



E ffective Machine Learning Teams

by David Tan, Ada Leung, and David Colls

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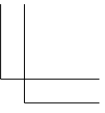
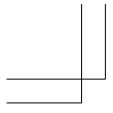
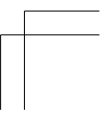
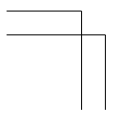
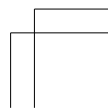
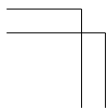
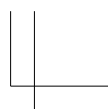
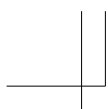


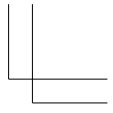
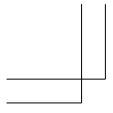
Table of Contents



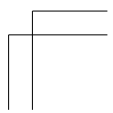
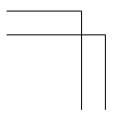
Part II. Engineering

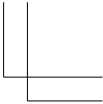
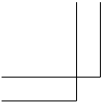
3. Effective Dependency Management: Principles and Tools.	83
What If Our Code Worked Everywhere, Every Time?	84
A Better Way: Check Out and Go	85
Principles for Effective Dependency Management	87
Tools for Dependency Management	90
A Crash Course on Docker and batect	96
What Are Containers?	97
Reduce the Number of Moving Parts in Docker With batect	101
Conclusion	107
4. Effective Dependency Management in Practice.	109
In Context: ML Development Workflow	109
Identifying What to Containerize	110
Hands-on Exercise: Reproducible Development Environments, Aided by Containers	113
Secure Dependency Management	124
Remove Unnecessary Dependencies	125
Automate Checks for Security Vulnerabilities	127
Conclusion	130
5. Automated Testing: Move Fast Without Breaking Things.	133
Automated Tests: The Foundation for Iterating Quickly and Reliably	135
Starting with Why: Benefits of Test Automation	136
If Automated Testing Is So Important, Why Aren't We Doing It?	139
Building Blocks for a Comprehensive Test Strategy for ML Systems	142
The What: Identifying Components For Testing	143
Characteristics of a Good Test and Pitfalls to Avoid	147
The How: Structure of a Test	152
Software Tests	154
Unit Tests	154
Training Smoke Tests	157
API Tests	159
Post-deployment Tests	162
Conclusion	165
6. Automated Testing: ML Model Tests.	167
Model Tests	167
The Necessity of Model Tests	168
Challenges of Testing ML Models	169



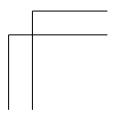
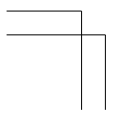
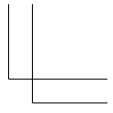
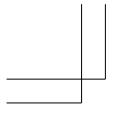


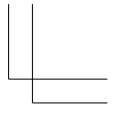
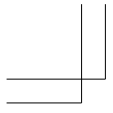
9. MLOps and Continuous Delivery for ML (CD4ML)	267
MLOps: Strengths and Missing Puzzle Pieces	269





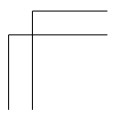
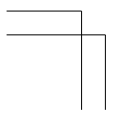
Build the Culture We Wish We Had	363
Encourage Teams to Play at Work	364
Conclusion	366
Epilogue: Dana's Journey	367
Index	369

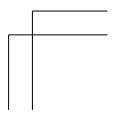
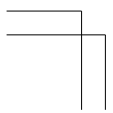
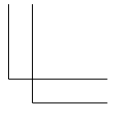
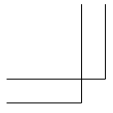


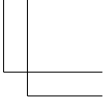
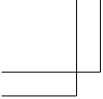


Preface

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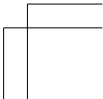
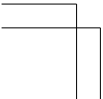


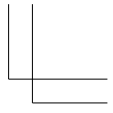
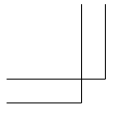




the capabilities necessary for data scientists and ML engineers to design and deliver ML solutions in the real world.

In the past, we've presented the principles, practices, and hands-on exercises in this book to data scientists, ML engineers, PhD students, software engineers, quality analysts, and product managers, and we've consistently received positive





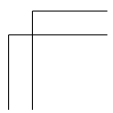
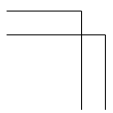
you to try out the practices in your teams, and we hope you'll experience firsthand the value that they bring in real-world projects.

Approach this book with a continuous improvement mindset, not a perfectionist mindset. There is no perfect project where everything works perfectly without challenges. There will always be complexity and challenges (and we know a healthy amount of challenge is essential for growth), but the practices in this book will help you minimize *accidental* complexity so that you can focus on the *essential* complexity of your ML solutions and on delivering value responsibly.

How This Book Is Organized

Chapter 1, “Challenges and Better Paths in Delivering ML Solutions”, is a distillation of the entire book. We explore high-level and low-level reasons for why and how ML projects fail. We then lay out a more reliable path for delivering value in ML solutions by adopting Lean delivery practices across five key disciplines: product, delivery, machine learning, engineering, and data.

In the remaining chapters, we describe practices of effective ML teams and ML practitioners. In Part I, “Product and Delivery”, we elaborate on practices in other subsystems that are necessary for delivering ML solutions, such as product thinking





Part II: Engineering

Chapters 3 and 4: Effective dependency management

Here, we describe principles and practices—along with a hands-on example that you can code along with—for creating consistent, reproducible, secure, and production-like runtime environments for running your code. When we hit the ground running and start delivering solutions, you'll see how the practices in this chapter will enable you and your teammates to “check out and go” and create consistent environments effortlessly, instead of getting trapped in dependency hell.

Chapters 5 and 6: Automated testing for ML systems

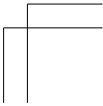
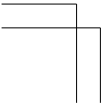
These chapters provide you with a rubric for testing components of your ML solution—be they software tests, model tests, or data tests. We demonstrate how automated tests help us shorten our feedback cycles and reduce the tedious effort of manual testing, or worse, fixing production defects that slipped through the cracks of manual testing. We describe the limits of the software testing paradigm on ML models, and how ML fitness functions and behavioral tests can help us scale the automated testing of ML models. We also cover techniques for comprehensively testing large language models (LLMs) and LLM applications.

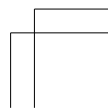
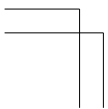
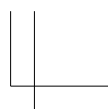
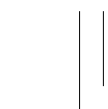
Chapter 7, “Supercharging Your Code Editor with Simple Techniques”

We'll show you how to configure your code editor (PyCharm or VS Code) to help you code more effectively. After we've configured our IDE in a few steps, we'll go through a series of keyboard shortcuts that can help you to automate refactoring, automatically detect and fix issues, and navigate your codebase without getting lost in the weeds, among other things.

Chapter 8, “Refactoring and Technical Debt Management”

In this chapter, we draw from the wisdom of software design to help us design readable, testable, maintainable, and evolvable code. In the spirit of “learning by doing,” you'll see how we can take a problematic, messy, and brittle notebook and apply refactoring techniques to iteratively improve our codebase to a modular, tested, and readable state. You'll also learn techniques that can help you and your team make technical debt visible and take actions to keep it at a healthy level.





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Using Code Examples

Supplemental material (code examples, exercises, etc.) is available for download at:

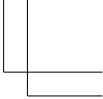
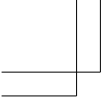
- <https://github.com/davidjones/loan-default-prediction>
- <https://github.com/davidjones/ide-productivity>
- <https://github.com/davidjones/refactoring-exercise>

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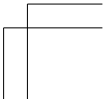
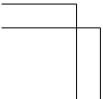
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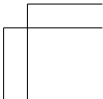
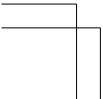
When we started writing this book, we set out to share a collection of point practices that have helped 0.5





From David Tan

Thank you Nhung for being so patient and supportive through the late nights that I spent on this book. I would not have finished this book without your support.





From David Colls

I'd like to thank my family for putting up with a husband and father writing, reviewing, and researching content for a few months straight, on weekends, during movie nights, and on the basketball sidelines.

I'd like to thank the many Thoughtworks colleagues around the world who have gone before us in writing books and creating transformative perspectives on technology, stoking our determination to do the same, and showing us what good looks like. Closer to home, I'd like to thank all the Australian Thoughtworkers I've worked alongside over more than a decade for broadening my perspectives and enriching me professionally and as a human being.

I'd especially like to thank all those members of the Thoughtworks Australia Data & AI practice who I've had the privilege to work with as we built something new together—there's a little bit of each of you in this book. I'd also like to thank our clients for the trust they place in us to develop new approaches to their biggest opportunities and challenges.

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