

ATOM: Data Science Interviews

...

A Lively Discussion on Interviewing

Hanna Landrus

Quick Poll

- Raise your hand if you are hiring a data scientist, have tried to hire one recently, or plan to in the near future.
- Raise your hand if you have interviewed for a data science position recently or plan to in the near future.
- Blink twice if you fall in the second group but your coworkers are here.

Who Is This Person? Context and My Bias

Hanna Landrus

@hanna on PuPPy slack

Uncropped slack photo (join the slack, it is great) ->

- Math background
- Two years experience as a data analyst/scientist at a medium sized startup
- Have been both an interviewer and interviewee in the last year, mostly startups
- Outside of data I love to climb, paint, and bake



What Is a Data Scientist?

Currently there is no singular definition BUT you need to know your own definition.

Job Posters:

- Have projects in mind
- Make it clear your definition in the job posting
- Get buy in that everyone on the team has the same definition

Job Seekers:

- Focus on job posting that match your goals
- Keep an open mind if not, sometime job posting are poorly written
- Be wary of the data science platypus¹

What Makes You Not Apply to a Job?

- If it sounds like they have no idea what they are trying to hire
- Obvious errors
- Not being able to see myself in the position² i.e. gendered language
- If the buzzword ratio is too high
- If I can't find team members I could work with on LinkedIn
- And...?

When Should You Hire a Jr. vs. Sr. Data Scientist?

Proverbial truths that help no one:

Hiring a senior data scientist is hard

Getting a job as a junior data scientist is hard

Considerations:

- Mentorship from the existing team
- Taking a risk on someone with no experience.
- If we want to meet the growing demand for data science we need to hire and mentor new people

What Method Is Best for Testing Technical Skills?

Methods: whiteboard, take home, online/in person programing, conceptual/problem solving

Considerations:

- How do you measure the success of a skills test?
- Is it better to reduce false positives or false negatives?
- Should you test general aptitude or specific skills?
- Whose time is more valuable candidates or interviewers?
- Is it possible to simulate real working conditions?

How Should You Execute Technical Challenges?

- Do your challenges before giving them to candidates
- Aim for as much consistency as you can i.e. try and be scientific
- Treat them like you would a colleague while working through a hard problem
- Make sure you are testing the skills you want and not peripheral skills
- And....?

How Should You Take Technical Challenges?

- Communicate your thought process
- Stop chasing the last interview and study for who is giving the next one
- Learn all the ways someone can ask the same question
- Practice discussing technical things with technical people (Thanks ATOM!)
- And...?

Other Data Science Interview Related Topics You Want to Discuss?



References

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f-XXR9j6m8>
2. <https://blog.wikimedia.org/2017/02/02/hiring-data-scientist/>
3. <http://qethanm.cc/2018/01/30/common-mistakes-in-data-science-hiring-part-2/>

Thank you!

Hanna Landrus

hannalandrus@gmail.com

@hanna on PuPPy slack

<http://pugetsoundpython-slack.herokuapp.com>