

#FABCONSQLCON2026

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The Fabric Effect at CDW

Built by the Business, Supercharged by IT

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Two Voices. One Story.

CHRISTOPHER MARCOLIS

Head of Presales
CDW Data & AI Practice

*"My business couldn't wait ## months
on the IT backlog. So, I built it myself.
With duct tape, hairspray, and unicorn farts."*



The Executive Narrator

MWAZANJI SAKALA

Sr. Solution Engineer
CDW Data & AI Practice

*"What Christopher just called 'duct tape,
hairspray, and unicorn farts.' — I'll translate that
into actual architecture for you."*



The Technical Translator

The Analytics Problem

(Every Business Leader Knows)



Data is Everywhere

CRM. ERP. HCM. Marketing.
Finance. Every team built their own
island.



IT Can't Keep Up

Innovation is accelerating faster
than enterprise architecture review
cycles.



The Backlog is Real

##-month waits. Competing
priorities. Business needs can't
pause for the queue.

"I had data in five systems. I needed one answer. IT was going to get to me in Q3... of next year." — Christopher

I Couldn't Wait. So, I Built It!

- I run a data-driven presales operation — pipeline, partnerships, seller performance
- My data lives in Salesforce, Excel, Snowflake, SharePoint, and 2 homegrown tools
- I needed a single view of my business. IT had me in the backlog
- So, I called in favors. Used consulting hours. Wrote some glue code. Built it myself.
- Used a semantic layer to stitch it all together. It worked. Mostly.

5

Source systems
to integrate

mo

IT backlog
wait time

100%

Held together
by favors & duct tape

\$15M+

Pipeline this
thing now tracks

MWAZANJI'S TAKE

What Christopher built was a Power BI semantic model pulling from shared OneDrive + Salesforce exports. It worked — but every connector update was a 2am fire drill.

What 'Glue & Hairspray' Actually Means

PRESENTATION	Power BI Reports + Manual Excel
SEMANTIC	Power BI Dataset (the 'semantic glue')
INTEGRATION	Power Query + Manual Refresh Schedules + Shared OneDrive CSVs
SOURCE	Salesforce · Snowflake · SharePoint · Excel · Homegrown App

The Real Problems

- Manual refresh = stale data at the worst moment
- Any connector update breaks the chain
- No lineage — nobody knows what broke
- Single person dependency to fix it
- IT won't touch it. Can't support it.

CHRISTOPHER'S TAKE

I didn't know what half of this was called. I just knew it broke every time someone at Salesforce had a bad day.

It Worked. Mostly.



The 2am Connector Break

Salesforce updated their API.
My entire pipeline went dark.
Monday morning QBR had no data.



The Data Drift

Nobody noticed for 3 weeks
that one of my Excel files got
renamed. Metrics were
wrong. Pipeline calls were
wrong.



Single Thread of Failure

I was the only one who could
fix it. That's not a data
problem. That's a business
risk.

The system I built to run my business was becoming the thing I had to run instead of my business.

I Went Back to IT.

But this time, I came differently.

HOW I USED TO ASK

- *"Build me a thing"*
- *"I need it by next sprint"*
- *"It should look exactly like this"*
- *"IT is blocking me"*
- *"Just give me access and I'll handle it"*

VS

HOW I ASKED THIS TIME

- *"I already built a working prototype"*
- *"Here's what I need governed and supported"*
- *"I'll compromise on design if you'll sponsor it"*
- *"I want to be in Fabric — your stack, your rules"*
- *"Let's build something together that IT can own"*

IT Said Yes. With Conditions.

01

Use the platform as designed

No more side-loading. Dataflow Gen2, OneLake, and approved connectors only.

02

Compromise on the design

My opinionated architecture had to bend to Fabric's patterns. That's the deal.

03

IT sponsors, not just tolerates

In return for compliance, IT becomes a real partner — monitoring, support, scale.

04

Make it reusable

This can't just serve presales. The architecture has to be a template the business can use.

This moment — an IT team willing to sponsor a business-led build — is rarer than it should be.

Why Fabric Changed the Equation

Before Fabric

- Business builds in shadow IT
- IT governs in a separate stack
- The two never meet cleanly
- Semantic layer = the war zone

With Fabric

- One platform. One tenant. One lake.
- Business user and IT live in the same house
- IT can govern what I build
- I can move fast inside guardrails

MWAZANJI'S TAKE

Fabric's unified compute and OneLake storage means the semantic model I build as a citizen developer lives in the same governed environment as enterprise pipelines. No export-to-CSV handoff required.

The New Stack — Rebuilt Inside Fabric

CONSUME

Power BI Direct Lake Semantic Model · Direct Lake Reports · Teams/SharePoint Embed

SERVE

Fabric Warehouse · Dataverse Tables for Transanalytics · Lakehouse SQL Endpoint

TRANSFORM

Dataflow Gen2 · Fabric Notebooks · Data Pipeline Orchestration

STORE

OneLake · Delta Parquet Tables · Lakehouse (Bronze / Silver / Gold)

INGEST

Dataflow Gen2 Connectors · Salesforce · Snowflake · SharePoint · Dynamics 365

THE CONNECTORS THAT UNLOCKED EVERYTHING

Three Capabilities. One Breakthrough.



Dataflow Gen2

EXEC

Connects to everything I used to manually export. Certified connectors, scheduled refresh, no code required.

MWAZANJI'S TAKE

Power Query-based ETL with Output Destinations to Lakehouse or Warehouse. Supports 150+ connectors including Salesforce, Dynamics, Snowflake. Staging on OneLake by default.



OneLake Storage

EXEC

One place to put everything. IT governs it. I use it. Nobody argues about where the data lives.

MWAZANJI'S TAKE

Delta Parquet on ADLS Gen2, hierarchical namespace. Fabric Shortcuts enable zero-copy data sharing across workspaces. No more data silos.



Dataverse Tables

EXEC

My operational data — live. Not a report. An actual table that writes back to the business system.

MWAZANJI'S TAKE

Transactional + analytical access via DirectLake. Power Apps, Power Automate, and fabric pipelines all talk to the same table. Zero ETL between operational and analytical.

One Portal. One Truth.

"This is the tool I run my business from.

Every pipeline call.

Every partner review.

*Every leadership ask
— answered in seconds."*



Pipeline Visibility

100s opportunities. \$15M.
Live. One screen.



Partner Scorecards

Snowflake, Microsoft,
Databricks — all tracked, all
current.



Seller Performance

Attach rates, opportunity
quality, coverage by vertical.



Presales Capacity

Who's working what, where
we're overloaded, where we
have room.

MWAZANJI'S TAKE

Under the hood: DirectLake semantic model on Lakehouse Gold layer + Dataverse virtual tables for write-back. Power BI Embedded in a Teams app. IT monitors the pipeline. BU owns the report layer.

Before & After: What Actually Changed

DIMENSION	BEFORE — Glue & Hairspray	AFTER — Fabric + IT Partnership
Data Freshness	Automated & Manual refresh yo-yo	✓ Scheduled Dataflow Gen2 · near real-time
Connector Breaks	2am fire drills when APIs change	✓ Certified connectors · IT monitors
Time to Insight	Build a new report: 2–3 weeks	✓ New report on governed model: hours
IT Relationship	IT won't touch it	✓ IT sponsors and co-develops
Reliability	Single person can fix it (me)	✓ Documented, governed, transferable
Scale	Only works for presales	✓ Architecture template for any BU

MWAZANJI'S TAKE

The technical unlock: moving from 'dataset in a workspace nobody governs' to 'Lakehouse + Warehouse in an IT-sponsored capacity' changes everything about reliability, monitoring, and cost transparency.

How I Learned to Behave.

(And why IT became my best partner.)

- 01 Show up with a working prototype, not a requirements doc. IT respects builders.
- 02 Compromise on architecture. If IT's going to own it, it must be built on their platform.
- 03 Shadow IT isn't the enemy — it's R&D. Treat it that way, then bring it home.
- 04 IT sponsorship isn't just about support. It means the work lives past you.
- 05 The power user era isn't over. It just needs a platform that can hold it.

MWAZANJI'S TAKE

The fastest path to a governed, production-grade data platform is a business user who already built the prototype — we just swap the duct tape for Dataflow Gen2 and put IT's name on the capacity.

The Power User Revolution is Already Inside Your Organization.



Your best data builders

...are in the business, not in IT. They just need the right platform.



Shadow IT is prototyping

...the most relevant, high-value use cases in your organization.



Fabric is the bridge

...that lets business agility and IT governance live in the same house.

Stop fighting your power users. Start building a platform that deserves them.

IT can be your best co-developer.

If you learn to behave.



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WHAT'S NEXT

- Copilot pages over the portal
- Fabric Real-Time Hub for pipeline events
- Cross-BU reuse of the architecture
- Fabric Agent Skills for auto-insights

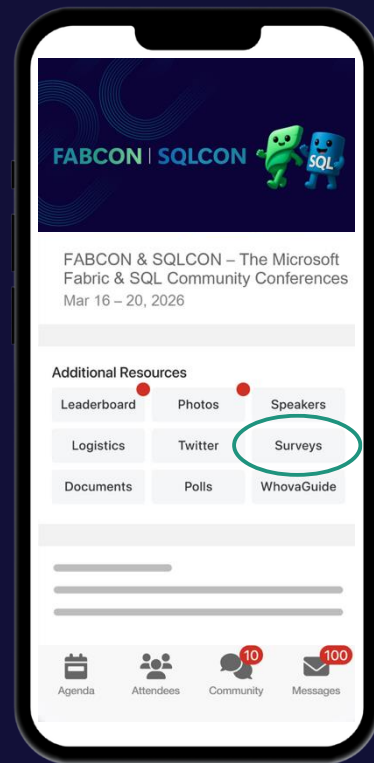
Find us at the CDW booth
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Thank you. Questions? Let's talk.

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Join the SQL User Panel



Influence our SQL roadmap and ensure
it meets your real-life needs

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