

Video Transcript

DeShaun, IBM Data Scientist, Get Insights from a Data Scientist

How's everyone doing? My name is DeShaun, And I am a data scientist at IBM. I have been at IBM for about five years and have been in the data science space for the last four years.

So, what drew me into data science? I have always had the curiosity for numbers, for math. My background in undergrad is in math. And then my graduate degrees were not in math. They were in a public space, in education policy and public administration. But my focus was more so around curriculum development and evaluation, and so I've always had this curiosity for numbers. And so, when I got to IBM when I came out of graduate school, I recruited into the advanced analytics space. And so, I, again, always love numbers, and then I wanted to really see what was the next, and so, that next step up for me was a data scientist. And so, I really did a lot of training and development and did some course work here within IBM to get that data science certification and have loved every moment of it since.

How did I know data science was the right career for me? It's just kind of something that happened. I allowed my steps to be guided with just the natural ebbs and flows of life and just kind of where my career was naturally progressing to. And then because of my curiosity for numbers and my curiosity to solve problems, data science just kind of fell right into my lap, and I just continue to do well in it, continue to thrive in this. So, for me, I knew that was the right path. I knew I was able to answer so many problems with data science no matter what it was, whether it was involving social data or, you know, I've worked in like the education space, and so solving problems in the education system using data. I've solved problems in the financial space using data. I've solved problems in the production space using data. And so, for me, I knew that I was able to solve problems across various aspects in various fields. And so, for me, I knew that was the right space for me -- is because I was able to do what I love. I was able to still explore my curiosity for numbers. I was really able to solve problems. And so, I just knew data science was the right space for me.

I've had a few mentors along the way in my journey here at IBM. One in particular, a woman of color in a leadership role -- Heather Gibbs-Poe -- who really helped pull my potential. She really seen a lot in me. And so, some of my work with some different clients in the education space here in Georgia really allowed us to really hone in on their relationship and really allowed me to see what aspects of a mentorship that I was looking for because it's hard to say that: Hey, you know, I need a mentor, or I want to mentor if I didn't necessarily know what I needed for the mentor then. And so, she really helped me hone in on my skills. She helped me hone in on my professionalism and really allowed me the opportunity to really gauge the various aspects of data, of advanced analytics, and of the consulting world and gave me the opportunity to just really learn and grow under her mentorship and under her guidance.

The best career advice I've gotten so far is to do what you love and love what you do. And so, it might sound cliché a little bit, but the best thing is you get your best work, and you do your best work doing something that you love to do. And if the work that you're doing isn't that it might be hard to really hone in on that. And so, I think that was the best piece of career advice that I've gotten.

What is the day in the life of a data scientist look like? Wow! It looks different every day just depending on the type of projects. On one project you might be, you know, predicting when HVAC failures will be happening in the desert for a military base, or you might be looking at market value and market share for consumer products companies, or you might be working with a school district understanding how does

student data affect like test scores and what can we put in how can we build data warehouses or data lakes to really help a school district grow, understand student data, understand students test data, understand evaluation data. And it really all makes sense to really get insight into how to make a school district better for not only the students but also faculty, for parents, for staff. The day in the life just looks different every day. It just really depends on the project. But I will say something that's going to always happen is you're going to always look at numbers and see how that number tells a story, how can you take that story to really get insight and information from it to make valuable decisions.

My favorite part of my job... I would say just the flexibility, the change in environment every day. Again, every day doesn't look the same, and so, for me, I like a new challenge. I hate monotony. And so, for me, the fact that my job entails so much and that every day looks a lot different, that's the favorite part to me. And two things I would tell someone who is interested in getting started with data science... One, have a curiosity for math because there is a lot of math and numbers in data science. You don't have to be the best at it because the program will do a lot of the math crunching for you, but you do have to understand logic and kind of how numbers work together. And then two, I would say never be afraid to take a challenge. There are a lot of resources and tools such as Udemy, such as, you know, code academies, such as YouTube, such as IBM. You have so many different softwares and programs that'll teach you what you need to know about data science. Just never be afraid to learn, never be afraid of a challenge, and never be afraid to get your hands dirty.