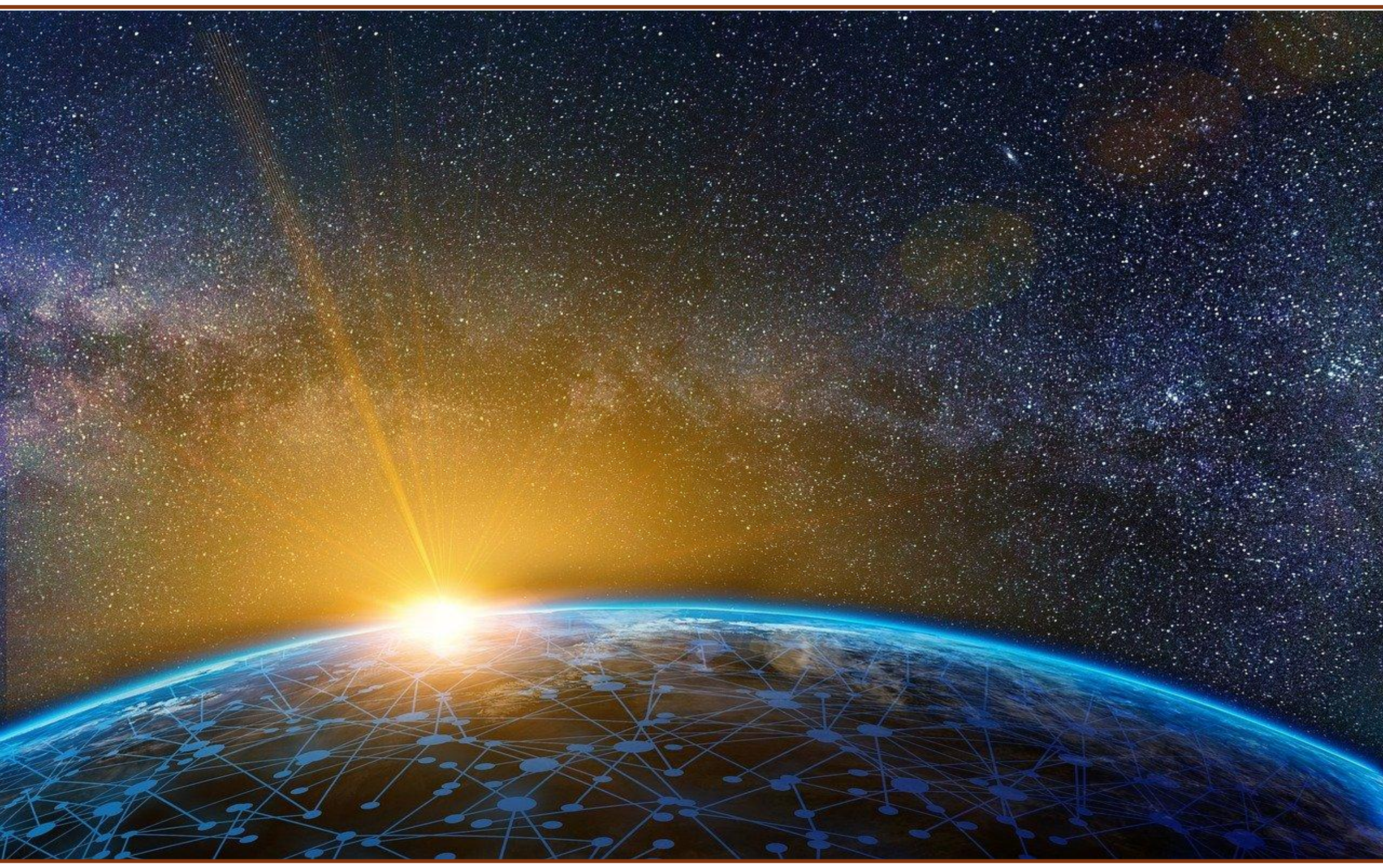
The Competitive Edge

A monthly operations knowledge boost



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By Maroubra Consulting

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Welcome to the second edition of *The Competitive Edge:* The monthly operations knowledge boost from Maroubra Consulting. In this edition we will look at non-profit support as part of the business model, cyber security as a business differentiator, and an AI use case for market expansion. Read on!

1. Management Consulting against Poverty: Raising the bar on supporting a good cause

Have you ever thought about how your company 'pays it forward?' December is a busy month for most businesses. In the true Christmas spirit, more often now than in other seasons, supporting a good cause becomes a business topic.

However, to raise the bar on the support opportunity, we cannot limit this thinking to the Christmas season. A viable option for many organisation is to embed support of a good cause into the business model. So, how about paying it forward all year long?

Based on the principle of paying it forward, Maroubra Consulting has strategically placed pro-bono project support at the core of our business model, in parallel to revenue driving client support. We do this through embedding NGO organisations in our client and knowledge networks. Through-out the year we work strategically and ensure steady project activity for our NGO friends, selected to support the UN sustainability goal 1: End poverty.

One of these pro-bono projects was facilitating the long-term strategic planning process for REACH in Cambodia (See below). The case had efficiency and fundraising focus among key strategic areas to facilitate for improved operations, as well as focus on strategic and operational risk mitigation over the next strategy period. It was truly rewarding to work with the local Cambodian NGO's management team and applying best practices from the international business world to their local operations.

Underlining the importance of such work and the vulnerability of the local population these NGOs help surfaced as there was an outbreak of war with Thailand while we were conducting work meetings in Cambodia July 2025.

2. Cybersecurity as a Business Differentiator

Cybersecurity has evolved from a defensive measure to a strategic advantage. In today's market, trust has become a currency — and adhering to regulations like GDPR, SOC 2, and ISO 27001 should no longer be considered optional: To stay ahead of the competitive curve, these certifications should be viewed as entry tickets and a competitive edge for growth in international markets. Nearly two-thirds of organizations report that customers, investors, and suppliers increasingly require proof of compliance before doing business*

As AI adoption accelerates, now also in cyber security, information management and ISO certifications, governance and risk management often lag behind. Only 37 % of organizations conduct regular AI risk assessments, leaving gaps that can undermine credibility.

These gaps can lead to compliance issues, lost business opportunities, and reduced trust from customers and partners. Companies that address AI risks early show reliability and build stronger relationships. Clear governance also helps avoid costly mistakes and supports smooth growth. In short, managing AI risk is part of the key to staying competitive and trusted.

Maroubra Consulting partners with Vanta to close the market credibility gap for our clients. By automating compliance and embedding AI-informed risk management into workflows, we help businesses scale securely while maintaining trust. Vanta's latest trust report outlines five key trends shaping security strategies in 2025—from rising compliance expectations to the urgent need for AI governance.

*Read the report:
https://www.vanta.com/resources/security-trends-2025

Management consulting against Poverty: Testimonial

"Maroubra Consulting provided invaluable pro-bono support to our grassroots NGO, REACH Siem Reap. Supporting our long-term strategic planning process, the Maroubra Consulting strategy lead was patient and adept at cross-cultural collaboration, ensuring every member of our local leadership team was able to contribute their ideas. The workshops were a special and educational experience for our team, and we are grateful for their team equipping us with the knowledge we need to strategically plan for our future."

Emily Williamson

Founder and Program Manager at REACH Siem Reap

3. AI adoption – a practical use case journey for strategic market pre-study: Triangulation to be leveraged for quality assurance

The use of AI has successfully entered the strategy process, but is it straight forward adding the AI tool component to our teams? We used Perplexity Pro to support a market pre-study for one of our clients. Read on for our perspectives on the AI user journey!

The purpose of the pre-study was twofold:

1. Establish a certain level of structure and perform analysis for a critical strategic decision.
2. Address the "How's" by presenting concrete alternatives for practical execution.

Normally, this type of research would require days to weeks of manual work given the need and difficulty of identifying relevant information. Facing time pressure and limited capacity, we wanted to test how much of the business research process could be automated with AI. We also wanted to evaluate the quality of the output.

The prompts were prepared in a Word document, using track changes and version numbering to allow for multiple iterations. The instructions included a table of contents with 10 sections, each containing 3 sub-paragraphs, and a limit of 3 pages per section—up to 30 pages in total.

Given the sophistication of the models behind Perplexity Pro we had high expectations of the tool. However, on the functionality side there was a bit of troubleshooting! In the first attempts, when we uploaded the prompt document with 'Deep Research' enabled, Perplexity froze after a few minutes. To solve this, we adjusted the prompt to cover only 1–2 sections of our strategy model at a time.

Formatting presented another challenge. Sometimes the output exported successfully to Word. Other times, exporting failed completely. We also noticed significant variation in the number of pages, level of detail, and references provided—receiving both shorter and more extensive versions of the same sections.

Left with slightly deviating results from the prompts we then used triangulation to ensure consistent quality: A manual relevance check, followed by asking Perplexity and at least one other AI tool to compare different versions of its own output, test consistency, and also verifying whether the listed references actually existed.

Preliminary business benefits of AI use in the strategy process include a solid overview of relevant information for the pre-study: Given the amount of detailed information retrieved and structured into a readable document, we seem to have 'exhausted' the internet for relevant material. Achieving the same level of detail manually would likely take weeks for a single individual or smaller team. Second, we see clear potential in using AI, not only to generate content but also to quality-check critical aspects of its own work and output. Despite functional troubleshooting, we are convinced of the value added by AI in this market pre-study case. To be continued!

Closing thoughts

AI adoption has successfully entered both strategy processes and operations. Market studies and cyber security are example areas. For many organisations however, the opportunity to let the business benefits from AI flow into a 'pay it forward' model through supporting non-profit NGO's is something all businesses should consider. Not only close to Christmas, but through the whole year!

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.