

# Man vs the Machine

Analysis & Optimization in Advertising

PART 1

# Setting the Scene

The noise · Our reality · Our hypothesis



**Vincent Nebeling**  • 2nd

Investment Banking | Building cool things on the internet

1h • 

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R.I.P. lead gen agencies.

I booked 6 calls this morning.

Using a Claude-powered LinkedIn Acquisition System.

Most founders don't know:

- How to position themselves so LinkedIn attracts the right buyers
- What content actually creates inbound conversations (not likes)
- How inbound and outbound should work together to fill a calendar
- How to follow up without sounding salesy or losing warm leads

So I built the system that fixes it all.

The LinkedIn Acquisition Machine (Powered by Claude)

## WHAT LINKEDIN WANTS US TO BELIEVE

**Cem Atik**  • 2nd  
€2B+ Revenue. Exit Ready by Design. We Build What Buyers Want.  
[Book an appointment](#)  
16h • 

[Connect](#)

R.I.P Google Ads Specialists.

Claude 4.6 just replaced the most time consuming parts of their job... more

 **Claude**  
+  
 **Google Ads**

   260

863 comments • 4 reposts



**Justin Norris** ✓ • 2nd

GTM Systems & AI Leader @ 360Learning | Writing @ ...

[View my blog](#)

1w •

**Connect**

If you're suffering from AI-driven FOMO while doomscrolling LinkedIn, you're not alone.

Knowledge workers are confronting what feels like an existential threat(learn to use AI or be replaced by someone who does) while swimming in an endless sea of shiny objects, which changes every few weeks, all of which are presented as The Next Big Thing.

"Are you using Clay yet? You need to get on N8N! Automate everything with Claude Code! Don't forget to buy a Mac Mini and set up your OpenClaw..."

# Our Reality

What we actually see inside the agency



## **We use AI and invest in it**

It's not a side experiment. We have dedicated workflows, an AI-focused team, and active adoption across accounts.



## **Results are mixed — and we didn't fully understand why**

Some areas work well. Others consistently fall short. The team shares wins and failures regularly, but the pattern wasn't clear.



## **Usage varies significantly across the team**

Some members lean heavily on AI. Others barely touch it. Without a shared picture, we couldn't make informed decisions about where to invest.

## OUR HYPOTHESIS

**“AI is already capable of handling a significant part of our analytical work — but how good it is depends almost entirely on the context we give it.”**

To test this, we designed a structured internal study across 12 specialists and 7 campaign analysis tasks.

Let's look at the study →

PART 2

# The Study

Data maturity · Methodology · Results

# Levels of Data Maturity

Where clients are today — and where AI can take them

1

## BROKEN FOUNDATION

- No consent management
- No tracking or GTM/GA4 misconfigured
- No centralized reporting

2

## DESCRIPTIVE

- Consent-first data collection
- Web, Ads & Pipeline tracking established
- Centralized reporting defined
- Analysing the past

Most of our portfolio is here

3

## PREDICTIVE

- Consent-first data collection
- Web, CRM and Ads data unified (BigQuery / data lake)
- Predictive capabilities enabled
- Optimising the future

Where AI reaches full potential

# Methodology of the Study

How we designed and ran the internal evaluation



## RESEARCHED AREAS

7 campaign analysis tasks:

- 1.Campaign performance analysis
- 2.Keyword performance analysis
- 3.Search terms/context cleanup
- 4.Asset/ content performance
- 5.Audience/targeting performance & exclusions
- 6.CRM channel-level performance
- 7.Budget pacing & reallocation



## WHO WE ASKED

12 advertising specialists  
working across the full client  
portfolio

Small / Early-stage (<50 employees or  
<30M revenue): 65%

Growth stage (30M–100M revenue or  
201–500 employees): 17%

Scale-up / Enterprise (500+  
employees or 100M+ revenue): 18%



## EVALUATION STRUCTURE

- 0 = Not used  
1 = Unusable  
2 = Weak (needs editing)  
3 = OK draft, needs additions  
4 = Strong, minor QA needed  
5 = Human-level output



## HOW WE DEFINE AI

Juma platform with Claude &  
ChatGPT models

Excludes platform-native AI  
(Google, LinkedIn)



## ANALYSIS vs OPTIMISATION

Analysis:  
Retroactive, data-driven  
review of campaign  
performance

Optimisation:  
Forward-looking hypothesis  
formation for testing

AVG SCORE

3.2 / 5

VERDICT

AI-Assisted  
(context-dependent)

RATING DISTRIBUTION

10%

1–2  
Weak

25%

3  
Average

65%

4–5  
Strong

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Mixed results: some find it fast and structured; others stopped using it due to hallucinations or insufficient incremental value.
- Performance improves with historical context (budget changes + date ranges) — without it, output quality drops significantly.
- Risk: hallucinations on large/unclear exports; human sanity check required.
- Some respondents find screenshot input more reliable than CSV uploads for data reading.

*Provide change log + clear date ranges; validate outputs on large exports.*

# Keyword Performance Analysis

02

Google | AI-assisted triage vs unreliable discovery/volume estimation

AVG SCORE

3.4 / 5

VERDICT

**AI-Ready: Analysis  
Not Discovery**

AI CAPABILITY SPLIT

✓ **STRONG**

Sort & segment  
Intent triage  
Pause flags  
Large accounts

⚠ **WEAK**

Volume truth  
New discovery  
Deduplication  
Small accounts

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Excellent at keyword sorting, segmentation and flagging what to pause or optimize.
- Helpful for large accounts; less useful for tiny accounts where humans can eyeball.
- Consistent flaw: AI may invent search volumes or suggest duplicates.
- Best workflow: AI for ideas & structure → validate via Keyword Planner / Semrush.

*Never trust volume estimates from AI; validate volumes and duplicates before action.*

Google | Intent clustering, negative candidates, QA required

AVG SCORE

3.4 / 5

VERDICT

AI-Ready  
with QA

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Strong at classifying search terms by intent and grouping semantically.
- Can surface negative keyword candidates; one respondent used it to reorganise ad groups entirely.
- Still needs revisions; manual review essential to avoid excluding relevant terms.
- Performance depends on clarity of business context — nuanced verticals are harder.

## INTENT BUCKETS

### High Intent

Buy / demo / pricing

### Research

Compare / learn / how

### Brand

Company / product name

### Irrelevant

Off-topic / noise

AVG SCORE

3.3 / 5

VERDICT

**AI-Assisted  
Great Structure,  
Weaker Reasoning**

AI CAPABILITY

**Ranks  
Winners/Losers**

Metric reading  
Asset mapping  
Creative structure  
Rankings

**Persona  
Nuance**

'Why' reasoning  
Deep persona  
Context gaps  
Export lag

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Strong for creative structuring and asset mapping across campaigns; particularly praised for LinkedIn copy suggestions.
- Works well for filtering weak creatives in large accounts, but inaccuracies mean everything needs double-checking.
- Struggles with deeper 'why' reasoning — persona nuance tends to be obvious.
- Needs account-level context; export workflow adds friction vs. analysing directly in-platform.

*Provide targeting/persona + objective + market context; validate when reasoning is required.*

# Audience / Targeting Performance & Exclusions

05

LinkedIn · Google | Pattern detection, ICP analysis, strategic exclusions

AVG SCORE

4.2 / 5

VERDICT

**AI-Ready  
with Strategic  
Oversight**

AI DOES / HUMAN DECIDES



**AI Does**

Grouping  
Overlap detect  
ICP gaps  
Comp compare



**Human Decides**

Exclusions  
Tradeoffs  
Strategy  
Final approval

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Spot-on audience grouping and ICP analysis when given proper context.
- Strong at job title/department clustering; works best with valid LinkedIn job title list.
- Can detect overlap between audiences and organize themes
- Exclusion decisions still require strategic human judgment.

# CRM Channel-Level Performance

06

No PII | High-value synthesis, data quality dependent

AVG SCORE

3.8 / 5

VERDICT

AI-Ready  
with QA  
(Data-Quality  
Dependent)

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- High time-saver: AI synthesizes patterns quickly from CRM exports (no PII).
- Noted benefit: helps analysts get up to speed in unfamiliar industries faster
- Risk: struggles with very large CRM docs; can invent info if inputs are messy.
- Best results when CRM data is clean and questions are well scoped.

DATA PIPELINE

CRM Export  
(No PII)

AI Analysis  
Claude / GPT

Insights Out  
Patterns & trends

# Budget Pacing & Reallocation

07

BONUS | Low adoption · very high capability · closest to automation

AVG SCORE

4.2 / 5

VERDICT

Low adoption — only 3 respondents tested

Good Candidate  
for Automation

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- When tested seriously, AI performs extremely well — rule-based, numeric, structured tasks.
- Can calculate pacing gaps, flag underspend, and propose reallocation across channels.
- Forecasting can be unrealistic; outputs need constraints and guardrails.
- Low adoption is mixed: some haven't tried it yet; others found forecasts inadequate or outputs needing too many manual edits.

AUTOMATION FLOW



Pacing Gaps



Underspend Flags



Reallocation



Human Approval

# AI Capability by Use Case

|                                |     |                         |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| Campaign Performance Analysis  | 3.2 | AI-Assisted             |
| Keyword Performance Analysis   | 3.4 | AI-Ready: Analysis Only |
| Search Terms / Context Cleanup | 3.4 | AI-Ready w/ QA          |
| Asset / Ad-Level Performance   | 3.3 | AI-Assisted             |
| Audience & Targeting           | 4.2 | AI-Ready w/ Oversight   |
| CRM Channel Performance        | 3.8 | AI-Ready w/ QA          |
| Budget Pacing & Reallocation * | 4.2 | Candidate → Automate    |

PART 3

# So What?

What we found · What to do · Where this is going

# Humans aren't being replaced. They're being repositioned.

AI handles descriptive analysis well. Strategy, business judgment, and context — that still belongs to us.

## AI IS STRONG AT

- Descriptive campaign analysis
- KPI structuring & summaries
- Intent classification
- Pattern detection in data
- Filtering & ranking assets

## HUMANS REMAIN ESSENTIAL FOR

- Business consulting & strategy
- Context and change history
- Final judgment on exclusions
- Nuanced persona reasoning
- Anything forward-looking

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO DIFFERENTLY NOW

# Stop obsessing over the prompt.

## Start obsessing over the context.

The quality of your AI output is a direct reflection of the data, briefing, and business context you feed it — not the model you use.

Business Context

+ Clean Data

+ Clear Brief

= Strong AI Output

# The real unlock isn't a better prompt. It's better data.

*Context was the bottleneck before AI. It still is.  
The agencies that solve it first will win.*

## Level 2 → Level 3 Maturity

Moving to unified data (BigQuery / data lake)  
unlocks AI's predictive capacity

## Full-circle closure

Data → Analysis → Ad Optimisation. The loop  
closes when AI can act, not just describe.

## Automation is possible — context is the bottleneck

Platform automation existed before AI  
(Metadata.io). It failed then for the same  
reason it's limited now: lack of business  
context.

