

## 4 Interview a Data Scientist

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Make contact with and interview (for example, over a coffee meeting) a data scientist or, preferably, a manager of data scientists working in industry.

**The name of the person you interviewed, who they work for and what is their role (include a link to their LinkedIn profile)**

**Kevin Chai** Lead Data Scientist at Curtin University,  
Curtin Institute for Computation  
Perth, Australia  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kevin-chai-1a135a/>

- Did PhD in datamining
- Health and medicine post-doc
- **Stack:** Python, Scikit-learn, TensorFlow, Keras, Scikit-image

**the date, time and approximate length of the interview**

19 Sept, 1pm. For 1 hour.  
(It was the first time he was available)

**If you could work on any problem, what would it be?**

- Tend to build prototypes
- Funding is coming from R&D
- Work with Power ledger and cryptos
- **It's all about silly methods that change the world**

I have a history in health and medicine, and there are lots of places where that can grow. At Curtin, I've worked with a mix of projects including npl, material science, astronomers, and bioinformatics.

I'm not big on the fact that data science has gotten big, but I do enjoy it's *impact* on the world.

**What are bad recommendations you hear in data science?**

Trying to get universities to compete with companies like Deloits

**A hammer and a nail cost \$1.10, and the hammer costs one dollar more than the nail. How much does the nail cost?**

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**Give me an example of a time when you solved an analytically difficult problem.**

Craters on mars

- Planetary scientists wanted to look back millions of years using craters.
- The real problem: is trying to understand the past.
- Solution: Why not also look at mountains and river beds?

## What do you ask clients?

- What problem do you have?
- Do you have the data to solve it

## Should I work in deloits, contractor, open source projects, uni?

- Open source:
  - Helps with your CV
  - Is good early for prestige
- Expected to be a unicorn
  - Soft skills
  - Ability to present because data-science is popular
- Machine learning = researcher
- Data scientist = engineer

## Tell me something that's true that almost nobody agrees with you on

- Uni isn't necessary
- see nano-degrees
  - Shows people have a passion for tech
- Need to add critical thinking skills

## What do data-scientists hate?

- Time-wasting
- Being presented half-baked solutions rather than problems to solve
- Change management:
  - Can be difficult if people think their jobs will be automated
  - Can focus instead on helping with their job, like analysing CT scans

## What question would a data-scientist ask you in this interview? (That I wouldn't know to ask)

- Are there any other methods other than neural networks to solve the problem.
  - Eg. Back propagation
  - Genetic algorithms (Uber is doing this <https://eng.uber.com/deep-neuroevolution/>)