DATA VADER

STEP 6 OF 7 STEPS STARTER PACK

ACING THE INTERVIEW

BUILD A GROWING AND FULFILLING CAREER IN DATA SCIENCE

Hi there! Welcome to the sixth chapter of my eBook, 7 steps guide to build a growing and fulfilling career in Data Science.

I hope you have received and read Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, and Step 5 of the guide.

Step 1 was about understanding Data Science, knowing why we see Data Science everywhere, and diving deeper into the components of Data Science: Mathematics/Statistics, Programming, and Business understanding

Step 2's content helped in knowing about various roles in Data Science and also help you in choosing the right role for you.

Step 3 was about getting to know how to acquire the skills required to land your dream career. I compartmentalized into three routes: doing a master's, doing a certification program, or taking online courses.

In step 4 you got a guide on building a portfolio. It explained why you should build a portfolio and how you can do that. We focussed on some pointers that can help you pick the right project for you.

Step 5 was a guide on starting your job hunt. You can utilize those steps to enhance your chances of being shortlisted.

In this chapter, we will be having a look at the interview process and how to ace it!

Step 6: Acing the interview

Till now, if you have followed this guide meticulously, you would have received some interview calls. This chapter will help you ace the interview, whenever you get the chance.

I read a motivational piece of post years ago, which said that instead of spending time bemoaning over lack of opportunities, start preparing yourself for the right opportunity. Even if you get one, you should be able to gain that one.

The same goes for the Data Science interview. As I said in the last chapter, spend 80% time in upskilling and 20% time in applying for jobs. 80% time should be allocated in becoming so good that even if 20% of the time, fetches you an opportunity, you grab that one!

This means that you should be totally prepared for the interviews in and out

I find interviews very fascinating. It is like, within a short span of time, you have to convince the recruiter that:

- You have a relevant skillset
- You have business understanding
- You have good communication skills
- You can work in teams

This might seem daunting, you can ease this with practice! I am going to include a couple of my personal experiences with interviews.

Know what recruiter wants

In the last section, I gave you some pointers over which a recruiter might assess you in the span of time you spend with the recruiter.

Let's break the expectations one by one to understand the requirements in depth. You feel like you have prepared enough, but if it is not aligned as per what the recruiter wants, the efforts will not result in a tangible outcome.

So, know before you go.

Relevant skillset

There are two words to focus on here:

1. Relevant
2. Skillset

Skillset can be technical and non-technical but in this section, we will focus on technical skills.

So, the recruiter is interested in your data skills and problem-solving skills. You can demonstrate with coding rounds that might be in two formats:

1. Take-home assignments
2. Live assessment

The second word is relevant here. It means that the skillset which you possess should align with what the recruiter wants.

I will tell you something from my personal experience. In January, I interviewed with a startup in the agritech domain. We had a discussion over a number of things and everything seemed fine.

Until they wanted someone with knowledge of the Firebase database. Everything other than this went smooth and perfect.

So, despite experience with other databases, I was not finally selected for the job because I did not have a "relevant" skillset.

This will not mean that you have to go out and acquire each and every type of skillset available. It means that you have to stay focussed on openings whose demand for relevant skillset is what you possess.

Business understanding

We have discussed at lengths about this in the first chapter. The company you are applying to will be working in a particular domain or industry. Knowing the basics will get you far.

I interviewed for a biotechnology firm that wanted the candidates to have an understanding of genomics. That's why while building your portfolio, try to know the basics of the domain.

Good communication skills

This is one of the very underrated skills which I believe can take you far. Organizations want people with good communication skills who can explain the actionable insights to stakeholders with absolute clarity and simplicity.

This can be enhanced manifolds by writing blogs and posting on social media as you will get instant feedback.

You should focus on Data Storytelling. I recently came across an article by Harvard Business Review which stated that the last step implementation of Data Science projects is hampered because of lack of communication.

Managers have high expectations from data teams and when data teams come with solutions, they are very complex which creates a wide gap between them.

That is why communicating well is also one of the top priorities of the recruiters.

Team working

This usually forms a part of HR rounds, but they want to assess you on team working skills so that they can esnure coherence in teams and derive best outcomes.

The interview process

There is no set pattern as such, different companies prefer doing it differently. Some of the elements might be frequent, some not.

I am going to list all of them and some details as to what these steps mean:

- **Aptitude test:** For some entry-level positions, some companies take an aptitude test that tests reasoning, quantitative aptitude, and English Comprehension skills.

  You can prepare for these using a lot of online sources.

- **Take-home assignment:** Your problem-solving skills will be assessed by take-home assignment which can be either in Python or SQL.

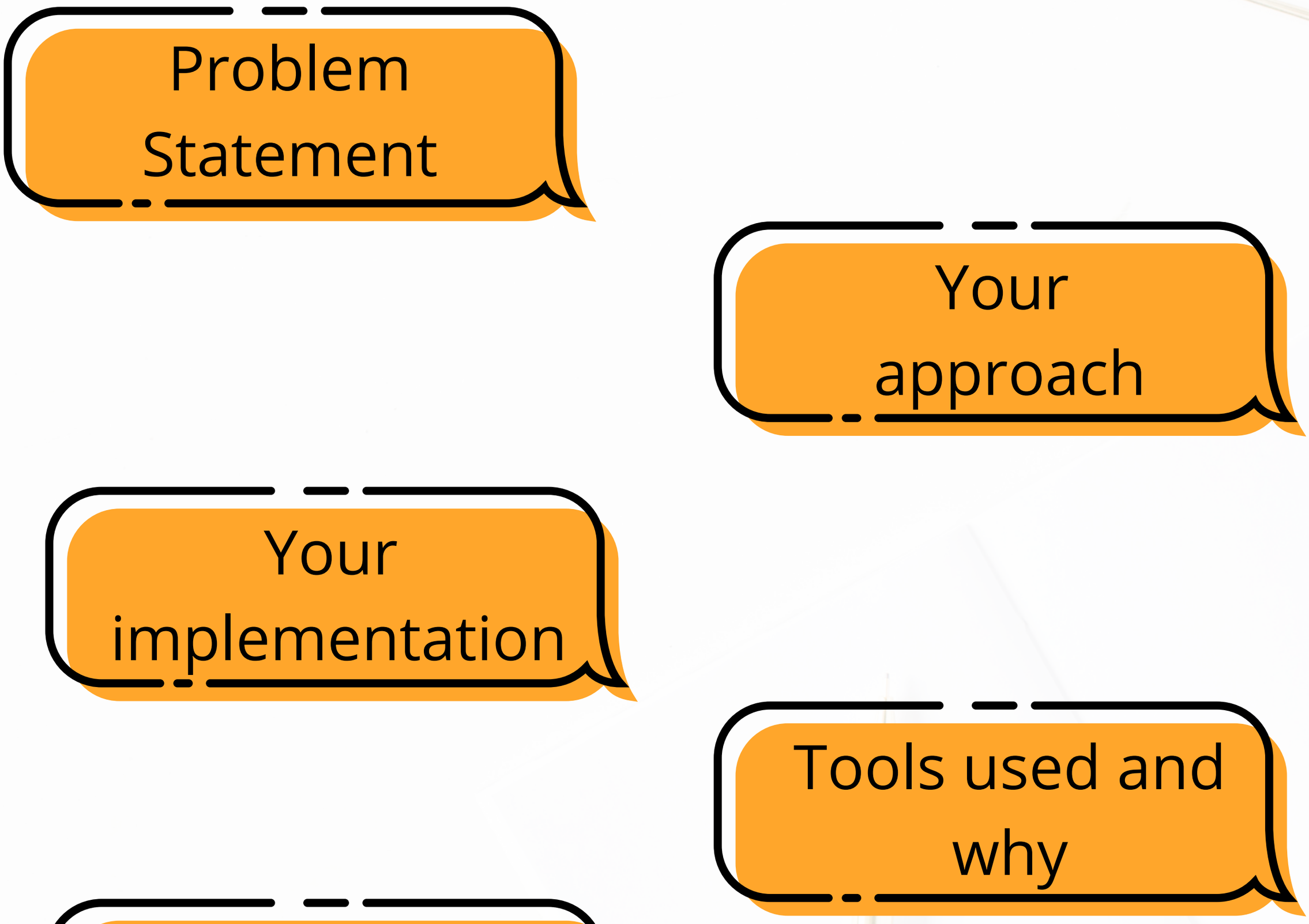
  You can practice these on Hackerrank, I believe they have the best set of questions. As far as Python coding is concerned, solve Hackerrank and try to finish basic level Data Structures and Algorithms which will help you solve a lot of problems. DSA is not mandatory, but if you can study them, well and good.

- **Case study:** This section is to check your data skills. You will be provided with a dataset and will be asked to manipulate data, visualize, create a machine learning model, depending on the job you have applied for.

You have to be really good with your data manipulation skills using different Python libraries like pandas, matplotlib, sci-kit learn, etc.

- **Interview:** Different companies can have different stages of interviews. In the technical interviews, you can be asked questions related to theory. You will be also asked questions related to projects you have done or worked on in your job.

This will also help the recruiters to assess your problem-solving skills. Try to structure your projects in:



There can be more interview rounds, depending on the company and its management.

One of the best tips that I received for interview preparation is to have answers ready.

You can do that by looking at the most frequent questions asked in Data Science interviews and preparing answers for them. Later on, as you start giving more interviews, you will have your own interview question bank. You can use this to prepare answers.

The prepared answers will give you confidence and reduce the randomness of the process.

This guide can be elongated further but I will take a pause here.

The DataVader Community goes live on 25th May! Let me know you are excited.

See you in the next chapter.