

Data Science in DC: Business and Talent Development Discussion

Notes from Discussion on 4/11/18

Talent Pathways Opportunities and Challenges

How might we strengthen the talent pipeline and career pathways into the data science industry?

- The big firms such as Booz Allen, Deloitte, and EAB are **hiring fresh graduates, giving them work experience, and leveling them up**. But hiring talent from these firms expensive for smaller firms.
- There is a lot of **confusion in the industry around definitions**. For example, data scientist vs. data analyst, it's not clear what skills people have when they use these terms.
 - Many companies call themselves data companies and use buzz words such as “artificial intelligence” and “big data”. **This makes it difficult for companies that are “pure” data science to market themselves.**
 - General Assembly developed a [Standards Board](#) to help develop **clear, unbiased standards that define and validate skill sets to help deal with this definition issue.**
- Many people get their jobs through going to **Data Science Meetups in DC**.
 - It's not enough to just go to meetups and introduce yourself, you need to **demonstrate the skills you have to the employer**
- At General Assembly, most students already have an undergrad or graduate degree. The key to getting a job is **demonstrating to employers that you can solve a real business case in a creative and compelling way**. While many of their students end up working at consulting companies, some work for startup companies as well.
 - General Assembly also does a lot of trainings for companies such as Booz Allen & Deloitte to **provide training in new skills to existing employees.**
- Many companies that are federal government contractors **must hire people with a minimum of 5 years' experience**, and oftentimes need a Master's Degree.
- [DC Youth Corp](#) provides training to DC youth by providing them **access to tech-enabled opportunities.**
- DCPS is starting to identify that they need to work on their curriculum earlier to prepare students for bachelor's degrees. They have begun to reach out to local employers but this can be a challenge as **employer needs change faster than the curriculum can adjust**. There is a need for DCPS to be more aware of the trends so that they can be nimbler with their curriculum.
- The DC Department of Employment Services offers the **On the Job Training program** which provides **reimbursement of wages for up to 75% for up to 6 months.**
- QX Branch offers **free 2-hour training sessions in quantum computing** for the DC community.

- **College scholarship programs** offered by DC Government to DC high schools students include [DC Mayor's Scholars Undergraduate Program](#) and [DC Tuition Assistance Grant \(DCTAG\)](#)

Business Development Opportunities and Challenges

What are the biggest opportunities and challenges facing data analytics companies/ organizations in DC?

- It would be helpful to have a **one-stop shop** where businesses and talent can go to find information about the data analytics in DC. This one-stop shop should include information about what is going on in the data science & analytics space, what services the government provides to support companies, and what partners are doing in the area.
 - Check out [Data Community DC](#) and the [Data Analytics Industry Profile](#) for some resources on this.
- A lot of government agencies are putting out RFIs but it's **very hard for small businesses to compete and win these contracts**. The small business may be able to get a subcontractor spot but the prime often gives the lowest margin work to these entities and it's work that they don't want to be doing.
- **Vendor fairs** at which companies interested in working with government could share their capabilities with procurement officers and others, would be helpful. OCP **reverse vendor fair** is coming up on [April 19th](#). Could be helpful to do this with more of an industry focus.