What do we learn from Kaggle competitions?
Ben Hamner

Abstract: Nothing polarizes opinions in the machine learning world more than the topic of competitions - especially, perhaps, Kaggle competitions. Some people view competitions' razor focus on objective predictive performance as having a pernicious influence, leading to a disregard of computational complexity, real insight, scientific purity, or elegant simplicity.

On the other hand, there are those who view competitions as being the only "true" way to ascertain pragmatically the capabilities of machine learning algorithms. They view researchers who aren't prepared to submit their algorithms to the rigors of competition as hiding from objective scrutiny. They see the success of competitions in schools as showing that only competitions really engage students with the exciting potential of machine learning.

So where is the truth? In this talk, a data scientist at the world's largest machine learning competition platform, Kaggle, will engage with both the pros and cons of competitions, and will explain what has been learnt from the last three years of Kaggle competitions. He will look at case studies both from academic and industrial competitions, and will draw out some of the themes coming from the most successful performers.