

SEMINAR REPORT

THE DRAB DATA STORY

From Data to a Better Tomorrow

Speaker: Abhishek Kar, mjunction services limited

The Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business

Management, Kolkata

25 September 2026

SPEAKER PROFILE

Abhishek Kar

Data Protection Officer & Deputy Head – Quality Management Group, Technology, mjunction services limited

Alumnus, MBA, IISWBM



Introduction

The seminar, titled "The Drab Data Story", was conducted by Mr. Abhishek Kar of mjunction services limited on 25 September 2026. The session focused on the importance of understanding, interpreting, and communicating data effectively in the modern business environment.

The seminar highlighted that data by itself does not necessarily provide meaningful insights. To convert raw data into actionable information, it is essential to understand the context behind the data, identify patterns and root causes, and connect analytical findings with business objectives.

Data Visualisation

The session began by demonstrating how the same set of numbers can appear confusing when presented without an appropriate visual structure. A sales dataset covering four quarters and three products was used to illustrate this point.

The speaker emphasized that a good data visualisation should include several basic elements:

- Appropriate title
- Clear legend
- Correct unit of measurement
- Properly labelled axes
- Identification of trends
- Recognition of peaks and troughs
- Identification of outliers and exceptions
- Meaningful comparisons

These elements help transform raw numerical information into something that can be understood and analysed effectively.

Importance of Context

One of the major themes of the seminar was the importance of context. Data without context can easily be misunderstood because numbers alone do not explain why or how the data was collected. Context helps analysts:

- Prevent misinterpretation of data.
- Make accurate comparisons.
- Understand whether an increase or decrease is actually meaningful.
- Improve the accuracy of AI and analytics.
- Support better decision-making.
- Identify hidden relationships and patterns.

The seminar used the example of Dr. John Snow’s cholera mapping. By geographically mapping cholera cases in London in 1854, John Snow identified the Broad Street water pump as a likely source of the outbreak. This demonstrated how adding geographical context can transform data into meaningful insight.

Another example was Abraham Wald's analysis of WWII aircraft. Instead of reinforcing the areas where returning aircraft had bullet holes, Wald suggested protecting the areas without holes. His reasoning was that aircraft hit in those areas were less likely to return. This illustrated how understanding missing information can be as important as analysing the information that is available.

01

JOHN SNOW

Context helped reveal the source of an outbreak

02

ABRAHAM WALD

Survivorship bias showed where protection was actually needed

03

MEANING BEFORE MEASUREMENT

Data must be understood before it is acted upon

KEY IDEA

Context turns raw data into insight.

Root Cause Analysis and Analytics

The seminar connected business questions to different forms of analytics: descriptive analytics explains what happened; diagnostic analytics examines why it happened; predictive analytics considers what may happen next; and prescriptive analytics suggests what should be done. Real-life examples included Singapore MRT failures and Richard Feynman's investigation of the Challenger disaster.

DESCRIPTIVE

What happened?

DIAGNOSTIC

Why did it happen?

PREDICTIVE

What may happen next?

PRESCRIPTIVE

What should be done?

Examples discussed: Singapore MRT failures; Richard Feynman’s investigation of the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster.

Data Analytics in Business

Examples from Walmart, UPS, Netflix and General Electric showed how data can support inventory planning, route optimisation, content decisions and predictive maintenance. The seminar also discussed how organisations such as Amazon, Starbucks, Uber, Microsoft, McDonald’s, Airbnb, American Express, and Zara use data to support different business processes.

BUSINESS QUESTION	→	DATA	→	INSIGHT	→	DECISION
01 Walmart inventory planning		02 UPS route optimisation		03 Netflix content decisions		
04 General Electric predictive maintenance		05 Amazon business process improvement		06 Starbucks customer and store insights		
07 Uber operational decisions		08 Microsoft data-informed products and services		09 McDonald’s customer and operational analysis		
10 Airbnb marketplace and business insights		11 American Express risk and customer analytics		12 Zara demand and inventory decisions		



Role of a Business/Data Analyst

The seminar highlighted that modern organisations require professionals who understand both business and data. The role of a business/data analyst extends beyond simply working with numbers or software.

The responsibilities discussed included:

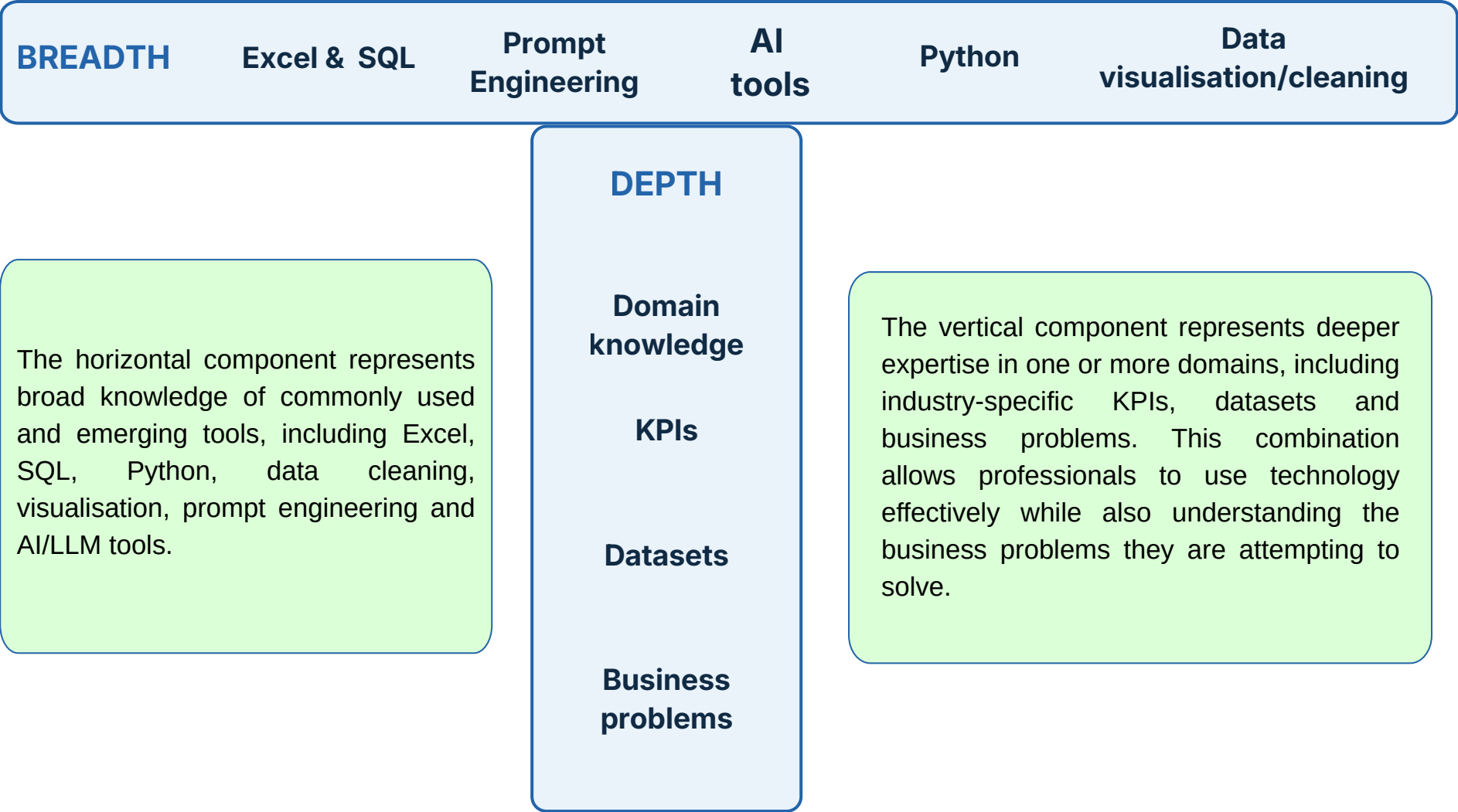
- Identifying business and data-quality issues.
- Addressing discrepancies in datasets.
- Establishing business-process and data-quality controls.
- Monitoring relevant metrics.
- Working with business units to define KPIs.
- Analysing business processes to identify improvement opportunities.

The overall analytical process was described through four interconnected aspects:
Approach → Deployment → Learning → Integration

Together, these elements help organisations implement analytics effectively and continuously improve their processes.

T-Shaped Skillset

The speaker introduced the concept of a T-shaped skillset for professionals working in analytics.



KEY IDEA Technical ability creates potential; domain knowledge creates relevance.

Key Takeaways

- 01** Data needs context to become meaningful.
- 02** Good visualisation makes information easier to understand.
- 03** Root cause analysis helps explain why events occur.
- 04** Business knowledge and technical skills must work together.
- 05** A T-shaped skillset helps professionals generate actionable insights.

Conclusion

The seminar 'The Drab Data Story' demonstrated that data analytics is not simply about numbers, software, or programming. Its real value lies in understanding context, identifying meaningful patterns, investigating root causes, and converting insights into practical business decisions.

Through examples from organisations such as Walmart, UPS, Netflix, Amazon, Starbucks, Uber and Zara, the seminar showed how data-driven thinking is applied across different industries. It also emphasised the growing importance of professionals who can bridge the gap between business requirements and technical data capabilities.

For management students, the seminar was particularly relevant because it demonstrated that analytical skills should go hand in hand with business understanding, critical thinking, problem-solving ability, and domain knowledge. The session ultimately reinforced the idea that good data does not automatically create good decisions; meaningful decisions come from understanding what the data is saying and why it matters.

