

JPC's Competitive Edge Roundtable #4

Harnessing Machine Precision and Human Intuition in Modern ABM

Key findings, insights and conclusions

February 2026



Introduction

“88% of respondents say their organisations are regularly using AI but only 39% report enterprise-level impact.”

McKinsey

Automation doesn't equal transformation. The gap between adoption and outcomes tells the story. AI accelerates research, surfaces signals and automates activity – yet deals still stall, and confidence still wobbles. In complex accounts, the moments that matter most still require human interaction and judgement.

On 29 January, JPC brought together senior sales, marketing, customer success and revenue leaders for the fourth roundtable in our Competitive Edge series.

Hosted by **James Mollard**, Growth & Strategy Director, and **Claire Ellis**, Managing Director, the question on the table was this: **How do we harness machine precision and human intuition together to create a genuine edge in modern ABM?**

Our panel, led by JPC Strategist **Nick Saalfeld**, included **Rob McGinn** (McGinn Advisory Partners), **Robert Norum** (Propolis Growth Expert), **Amanda Weekes** (Enterprise Marketing Leader) and **Chris Gallagher** (JPC's AI Partner and former Enterprise Sales Leader). The conversation was deliberately experience-led – less about tools and tactics, more about what we're actually seeing as AI embeds into enterprise go-to-market models.

What quickly emerged was a shared recognition that AI hasn't removed uncertainty from enterprise ABM – it's redistributed it. Decisions are made faster. Signals feel richer. But accountability weighs more.

Our panellists described a growing gap between what models can calculate and what their teams can confidently own in front of customers.

In complex accounts, confidence still comes from moments of judgement – when to push, when to challenge, and when to trust – not from scores, dashboards or probability curves. As AI takes on more execution, the moments that determine outcomes – and the people who make those calls – matter more than ever.

This playbook captures the lived tensions, principles and practical choices that emerged from the room – and what they mean for your ABM strategy.

How to use this playbook

This is a working playbook built by ABM leaders wrestling with the same tensions as you. Use it to sharpen judgement, challenge assumptions and make better calls when it counts. Each theme includes:



The core tension – the trade-off leaders need to navigate



In practice – the recognisable moment where this tension shows up



What we heard – the lived reality expressed in the room



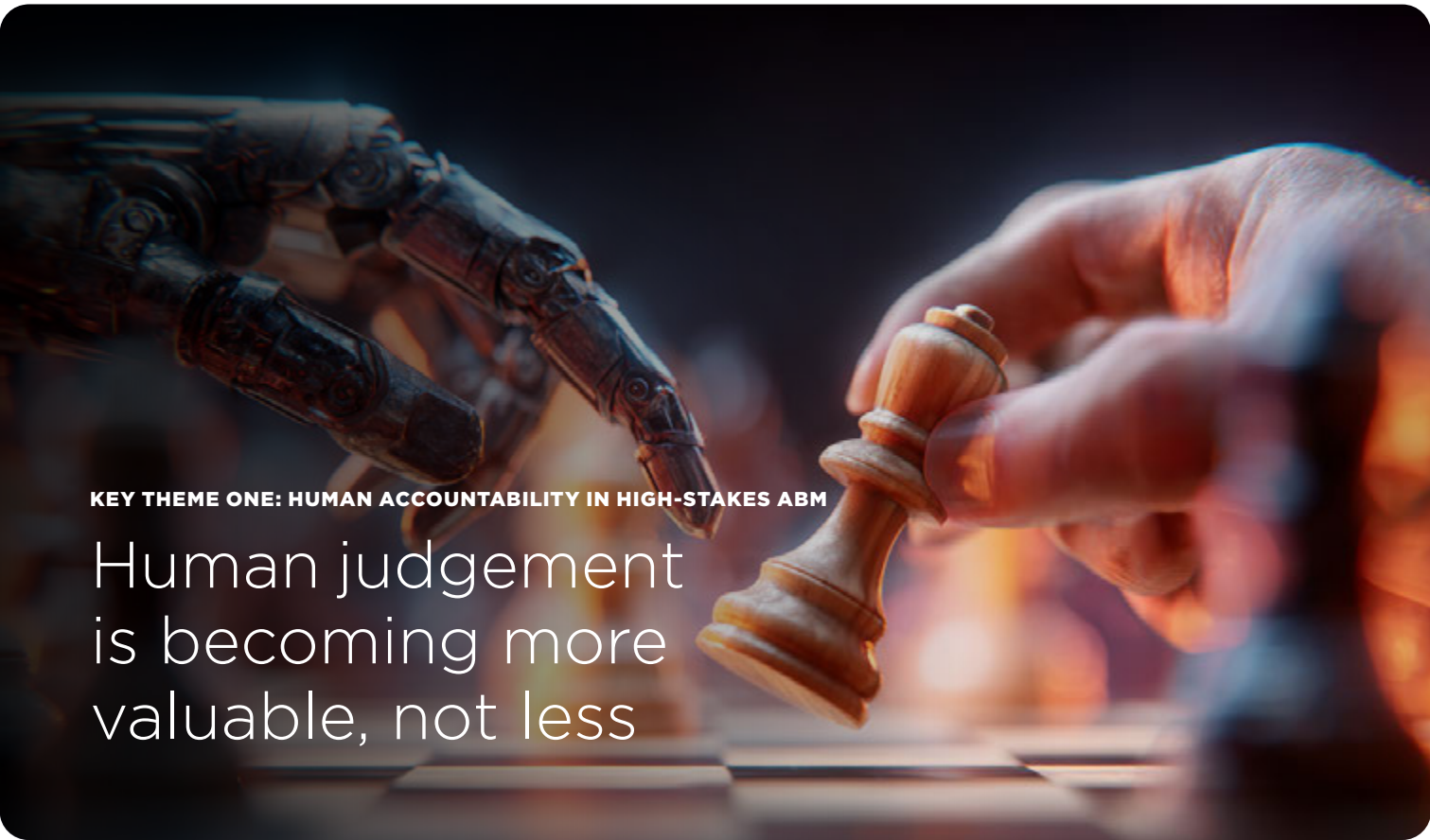
Why this matters – what's at stake



JPC's point of view – our strategic perspective from 20+ years in complex ABM and pursuits



What good looks like – practical principles and recommended actions



KEY THEME ONE: HUMAN ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIGH-STAKES ABM

Human judgement is becoming more valuable, not less



The core tension

AI increases visibility – but it can also create false certainty. The more “precise” the data looks, the more tempting it becomes to defer judgement... right up until the deal turns and no one can explain (or own) the call.



In practice

An account health score is trending up. But stakeholder sentiment has quietly shifted. The team trusts the dashboard over the room dynamic – until late-stage objections land and momentum slips.

Dashboards may look convincing. Scores may trend positively. But when it comes to committing time, political capital or executive sponsorship, someone still has to take responsibility.

Gartner predicts that by 2030, 75% of B2B buyers will prefer sales experiences that prioritise human interaction over AI. Buyers aren’t rejecting technology – they’re seeking judgement and context.



What we heard

AI is improving visibility in ABM. Panellists said they can now spot what matters earlier – enabling faster research, clearer priorities and earlier warning signs across the account lifecycle.

But greater precision hasn’t produced greater certainty, particularly in high-stakes pursuits where reputational and commercial risk are real.



“We’re getting very good at generating information – faster than we’re strengthening judgement.”
James Mollard, JPC



Why this matters

AI can make the data appear more robust. But confidence in a major decision still comes down to human judgement – and who is willing to own it.

The room repeatedly returned to one danger: false certainty. A model can sound confident even when it lacks context. Deferring to it can feel safe – until the deal turns. Then the question isn't what the data said but who owned the call.



JPC's point of view

The more AI increases visibility, the more it raises the cost of misjudgement. Signals arrive earlier. Decisions accelerate. The consequences of acting – or acting too late – become more material.

The edge belongs to organisations that scale capability without surrendering human judgement.

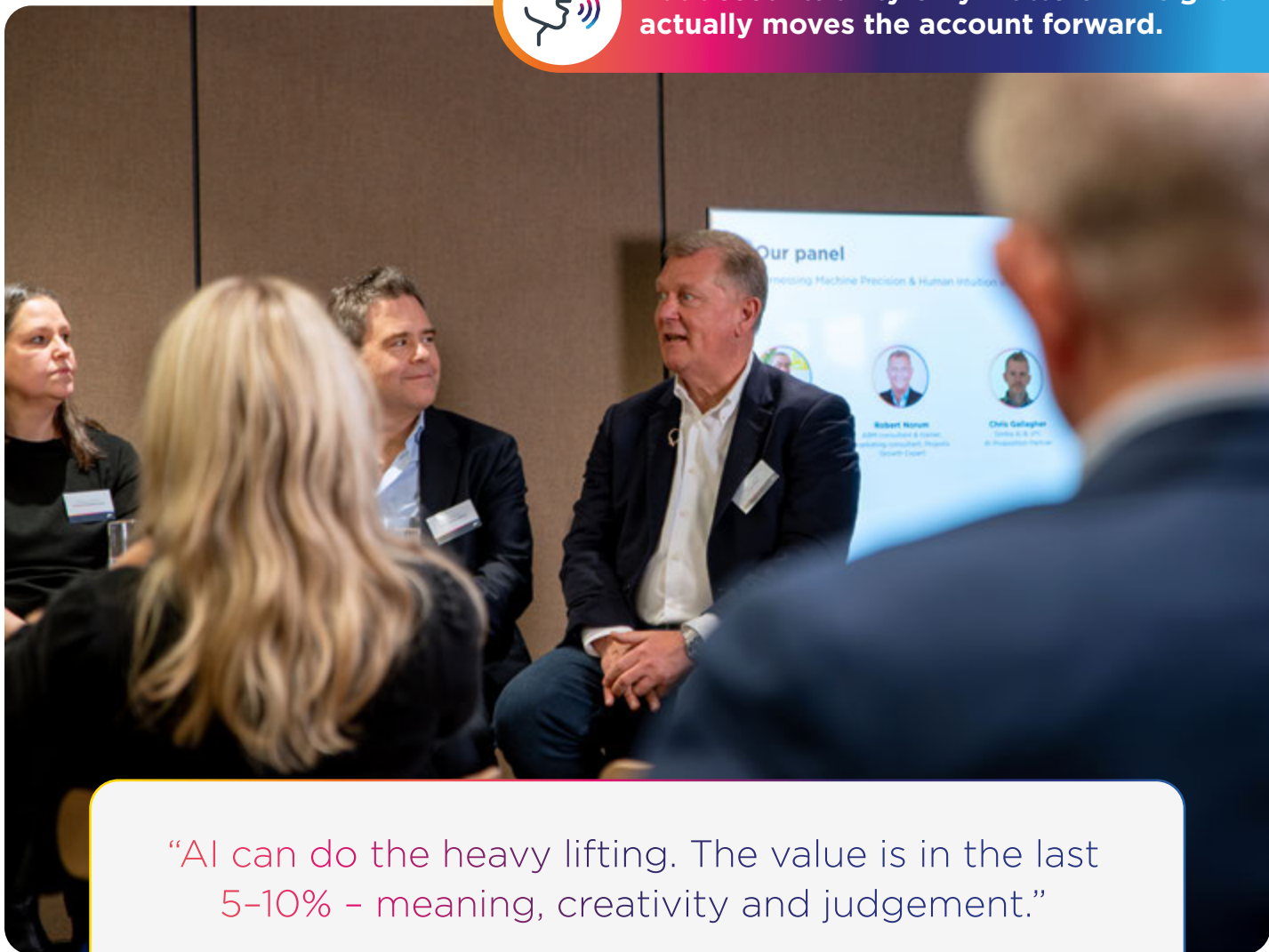


What good looks like

- ✓ **Use AI to raise sharper questions** – not to settle decisions by default
- ✓ **Define obvious human sign-off points in high-risk moments** (prioritisation, messaging, escalation, exec engagement)
- ✓ **Create clear guardrails:** what AI informs vs what humans decide – and why
- ✓ **Make accountability visible:** name the human owner of each judgement call, even when AI contributes inputs
- ✓ **Move faster without becoming rigid:** rapid interpretation, clear ownership, fewer “dashboard-only” conclusions



But accountability only matters if insight actually moves the account forward.



“AI can do the heavy lifting. The value is in the last 5-10% – meaning, creativity and judgement.”

Robert Norum, Opportunitas Limited



KEY THEME TWO: MAKING INSIGHT ACTIONABLE

Insight without ownership doesn't change outcomes



The core tension

Most organisations are information-rich but action-poor. Dashboards create visibility but without clear ownership, insight becomes elusive.



In practice

A renewal risk is flagged four months out. Marketing dashboards show it. Customer Success assumes Sales owns it. Sales assumes CS is handling it. No one acts. The customer churns.



What we heard

No one in the room lacked data. Insight was abundant. The frustration came from how rarely it actually changed behaviour. Signals sat in dashboards. Teams saw renewal risk months ahead but waited for formal windows to open. By then, competitors were embedded.

“Information without action is just theatre.”

Rob McGinn, McGinn Advisory Partners Limited

“83% of UK employees now use GenAI at work, yet fewer than 5% use it in ways that fundamentally transform how they operate.”

EY - Work imagined survey





Why this matters

Insight is only useful if it changes what happens next. But many organisations stop at visibility because action carries risk. Insight feels safe; intervention can feel exposing.

In complex accounts, momentum comes from stepping in at the right moment while reports arrive after the moment has passed. Data sitting in systems might reassure people internally, but someone needs to take ownership of the response to move things forward. Doing that well - repeatedly - takes judgement, coordination and shared accountability - and those are exactly the things that get harder as ABM scales. And as Robert Norum said at the B2B Marketing ABM Conference: **“Information informs. But it’s insight that transforms. Insight doesn’t simply tell you something interesting - it changes what you do next.”**



JPC’s point of view

Visibility without velocity is waste. The commercial value lives in dialogue - when insight becomes narrative and sellers can carry it credibly into the room. We focus on that translation point: making insight transferable, believable and ready to use.



What good looks like

- ✓ **Design insight to be transferable** - not trapped in tools, dashboards or team silos
- ✓ Assign a **named owner** for acting on key signals
- ✓ **Link signals to an agreed response:** action + timeframe + “who does what”
- ✓ **Share responsibility for converting insight into narrative** across Sales, Marketing and Customer Success
- ✓ **Treat AI outputs as prompts for dialogue instead of definitive answers. Equip teams to ask:** “What might this signal mean for this account?” rather than assuming the model is correct



Even when insight reaches the right people, there’s still a conversion point...





KEY THEME THREE: CONFIDENCE IS THE CONVERSION POINT

Sales confidence is the single point of failure



The core tension

AI can surface credible insight but if sellers can't explain the "why", they won't act. When confidence collapses, momentum stalls.

but sellers can't explain the "why" behind it, they're carrying conviction without understanding, confidence drops – and so does momentum. The bigger risk is false confidence: insight that looks authoritative on a dashboard but collapses under questioning.



In practice

AI flags an expansion signal. The seller sees the score but struggles to justify it in front of a sceptical CIO. Rather than risk credibility, they avoid raising it. Although accurate, the signal remains commercially stuck.



JPC's point of view

If AI reduces confidence in the room, it's failing at the moment that matters most. In strategic ABM, confidence is an operating condition. Sales teams hesitate when AI gives them insight they can't defend in front of a sceptical buyer.



What we heard

Sales confidence proved fragile but decisive. When sellers trusted and understood AI-generated insight, momentum increased. When they didn't, hesitation followed even when signals were strong.

As James pointed out: "You enable sales with a question... but what do I do with the response?" Here's the gap: AI flags credible cross-sell and expansion signals, but sellers struggle to explain why they matter or how to raise them credibly. It's a readiness problem. According to **Salesforce**, around 87% of sales organisations are now using AI tools, yet many newer sellers (including Gen Z reps) still report limited structured feedback and roleplay ahead of customer calls. This highlights the training gaps in modern sales enablement.



What good looks like

- ✓ **Package insight into seller-ready "conversation kits"** (so what, why now, suggested openers, next step)
- ✓ Equip sellers to **explain the "why"** behind the insight
 - ✓ Pre-empt likely objections and challenges – don't leave it to chance
 - ✓ Train teams to use insight under pressure (roleplay, coaching, call prep)
 - ✓ Treat sales confidence as a competitive advantage – and measure it

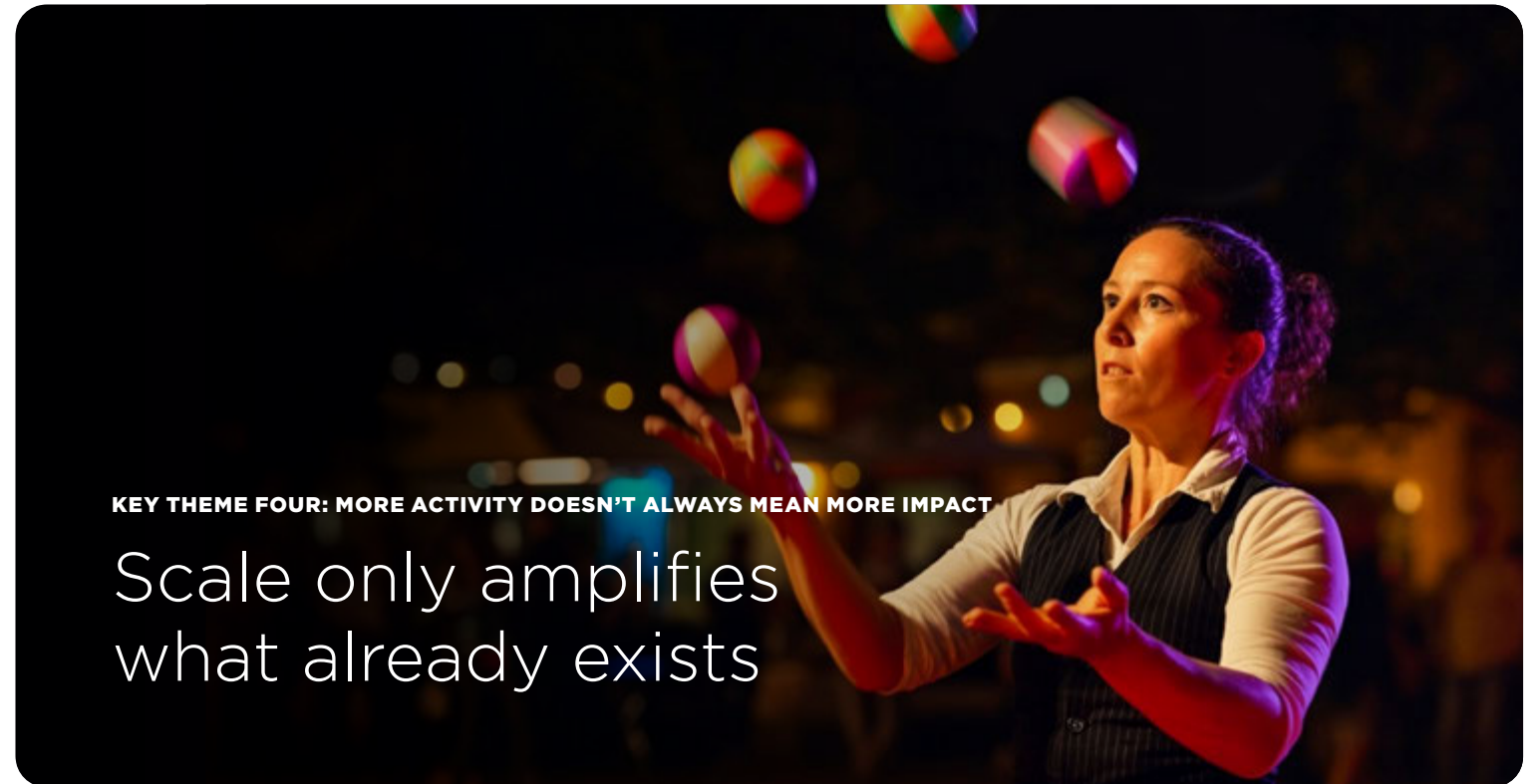


Why this matters

In ABM, sellers must carry insight into live conversations and defend it under pressure. When AI-generated insight looks polished



If confidence breaks when sellers feel exposed, it also breaks when volume overwhelms focus.



KEY THEME FOUR: MORE ACTIVITY DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN MORE IMPACT

Scale only amplifies what already exists



The core tension

AI makes it easier to do more. ABM depends on doing what matters. Without selectivity, scale dilutes relevance and accelerates sameness.



In practice

“Personalised at scale” outreach increases output but buyers spot the pattern. Engagement volume rises; resonance drops; credibility erodes.



What we heard

AI has made scale easier and cheaper. One-to-one personalisation – once resource-intensive – is now technically achievable at speed. Yet our panellists described a paradox: more activity, more content, more outreach but diminishing resonance.

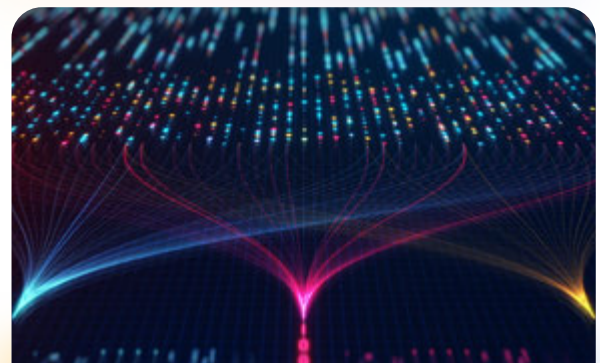
“You can scale. But you still need to decide where to place your bets. You can’t do everything; you can’t be everything to everybody. So yes, you can scale and do more with less, potentially – but you still need to work out where you’re going to focus.”

**Amanda Weekes,
Enterprise Marketing Leader**

“The biggest misuse of AI is assuming you can delegate creative messaging and everything will be great. Then it’s a race to the bottom.”

Robert Norum, Opportunitas Limited

The panel pointed to an uncomfortable reality: buyers are now trained to spot AI-generated content and increasingly dismiss it. As one participant said during dinner: “I can spot AI stuff a mile off and it’s not attractive.”



In the **Ataccama Data Trust Report 2025**, 68% of CDOs said data quality is their top challenge; around 4 in 10 struggle to keep data quality consistent.



Why this matters

Scale can increase output quickly and dilute what makes ABM work. Relevance and credibility are the value drivers in enterprise accounts, and they're also the first things to erode when volume increases without focus.

AI rewards efficiency. ABM depends on difference. Scale makes it easier to do more, but strategy still depends on deciding what not to do – and what must stay human-led. Back to Amanda: “ABM is all about the customer, the insight, that human connection... and then working out which bits you can accelerate or scale.”



JPC's point of view

Scale without selectivity is dangerous. Advantage comes from disciplined choice: who to pursue, who not to, and where human attention is most valuable. AI should reinforce that discipline, not bypass it.



What good looks like

- ✓ **Prioritise accounts and buyer groups** before automating activity
- ✓ **Set explicit principles** for what should *not* be automated (especially in late-stage relationship moments)
- ✓ **Anchor human-led value propositions** and narrative before AI execution
- ✓ **Measure relevance by engagement** quality, not activity volume
- ✓ **Audit automation regularly** to ensure differentiation isn't eroding



Before scaling up, get the fundamentals right.



KEY THEME FIVE: ARCHITECTURE BEFORE ACCELERATION

AI doesn't fix broken systems, it exposes them



The core tension

When organisations are aligned, AI creates clarity. When they aren't, it accelerates fragmentation.



In practice

Intent scoring is rolled out across priority accounts. Weekly account meetings don't change. No one can re-prioritise mid-quarter. The insight sits unused and teams blame the tool rather than the operating model.



What we heard

Where organisations were aligned, AI created clarity and momentum. Where they weren't, it amplified confusion. Different teams interpreted the same signals differently. Systems told competing stories. Sales confidence suffered as a result.

“63% of organisations either lack – or are unsure about – the data management practices required for AI”

Gartner

Rob described a pattern he sees repeatedly: “You’ve got to get the fundamentals of the business right. If you don’t, automation and AI just amplify the noise. It doesn’t get you where you need to get to. Automation doesn’t fix broken processes. It just makes them faster and more expensive.”



Why this matters

If ownership, definitions and handoffs are unclear, automation accelerates confusion rather than coordination. AI magnifies whatever already exists. Misaligned systems don't just create confusion – they create competing versions of false certainty across teams.

As Robert put it: “All those teams are using different platforms, different technologies, different CRM systems. They’ve all got a completely different view of the truth.”



JPC's point of view

Architecture comes before acceleration. AI readiness is less about tools and more about shared understanding – what success looks like, who owns what and how decisions are made.



What good looks like

- ✓ Shared definitions of success across GTM functions
- ✓ Clear ownership across teams of insight, narrative and action
- ✓ Governance that builds trust in data without slowing decisions
- ✓ A genuinely shared view of the customer beyond access to the same systems
- ✓ Clear, documented handoffs – tested under pressure

KEY THEME SIX: HUMAN ENABLEMENT, CULTURAL CHANGE AND TRUST

The human premium is rising



The core tension

AI investment is rising. Human enablement isn't keeping pace. As AI takes more of the routine execution, the bottleneck shifts to confidence, coaching, storytelling and trust – the distinctly human parts of ABM.



In practice

Teams adopt AI tools but reinvest saved time into more activity instead of better conversations. Rework rises. Confidence dips. The value of the tool is questioned, when the real issue is enablement.



What we heard

As discussion moved from technology to people, the emotional core of the evening – fear and confidence – surfaced as we spoke openly about capability gaps and the pressure AI places on judgement. Participants noted that while AI investment is rising, investment in human enablement is lagging.



Why this matters

AI frees up time but doesn't automatically improve how that time is used. Without deliberate reinvestment, efficiency gains simply create more activity rather than better outcomes. Workday found that while 85% of employees say AI saves them time, nearly 40% of those gains are wiped out by rework – fixing, rewriting and double-checking AI output.



JPC's point of view

As AI takes on more of the routine execution, the bottleneck shifts to people: confidence, coaching, storytelling and trust. The organisations that get ahead will be the ones that invest in enablement and adoption – so teams know how to use AI to strengthen conversations, not just output. The human premium is rising.

“92% of executives say people skills – such as problem-solving, empathy and strategic thinking – are more important than ever as AI grows”

Gartner

Chris Gallagher challenged the room: “How many job specs or appraisals include AI competency? Until we embed that into the day-to-day, cultural change won't happen.”

Robert shared John Hegarty's perspective: “AI is going to automate the 95% of the time I spend kicking ideas around, doing research, talking to people. We still need the genius. The 95% is about acceleration, cost reduction – but anyone can do it. The 5% is interpretation and what you do with that. That's still going to be absolutely critical, and that will be human-led.”



What good looks like

- ✓ Leaders model how AI informs judgement rather than replacing it
- ✓ Teams trained to question, challenge and contextualise AI outputs
- ✓ Time saved reinvested into customer dialogue and strategic thinking – not just more activity
- ✓ AI competency embedded in job specs, appraisals and hiring philosophy
- ✓ Psychological safety around AI-supported decisions
- ✓ Organisations measure enablement investment alongside AI investment

Closing reflections

Where the real edge lives

AI capability is becoming universal. What remains rare is the ability to combine machine precision with human discernment in a way that builds confidence, trust and momentum in complex accounts.

The organisations that create a genuine ABM edge will have:

- ✓ Clear ownership of judgement
- ✓ Strong alignment across functions
- ✓ Confidence to keep critical decisions human-led

In an AI-saturated world, advantage shifts from access to intelligence - to agency over it, and that remains distinctly human.

Key takeaways



Human judgement is becoming more valuable, not less - AI boosts visibility, but people still own high-stakes judgement calls



Insight without ownership doesn't change outcomes - signals stuck in dashboards don't change outcomes; ownership and action does



Sales confidence is the conversion point - if sellers can't explain or defend insight in the room, momentum dies



Scale amplifies what already exists - AI makes it easy to do more; strategy is deciding what not to do



AI exposes broken systems - misalignment, messy processes and conflicting "truths" are amplified, not fixed



The human premium is rising - as AI handles execution, enablement, judgement and trust-building bring the real competitive edge





From acceleration to advantage



A closing word from James Mollard,
our Growth and Strategy Director

MY TAKEAWAY FROM THE ROUNDTABLE IS THIS:

AI only creates an edge when the insight it generates drives clarity – and prompts action and interaction.

It increases speed and efficiency, but major deals still hinge on human moments: earned authority, mutual trust and shared purpose.

And let's not forget that AI genuinely can't read a room and build rapport. What stood out was how the technology was applied. The organisations winning with AI are using it to elevate their best people. The challenge now is to move beyond surface-level adoption and use AI imaginatively and deliberately.

Soon, today's version of ABM will be table stakes. When everyone has access to the same intelligence, execution becomes the differentiator. Agency over automation. Relatable over merely relevant.

If that resonates, we should talk.

JPC design and execute revenue strategies that shift outcomes across complex enterprise sales cycles. In an increasingly competitive world, we're here to help you find your Edge.

We're ready to help you
FIND YOUR EDGE.

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We'd love to hear your perspective. What topic or questions would you like us to tackle in our next Competitive Edge Roundtable? Let us know and sign up for our next event here:

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