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4



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Mining data for its assets

GAUTAM Banerjee is the President of Data Science Foundation. He is also the chair of NASSCOM East Analytics Special Interest Group. In a conversation with FE, he shares his views.

How do you see India's contribution to Data Science at the global level?

Huge. Whether its predictive analytics, machine learning, IOT or artificial intelligence, India is rightly poised to take a large pie of the growing global market in data science. According to NASSCOM estimates, the Big data analytics sector in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 26% over the next five years and reach \$16 billion by 2025.

How is the Data revolution different from IT progress and maturity?

IT processes mainly drive digitisation and automation of manual processes using various tools and technology platforms. Data analytics, on the other hand, looks at unearthing the hidden insights and values in data by using statistical and mathematical algorithms. The data revolution requires data engineers, analysts and data scientists who have a research orientation and an analytic mind as it



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involves lots of 'trials and errors'. And this needs to be understood by the top management and CXOs too. Seeing data science initiatives with the same 'IT lens' is to set it up for failure at the beginning itself!

What is the role of DSF in Analytics and Data Science in India's context?

The Data Science Foundation was formed to promote awareness about this new data paradigm and to create a platform for data scientists and user community to discuss, debate and

collaborate with each other, benefitting business and social organisations. DSF is India's representative member in the International Standards Committee of Big Data Analytics WG9 under ISO. DSF is the only such platform in Asia Pacific to also work on Analytics Maturity Model and standardise best practices for Data Science.

What triggered the formation of DSF?

I have an Analytics consulting company, Business Brio. In the initial days, we had a collaboration opportunity with the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata on a couple of unique projects like wind energy forecasting, risk modeling, etc. We had developed an ensemble method of forecasting and Neural Network for wind energy forecasting which gave a very good forecast and also helped Business Brio win an award from NASSCOM for Excellence in Analytics! The thought of collaboration between corporates and academia and, creating a platform to harness this for public benefit, started taking shape in my mind then.

How is DSF able to engage with stakeholders to achieve this?

DSF has an honorary executive council drawn from companies like TCS, ANZ, Microsoft, Business Brio, KPMG,

Protiviti, etc. who discuss and guide us on the way forward. It also organises Data Science Summits to bring practitioners, researchers, start-ups, etc. onto one platform.

How do you find time for DSF out of your current engagement with Business Brio?

Business Brio is in the able hands of my co-founders, Mainak Sen and Soma Banerjee, with strong client engagements like Railtel, Tata Metaliks, CRIS, Ministry of Steel (GoI), First American, Zain Telecom, PWC, etc. My co-founders have allowed me to devote time to this passion of mine.

What are the future plans for DSF?

Many. We had launched DataThon — an online solution platform for data challenges for corporates and government. It harnesses disproportionate benefits from the world beyond organisational boundaries and also helps practitioners get more maturity. We also have the only Data Science magazine in Asia Pacific called Data Astronaut (published in print and online). We have a lot of work taking these initiatives to the next level and making a complete eco system for data scientists and the user community.

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