolve from a behind-the-scenes support role into a front-line driver of business transformation. That early exposure shaped my conviction that data, when used with intent, can influence decisions, inspire innovation, and move organizations forward.

As I stepped into leadership roles, particularly within global higher education, I had the privilege of building and guiding teams of data scientists, engineers, and analysts. Together, we weren't just running reports and dashboards; we were designing analytical solutions and strategies that improved efficiency, solved complex problems, and unlocked meaningful growth.

What are the most significant achievements in your career so far, and what impact have they had on your organization or the wider industry?
Looking back on two decades in analytics within US higher education, I would call my biggest achievement the ability to drive disruptive transformation in a sector often resistant to change. Higher education in the US is highly governed by regulation, compliance, and legacy systems, and it has historically struggled to embed analytics into everyday decision-making. My role has been to break through these barriers.

> "I drive disruptive transformation in a sector often resistant to change."

We built a university-wide data literacy program, establishing a "single source of truth" culture. Today, we don't just measure outcomes such as new enrolment, student retention, and satisfaction; we measure how often data drives decisions, and how those decisions improve outcomes.

Which data or analytics initiative are you most proud of leading, and what were the key factors in its success?
To stay ahead of the changing Search landscape driven by Search Generative Experience (SGE), we built an in-house generative AI platform (LLM) to monitor brand visibility in evolving search environments. This allowed us to adapt our outreach and maintain a strong presence even as the digital ecosystem shifted.

Another effort close to my heart was featured in Digital First Magazine, where we used AI to analyze anonymous website visitor behavior to understand prospective students. These insights fueled tailored outreach strategies, strengthened engagement, and ultimately made the student journey more personalized and meaningful. My team embraced experimentation, iterated quickly, and always kept the focus on our students, faculty, and the communities we serve.

What advice would you give to other leaders aspiring to achieve a similar impact in the data and analytics field?
Learn the art of the ask. Data initiatives rarely succeed on technical merit alone; they thrive when tied directly to business outcomes. Speaking the language of ROI, growth, and competitive advantage, not dashboards and models. Equally important is building trust through transparency and collaboration. Involve stakeholders early and often. Don't just present them with solutions, co-create them.

Scott Zoldi

Chief Analytics Officer
FICO

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What are the most significant achievements in your career so far, and what impact have they had on your organization or the wider industry?
As a scientist and a leader of scientists, I know the things that excite us the most are invention and learning. Seeing our learnings translated into algorithms and techniques that get expressed in software, and operationalized at customer organizations, is a daily dream come true. Having been granted 107 software patents (with 47 still pending) is a personal pinnacle, too, and one I am proud to have achieved with my data science team at FICO.

Some of the innovations I am proudest of include:

- Numerous AI and analytic capabilities in FICO® Falcon®, the world's leading fraud detection solution that protects two thirds of the global volume of payment card transactions.
- The patented application of blockchain for AI model development management, a critical enabler in building trust in AI by creating an immutable record of every step of the development process.
- Focused language models (FLMs) for Generative AI (Gen AI) that, along with the trust score that accompanies every output, allow Gen AI technology to be trusted, for the first time, for business-critical applications.

> "This allows us to trust Gen AI for business-critical applications."

Which data or analytics initiative are you most proud of leading, and what were the key factors in its success?
I'm most proud of leading the FICO Educational Analytics Challenge, a program that brings AI and data science to students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), to inspire and train the next generation of data scientists. Now in our third year of this commitment, the FICO Challenge is a semester-long program that continues to give students hands-on experiences building AI models to address specific real-world business problems, while simultaneously advancing responsible AI practices.

Importantly, in addition to solo and group work, the program pairs student participants with FICO data scientist mentors. This is an incredibly rewarding experience for both the student mentees and the FICO data scientists, many of whom maintain long-term professional relationships.

What trends or emerging technologies in data and analytics excite you most right now, and why?
Gen AI is a powerful technology. FICO's focused language model approach eradicates the hallucinatory tendencies of Large Language Model Gen AI chatbots in two ways. First, the FLM is trained on a narrow set of task-specific inputs.

Second, each response the FLM provides is accompanied by a trust score that tells the user how likely the answer is to be aligned with expert-defined knowledge anchors. In doing so, the trust score effectively calculates the likelihood of hallucination, allowing a risk-based approach to using Gen AI, and enabling trust of the validity of the provided answer.

McKinley Hyden

Director of Data Value & Strategy
The Financial Times

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Can you share the career journey that led you to your current role, and the defining moments that shaped your approach to data and analytics?
I grew up surrounded by two very different worlds: my father, an actor, immersed me in creativity and storytelling, while my mother, a formidable business leader at Condé Nast and later McKinsey, exposed me to strategy and influence. Many assumed I would follow a purely creative path, but what truly captivated me was understanding human behavior – why individuals make certain choices and how groups act collectively.

That curiosity led me to see business as its own form of storytelling: the ability to shape narratives, influence outcomes, and create change. Over time, I realised I could blend creativity with evidence, stories with structure, to tackle complex challenges in new ways.

One defining moment was leading audience engagement at the Financial Times. Positioned within editorial, I worked alongside world-class journalists to build an analytics capability that complemented their craft. That experience taught me that data alone is not persuasive; it must be grounded in context, communicated with clarity, and connected to goals that people care about. It reinforced my belief that the arts and sciences are not separate disciplines, but partners. That intersection continues to shape my approach to data and analytics today.

> "I worked with top journalists on an analytics capability to complement their craft."

What are the standout achievements and initiatives of your career so far?
Building a data capability within editorial at the Financial Times. It was a pioneering effort that required overcoming understandable apprehension and misalignment around how data could support journalism. The fact that data remains embedded and valued in editorial today is a testament to the foundations laid during that work.

The initiative I'm most proud of leading is the AI Transformation program at the Financial Times. What made it complex wasn't only the technical challenges, though the pace of change was relentless. The greater challenge was emotional. In a media organization, AI raises profound questions – about trust, integrity, and even the role of journalism itself. Personally, I've been deeply concerned about AI's broader societal impact, including its potential to distract from urgent issues like climate change. Balancing those anxieties while providing clarity and direction for the organization was both the hardest and most rewarding part of the work.

The success of this initiative came down to a few key factors. First, staying grounded in values. By being explicit about what principles were non-negotiable – such as responsibility and integrity – we created stability amid rapid change. Second, collaboration was vital. Real progress came not from individual "superhero" efforts but from bringing together diverse perspectives, skills, and networks to co-create solutions.

Finally, acknowledging emotions around change proved critical. Too often, transformation efforts ignore the human element. Recognizing fears, hopes, and motivations made it possible to build trust and momentum. That balance of values, collaboration, and empathy has been the cornerstone of our progress.

Jam Benneth Wong

AVP, Head of Data Science and Analytics
ASA Philippines Foundation

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What moments shaped your approach to data and analytics?
I began as a theoretical physicist, trained to approach problems with a scientific mindset – breaking them down to first principles and questioning assumptions until reaching clarity. This habit of continually asking why has shaped my approach to data and analytics. I don't just seek to answer questions with data; I aim to understand the underlying business problem, why it matters, and how best to address it. This way of thinking has guided me from academia into my current role, where I apply scientific rigor to practical challenges in financial inclusion.

What are the most significant achievements in your career so far?
A key milestone was deploying a performance dashboard that now supports over 700 Operations managers at ASA. Before this, managers relied on fragmented, ad hoc, and manual reports, consuming hours of their time. Through stakeholder immersion and continuous feedback, I identified pain points and designed a system that automates reporting and consolidates key metrics. This initiative not only improved productivity but also set the foundation for ASA's digital transformation journey. Beyond ASA, it demonstrates how microfinance – an industry often lagging in tech adoption – can modernize operations to better serve communities.

What challenges have you faced in driving data-driven transformation?
One of the biggest challenges is building trust in a 12,000-strong organization, where over 80% of staff are in Operations and underexposed to technology. Technical capability alone isn't enough. Solutions must be credible and recognized as valuable by stakeholders.

> "I apply scientific rigor to practical challenges in financial inclusion."

To overcome this, I immersed myself in the grassroots, conducting fieldwork and engaging with staff nationwide. By listening, demonstrating quick wins, and showing that analytics can ease workloads rather than add complexity, I gained buy-in. Building reputation and trust proved just as essential as delivering technically sound solutions for data-driven transformation.

Which emerging technology excites you the most right now?
While large language models and agentic AI dominate headlines, I am most excited about them in relation to data engineering. The success of a digital transformation journey depends on a foundation of high-quality, reliable data. At ASA, where data maturity is still developing, our priority is to strengthen these foundations, ensuring that data is accurate, consistent, and accessible across the organization.

For microfinance, the critical question remains: Can we prove with data that microfinancing truly helps achieve poverty alleviation? Today, much of the industry lacks the depth and quality of data required to answer this definitively. The challenge is less about deploying advanced algorithms and more about building the infrastructure and pipelines that make such insights possible. As the largest microfinance institution in the Philippines, we are uniquely positioned to lead this effort.

Cindi Howson

Chief Data & AI Strategy Officer
ThoughtSpot

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Can you share the career journey that led you to your current role, and the defining moments that shaped your approach to data and analytics?
I started in this industry as a report writer at Dow Chemical, Switzerland. In the early 1990s, I had the opportunity to work on what was then the industry's first global data warehouse project. I led the BI and analytics team to select and deploy tools like BusinessObjects and Cognos PowerPlay to thousands of users globally.

I left Dow to pursue my MBA, thinking I would change careers but realizing that combining technical skills with business acumen is exactly what our industry needed more of. This launched my career running BI Scorecard and authoring and co-authoring seven books for our industry and training a generation of now CDAOs while teaching for TDWI.

In 2015, I joined Gartner to lead the IT Score maturity model and Magic Quadrant for Analytics and BI as well as groundbreaking research into using data for good. I brought new innovations such as the BI Bake Offs and Women in Tech roundtables to Gartner.

In 2019, I joined the ThoughtSpot leadership team in a newly created role, Chief Data Strategy Officer, to support our top customers globally on their data strategy, culture, and people change, as well as shaping our product strategy. My role has since evolved to include AI and Gen AI.

> "Getting people to shift mindsets is much harder than learning new tech."

What are the most significant achievements in your career so far, and what impact have they had on your organization or the wider industry?
I have published seven best-selling industry books that remain bibles for some on best practices for using data and analytics for business impact, as well as foundational concepts.

As host of The Data Chief podcast, for six seasons now, I shine a light on the topics that CDAOs are grappling with most and bring their stories and best practices to listeners bi-weekly. The podcast is now rated in the top 1.5% of all podcasts.

Which data or analytics initiative are you most proud of leading, and what were the key factors in its success?
Dow's, because it was an industry first with no playbooks. Internally, I am proud of my influence in creating a company-wide diversity liveboard so all ThoughtSpot employees have visibility into this data. We then converted this to an app that all our customers leverage.

What challenges have you faced in driving data-driven transformation, and how have you overcome them?
There are two types of leaders: those who focus on technology first and others who focus on business impact. I think of this as the how versus the why. Getting people to shift their mindsets to the why first and factoring change management into the process has been significantly harder than learning new tech.

Susan Gibson

Head of Data Analytics and AI
University of Technology Sydney

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Can you share the career journey that led you to your current role, and the defining moments that shaped your approach to data and analytics?
For me, a defining moment came when we began using predictive AI in education. It was the shift from simply analyzing what had already happened to using data to actively shape better futures for individuals. Seeing the excitement of the team when they realized they could identify students likely to leave and provide the right support, or reach out to potential students who might otherwise have been overlooked, was incredibly powerful. It was an example that reminded me that data and analytics are not just about insight, but about creating opportunities and changing lives.

Which data or analytics initiative are you most proud of leading, and what were the key factors in its success?
The democratization of BI and AI capabilities at UTS, which has enabled individuals and teams to be innovative with technology within appropriate guardrails. I'm also proud of building high-performing teams with strong cultures that have driven major innovations and opportunities for our organization.

What challenges have you faced in your career and how have you overcome them?
Driving data-driven transformation has involved overcoming cultural resistance, fragmented systems and skill gaps. I addressed these by democratising access to AI and BI capabilities, fostering hands-on learning environments and aligning innovation with governance frameworks.

> "Use data and analytics as the enabler – don't make it the headline."

By enabling teams to experiment within guardrails and connecting data workflows, we built trust, improved operational efficiency and delivered predictive insights that support proactive decision-making.

What trends or emerging technologies in data and analytics excite you most right now, and why?
Agentic AI is one of the most exciting trends in data and analytics today. It represents a shift from passive tools to autonomous systems that can reason, plan and act on behalf of users. This technology is set to fundamentally reshape the technology landscape. Combined with the accelerating pace of innovation in data infrastructure and governance, it's an extraordinary time to be working in this field where the potential to drive meaningful, scalable change has never been greater.

What advice would you give to other leaders aspiring to achieve similar impact in the data and analytics field?
Focus on telling the story of your impact in business terms. People connect with outcomes. Use data and analytics as the enabler and do not make it the headline. Build trust by aligning your work with strategic goals and empower others to engage with data confidently. Success comes from translating insights into action and making the value of data real for your stakeholder.

Sarah Cawsey

General Manager Data Services
Auckland Council

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Can you share the defining moments that shaped your approach to data and analytics?
My career has largely been in banking strategy but data, numbers, and insights have always been at the core. I believe you can't write an effective strategy without truly understanding how the business is driven by its numbers. In my previous organization, I advanced from a broad strategy role to lead a team focused on insights and analytics. That transition allowed me to learn from the team as well as specialize in the area I'd always been most passionate about - the analytics and insights side.

My next opportunity came when my manager at the time 'voluntold' me to apply for a role in the technology side of data. Making that transition has been one of the biggest, but most rewarding challenges of my career.

Tell us about some of your top achievements and the impact they've had.
My most significant achievements have been with my current team, where my experience and values have really come together. I've had a once-in-a-career opportunity at Auckland Council to build a data practice from the ground up. In just two years we've delivered platforms and tooling, strategy, governance frameworks and policies, data literacy modules, and AI capability.

> "The impact of these capabilities will be felt city-wide."

And we're only getting started. The impact of these capabilities will be felt city-wide – from waste collection to natural hazard planning, to efficiencies in back-office functions. For the organization, the biggest shift is our ability to make truly data-informed decisions.

Which initiative are you proud of?
I'm proud of the work we've done at Auckland Council as a whole. The key factors in our success have been a clear vision, the right people leading the change, and the resources to deliver. Organizational support, particularly with funding, has been fundamental to putting the right technology, policies, and processes in place.

What trends or emerging technologies in data and analytics excite you most right now?
I don't tend to get caught up in emerging trends for their own sake. What excites me is using the tools we already have to deliver value for the region.

The work we've done to automate, build infrastructure as code, design modular systems, and strengthen governance and classification foundations means we're now well-placed to adopt AI in a sustainable, scalable way. It might not sound flashy but using emerging technologies efficiently and responsibly will make the biggest difference in the long run.

Tarun Sood

Chief Data and AI Officer
American Century Investments

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Tell us about your career.
It began in consulting, where I spent over a decade empowering C-suite executives to harness the power of IT strategy, data governance, and analytics transformation across various industries. This journey has equipped me with a strategic perspective on leveraging data to drive impactful business outcomes. I embraced an executive leadership role seven years ago, channeling that external insight into transformative enterprise execution.

A defining moment in my career was the shift from fragmented data systems to a unified, cloud-native platform, which unlocks real-time insights and scalable AI solutions. This transformation has solidified my belief that effective data leadership blends technical expertise with the ability to inspire culture, align with business priorities, and create measurable impact.

What are your most significant achievements so far, and what impact have they had?
Over the past three decades, I have led organizations through significant shifts in data and analytics, ranging from structured data warehousing to unstructured data exploration, cloud transformation, and now the rise of generative AI. One of my key achievements has been guiding organizations, including American Century, through these transitions while maintaining a focus on business value.

I have built scalable data ecosystems, modernized legacy platforms, and integrated AI into core business functions such as investment research. By embracing emerging technologies early and aligning them with our strategic goals, we have established ourselves as leaders in ethical and innovative data use. These efforts transformed our internal capabilities and influenced broader industry perspectives on responsible AI, data governance, and the future of analytics.

> "We unlocked new capabilities in predictive modeling."

Which data or analytics initiative are you most proud of leading?
I am most proud to have led the development of our enterprise data lake foundation at American Century. This initiative established a scalable, secure, unified data access framework across the organization, enabling advanced analytics, business intelligence, and AI solutions. By integrating structured and unstructured data into a cloud-native architecture, we unlocked new capabilities in predictive modeling and real-time insights.

Additionally, this initiative served as the launchpad for our Conversational AI platform, which now provides intelligent, natural language interfaces for both internal and client-facing applications. Key factors contributing to our success included strong executive sponsorship, cross-functional collaboration, and a clear focus on governance, scalability, and user experience. This foundational work has transformed our operations and positioned us to lead in responsible AI adoption within the asset management sector.

What trends or emerging technologies in data and analytics excite you most right now?
The most exciting trends in data and analytics today are Generative AI and Agentic AI. These advancements are redefining the roles of Chief Data Officers, AI Officers, and IT leaders, shifting their focus from infrastructure and reporting to orchestration, automation, and strategic enablement.

Joëlle van der Bijl

Chief Data & Analytics Officer
FrieslandCampina

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What has defined your approach to data and analytics?

I began my career programming financial consolidation systems, where I discovered the joy of using technology to solve real business problems. That curiosity grew into a passion for simplifying decision-making through data.

At FrieslandCampina, I held Finance Controlling and FP&A roles across Asia and the Middle East before returning to IT. I've shaped my career at the intersection of business and technology, proving that they don't have to live in separate worlds. Today, as Chief Data & Analytics Officer, I focus on unlocking the power of data and AI to drive smarter decisions and inspire new ways of working across our dairy cooperative.

Tell us about some initiatives you're proud of.

I'm proud to have led initiatives that transformed not only our data and tech capabilities, but also our mindset as a company, creating real business impact. A major transformation was the migration from legacy BI and AI platforms to our Global Data & AI platform, not as a technical project, but as a movement that showed how data could reshape the way we work. That was my first real taste of scaling data impact.

Later, I sponsored the set up of our Technology Excellence Center in Kuala Lumpur, which has grown into a global hub for IT. What makes me proud is not just the technology, but the people side: attracting great talent, building strong leadership, and creating programs that make colleagues feel engaged and supported.

> "This set the blueprint for scaling AI across other business groups."

A real defining moment for me was establishing our Responsible AI Board and policy framework. I believe responsibility is what enables us to innovate with confidence, not what holds us back. Building on that, I'm now shaping our AI strategy and pushing the next steps in data democratization because I see scaling AI and empowering people with data as two sides of the same coin.

Another highlight is our "Re-think with AI" program in BG Asia, which has become a model for end-to-end transformation and strategic impact.

We began by co-hosting a discovery session in Singapore, to reimagine Sales & Marketing plans using AI. This session introduced leaders to AI frameworks, real-world FMCG examples, and hands-on demos like route-to-market platform. From there, we built an AI ideation funnel focused on BG Asia's growth strategy, "Back to Roar," and prioritized five high-impact use cases.

The success came from a structured, end-to-end approach. We secured early buy-in from BG Asia, where the team was ready and data-rich. Then we ran immersive simulations to build AI literacy and define leadership roles in a data-centric world. Next, each use case was piloted, validated, and scaled with clear ROI.

This initiative not only accelerated BG Asia's strategy but also set the blueprint for scaling AI across other business groups.

Pedro Liaño

CDAO & VP Transformation
Bed Bath and Beyond

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What influenced your approach to data and analytics?
I grew up in data with my hands on the keyboard. At IBM, I learned discipline and how to make analytics reliable in regulated, high stakes environments. At Sulzer, in manufacturing and energy, value became tangible: fewer failures, steadier operations, better margins. Moving to retail and ecommerce at Beyond, I saw the same heartbeat in customer journeys and launches. I committed to simplicity, short cycles, and visible outcomes.

Tell us about the impact you've had in your career.
I'm proud of turning governance from a checkpoint into an accelerator. We built governance by design inside pipelines, not on slides. Audits sped up, incidents dropped, and teams confidently retired redundant assets to control cost and complexity. Earlier, in industry, impact meant fewer surprises on plant floors and calmer on call rotations. These are small human wins that compound.

Tell us about a particular initiative you're proud of.
We rebuilt the Customer 360 domain so trust was part of the product. Quality lived as code: profiling, validation, matching, uniqueness, integrity, completeness, enrichment, monitoring, and remediation pushed down into pipelines across several technologies. The technology mattered, but the people made it work: clear ownership, steady executive sponsorship, Monday shaping and Friday demos, and SLAs that were real. The result was fewer incidents, faster launches, and conversion-oriented use cases that business partners leaned on with confidence.

> "I turned governance from a checkpoint into an accelerator."

What trends or emerging technologies do you think have the most potential to add value?
AI on trusted ground excites me most: retrieval and agents that honor accuracy, IP, and policy by design. Data contracts and observability feel like seatbelts, quiet until the moment they save you. Semantic layers, ontologies, and digital twins are closing the gap between operations and analytics so decisions happen closer to reality. Serverless and open lakehouse patterns make efficiency feel natural. Regulatory ready AI is an enabler, not a brake; when guardrails are baked in, teams move faster and sleep better.

What should a data leader do if they want to achieve a big impact in retail or manufacturing?
Aim for two north stars: usefulness and trust. Spend your first weeks shadowing the people you serve, such as store managers, merchandisers, and plant supervisors.

Then write a one-page day in the life that names their real pains. Build boringly excellent foundations: clear SLAs, runbooks, on call etiquette, and a shared glossary. Create a dual cadence; ship something small every week and place a few quarterly bets with explicit exit criteria. Be as proud to stop the wrong thing as to scale the right one. Treat cost like UX with visible budgets per data product.

Practice blameless incident reviews and invite business partners. Learn to translate between engineers, Legal, Marketing, Operations and the CFO so decisions travel fast. Say no with a metric and an alternative. Measure leadership by how many people grew because you were there, not by how many decisions you made.

Sigrid Rouam

Global Chief AI Officer
EFG Private Bank

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Tell us about yourself.
I spearhead EFG's global data and AI transformation, overseeing the development of scalable AI infrastructure, robust governance, and workforce upskilling, with a focus on designing and implementing impactful solutions using Machine Learning, AI, and Generative AI.

Prior to EFG, I built a track record across diverse fields in Genomics Research, FMCG, and Telecommunications on starting and scaling data science teams. A defining moment was at the Singapore Exchange, where I was entrusted to build its data science capability from the ground up – an experience that sharpened both my strategic vision and hands-on leadership. Subsequent and larger roles at Standard Chartered and Credit Suisse further enhanced my expertise in building high-performing AI teams to address complex business challenges.

Which data or analytics initiative are you most proud of?
Designing and delivering EFG's Responsible AI program. The core goal was to strategically balance AI innovation with a proactive approach to managing ethical risks. I wanted to ensure that AI is built and used in ethical, fair, transparent and accountable ways. I believe a truly responsible AI initiative starts with a diverse team.

> "A diverse and inclusive environment creates more robust and equitable AI."

A team with multiple perspectives is better equipped to identify and mitigate biases, which will ultimately build AI models that respect and reflect the rich diversity of our users and society. By prioritizing a diverse and inclusive environment, we created more robust and equitable AI solutions that we could confidently deploy to create value to multiple stakeholders and users.

What emerging technology are you thinking about the most right now?
Agentic AI represents a significant leap forward because of its potential to transform productivity. Unlike conventional AI applications that perform single tasks, agents can autonomously reason, plan, and execute multi-step workflows to achieve complex goals. This enables them to automate entire processes, from orchestrating data pipelines to proactively managing strategic business functions. This shift frees up human talent from tedious, repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on innovation and higher value work such as strengthening client relationships. It promises a new paradigm of productivity where AI acts as an intelligent collaborator.

However, this technology is still in its nascent stages and needs to mature significantly. The core challenge lies not just in technical scalability, but in defining the proper governance. As agents take on more autonomous decision-making, it becomes critical to establish frameworks for accountability, ethics, and transparency. Building trust will require robust guardrails to ensure these powerful systems operate safely and align with human intent.

Dr. Milica Ng

Senior Director, Global Head of Data Science
CSL

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How did you become interested in both data science and biotechnology?
I was born in a culture where we greet each other with “be healthy,” so it’s not surprising that health has always been my north star. My career journey began with a natural talent for mathematics and an early fascination with technology when the personal computer first appeared in my primary school.

Tell us about some of your big wins.
One of the achievements I am most proud of has been building a data and analytics capability from the ground up. Starting with very limited resources, I recruited, coached, and developed diverse talent, while at the same time designing the technical infrastructure: scaling from a single server, I led the design and evolution of the infrastructure all the way through to an on-premise platform and ultimately to a peta-scale capable, cloud-based data science lab.

Another defining achievement has been championing and implementing a framework for data FAIRRification, ensuring data is Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable, and Reproducible. By embedding this concept, we created a sustainable foundation that improved R&D efficiency, compliance, and collaboration across global teams.

I also played a pivotal role in securing buy-in for developing biomedical data products to support portfolio progression in drug development. This work has had a direct impact on advancing programs faster and more cost effectively, directly benefiting patients.

> “I scaled from one server to a peta-scale capable, cloud-based data science lab.”

Finally, I am proud to have pioneered and productionalized the use of artificial intelligence within the organization. Moving from proof-of-concepts into real, scalable applications was a critical step in shifting the culture toward data-driven decision-making. It also positioned us at the forefront of how AI is applied responsibly in biotech.

What initiative are you most proud of leading?
The Biomedical Data Science Initiative (BDSI). It was designed as a roadmap to address two major shifts in biomedical research: the exponential growth in data being generated and rapid advances in deriving insights through AI, machine learning, and data science.

BDSI ensures CSL remains competitive and future-fit by focusing on four pillars: talent, partnerships, infrastructure, and cloud strategy, to build modern translational data science capabilities and support our transition to a precision medicine-based R&D organization.

What challenges have you faced in driving data-driven transformation?
One of the first was securing senior management buy-in. Data initiatives can seem abstract until their impact is made tangible, so I focused on accountability and clear, measurable KPIs. By tying outcomes directly to business and R&D objectives, I was able to build credibility and demonstrate the value of investment.

Another challenge was ensuring fit-for-purpose data availability. Scientific and biomedical data is often fragmented, incomplete, or not readily reusable. To overcome this, I developed frameworks for improving internal data quality while also strategically buying external data to fill critical gaps. This dual approach ensured teams had timely access to data that was both reliable and impactful.

Dr. Irina Mirkina

CEO
WM Capital

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What are some of the milestones of your career?
With an early career as a scientist, I learned how numbers drive markets and shape policy decisions, but also that rigorous research alone isn't enough – insights must translate into action. Working in regulated industries – from fintech to maritime transportation – I saw again and again that building robust data and AI governance not only unlocks business value, but also future-proofs any company for deploying AI effectively. My time at UNICEF expanded that vision: AI and analytics aren't just about profits but people's lives. Championing AI initiatives for children's health and education solidified my conviction that AI can be a force for global good when deployed ethically and responsibly. Navigating AI hype, choosing partners or evaluating proposals for the European Commission, I saw brilliant ideas stall for lack of risk management.

These cross-sector experiences converged in my role at Fugro, where I fused commercial acumen with a heart for social impact. A watershed moment was watching our AI models detect anomalies that human teams missed, saving weeks of costly fieldwork and reducing environmental disturbance. It proved that advanced analytics can protect both budgets and the planet.

Leading AI strategy and building partnership networks taught me that true transformation demands more than tech. It requires storytelling, stakeholder alignment, and a culture that embraces change.

What are some of your most significant achievements?
At UNICEF, I led strategic and responsible AI deployment in some of the most sensitive contexts, where teams rolled out over 60 AI/ML projects across 156 UNICEF country offices, directly improving health, education, and emergency response for more than two million children.

> "I helped establish a blueprint for ethical AI in humanitarian settings."

By engaging partners, startups, and local communities, we didn't just pilot AI tools. We built sustainable pipelines of AI technologies that had a direct, multiplicative impact on children, their families, and their communities worldwide.

From early-warning disaster systems to AI health diagnostics models to personalized learning tools, our work directly improved outcomes for millions of children all over the world and established a blueprint for ethical AI in humanitarian settings.

At Stena Line, I led the creation of a dynamic pricing engine that delivered a 14% boost in annual profits and a 3.8% increase in freight revenue. By integrating real-time demand signals, competitor rates, and route optimizations, we transformed pricing from a manual art into a data-driven science that outpaced market shifts.

At Fugro, I'm most proud of leading the AI-driven subsurface modelling platform that cuts invasive survey costs, saving Fugro millions while reducing our environmental footprint. By harnessing multi-sensor data and cutting-edge algorithms, we delivered rapid, high-precision models that are bound to become the new standard for safe offshore exploration.

What trends or emerging technologies in data and analytics excite you most right now, and why?
Privacy-first and ethical AI with built-in checks and guardrails: embedding trust and transparency by design safeguards users, anticipates regulatory requirements, and builds confidence in AI outcomes.

Karl O'Hanlon

Chief Data & Analytics Officer
Veolia

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Tell us about the defining moments that shaped your approach to data and analytics?

I joined Veolia in 2010 as a Data Analyst for a London contract, focusing on leveraging data to impact performance and advise decision-making. My career breakthrough came during the London Olympics, where I led the analysis of service disruptions and optimized planning across London, a complex data optimization challenge.

Subsequently, I progressed to manage the Business Performance team for London, then the UK, before becoming Head of Data & Analytics for the UK and later Northern Europe. This journey saw me consistently expanding my remit, responsibilities, and geographical scope.

For the past two years, I've held the position of Group Chief Data and Analytics Officer (CDAO). In this role, I'm spearheading Veolia's global data transformation, implementing AI solutions, and delivering data-driven value to both operational and corporate employees. This involves leading a cultural and technical revolution within the organization.

Which data or analytics initiative are you most proud of leading?

I am leading two incredibly valuable initiatives. The first is to speed up our use of ML and AI in our operations through a new series of platforms and services that we are offering globally. The aim is to be able to deploy use cases on any of our sites in only a matter of days rather than the current lengthy process. The potential for this is huge as we scale across our thousands of operational sites globally.

> "The aim is to be able to deploy use cases on any of our sites in only a matter of days rather than the current lengthy process. The potential for this is huge."

Secondly, we are working to reimagine our global reporting processes. These processes are necessary for regulatory compliance but also to help drive our global decision making. Through simplifying and improving these long-standing issues, we will be able to gain much greater value through our data while minimizing the cost of collating it.

Tell us about some of the challenges you've faced and how you overcame them.

Data Transformation is really one of the most difficult ones. Among the initial challenges I faced was ensuring that we were setting aside the right budget for this transformation as it's much easier to budget for tangible project delivery. But in the end, the projects won't be able to reach their maximum potential value without the transformation that goes with it.

That's why our transformation team works entirely on concrete project delivery which educates through the delivery of roadmap projects. This has helped people understand the standards that need to be applied and helped them in thinking about how these standards can be applied in future projects.

Shilpi Agarwal

Founder and CEO
DataEthics4All Foundation

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Tell us about your work introducing data ethics to younger generations.
Driving data-driven transformation in education has meant overcoming skepticism around AI, resource constraints, and a lack of representation in tech. One of the most powerful ways we've addressed these challenges is through transformative partnerships.

By partnering with organizations like Boys & Girls Clubs of America, we've been able to bring AI ethics education to underserved communities and empower at-risk youth to see themselves as creators of technology rather than just consumers. This grassroots approach builds trust, bridges the digital divide, and provides young people with a vision of themselves as leaders in a tech-driven future.

What kind of hurdles did you encounter while bridging this gap?
The biggest challenges weren't technical, they were cultural. Many schools feared that AI was either too advanced or too risky, and underserved communities often lacked the resources to participate. To address this, we built a full AI Ethics Ecosystem that lowers barriers and creates pathways for all learners.

The 12 Pillars of Data Ethics Framework is the backbone of all programs, making ethics integral, not optional. Then there is the Curriculum Alignment, which is about designing AI ethics courses aligned with CSTA, ISTE, and College Board standards to reduce friction in adoption.

> "We're not just tracking trends – we're helping shape them."

Next we focus on Community Engagement: building a global K-through-Gray community where educators, parents, students, and mentors collaborate.

Our Youth Leadership Pipeline, meanwhile, offers opportunities through the AI Youth Council and PVSA leadership awards, creating recognition for student contributions. Another key element of this ethics ecosystem is our Transformative Partnerships, where we collaborate with other organizations to empower at-risk youth to thrive in tech.

By pairing free school pilots and certifications with scalable tech delivery, we've turned skepticism into advocacy and created a replicable, inclusive model for AI literacy and leadership.

What trends or emerging technologies excite you most right now, and why?
We're at a historic crossroads where innovation and responsibility are finally converging. I'm excited by AI agents and workflow automation. Platforms for building AI-based agents and workflows are democratizing automation, enabling innovation at every level. People who couldn't code are now empowered to build AI Solutions with vibe coding.

I'm also excited about multimodal AI, the integration of vision, speech, text, and robotics is redefining creativity and problem-solving. And there are promising new responsible AI tools. Fairness metrics, transparency dashboards, and explainability tools are finally equipping leaders to build ethical systems at scale.

Our being invited by the US Department of Labor to provide guidance on implementing the national AI Executive Order in K–12 education affirmed that ethics and inclusion are now national priorities. We're not just tracking trends – we're helping shape them to ensure AI empowers, protects, and inspires the next generation.

Anna Kwiatkowska

Chief Data Scientist
HM Revenues and Customs

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Tell us about yourself.
As Chief Data Scientist at HMRC, I lead a team of around 80 within a 2,000-strong community, shaping our approach to data, AI, and innovation. My focus is on building robust data foundations, fostering digital and data literacy, and ensuring analytics align with strategic goals to create lasting impact.

While it's hard to pinpoint a single defining moment, the advent of cloud technology and advances in data processing have exponentially increased our potential for impact. Across organizations, I have pioneered advanced analytics and machine learning to personalize experiences and deliver measurable outcomes, always recognizing that true innovation is a blend of data, technology, process, and – most importantly – people and culture.

You've worked across numerous industries. What are some highlights?
Throughout my career, I have driven significant change across retail, broadcasting, and the public sector by delivering incremental gains, improving operations, and enhancing performance through data and analytics. In retail, I developed and implemented advanced analytics and CRM strategies for major brands, resulting in improved engagement and measurable ROI. At Sky, I pioneered machine learning and personalization, transforming customer experiences and driving substantial business outcomes.

At HMRC, I have focused on deploying data science and AI to solve complex challenges, unlock significant value, and embed ethical innovation at scale – building a 2,000-strong data science community. However, my most lasting impact has been in growing capability and empowering others and learning from them myself — establishing academies, fostering apprenticeships, and mentoring colleagues to help them gain new skills and progress into leadership roles. Seeing those I have supported drive change themselves is the most rewarding achievement of my career.

> "This set the benchmark for responsible data and AI use in government."

I also advanced data and AI ethics at HMRC, championing this agenda before it became a mainstream priority. Recognizing early on that responsible data and AI use is critical to public trust and long-term success, I led the development and embedding of ethical frameworks and practices across the department, securing buy-in from academia and other institutions.

I am particularly proud that this work has influenced wider government thinking and set a benchmark for responsible data and AI use, supporting both operational excellence and public confidence.

What's your advice to other leaders aspiring to achieve impact in data and analytics?
Focus on scaling and industrialization, and on solving real business problems rather than chasing the latest technology trends. While proof of concepts (POCs) are useful for testing ideas, real change only happens when solutions are implemented at scale and embedded into core operations. And Gen AI POCs need to be properly scrutinized, especially as the reward mechanism makes them appear convincing.

Prioritize initiatives that address genuine needs and can be industrialized, investing in robust data foundations, repeatable processes, strong governance, and skills development. Scaling successful pilots requires persistence, stakeholder engagement, and a clear economic case for change. Ultimately, the most meaningful transformation comes from moving beyond experimentation to deliver sustainable, measurable value at scale.

Xanthe Sulzberger

Head of Product and Value Enablement
Fonterra

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Give us a sense of what got you to where you are today.
My career has spanned leading data-driven initiatives across fintech, logistics, education, and now the B2B Ingredients sector at Fonterra. Each role has offered opportunities to explore cutting-edge data architectures, platforms, and solutions. The ever-evolving landscape of data and technology continues to inspire me, as it constantly reshapes how we deliver real-world business outcomes.

I'm passionate about end-user enablement and product thinking. I've had the privilege of working with exceptional teams to build impactful products that surprise and delight our customers. These experiences have shaped my approach to data as a strategic enabler of innovation and value.

What are you most proud of in your career?
One of my proudest achievements is, no matter what role, championing a data-first culture. Fostering collaboration, enabling data literacy, and empowering teams to drive meaningful change. This cultural shift has had a lasting impact on how data is perceived and used across the business. Of course, you cannot do this without the support of a fantastic team.

I've also led the development of robust information management practices and data catalog. Part of this has been understanding and adapting to evolving laws and policies around data privacy and AI and thinking about how it influences the products we build. Balancing the growing demand for dynamic data products with the need for compliance has been both challenging and rewarding.

> "I've learned that strategy always trumps tools."

A key milestone has been solving the challenge of data accessibility – enabling teams to quickly find high-quality, trusted data to accelerate product development. This has significantly improved the speed to delivery and helped establish standards for production-ready data products. The success has been underpinned by strong alignment with security and legal teams. This symbiotic relationship ensures we build products that are not only innovative but also compliant and secure.

What challenges have you faced in driving data-driven transformation?
Delivering innovative, value-driven, and privacy-conscious solutions is an ongoing journey, not a destination. One of the biggest challenges has been shifting mindsets from traditional BI tools and dashboards to AI-orchestrated insights. This transformation requires continuous engagement, demonstrations, and conversations.

I've learned that strategy always trumps tools. Clear business requirements linked to company strategy are imperative. Acquiring a platform without a defined problem to solve rarely delivers the desired outcomes and is often not the miracle hoped for.

I have come to understand that sometimes a simple, well-adopted product often outperforms a sophisticated one with all the bells and whistles. Designing and delivering great products builds trust and proves that data teams can deliver the right solution for the right purpose.

Pier Martin

Vice President, Data & Analytics
Zeal Network SE

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Where have you worked and what did you do in each role?
At Wayfair, I led global analytics teams through a large-scale shift from monolithic systems to modular architecture, a turning point that deepened my expertise in scaling data platforms. At Wunderflats and Digital Charging Solutions, I built strategies that aligned advanced analytics with business expansion. Today at ZEAL, I drive an enterprise-wide transformation in how data informs marketing, product, and customer engagement. Alongside corporate roles, I built a coaching practice that supports new managers navigating data leadership.

Tell us about what you've done as a leader to drive innovation.
A consistent theme in my career has been building scalable data organizations that accelerate insight and impact while leaving teams stronger than when I arrived. At MD Financial, I created a Center of Excellence for analytics that centralized reporting, governance, and advanced modeling, starting from scratch as the second member of the team. Just as important, we built a strong team culture where collaboration and shared purpose made data a trusted driver of strategic decisions. At Wayfair, I championed the move from monolithic to modularized data architecture before it was widely adopted. This shift not only reduced time from question to insight but also developed future leaders who carried the approach forward after my tenure.

> "Communication and alignment are as important as engineering or analytics."

At ZEAL, I've continued this focus by aligning data strategy to business priorities, re-orienting the team into a domain model, and embedding a data product mindset with governance at its core. Across each role, I've prioritized developing people into leaders and ensuring data is seen as a true partner at the table. Beyond organizational transformation, one of my proudest achievements is building a coaching practice and mentoring aspiring leaders – helping data professionals grow gives me as much joy as driving business results.

What lessons have you learned on the road to success?
The greatest challenge in driving transformation is not technical but cultural – shifting perceptions of data from a back-office reporting function to a business-critical enabler. I've overcome this by introducing clear operating models, focussing the team on business outcomes, and embedding data and analytics into business where it could influence strategy daily. Communication and stakeholder alignment were as important as engineering or analytics. Through transparent prioritization processes and regular feedback loops, I built credibility and reduced resistance to change. The result: higher engagement, improved delivery velocity, and a stronger sense of shared ownership across business and data teams.

What trends or emerging technologies are you most interested in?
The convergence of generative AI with structured data foundations. The potential of agentic AI systems to enable true self-service analytics is transformative, allowing business users to move from asking "what happened?" to "what should we do next?" in real time. I also see experimentation platforms becoming a core part of every digital business, embedding test-and-learn capabilities into strategy rather than treating them as ad hoc exercises. These trends represent the next leap in data maturity: where AI augments human judgment at scale.

Priscila Papazissis Paolinelli

Head of Data Analytics
Vallourec

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Can you share the career journey that led you to your current role?
I have built a career over 20 years at the intersection of technology, business, and data, moving through sectors as diverse as healthcare, mobility, and industry. Along the way, I developed deep expertise in business intelligence, analytics, and artificial intelligence, always focusing on transforming data into decisions that generate tangible business impact.

My journey has been shaped by leading teams in high-growth environments, scaling data strategies globally, and fostering a culture of data-driven transformation. A defining moment for me was understanding that true data literacy is not only technical but cultural, and the success depends on empowering people at all levels to trust, interpret, and act on data and AI with confidence.

Tell us about where you've had an impact at your organization.
Leading projects that built a strong culture of data and AI has been one of the most impactful milestones in my career. By fostering data and AI literacy, governance, and adoption, I have helped organizations move from isolated reporting practices to a mindset where data and AI are part of everyday decision-making.

Another highlight has been designing and delivering corporate training programs in Generative AI, equipping professionals from different areas and maturities to experiment with the technology responsibly and unlock business value. These experiences inspired me to publish the book "Data and AI Literacy: Strategies and Practices to Work and Live in a Data-Driven World" (currently available only in Portuguese), where I share practical frameworks and reflections to strengthen data and AI adoption.

> "Investing in literacy is the foundation for sustainable data and AI transformation."

Being recognized as a Qlik Luminary for five consecutive years and a LinkedIn Top Voice has also allowed me to amplify these topics to a wider community, helping shape the industry dialogue around data and AI literacy, and show the innovative and transformative power of these initiatives.

Which data or analytics initiative are you most proud of leading, and what were the key factors in its success?
I am most proud of the data and AI literacy programs I have implemented since 2018 in many different industries, as they have created a long-lasting impact across very different sectors. In healthcare, I developed initiatives that enabled professionals to use analytics to improve patient care and operational efficiency, making data more accessible and actionable in a highly regulated environment. In the mobility sector, I led literacy programs that supported the rapid expansion of services, helping teams translate data into insights that guided strategic decisions in a competitive market.

More recently, in the industrial sector, I have been leading Generative AI training programs that bring together professionals from multiple areas and levels of maturity, equipping them to experiment with AI responsibly and unlock innovation at scale. These initiatives show that no matter the context (health, mobility, or industry), investing in literacy is the foundation for sustainable data and AI transformation.

About the Editor

Joshua Carroll is an experienced editor and content marketer and produces B2B stories that focus on emergent trends in data and analytics, cloud computing, information security, and more.

He works with world-leading brands to shine a light on fresh ideas and innovative products using a range of multimedia content.

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Joshua Carroll
Global Head of Content
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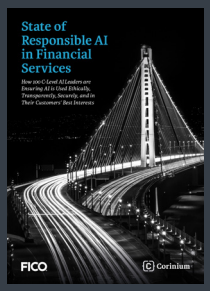

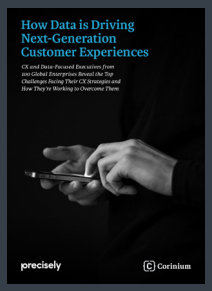

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