



Importance of Data Science in post-COVID-19 world

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As uncertainty grips the post COVID19 phase, the definition of “new normal” keeps evolving, one fact that strongly emerges out of the discussions and debate is that neither the business models nor the work place dynamics will be the same as before. The social distancing which almost all the nations, developed or otherwise, has advocated so far, is going to be an essential part of the new normal. “Work From Home” will be a part of an employer – employee contract. This is amplified by the fact that a quick google search on “work for home jobs in India”, returned 40,50,000 returns with 422 new postings regarding the same in LinkedIn. So what will drive such change? What will be the skill requirements in the new scenario?

Business models driven by Data Science has been growing steadily over the last few years. Post COVID-19 era will only accelerate it further. While data driven decision making and unstructured data was increasingly being used across all business verticals, companies were reasonably behind the curve when it came to employing them in the manufacturing process. We must race for a major disruption in the manufacturing process owing to increased automation and using robotics. Scenes from Sci-fi movies will become reality very soon where a handful of experts will be running and developing complex computer simulations while the shop floors will be ‘manned’ by robots. Decisions like these will not only be driven by market efficiency, but also concerns about maintaining ‘social distancing’. COVID-19 will eventually subside but the next one may not be too far way. Businesses and Governments will endogenise such eventualities in their decision making. This leads us to two important questions-one, what are the new skill sets that are required and two, how does one acquire them? Integration of AI ML knowledge with Business would require professionals who can blend domain expertise with technical skills. The concept of manager will undergo change. Our approach to adopting AI ML in workplace so far has been, a balance between demand and supply lead. Organizations mostly applied available tools and techniques in Data Science to solve problems and at times extracted or generated newer data depending upon the business forecast. The future would tilt more towards demand lead problems. For example, as a response to the current uncertainty, more emphasis will be on immediate short run projections and challenges. This would mean extremely precise predictions. Such predictive modelling exercises will

dominate business as well as policy making. Questions like, how do we plan against all contingencies for each month will not be relegated as academic. To answer these, professionals need to frame the right problem and adopt the right AI ML tools.

The training will undergo major transformation too. While the AI ML related training will remain skill based, there will be now a lot of emphasis on problem structuring. For example, one will have to integrate components of AI ML both within the courses as well as in the program. The need will be to move away from defining a customer in generic terms to a more nuanced definition of customers. The new customer will be one who will now be assumed to be more digital savvy. This would mean strategizing based on her digital footprint. The importance of social media Analytics will occupy the centre stage. Curriculums that can integrate traditional models with data and analysis that is in the domain of social media will leap frog. Even the delivery of such curriculum will show a significant shift towards online delivery. We are at an early stage, however, innovative models to engage on line learning has already began. Perhaps this is an area that will work in Indias' favour too.

The success stories in online education portal is usually measured in terms of program completion rate. The Indian education system which crucially depends upon “tutors” is handy as it allows constant engagement with the participants who otherwise often struggle to complete online courses. Amidst all these, there is an increasing concern that we will see more and more individualistic approach. Social distancing would reduce the need for human to human connect even further. While it may be too early to fathom what will be its possible fall out, organizations will face even greater challenge to create synergies. It is absolutely important that professionals now are both skilled technically as well as embrace empathy. A new order awaits us.



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