What is Data Science?

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In order to help the Executive Committee understand the purpose of Data Science, I would start with appealing to their intuition with regard to making recommendations or decisions, i.e., as one of collecting information, looking for patterns or trends, and coming to a conclusion. This a process that everyone is familiar with from experience. I would then elaborate each of these aspects of the process via an example that many people are familiar with, that of buying a car. Even those who have never bought a car should be able to relate this example to their own experience of making an important purchase.

Having discussed this example in some detail, I would note the inherent limitations of the process associated with scale, i.e., the limited amount of data that can be collected and analyzed without the assistance of technology. This limitation necessarily influences the quality of the decision or prediction that can be made from it. This clarifies the role of the data scientist as one who engages in a process that they are familiar with, but using technological tools that help to overcome those limitations. Finally, I elaborate how the process might be broken down further into variety of roles involved with the analysis of data to answer different kinds of questions.