

# Look for These 7 Characteristics Before Hiring a Data Scientist

Data is being collected in droves, but most of the time, people don't know what to do with it. That's why [data scientists](#) are hot commodities in the startup world right now. In fact, between 2003 and 2013, employment in data industries [grew about 21 percent](#) -- nearly 16 percent more than overall employment growth. It's a fairly new concept, but these people are so valuable because they understand the significance of data for your business and how you can use it.

Using analytics, firms can discover patterns and stories in data, build the infrastructure needed to properly collect and store it, inform business decisions and guide strategy. Access to sufficient and robust data is vital to sustained startup growth.

Companies need to incorporate data science into their business models as early as possible while they're taking risks and making crucial decisions about the future. But how do you know whether your company is ready to go the extra mile and hire a data scientist?

First, you need to make sure you can afford to hire one. On average, a single data scientist costs a company [\\$100,000 annually](#). A team of data engineers, machine learning experts and modelers can cost millions.

Smaller companies may need to create software solutions and invest time in building revenue to ensure they can actually utilize a data scientist's skills. Tools such as [Tableau](#), [Qlik](#) and [Google Charts](#) can help you plot and visualize the results of your data collection, connect this information to dashboards and quickly glean actionable insights.

Once your business is ready to make a larger investment to gain a competitive edge, there are several key traits to seek out in potential candidates. The best data scientists are:

## 1. Skilled.

All the data in the world won't illuminate much if the scientist analyzing it doesn't possess practical IT skills, experience with the tools mentioned above and a thorough understanding of basic security practices. A solid background in mathematics and statistics is also an indispensable trait; this demonstrates an intellectual rigor and the ability to confidently synthesize and massage many types of data sets.

**Related:** [Want Big Data to Help Your Marketing Team? Hire a Data Scientist.](#)

## **2. Aware.**

Armed with a thorough understanding of the pressures inherent to certain industries, skilled data scientists can effectively enlighten the decision-making process. To this end, interview recruits about how they view the competitive climate at the moment.

## **3. Proven.**

A good way to guarantee you hire the best data scientist for your needs is to ask each contender to develop a sample presentation based on a specific set of data you provide. Then, pursue the candidates who convey real vision, robust understanding and deep insight.

**Related:** [4 Things a Data Scientist Can Do for Entrepreneurs](#)

## **4. Entrepreneurial.**

Data scientists energize enterprise through discovery. Natural curiosity and enthusiasm for solving big problems coupled with an ability to transform data into a product may place one candidate above the rest.

## **5. Agile.**

Just as successful startup teams depend on across-the-board versatility, data scientists must be agile enough to quickly modify their methods to suit changes within a particular industry.

## **6. Intuitive.**

You want this person to beat you to the punch when it comes to anticipating questions that data could answer. Look for someone who has a keen sense for future data applications.

## **7. Strong communication.**

Insight that can't be expressed is worthless. Good data scientists are able to uncover data patterns and are willing to explain those patterns in clear and helpful ways through thoughtful and open communication. They should know how to present visualizations of data and tell a story through numbers.

The perfect complement to a scaling, booming startup is a data scientist with a killer skill set. By sharing the burden and excitement of making crucial business decisions, this single hire can take your startup from data zero to data hero in no time.