**Six Months as a Machine Learning Engineer: What do you need to hear?**

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Hello! It's been months here as I took time off so I could face my work and settle in properly. Now I am back. I will post twice a month as I used to and shuffle my content around tutorials, experiences and tips for becoming a data professional.

If you are new to my page, hi! I am Qudirah. I started writing about my journey as a data scientist in Nigeria to share what I have learned (helps me retain them), keep track of what I have learned and meet more people like me ( I have done way less of this). Around July last year, I got a role as a machine learning engineer, and since then, I paused my writing, but now I am ready to share my experience so far. I will do this in the form of an interview using some questions I have gotten over time.

**Q: So, how did I land the role?**

It was pretty fated. I am a Muslim, and we tend to believe in fate. For example, you go to an apple store and get an apple, but have you ever thought back that since the apple's seed has been planted, your name has been written on it? Is this meant for Qudirah or something? That is precisely how I feel about the role. I think it was just meant to fall in place. I have had better interviews and not landed the jobs due to one thing or the other. I didn't apply for this one. The recruiter texted me on LinkedIn, and I went through about four interviews. Two were informal, and two were very formal and brutal. They were tough. The questions I have answered and studied several times are different from the ones I was asked. I thought I messed up and never expected the role. I had evenmoved on.

**Q2: Right. But what are the key things you did that brought about that moment?**

Being active on LinkedIn. And I have a lot of people using the 'I don't know what to post. LinkedIn can be so intimidating bla bla bla' excuse and I agree. I feel that way too. I can't/won't write a 1000-word story about how I completed a course on DataCamp, but when I write here, I share it there. When I finish a course, I share the certificate there. It has become like a dumping ground for my achievements. I include a sentence or two describing what the post is and dump it. I also optimized my page with the job title I wanted so that I could show up when recruiters search. My resume, certifications, and everything else are there. This is a [link](https://www.linkedin.com/in/qudirah-alimi-82b60b189/) to my page, and I will work on a separate post for LinkedIn optimization.

Secondly, writing also helped. My whole story and everything was out there, so my work life and capabilities were easy to stalk, and it was easier for them to know if I was worth the shot or not.

Thirdly, always practice. Practising on Hackerrank helped me. Most of my questions were not straightforward. They were those kinds of questions where they wanted to check your approach to problem-solving, and solving many questions on Hackerrank helped. I am starting a series on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/learnpywithq/) where I post questions every Monday and then the solution every Friday. The key is brainstorming, exercising mentally, and expanding your problem-solving skills. Those are all from what I can remember.

**Q3: So, how has the journey been so far?**

Uhh. It was pretty hectic at first. I had gone from applying for jobs serially to working full-time, which was what I wanted, but it took me time to settle. I paused from things, ghosted my socials for a while, and even now, I am still finding my feet.

**Q4: As a machine learning engineer, what skills have been helpful on your job?**

Communication. Many of us have written communication on our resumes, but I didn't realize how essential it was till I started working. Every bit of your work has to be communicated. What are you doing, what are you going through, what is holding you back? I had a lot of issues with that when I started. I often ramble when talking, which makes people more confused about what I am explaining. I am getting better. Keep it short, simple, and easy to grasp. I have only been working with Python on the technical side of things. I am enormously working on data cleaning. I have heard a lot about how, in reality, data is always dirtier, but I have experienced it first-hand a whole lot now. Data is sometimes not available; you make do with what you have. Also, I have read a lot that a data scientist is just a software engineer with statistical knowledge and boy, that is true. I have had to deploy using Flask and then to a production environment using AWS Ec2 instance and docker mainly, which were skills I picked up along the way. I won't lie; it has been hectic and fun—a big emphasis on FUN.

**Q5: What do you love and hate about your job?**

I love the work pace. It is healthy, and I like that because I sometimes overwork and feel burnt out after about two or three months so this environment gives me the balance I needed. The company also builds different solutions, so there are different fields to explore and many fun things to do. It is always fun having multiple projects. What do I hate? hmmm… I don't know. I get tired sometimes and get motivated by the bills I have. Lol. But that's an adult thing I guess.

**Q6: Advice to entry levels?**

Post what you do as much as you can. Try out projects that interest you and even refine old projects. Don't be embarrassed by those old projects. I always leave them around because it shows my progress, but even I got hired because of my Netflix recommender system, which was the first project I did straight out of school. I would call it basic, but my crop recommender project, the first project I ever did as an ML engineer, is currently beneficial in one of the projects I am handling, and that's just wild to me. So do what speaks to your soul, do your best and don't sabotage who you are. As an ML engineer, your backend skills matter a lot. You stand out more by being able to perform an end-to-end project, which is cleaning, augmenting (when necessary), wrangling, visualizing your data, modelling, deploying and evaluating your solutions. So do that. Strengthen your skills and be better. Also, always practice.

**Bonus advice for those who have gotten a role but are still settling (like me)**: My line manager's advice before the year ended was to do more than my job. I always do what I am asked, but I need more. Layoffs are now a trend and even huge companies have massive layoffs, so how do you stand out? By doing more. Pay attention in meetings and calls, take charge when you can and practically do more than your job.

And that will be all. If there are more questions you would love to ask, then let's hear them. If I get quite a handful, I will have a part two. Bye. Till next time.

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