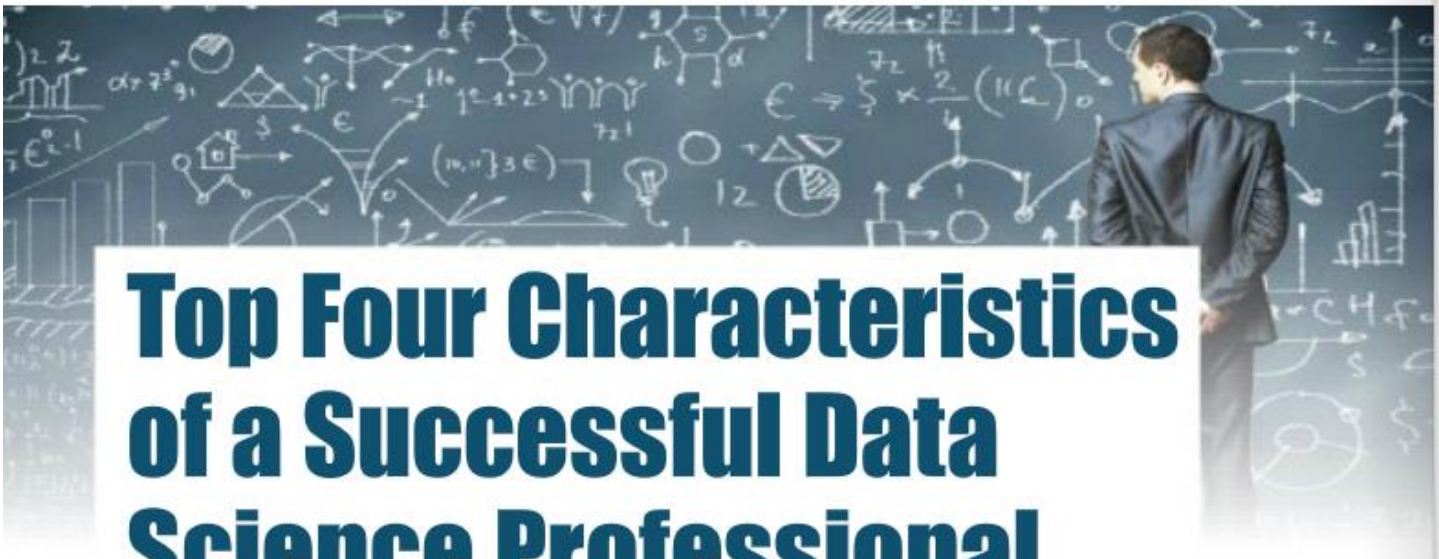


Top Four Characteristics of a Successful Data Science Professional

By Navin Dhananjaya, Chief Solutions Officer, Ugam

He comes with extensive knowledge of designing and developing analytical products and solutions for the retail and CPG industry. His previous positions included VP of Retail at Mu Sigma, Head of Retail/CPG products and platforms at Infosys, and co-founder of Manthan.

Navin Dhananjaya

Today, the data science-obsessed Sheldon Cooper is 'cooler' than the macho stud every girl would be fixated on. Thanks to theinformation explosion, data science is one of the most sought-after careers in the 21st century. With more and more companies using Big Data, the demand for great data scientists or decision science professionals has far outstripped the supply available. In fact, McKinsey reported that, by 2018, the United States alone will face a shortage of 140,000 to 190,000 people with deep analytical capabilities.

Companies today are confronted with the intriguing challenge of making sense of humongous amounts of data to help drive productivity, increase margins and gain deeper understanding into the minds and preferences of the consumer. This new consumer is empowered with technology and has high expectations from businesses and brands when it comes to service, value, quality and convenience. Consumers are also leaving behind trails of digital footprints from their web interactions and through social media. Businesses that can leverage this 'Big Data' to make decisions will be a step ahead of competition by uncovering key insights about consumers.

Data science professionals who can collect and manage this plethora of data, analyse and interpret it to find patterns and ultimately draw meaningful insights will be much in

demand. But the field of analytics is enormous in itself, as there is a spectrum of services that work together in gleaning actionable insights. These services include business intelligence, data mining, data visualization, quantitative analytics techniques, and much more.

So What Would it Take to Become a Successful Data Science Professional?

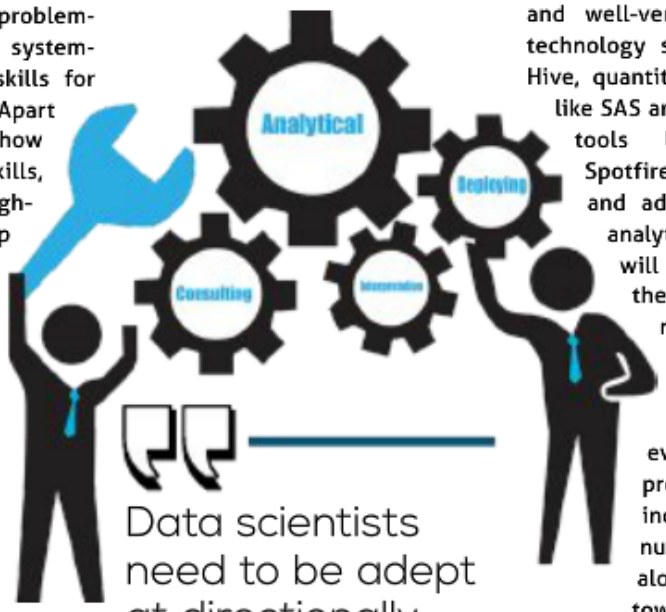
Data science requires a multi-disciplinary approach. A natural aptitude for data-crunching, statistics and mathematics, coupled with analytical reasoning, problem-solving abilities, and system-thinking are important skills for every data scientist. Apart from the technical know-how good communication skills, a curious mind and a high-learning quotient will help such professionals grow and scale within any organization.

The Four Characteristics Are:

1.Consulting:
While sophisticated algorithms and cloud computing have helped to automatically mine Big Data, there are many that still require human intervention. Consulting abilities help data scientists ask the right questions from a domain perspective to get to the problem, outline analysis frames, make sense of the results and guide decisions.

2. Analytical:
With access to advanced technology, data scientists need to develop skills that enable them to organise and analyse data and communicate it in a manner that can drive impactful data-driven decisions. People need to be inquisitive and able to simplify a problem and break it into smaller analysis segments and provide recommendations accordingly.

3. Interpretation:
It is extremely crucial to look at the data within the context while interpreting the bigger picture. Data scientists need to be adept at directionally interpreting present and historical business data to provide valuable insights that are actionable to the business. Knowledge and applications of common tools such as Excel and PowerPoint will be very helpful.



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4. Deploying:
As companies adopt data sciences for better decision-making, the ability to deploy technology faster and scale analytics for better business consumption becomes important. As every case of technology deployment is unique, young aspirants need to be aware and well-versed with Big Data technology such as Hadoop and Hive, quantitative analytics tools like SAS and R and visualisation tools like Tableau and Spotfire. The ability to learn and adopt these new data analytics technologies will eventually show their competence and maturity.

The above characteristics are a necessity for every data science professional. Each includes mastering a number of skill sets along the journey towards becoming 'a true professional'. As graduates and engineers enter the world of powering decisions via analytics, every organisation needs to invest in nurturing them to help excel in this promising profession. A collective effort from within the industry, HR professionals and universities will ensure that in the future the supply for Data Scientists will be nearer to the fast-rising demand.