# Before You Hire That Data Scientist..
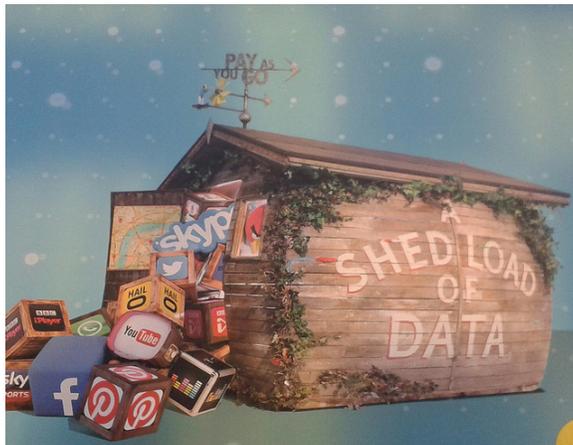
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Apparently, the only thing increasing faster than a data scientist's salary is the amount of information we're creating. Here's something to chew on and send over to your HR crew. Wired highlighted some figures from a recent study that showed the lure of big data.

**"According to Burtch Works' 2014 study of salaries for data scientists… those responsible for a team of 1-3 earn [a median salary of] $140,000 and those responsible for a team of 10 or more earn $232,500. By contrast, the mean average annual income for a lawyer in America was $131,990 in 2013, while doctors earned $183,940, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics."**

If you're thinking about how to accelerate your data strategy, what do you need to be thinking about? Is your burning platform really more data scientists?

## Who's The Audience For All That Analysis?

Michael Li, CEO at The Data Incubator, and yes, a data scientist, makes some interesting points in a recent HBR piece. He challenges us to think about the audience for our analytical work — is it for machines or humans?

In the context of machines, a lot of the data being crunched is for online ads, high-volume financial transactions, or recommendation engines. If that's part of your model, you'll need more left-brain types, someone that tends to think in a more linear way. As Li mentions, "these data scientists are building very complex models ingesting enormous data sets and trying to extract subtle signals with machine learning and sophisticated algorithms."

They also tend to be automated, with very clear objectives like clicks and purchases.

according to LI. Their analysis might include assessing a product's impact, dissecting customer growth and retention, or sifting through research to deliver the right information to a client.

It also gets a bit more complicated when you bring those human decision makers into the fold — they're not data scientists! They're just trying to make heads or tails out of what you've delivered. In other words, your data scientist needs to be good at helping business people understand what story the data tells. And they have to speak in business terms, not data science jargon.

### Will Your Long-Term Strategy Demand More Data Analysis?

Data-driven approaches are reshaping parts of every industry, every day. There's downsides, yes, but what's happening is companies are figuring out that when data is properly managed and analyzed, it creates a more informed and agile business.

***Companies of all sizes should be looking for signs that their own business might become more data-driven.***

Think about the ecosystem that sprung up around the iPhone. Few of us would have predicted billions of downloads in the span of a few years. Now with wearables, the internet of things, and online sentiment analysis, there's plenty of possibilities for businesses to jump in as service providers, product companies, or content producers.

However your strategy unfolds, keep an eye on how your industry analyzes its data. That'll put you in a position to find the right people to build out your team when the time is right.

### Specificity Is The Goal

Once you're in a position to write a job requirement, go read some of Tom Davenport's commentary on the mistakes companies make when searching for data talent. Specificity should be the priority, according to Davenport.

A great way to get a sense of what Davenport describes is by looking at examples of the data type categories he pulled from job listings. You'll notice they go well beyond just using the "bigdata" catch-all.

- Bioinformatics with a strong genome data focus

- Syndicated marketing data

- Text from warranty claims

- Video of customers in stores

He also breaks down a few of the tools that your future data engineer might use.

- Hadoop, Pig, Hive, Python

- SAS, SPSS, R (typical statistical analysis tools);

- SQL, Business Objects, Cognos

- Excel

- Teradata, Informatica

But even as good as your candidate might be on paper, don't underestimate her ability to move the discussion beyond the algorithms and machines. Davenport summarizes it for us.

*"Survey results say that employers care more about the ability to communicate analytics than any other trait."*

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