

Why all companies need a data experience designer

Sharing the results of a global research project, the authors call for a design mind-set that, rather than analyzing past behavior, empowers users and meets future needs through data-enabled products and services.

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For all the talk about how big data is transforming business and society, the focus of the conversation seems to be on the pieces of data themselves. Analytics – descriptive, predictive and prescriptive – are largely seen as the main source of value, with the data scientist positioned at the core of this transformation, endowed with the powers and responsibility to unlock big data’s big secrets.

True, some companies are successfully using analytics to streamline and redesign their internal processes, improve their targeting and customize their offerings. But an essential piece in the data economy puzzle is being overlooked: the person.

Consider social media, wearables or the connected home: all these hinge on data generated by or associated with individuals. And it’s not just about capturing what people already do but enabling them to do it better. From recording sleep habits to real-time guidance on the best route home, data can augment existing experiences and open the possibility of previously unthinkable new ones occurring.

Data-enriched experiences create value for individuals – value that businesses can seek to capture. Companies that go beyond pure analytics and redesign customer experiences with data in mind will be the winners. But what will it take for a company to create such products

and services?

We believe firms need to develop a new mind-set, one that is distinct yet complementary to that of the data scientist. This mind-set will focus on the person rather than data and rely on principles of design rather than analysis. We envisage a new organizational figure – the data experience designer – who will master the mind-set and work hand-in-hand with the data scientist to lead the company forward.

This article summarizes the findings of a global research project that involved in-depth interviews with experts in cities around the world, including Berlin, Boston, London, New York, San Francisco, Sao Paulo and Tokyo, as well as analyses of emerging Personal Data Economy (PDE) initiatives. The goal is to define the core elements of the new design mindset that companies must adopt as they create new data-rich products and services aimed at reaching a new breed of data “prosumer.”

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