



Interview Questions

Culture and Fit Interview

Culture & Fit

- Today we will cover some culture fit questions your interviewers are likely to be interested in.
 - These questions might come up as part of other interviews, and will likely be asked indirectly.
 - It helps to keep what the interviewer is looking for in the back of your mind.
- You may also get broad questions about what kinds of work you enjoy and what motivates you.
 - It's useful to have an answer ready, but there may not be a "right" answer the interviewer is looking for.

Are you specifically interested in the product/company/space you'd be working in?

- It helps to prepare by thinking about the problems the company is trying to solve, and how you and the team you'd be part of could make a difference.

Do you care about impact?

- Even in a research-oriented corporate environment, I wouldn't recommend saying that you don't care about company metrics, and that you'd love to just play with data and write papers.

Will you work well with other people?

- I know it's a cliché, but most work is collaborative, and companies are trying to assess this as best they can.
- Avoid bad-mouthing former colleagues, and show appreciation for their contributions to your projects.

Are you willing to get your hands dirty?

- If there's annoying work that needs to be done (e.g. cleaning up messy data), will you take care of it?

Are you someone the team will be happy to have around on a personal level?

- Even though you might be stressed, try to be friendly, positive, enthusiastic and genuine throughout the interview process.

Your Background

You should be prepared to:

- give a high-level summary of your education and experience
- do a deep-dive into a project you've worked on (or anything on your resume!)

The deep-dive doesn't have to be directly related to the position you're interviewing for (though it can't hurt), but it needs to be the kind of work you can have an in-depth technical discussion about.

Your Background

To prepare:

- Review any papers/presentations that came out of your projects to refresh your mind on the technical details.
- Practice explaining your project to a friend in order to make sure you are telling a coherent story.
- Keep in mind that you'll probably be talking to someone who's smart but doesn't have expertise in your particular field.
- Be prepared to answer questions as to why you chose the approach that you did, and about your individual contribution to the project.



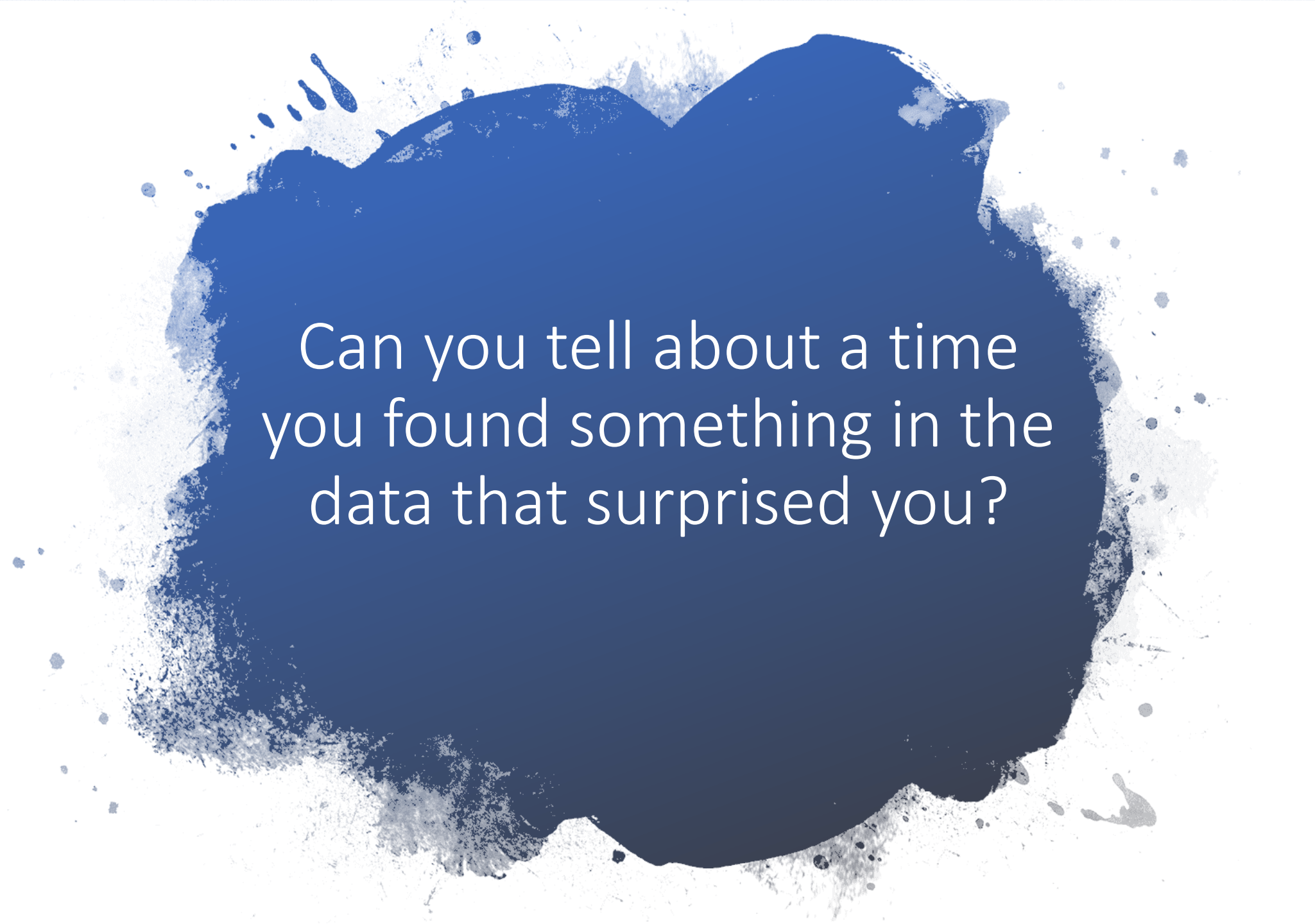
What's the project you
worked on that had the
biggest impact?

Discussion

For this answer, if you have done any data science projects for a company, you want to use one of those instead of a non-data science project.

On the other hand, if you've only done data science projects for personal use or class, you can highlight another project. The biggest thing here is to focus on the impact to the business.

Saying "I built a model with 90% accuracy!" is not what they're looking for; they want to understand how someone used the model, tool, or analysis you built and why it mattered.



Can you tell about a time
you found something in the
data that surprised you?

Discussion



In this answer we used an example where we were surprised by what is essentially a data quality issue for our use-case.



But you could answer instead about a time your intuition just didn't match with the results; for example, an exploratory data analysis you did of the reddit sub-thread on data science where you thought the word count of posts would correlate positively to the number of comments but it turned out there was a negative correlation



This question is looking to see that you think about your data before simply diving into it. It also is testing that you don't just try to confirm your initial hypothesis but rather let yourself be surprised by results and adapt given the new information.

Give me an example of when you took an unpopular stance in a meeting with peers and your leader and you were the outlier.

What was it, why did you feel strongly about it, and what did you do?

Discussion

This answer uses the STAR approach: situation, task, approach, result. This is a classic framework for answering behavioral interview questions, as it provides a structure for the answer that is easy to follow.

When thinking of a good example for this question, you want to find a situation that had a positive result, not “and then we never spoke again” or “I got him fired.” You also want the disagreement to be business-related not “we disagreed how to load the office dishwasher.”

Interviewers here are looking to see if you can empathize with someone you disagree with and avoid bad-mouthing them or blaming others for your problem.

What do you do when you don't know how to solve a data science related problem?

Discussion

Data science is a field where you'll be constantly learning and challenged by problems you've never seen before, so it's important that you develop a few strategies for getting unstuck.

One thing this question is looking for is that you've developed strategies for outside of the classroom setting where you have an answer sheet, classmates, and a professor all there to help you.

You'll potentially need to tailor this answer to the company you're talking to: if you say your main strategy is asking your data scientists colleagues, and you're interviewing to be the first data scientist, that will be a red flag.

Describe a data science project in which you worked with a substantial programming component.

What did you learn from that experience?

In any of these projects, have you had to deal with dirty data?

What kinds of tests do you run to validate the quality of your data?

What is the most common problem you find?

Tell me about a decision for which data and analysis weren't sufficient to provide the right course and you had to rely on your judgment and instincts.

Give me two to three examples. They don't have to be big strategic decisions – could be big or small.

Give me an example of a time when you didn't think you were going to meet the commitments you promised.

How did you identify the risk and communicate it to stakeholders?

What was the outcome?