Effective use of Big Data & analytics key to faster biz growth

A report by rating agency CRISIL and IT industry body Nasscom says global Big Data market will touch $25 billion by 2015, and in India it is expected to touch the $1-billion mark next year

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LAST week, Wipro, India's third largest IT services provider, announced a tie-up with Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) to train its new recruits in data analytics. Completion of the programme would throw open coveted on-site opportunities with Wipro's clients in the US, which faces a shortage of about 1.5 lakh analytics professionals and other international locations. The fact that an IT major like Wipro has resorted to designing such a course not only underpins the lack of right talent to man Big Data and analytics roles, but also its growing importance in the global tech landscape.

Big data is huge volumes of fast moving, structured and unstructured data in petabytes (1,024 terabytes) or exabytes (1,024 petabytes), which is almost impossible to process and make sense of using traditional databases. Such data, sourced from multiple channels like internet, social media or mobile data, if rightly assimilated and interpreted, opens up a plethora of opportunities for the businesses, be it understanding consumption pattern or industry trends and trump competition.

"The genesis of Big Data is happening with the explosion of devices and the voluminous increase of human to machine interactions whether it is happening on social platform or sensors sending inputs. While data explosion is a challenge, making sense of this data and gleaming insights to gain competitive edge is a great opportunity for enterprise. As a result there is an increasing demand for tools that are intuitive and simple that empowers them with the ability to derive insights from the data," said Srikanth Karnakota, director—Server and Cloud Business, Microsoft India.

According to a recent Accenture report, companies which have adopted Big Data are overwhelmingly satisfied with the outcome. About 92% of the companies surveyed said they were satisfied with the business outcomes of using Big Data while 94% of the businesses said their Big Data implementation met their needs. But, Big Data and analytics was rated extremely important by 67% of the companies valued at over $10 billion, whereas the corresponding figure for companies valued between $250-500 million is 43%.

A report by rating agency CRISIL and IT industry body Nasscom said global Big Data market will touch $25 billion by 2015 from $5.3 billion in 2011, while in India it is expected to to touch $1 billion. India is fast catching up. According to the Accenture report, 65% of the companies surveyed use Big Data to analyse customer behaviour, 59% to improve customer personalisation, 51% to make data a revenue generator, 37% to enhance customer relationships and only 14% to identify cost reduction opportunities.

The vast opportunities that the segment has in store come with a fair share of thorns as well. A lot of enterprises have security concerns while some are even clueless about where to use big data. "It's a hammer looking for a nail. A lot of enterprises are scratching their heads over what is the problem they are going to solve with Big Data. If you want to differentiate from your competition, Big Data can play an enormous role. The insights you get through Big Data can help you get insights and get a notion of where competition is not that active," said Mallinath Sengupta, senior vice-president & head, Specialised Market Unit, Mphasis.

However, finding the right people to handle Big Data and analytics have been a major cause of concern for the enterprises. The Accenture report says none of the companies surveyed implemented Big Data using only internal resources while 69% of the businesses sought help from consultants. Over 60% of the companies said they will hire Big Data expertise by next year while 8% of the companies said they do not see the need for such recruitment immediately.

Other organisations have resorted to internal technical training, vendor-based workshops and independent research among others to address issues related to implementation of Big Data.

"Big Data is an emerging technology that helps decipher insights from the terabytes, petabytes, and exabytes of data being generated and enterprises leverage these insights to make businesses more agile, make better business decisions, and give them that next competitive advantage. However, the importance of Big Data may vary across verticals, owing to the factors like the volume of data generated, number of applications they're running and most importantly what the customer wants to drive out of the data," said Tarun Kaura, director—Technology Sales, India, Symantec.

Effective utilisation of Big Data and analytics have done wonders for most businesses in boosting customer relationship, redefining product development, organise operations and optimise supply chain. "We are building the fastest and the most reliable recommendation platform for real estate. Broadly, we have defined five data points for all houses and these data points are valuable in recommending best suitable options to house seekers. Every preference of a lister or seeker is taken into account while recommending options which helps users to take informed decisions," said Pankhuri Srivastava, co-founder of online home renting platform Grabhouse.com.

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