

I've spent much of my career working in the space between strategy and execution — a role many organizations need but rarely design for.

I wrote this piece to explore why that space matters more than ever, especially as AI and automation accelerate — and why the real differentiator isn't the tools themselves.



Odd Bird

I've been called many things over the course of my career — architect, analyst, engineer, translator, fixer. None of them ever completely fit.

What I've learned, sometimes the hard way, is that I operate in a space many organizations struggle to name: between strategy and execution, between business intent and technical reality. I'm deeply technical, particularly in the data domain, but my value has never been the code itself. It's the clarity that emerges when systems, data, and business decisions finally start speaking the same language.

That combination has been both my greatest strength and my greatest professional complication.

The Space Between

Most organizations are structured to separate thinking from doing. Strategy is handed down. Technology is tasked with implementing it. When things go wrong, the gap between the two becomes painfully visible — usually absorbed by people through manual effort, heroics, or quiet workarounds.

I've spent much of my career living in that gap.

In one engagement, I worked directly with the COO of a global consumer brand to redesign how demand planning worked across hundreds of retail locations and a deeply fragmented contract manufacturing ecosystem. What emerged wasn't just a system — it was a shared understanding of how decisions impacted supply, commitments, and customers in real time.

Decisions were informed by data. Data was shaped by business reality. And systems evolved alongside understanding.

That last part matters more than it sounds.

Why This Role Is Hard to Name

Organizations are comfortable hiring specialists. They're less comfortable hiring people whose value comes from *connecting* specialties — especially when that connection exposes structural problems.

More than once, more thoughtful leaders have said some version of this to me:

“You're someone every company needs. We just don't know what to call it, where to put it, or what to pay for it.”

“You are the glue holding this project together.”

“You're like a hawk – soaring high above, yet able to zoom in and capture the finest detail.”

There is no malice. It's more a mismatch between how work is categorized and how progress actually happens.

When systems are misaligned, success depends on heroic effort: people compensating for brittle processes, reconciling data manually, explaining inconsistencies instead of eliminating them. Over time, those heroics become normalized — even celebrated — while the underlying causes remain untouched.

I've seen teams of highly educated professionals spend weeks each month consolidating and reconciling numbers that should have agreed by design. I've seen organizations treat chronic manual labor as a cost of doing business rather than a signal to redesign the system.

When those systems were rethought — not replaced wholesale but reshaped incrementally — the results were dramatic. What once required half a dozen analysts became a task for one or two administrators. Errors didn't disappear, but they became visible, traceable, and correctable. Over multiple years, the only failures were from data input/source mistakes — not system failures.

That's not magic. That's alignment.

The AI Moment

Which brings us to now.

As organizations rush to adopt AI, modernize platforms, and automate complex and impactful decisions, the real differentiator won't be the tools themselves — nor an organization's reliance on individuals rapidly adapting to them.

It will be whether those tools are adaptable, and whether the people using them are equipped to evolve in stride with the business.

AI is only as good as the data it consumes — its accuracy, relevance, and structure. Without that foundation, automation simply accelerates confusion.

Most of my career, I have worked as if the specific technology didn't matter, because it didn't. The constant, relevant questions were always the same:

What are you actually trying to accomplish? What is your greatest pain point?

For me, measuring my value by the code I produce is like assessing a bestselling author by the typewriter they used.

An Odd Bird — and Comfortable With It

This role — this way of working — doesn't fit neatly into job descriptions. It doesn't always interview well. It can be uncomfortable for organizations still oriented around rigid boundaries.

But when the stakes are high — when decisions matter, when systems must flex, when clarity replaces heroics — this space in between becomes essential.

I've learned to be comfortable being the odd bird.

Because in the moments that matter most, that's often exactly what's needed.