The Ethics of Big Data

Panelist
• tbd

Moderator
• Dale Fodness
  • Assoc Prof Marketing
  • University of Dallas

Panelist
• Mark Hargreaves
  • Director Compliance
  • AT&T

SESSION OUTCOMES

What is Big Data?

Why are the ethics of Big Data important?

How do we behave ethically as regards Big Data?

SESSION AGENDA

Introduction: Topic & Panelists

Panelist 1
• Mark Hargreaves
  • Director Compliance
  • AT&T

Panelist 2
• tbd

Q & A
WHAT IS BIG DATA?

• Volume
  • Very big numbers; 90% of the data in the world has been created in the last two years; 2.5 quintillion bytes of data per day

• Velocity
  • The speed with which vast amounts of data can be ingested, integrated and analyzed for use "in real time"; increasing exponentially

• Variety
  • Wide range of sources generating data in a number of formats; "Internet of Things"

WHY ARE ETHICS OF BIG DATA IMPORTANT?

• While the commercial benefits of big data are compelling, significant risks exist from information being used in ways that weren’t intended.

• Our ability to reveal patterns and new knowledge from ever-increasing streams of data is moving faster than our current legal and ethical guidelines can manage.

• The onus is on business leaders to ensure their big data programs are implemented with the ethical implications of big data in mind.

HOW DO WE BEHAVE ETHICALLY RE: BIG DATA?

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Mark Hargreaves
Director-Compliance
AT&T

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Big Data Ethics
Mark Hargreaves
Director, Compliance
AT&T

COMPLIANCE VS. ETHICS
• When does compliance end and ethics begin - or are they one and the same?
• Compliance and Ethics obviously go together
  • just check the sign at the door
• But the subject of the hour is Big Data Ethics, not Big Data Compliance
• So where to begin?

ETHICS BEGIN WITH COMPLIANCE
• Many of us here today are from lines of work that are highly regulated:
  • Health Care
  • Education
  • Financial Services
  • Telecommunications
• Regulations and compliance around Big Data can be:
  • Prescriptive - you have to do it a certain way
  • Prohibited - you can't do it a certain way
  • Either way – the rules define how you do Big Data
• Regulations are enforced by regulators and the courts - so having programs designed to reasonably ensure compliance are a priority
SO WHERE DO ETHICS COME IN?

- Ethics are not unique to Big Data - organizations have long sought to foster a culture of ethics and responsibility.
- So then what is Big Data exactly?
- Big Data is many things to many people using many different tools, but at the core, Big Data is ultimately the result of a team of people across multiple disciplines working together to unlock the value in data.
- Value can include analyzing large scale business processes and finding efficiencies that improve performance and customer satisfaction.
- Value can also be found using Big Data to help people stay connected and organized - think of a mobile device as a remote control for your life for example.
- The teams entrusted with access to the data that can fulfill these goals should not only be directed by regulations - they need to be guided by ethics.

ETHICS IN PRACTICE

- Formalize your expectations and have covered employees acknowledge them.
- AT&T’s Data Science Principles and Practices
  - Make Informed Decisions: this goes back to compliance (know the rules or consult those who do)
  - Practice Security: Always follow corporate security. Avoid shortcuts
  - Practice Integrity: do not misrepresent results
  - Avoid Intrusive or Offensive Insights (children, sexual orientation, religion, racial or social stereotyping)....and don’t discriminate
  - Think Transparently: if your work would not play well on CNN or the New York Times – think twice before proceeding

BIG DATA ETHICS ENVIRONMENT

- The concept of Big Data ethics in general rocketed to the top of the charts with disclosure of Facebook’s “experiment”
  - They modified the emotional content of what appeared in people’s news feeds and studied the after-effect of that change on users.
- If you want a deeper read into the practice of “user experiments” refer to media on the free online dating site OKCupid. (type “OKCupid + Experiments” into the browser of your choice for more information)
  - They mismatched their matches - just to see what happened
  - In fact, they experiment on users all the time and are quite proud of it.
- In these two cases - the companies are product of the internet age offering a free service in exchange for broad access to user data with minimal compliance regulation.
  - They do face the FTC and Section V Unfair and Deceptive Trade Practices enforcement if they don’t follow their privacy policies.
  - But as long as they disclose their practices - they have broad latitude in what they choose to do.
- For them - ethics is truly a case of what you will do when nobody is looking. There is nobody to tell them no - they have to draw the line on their own.
WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR IN BIG DATA

• If you are working on Big Data – let’s talk, there are not many of us around
• If your organization is working in Big Data – you need to understand it well or rely on someone who does to design your compliance program
  • Traditional approaches to compliance & ethics may not translate
• If your organization has data of interest to Big Data practitioners – remember:
  • Your data is your reputation
  • You can’t outsource liability

Q&A

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