

## The Asset Is the Anchor: Rethinking Smart Building Data

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Think Your Building Data is Ready for AI? Think Again.

What I discovered inside one of the largest facilities management companies in the world **shocked me**—and it all started with a simple question:

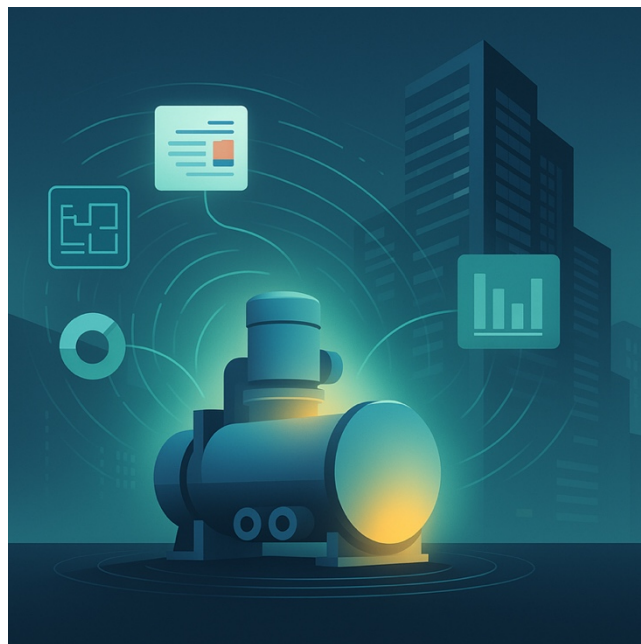
*Can we even trust the data behind our buildings?*

📌 **Here's what I learned the hard way.**

Five years ago, I joined JLL with a clear vision: optimize building operations using AI, machine learning, and digital twins.

To do that, I built a cloud-based platform designed to integrate data across disparate building systems like BMS, CMMS, energy, occupancy, and financials.

**But I quickly hit a wall**—not just with the tech, but with the sheer number of manual processes and siloed systems that had never been designed to talk to each other.



Early on, **I tested a simple idea**: could I match the various data streams tied to a single asset—just by analyzing and matching the data?

👉 As an example, I discovered that **only 5% of assets** could be reliably matched between the work order and financial systems. This wasn't theory—it was live, in-production enterprise data. And it was **the first major issue I faced**.

**Why?** Because a single chiller might have five or more disconnected data sources: Work orders, sensor data, compliance logs, rounds, financial records...

Each tells part of the story. Each may claim to be the source of truth. But really, each is just a sliver—valuable, but incomplete.

📌 **The problem**: all those disparate streams have no shared anchor.

Older building systems were **siloed by design**. They don't speak the same language, share IDs, follow a common ontology, or even agree on naming.

The name originally assigned to a commissioned asset may live in the BMS—but **nowhere else**.

Now your analytics engine is stuck trying to reconcile five different versions of the same asset—with no common reference.

And while platforms often promise to “*normalize*” the data... 🙅 **Normalization doesn’t solve the core problem.**

### 💡 **My Eureka Moment:**

The asset itself must be the starting point for **data truth**.

You have to build the data record from the asset up—not the application layer down. That means assigning new data keys to physical assets—keys that let disparate systems align around a shared anchor.

### **But here’s the catch:**

You can’t just match metadata—you have to verify the asset in the field. It might have been renamed, replaced, or removed entirely.

Without physical validation, you’re building on a **foundation of assumptions**.

### **Because here’s the hard truth:**

If you don’t get the base asset data right, you will never truly **optimize building operations with AI**—no matter how good your algorithms are.

This isn’t just a data problem—it’s a **foundational issue** that limits every other smart building promise.

✉️ If you’re facing data issues, reach out to me at [randy@ideonconsulting.com](mailto:randy@ideonconsulting.com). I’ve spent years untangling this complexity—and I can help you do the same.

