Erick Castaneda
Data Scientist @ Sam's Club
(Phone Call) Walmart
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5:00 - 7:00 PM

In data science, a seasoned professional with an economics background shared insightful advice and experiences, shedding light on the multifaceted landscape of business-facing technical roles. Armed with a degree in economics from the University of Texas at Dallas rather than a conventional computer science background, the individual outlined a journey marked by learning the intricacies of business, ESPECIALLY mathematics, and coding, particularly Stata. The narrative began with a cautionary note on student debt, urging to be mindful of the costs associated with education, emphasizing that the degree's substance often eclipses the prestige of the institution. For skill development, he advocated leveraging online platforms such as Udemy, Coursera, and LinkedIn Learning. Erick underscored the pivotal role of SQL, data architecture, and algorithm creation, indicating a strong focus on building competencies that enable the generation of key performance indicators (KPIs) and informative charts. This insight offered a glimpse into the practical applications of data science within the business environment, where the ability to interpret and communicate data-driven insights is paramount. The discussion transitioned to pointers specific to a data scientist's role. The emphasis on SQL as a go-to tool and the importance of crafting queries highlighted the hands-on nature of the profession. Moreover, the individual delved into various business domains, including merchandising, real estate, and supply chain, revealing the diverse areas where data science intersects with organizational needs. The notion of a "center of excellence," a team designed to organize dimensions and provide business intelligence, showcased the integral role of data scientists in addressing organizational challenges. As the conversation unfolded, he projected a vision for the next five years, envisioning a data scientist's evolution towards dashboarding and data pipeline development. Drawing parallels with experiences at HEB, the individual illuminated the intricate web of data systems, where algorithms are harnessed to glean insights from colossal datasets—whether it be analyzing market basket patterns or discerning combinations of items frequently purchased together. The call to learn neural networks, Support Vector Machine, logistic regression, SQL, Python, and Power BI highlighted the technical acumen required in the field. Finally I learned valuable career advice, with him urging me to specialize in a particular area, like supply chain, for a more streamlined career trajectory. The importance of effective communication and networking was emphasized, as data scientists often find themselves engaging with diverse departments within a company. Practical tips, such as maintaining an organized repository of notes using tools like OneNote, showcased the significance of meticulous record-keeping in a profession where algorithms and code are indispensable. It concluded with a reflection on career development, a story from his own life about a manager who trusted in his abilities even when he did not which showed the importance of resilience and the understanding that mastery in data science is a journey, not

an immediate destination. Overall I would say the interview provided a comprehensive overview of the data science landscape from the vantage point of a business-facing practitioner. The insights shared, ranging from technical skills to career advice, served as a valuable guide for my future project.