Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Data Scientist Position Description

February 9, 2015

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General Characteristics

Individuals within the Data Scientist role is responsible for modeling complex Institute problems, discovering Institute insights and identifying opportunities through the use of statistical, algorithmic, mining and visualization techniques. In addition to advanced analytic skills, this role is also proficient at integrating and preparing large, varied datasets, architecting specialized database and computing environments, and communicating results.

Data Scientists work closely with clients, data stewards, project/program managers, and other IT teams to turn data into critical information and knowledge that can be used to make sound organizational decisions. Other responsibilities include providing data that is congruent and reliable. They need to be creative thinkers and propose innovative ways to look at problems by using data mining (the process of discovering new patterns from large datasets) approaches on the set of information available. They will need to validate their findings using an experimental and iterative approach. Also, Data Scientists will need to be able to present back their findings to the business by exposing their assumptions and validation work in a way that can be easily understood by their business counterparts.

These professionals will need a combination of business focus, strong analytical and problem solving skills and programming knowledge to be able to quickly cycle hypothesis through the discovery phase of the project. Excellent written and communications skills to report back the findings in a clear, structured manner are required.

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Career Path

The following section is intended to serve as a general guideline for each relative dimension of project complexity, responsibility and education/experience within this role. This table is not intended for use as a checklist to facilitate promotions or to define specific responsibilities as outlined in a job description. Actual responsibilities and experiences may vary.

Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Dimension			
Work Complexity	• Designs experiments, test hypotheses, and build models. • Conducts data analysis and moderately complex designs algorithm.	• Designs experiments, test hypotheses, and build models. • Conducts **advanced** data analysis and **complex** designs algorithm.	• Designs experiments, test hypotheses, and build models. • Conducts advanced data analysis and **highly complex** designs algorithm. • **Applies advanced statistical and predictive modeling techniques to build, maintain, and improve on multiple real-time decision systems.**
Typical Responsibilities			
Business Requirements	• Works with Institute stakeholders to identify the business requirements and the expected outcome. • Works with and alongside business analysts by suggesting other products of interest to the client. • Models and frames business scenarios that are meaningful and which impact on critical business processes and/or decisions.	• Works with Institute stakeholders to identify the business requirements and the expected outcome. • Works with and alongside business analysts by suggesting other products of interest to the client. • Models and frames business scenarios that are meaningful and which impact on critical business processes and/or decisions.	• **Leads discovery processes with** Institute stakeholders to identify the business requirements and the expected outcome. • Works with and alongside business analysts by suggesting other products of interest to the client. • Models and frames business scenarios that are meaningful and which impact on critical business processes and/or decisions.
Data Requirements	• Collaborates with Institute subject matter experts to select the relevant sources of information.	• **Identifies what data is available and relevant, including internal and external data sources, leveraging new data collection processes such as smart meters**	• Identifies what data is available and relevant, including internal and external data sources, leveraging new data collection processes such as smart meters and geo-location

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		and geo-location information or social media. • Collaborates with Institute subject matter experts to select the relevant sources of information. • **Works with IT teams to support data collection, integration, and retention requirements based on the input collected with the business.**	information or social media. • Collaborates with Institute subject matter experts to select the relevant sources of information. • **Makes strategic recommendations** on data collection, integration and retention requirements **incorporating business requirements and knowledge of best practices.**
Analysis	• Works with team leaders and members to solve client analytics problems and documents results and methodologies. • Works in iterative processes within IT and validates findings. • Performs experimental design approaches to validate finding or test hypotheses. • Validates analysis by comparing appropriate samples. • Employs the appropriate algorithm to discover patterns.	• **Solves** client analytics problems **and communicates** results and methodologies. • Works in iterative processes **with the client** and validates findings. • **Develops** experimental design approaches to validate finding or test hypotheses. • Validates analysis by comparing appropriate samples. • Employs the appropriate algorithm to discover patterns.	• **Develops innovative and effective approaches to solve** client's analytics problems and communicates results and methodologies. • Works in iterative processes with the client and validates findings. • Develops experimental design approaches to validate finding or test hypotheses. • Validates analysis **using scenario modeling.** • **Identifies/creates** the appropriate algorithm to discover patterns.
Qualification and Assurance	• Uses the expected qualification and assurance of the information to quantify the accuracy metrics of the analysis.	• **Assesses, with the business, the** expected qualification and assurance of the information **in support of the use case.** • **Defines the validity of the information, how long the information is meaningful, and what other information it is related to.**	• Assesses, with the business, opportunities to enhance the qualification and assurance of the information **to strengthen** the use case. • Defines the validity of the information, how long the information is meaningful, and what other information it is related to.

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Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Access Management and Control	• Qualifies where information can be stored or what information, external to the organization, may be used in support of the use case.	• **Works with the data steward to ensure that the information used is in compliance with the regulatory and security policies in place.** • Qualifies where information can be stored or what information, external to the organization, may be used in support of the use case.	• Works with the data steward to ensure that the information used is in compliance with the regulatory and security policies in place. • Qualifies where information can be stored or what information, external to the organization, may be used in support of the use case.
Quantification	• Assesses the volume of data supporting the initiative, the type of data (e.g., images, text, clickstream or metering data) and the speed or sudden variations in data collection.	• **Identifies and analyzes patterns in** the volume of data supporting the initiative, the type of data (e.g., images, text, clickstream or metering data) and the speed or sudden variations in data collection.	• **Utilizes patterns and variations** in the volume, **speed and other characteristics** of data supporting the initiative, the type of data (e.g., images, text, clickstream or metering data) **in predictive analysis.**
Policies, Standards and Procedures	• Collaborates with the data steward to ensure that the information used follows the compliance, access management, and control policies and that it meets the qualification and assurance requirements of the Institute. • Recommends ongoing improvements to methods and algorithms that lead to findings, including new information.	• Collaborates with the data steward to ensure that the information used follows the compliance, access management, and control policies and that it meets the qualification and assurance requirements of the Institute. • **Partners with the data stewards to define the data quality expectation in the context of the specific use case.** • Recommends ongoing improvements to methods and algorithms that lead to findings, including new information.	• **Develops usage and access control policies and systems in collaboration with the data steward.** • **Partners with the data stewards** in continuous improvement processes impacting data quality **in the context of the specific use case.** • Recommends ongoing improvements to methods and algorithms that lead to findings, including new information.
Communications/ Presentations	• Presents and depicts the rationale of their findings in easy to understand terms for the business. • Presents back results that	• Presents and depicts the rationale of their findings in easy to understand terms for the business. • Presents back results that	• Presents and depicts the rationale of their findings in easy to understand terms for the business. • Presents back results that

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	contradict common belief, if needed. • Communicates and works with business subject matter experts.	contradict common belief, if needed. • Communicates and works with business subject matter experts.	contradict common belief, if needed. • Communicates and works with business subject matter experts **and organizational leadership**.
Change Advocacy	• **May educate** the organization both from IT and the business perspectives on new approaches, such as testing hypotheses and statistical validation of results. Helps the organization understand the principles and the math behind the process to drive organizational buy-in.	• **Educates** the organization both from IT and the business perspectives on new approaches, such as testing hypotheses and statistical validation of results. Helps the organization understand the principles and the math behind the process to drive organizational buy-in.	• Educates the organization both from IT and the business perspectives on new approaches, such as testing hypotheses and statistical validation of results. Helps the organization understand the principles and the math behind the process to drive organizational buy-in.
Metrics	• Provides business metrics for the overall project to show improvements (contribution to the improvement should be monitored initially and over multiple iterations). • Demonstrates the following scientist qualities: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness.	• Provides business metrics for the overall project to show improvements (contribution to the improvement should be monitored initially and over multiple iterations). • Demonstrates the following scientist qualities: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness.	• Provides business metrics for the overall project to show improvements (contribution to the improvement should be monitored initially and over multiple iterations). • Demonstrates the following scientist qualities: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness.
Performance	• Provides on-going tracking and monitoring of performance of decision systems and statistical models.	• Provides on-going tracking and monitoring of performance of decision systems and statistical models.	• Provides on-going tracking and monitoring of performance of decision systems and statistical models.
Support	• Implements enhancements and fixes to systems as needed.	• **Troubleshoots and** implements enhancements and fixes to systems as needed.	• **Leads the design and deployment of** enhancements and fixes to systems as needed.

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Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Typical Education/ Experience	• Bachelor's degree in mathematics, statistics or computer science or related field. • Typically requires 1-3 years' experience manipulating large datasets and using databases, and 1-3 years' experience with a general-purpose programming language (such as Hadoop MapReduce or other big data frameworks, Java). • Experience in the use of statistical packages. • Familiarity with basic principles of distributed computing and/or distributed databases. • Demonstrable ability to quickly understand new concepts-all the way down to the theorems- and to come out with original solutions to mathematical issues. • Good communication and interpersonal skills. • Knowledge of one or more business/functional areas.	• Bachelor degree in mathematics, statistics or computer science or related field; **Master degree preferred.** • Typically requires **3-5 years** of relevant quantitative and qualitative research and analytics experience. • **Solid knowledge** of statistical techniques. • **The ability to come up with solutions to loosely defined business problems by leveraging pattern detection over potentially large datasets.** • **Strong programming skills** (such as Hadoop MapReduce or other big data frameworks, Java), and statistical modeling (like SAS or R). • **Experience using machine learning algorithms.** • **Proficiency** in the use of statistical packages. • **Proficiency in statistical analysis, quantitative analytics, forecasting/predictive analytics, multivariate testing, and optimization algorithms.** • **Strong** communication and interpersonal skills. • Knowledge of one or more business/functional areas.	• Masters in mathematics, statistics or computer science or related field; **PHD degree preferred.** • Typically requires **5 or more years** of relevant quantitative and qualitative research and analytics experience. • Solid knowledge of statistical techniques. • The ability to come up with solutions to loosely defined business problems by leveraging pattern detection over potentially large datasets. • Strong programming skills (such as Hadoop MapReduce or other big data frameworks, Java), statistical modeling (like SAS or R). • Experience using machine learning algorithms. • **High proficiency** in the use of statistical packages. • Proficiency in statistical analysis, quantitative analytics, forecasting/predictive analytics, multivariate testing, and optimization algorithms. • Strong communication and interpersonal skills. • **Experience leading teams.** • **In-depth industry/business knowledge.**

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Explanation of Proficiency Level Definitions

Proficiency scale definitions are provided to help determine an individual's proficiency level in a specific competency. The rating scale below was created as a foundation for the development of proficiency level definitions used for assessments.

Being Developed: (BD)	Demonstrates **minimal** use of this competency; limited knowledge of subject matter area; needs frequent assistance and **close supervision** for direction. Currently developing competency.
Basic: (B)	Demonstrates **limited** use of this competency; basic familiarity of subject matter area; needs additional training to apply without assistance or with **frequent supervision.**
Intermediate: (I)	Demonstrates **working or functional proficiency** level sufficient to apply this competency effectively without assistance and with **minimal supervision;** working/functional knowledge of subject matter area.
Advanced: (A)	Demonstrates **in-depth proficiency** level sufficient to assist, consult to, or lead others in the application of this competency; in-depth knowledge in subject matter area.
Expert: (E)	Demonstrates broad, in-depth proficiency sufficient to be recognized as an **authority or master performer** in the applications of this competency; recognized authority/expert in subject matter area.

As you complete the competency assessment, read all of the proficiency level definitions for a competency (provided in the next section) and select the one that is most characteristic of the demonstrated performance. If more than one definition is descriptive, select the highest level that is typically exhibited.

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Summary Proficiency Matrix

The chart provides a summary of proficiency ratings.

Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Competencies			
Change Advocate: Identifies and acts upon opportunities for continuous improvement. Encourages prudent risk-taking, exploration of alternative approaches, and organizational learning. Demonstrates personal commitment to change through actions and words. Mobilizes others to support change through times of stress and uncertainty.	B	I	A
Communications for Results: Expresses technical and business concepts, ideas, feelings, opinions, and conclusions orally and in writing. Listens attentively and reinforces words through empathetic body language and tone.	I	A	E
Conceptual Thinking: Synthesizes facts, theories, trends, inferences, and key issues and/or themes in complex and variable situations. Recognizes abstract patterns and relationships between apparently unrelated entities or situations. Applies appropriate concepts and theories in the development of principles, practices, techniques, tools and solutions.	I	A	E
Information Seeking: Gathers and analyzes information or data on current and future trends of best practice. Seeks information on issues impacting the progress of organizational and process issues. Translates up to date information into continuous improvement activities that enhance performance.	I	A	E
Innovation: Improves organizational performance though the application of original thinking to existing and emerging methods, processes, products and services. Employs sound judgment in determining how innovations will be deployed to produce return on investment**.**	I	A	E
Problem Solving: Anticipates, identifies and defines problems. Seeks root causes. Develops and implements practical and timely solutions.	I	A	E
Teamwork: Collaborates with other members of formal and informal groups in the pursuit of common missions, vision, values and mutual goals. Places team needs and priorities above personal needs. Involves others in making decisions that affect them. Draws on the strengths of colleagues and gives credit to others' contributions and achievements.	I	A	E

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Proficiency Matrix

The following charts illustrate proficiency levels for each competency.

Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Competencies			
Change Advocate: Identifies and acts upon opportunities for continuous improvement. Encourages prudent risk-taking, exploration of alternative approaches, and organizational learning. Demonstrates personal commitment to change through actions and words. Mobilizes others to support change through times of stress and uncertainty.			
Being Developed (BD): Supports change initiatives by following new directions as directed and providing appropriate information. Asks for feedback and ideas on how to do a better job and tries new approaches.			
Basic (B): Participates in change initiatives by implementing new directions and providing appropriate information and feedback. Offers ideas for improving work and team processes. Experiments with new approaches and improves productivity through trial and error.	✓		
Intermediate (I): Participates in change programs by planning implementation activities with other change champions. Interprets the meaning of new strategic directions for the work group and sets objectives and standards. Implements monitoring and feedback systems. Evaluates progress and finds ways of making continuous improvements. Solicits and offers ideas for improving primary business processes. Improves effectiveness and efficiency through the involvement of peers and business partners by initiating new approaches.		✓	
Advanced (A): Leads the planning and implementation of change programs that impact critical functions/processes. Partners with other resource managers/change agents to identify opportunities for significant process enhancements. Recommends changes that impact strategic business direction. Sets expectations for monitoring and feedback systems and reviews performance trends. Evaluates progress and involves peers and team members in analyzing strengths and weaknesses in performance. Improves efficiency by spearheading pilots and planned functional change initiatives.			✓
Expert (E): Reviews, sponsors and approves recommendations for enterprise-wide change programs that impact cross functional key processes. Partners with other business leaders to identify opportunities for significant technology/process enhancements. Lobbies for changes that impact strategic business direction. Approves strategic monitoring criteria and reviews high impact enterprise performance trends. Evaluates progress against key performance drivers and assesses organizational opportunities and risks. Solicits the support of business leaders in planning and spearheading enterprise change initiatives.			

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Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Communications for Results: Expresses technical and business concepts, ideas, feelings, opinions, and conclusions orally and in writing. Listens attentively and reinforces words through empathetic body language and tone.			
Being Developed (BD): Speaks and writes to peers in ways that support transactional activities. Shares information and asks questions prior to taking action.			
Basic (B): Converses with and writes to peers in ways that support transactional and administrative activities. Seeks and shares information and opinions. Explains the immediate context of the situation, asks questions with follow-ups, and solicits advice prior to taking action.			
Intermediate (I): Conducts discussions with and writes memoranda to all levels of colleagues and peer groups in ways that support troubleshooting and problem solving. Seeks and shares relevant information, opinions, and judgments. Handles conflict empathetically. Explains the context of inter-related situations, asks probing questions, and solicits multiple sources of advice prior to taking action.	✔		
Advanced (A): Converses with, writes reports and creates/delivers presentations to all levels of colleagues and peer groups in ways that support problem solving and planning. Seeks a consensus with business partners. Debates opinions, tests understanding and clarifies judgments. Brings conflict into the open empathetically. Explains the context of multiple inter-related situations, asks searching, probing questions, and solicits expert advice prior to taking action and making recommendations.		✔	
Expert (E): Converses with, writes strategic documents and creates/delivers presentations to internal business leaders and as well as external groups. Leads discussions with senior leaders and external partners in ways that support strategic planning and decision-making. Seeks a consensus with business leaders. Debates opinions, tests understanding and clarifies judgments. Identifies underlying differences and resolves conflict openly and empathetically. Explains the context of multiple, complex inter-related situations. Asks searching, probing questions, plays devil's advocate, and solicits authoritative perspectives and advice prior to approving plans and recommendations.			✔
Information Seeking: Gathers and analyzes information or data on current and future trends of best practice. Seeks information on issues impacting the progress of organizational and process issues. Translates up to date information into continuous improvement activities that enhance performance.			

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Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Being Developed (BD): Asks questions and solicits procedural information that explains how day-to-day tasks are conducted. Collates facts and data. Checks and monitors progress of activities in area of responsibility. Seeks out the appropriate people for guidance when needed to get things done.			
Basic (B): Seeks information on both formal and informal processes. Uses appropriate tools, techniques and sources to gather, update and monitor information. Checks for accuracy of interpretation. Seeks out the appropriate people for guidance when needed depending on the type of issue.			
Intermediate (I): Utilizes a variety of information and data sources pertaining to organizational and professional trends. Checks the source for omission and accuracy. Identifies the sources that are appropriate for specific types of information. Checks for bias and omission. Seeks out the appropriate people to approach for guidance either formally or informally depending on the type of issue. Links information in a lateral as well as linear manner. Finds hidden data. Relates and manipulates data from various sources to create a fuller picture. Investigates and uncovers root causes of a problem or issue.	✓		
Advanced (A): Researches organizational and professional trends. Networks internally and externally on areas of interest and concern. Evaluates sources, and collates and compares findings for bias, omission and accuracy. Conducts objective analysis. Prioritizes information by source. Monitors systematically. Deploys resources (time, people, and systems) to ensure timely management reporting. Reviews and determines need for corrective action and/or business opportunities.		✓	
Expert (E): Studies environmental, business and technological trends and forecasts. Networks among thought leaders and strategic influencers. Differentiates data sources for validity, reliability and credibility. Tracks and synthesizes systemic benchmarking trends. Evaluates composite information in relation to its impact on decision-making and strategic implications. Sets expectations for and reviews management and key stakeholder reports. Assesses validity of business strategy recommendations against trend data. Steers senior leadership toward making informed, sound strategic decisions.			✓

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Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Innovation: Improves organizational performance though the application of original thinking to existing and emerging methods, processes, products and services. Employs sound judgment in determining how innovations will be deployed to produce return on investment.			
Being Developed (BD): Participates in problem-solving discussions and suggests ideas as opportunities arise. Accepts that new ways of doing things can improve individual and team results.			
Basic (B): Reacts open-mindedly to new perspectives or ideas. Considers different or unusual solutions when appropriate. Identifies opportunities for innovation and offers new ideas. Takes the initiative to experiment.			
Intermediate (I): Shares new ideas and consistently demonstrates openness to the opinions and views of others. Identifies new and different patterns, trends, and opportunities. Generates solutions that build upon, adapt, and go beyond tradition and status quo. Targets important areas for innovation and develops solutions that address meaningful work issues. Seeks to involve other stakeholders in developing solutions to problems. Takes calculated risks.	✔		
Advanced (A): Challenges conventional thinking and traditional ways of operating and invites stakeholders to identify issues and opportunities. Helps others overcome resistance to change. Seeks out opportunities to improve, streamline, reinvent work processes. Explores numerous potential solutions and evaluates each before accepting any, as time permits. Maintains balance between innovation and pragmatism when determining the practical application of new ideas. Makes lots of proposals, builds on others' ideas. Sees opportunities, open-minded. Develops new products or services, methods or approaches. Develops better, faster, or less expensive ways to do things. Fosters a non-judgmental environment that stimulates creativity.		✔	
Expert (E): Thinks expansively by combining ideas in unique ways or making connections between disparate ideas. Devises unusual or radically different approaches to deliver value added solutions. Analyzes previously used concepts, processes or trends and devises new efficiencies not obvious by others. Directs creativity toward effective implementation of solutions. Creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation. Sponsors the development of new products, services, methods, or procedures. Exhibits creativity and innovation when contributing to organizational and individual objectives. Employs sound judgment when selecting among various creative ideas for implementation.			✔

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Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Problem Solving: Anticipates, identifies and defines problems. Seeks root causes. Develops and implements practical and timely solutions.			
Being Developed (BD): Asks questions and looks for data that helps to identify and differentiate the symptoms and root causes of every day, defined problems. Suggests remedies that meet the needs of the situation and those directly affected. Escalates issues appropriately.			
Basic (B): Investigates defined issues with uncertain but limited cause. Solicits input in gathering data that help identify and differentiate the symptoms and root causes of defined problems. Suggests alternative approaches that meet the needs of the organization, the situation, and those involved. Escalates issues with suggestions for further investigation and options for consideration.			
Intermediate (I): Applies simple problem-solving methodologies to diagnose and solve operational and interpersonal problems. Determines the potential causes of the problem and devises testing methodologies for validation. Shows empathy and objectivity toward individuals involved in the issue. Analyzes multiple alternatives, risks and benefits for a range of potential solutions. Recommends resource requirements and collaborates with impacted stakeholders.	✓		
Advanced (A): Diagnoses problems using formal problem-solving tools and techniques from multiple angles and probes underlying issues to generate multiple potential solutions. Proactively anticipates and prevents problems. Devises, facilitates buy-in, makes recommendations and guides implementation of corrective and/or preventive actions for complex issues that cross organizational boundaries and are unclear in nature. Identifies potential consequences and risk levels. Gains support and buy-in for problem definition, methods of resolution, and accountability.		✓	
Expert (E): Anticipates long-term problem areas and associated risk levels with objective rationale. Uses formal methodologies to forecast trends and define innovative strategic choices in response to the potential implications of multiple integrated options. Generates and solicits the approval of senior leadership prior to defining critical issues and solutions to unclear, multi-faceted problems of high risk which span across and beyond the enterprise.			✓
Teamwork: Collaborates with other members of formal and informal groups in the pursuit of common missions, vision, values and mutual goals. Places team needs and priorities above personal needs. Involves others in making decisions that affect them. Draws on the strengths of colleagues and gives credit to others' contributions and achievements.			

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Title	Data Scientist I	Data Scientist II	Data Scientist III
Being Developed (BD): Participates willingly by supporting team decisions, assisting other team members, and doing his/her share of the work to meet goals and deadlines. Informs other team members about client-related decisions, group processes, individual actions, or influencing events. Shares all relevant and useful information.			
Basic (B): Takes initiative to actively participate in team interactions. Without waiting to be asked, constructively expresses own point of view or concerns, even when it may be unpopular. Ensures that the limited time available for collaboration adds significant customer value and business results.	✓		
Intermediate (I): Actively solicits ideas and opinions from others to quickly accomplish specific objectives targeted at defined business outcomes. Openly encourages other team members to voice their ideas and concerns. Shows respect for differences and diversity, and disagrees without personalizing issues. Utilizes strengths of team members to achieve optimal performance.		✓	
Advanced (A): Consistently fosters collaboration and respect among team members by addressing elements of the group process that impedes, or could impede, the group from reaching its goal. Engages the "right people," despite location or functional specialty, in the team by matching individual capabilities and skills to the team's goals. Works with a wide range of teams and readily shares lessons learned.			✓
Expert (E): Identifies and improves communication to bring conflict within the team into the open and facilitate resolution. Openly shares credit for team accomplishment. Monitors individual and team effectiveness and recommends improvement to facilitate collaboration. Considered a role model as a team player. Demonstrates high level of enthusiasm and commitment to team goals under difficult or adverse situations; encourages others to respond similarly. Strongly influences team strategy and processes.			

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