

# RAJU PILLAI

[raju@pillai.me](mailto:raju@pillai.me) | 210-535-2364 | [linkedin.com/in/rajupillai](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rajupillai) | DFW, TX | Green Card

## Executive Profile

Data & AI executive who builds production AI/ML systems that move enterprise P&L — \$500M in prevented losses, \$1M+ in new AI-product revenue, and 40% efficiency gains across finance operations. 25+ years building and scaling data organizations from greenfield to global teams of 30+, currently leading AI strategy and the AI Council at Onyx CenterSource, the leading global hospitality commission payments company.

## Career Highlights

- Prevented **~\$500M in duplicate payments** through AI-driven MDM and data quality automation at a global hospitality payments company.
- Launched AI-powered analytics products projected to generate **\$1M+/year**; reached **\$400K in just four months**.
- Deployed a production conversational AI chatbot that reduced support costs by **\$250K+** and improved NPS scores.
- Led enterprise data and architecture functions for **13 years** at Harland Clarke, supporting **\$15M in annual revenue**.
- Built and scaled data infrastructure supporting millions of transactions and multi-terabyte datasets across global operations.

## Professional Experience

**Onyx CenterSource** | Global Hospitality Payments and Intelligence Aug 2019 – present  
Senior Director – Data Engineering, Analytics & AI | Head of Function

- Lead enterprise-wide data engineering, AI/ML, analytics, and data architecture functions for a global hospitality payments company, owning a multi-million-dollar departmental budget and a FinOps framework that ties every dollar of cloud and AI/ML spend to measurable ROI.
- Direct a global cross-functional team of 15 across engineering, AI/ML, analytics, and contractors, plus matrixed influence across product, finance, and operations stakeholders.
- Led the design and implementation of a multi-terabyte AWS-based data lakehouse consolidating complex data from global hotel bookings, properties, and travel agency sources — forming the backbone for all analytics and AI-driven products.
- Partner with C-suite executives to align AI and data initiatives with product roadmaps, while advising on AI investment strategy and influencing enterprise priorities, digital transformation, and business growth.

### AI/ML & Generative AI — Production Deployments:

- Launched and led the official company-wide AI program, establishing an **AI Council** to govern AI strategy, prioritize initiatives, and accelerate adoption across the organization.

- Built an AI-driven data quality and MDM pipeline that identified and eliminated duplicate payment processing across a global hotel and travel agency portfolio, **preventing ~\$500M in erroneous payments** in the first year while eliminating manual reconciliation effort.
- Launched AI-powered analytics products now **projected to exceed \$1M in annual revenue**, already generating \$400K within the first four months.
- Delivered an **AI-powered financial reconciliation tool** that automated end-to-end reconciliation workflows, reducing finance team processing time by **40%**.
- Deployed a conversational analytics chatbot in production, **reducing support costs by \$250K+** and measurably improving NPS scores.
- Developed a multi-modal AI model leveraging invoice, statement, and transaction data for intelligent payment matching and automated decision-making.
- Implemented an AI/ML fraud detection system for the payment engine, identifying anomalies and flagging potential issues in near real-time across \$1B+ in annual payment volume.
- Built an **AI-powered self-healing data engineering pipeline** with automated data augmentation capabilities, reducing manual data corrections by 60%, freeing engineering capacity for higher-value work.

### Data Platform & Operations:

- Built a modern, end-to-end data platform that ingests data from diverse customer sources, with automated cleansing, quality validation, transformation, and enrichment — producing "golden" datasets that power AI/ML, the payment engine, and enterprise analytics. Designed for scalability and adaptability across new sources and downstream targets.
- Established a FinOps framework tracking AI/ML API usage by application, optimizing cost allocation between real-time and batch inference across AWS Bedrock and SageMaker.
- Instituted enterprise data governance and integrity standards across business units, embedding data quality controls into ingestion and transformation pipelines to ensure consistent, trustworthy data for AI, payments, and reporting.

**Harland Clarke** | FI & Consumer Marketing and Printing  
 Director of Enterprise Data and Application Architecture

May 2006 – Aug 2019

- Served 13 years as the company's de facto Head of Data and Architecture, owning enterprise data strategy across multiple business units and serving as trusted advisor to the CEO and CMO on data strategy, M&A integration, and enterprise-wide digital transformation.
- Built and led a global team of up to 30 — onshore and offshore data engineers, ML engineers, BI specialists, and analysts — with 3 direct manager reports, sustaining high retention and performance through a decade of organizational change including multiple M&A events.
- Built and scaled a Marketing Analytics, BI, CRM, and e-Commerce practice supporting nearly \$15M in annual revenue, including predictive ML models that optimized customer engagement and e-commerce conversion for major financial institution clients.
- Consolidated fragmented, siloed BI systems into a unified data warehouse and lake, dramatically improving data accessibility and enabling analytics-driven decision-making across business units.
- Established an enterprise data governance framework delivering full CCPA, GDPR, and PCI DSS compliance — a foundational capability that protected and grew the company's financial-institution client base.

**Lombard Canada, Toronto, ON | Personal & Commercial Insurance**

Jan 2001 – May 2006

### Lead Technical Database Administrator

- Led a first-of-its-kind core platform modernization at one of Canada's largest insurers, partnering with Microsoft to migrate a mission-critical policy management system across database platforms and delivering \$1M+ in cost savings.
- Built and mentored a DBA team supporting both transactional and analytical applications enterprise-wide.

**Clarke American | FI & Consumer Marketing and Printing**

May 1998 – Dec 2000

### Database Administrator

- Joined as a consultant and converted to permanent staff based on performance. Designed the company's first e-commerce database platform and collaborated directly with IBM developers on early cross-platform replication technology.

## Education

**Post Graduate Program in AI/ML** – University of Texas at Austin (April 2024)

*Coursework spanning supervised/unsupervised learning, deep learning, NLP, and applied ML*

**Master's in Information Systems** – University of Phoenix (Oct 2008)

**Bachelor's in Commerce** – University of Kerala (April 1996)

## Certifications

- AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner
- Big Data Certificate – Massachusetts Institute of Technology

## Core Competencies & Technology

**Leadership & Strategy:** AI/ML & Generative AI Strategy · Data Engineering & Lakehouse Architecture · Cloud Platforms (AWS, Azure) · FinOps for AI/ML · Predictive Modeling & Decision Intelligence · Data Governance & MDM · Executive Stakeholder Partnership · Global Team Leadership · P&L Management · Digital Transformation & Modernization · GenAI / LLM Strategy · AI Governance / AI Council Leadership · MLOps / AIDLC

**Technology:** AWS Bedrock · SageMaker · Snowflake · Python · Spark · SQL & NoSQL · REST APIs · Data Visualization Tools