First Meetup Event Experience

Meetup event: ‘How Machine Learning is Used to Develop a Framework to Identify Safety Incidents’

Speaker: Dr Beverly Wright

Organizers: Big Bang Data Science

Location: Alpharetta, GA

Date: September 24, 2018

Big Bang Data Science is the only meetup group within 25 miles radius from my residence. I joined this group about 2 months ago. After receiving an invitation from the organizer Mr. Medwani to attend their upcoming event, I sent him a thank you email. He was very friendly. He replied me back within a few hours. I sent him a follow up email with a few questions to get some guidance on how to spend my time fruitfully at the event. He was kind enough to answer all my questions and also shared his cellphone number.

On the day of the event I was very nervous (as expected). I entered the event hall with apparent look of incompetence and inferiority on my face. With a shaky tone, I asked one of the attendees who the organizer was. Mr. Medwani immediately came forward and shook hands with me. He tried to make me feel comfortable. He also gave some broachers with details about their organization and what programs they offer. In the mean time, Dr Beverly started her lightning talk on her recent projects. The biggest takes for me from the lecture were:

1. EDA is a never-ending pain for every data scientists regardless of the experience levels.
2. Real life data is a nightmare; it can be all categorical and a mess beyond imagination
3. Real life solutions don’t need to have high accuracy all the time
4. Feature engineering is one of the keys to the successful model
5. Steps most data scientists usually take to solve real life data problems
6. Life of a data scientist is not as flowery as I thought

After the lecture came the part of embarrassments. Most of the attendees were either a prominent employee of the company he/she is working with or a CEO of the company. Only two other attendees were at the beginner level who were more prepared and skilled in networking than me. I finally managed to start a conversation with a few of the senior level data scientists and get connected with them on linked in. Unfortunately, our conversations did not last for more than few minutes, for I ran out of questions to ask them.

At the end of the program, Mr. Medwani invited me to join his training program and offered me an internship after that. He is still in touch with me. Even though I have not enrolled in their training program, they gave me a temporary access to their online lectures. They also sent me a few software info that they use for their program and hack-a-thon projects.

Overall it was great experience for me. I did enjoy the event and the company of some accomplished people. Their advices and support were really very informative as well as effective to get ready for my career in data science. One important thing I learned that path to be a data scientist is not an easy one.