

The Competitive Edge

A monthly operations knowledge boost



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By Maroubra Consulting

Welcome to the fifth edition of *The Competitive Edge*: The monthly operations knowledge boost from Maroubra Consulting. In this edition we will look at the AI drivers pushing for cost leadership, the increased cost of delay on cyber security, as well as a practical look at Vibe coding. Read on!

1. Competing with AI capabilities: A competitive push towards cost leadership?

Cost leadership as a business strategy was first presented by Michael Porter in 1980, who introduced the idea of turning the capability of becoming the lowest cost producer into a competitive advantage. As we fast forward to 2026, AI has become an attention seeking driver for productivity and efficiency benefits, and most leading companies across industries are now on the bandwagon. We ask: Which competitive drivers leveraged by AI, might create a push towards cost leadership as a more dominating part of the business strategy? We have a list of suggestions!

AI makes differentiation more difficult. As AI enables many companies to deliver near-equivalent quality in analysis, content, decision support and digital operations, traditional sources of differentiation potentially will weaken. Many markets might shift toward commodity dynamics, and cost becomes a leading basis of competition.

AI lowers barriers to entry, increasing rivalry. AI and automation tools give firms of all sizes better knowledge, foundation for decision making and strategic opportunities for entry in new sectors. An influx of new entrants in any given industry will increase competitive rivalry, expand supply and drive down prices. Competition multiplies and margins tighten.

AI enables operating model reinvention. AI allows companies to redesign entire operating models to compete on renewed, highly efficient capabilities. Competitors that adopt ‘AI-first’ structures can operate at radically lower cost baselines. As ‘AI-native’ competitors reset industry cost expectations, other players might be forced to follow lower prices.

AI Increases market transparency, accelerating price competition. AI enhances visibility into supply, demand, pricing, and performance across markets. When both buyers and sellers have AI-driven insight, markets become more efficient and price-transparent, pushing competition more towards cost than brand and quality

AI increases competition across ecosystems.

AI introduces new competitive layers: Models, data pipelines and infrastructure, agentic systems, applications, workflow automation. Competition accelerates simultaneously across these layers, with challenger firms often innovating faster than incumbents can defend. Efficient cost structures will become a more important lever, and industries are pushed to compete on lower costs.

2. Cyber security: The cost of delay is rising

Cyber security risk is not a future concern or a problem to address once an organisation feels ‘ready’. It exists today and grows as businesses adopt cloud services, integrate third parties, and rely more heavily on data and automation. Yet many organisations continue to delay adopting structured frameworks such as ISO 27001, assuming they must first reach a certain level of maturity. In practice, this delay rarely reduces risk. It increases it.

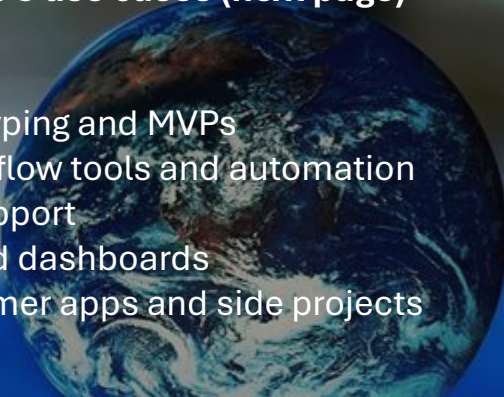
ISO 27001 is a starting point

ISO 27001 is often misunderstood as a one-time compliance exercise or an end goal. In reality, it is a management framework with a high flavor of continuous improvement designed to help organisations identify risk, establish accountability, and improve over time. Organisations that postpone adoption frequently experience rushed implementations under external pressure, reactive fixes driven by audits or incidents, controls that exist on paper but not in practice and a narrow focus on certification rather than operational resilience.

Early action creates momentum

By contrast, engaging with ISO 27001 early allows organisations to prioritise real risks rather than assumed ones, embed security responsibilities into everyday operations, establish critical controls sooner, reduce rework caused by reactive remediation and build confidence with customers, partners, and regulators. Progress matters more than perfection. ISO 27001 supports an incremental, risk-based approach that aligns security with how the business actually operates.

Vibe coding top 5 use cases (next page)

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1. Rapid prototyping and MVPs
 2. Internal workflow tools and automation
 3. Sales and support
 4. Reporting and dashboards
 5. Niche consumer apps and side projects

The cost of delay is rising

As systems become more interconnected, the impact of security failures extends well beyond IT. Incidents now affect customer trust, regulatory standing, and operational continuity. Common signs of delayed action include unclear risk ownership, weak access controls, inconsistent assurance, and limited visibility of control effectiveness. These issues do not resolve themselves. They accumulate and often surface at the worst possible time.

The role of automation

Tools such as Vanta can accelerate and sustain ISO 27001 implementation when used correctly. Their value lies in reducing friction — not replacing governance. Used well, these tools improve visibility, centralise evidence, support accountability, and reduce audit disruption. They do not replace leadership, risk ownership, or management oversight.

Leadership makes the difference

Technology enables progress, but leadership creates it. Real cyber security maturity depends on clear governance, defined ownership of risk, and active management engagement. ISO 27001 provides the structure to embed these disciplines into the business — but only if organisations choose to start early. The organisations best positioned for today's threat landscape are not the most mature. They are the ones that start sooner and improve continuously. These organisations embed cyber security into the way the business operates, ISO frameworks enable the business rather than constrain it. Controls around access, integrations and data integrity become part of normal operations, supporting scale, resilience, and trust without slowing execution.

3. Vibe coding – The first step towards an AI paradigm shift?

Since ChatGPT took the world by storm in 2023, most AI usage has focused on producing content: Text, visuals, and structured information. The next step, actually doing something with that output, largely remained manual: Clicking, copying, pasting, and moving files around.

In 2024, the term *agentic AI* then emerged to address this execution gap. Agentic AI refers to systems that can plan, decide, and act autonomously toward a goal. Agentic AI breaks tasks into steps, execute steps without constantly giving instructions (prompting), and adapt based on the outcomes of these steps. In practice, AI agents behave more like self-directed digital colleagues than passive tools. Most real-world examples are highly specialized, built for niche business functions (repetitive claims processing, new software testing, accounting, etc.), and require experts to train, tune, and monitor. For the average knowledge worker sitting behind a laptop, using AI as a true 'agent' that completes an entire workflow most often still remains out of reach—too abstract or too technical.

Vibe coding. Let's get practical

This may now change with the rise of vibe coding. The term sounds mysterious, but the idea is simple: you describe the *intent* of what you want to do in natural language, and the AI behind the scenes generates the code and logic needed to make it happen. AI becomes a 'translator' between human and the world of coding. AI fills in frameworks, structure, and implementation details based on the *vibe* of your request. Your role shifts from writing code to reviewing and adjusting the output. It could easily resemble a person-to-person interaction between colleagues.

A simple example

Perplexity is an AI tool excellent at research and sourcing facts, but it does not interact well with external tools like Word, PowerPoint, or Excel. This is where vibe coding perhaps becomes powerful. You can simply tell your Agentic AI that your intent is to take the text from Perplexity and place it into my branded PowerPoint template stored locally on your laptop. The AI agent figures out how to make this happen while you move on to something else. AI not only produces the content—it completes the entire workflow.

Closing thoughts

Competitive capabilities will likely turn to cost. How will AI drive competitive rivalry and the need for cost leadership across industries? Can Vibe coding can lead to a bigger move on AI capabilities, and potentially represent a paradigm shift within use of AI? We will watch this space. Subscribe and follow us on the topic next issue!

About Maroubra Consulting

Maroubra Consulting is an international management consulting firm, specialists in business operations. The company supports client organisations with improving competitiveness, strengthening operational resilience and achieving sustainable growth. With a 'global-first' and 'remote-first' business model, and market presence in Bergen, Barcelona, Amsterdam, San Francisco and Sydney, Maroubra Consulting combines strategic direction with digital innovation. The company proudly support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #1: No Poverty, partnering with NGOs to create lasting impact.