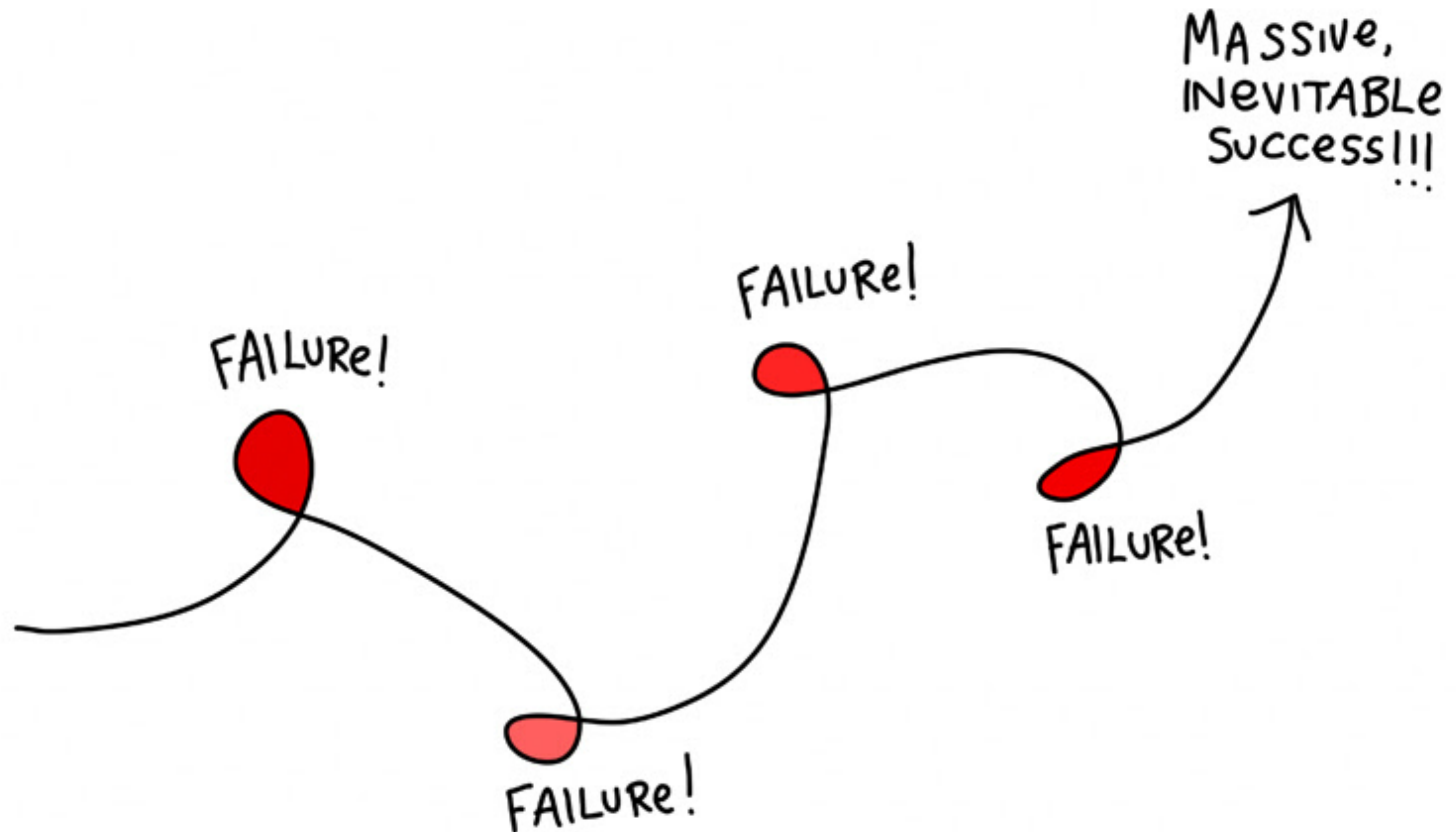


Interviewing Best Practices

(Welcome to Hell 😈)

a data scientist should be able to
run a regression, write a sql query, scrape a web
site, design an experiment, factor matrices, use a
data frame, pretend to understand deep learning,
steal from the d3 gallery, argue r versus python,
think in mapreduce, update a prior, build a
dashboard, clean up messy data, test a hypothesis,
talk to a businessperson, script a shell, code on a
whiteboard, hack a p-value, machine-learn a model.
specialization is for engineers.

The rule of 1:
It doesn't matter how many times you hear "no",
you only need a single "yes".



Agenda

1. Job Search Lifecycle
2. Interviewing Preparation
3. CAR method
4. Talking about your previous experience

Out of Scope

1. Technical interviewing
2. Panel interviewing
3. Presentation-based interviewing

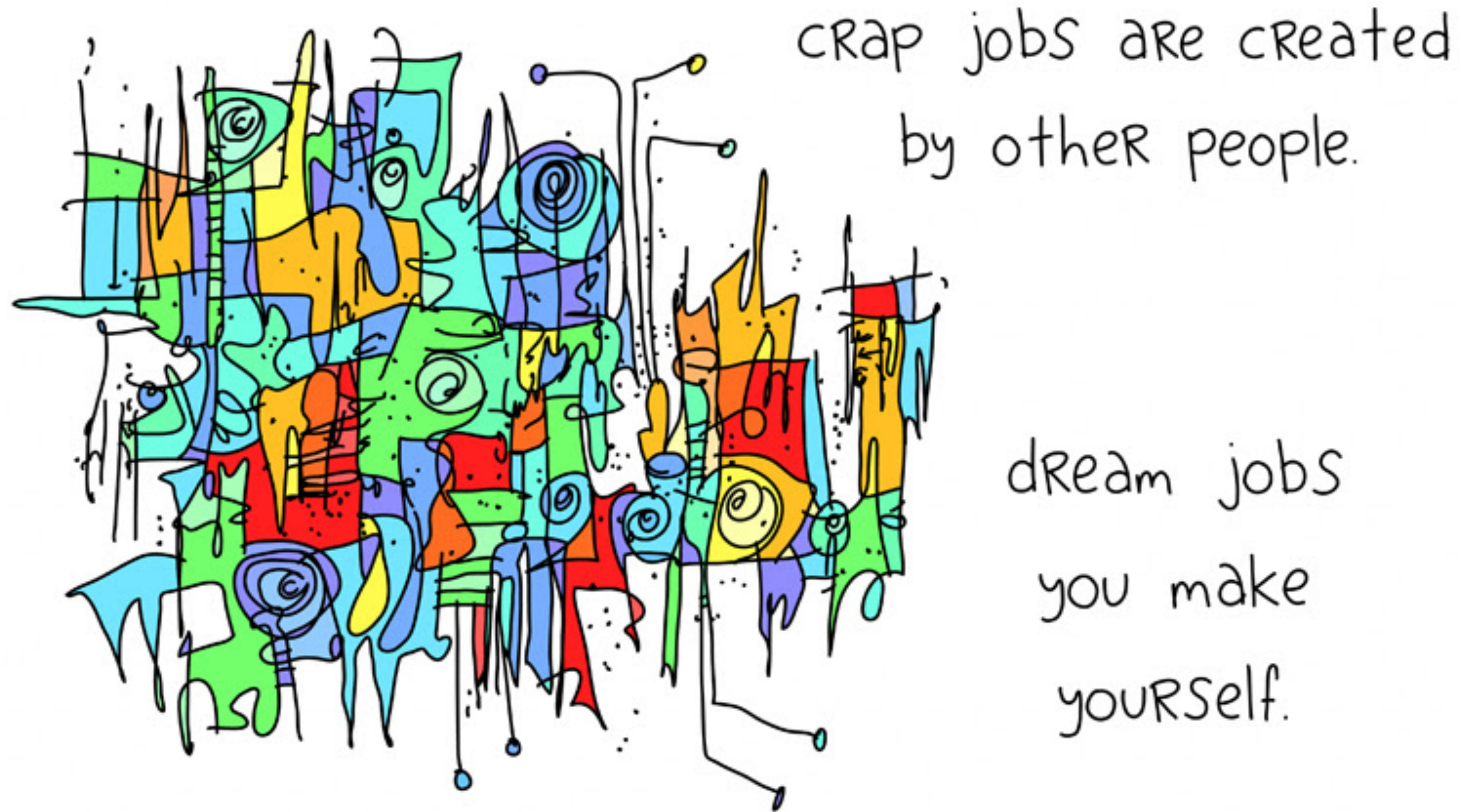
In Scope

1. Overall process
2. Culture Fit Interview
3. Behavioral interviewing

Job Search Lifecycle

1. Find jobs
2. Preparation
3. Application
4. Phone screenings
5. Onsite interviews
6. Negotiating offer

The best jobs are found through connections



CRAP jobs are created
by other people.

dREAM jobs
you make
yourself.

Methods To Find Jobs

1. Ask connections
2. Identify a company -> find contacts
3. Hunt job postings

Understanding the Job Posting

1. Read the literal words
2. What is boilerplate? What is specific?
3. Interpret the words
4. Read between the lines
5. Understand the company: What do they do? / How do they make \$\$?
6. Research the company on Glassdoor

Example

Data Scientist, Machine Learning Intern at Glassdoor

Negative Example

Senior Data Scientist

**Get in interview teams
&
Work through a job posting**

Degree Requirements

- Data Science degree inflation
- A PhD is nice-to-have but not required
- Your Masters will qualify you for most jobs

Work Experience

- Companies want 2+ years of relevant experience
- They ain't gonna get in this business climate
- Any professional experience is highly valued

Any Questions?

How Interviews Will Go

1. Icebreaker / Your Story question
2. Historical behavioral question on a line-item of your resume
3. Follow-up questions (a few)
4. Rinse, wash repeat
5. "Why are you interested in Company X?"
6. "Do you have any questions for me?"

Preparation before interviewing

I typically prepare between 1:4 - 1:10

For a 15 minute phone screening I do 1 hour of work

Preparation Before Each Interview

Write down on paper:

- Persona
- Selling Points
- Questions they might ask you
- Questions you'll ask them

Persona

- You can't be anyone, but you can perform.
- Who do you want to be for this interview?
- What is your theme?
- Be positive. Bias towards action.
- Company & Position specific
 - Startup vs Established Company
 - Where in the org chart do you sit?

My Persona

- Get Stuff Done from Day 1
- Domain expert

**Get in teams
&
Revise Individual Personas**

Selling Points

- What makes you a strong sell?
- Painkiller vs Vitamin
- Address each job posting requirement:
 - They write: "Proficiency in Python."
 - You say: "Python is the majority language of MSDS program. Look at my GitHub for examples"

My Selling Points

Persona \Rightarrow Selling Point

Generalist \Rightarrow I have done something similar before.

Strong coder \Rightarrow I can create production proof-of-concept.

**Get in teams
&**

Revise individual Selling Points

Culture Fit Interview



Culture Fit Interview

- Are you going to “fit in”?
- They are non-informative (aka kinda 🐛) - they do not provide any information about if a person can do a job, but instead screen candidates who don’t look and sound like the interviewer.
- When interviewing you need to recognize that this is game, with rules and you just need to play the game.
- Deliver what “they” expect. Remember to mirror nonverbally and reflect verbally.

Culture Fit Interview

- Focus company's values, work style, office environment (i.e., stuff on their social media)
- Example Questions:
 - "How do you prefer to work?"
 - "Who was your best boss? Why?"
 - "What do you love about your last job?"

Culture Fit Interview

- EVERYTHING YOU SAY SHOULD BE SUCCINCT
- 30 seconds - 1 minute
- Quick stories
- Only positive



It's Time For A Break

Behavioral Interviewing - What is the goal?

1. To reject you
2. Make sure you can form coherent English sentences
3. It is **NOT** to get to know you as a beautiful individual with a unique history

S

T

A

R

SITUATION

TASK

ACTION

RESULT

**SET THE
SCENE**

**DESCRIBE
THE
PURPOSE**

**EXPLAIN
WHAT
YOU DID**

**SHARE
THE
OUTCOME**

Behavioral Interviewing - CAR Method

Context

Action

Result

"Tell me about a time you failed.
How did you deal with the situation?"

Think

Pair

Share

Interview Question: What is your greatest strength?

Interviewer: What's your biggest strength?

Me: I'm a fast learner.

Interviewer: What's 11 times 11?

Me: 65.

Interviewer: Not even close. It's 121.

Me: It's 121.

me_irl

Interview Question:

"What is your greatest strength?"

List 3:

1. Independent
2. Curious
3. Continuous Improving

Tell a story to illustrate:

"In my last role as a faculty at a startup (Context), I was in-charge of independently developing new curriculum in Spark (Action)... That content was adopted across the organization and students were able get cutting-edge jobs in Data Science (Result)."

Interview Question:
What is your greatest weakness?

MY WEAKNESSES?

**I CARE TOO MUCH AND TRY TOO
HARD.**

Interview Question:

What is your greatest weakness?

- List a single one.
- Be simple: “I can be overly critical of myself and my work.”
- Do not apologize!

Interview Question:

What is your greatest weakness?

Typically, I flip one of my strengths:

"For example, being independent I have to buy into what I'm working on. I need to understand the vision and purpose behind projects am I assigned. Then I can take ownership and deliver."

Interview Question: What is your greatest weakness?

Explain how you are self-aware, mitigate it, and (possible) turn it into a context-specific strength:

“But because I am, at times, very critical of my work, I have realized how meticulous I am. I'm always very attentive and careful toward the work that I do, sometimes at the sake of speed. I typically ask for guidance about exceptions.”

**Pair off within teams
&**

Answer: "What is your greatest weakness?"

Write down CAR answers for these questions

- "Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with the situation?"
- "What is your greatest strength?"
- "What is your greatest weakness?"
- "Sometimes it's just not possible to get everything on your to-do list done. Tell me about a time your responsibilities got a little overwhelming. What did you do?"
- "Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle that?"
- "Tell me about a time when you worked under close supervision or extremely loose supervision. How did you handle that?"

Describe a Project or Past Work

- Structure your response (CAR, Funnel, Timeline)
- Appropriate choice of facts and level of detail
- Be clear and precise, not arrogant.
- Assume your interviewer is bright, curious, but has no specific domain knowledge.

Describe a Project or Past Work

- Length - 2-5 minutes
- If at possible, relate it to the company's mission or products
- Leave out implementation details:

“My project was building APIs to help internal customers self-serve data. I can go into that in more detail about how I built it if you want. But the most interesting part was deploying to a production environment...”

**Pair off within teams
&
Describe a single bullet point
from LinkedIn**

For Each Past Work Experience

- Why did you go there?
- What did you do?
- Why did you leave?
- Key themes: Intentionality & Lessons Learned

Why did you go there?

- Bad answer:
 - It was the only offer I got
 - It was the only college I got into
 - Followed boyfriend / girlfriend / sig-o
- Good answer:
 - I went there because of X, Y and Z. X, Y and Z should be professional, known things.
 - “My last job wasn’t technical enough, so I was looking for a role that did more stuff in Python.”
 - If there is a personal reason that you want to share, make it simple: "My mother got sick."
 - Logical & Intentionally

What did you do when you were there?

- Bad answer:
 - Not much - Just followed directions.
 - I don't remember...
- Good answer:
 - The company did X, and I supported by doing Y.

Why did you leave?

- Bad answer:
 - I was fired
 - I hated everyone there
 - The job sucked
- Good Answer
 - Develop different / additional skills
 - Better opportunity elsewhere
 - Needed a break (MAYBE)
 - Location (MAYBE)

Let's dig into Brian's past!

Ground rules

- Generally speaking, the interviewer is in leading. You are following.
- Play "Yes, and..."
- Legal vs Illegal questions.

Legal Interview Questions

- ☐ What education do you have?
- ☐ What experience qualifies you for this job?
- ☐ Do you have licenses and certifications for this job?
- ☐ Are you willing to travel?
- ☐ What name(s) are your work records under?
- ☐ Do you have the legal right to work in the United States?
- ☐ Are you available for overtime?

Illegal Questions, Part I

The California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) prohibits employment practices that discriminate against applicants or employees on the basis of:

- race,
- religious creed,
- color,
- national origin,
- ancestry,
- physical disability (including HIV-positive status) or mental disability,
- medical condition (specifically cancer-related conditions and genetic characteristics),
- marital status,
- sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, and gender identity),
- age (40 years and older),
- or sexual orientation.

It also includes discrimination based on a perception that a person is a member of a protected class or is associated with a person who is, or is perceived to be, a member of a protected class (CA Gov. Code Sec. 12940 et seq.).

Illegal Questions, Part II

Title I of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) lists these additional prohibited questions:

- ☐ Have you ever been hospitalized? If so, for what condition?
- ☐ Have you ever been treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist? If so, for what condition?
- ☐ Is there any health-related reason that you may not be able to perform the job for which you are applying?
- ☐ How many days were you absent from work because of illness last year?
- ☐ Are you taking any prescribed drugs?
- ☐ Have you ever been treated for drug addiction or alcoholism?

What do you do when asked an illegal question?

1. You can deflect to a new topic area.
2. You can give a brief answer.
3. Some combination of the 2.

What do you do when asked an illegal question?

- "I think that topic is legally protected and not appropriate."
- "That won't impact my ability to perform the job."
- "I'm not comfortable answering that question."
- If blatant and offensive, you have every right to terminate the interview and walk out.

Questions you'll ask them

- ALWAYS HAVE SOMETHING PREPARED
- Generic is okay: "What is the best thing about working here?"
- Be specific: "You choose to release Y product. Why?"
- Examples

Random Advice

- Rehearse enough to be fluent. However, don't memorize.
- Be excited to answer them!
- It is okay if something didn't turn out right - it happens to everyone.
- Never lie, but you do not need to disclose every fact.

What to do when you are nervous

- Realize it
- Own it
- Use it
- Declare it

Tactics for Nervousness

- Over-prepare for the interview
 - Lay out your supplies and clothes the night before
 - Get your plan in order
- Get there early to settle in
- Focus on them
- Give yourself a job - take notes
- Stay in your body
- Plan something for immediately afterwards

Summary

- Don't wing it!
- Preparation is most of the work
- Practice, practice, practice
- You'll suck, then get better

