

QLIK EXECUTIVE EXCHANGE REPORT

# The Data Journey Australia & New Zealand 2021

*Perspectives from senior data and  
analytics leaders during Qlik's  
Executive Exchange, October 2021*

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# Executive Summary

The data and analytics movement in Australia and New Zealand is well and truly taking shape as organisations invest in staff and strategies to transform their businesses digitally using data.

It's an exciting period for data scientists and analytical experts in the region. However, the journey has in many ways only just begun.

In October 2021, cloud data and analytics platform provider Qlik hosted a roundtable with senior Australian and New Zealand data and analytics leaders to discuss some of the key themes and findings surfaced in the Qlik-supported Corinium report: State of Data and Analytics Australia and New Zealand, 2021.

In this report, we explore some of the insights provided by the attending data professionals over two chapters.

Topics covered include what shape ANZ data strategies are taking, leadership structures and data executive reporting lines, innovation plans for the next three-to-five years and the importance of ethical approaches in data governance. ■

## Contributors

Executive Exchange Moderator / Host:



**Joe DosSantos**,  
Chief Data and Analytics Officer,  
Qlik

### Attendees:



**Brian Ferris**,  
Chief Data and  
Analytics Officer,  
Loyalty New Zealand



**Brett Woolley**,  
Head of Data Strategy  
and Governance,  
QBE Insurance



**Kieran Earnshaw**,  
Head of Operations &  
Performance Improvement,  
Suncorp Bank



**Susie Kluth**,  
Chief Data Officer,  
Department of Education,  
Skills and Employment



**Bob Sparshatt**,  
Chief Data Officer,  
Equifax Australia



**James Cudmore**,  
Chief Customer and  
Product Officer,  
Newcastle Permanence



**Alex Burton**,  
Consumer Data Officer,  
Commonwealth Bank  
of Australia

# Data Strategies at a Glance

## How Australian and New Zealand data leaders drive their businesses with data

In July, Corinium, in partnership with Qlik, published the State of Data and Analytics Australia and New Zealand 2021 report. The survey-based report sought insights from 150 senior data and analytics leaders from the region on a range of questions pertaining to COVID, data and analytics program maturity, demand for data and analytics and more.

In October, Qlik Chief Data and Analytics Officer Joe DosSantos held a roundtable with senior Australian and New Zealand data leaders to hear their responses to some of the report's findings and gain insights into how they operate their data and analytics programs in their respective organisations.

### Who owns the data strategy?

One of the first data points from the State of Data and Analytics ANZ report discussed pertained to Australian and New Zealand organisations with formalised data strategies.

Some 52 percent of survey respondents described their data strategies as either 'basic' or 'average'. Suggesting that data strategies and programs were in place but that data leaders weren't particularly enthusiastic about them.

Reflecting on this, Loyalty New Zealand's Chief Data and Analytics Officer Brian Ferris says in his organisation, which is a marketing and



loyalty-focused business, it has been important to decouple the notion of a data strategy from a business strategy.

"Our whole organisation is essentially about data, data-driven customer engagement and marketing and loyalty," he says.

"Half of the organisation is data and technology, and a quarter is direct marketing and loyalty management. One of the things that is different about us is we don't have a data strategy per se, it's something I'm not that big on.

"Instead, we have a business strategy and components of it are enabled through tech or data."

Ferris adds that a data and technology encompassing business strategy drove greater engagement across the whole organisation and, in-particular, executive sponsorship.

"Our Chief Customer Officer is a critical role in the organisation because

we're a customer engagement, marketing and loyalty company. She co-sponsors all the key technology or data initiatives we do," he says.

***"Our Chief Customer Officer is a critical role in the organisation because we're a customer engagement, marketing and loyalty company. She co-sponsors all the key technology or data initiatives we do."***

**- Brian Ferris,**  
Chief Data and Analytics Officer,  
Loyalty New Zealand



## Structures and Reporting Lines

Executive sponsorship is a key part of getting any data or technology strategy off the ground and will vary from organisation to organisation and depend on what the critical components of the strategy are.

QBE Insurance Head of Data Strategy and Governance Brett Woolley says his data strategy is also organised to be tied very close to the business strategy, and his reporting lines are consistent with that.

"We report into the chief transformation officer," he says. "That reporting line is quite deliberately outside of tech to keep it a business-focused conversation.

I'd call our data strategy a capability execution strategy. We're looking at the capabilities we'd like to adjust, and how to go about it in order to support a business strategy that's been adopted.

"The elements of that include what we call the knowledge of data, which is our governance conversation. Within that we consider what we want to do around analytics and how we enable tech platforms underneath to drive that.

"The element we are now being asked from the board down to work on is how to incorporate a data ethics conversation into the strategy, as the question shifts from, 'what can we do' to include 'what should we do'."

*"I'd call our data strategy a capability execution strategy. We're looking at the capabilities we'd like to adjust, and how to go about it in order to support a business strategy that's been adopted."*

– Brett Woolley, Head of Data Strategy and Governance, QBE Insurance

## Proximity to the CEO

An interesting data point drawn from the State of Data and Analytics Australia and New Zealand report was that none of the senior data leaders surveyed reported to the CEO. Most (45%) reported to the Chief Information Officer followed by the Chief Technology Officer (28%), Chief Operating Officer (18%) and Chief Finance Officer (9%).

The concern the data raises, Qlik CDAO Joe DosSantos says, is in cases where lack of appropriate reporting lines might prevent data leaders from having a real impact on business strategy.

"When you see data strategies nested under a purely technical umbrella, it can raise concerns that roles are not positioned as best they can be to influence great business value making decisions," he says.

As data and analytics maturity grows within Australian and New Zealand organisations, data leader reporting lines appear to vary depending on how companies best see data teams can complement business strategy.

Suncorp Bank Head of Operations & Performance Improvement, Kieran Earnshaw, highlighted that in reporting to the CIO he is close to strategic development.

"This is because our CIO also owns group strategy as well as the transformation agenda. So, there's technology, transformation and group strategy together in one place," he says.

"From my perspective this works. I think the rationale being that technology does play a major role in driving transformation. But it also of course is going to be quite dependent on the person that is sitting at the top of that structure."

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Chief Data Officer Susie Kluth says the conventional reporting line structure wouldn't be a logical fit for the department.

"We don't report to our CIO and that was a very deliberate decision," she says. "We also don't report to the CEO but instead we are embedded within one of our groups within the department."

"We have six groups, one for each of the education sectors and we also cover employment services. My team is embedded in the higher education group, which is quite advantageous. We are using this group as a demonstration of best practice to serve as a model for other areas in the department."

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**- Susie Kluth,**  
Chief Data Officer,  
Department of Education,  
Skills and Employment



## Selling Data, Sharing Data

Equifax Australia Chief Data Officer Bob Sparshatt says in the context of his organisation, which aggregates data for other businesses, the data strategy is essentially what data is going to be procured.

"In our world there are probably three strategic areas," he says. "There's a product strategy, which influences a lot of my data strategy. That's because there's no point in me sourcing data, managing data or improving the quality of data if the products are not there to take them to market.

"The third area would be our tech strategy of moving to the cloud. The movement of all our data to the cloud is led by my team, and we are leading tech in that, rather than having the tech lead us."

For Education Department Chief Data Officer Susie Kluth, incoming data sharing legislation and programs serves as another reason that public sector organisations need to invest in data governance and quality.

"There is work going on in Australia with the data availability and transparency bill, which is currently before parliament, as well as the government's open data agenda," she says. "There is a lot of impetus to get our data in order so that it is ready for sharing outside of government when the opportunity becomes available."

Newcastle Permanence Chief Customer and Product Officer James Cudmore says his organisation has a business strategy that is pillared around using data for things like digitising the mortgage and transactional process for customers.

"It's about increasing our transactional relevance to customers and then redesigning our IT architecture to achieve those two objectives," he says.

"Right in the middle of all that is data, particularly with open banking coming into Australia. We see that data sharing and data consumption underpins how we can accelerate lending processes for customers as well as the value add you can give back to them in everyday transactions.

"All the major banks are really starting to put the foot on the gas when it comes to becoming recipients of data under the open banking regime. You don't have to think too far ahead to see the competitive banking market looking entirely different than it is today." ■

***"The movement of all our data to the cloud is led by my team, and we are leading tech in that, rather than having the tech lead us."***

**- Bob Sparshatt,**  
Chief Data Officer,  
Equifax Australia



# Innovation and Responsibility

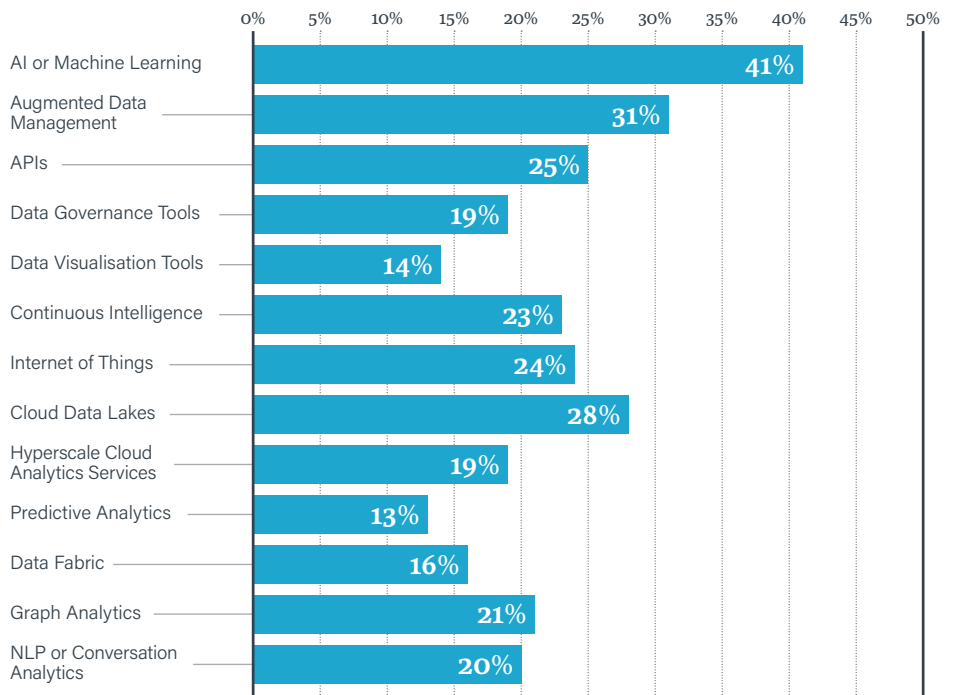
*Data leaders are excited to move forward with cloud, AI and machine learning, but cautious as well*

One major discussion point from Qlik's Executive Exchange was related to what technology innovations senior data executives believe would drive the most change or value in their organisation over the next three to five years.

The question was first posed in Corinium and Qlik's State of Data and Analytics Australia and New Zealand 2021 report, which showed AI or machine learning as the clear frontrunner from a range of data and analytics technology areas.

## AI Expected to Drive Great Change to Future Data Strategies

Which technologies do you think will drive the greatest changes in your data strategy over the next 3-5 years? (Select up to three)



Source: Corinium Intelligence, 2021







“Augmented data management and cloud data lakes are the other major items that were highlighted in that report, and we know that moving data and data platforms to the cloud is something many organisations are thinking about right now,” Qlik CDAO Joe DosSantos say.

“This provides a sense of what people are working on, many of the themes probably look familiar, be them technical foundational items like graph databases, data fabric and cloud, as well as advanced items that concern more deterministic and model driven predictions to AI.”

Commonwealth Bank of Australia Consumer Data Officer Alex Burton says he is seeing advances in customer engagement platforms as the next big thing.

“We have a great customer engagement engine that uses insights from customer activity to drive highly relevant and personalised banking features. We’re already doing things with it to help improve the customer experience that we couldn’t have foreseen two years ago,” he says.

“I think where we are seeing some real value is in automated machine learning. We are replacing all of our

legacy models with machine learning models and recently partnered with AI global expert H2O.ai to take things to the next level. That’s really the next big wave for us.”

Loyalty New Zealand’s Brian Ferris says the tech priorities chart resonated quite strongly with him given his organisation has almost finished its cloud deployment and is now looking to ramp up its automation and machine learning.

“We’re doing a bunch of pure-play machine learning. There is so much value in that at every layer of the data value chain, from ingestion to data quality, lineage and modelling,” he says. “Using ML to automate things is a huge priority, tied up with data governance and better control.”

One of the big challenges in making the jump and launching initiatives that innovate with machine learning, AI, guided data visualisations or any of the popular technology areas that data leaders are investigating, Ferris says, is finding appropriate software and service solutions.

“The level of fragmentation in the market is incredibly difficult for us,” he says. “Everyone is claiming to do everything and trying to scale via acquisitions. That can lead to vendors

having some really strong core functions and then some that are just absolute tissue paper-thin.”

***“We are replacing all of our legacy models with machine learning models and recently partnered with AI global expert H2O.ai to take things to the next level.”***

**– Alex Burton,**  
Consumer Data Officer,  
Commonwealth Bank of Australia

## Thoughtful Approaches

Enhancing data and analytics strategies by moving into AI, machine learning or migrating to the cloud is a big focus for many senior data leaders in the Australian and New Zealand market at the moment.

However, QBE Insurance's Brett Woolley points out that it's important to be considering responsible data practices in parallel with making advancements.

"I have a peer who heads up data science. They are heavily focused on how to monetise and drive value from AI and machine learning. We have a number of AI projects in production," he says.

"My focus then is actually on how to keep the organisation off the front-page news. It's the ethics aspect. My conversations concern making sure people understand the risks involved

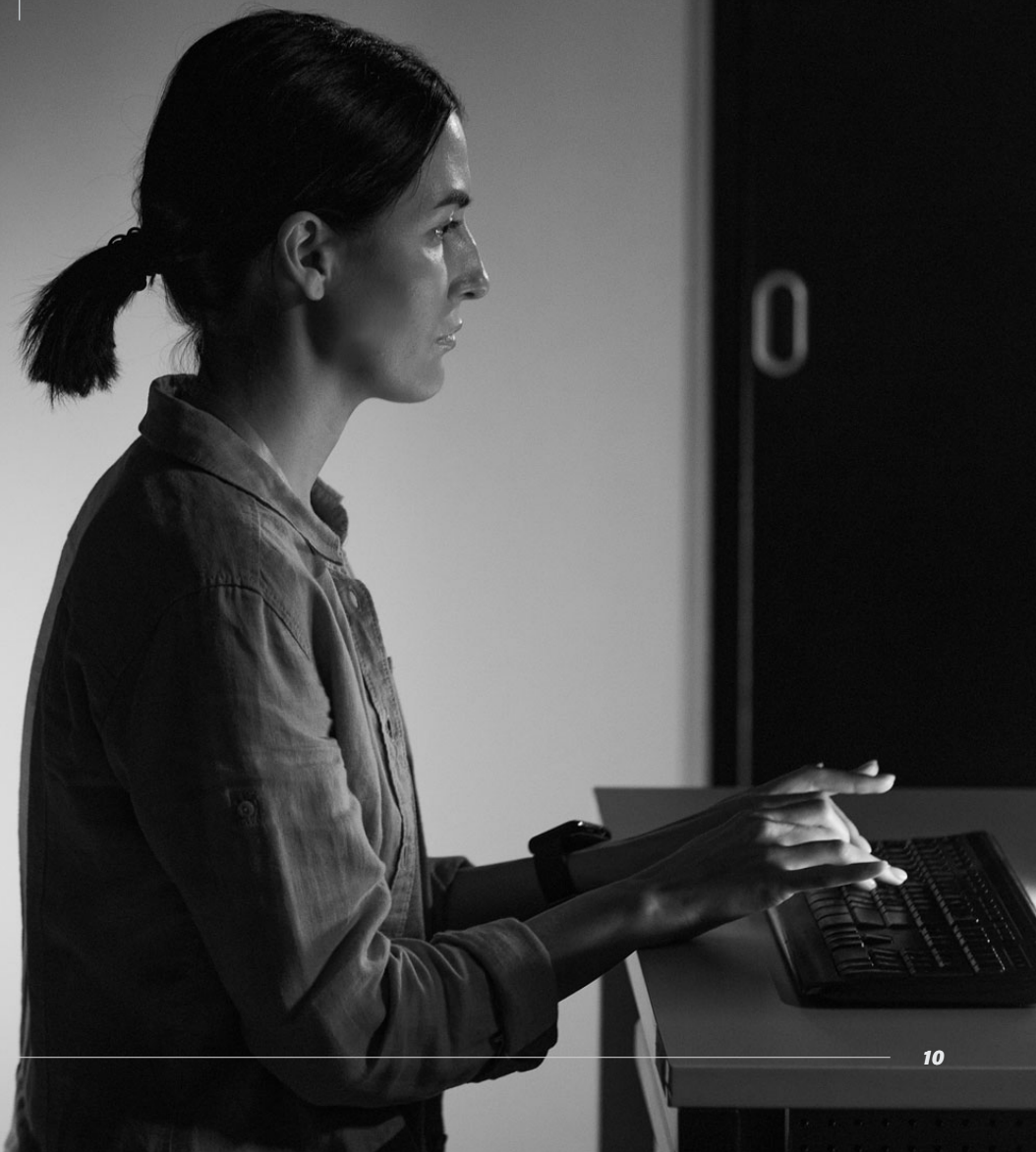
with going to AI. That's what I work on while my colleague accelerates the AI journey."

Qlik's Joe DosSantos says the "brave new world" of responsible data use will see governance overlapping with AI in automating the understanding of what the data is.

"It's easy to ask somebody to review 10 columns for anything risky but becomes overwhelmingly complex when it becomes 10,000 tables," he says. "Being able to incorporate different models to auto tag and auto-policy definition data will create some real winners."

***"Being able to incorporate different models to auto tag and auto-policy definition data will create some real winners."***

**- Joe DosSantos,**  
Chief Data and Analytics Officer,  
Qlik



## Explainable Practices

Advances in AI and automation from machine learning offers senior data leaders great promise when it comes to speeding up data governance practices and highlighting potential risks inherent in certain data sets.

However, QBE Insurance’s Brett Woolley notes that for the time being, the risk of biased data getting into machine learning models is still a challenging area to manage.

“If you feed your ML model a non-representative dataset, your algorithm will come up with a biased answer,” Woolley says. “How do you manage that? You can’t necessarily prevent it, but you need to have a comfortable and defensible position.

“I say that because you do want to push your analytics. If you don’t push them to the edge, you are leaving a lot of value on the table. But if you cross the line from an ethics perspective, you’re in trouble. Knowing how to get the most out of your analytics while staying within the comfort zone of risk and responsibility can be a challenge.”

Equifax Australia’s Bob Sparshatt says coming from the credit space, he and his team absolutely need to be able to explain their models.

“With our credit scoring we have to be really clear around the data sources that we do and don’t use. It’s the same in the US, where they have actually developed a new technique called Neuro Decisioning Technology that satisfies the ‘explainability’ requirements we have,” he says.

“While I’m primarily focused on managing data and not on the analytics side, it’s still really important for all of us to be aware of these responsibilities. In terms of bias and modelling the use of gender and age is something that is very topical at the moment.

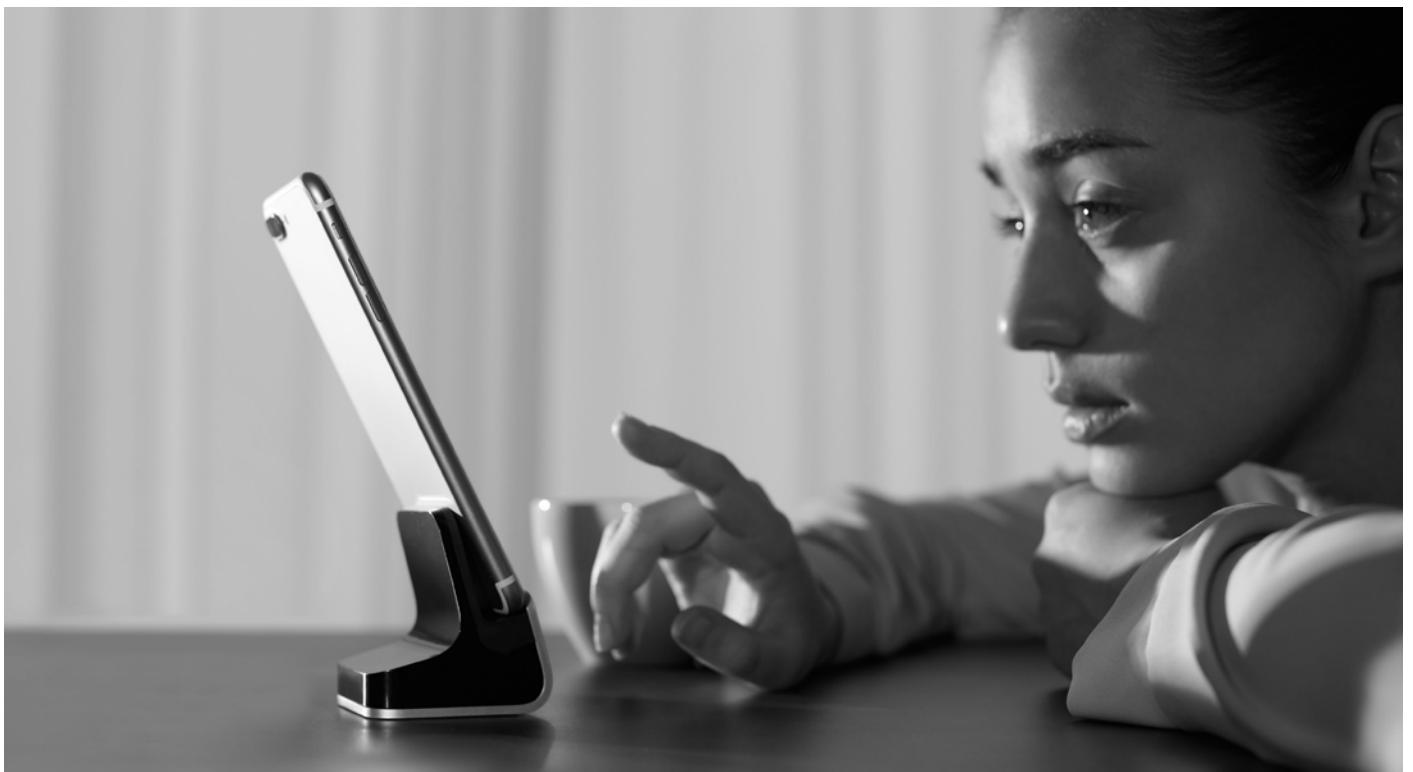
“So, that naturally dictates that our data strategy is really about controlling our data. Part of that includes removing data that we don’t need. In the past, organisations might have held onto data in the expectation that one day they’ll need it. Often enough they really don’t.”

Qlik CDAO Joe DosSantos says the example of Sparshatt’s focus on governance and policy is critical for all data leaders to be aware of.

“Just because a company says they have a data retention policy, it doesn’t mean they have one or that they follow it. Owning that as part of your data governance strategy is very important.” ■

***“Knowing how to get the most out of your analytics while staying within the comfort zone of risk and responsibility can be a challenge.”***

**– Brett Woolley,**  
Head of Data Strategy  
and Governance,  
QBE Insurance





## Conclusion

It's an exciting time for Australian and New Zealand data leaders, as their organisations are recognising the importance of data and analytics practices and sponsoring campaigns of work to build out and advance data and analytics capabilities.

Some data programs are still in their earlier stages, where important foundational governance and policy works and platform development occupy the core goal of data strategies, while others are more established and looking to innovate with new technologies like AI and ML.

Data conscientiousness and ethical considerations, which have increased in cadence with the rise of data and analytics, will throw up challenges for data leaders looking to innovate fast, but ultimately provide welcome guardrails toward progress. ■

## About Qlik

Qlik's vision is a data-literate world, one where everyone can use data to improve decision-making and solve their most challenging problems. Only Qlik offers end-to-end, real-time data integration and analytics solutions that help organisations access and transform all their data into value.

Qlik helps companies lead with data to see more deeply into customer behavior, reinvent business processes, discover new revenue streams, and balance risk and reward. Qlik serves over 50,000 customers around the world.



## About the Editor

Michael Jenkin is an editor and journalist with more than a decade of experience producing content across broadcast, print and digital media. He specialises in enterprise IT and technology writing.

At Corinium, Michael develops content to inform and support data and analytics and information security executives.

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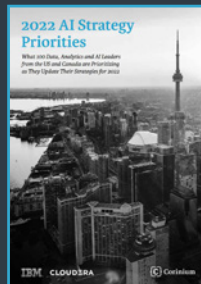


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