Making the Most of Your Data Brain

Data Maturity Report 2024

Qodea

Google Cloud Partner

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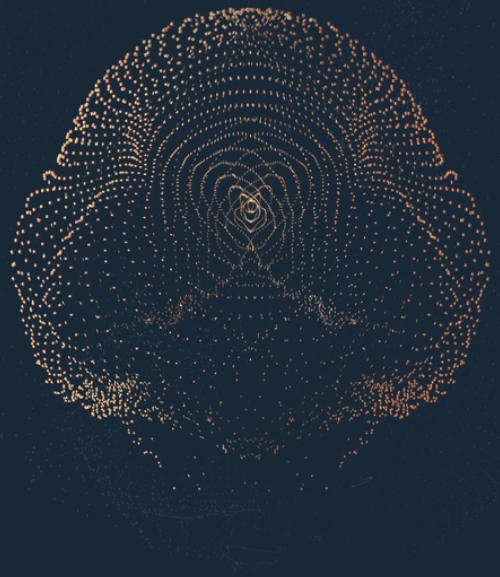
What is a ‘Data Brain’?

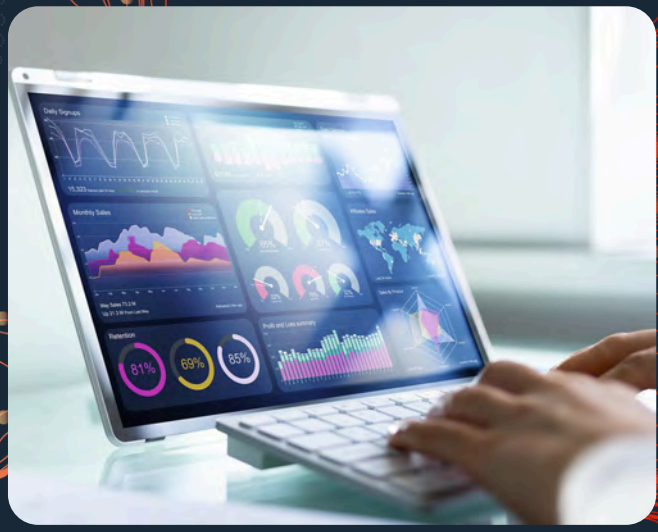
The human brain is a marvel of evolutionary engineering. Its ability to store, receive, process, and **send millions of sensory signals and data throughout** the body – activating our muscles and driving us to action – is key to who we are.

The brain contains millions of synapses that connect and communicate between neurons across the body. These synapses can be created dynamically, removed and optimised to deliver and retrieve information at the fastest speed possible – helping us to create memories, insights and understanding.

A large part of the brain's brilliance is synthesising lots of different data, foregrounding what's relevant, and turning it into actionable information that is useful, timely and contextual.



Similarly, many businesses and organisations might be said to have **data brains at their centre.** An effective data brain is not just a storage repository for raw data. Instead, the most sophisticated data brains use information intelligently. They integrate a complex web of signals, sources, live contexts, and analytics tools to correlate and synthesise data into useful, actionable information that drives an **organisation's success.**



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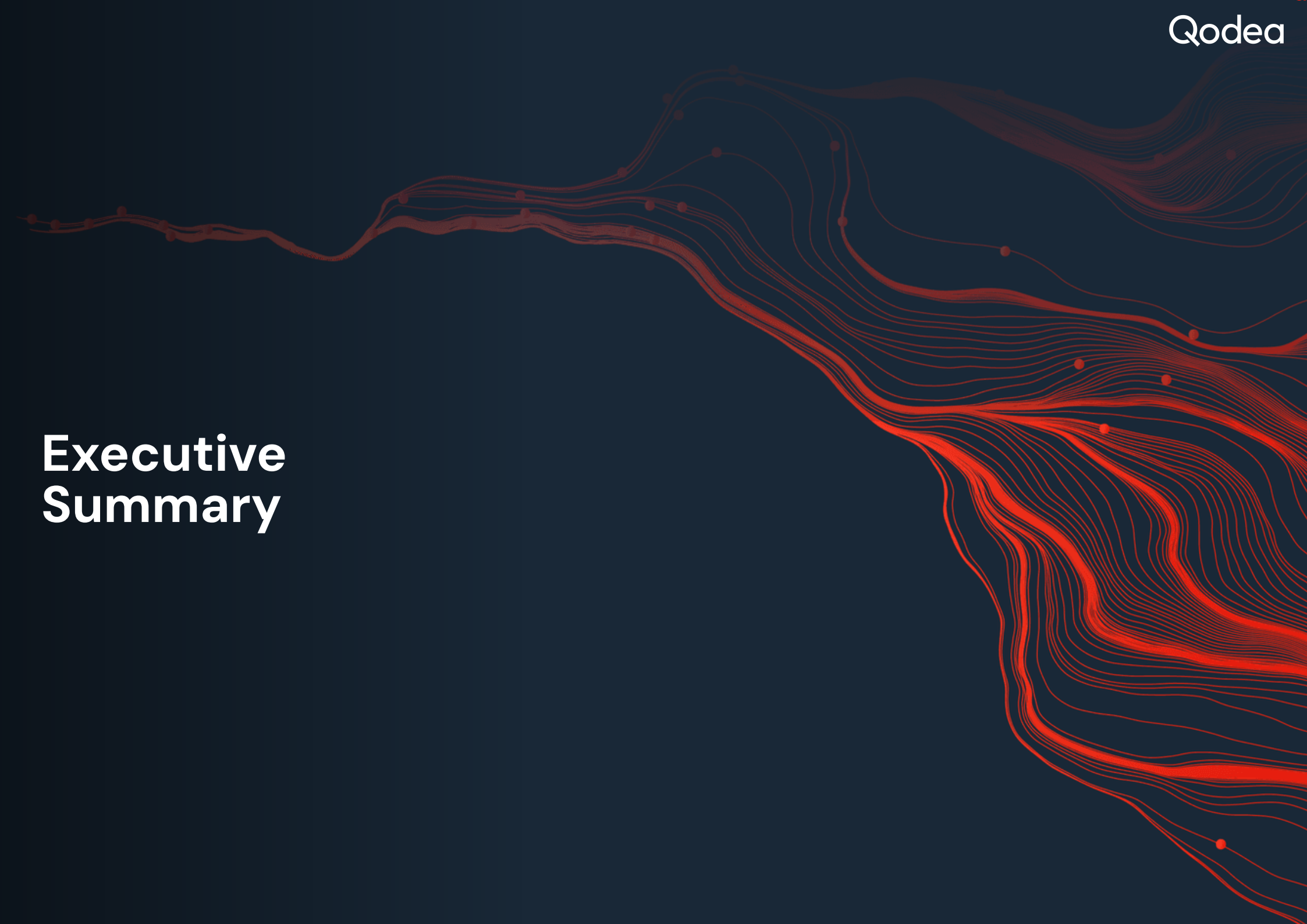


Executive Summary

Executive Summary 1/3

In an age of hyper-innovation, the forces of AI, biotechnology, and quantum computing are propelling us into the next industrial revolution. **This will change our lives in ways we cannot yet fathom.** At the centre of these seismic waves lies data. It's often claimed that more data has been created in the last two years than in the entirety of human history.

But while we are now objectively **'data rich',** this doesn't always translate into the ability to embed data-driven decision-making into businesses. Many businesses are suffering from information overload, leading to decision paralysis. The exponential growth in volumes and availability of data is both a blessing and a curse, obscuring insights. In short, **our data brains are not firing on all cylinders.**

Executive Summary 2/3

To realise the potential of the coming wave of technology-driven change, **businesses need to use more of their data brain.**

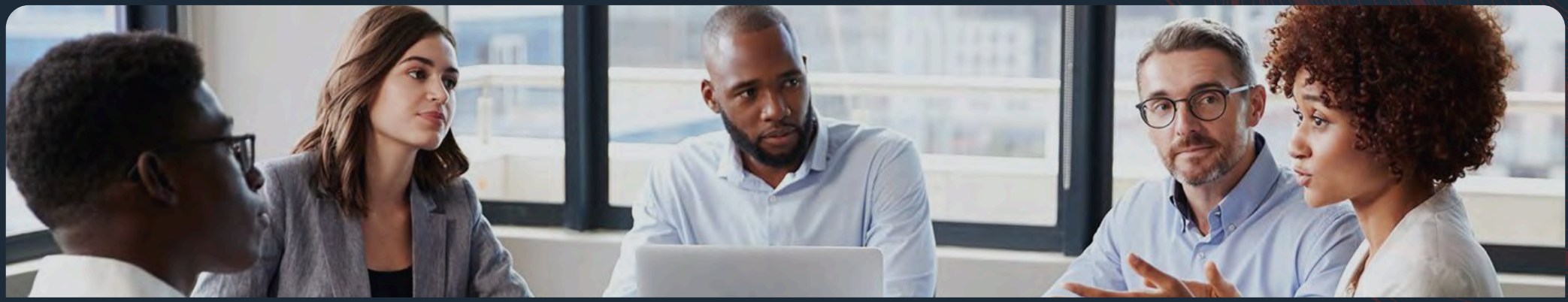
We surveyed 150 UK IT decision-makers to understand where they are on their data journeys, and what barriers are standing in their way. **We found that:**

Businesses use less than half of their 'data brain' (i.e. the amount of data an organisation can access and use compared to their potential).

IT complexities and integration woes combine to make it 'near impossible' to get a single organisational view of data.

Meanwhile skills and resource shortages make it harder for teams to address these challenges and forge a path ahead.

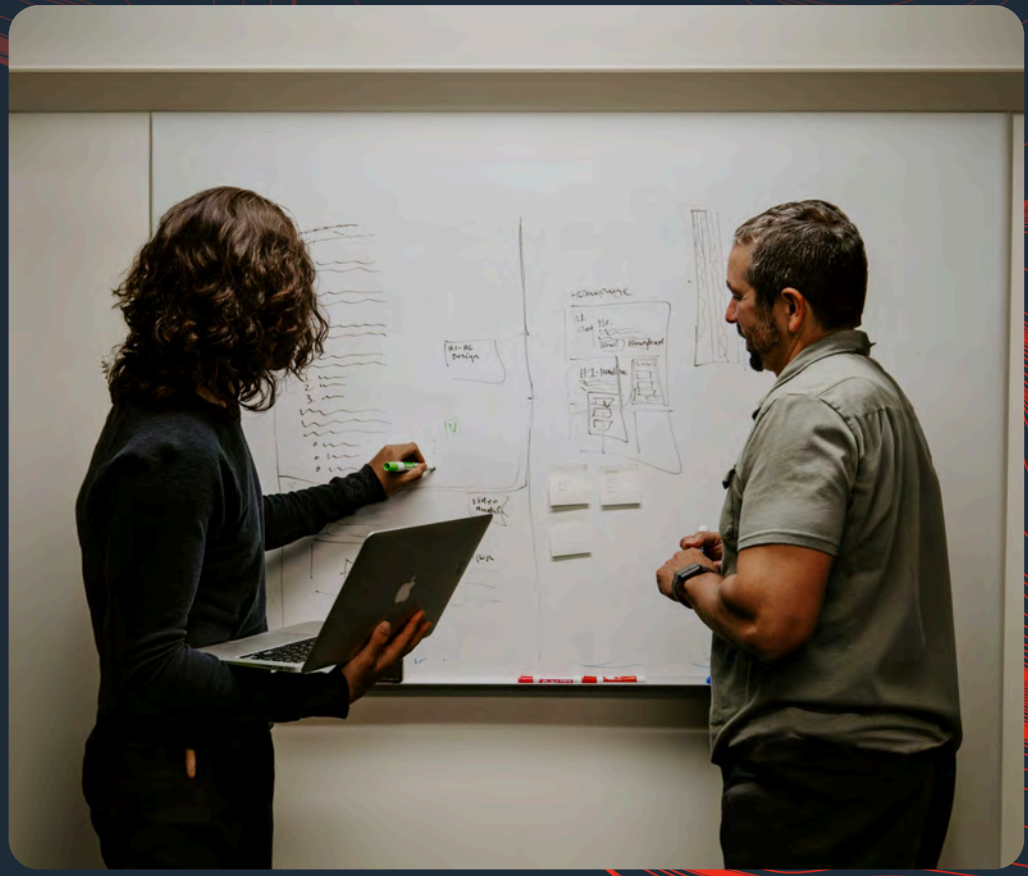
As a result, bad decisions are being made, deals lost, product launches delayed, and reporting deadlines missed, because businesses are not making full use of their data brains.



Executive Summary 3/3

There are steps businesses can take to **unlock the full capacity** of their data brain. While data and organisational complexity are common in the modern world, it does not have to be overly costly and difficult to manage. By investing wisely in cloud, businesses can benefit from economies of scale to **gain significant Return on Investment (RoI).**

Modern tooling and cloud computing technologies streamline and simplify data management, allowing businesses to seamlessly migrate data to the cloud, analyse it instantly and **understand more about operations.** Moreover, data with generative insights (delivered through GenAI) can help humans to translate more data into action. In doing so, **businesses can get their data brain synapses firing on all cylinders!**



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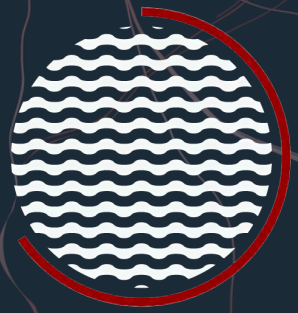
Is your organisation using its data brain effectively?

Is your organisation using its data brain effectively? 1/3

Almost all organisations are getting pressure from boards and executive teams to be **"more data-driven and data-centric".** And with good reason. Respondents say that being able to increase the use of their 'data brain' would enable them to **optimise efficiency, improve their security and compliance posture, and boost customer experience and business performance.**

91%

of IT Leaders have a specific mandate from senior management to be more data-driven.



It's a common myth that humans use just 10% of their brains (in reality, we use 100%). Yet businesses are using less than two-fifths (39%) of their data capacity – with one in four saying they are using just 10-24%. **While almost all organisations are collecting more data than ever before, many are failing to put this data to work - instead leaving it to languish with its value unlocked.**

69%

admit to hoarding data in data lakes, yet using just a fraction of it.

73%

struggle to transform data into significant business value.

Is your organisation using its data brain effectively? 2/3

“Knowledge is power and data is the source of knowledge. But data freshness is essential. Data lakes can quickly transform into data swamps, and data hoarding amplifies this effect. The moment data is created and available, it should be surfaced to make timely decisions. Hoarding old and irrelevant data escalates cost, reduces efficiency, and increases risk.”

Matt Penton, Head of Data and Analytics at Qodea

Is your organisation using its data brain effectively? 3/3

CASE STUDY

A major building merchant and home improvement company's poor data structure meant significant manual work was required to build and share reports, maintain quality, and secure data, which was impacting its ability to gain timely insights. Implementing Google Looker, Qodea helped to open up more of the merchant's data brain, helping to:

Improve data discovery, bringing recovery time to under 30 minutes.

Enable new data sources to be added in under 2 hours.

Give a single source of truth for all reporting and insights.

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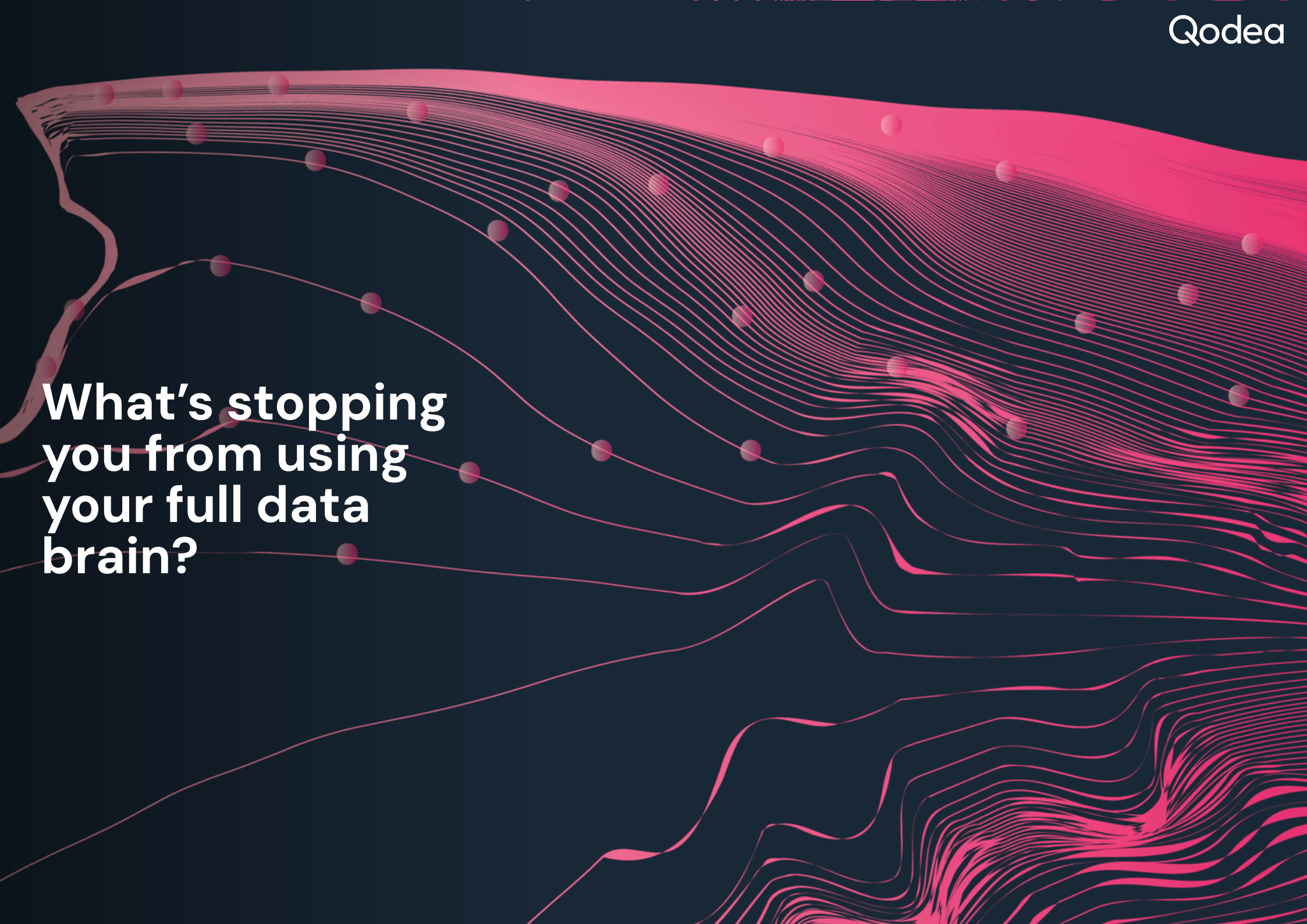

What's stopping you from using your full data brain?

What's stopping you from using your full data brain? 1/4

Respondents to our survey identified several barriers preventing their organisations from making **full use of their data brains:**

57%

IT complexity

41%

Legacy systems

37%

Lack of resources

36%

Lack of skills

What's stopping you from using your full data brain? 2/4

Cloud is often seen as a panacea to complexity but, in some cases, it is actually adding to the workload instead of lightening it. **These challenges aren't going away.** If we want to use more of our data brains then **new, sophisticated approaches are needed.**

87%

want to empower 'citizen developers' to overcome the data skills gap.

81%

lack the skills and know-how to enable the workforce to do more with data.

Organisations use an average of 31 different data sources.

76%

The complexity of their data architecture is increasing exponentially.

81%

Despite the move to open technology stacks and APIs, integration issues plague the IT industry.

79%

Because data is stored and generated by so many parts of the business, it's near impossible to get a single organisational view.

What's stopping you from using your full data brain? 3/4

"Even at a couple of dozen data sources, that is still a lot of diversification. No wonder people are experiencing problems. But while that complexity is not going to decrease, it doesn't have to be a bad thing. The richer and more complex the data we get, the more potential we have to gain novel insight. And the more people you can enable to interact with and extract benefit from data - everyone can be a data citizen at all levels of data skills."

Matt Penton, Head of Data and Analytics at Qodea

What’s stopping you from using your full data brain? 4/4

Pentland

CASE STUDY

Pentland Brands is the owner of big brands such as Speedo, Berghaus, ellesse, Mitre, Kickers, and others. It was struggling to understand how its brands were performing across different demographics and geographies, as it had different data sets coming from a variety of distributors which obscured the picture of performance. Working with Qodea, Pentland was able to expand and make better use of its data brain by:

Eradicating reporting errors

Gaining 3x faster time to insights

Onboarding 8 distributors

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Braindead business decisions

and how to avoid common mistakes

Braindead business decisions 1/4

Our inability to make full use of our data brains is limiting business success and leading to bad outcomes. **Project overruns, cost, and stress are bad enough** - but the inability to work with timely, accurate, and validated information is having real business consequences, with survey respondents saying that:

39%

have over-spent or under-spent on projects.

37%

have made decisions based on inaccurate data.

36%

have made inaccurate forecasts.

31%

have delayed new product or service launches.

31%

have suffered customer complaints.

27%

have missed reporting deadlines.

25%

have missed revenue opportunities.

Braindead business decisions 2/4

46%

of IT projects that rely on data run on time, within budget, and to the intended scope.

85%

the associated cost of managing their data architecture is increasing every year.

69%

data architecture is becoming increasingly difficult to manage.

Braindead business decisions 3/4

“Leaders are using data for big business-defining decisions. But if you’re doing that, you better be confident that your information is right. For example, reporting bad numbers can have very serious and very public repercussions, leading to fines and reputational damage. And customer complaints can quickly lead to churn – unless you’re selling grated unicorn horns customers can and will go somewhere else. These are the tangible costs that can sink a company when data is used ineffectively.”

Matt Penton, Head of Data and Analytics at Qodea

Braindead business decisions 4/4

CASE STUDY

A major water company copied its old data into a data lake, but the tools used to manage the lake were not fit for purpose, making it difficult to share its data with others. Working with Qodea, and using Google Cloud Datastream to move data directly from various data sources to Google BigQuery, the company was able to gain more timely insights, enabling it to:

Automate the movement of data, without the need for extra steps or tools.

Analyse data in near real-time and build predictive insights.

Easily share curated datasets publicly and seamlessly, in line with industry regulations.

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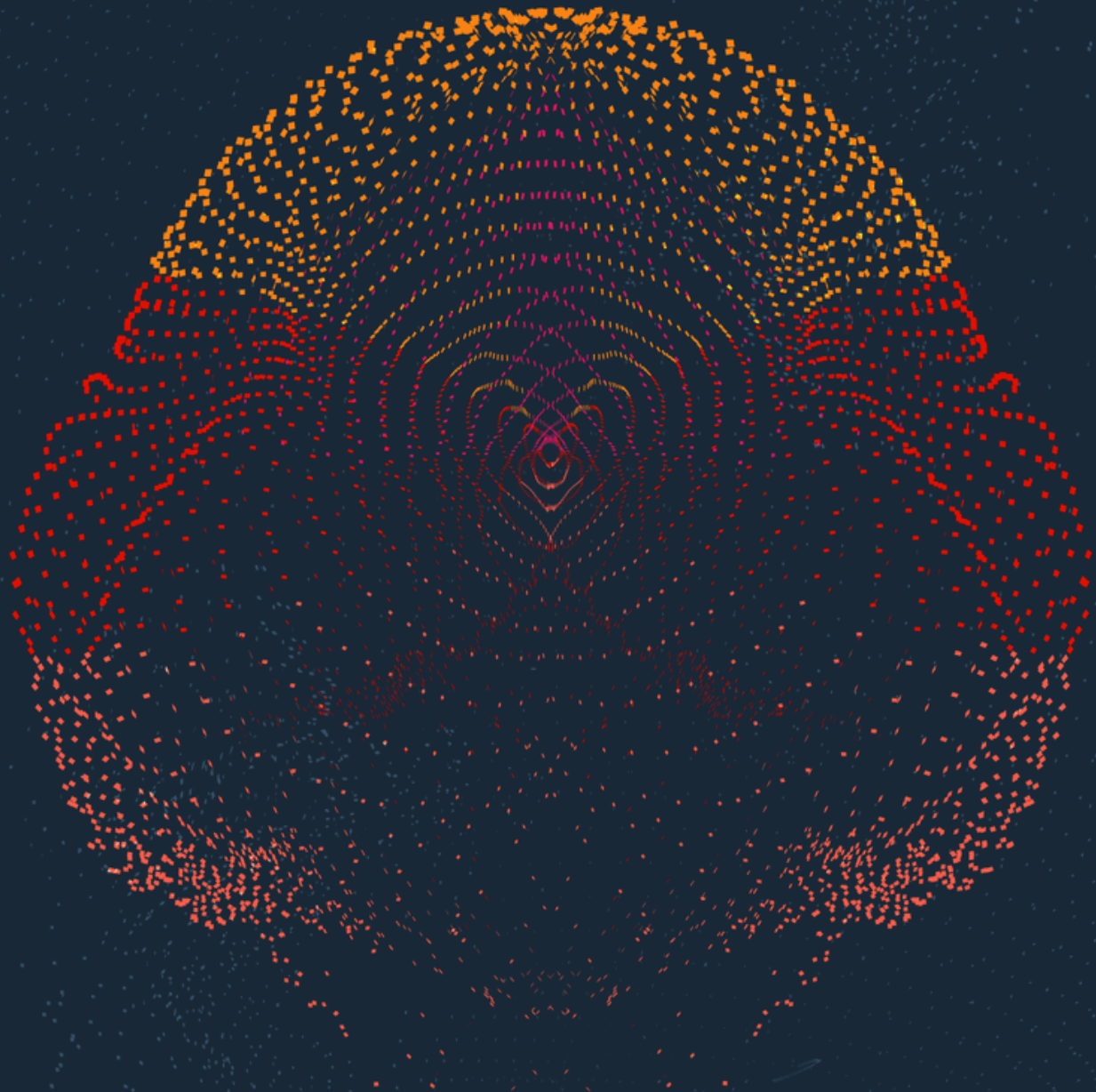
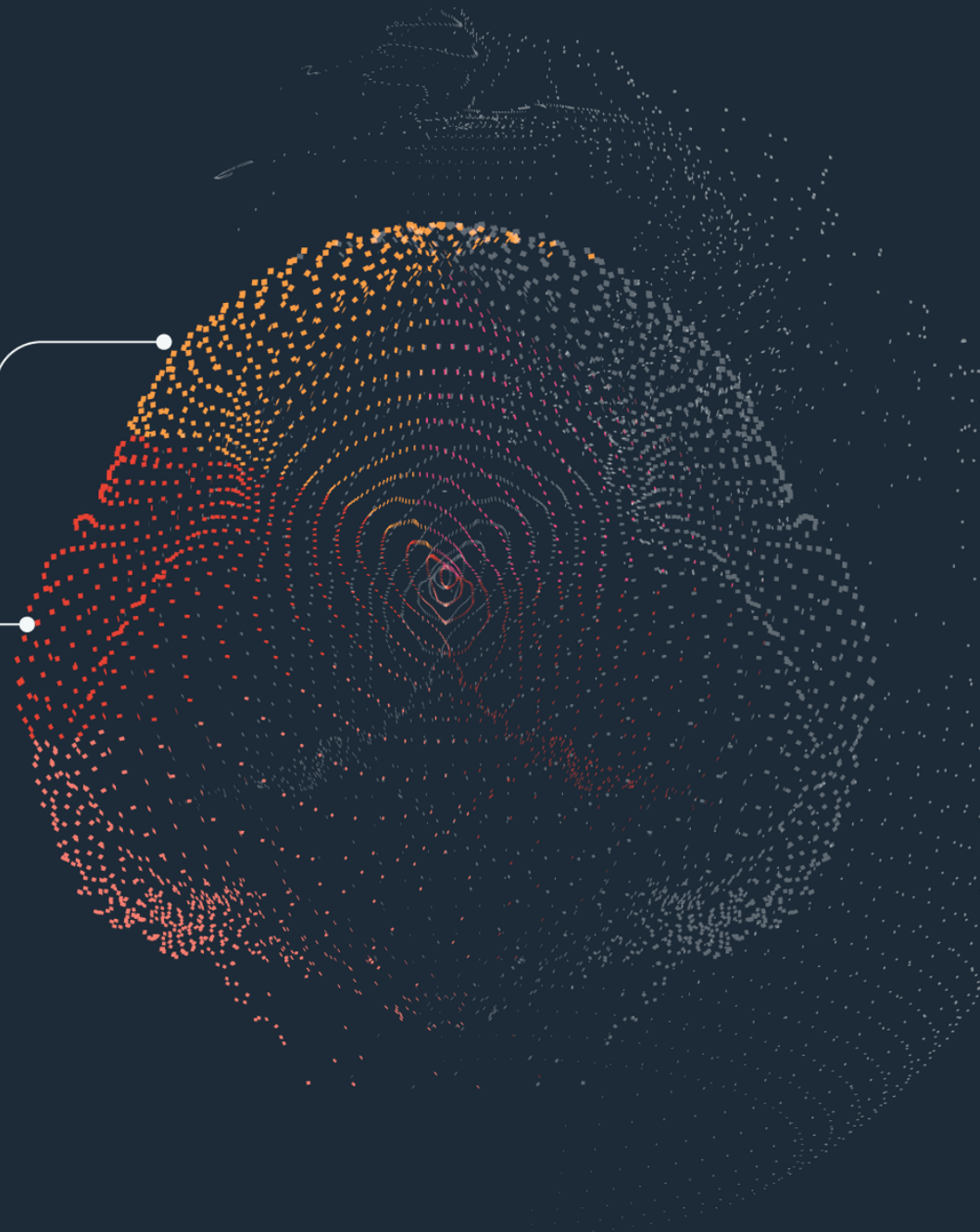
Making the most of your data brain – 10 steps to get ahead



10 steps to get ahead 1/5

The past decade has demonstrated that the companies most effective at harnessing data are the most successful. With new technologies increasing the potential usefulness of data, executive teams are right to push their businesses to increase their data maturity – it could be the difference between thriving and extinction.

There are many practical steps that you can take to use more of your data brain. Here are ten to consider:



1.

Know your maturity: Understanding where you sit on a data maturity scale gives you a baseline to establish your needs and goals, and objectively measure your progress. Often, businesses think they are further along than they are, and having an external assessment brings clarity to the picture and exposes where action is needed.

2.

Data maturity is a journey, don't try to boil the ocean: 70% of cloud migrations fail, so it's important to be strategic and selective and move in stages. Decide which data sources will be most pertinent to move first, focusing on ones that will enable quick wins with minimal disruptions. This way, as you progress on your journey, you can ensure you are continuously delivering value.

10 steps to get ahead 2/5

3.

Complexity will only increase, so simplification is essential: Just because something is complex, doesn't mean it has to be more difficult or costly to manage. Automation of data insights helps to remove repetitive tasks, enabling more time for analysis and insights. Moreover, common tooling, low code, and no code make it easier to manage data, and cloud computing and tooling allow you to achieve economies of scale.

4.

Hone, don't hoard, to reduce risk and cost: Moving and storing data takes energy. Yet businesses often forget about these costs, particularly when using cloud storage. Storing data unnecessarily also creates risk; many regulations, such as GDPR, now demand that data must be deleted within a certain timeframe. By setting and automating policies to ensure data is deleted promptly, you can reduce your costs and risks.

5.

Modernise through decoupling: Legacy technology is a persistent challenge. Yet moving away from legacy systems is not always possible and comes with risk. By decoupling systems, you can reduce your dependencies and modernise in stages. For instance, changing a system's front end to improve customer experience first before embarking on a back-end systems upgrade. This reduces risk while still enabling steady modernisation.

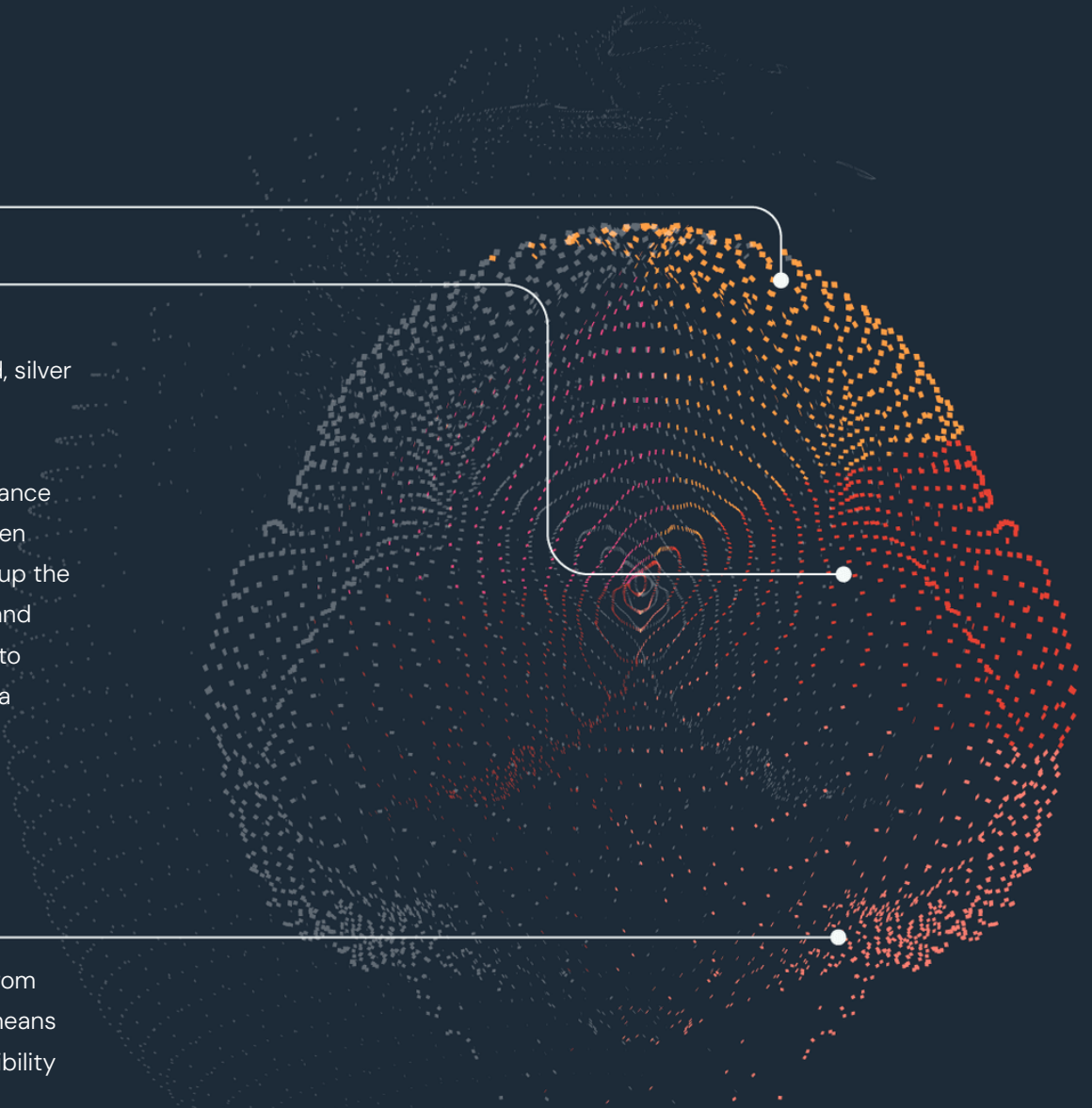
10 steps to get ahead 3/5

6.

Don't change the tech and forget about the process: When modernising, it's important to consider downstream consumers and upstream suppliers of data to reimagine business processes holistically. Simply swapping old tech for new will not get you where you want to be. You need to change the policies and workflows, too. For instance, if you input a new automated system for invoicing but still require human approval, the process will not operate notably faster than what existed previously.

7.

Go for gold: Not all data is created equal. By grading your data as gold, silver or bronze, you can set governance around how that data is used. For instance, anything used for compliance reporting must be gold. You can then plan to migrate your data sources up the chain, moving your silvers to gold and your bronzes to silver, helping you to continually raise the quality bar in a prioritised, manageable way.



8.

Design for long-term success: Data pipelines frequently break. Moving data from one place to another inevitably hits roadblocks. Overcoming this data friction means being able to recover, find the fault, and fix it fast. To do this, you need deep visibility into all data pipelines and interdependencies so data flow can be restored seamlessly.

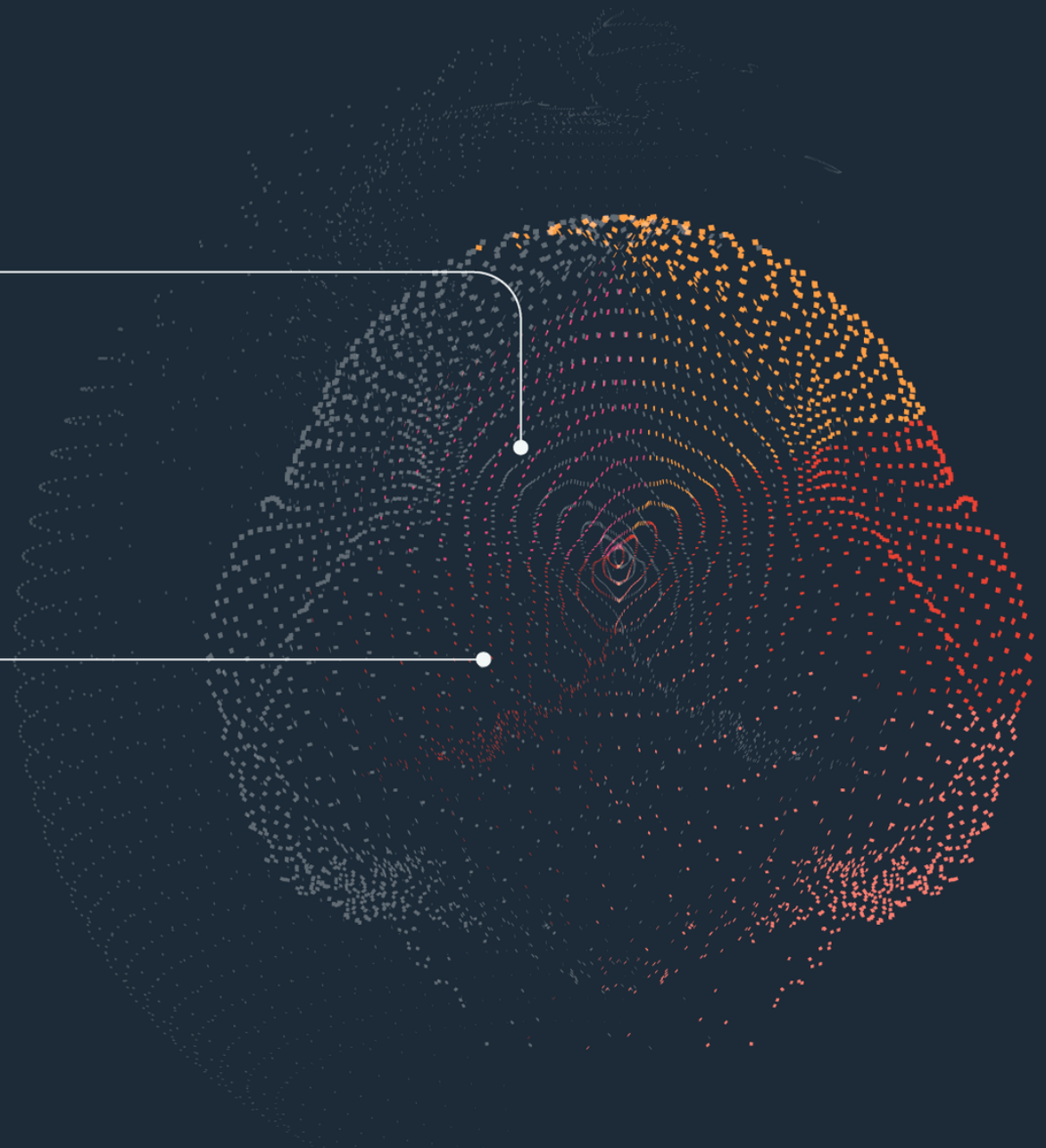
10 steps to get ahead 4/5

9.

Train your data citizens in what they need to know: Having more competent data citizens in your organisation will help you unlock the full capacity of your data brain. However, that doesn't mean you must train everyone to be an SQL analyst. Today's training comes in all different flavours, lowering many of the previous barriers to entry, enabling rapid access to new understanding, techniques, insights and tooling.

10.

Reduce friction and create safe areas to fail: To unleash the innovative potential of data, end-users need to be able to experiment. Creating safe environments built in highly secure sandboxes and development areas gives people that space to create. With clear, robust guardrails that govern how and where can be used, you can open more data up to more people a" while mitigating risk.



10 steps to get ahead 5/5

“Henry Ford once remarked that if you ask people what they want, they will ask for faster horses. The same is often true for technology. We seek tools that incrementally improve on what we are already doing – but real progress comes through transformation. It’s important to remain curious, consider what is possible, and look for new tools that will drive the business forward instead of just enabling you to tread water.”

Matt Penton, Head of Data and Analytics at Qodea

About Us

We are the largest Google Cloud-only digital consultancy in Europe. With offices in the UK, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Romania, we're home to some of the industry's foremost cloud experts, with over 300 employees, 420+ Google certifications and numerous industry awards, including Partner of the Year 2023 for DEI.

Together, we've become an award-winning powerhouse for strategic consulting and best-in-class engineering, uniting expertise in AI, security, martech, data, and Workspace to provide one Google experience for clients.

As a values-driven, certified B Corporation, we all place a strong emphasis on delivering positive, sustainable impacts for our clients, their clients and the wider world around us.

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Data Maturity Report