Dr. Robert Allen Cobb Jr.

robert@robertallencobb.com

Profile

I'm a strategy-driven business leader with deep expertise in analytics and a track record of delivering measurable commercial impact. With over a decade of experience leading transformation across large-scale operations, I specialize in uncovering value creation opportunities, improving enterprise performance, and turning data into high-leverage commercial decisions.
I've led efforts to redefine pricing strategies, enable dynamic hedging models, and build predictive platforms that inform risk and capital allocation. I also teach strategy in the Full-Time MBA program at the University of Tennessee, bridging theory with real-world execution. Whether partnering with executives or mentoring future leaders, I bring a bias for action and a sharp focus on results.

Experience

The Pilot Company (Pilot Flying J), Knoxville TN

Director-Advanced Analytics | July 2024-Current

I lead the Business Analytics, Advanced Analytics, and Quantitative Analytics functions at Pilot, overseeing a team responsible for delivering insights and analytics that drive pricing, risk, and capital allocation decisions across the enterprise.

- Direct a unified analytics organization that supports all commercial business units, aligning analytics roadmaps to enterprise growth, margin expansion, and capital efficiency goals.
- Built and maintain the Commercial Analytics Platform (CAP), the company's core forecasting and elasticity engine, used across energy, retail, finance, and operations.
- Built and maintain the Trading and Risk Analytics Platform (TRAP), a suite of real-time tools that provide trading insights, deliver hedging signals, and optimize futures positions to support risk management and commercial operations.
- Partner closely with senior leadership to ensure data-driven decision-making is embedded into enterprise strategy, investment planning, and risk mitigation efforts.

Senior Manager-Advanced Analytics| January 2023-July 2024

Led major analytics initiatives supporting commercial strategy, fuel pricing, and enterprise risk. Directed a team focused on advanced modeling, platform development, and market research delivery.

- Led analytics efforts within McKinsey-partnered analytics projects, using internal data science capabilities to test hypotheses and influence long-range decisions in energy and fuel markets.
- Conducted impact evaluation studies on major business decisions, translating statistical findings into clear strategic guidance for executive leadership.
- Worked directly with Data Science, Engineering, and Governance teams to build robust data pipelines and ensure analytical outputs met the highest standards of quality, compliance, and reliability.
- Built a high-performance analytics team culture centered on experimentation, precision, and business impact.

Manager-Business Analytics| November 2021-December 2022

Established and led the Business Analytics team focused on experimental design, pricing optimization, and enterprise measurement. The team operated as a centralized analytics function, with a primary focus on driving bottom-line results.

- Delivered $75M in sustainable annual fuel gross profit through the deployment of custom-built gasoline and diesel pricing algorithms across retail and commercial channels.
- Built analytics capabilities that supported decision-making across pricing, marketing, and finance, establishing clear measurement protocols and KPI frameworks.
- Recruited and developed a team of analysts focused on high-impact projects that blended rigorous testing with commercial intuition.

Senior Strategist-Analytics Center of Excellence, Algorithmic Pricing | April 2019-November 2021

Played a foundational role in launching Pilot's enterprise fuel pricing strategy through experiment-first design and deployment of deep learning-based fuel pricing engines across 750+ locations.

- Acted as the primary liaison to senior leadership for pricing strategy analytics, providing regular updates, performance reporting, and strategic recommendations.
- Led internal efforts on multiple third-party strategy engagements, where I shaped model design and pricing implementation that aim to satisfy Pilot's commercial objectives.
- Contributed to the buildout of Pilot's internal analytics consulting function, focused on delivering long-term commercial strategy through advanced modeling and insight delivery.

Data Scientist-Various Departments | June 2014-April 2019

- Primarily focused on fuel price optimization and analytics, with occasional responsibilities in non-energy initiatives.

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The University of Tennessee, Knoxville TN
Clinical Professor, Econometrics and Strategy-Haslam College of Business| August 2021-Current
- Econ 505: The Economics of Strategy (Full-Time MBA)
- Econ 503: Economics in a Global Environment (Online MBA)
- Econ 381: Econometrics (Undergraduate)

University of Tennessee, Knoxville TN
Graduate Teaching/Research Assistant | July 2013-June 2014 (concurrently during PhD coursework)
- Teaching Assistant for Time Series Econometrics (Dr. Luiz Lima) and Introductory Economics

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green KY
Graduate Research Assistant | August 2011-May 2013 (concurrently during MA coursework)
- Lead Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Brian Goff
- Served as a university mandated tutor for Statistics, Managerial Economics, and Econometrics courses

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Education
Doctorate in Business Administration: Drexel University (June 2020)
Major in Corporate Strategy and Decision Theory
Focus: Optimization Frameworks
Dissertation: *Profit Maximization with Price Discounts and In-Kind Rewards*

PhD ABD, Master of Arts in Economics: University of Tennessee (December 2015)
Major in Applied Econometrics and Behavioral Economics
Thesis: *The Effects of Individual and Employer Characteristics on Hourly Employee Retention: An Empirical Study*

Master of Arts, Applied Economics: Western Kentucky University (May 2013)
Major in Applied Econometrics
Thesis: *Extreme Value Estimation for Predicting Home Runs Hit During the Steroid Era*

Bachelor of Science: Western Kentucky University (May 2011)
Majors in both Economics and Computer Information Technology
Thesis: *Close the Sale on that Whale! Predicting Brokerage Closed Sale Amounts*

Technical Areas of Expertise
Strategic & Quantitative Expertise
- Econometrics (predictive modeling, causal inference, time-series/panel methods)
- Price Optimization (gasoline, diesel, B2B/retail elasticity models)
- Experimental Design (A/B testing, field experimentation, test/control design)
- Game & Decision Theory (competitive behavior modeling, decision under uncertainty)
- Market & Consumer Analytics (demand drivers, loyalty dynamics, segmentation)
- Statistical Modeling (simulation, multivariate analysis, KPI forecasting)

Technical Skills & Platforms
- R (expert): forecasting, Shiny apps, visualization, simulation
- SQL (expert): multiple dialects, advanced queries, performance tuning
- Python (proficient): pandas, scikit-learn, NumPy, automation
- Databricks: collaborative development, ML pipeline integration
- Spark: PySpark & Spark SQL for large-scale processing
- Machine Learning: supervised/unsupervised models, production deployment

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Professional and Academic Highlights
- Current advisory board member of the Western Kentucky University Gordon Ford College of Business
- Awarded LeBow College of Business Scholarship to pursue Doctorate in Business Administration from Drexel University
- Haslam College of Business Junior Board of Advisors at the University of Tennessee (2019-2022)
- Fully funded (full scholarship) teaching and research assistant in the field of microeconometrics at the University of Tennessee in the department of Economics as a PhD student
- Awarded the Outstanding Student Leadership Award for the Department of Economics at WKU (2013)