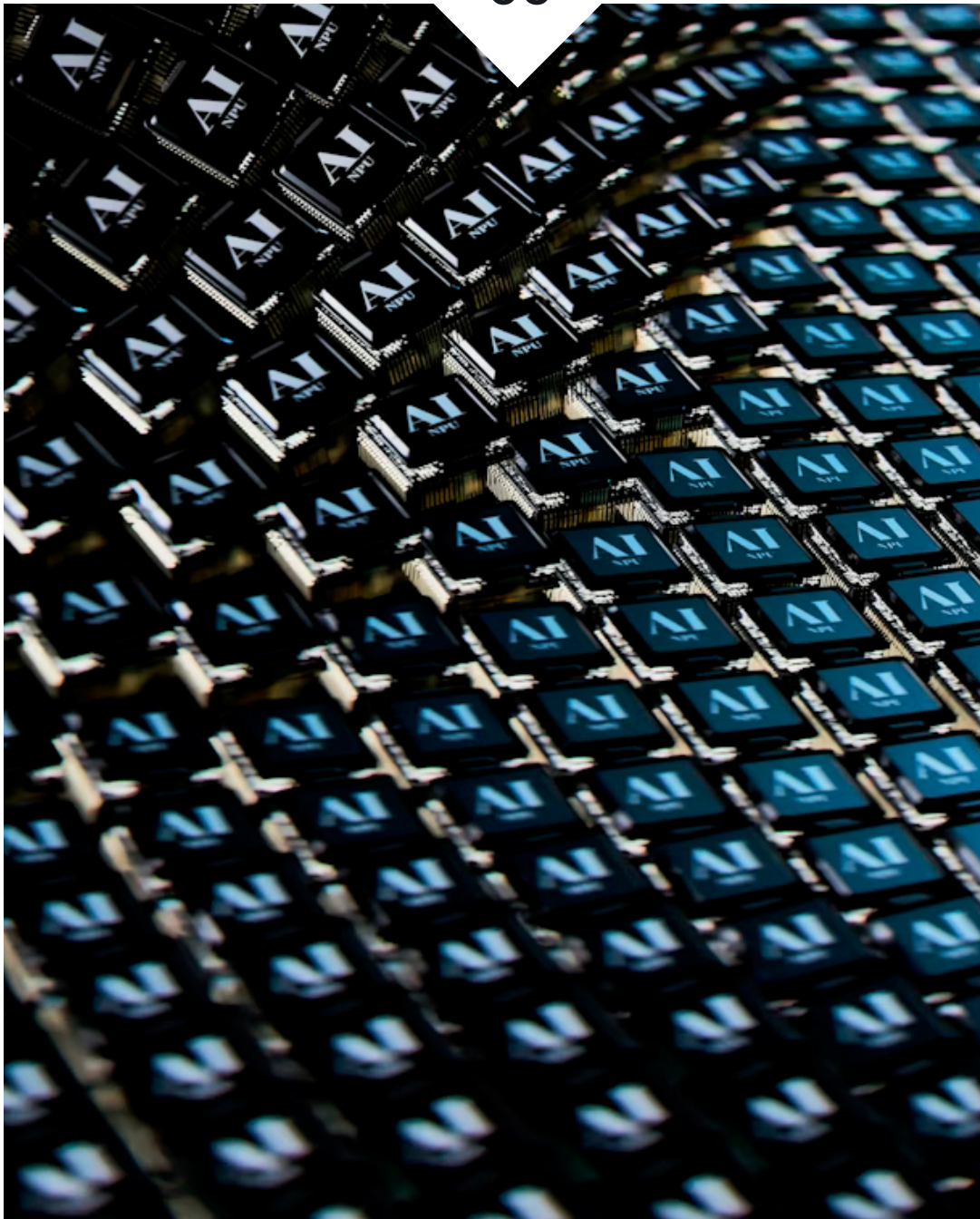


Fortified | Quarterly

DATA FOUNDATIONS
FOR AI ACCELERATION

05



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Editor	4
From Data to Decisions An Expert Panel on AI Readiness	6
ServiceNow Perspective From AI Ambition to Enterprise Impact	12
Ondaro Voices Why Data Foundations Decide AI Success	18
Data Foundations Are Not Static Why Governance, Context, and Ownership Matter	22
Customer Spotlight UCLA Health	26
Executive Insights Jeff Gregory	28

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Letter from the Editor

CXOs are moving beyond chatbots and copilots to deploying autonomous agents that can complete multi-step workflow with minimal human intervention. Across nearly every industry, AI has moved from aspiration to expectation and from experimentation to AI execution at enterprise scale. Regardless of which AI you use, it's how intelligence reimagines your business, accelerates innovation and improves your engagement with customers and employees.

ServiceNow has become the AI Platform for Business Reinvention. They have architected an enterprise platform where AI is native, governed, and operational across every business function — a fundamental shift that redefines what enterprise transformation looks like in 2026 and beyond. The unique differentiation amongst other platforms is its maturity on enabling organizations to act autonomously, moving beyond insight generation and agentic AI to autonomous workflows that can sense context, decide the right action, and execute across the enterprise.

While the platform connects any AI agent, any workflow, any data, and any industry with a single data model, **the gap between AI ambition and AI results is widening — not because the technology or the platform isn't ready. It's because that data underneath the business problem you are trying to solve isn't.**

That is the central truth this issue of *Fortified Quarterly* confronts head-on.

“

“One-third of CEOs are allocating at least 20 percent of their transformation budget to AI, another third are spending at least 40 percent on AI and 70 percent of CEOs are scaling AI at pace.”

Source: *World Economic Forum (2026)*



Data foundations for AI is not a technical issue; it's an executive challenge. What we explore in this issue of *Fortified Quarterly* is the discipline, governance, and cultural ownership that separates organizations, empowering them to extract real value from AI. The focus is not on AI features; it's on the continuous operating discipline leaders must put in place before any AI feature can deliver at scale.

In addition, we share critical lessons learned and success stories from customers that showcase what becomes possible when data discipline is treated as a leadership priority.

“

The organizations that will lead in the next three to five years are not necessarily those with the most sophisticated AI strategies. They are the ones building the most trustworthy, well-governed, and business-aligned data foundations today.

Governance is not red tape. It is how you scale without chaos. Ownership is not bureaucracy. It is how you sustain what you build. And data quality is not an IT metric. It is a competitive advantage — one that AI will amplify in both directions.

The future belongs to organizations that get this right now. We hope this issue helps you understand what “right” looks like — and gives you the clarity to move toward it.



A handwritten signature in white ink on a dark background, which appears to be the signature of Stephanie Otto.

By Stephanie Otto
Editor-in-Chief, *Fortified Quarterly*



COVER STORY

From Data to Decisions: An Expert Panel on AI Readiness

What Four Ondaro Experts Want Leaders to Understand About Data Foundations

AI is no longer a future-state conversation. It's here, embedded across platforms like ServiceNow, promising faster decisions, smarter automation, and deeper insight. But as many organizations are discovering, AI only moves as fast and as accurately as the data you feed it.

To cut through the noise, we brought together four Ondaro experts for a candid conversation on what data foundations for AI acceleration really mean in practice — not in theory, not in vendor slides, but inside complex, real-world enterprises.

OUR TEAM DIDN'T COME TOGETHER TO TALK ABOUT AI FEATURES.

They talked about the disciplines, decisions, and tradeoffs leaders must get right if they want AI to deliver value at scale.



Ian Cahall
Associate Director and
Principal Architect



Christine Morris
Sr. Director of Technical
Service Innovation



Eric Smith
VP of Global Solution
Consulting



Angi Williams
Principal Business
Consultant



Data foundations are not a cleanup project

One of the most persistent misconceptions the panel challenged was the idea that data foundations are a one-time effort.

Strong data foundations behave much more like an operating discipline than a project. They require ownership, standards, and continuous maintenance; especially as data volumes explode and platforms sprawl.

As organizations adopt more tools, integrate more systems, and experiment with AI, the risk compounds. Shadow IT grows. Data sources multiply. And without a clear strategy for how data is created, governed, and maintained, even the most advanced platforms can't compensate.

"The platform can't solve every problem," Morris stated in the panel. "It's definitely something that you've got to get right and then maintain."

"It's also about having that data management strategy," added Williams. "What is your data being used for? And making sure you understand, when you're cleaning it and again, maintaining it the entire time, to have that understanding of decisions that need to be made and how the data can reliably support those decisions."

More data does not mean better data

Another theme that resonated strongly was the danger of collecting everything "just in case."

Smith shared an early-career lesson from a client determined to load tens of millions of configuration items into their CMDB. The client wanted it all, which resulted in technical debt instead of insights.

Good data, the group agreed, isn't about completeness for its own sake. It's about relevance, reliability, and usability.

"Good data is data you can actually run the business on," Morris said. She explained that it doesn't have to be perfect. It just has to be consistent, predictable, and clearly understood across the organization.

When data is working, leaders trust it. They don't export dashboards to Excel to double-check the numbers. They don't need translators to explain what metrics mean. Decisions move faster because the data already speaks the business's language.

AI amplifies both strengths and weaknesses

As AI becomes more deeply embedded into ServiceNow workflows, the panel was clear on one point: weak data foundations don't just limit AI — they actively undermine it.

AI finds insights by going through your data. If data is bad, the insights won't be usable. Leadership won't be able to trust them. This becomes even more critical as organizations move beyond summarization and experimentation into AI-driven decisioning and optimization.

But when you have an established, reliable data foundation, AI can revolutionize organizations to move beyond pilots. Eventually, teams stop asking where they can try AI and start asking which outcomes they are optimizing and how success will be measured.

Data readiness is contextual, not universal

There's no single checklist for "AI-ready" data. Readiness depends on what you're trying to achieve and where you're applying AI within the platform.

"Asset Management data readiness looks very different from IRM or SPM," Cahall explained. "You have to be specific about the outcome."

Stability, validation, automation, and reducing free-text fields all play a role. So does designing data models that support scale rather than experimentation alone.

The takeaway for leaders is simple but powerful: clarity of intent matters more than blanket maturity scores. When organizations align data practices to real business outcomes, readiness becomes achievable and measurable.

Governance is an accelerator, not a blocker

Governance often gets framed as friction. The panel flipped that narrative.

Without clear ownership, stewardship, and decision rights, platforms sprawl, priorities skew toward the loudest voices, and value gets diluted. With governance in place, organizations can prioritize objectively, fund the right initiatives, and scale responsibly.

As AI enters the picture, governance becomes even more critical — not just for platforms, but for data access, security, lifecycle management, and risk.

"What data do you allow AI models to see?" Smith said. "What data should never be exposed? Those are governance questions."

Done well, governance doesn't slow innovation. It makes it sustainable.



The future belongs to organizations that get this right now

Looking ahead, the panelists agreed that data will become less of a compliance requirement and more of a strategic asset. AI will force standardization where ambiguity once lived. Knowledge and data will merge. And organizations will need flexible, dynamic data models that evolve alongside their AI usage.

Perhaps most importantly, AI will amplify what makes each organization unique — if the data reflects that uniqueness.

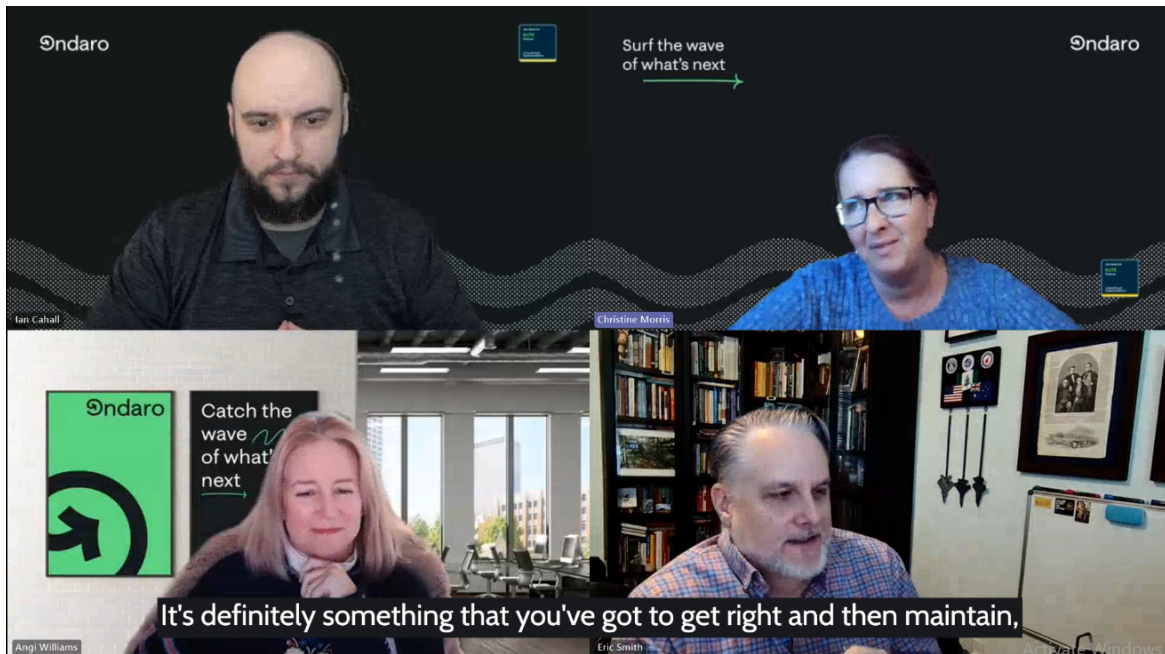
“If AI is going to be human-facing, especially with customers, it has to look and sound like you. The data it serves needs to reinforce who you are as a business.”

ERIC SMITH

The full panel conversation dives deeper into each of these themes, with real examples, candid disagreements, and practical guidance leaders can apply immediately. If you're serious about accelerating AI without compromising trust, scale, or outcomes, it's a conversation worth watching.



Watch the 8 clips from the panel



The AI Acceleration Myth: Why “Cleaning Your Data Once” Will Never Be Enough

The panel reframes data foundations as an ongoing operating discipline, not a short-term remediation project.



When “More Data” Becomes Technical Debt

A concrete, memorable discussion that will resonate with organizations who’ve funded large-scale data efforts that quietly created risk instead of value.



What Good Data Actually Looks Like When You're Running the Business

The panel translates "good data" from an abstract ideal into something leaders can recognize — trust, consistency, and decision-ready dashboards.

WATCH VIDEO



AI Doesn't Fail Quietly: It Amplifies Bad Data

A strong executive warning: AI magnifies weaknesses. This clip connects data quality directly to AI credibility and decision risk.

WATCH VIDEO



From Pilots to Performance: How Leaders Know They're AI-Ready

Discussing the maturity signal leaders are looking for — shifting from experimentation to outcome-driven AI investment.

WATCH VIDEO



Governance Is Not Red Tape. It's How You Scale Without Chaos

The panel explores governance as a business accelerator, especially for organizations struggling with platform sprawl and competing priorities.

WATCH VIDEO



Governing AI Is the Next Leadership Test

This clip bridges traditional data governance with emerging AI risk, security, and accountability.

WATCH VIDEO



The Next 3–5 Years: Why Data Will Become Your Competitive Advantage

The panel share their forward-looking insights on data as a strategic differentiator and what organizations need to be aware of for the future.

WATCH VIDEO



SERVICENOW PERSPECTIVE

From AI Ambition to Enterprise Impact



Eric Schnorr

Global Director, Technology Excellence, Industry and Solutions Partner Go to Market at ServiceNow

As AI ambition accelerates across the enterprise, many organizations are still wrestling with a fundamental question: what separates experimentation from true, scaled impact? In this exclusive conversation for *Fortified Quarterly*, Christine Morris, Senior Director of Consulting Services at Ondaro, interviews Eric Schnorr, Global Director, Industry and Solutions Partner Go to Market at ServiceNow, to explore what it really takes to operationalize AI.

From leadership alignment and data readiness to governance, architecture, and quick wins that build momentum, Eric shares practical insights shaped by decades of experience helping organizations turn strategy into measurable outcomes.

MORRIS: Thank you, Eric, for taking the time to speak with me. It's always such an honor to hear ServiceNow's perspective on matters that business leaders care about. So, for the first question to help us get started here...

... from your vantage point at ServiceNow, what distinguishes organizations that are truly ready to accelerate AI from those that are still experimenting?

SCHNORR: First, thanks for having me, Christine, it's always an honor to speak with an Elite partner like Ondaro and we appreciate the thought leadership and value you bring to our customers. I'll offer the quick disclaimer that these are my own perspectives and not official statements or guidance from ServiceNow.

A lot of what I'll share is shaped by years of working in IT and in data centers as a customer myself. The spirit of it is simple: Our customers win with our technology, and our partners walk alongside them on that AI journey. I have a tremendous amount of empathy and admiration for our customers — the work they do is hard. Constant firefights, constrained resources, and a pace of change that just keeps accelerating. We want to make their world work better.

So what separates the organizations that are truly accelerating from those still stuck in experimentation mode?


The winners have two things above everything else: clear vision and strong leadership. They're not trying to boil the ocean. They're working in controlled, bite-sized chunks with clearly defined outcomes and time-bound project plans. AI initiatives have deadlines. Executives are willing to resource their teams properly and equally willing to pull the plug if things aren't working. That takes courage, and it's rarer than you'd think.

It's also a two-way street. The CIO and business unit leaders all must be in lockstep. When that alignment exists, small wins create momentum and momentum creates traction, buy-in, and the budget and freedom to pursue bigger opportunities and wins.

The organizations still stuck in the lab tend to be missing one or more of these: vision, data readiness, defined timelines, or executive sponsorship. And critically, they can't answer the most basic question: why are we doing this?

Always have an answer for that question. Everything else flows from it.





What foundational data capabilities must be in place before AI can deliver enterprise-scale value?

SCHNORR: Great question, Christine and honestly, it's the one every CIO should be asking their team right now.

From a ServiceNow perspective, a solid CMDB is key. The better it is, the more you can drive more velocity and value from it. Perfect is the enemy of good. It should be clean, trustworthy, and something your team feels confident standing behind. As a trusted colleague said to me, "Without CMDB, there is no AI."

The goal is fast time to value, small wins with real outcomes. Get out of the lab and into production. Not perfection on a whiteboard.

But here's the question you didn't ask, and it might be just as important: what else needs to be in place? Because data alone won't get you there. You need executive sponsorship, clearly defined goals, and a culture that's oriented around outcomes and not just activity. Those aren't soft factors. They're the difference between AI that delivers enterprise-scale value and AI that sits in a pilot forever.

MORRIS: That's a great point Eric. That leads to the next question...



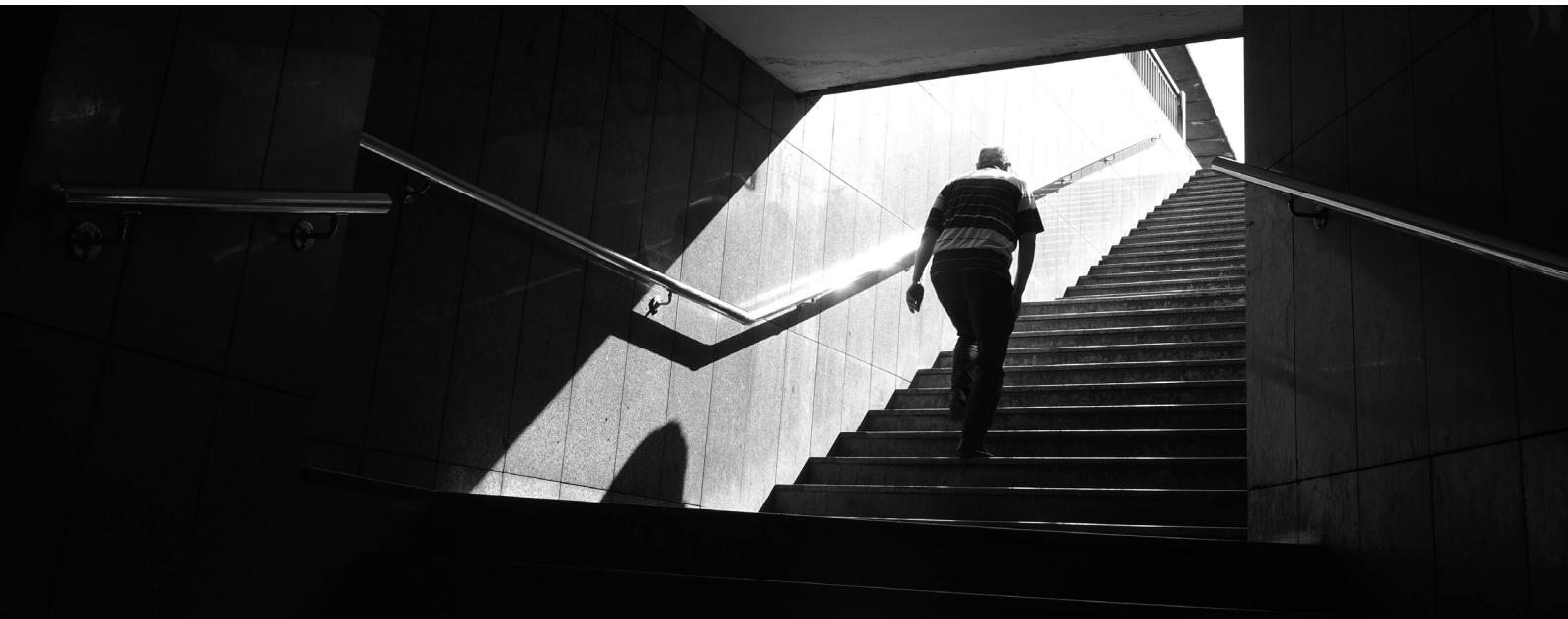
... as organizations move from AI pilots to scaled deployment, how do data governance, quality, and architecture decisions either accelerate or hinder progress?

SCHNORR: This is top of mind for every CIO right now: how do you make AI real, and what is the actual business impact? I mentioned CMDB earlier, and I'll circle back to data quality because it's important. But governance is equally critical and you can see proof of that in ServiceNow's AI Control Tower. You cannot have agents executing undefined routines or running unchecked, triggering compliance violations or unpredictable costs. If you can't run IT safely and securely, you may as well close up shop. Governance and guardrails aren't optional, they're the foundation.

And here's the thing: AI amplifies everything you're already doing, including your best practices. So, if your governance is strong, AI makes it stronger. If it's weak, AI will expose that fast.

Architecture decisions are just as critical and often underestimated. The modern enterprise is incredibly complex: on-premises, cloud, hybrid, hosted, office, remote. There are so many modalities for today's workers and CIOs to manage, and they all must work together seamlessly.

Think of it like an orchestra. The goal is a symphony in full glory: every instrument in tune, every section playing its part. You know that sound when the orchestra is still warming up, everyone playing different tunes? That's the difference between a well-architected AI deployment and one that creates more chaos than it solves.





What advice would you give leaders who want to future-proof their data foundation for the next wave of AI innovation?

SCHNORR: My advice? Reverse the question and reverse your thinking.

In one's personal life, a 10-year plan is invaluable. Do the things at 30 that your 40-year-old self will wish you had done. But for business? Throw away your 5-year plan. Document the vision, absolutely - but this isn't 1990. Technology moves fast, and AI will accelerate that geometrically. Six and twelve-month plans are your friend. Think fast, move faster. Build flexibility into your strategy, not ambiguity.

I know it can be uncomfortable. But the leaders who will win are the ones who embrace that uncertainty and learn to iterate through it.

On data specifically, more data is created every day than can ever be effectively managed. It won't slow down, it will accelerate. So, run the race for the sake of the race. You'll win, but there is no victory lap and no finish line. The goal is to pass the torch better than you received it.

That means having a focused data strategy that covers the 80% that matters most to your organization. It varies by industry, but everyone has mission-critical data, customer data, employee data, regulatory data, and user sentiment. Define your strategy around that core. Ask yourself: What delights your customers? What drives revenue today? What retains your best talent? What fuels innovation? Then ruthlessly direct your limited resources toward purging, organizing, and cleaning the data that drives those outcomes and stop spending energy on the data that doesn't.

Clean data, clear priorities, and the courage to stay agile. That's how you future proof.

On the topic of quick wins, let me make that tangible. ServiceNow is a key component of any customer's digital transformation and AI journey; the foundational glue that holds everything together. Not just IT and the data center, but critical apps, front office, back office, cloud, security — you name it. It's why we call it the Platform of Platforms.



**HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF HOW CIOS CAN START WINNING TODAY.
SOME OF THIS GETS A LITTLE TEXTBOOK, BUT I THINK YOU WILL GET THE IDEA.**

AI-powered incident classification and routing is probably the most common win. Instead of agents manually triaging tickets, AI categorizes and routes them automatically. Deflection rates and resolution times improve within weeks. Because it's easy to measure, it's great for building executive confidence early.

Predictive alerting and AIOps correlate events and stop potential outages before they happen. If you can tell leadership, *"We prevented three major incidents this quarter"* that's a powerful proof point. A minor outage may be manageable, but avoiding a major one can save millions in lost revenue, regulatory fines, and reputational damage. It also reduces the burnout and stress that comes with constant firefighting.

Virtual Agent and self-service is another. Deploy a conversational AI agent for the most common employee requests. Things like password resets, software requests, and HR FAQs can deflect thousands of tickets fast. Low risk, high visibility, quick ROI.

AI-powered knowledge generation creates knowledge articles from resolved tickets. Most agents don't love writing documentation and it takes a lot of time. AI does it automatically and feeds the self-service loop, making the whole system smarter over time.

And this isn't theoretical. At ServiceNow, we've reduced our own Level 1 help desk burden by over 90 percent. That makes every employee dramatically more productive and frees them to learn, grow, and focus on work that matters.

MORRIS: Thank you so much Eric again for this.

I think you really helped our readers unlock a new level of understanding on how important data truly is and how AI can really elevate an organization and make them competitive.

SCHNORR: It's with genuine pride that ServiceNow and Ondaro have been able to help so many customers across so many industries such as education, financial services, government, healthcare, insurance, manufacturing, media, pharma, retail, technology, telco, transportation — the list goes on. The breadth of impact is something I don't take for granted.

Thank you for having me today. I hope something I shared sparks an idea, starts a conversation, or gives someone the confidence to take that next step on their AI journey. That's what it's all about.



Ondaro Voices: Why Data Foundations Decide AI Success

Real-world lessons on how data quality, governance, and platform discipline shape automation and AI outcomes.

As organizations race toward AI and advanced automation, many discover that their biggest obstacles are not tools or technology, but the data underneath them. In this Q&A, Ondaro consultants Donna Barrett, Senior Business Consultant, ITSM, and Dan Wright, Principal Business Consultant, Associate Director, share real-world experiences from the field.

From CMDB and CSDM breakdowns to customer data inconsistencies and over-customization, they reflect on how poor data foundations create downstream risk, slow implementations, and stall AI ambitions, and what clients can do differently to get back on track.

MEET OUR EXPERTS



Donna Barrett

Senior Business Consultant, ITSM,
Ondaro



Dan Wright

Principal Business Consultant,
Associate Director, Ondaro



1

What's a memorable situation where poor or inconsistent data created major challenges in your implementation — and what did it cost the client in time, rework, or outcomes?

DONNA: One of the biggest challenges with inconsistent data often pertains to the CSDM and CMDB and how these are used with ITSM. Having incomplete CI or Service data makes it a challenge to effectively deliver ITSM Incident and Change processes. For ITSM tasks to be resolved, or fulfilled, best practice is to identify the CI's reference Groups: those who support a CI, such as an application service instance or server, for incident and those groups that manage Changes for a Service or CI. This helps to expedite assignment of tasks to the right group most familiar with the device.

For Data Quality: Groups referenced on CIs are considered soft attributes and not discoverable, so it is important to have a process to identify CI owners for support, management and change and a process to continuously monitor and confirm the groups at least annually.

Also, for ITSM Incident and Change, when the CMDB and CSDM has good CI to CI or Service to CI relationships, the Impacted CI's and Services will be identified and added to Incident and Change, providing details to identify additional risk and business impact.

Without complete, accurate, correct CMDB data, ITSM is a challenge to resolve incidents and identify the true change impact, which can cause clients to suffer unplanned outages to services and avoid risk.

DAN: We've had several clients with major issues related to account and contact data being not only inconsistent, but duplicative and misaligned. CSM is really dependent on this kind of data being clean in order to know who the customer is, what they should see and how to direct their request. When this information is a mess, it's really caused challenges in proper case routing.

We've had to pause our originally planned efforts to partner with the client to really focus on a strong data foundation to ensure there were data consistencies that would allow for successful workflow automation to take place. This cost the client a significant amount of additional time and money.



2

When clients talk about wanting AI or advanced automation, what data-related obstacles do you see that prevent them from getting there?

DAN: As AI is on the forefront of many of our clients’ minds, they always seem to bring up the question of “how can we use AI to get our organization more efficient?” The use of AI sounds great in theory, but if there are major data issues any initiative related to this will fall flat on its face.

Some obstacles I’ve seen from clients achieving their AI/automation goals include:

POOR DATA QUALITY

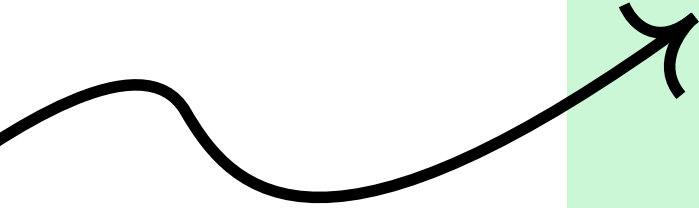
Inconsistent or incomplete records, duplicate cases/tickets etc. with poor classifications

DATA AVAILABILITY ISSUES

Issues with how companies have scaled across different tools/systems creates added challenges getting appropriate data or “the full picture”

DATA PRIVACY CONCERNS

Current clients have expressed wanting to leverage AI but fears of how things like Personally Identifiable Information (PII) could be inappropriately extracted for proper usage.



DONNA: One of the bigger challenges I see regarding data issues, is when clients add custom fields to the ITSM, or HRSD or CSM or IRM applications tasks. Modifying the out-of-the-box task driven processes and the data tables and attributes that define them, will adversely affect the ability to implement Agentic AI and functionality such as ServiceNow’s Now Assist.

As mentioned previously, incomplete or low quality CMDB missing attributes and CI to CI Relationships limits the ability to effectively respond to incidents fully or evaluate change risk which is a highly automated area when the CI and Service data is complete and accurate.



3

Based on the horror stories or mistakes you've experienced, what's one piece of advice you would give to a client regarding data foundations to accelerate AI?

DONNA: My biggest piece of advice, limit or altogether avoid customizing your ServiceNow platform applications. Try to limit adding custom fields or business rules or scripts. ServiceNow has prebuilt workflows and functionality in all their product applications, thus when they layer in their Agentic AI functionality, its built to be out-of-the-box.

When we encounter custom fields, custom rules or scripts, we have to address how AI would automate those customizations; creating a challenge to technical feasibility and/or taking it longer to implement.

DAN: If at all possible, attempt to simplify and standardize how data is recorded — think updated taxonomies, reducing information sourced from “free text” fields, etc.

“

This will allow AI to pick up more polished data and have instant credibility amongst its user base.

Data Foundations Are Not Static: Why Governance, Context, and Ownership Matter



Chris Padmore
ITOM Practice Principal
at Ondaro

If you ask most organizations whether they have a solid data foundation, the answer is almost always yes. And yet, many of those same organizations struggle to scale, automate, or truly transform on the ServiceNow platform. That disconnect usually comes down to a fundamental misunderstanding of what a “data foundation” actually is.

Data Existing Is Not the Same as Data Being Foundational

Too often, data foundations are treated as something you have, rather than something you actively operate.

ServiceNow runs on core data elements. Tables like Companies, Locations, and the CMDB are central to how the platform functions. A common assumption is that if records exist in those tables, the foundation must be solid.

In reality, the foundation isn't the presence of data. It's the operational management and governance of that data over time.

A true data foundation is one where information stays current, reliable, and consistently consumable across the platform. Without ownership, standards, and ongoing care, data quickly degrades. And when that happens, everything built on top of it becomes harder to trust.



The Most Dangerous Assumption: “If It’s in ServiceNow, It’s Managed”

One of the most damaging beliefs I see is the idea that data in ServiceNow is automatically being managed simply because it exists there.

ServiceNow collects data from many sources. Integrations bring in supporting data. Discovery generates connection and infrastructure data. Request submissions add supplemental information. Some of this data is essential to business processes. Some of it exists only to support system behavior. Some of it is never actually used again.

When leaders assume all of this data is equally governed, they quietly undermine transformation efforts. Unmanaged data creates noise, erodes confidence, and forces teams to compensate with manual workarounds. Over time, the platform becomes harder to scale, not easier.

Where Perfection Hurts More Than It Helps

Another common trap is over-investing in data perfection where it doesn’t belong.

I frequently see CI records overloaded with dozens of custom fields, without a reliable way to populate or maintain them. Before adding any data element, it’s worth asking a few simple questions:

1

Is the data discoverable? If so, let Discovery populate it.

2

Is the data immutable? Then set it once at creation.

3

Is the data conditional? Use automation to keep it current.

4

Does the data depend on dozens of mitigating circumstances? Then it probably doesn’t belong on the CI record at all.

NOT ALL DATA NEEDS TO BE PERFECT. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT THE DATA YOU DO RELY ON IS TRUSTWORTHY AND MAINTAINED WITH INTENTION.



Data Ownership in a Platform That's No Longer "Just IT"

As ServiceNow expands beyond IT, data ownership becomes more complex, but the principle stays the same: source of truth matters.

The system that generates the data should typically remain the source of truth for that data. If your real estate team manages locations in a procurement or facilities tool, ServiceNow should consume that information and only augment it when necessary.

Once source-of-truth data enters ServiceNow, or is generated there directly, it must be treated as usable and correct by everyone who interacts with it. That means the appropriate teams must be accountable for governing data quality, not just for their own benefit, but for the organization as a whole.

When Data Foundations Become Brittle

You can usually spot a failing data foundation long before anyone labels it a data problem.

One of the earliest signals is an increase in task resolution times. The process hasn't changed, but the work takes longer because more manual effort is required to compensate for unreliable data. Those delays cascade downstream, creating even more friction.

Eventually, people stop trusting the system and start creating their own ad-hoc data sources. That fragmentation pulls them further away from their actual work and accelerates the breakdown of the foundation.

The root causes are almost always the same: poor governance or poor training.

Either the data isn't being cared for, or people don't know where it lives or how to use it.



Designing for AI, Automation, and Reality

Many organizations collect far more structured data than they actually need. We've all experienced request forms that ask dozens of questions just to accomplish something simple. That level of friction slows everything down and often produces low-quality data anyway.

At the same time, I wouldn't shy away from unstructured data. Some of the most valuable context lives in notes, comments, and descriptions. When people are allowed to clearly document their issue or request in their own words, the quality of context improves dramatically.

AI and automation are particularly well-suited to consuming that unstructured data, distilling it, and making it actionable. That's where real efficiency gains come from, not from forcing every interaction into rigid fields.

Data Belongs to Everyone

There's a misconception that data belongs to IT, and everyone else simply had to use what was presented to them.

However, the data you provide and consume to do your job is your data. It's everyone's data. While certain teams may be responsible for keeping it clean and usable, part of that responsibility is making sure people know the data exists and understand how to use it.

As AI becomes more deeply integrated into platforms like ServiceNow, that truth is becoming more visible. People can get answers faster without needing to understand the full data model behind the scenes. That only works if the underlying data foundation is resilient, well-governed, and treated as a shared asset.

Data foundations aren't static. They require care, context, and collaboration. When organizations embrace that mindset, scale and transformation stop being aspirational goals and start becoming natural outcomes.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Building a Strong Data Foundation to Power AI-Driven HR at UCLA Health



Stacey Titter

Senior Manager,
HR Digital Transformation
at UCLA Health

At UCLA Health, we knew that if we wanted AI to truly enhance the employee experience, we had to start with our foundation: our knowledge. Before implementing Now Assist, our HR knowledge varied widely across teams. Each team developed articles independently, using different formats, writing styles, and levels of detail. The result was an inconsistent experience for employees searching for answers in our portal. Too often, employees bypassed self-service and reached out directly to HR or opened cases for questions that existing knowledge could have addressed. We also heard from leaders that they were spending valuable time searching for HR answers on behalf of their teams, pulling them away from patient-facing responsibilities.



Our work to prepare for Now Assist fundamentally changed how we think about data. In late 2024, we dedicated an entire HR department retreat to AI, with a clear focus on the importance of high-quality data as a prerequisite for success. As we aligned our knowledge with ServiceNow best practices, it became clear that knowledge is not just content. It is the data that powers AI Search and shapes the employee experience. With that understanding, our teams put in the effort to update and standardize articles, knowing that stronger data would lead to better self-service and higher case deflection. We also implemented governance processes to ensure new content meets best practices and that we continuously monitor feedback and performance.

Once Now Assist was live, the impact was immediate. Employees could ask questions in plain language and receive instant, summarized responses with links to supporting knowledge. Instead of scrolling through lists of articles, they experienced a search journey that mirrors the intuitive tools they use outside of work. The built-in feedback features now provide real-time insight into how AI Search is performing, giving us actionable data to guide ongoing improvements. We approached this launch knowing we had one opportunity to build trust in the experience, and that investing time in our data upfront would determine long-term adoption.

Looking ahead, we are focused on sustaining and evolving this strong foundation. We will continue enforcing best practices for new knowledge and leverage Now Assist skills to help generate and refine content.



“

As AI capabilities mature, we envision an AI agent working alongside our portal content manager to monitor usage trends, flag outdated or duplicate content, and identify gaps based on unanswered employee questions.

With strong governance and AI-powered insights, we are building a more proactive, employee-centric HR experience that keeps pace with the expectations of our workforce and the demands of a leading health system.





EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS CORNER

AI Readiness Starts with Clarity, Data, and Change

JEFF GREGORY, CEO @ ONDARO

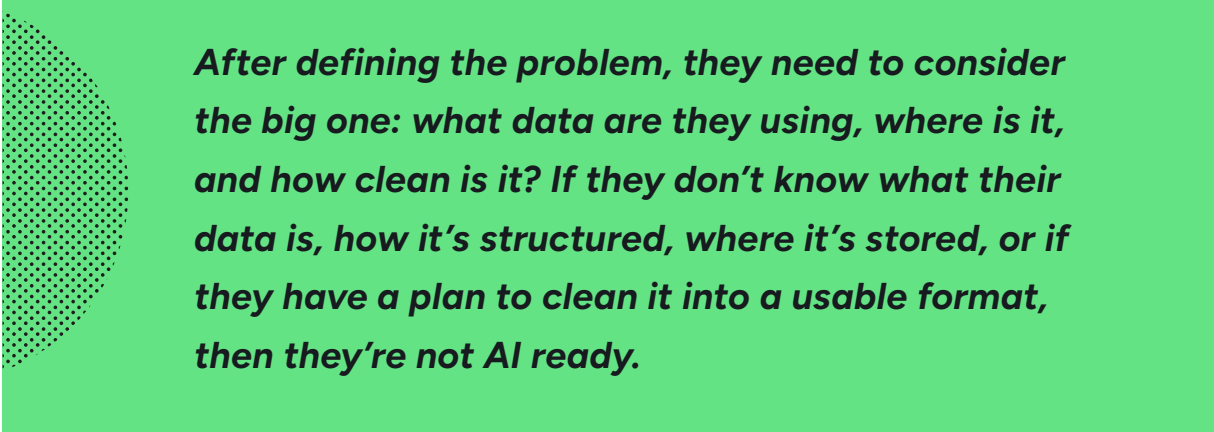
Artificial intelligence is the buzzword in business today. But turning talk into action is more challenging than most companies think. Here's what Jeff Gregory, CEO of Ondaro, said on what it truly means to be AI ready.

Some think AI is a robot butler that solves world hunger, while others see it as just a tool that takes meeting notes and generates summaries automatically. Without a clear definition and cohesive understanding of AI throughout the organization, businesses will struggle with implementation because they'll be speaking in different languages.

But those who have that understanding and know how it applies to their business are one step closer to becoming AI ready.



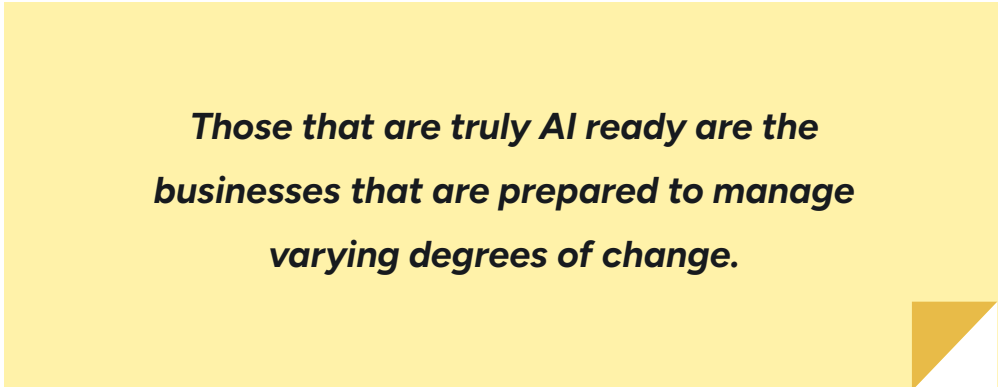
From there, they can move on to the next step in the process: knowing what problem they're trying to solve with AI. Is it a problem that AI can actually fix, or are they just assuming "AI" is the catch-all answer? What value are they expecting to get from applying AI to the workflow? Should they consider other advanced technology alternatives like automation or machine learning?



After defining the problem, they need to consider the big one: what data are they using, where is it, and how clean is it? If they don't know what their data is, how it's structured, where it's stored, or if they have a plan to clean it into a usable format, then they're not AI ready.

Hitachi's December 2024 survey of IT leaders found that 37 percent cited data quality as a major barrier to AI success. Ultimately, if a business' data isn't accessible or understood, none of this will work, no matter how many other boxes are checked.

Lastly, the business itself must be ready for change. An organization's change capacity and, subsequently, management capabilities are critical indicators of success. Any level of AI adoption in an organization will affect people's jobs, what they do, and how they do it.



Those that are truly AI ready are the businesses that are prepared to manage varying degrees of change.





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Ondaro is the leading Elite, pure-play ServiceNow partner in the Americas. We have helped thousands of clients achieve their transformation goals leveraging ServiceNow, the AI platform for business transformation.

Through strategy, implementation, transformation and operational services, we help our clients transform the complex landscape of business operations into streamlined, secure, automated processes.

Whether you need help getting started fast with ServiceNow product capabilities or going big with transformational impact, Ondaro can help you navigate what's next for you.

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