



Data Analysis for the Rest of Us

It is no secret that information is increasing exponentially. A recent IDC Digital World study predicts that the amount of data available to us will grow by 50 times in the next 10 years alone. But the sheer volume of data alone isn't the only thing you have to worry about. Equally challenging is the question of what to do with the data once we have it. This challenge has given birth to one of the fastest-growing employment fields: data science. While the in-depth expertise of true data scientists is clearly in high demand, there is another, even larger audience that needs data skills: the rest of us!

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–Jim Polzin

Employers demand data skills

Go to any online job-posting site, and you'll see how in-demand “data analysis” skills are, no matter the position or industry. Technological advancements have driven changes in how we do our work, and big data has created a world that requires everyone to have a working knowledge of good data practices. Put simply, data analysis has become too important to leave to just data scientists.

Every day, Normandale hears from employers who are struggling to find individuals with the skills needed to utilize data across their organizations. Equally pressing is their need for individuals who can assess and translate data into actionable and strategic information.

Enhance your foundational skills

Converting data into meaningful information often starts with building technical skills. Becoming proficient with applications like Excel, Access and Structured Query Language (SQL) is a great starting point. An excellent next step is Normandale's Data Analysis Certificate. Jeff Hudson, Continuing Education Director, shares that “this certificate is designed for those who want to boost their abilities to work with statistics, see trends and identify those key insights that are often hiding in the data.”

Digging deeper into creating data-focused employment opportunities, the college's STEM division is now working on a major grant-funded project that will lead to a suite of specific certificates and a broad-based associate's degree in Data Analytics. Jim Polzin, Computer Science professor and Normandale project lead, says "This is an exciting project. These skills are applicable in almost any field imaginable, giving students options and opportunities. Employers are looking for these people today and in the foreseeable future."

Stand out with cross-over skills

Those who can use data to untangle complexities or help others to understand implications and opportunities are today's go-to people. Additionally, as technology and data continue to morph, new fields and credentials are emerging, such as user experience (UX), customer experience (CX) and Health IT. Adding these kinds of data-oriented, hybrid skills to your own expertise will provide you with new ways to "see opportunities" and "speak the language" of other disciplines – an invaluable skill.

Tatyana Leyderman is a great example of someone who has benefited from layering expertise with new skills and knowledge. Coming from Quality and Analytics with no medical background, she is now a Health Care Quality Analyst at Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC). Tatyana explains how Normandale's Health IT program (MNHIT) "filled in the critical learning gaps so that I could make the transition to Healthcare Informatics." She specifically credits the program's focus on data analysis for helping to prepare her for her position today. She adds, "in my work, we use data to identify specific opportunities or key insights that allow us to make actionable improvements. It is very rewarding because you can see how your work is tied to improving care."

Whether you are just entering the workplace or looking to supplement years of experience, you—and your career—will be well served by developing skills in the area of data analysis. Normandale offers a number of affordable options. Give us a call at 952-358-8343. We look forward to helping you multiply your success.

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—Tatyana Leyderman

Pictured left:
Tatyana Leyderman
Pictured right:
Jim Polzin
Photography below
by Katie Heymer

