

# CEO involvement key for positive big data ROI

Many business owners and CEOs have introduced big data into their operations, yet few can leverage it for a competitive advantage.



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According to the PwC 22nd annual survey launched at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, CEOs are still failing to take advantage of the data analytics and AI investments in their organisations.

Yudhvir Seetharam, head of analytics at FNB Business says, big data has introduced a fundamental shift in the traditional role of the business owner or CEO. If a much more direct and hands-on approach is not adopted, millions will continue to be wasted on Big Data efforts that never materialise.

Seetharam points out mistakes that prevent CEOs from leveraging big data:

- **Integration with business strategy** – Big data often fails to be integrated into key processes and operations of the business without the intervention of the CEO and senior leadership. Active involvement of the CEO results in a more positive and sustainable approach.

- **CIO function** – the importance and role of big data has evolved to become more than just an IT function. CIOs and their IT teams now have to work closely with organisational leaders and the CEO to strategically gather data, analyse and produce meaningful insights from it.

Any IT professional can gather and process data, but can it be turned into a competitive edge and influence key decision making?

- **Investing in the right skills** – CEOs are currently battling with a shortage of data scientists globally, coupled with the challenge of having the appropriate skills to understand the industry or sector in which the business operates.

Furthermore, in instances where the business is able to attract the right skills, delegation of the organisations' big data efforts is left to the data scientist.

Seetharam says, the data scientist needs to collaborate with the CEO, other leaders and data experts within the organisation and work towards one common goal.

- **Long-term vision** – Big data efforts can only be successful if they are aligned with the organisation's long-term vision. CEOs and business leaders can influence the amendment or alignment of the business model to ensure the effective integration of Big Data.
- **Big data is an afterthought or burden** – when the organisation's leaders or the CEO is not actively involved, Big Data faces the risk of being an afterthought or being implemented to tick a box - in order to satisfy shareholders or investors.
- **Creating a data driven culture** – by taking charge, leading by example and holding the organisation's leaders accountable for the implementation and return on investment, the CEO can successfully build a big data driven culture.

"CEOs have a responsibility to upskill themselves to deeply grasp the concept of Big Data and Analytics. Moreover, when the CEO is fully entrenched he/she is able to review the investment regularly, strategically align resources and ensure a seamless decision-making process," concludes Seetharam.

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