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(Jan26 - Mar26)

In the Loop with

LemmeRecruit.

a quarterly guide to the **Australian** data & AI market you can leverage.

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Snapshot

product
data science/engineering related roles are going to surge

contractors
more teams will leverage contractors to fill in gaps while they figure out where AI fits

89%
of people in the data market feel anxiety around their job security

$$$
has more or less stabilised for permanent roles, but it needs to go up to match inflation and cost of living

demand
for "all-in-one" skill sets continue as teams run leaner

SKILL	DEMAND	SUPPLY	WHY
Applied AI/ML Capability	HIGH	TIGHT	There's a growing number of AI/ML engineering use cases across businesses of all sizes and industries. Some roles don't truly need AI but think they do, while others are well-defined yet demand a lot due to the niche skill set. Increasingly, the best approach is upskilling strong engineers rather than searching for a perfect fit.
Data Transformation Leadership	MEDIUM-HIGH	HIGH	As businesses invest more heavily in AI, the need for transformation leadership is growing. These roles typically require a blend of technical grounding to connect with teams, alongside strong change management and operational leadership to drive adoption and impact.
Value Creation	HIGH	LOW-MEDIUM	There's an ironic trend in the market. As businesses run leaner, they're expecting more from each hire. Across almost every role, the same question comes up: can they clearly demonstrate value? More than anything else, that's what's deciding who gets hired.

From the founders

The past quarter has been our busiest since launching last year, and it's been incredibly rewarding to see both long-standing relationships deepen and new ones form so naturally they feel well established from the outset.

Over the last 10 months, we've placed close to 20 data professionals across both contract and permanent roles. What makes this especially meaningful is that many of these individuals are people we've supported throughout our 12+ years in recruitment. There's a real sense of continuity in the work we do, and it's a privilege to continue partnering with both clients and candidates at different stages of their journey.

From a market perspective, we've seen consistent movement, but very little that has proven to be sustained or predictable. While some professionals have been impacted by redundancies driven by broader restructuring and cost pressures, others have remained active in the market for extended periods as hiring processes shift and priorities evolve.

Overall, the market feels increasingly fluid. Traditional markers of "stability" are becoming less defined, and both clients and candidates are navigating a landscape that requires greater adaptability, clarity, and responsiveness than ever before.

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A Fluid Market. Evolving Roles, Flexible Hiring and the Shift to Value Creation.

Internal Friction: When Change Slows Hiring Down

Organisations are continuing to go through restructures and leadership shifts, which is directly impacting hiring momentum. Even when candidates perform strongly at final stages, processes are often stalling as internal priorities evolve. At the same time, newer HR teams are still finding their footing, which can create hesitation around engaging specialist recruiters. Added to this, growing compliance and liability concerns around contractors, particularly from procurement, are becoming a consistent blocker.

The Rise of Flexible Hiring: Contractors Back in Focus

While contracting has been phased out in some areas, many businesses are quietly moving back towards it. Where there is uncertainty around long-term needs, contractors offer a way to maintain progress without overcommitting. In a market where role definitions are shifting quickly, flexibility is becoming increasingly valuable.

AI and the Rewriting of Roles

AI is actively reshaping how roles are defined. Traditional BI tools are starting to lose relevance as AI absorbs parts of reporting and analysis. At the same time, many organisations are mislabelling roles, with “AI Engineer” often used loosely at enterprise level. Expectations like “5 years AI experience” further highlight how out of step some hiring criteria are. The reality is that many roles today may look very different within 6 to 12 months.

A Short-Term Correction: The Return of Analytics Capability

Following recent analytics and BI redundancies, we expect a near-term correction. As AI adoption progresses, many organisations will realise automation is not yet ready to fully replace reporting. This is likely to drive a return to contractor hiring over the next 6 to 9 months. A lack of structured change management around AI will only amplify this challenge.

The Constant: Data Engineering Demand

Despite broader market shifts, demand for data engineering talent remains strong. As businesses invest in the infrastructure required to support AI and advanced analytics, this capability continues to be essential.

Turning Inwards: A Market Reflecting on Itself

There is a noticeable shift in mindset across the data community, with many professionals taking time to reassess their role in a rapidly changing market. The pace of evolution is driving a more introspective approach to career and capability.

The New Currency: Value Creation

What remains clear is that value creation is becoming the defining factor. Those who can connect their work to business outcomes, influence decisions, and adapt alongside technology will continue to stand out in an increasingly fluid market.

‘IN MY OPINION’

IN MY OPINION - CHAPTER 32

“You have a 6 month window where you build relationships with recruiters. It’s a tax to do all over again if you already have them built”

“People are making a big mistake with laying off that many people as a result of AI”

“The story that AI is the cause of these redundancies or lay offs, is an excuse”

“Taking humans out of the loop is foolish. There’s always a need for AI but humans are essential to that working effectively”

This segment is posted on our Linkedin company page every Thursday.

These are not made up quotes. They’re straight from people in the Australian and NZ data & AI market so that you can get a sense for what’s going on out there.

Some of it’s hilarious, some informative and some simply reassuring.

Final recommendations

Recommendations for Clients

- Define what success looks like upfront, separate must-haves from nice-to-haves, and tighten decision-making to avoid losing strong candidates late in the process.
- Use contractors to maintain delivery momentum where long-term needs are still unclear, rather than pausing hiring altogether.
- Focus on hiring high-quality, adaptable engineers and leaders who can build upon their AI relevant skill set, rather than searching for overly niche or unrealistic profiles.
- Ensure leadership, HR, and procurement are aligned from the outset to minimise friction, reduce delays, and protect candidate experience.

Recommendations for Candidates

- Go beyond tools and tech, clearly demonstrate how your work drives commercial or operational outcomes where you can.
- Be open to contract opportunities, hybrid scopes, or evolving role definitions as businesses navigate uncertainty.
- Understand how AI is impacting your function and where it can enhance your skill set, even without deep specialisation.
- Position yourself with clarity, invest in continuous learning, and proactively communicate your relevance in a shifting market.

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