

## MY GOALS: 17 MONTHS & BEYOND

### Story Behind My Quest for Data Science Study

It feels like a throwback to write about my learning goals and career plans with respect to data science. This is so because, a little over 2 years ago, I came to a crossroads between further education and career. Hitherto, I had graduated with a 2:1 in bachelor degree in Computer Science, then a teaching assistant in the same university for a year, and further on a year's experience with an e-commerce start-up initially as an intern and finally as a Web Traffic Analyst. After these experiences, I switched up to a more administrative role in a financial institution, but sooner than later, my natural leaning towards numbers and statistics made me create a special role in the company - I developed metrics for measuring loan performance and field officers' performance. This development caught the eye of the senior management of the company and my reports became a weekly necessity and helped in three departments of the company: HR, Credit and Risk and Business Operations. I was very excited on Monday mornings because that was when I pull the data from the system to analyze, update the dashboards and write reports. I went on to complete a Duke University Coursera course: *Business Metrics for Data-Driven Companies* to further satisfy my growing passion for data analytics. I would try as often as possible to upgrade my report to include new insights from the weekly financial data after that course.

I was satisfied with my work but that would change after some months, I was tired of using Microsoft Excel, I knew there could be more efficient ways and more insights in the data I was working with. I knew I had to upgrade in this path and so following this dilemma, I did some extensive reading around the career opportunities in data analytics. Then after a over a period of introspection, I decided to search for postgraduate training in the that direction. It was a pain intially until I finally landed a scholarship opportunity to study in China. I quit my job and left for China, much to my disappointment, though I was admitted to the computer science major, the professor who selected me was an ardent information security researcher. She made me understand my mathematics background and teaching assistant experience (Mathematics of Cryptography) impressed her. In summary, in July, 2019 I graduated the master degree with a 3.79 GPA and a practical project employing the power of blockchain (Ethereum) to assure cloud data integrity.

As far as a year ago, I had started exchanging emails with ELU - the passion for data science couldn't have been quenched by my studies then! More recently, I had enrolled in an intensive 40-hour Python for Data Analysis bootcamp with Le Wagon Chengdu just before the ELU course started. Also some few weeks ago, I instructed the first *Python for Beginners* workshop on campus as the Campus Ambassador for Le Wagon Chengdu. I am keen on becoming a data scientist, my academic training and perseverance so far makes me sure about this now more than ever!

## The Competencies I want to Develop

With the experience of my master degree, I became keener about the details of the Data Science being offered here. I must say that the Leadership bootcamp component resonates a lot with my previous experiences. Working with company data and deriving insights goes along with strategic leadership and communication skills. I am glad it is a core component of the programme and that I can learn more from here.

I want a solid command over Python programming. I have read many articles with focus on Python vs R, Python vs Julia etc. and I agree with most of these articles that Python has an edge over the other languages, and this advantage keeps growing. This programme's use of Python as the main language is good news for me.

After gaining solid command over Python programming, I'd expect a natural progression into proficient quantitative analysis skills. Being a successful data scientist, I believe, hinges on this strength. Through exercises, projects and workshops, I expect to gain exponential proficiency in quantitative analysis.

Timely and proficient communication is one key skill required, and I want to be able to develop that in this programme. I want to be a better storyteller with the ability to back the stories with compelling visualized facts.

The next progression I believe is to build intuition for creating data products. I want to be able to understand multi-layered systems that create data for further analyses. I am certain this knowhow can birth an entrepreneurial spirit in me.

In summary, I want to hone my leadership skills together with the four other competencies aforementioned.

## My Key Learning Goals

Coming into this programme I set these goals to guide me:

- Be active, open-minded and friendly: I graduated from a university of about 1000 international students from about 80 countries, on top of that I served as an executive of the International Students' Union with diverse colleagues so I do appreciate diversity well enough. As this program brings together people from all walks of life, I set out to be extra welcoming to all. Unlike the regular online courses, I also decided to be intentionally active, contributing where I have prior knowledge or experience and learning from all.
- Respect deadlines: for all assignments I will do my best to complete and submit them in time.
- Manage my time efficiently: in order to complete exercises and projects, I have to manage my time properly.
- Make time for workshops: I will do my best to attend all workshops

- Follow all mentors/instructors closely: I decided to follow all mentors and instructors of ELU on LinkedIn to take inspiration from their professional lives to help shape my choices and drive. I also decided to make good use of the mentorship time to learn directly from my mentor.

Fortunately, these goals are still relevant after my programme, hence I will continue pursuing them even after completing the programme.

## My Career Goals

I find one attractive spot of this programme in this very statement on the landing page of ELU's website:

*"...We offer post-graduate degree programmes to equip you with job-ready skills that are highly demanded by employers of digital economy. Join ELU for a brighter future!"*

- To be job-ready by May 2020
- To enter the Amsterdam labour market by mid-2020
- To be available for ELU instructor/mentor role for the November 2020 intake and beyond
- To be a trusted data science professional with a well-balanced leadership and effective communication skills
- To start earning fat paychecks

## My Goals & This Program and My Future Plans

I have come a long way to find a programme that resonates with my personality, dreams and aspirations. I have never been excited about a training like this in my entire academic life. The combination of Data Science and Leadership is a great feature of this programme, and for that I give kudos to the bearers of the vision, the board and entire working force!

One of my future aspirations is to set up Data Science Ghana akin to Data Science Lisbon as lead by one of ELU's mentors. I have actually already started something of the sort with a more experienced data science professional in Ghana, we have a WhatsApp page where we share information on the global developments in data science. We are currently planning for our first free webinar on *Python for Beginners* like I did some weeks back.

Overall, my future plans are primarily two sided: become a successful data scientist and give back to my society!

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