Apr 26

(Jan- Mar 26)

In the Loop with

LemmeRecruit.

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

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Snapshot

82%
of data professionals are 'on the market'

average day rate contract
length is 4.5 months

58 days +
is how long permanent roles are open for at the moment

average tenure
in permanent roles is 18-24 months

'AI' is mentioned
in 87% of our job briefings

SKILL	DEMAND	SUPPLY	TRENDS
Data Governance	High	Low	Organisations are increasingly recognising that weak data governance and poor underlying data foundations are critical blockers to successful AI and analytics initiatives.
Analytics	Low	High	Analytics responsibilities are increasingly being absorbed into analytics engineer and hybrid roles, reflecting a shift towards more integrated, end-to-end ownership of analytics within organisations.
AI Engineering	High	Tight	There is a limited supply of AI engineers with genuine, production-level experience, creating a gap between growing demand and the availability of talent capable of delivering real-world AI solutions at scale.

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 this period, 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.

Stability Over Opportunity: A Market Defined by Caution, Not Ambition

Role Titles are Broken

There is a growing theme across NZ that role titles in data and AI are becoming increasingly inconsistent. Different titles are often being used to describe the same function, with product, delivery and data blurred into one. This is creating confusion on both sides of the market. Going to market with the wrong title attracts the wrong candidates, slows hiring and leads to misaligned expectations. The generalist nature of the NZ market is a key driver of this.

Cost Cutting and Lean Teams

The majority of organisations across the NZ data market are running leaner than they should be, with individuals covering 2 or sometimes 3 roles without corresponding compensation. For many, this has been the reality for 6 to 12 months and it is now starting to show. We are seeing more candidates applying for roles or having conversations externally, driven by burnout rather than opportunity. This model is not sustainable, yet most organisations have not found a clear path out of it.

The Mid-Level Gap

Mid-level candidates are feeling the most pressure. Progression opportunities internally are limited due to restructures, with fewer clearly defined pathways. This is creating more competition and slowing career movement. As a result, many candidates are feeling stuck and uncertain about their next step.

Broader Talent Market

Senior data talent is largely sitting tight.
Many are in organisations with hiring freezes or ongoing uncertainty, limiting movement. There is a clear mindset to stay in a role for eighteen to twenty four months, even if it is not fully meeting expectations. At the same time, passive exploration is increasing. Candidates are having more informal conversations and asking deeper questions around funding, strategy and execution readiness.

Flexibility vs. Control

There is a shift back toward office mandates, driven by broader macroeconomic pressures. If flexibility is not there, organisations will either lose data talent or retain disengaged team members who are actively looking elsewhere. Productivity will be compromised if this isn't looked at in organisations.

Data Quality is the Real Blocker

This continues to come up and is becoming more visible across data driven organisations.

Many are reaching a point where data quality is the key blocker to progress. Underlying architecture is often not fit for purpose, with data used without proper governance. There is also a growing accountability gap with AI and GenAI. Outputs are being taken at face value without validation, leading to inconsistent and untrusted results.

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"

'IN MY OPINION'

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 hiring managers

- Be realistic about the scope of work. One person cannot deliver everything well.
- Get the foundations right, particularly data quality, before pushing into AI.
- Titles and positioning matter more than ever when attracting the right data talent.
- Flexibility is no longer optional, it is expected. The more limitations there are, the smaller the talent pool becomes.

Recommendations for candidates

- Stay curious and have conversations, even if you are not actively moving. Lean on your data network as much as you can.
- Ask deeper questions about structure, funding and delivery maturity. The roadmap is key to get visibility on.
- Be clear on where you want depth versus breadth in your next role.

Captured in Auckland visiting our kiwi clients!

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