

# Communicate your skills and assets

Throughout this certificate program, you have been taught professional and technical skills that can be utilized across many data roles within various industries. Being able to communicate about these skills in an effective way is important when pursuing a career as a data professional. This reading covers strategies on how to communicate your newly-acquired skills to prospective employers during interviews.

## Communicate technical skills in interviews

In your portfolio projects, you practiced explaining data concepts to various audiences through executive summaries. During your job search, you will send your resume and portfolio to hiring managers and decision-makers. Most often, the person who receives your information is not deeply-versed in data analysis. The information that you provide needs to be presented in an accessible manner throughout all stages of the interview process. Often, the interview process starts with the company's human resources department, where the interviewer may not understand the technical details of how you conducted your data-focused work. The below section describes how you can talk about your projects at a high level within your elevator pitch during an initial interview.

## Explain technical projects and skills during initial interviews

For initial interviews, your main goal is to answer the question, "What can you tell me about yourself?" When answering this question, you want to make sure to showcase your experience in the role you are applying for and what excites you about the role. You should present a clear, non-technical summary of your technical projects in an elevator pitch. An **elevator pitch** is a short, one-minute introduction that states why you are best suited for the role. The elevator pitch below describes the candidate's experience working on a project similar to those they would be working on in the role for which they are applying.

"Recently, I earned a Google Advanced Data Analytics Certificate, during which I completed a technical project on predicting customer churn for a telecommunications company. This project used customer demographics, call center data, and phone usage data to predict whether a customer would cancel their service plan or not. After running several machine learning models, I noticed that customers who called the call center for support more than three times or had a family plan were seven times more likely to churn. Based on these findings, I recommended the stakeholders gather survey feedback about the quality of support customers are receiving from the call center and implement a money-saving promotion for customers on family plans. I feel this project aligns well with the open position in providing analysis for how to retain customers."

Draft an elevator pitch that includes an example of a technical project you've worked on. It is important that when talking to prospective employers, you sound authentic and natural, so be sure to practice your pitch aloud. For more tips on how to develop an elevator pitch, review this LinkedIn article: [How to Craft a Perfect Job Interview Elevator Pitch](#).

## Use the STAR method to answer technical questions in behavioral interviews

Behavioral interviews are used to help hiring managers understand how you handle common situations in the workplace. These situations can include your interactions with clients or stakeholders, how you handle criticism, how you manage your time, your leadership skills, and more. One of the most common ways to answer behavioral questions is by using the STAR method. STAR stands for **situation**, **task**, **action**, and **results**. Below is an example of how this method might be used to answer the question, “What was the biggest challenge you faced in performing an analysis?”

### STAR responses:

- **Situation:** “In my prior role for Company XYZ, my team was working with a stakeholder who wanted to forecast revenue for 30 of their stores.”
- **Task:** “I was tasked with acquiring each of the 30 stores' financial data from the past 10 years in a secure way. “
- **Action:** “Acquiring the data was challenging due to a lack of access to the stores' legacy data and systems. After getting to know one of the store's data systems, I trained managers from the remaining stores so that they could provide access and share the data we needed for the analysis.”
- **Result:** “As a result, we were able to complete the analysis a month ahead of schedule.”

Even if you are just entering the workforce or changing careers, you can think of situations from your portfolio projects, past academic experiences, and volunteer work to share with the employer.

## Showcase your skills during technical interviews

Technical interviews can take place at any point throughout the interview process. Here are a couple types of technical interviews and suggestions for how to prepare yourself for technical questions:

### Online technical assessments

You may be given an online technical assessment before or after your initial human resources interview. These online assessments will usually assess the technical skills outlined in the job description and may or may not be timed. In order to adequately prepare for an online technical assessment:

- Review the skill requirements in the job description to determine what technical content to focus on.
- Ask the hiring manager for additional details about the assessment process (e.g., areas of focus, how the assessment will be scored, format of the test , etc.).
- Research the company to get a sense of the types of technical projects they focus on.

**Pro tip:** If the assessment is a coding exercise, adding comments to your code can help demonstrate your technical communication skills, logical thinking, and deductive reasoning.

## Case studies

Case studies simulate the types of projects you may be asked to work on as an employee. There are case studies centered around business, analytics, and machine learning. Utilize these four steps to answer case study interview questions:

- **Step 1: Clarify.** Asking clarifying questions about the case can demonstrate that you can communicate effectively and care about the details of the case presented to you. Consider asking clarifying questions around business goals, how the model will be used, what tools are available for you to conduct the analysis, and other questions that would give you more insight into the goal of the project.
- **Step 2: State assumptions.** After clarifying what the overall case study is about, communicate what assumptions you can make about the case. Can you assume that there will be a certain target audience, a certain amount of data provided, preliminary data exploration, or hypothesis testing? Stating these assumptions demonstrates that you can infer relevant information and navigate through problems well.
- **Step 3: Propose a solution.** There normally isn't only one right solution to any given case. Use all the information you gathered from your clarifying questions and assumptions to propose a logical solution.
- **Step 4: Provide an analysis.** Back up your proposed solution with the data and analysis you would need to perform. Communicate what data features would you need, how much data would you collect, and what hypothesis tests you would perform.

As you answer case study interview questions, it is important to take the interviewer through the entire PACE workflow so that they can get a sense of both your professional and technical skills. It is also helpful to connect the case to a similar project you have worked on in an academic or professional setting.

## Key takeaways

- An elevator pitch is a concise introduction to who you are, what makes you qualified for the role, and why you are excited about working for that company. An elevator pitch may include details about a technical project you have worked on in the past and how it relates to the role you are applying for.
- Behavioral interviews focus on how you handle professional situations in the workplace. Use the STAR method (situation, task, action, result) to showcase your professional skills in various situations.
- Technical interviews can include online coding assessments, case studies, and more. Knowing what technical skills are required in the job description can help you prepare for the technical questions that may be asked during the interview. Reflecting on how you utilized these technical skills on past projects is also beneficial.