

# Questions to ask during your 'Data Scientist' Job Interviews

A job interview is a 2-way process. This is especially true for data science jobs given the average tenure is short in the current market. The interview is not only about ANSWERING questions, it is also about ASKING questions.

No matter whether it is the only interview opportunity you have, or whether is one of the many opportunities in your hand, asking questions in the interview can help you to make better decisions, and can help you to impress the interviewer further to nail your opportunity. If you don't ask questions at all, interviewers often have an impression that you are not very engaged, or that you are too desperate for this job. So, you should always prepare a few questions!

I have been interviewing many candidates in the past years, and I believe that most people don't ask enough questions. Following is a list of questions I may suggest. Hopefully some of them will be useful for your next interview.

One thing to keep in mind: these questions are all things you should find out about an employer; but some of them you should ask only indirectly. Which questions fit into that category depends on your interviewer, company, and individual style. Common sense and experience still matter.

## **Strategy related questions:**

- Is there a strategy for Data Science, Machine Learning and Advanced Analytics?
- What is the high-level road map for strategy implementation?
- What is the vision in a long term (e.g. a 3-year plan) for the data science team?
- What is the short-term plan for the near future (e.g. 6-12 months)? What are the major initiatives ongoing currently?
- Are the short-term and long-term plans associated or bonded with specific dollar value and hard deadline deliverables?
- What are the major accountabilities for the data science team?
- What is the current biggest challenge for data science team?

**Organisation related questions:**

- What is the team structure on the organizational chart? Are there other reporting structures in terms of project deliverable, performance, etc.?
- What are team members' backgrounds in general? For example, educational background, technical skills, industrial experience or related?
- Is there a community or guild within the company for data scientists?
- Are there any career development paths for data scientists? Has anyone gone through the journey successfully?
- Are there any training opportunity or a budget and how does it work within the team?

**Technology related questions:**

- What is the environment for coding and technical development? Is there a platform to use or just laptops?
- Are there any preferences or restrictions in terms of the technology and tools? What is the process for obtaining a specific tool, package or library I would like to use which is not included in the tech stack?
- What are the languages and tools commonly used by the team? What is the level of proficiency?
- If I have any technical questions, are there technical leads or experts to seek advice from, or just my manager?

**Data related questions:**

- Is there a data catalogue to search, or meta-data to use for ETL?
- Where are the data that are commonly used for building and training models? Are these data located in silos or in a centralized data platform / lake / warehouse?
- Where are the teams for example, data engineering, DevOps and software development on the structure? How do they work with data scientists?
- Could you give me an example of the project team, in terms of who they are, what do they do, what is the process from the beginning to end of a project?
- What is the collaborative workflow and culture like cross teams and divisions within the company?

**Project related questions:**

- Are there any data science projects already in production?
- What is the operating and monitoring model for the life-cycle management?
- Is there an existing data governance framework to follow or reference? Are there any analytical modelling governance process and guidelines?
- Where are the data analytics, business intelligence, or reporting team? What is the boundary or relationship between data science team and these teams?
- What services or product does the data science team offer? Are there any plans for optimize work in the future?

**Teamwork related questions:**

- What is the operating model for the data science team to work with other departments or teams?
- Are projects initiated or requested by the business experts or from the data science team itself?
- Are there specific business domains within the company that the data science team needs to focus on or is limited to?
- What is the average percentage of time I will spend working on projects in delivery mode?
- If I have ideas for some business development opportunities, do I get time to idealize it and work on the proof of value, in order to push it onto the projects pipeline?
- How are the projects assigned among data science team members?

All these questions are just for your reference. Some will have been covered during the interview already. As much as I would like to make a cheat-sheet for you, there will not be one ready made for your interview with a specific company. You need to do your homework and be quick on your feet to choose what questions to ask. Try not to ask a question you could have answered by googling the company website or some articles.

"I Wish you best luck with the interview for a data scientist job, and don't forget to  
ASK questions!"