Microprediction
Building an Open AI Network

Peter Cotton

How a web-scale network of autonomous micromanagers can challenge the AI revolution and combat the high cost of quantitative business optimization.

The artificial intelligence (AI) revolution is leaving behind small businesses and organizations that cannot afford in-house teams of data scientists. In *Microprediction*, Peter Cotton examines the repeated quantitative tasks that drive business optimization from the perspectives of economics, statistics, decision making under uncertainty, and privacy concerns. He asks what things currently described as AI are not "microprediction," whether microprediction is an individual or collective activity, and how we can produce and distribute high-quality microprediction at low cost. The world is missing a public utility, he concludes, while companies are missing an important strategic approach that would enable them to benefit—and also give back.

In an engaging, colloquial style, Cotton argues that market-inspired "superminds" are likely to be very effective compared with other orchestration mechanisms in the domain of microprediction. He presents an ambitious yet practical alternative to the expensive "artisan" data science that currently drains money from firms. Challenging the machine learning revolution and exposing a contradiction at its heart, he offers engineers a new liberty: no longer reliant on quantitative experts, they are free to create intelligent applications using general-purpose application programming interfaces (APIs) and libraries. He describes work underway to encourage this approach, one that he says might someday prove to be as valuable to businesses—and society at large—as the internet.

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