White Paper

Your Data Can Save the World

Why You Should Care About Data for Good

June 2025

Let’s Get Straight to the Point.
Our World Is in Trouble.

No matter the organization you work for, or the domain in which you offer your expertise as a data professional, you should know that the data you work with can do more than just boost profits or increase operational efficiency.

Data has the potential to drive positive change in many areas, from fighting pollution and poverty to supporting migration policies and pandemic response.

Working with data for the common good is an emerging field, still in its early stages, with some excellent examples, but many opportunities are still being overlooked by companies. This represents a significant missed chance, as the legitimate pursuit of profit is by no means incompatible with the positive societal impact that data can enable.

FIT Academy’s second White Paper is dedicated to the theme of Data for Good, a world waiting to be discovered and embraced by all. If we recognize data as a core asset for organizational growth, then we must also recognize its role as a powerful force for improving our communities, our societies, and the world we live in.

There are already many ways in which data has made a meaningful difference across sectors.

We highlight four real-world cases here, one for each relevant field.

Social Media for Epidemic Outbreaks

During the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, researchers analyzed Twitter data to monitor public sentiment and information dissemination. This real-time analysis provided insights into public awareness and misinformation, aiding in the development of targeted health communication strategies.

Earthquake Emergency Response

In the aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, Facebook's Disaster Maps initiative provided anonymized location data to humanitarian organizations. This data helped estimate population movements and identify areas in need of aid, enhancing the efficiency of emergency response efforts.

Water Preservation

OpenET, a collaborative project involving NASA and other partners, uses satellite data to estimate evapotranspiration rates across agricultural lands in the western United States. This information assists farmers and water managers in making informed irrigation decisions, promoting sustainable water use.

Banking Data for Crime Prevention

In 2024, seven major UK banks, including Barclays, NatWest, and Lloyds, partnered with the National Crime Agency to share data against money laundering. The initiative uncovered eight criminal networks and supported ten investigations, showing how responsible data sharing can boost public safety.

The concept of Data Altruism

The European Union's Data Governance Act (DGA), effective since September 24, 2023, introduces the concept of "data altruism" to promote the voluntary sharing of data for the common good. Defined in Article 2(16) of the DGA, data altruism refers to the voluntary sharing of data, both personal and non-personal, by individuals or organizations without seeking or receiving a reward beyond cost compensation. This data is intended for objectives of general interest, such as healthcare, combating climate change, improving mobility, facilitating the development and dissemination of official statistics, enhancing public services, policymaking, or scientific research .

To facilitate data altruism, the DGA establishes a framework for the registration of recognized data altruism organizations. These organizations must operate on a not-for-profit basis, be legally independent from any for-profit entities, and adhere to transparency requirements. They are responsible for collecting and managing data made available for altruistic purposes, ensuring compliance with relevant data protection laws, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) .

The DGA also introduces a standardized European data altruism consent form to streamline the process of obtaining consent from data subjects. This form is designed to be easily understandable and accessible, allowing individuals to consent to the use of their data for specified general interest purposes. The consent can be withdrawn at any time, ensuring that individuals maintain control over their personal data .

By formalizing data altruism, the DGA aims to increase the availability of data for research and innovation, fostering a data-driven economy while safeguarding individual rights and promoting trust in data sharing practices. This initiative is a key component of the EU's broader strategy to create a unified data market that balances the benefits of data utilization with the protection of fundamental rights.

In summary, data altruism under the DGA represents a significant step towards harnessing the potential of data for societal benefit, enabling individuals and organizations to contribute to the common good through the responsible and voluntary sharing of data.

Link to the Data Governance Act

Case study
Orange’s Data for Development Challenge

In 2012, the French telecommunications company Orange initiated the Data for Development (D4D) Challenge, a pioneering example of corporate data altruism. By providing anonymized mobile phone data from approximately five million users in Côte d'Ivoire, Orange aimed to foster innovative solutions to pressing social and economic issues in the region.

The D4D Challenge released datasets derived from Call Detail Records (CDRs), encompassing information such as antenna-to-antenna traffic on an hourly basis, individual trajectories for subsets of users over specified periods, and samples of communication graphs. These datasets were made accessible to researchers and developers worldwide, encouraging a collaborative approach to data-driven problem-solving.

The initiative yielded significant insights across various domains. In public health, researchers analyzed mobility patterns to model the spread of diseases like malaria, enabling more effective allocation of medical resources. Urban planners utilized the data to understand commuting behaviors, leading to proposals for improved transportation infrastructure. Additionally, the data facilitated studies on economic activity, social network structures, and population distribution, informing policy decisions and development strategies.

Orange's D4D Challenge exemplifies how private sector data can be leveraged for the public good. By sharing valuable datasets while ensuring user privacy through anonymization, the company demonstrated a commitment to social responsibility and innovation. The success of the D4D Challenge has inspired similar data-sharing initiatives, highlighting the potential of collaborative efforts between corporations, researchers, and policymakers to address complex societal challenges.

Beyond Data Altruism
Other Forms of Data for Good

Doing good with data is possible not only through data altruism, but also through several other impactful approaches. Below is a list of best practices that every organization should consider.

1. Open Data

Governments, institutions, and private entities release datasets to the public, enabling transparency, innovation, and civic engagement. Open data initiatives have led to the development of applications and services in areas like transportation, energy, and environmental protection.

2. Hackathons for Good

Collaborative events where technologists, data scientists, and domain experts come together to develop solutions for social issues using data. Organizations like Hackathon for Good provide platforms for such initiatives, fostering innovation in areas like health, education, and sustainability.

3. Data Collaboratives

Cross-sector partnerships where public, private, and civil society organizations share data to address common societal challenges. These initiatives rely on trust, governance frameworks, and shared objectives to ensure responsible data use and maximize collective impact.

4. Data for Social Good initiatives

Corporate support for social good movements that leverage data to tackle societal challenges. In these initiatives, companies provide financial resources, infrastructure, or strategic backing to empower nonprofits, research institutions, or civic tech groups in designing and implementing data-driven solutions for public benefit.

5. Data Philanthropy

An expanded form of corporate giving where organizations donate not only anonymized datasets but also time, talent, and expertise to social impact initiatives. This can include lending data scientists, engineers, or analysts to nonprofit or research projects for defined periods, helping accelerate innovation and build capacity where it's most needed.

The Key Role of Impact Evaluation

If you're considering pursuing one of the approaches described on the previous page, it may be worth taking an additional step: integrating an impact assessment into your organization's initiative.

Measuring the effects of social impact projects is now a well-established practice, with a few clear and essential goals: understanding whether your actions are making a difference, determining the scale of that change, and how long it lasts.

These are far from trivial questions. Assessing impact is a complex challenge—but regardless of whether the outcomes are positive or negative, the insights gained are invaluable. They help determine whether a particular type of project, method, or approach is worth continuing or should be revised or replaced.

While impact evaluation is standard in the nonprofit world, it should also be seriously considered in any project where data is used as a driver for positive change.
There are many ways to evaluate a project's impact, but the most common methods include the following:

I**mplementation Analysis**: examines how a project was executed compared to the original plan. It assesses adherence to timelines, resource use, processes, and established standards. Often the first step in understanding why an intervention did or didn't generate impact.

Counterfactual Impact Evaluation: uses treatment and control groups to estimate the net effect of an intervention by isolating the change attributable solely to the project. Methods include experimental (RCTs) and quasi-experimental designs (matching, difference-in-differences, regression discontinuity).

Theory-Based Evaluation: evaluates a project based on its Theory of Change: it analyzes the logical sequence linking activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts, and verifies whether change occurred as expected along that causal chain.

Qualitative Evaluation: uses interviews, focus groups, observation, and document analysis to capture social dynamics, perceptions, and lived experiences. It helps explain the "why" and "how" behind outcomes, especially where quantitative data is limited.

Quantitative Evaluation: Measures impact through numerical data and statistical indicators. Methods may include pre-post surveys, regressions, and longitudinal analyses. It is useful for estimating the magnitude and statistical significance of observed effects.

Conclusions

Let’s close where we began.

It doesn’t matter what your organization does or what kind of data it generates—there is always a way to use this unique and valuable asset to do good.

The spectrum of opportunities to create positive impact with data is broad. Even if sharing your own data directly isn’t feasible, there are always alternative ways to contribute.

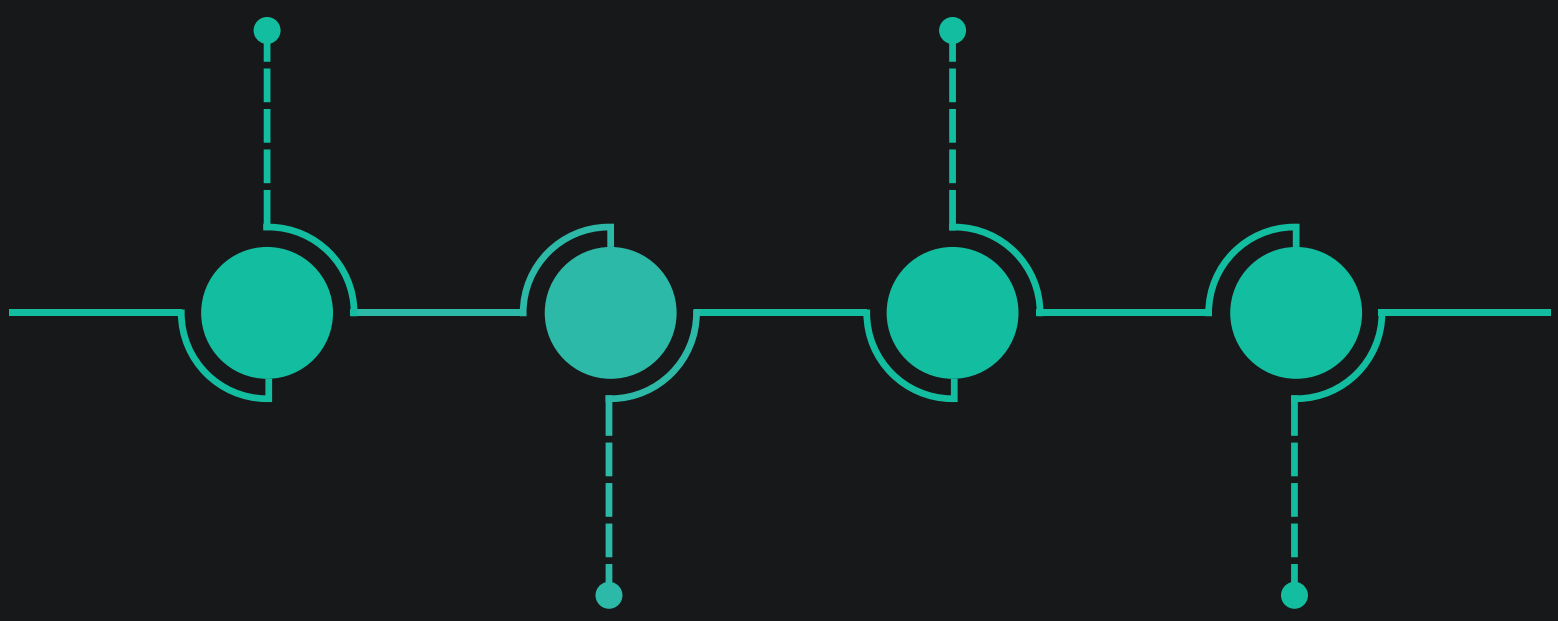
This white paper offers a starting point. The important thing is simply to begin.

At FIT Academy, We have developed deep expertise in the field of Data for Good and we are ready to support you on your journey toward a more responsible and impactful corporate role.

Whether it’s through training, consulting, or awareness-raising, our experience in the nonprofit sector enables us to be a trusted partner for anyone who wants to use data to help build a better world.

TRAINING
We offer programs focused on Data for Social Good, designed to equip organizations with the knowledge and tools to leverage data for positive societal impact.

PARTNERSHIP
FIT Academy is an international organization with a strong network. We can foster partnerships between companies and public entities for Data for Social Good initiatives.



IMPACT EVALUATION
No matter your project, we can assess its social impact using the most appropriate and effective evaluation methodologies.

OPEN DATA
We have specialized expertise in open data and can help you leverage this specific type of data both to support your company’s growth and to develop philanthropic initiatives.

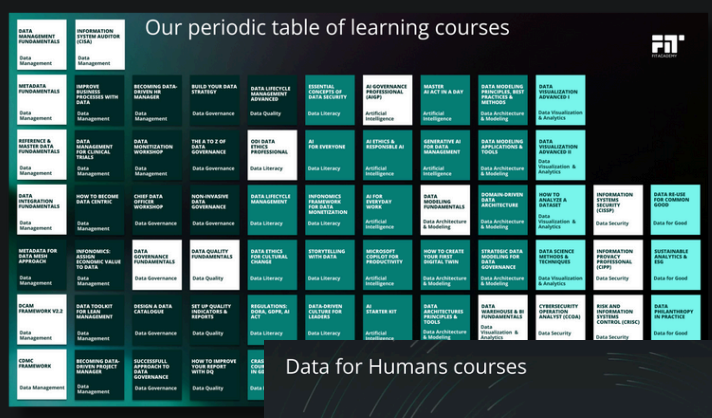
Maturity is our proprietary data capability assessment designed to understand the organization's structure, identify data talent, investigate its culture, and develop tailored training and consulting programs.

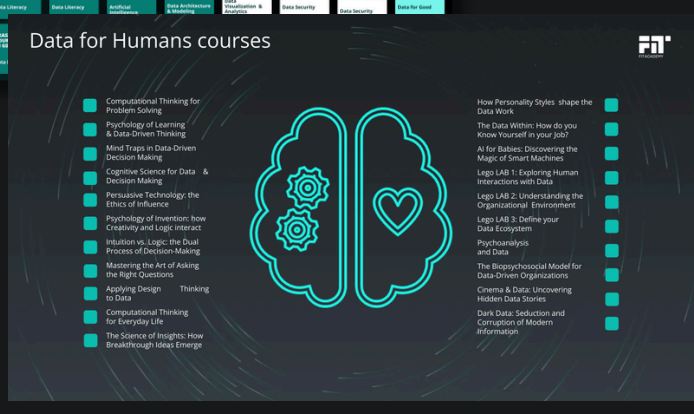
PEOPLE
Individual assessment through surveys, observations, and immersive experiences.

DOCUMENTS
AI-assisted document review

APPLICATIONS
Software usage metrics

With over 100 courses, we offer the most extensive data management training portfolio available on the market. Recently, we've expanded our catalog with innovative courses focused on understanding and managing the human component in data projects.





Visit www.fitacademy.fit to know more

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Developing a New Generation of Data Talents