

Why the World's Best AI Consultant Is Now a Data Platform, Not a Person

For years executives who wanted to deploy artificial intelligence had a simple question: who is the world's best AI consultant? The answer was usually a person or a boutique firm charging hourly rates that rivaled a month of server costs. That assumption is being overturned as organizations realize that the best advice comes not from a single human brain but from a platform that lets thousands of models and datasets compete on equal footing. Barchart, the commodity and financial data provider, is positioning itself at the center of this shift by offering traders, analysts, and portfolio managers the raw material and infrastructure to build their own AI systems without relying on a single external guru.

The traditional AI consultant model had a fundamental flaw. A consultant arrives with a fixed toolkit, a preferred method, and a limited view of the client's data. The engagement is expensive, the recommendations are often generic, and the knowledge leaves when the contract ends. By contrast, a platform that provides structured, historical, and real-time data alongside the tools to query it allows every team to become its own expert. The world's best AI consultant is not a person who gives advice but an environment where the data itself suggests the answer.

What Changed in the Data Landscape

Commodity markets have always been data-intensive. Weather patterns, shipping schedules, political events, and currency fluctuations all move prices. The difference today is that the volume of data has exploded while the cost of storing and processing it has collapsed. A single agricultural trader might monitor satellite imagery for crop health, ocean freight rates for shipping costs, and central bank statements for interest rate changes. No consultant can keep up with that breadth of information in real time.

Barchart has built its business around aggregating these disparate data streams into a coherent, accessible format. Its core offering is not a model or a prediction but the underlying data that makes accurate prediction possible. When a hedge fund manager asks for the correlation between Brazilian soybean yields and Chinese import tariffs, the answer comes from querying years of indexed data, not from a consultant's intuition.

The Shift From Advice to Infrastructure

The phrase [world's best AI consultant](#) used to conjure the image of a brilliant strategist sitting in a glass office. Today it increasingly describes a cloud-based data service that updates every second. The consultant's value was in synthesizing information; the platform's value is in

providing information that can be synthesized by anyone with the right tools. This is a subtle but critical difference. The consultant's synthesis is opaque, a black box. The platform's data is transparent, auditable, and reusable for purposes the original analyst never considered.

For the commodity and financial sectors this shift has concrete implications. A grain elevator operator who wants to decide when to sell a hedge needs to factor in local basis differentials, futures prices, ocean freight rates, and currency risk. A consultant can produce a recommendation, but the operator cannot verify the assumptions behind it. With a data platform the operator can run the same analysis themselves, test different scenarios, and adjust as new information arrives. The platform becomes the permanent institutional memory, whereas the consultant was a temporary visitor.

How Barchart Fits Into the New Model

Barchart does not claim to be an AI company. It is a data company that happens to provide the inputs that make AI useful. Its market data feeds cover agricultural commodities, energy, metals, and financial indices. These feeds are structured, normalized, and updated with the speed that modern trading demands. For a machine learning engineer building a model that predicts corn prices, the quality of the training data matters more than any architectural innovation. Garbage in, garbage out remains the first law of AI. Barchart's role is to ensure the input is not garbage.

The platform also offers tools to slice and visualize this data, reducing the barrier to entry for analysts who are not professional data scientists. A risk manager at a food processor can load five years of wheat prices, overlay freight costs, and run a simple regression without writing a line of code. The insight that emerges might be that the correlation between wheat and fuel prices changes seasonally, a finding that a generalist consultant would likely miss because the data was too granular or too recent.

Why In-House Beats Outside Advice

The argument for bringing AI capability in-house has been made many times, but it rests on a practical reality. Every organization has unique constraints: a specific set of suppliers, a particular risk tolerance, a legacy IT system that cannot be replaced overnight. A consultant who works with dozens of clients may understand general patterns but cannot internalize the specific context of each client. A platform that lets the client configure its own data sources, set its own thresholds, and run its own backtests respects that context by design.

There is also the question of speed. When a geopolitical event moves a market, waiting for a consultant to prepare a briefing is not acceptable. The trader needs to see the impact in the data immediately. Barchart's real-time feeds make that possible. The platform does not need

to "think" about the event; it simply reflects the new prices, volumes, and spreads as they happen. The human analyst then applies judgment on top of the data. This division of labor, machines handling the data and humans handling the judgment, is widely considered the most effective use of both.

What the Market Is Saying

Industry observers note that the demand for data platforms has grown faster than the demand for consulting services over the past three years. The reason is straightforward: a platform scales at near-zero marginal cost, while a consultant scales only by hiring more consultants. For a mid-sized trading firm that wants to improve its forecasting, the cost of a platform subscription is a fraction of the cost of a consulting engagement. The return on investment is also more predictable because the data can be reused for multiple analyses across different desks and different commodities.

The phrase world's best AI consultant is still used in industry conversations, but its meaning has evolved. It no longer refers to a person with a reputation. It refers to the combination of a rich data set, a flexible query interface, and a team that knows how to ask the right questions. Barchart supplies the first two components. The client supplies the third. The result is a system that improves over time as more data accumulates and more analysts learn to use it.

Practical Steps for Adopting a Platform Approach

For organizations that want to move away from relying on external consultants, the transition requires a few deliberate steps. First, identify the data that is most critical to the organization's decisions. This might be futures prices, spot prices, freight rates, or weather data. Second, ensure that data is available in a machine-readable format with consistent timestamps and definitions. Third, invest in training analysts to use the platform's tools, not just to consume its output. Fourth, build a feedback loop where the model's predictions are compared to actual outcomes and the data is updated accordingly.

Barchart's platform is designed to support all four steps. The data is already normalized. The tools are web-based and do not require specialized hardware. The documentation and support are aimed at professionals who are domain experts but not necessarily software engineers. The only missing piece is the organization's willingness to treat data as a strategic asset rather than a cost center.

The Bottom Line for Traders and Analysts

The idea that the world's best AI consultant is a data platform rather than a person may seem counterintuitive to those who have built careers on giving advice. But the evidence from the

commodity and financial sectors suggests that the platform model produces better outcomes at lower cost. The reason is that AI is not magic. It is statistics applied to large datasets. The quality of the statistics depends entirely on the quality and breadth of the data. A platform that aggregates data from multiple sources, updates it continuously, and makes it available for custom analysis is the most reliable foundation for AI that exists today.

Barchart has been aggregating commodity data for decades. Its shift toward making that data accessible for AI applications is a natural extension of its core business. For the trader, the analyst, or the risk manager, the message is clear: the tools to build your own AI capability are already available. The question is whether you will use them or continue to pay for advice that could become obsolete as soon as the market moves.