

## WE THRIVE COLLECTIVE

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# Hire Data-Driven Problem Solvers

## A Better Interview Question Bank

*A comprehensive guide designed to help hiring managers and organizational leaders assess candidates' ability to use data for decision-making, problem-solving, and business impact. 215 questions across 11 competency areas.*

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## Introduction

Most interview processes are designed to confirm what a resume already says. Candidates walk in prepared to narrate their experience, interviewers ask questions they've been asking for years, and gut instinct fills in the rest. That's not evaluation. That's pattern matching.

After 15+ years building people systems for franchise groups, retailers, hospitality brands, agencies, and VC-backed startups, what I've seen consistently is this: the candidates who struggle in role are rarely the ones who lacked the right experience. They're the ones no one thought to ask how they think.

Most organizations treat data literacy as a technical skill. Something you need in analytics or finance. Everyone else just needs to be good at their job.

### **That assumption is expensive.**

When someone giving feedback or running a training conversation can point to what was actually measured rather than what felt like it happened, the dynamic shifts. Personal feelings don't disappear. They just stop being the only thing in the room. Results become the starting point. From there you can set goals that mean something, test whether a process change worked, and build toward improvement that holds.

What gets overlooked is the critical thinking layer. If the numbers don't make sense, that's information too. Maybe the intake process is inconsistent. Maybe there's a breakdown in how training is being delivered. Maybe the measurement is capturing

the wrong thing entirely. Garbage in, garbage out. Recognizing that data doesn't add up, and being willing to ask why, is its own skill. Even naming that your data is unreliable moves things forward. You cannot fix what you have not identified.

**This is why data-driven problem solving belongs in your hiring criteria for any role where someone gives feedback, influences a decision, or explains results to others. The person who can take a set of numbers, find the story in them, and communicate it clearly to the people in the room makes every team around them better.**

This question bank is built around that argument. It covers 215 questions across 11 competency areas specifically designed to surface how candidates approach ambiguity, use data, solve problems, and make decisions when the answer isn't obvious. Use what's relevant for your role. Skip what isn't. The goal is a sharper conversation, not a longer one.

If you want to talk through building a more intentional hiring process for your organization, that work is exactly what I do. You'll find my contact information at the end.

**Nicole Phommanorat, SHRM-SCP**  
*Founder, We Thrive Collective*

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## | How to Use This Guide

215 questions. 11 competency areas. Use what applies to the role you're filling. Mix questions across categories to get a fuller read on how someone thinks, not just what they know. A few things worth keeping in mind as you work through this:

- 1. Not every role needs every category.** Review the competency areas and pull what actually maps to the job requirements.
- 2. Go deeper than the answer.** These questions are designed to surface thought process. Ask candidates to walk you through their reasoning, not just their result.
- 3. Mix and match across categories.** A well-rounded interview pulls from multiple areas. Someone hiring for an ops role might weight project management, data-driven decisions, and stakeholder communication differently than a leadership role would.
- 4. Use the same questions across candidates.** Consistency makes comparison fair. Standardize what you ask so you're evaluating the same thing across the board.

**5. Adjust the framing to the level.** A director-level candidate and a coordinator are both problem solvers. The questions work across levels. Your follow-ups are where you calibrate depth.

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## | Data Analysis & Interpretation

- Describe a time when you had to analyze information to solve a problem at work. How did you approach gathering and organizing the relevant data?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to make sense of complex or conflicting information. What steps did you take to break it down and understand it?
- Can you share an example of when you had to verify the accuracy of information you were working with? How did you go about this process?
- Describe an instance where you had to identify patterns or trends in your work. How did you approach this task, and what tools or methods did you use?
- Tell me about a time when you had to present findings from your analysis to others. How did you prepare and deliver this information effectively?
- Share an experience where you had to collect data from multiple sources. How did you ensure the information was consistent and reliable?
- Describe a situation where you had to clean or organize messy data. What was your approach to making it usable?
- Can you give an example of how you've used data to track progress on a project or goal? What metrics did you choose and why?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze qualitative data (like customer feedback). How did you approach summarizing and drawing insights from this information?
- Describe an instance where you had to compare data over time to identify changes or trends. How did you structure your analysis?
- Can you walk me through how you typically validate data before making a decision based on it?
- Describe a time when you had to make sense of incomplete or ambiguous data. How did you proceed?
- Have you ever found an error in a dataset that others overlooked? How did you identify and correct it?
- How do you determine whether data is relevant to a specific business problem or goal?
- Tell me about a time when you had to explain a complex data analysis to someone who wasn't familiar with the technical details. How did you ensure clarity?
- Describe a project where you had to use data to forecast trends or future outcomes. What method did you use, and how accurate was it?

- Have you ever had to challenge assumptions using data? How did you do it, and what was the result?
  - Explain how you prioritize different types of data when making a business decision.
  - How do you ensure the data you use is free from bias or misrepresentation?
  - Can you give an example of a time when data analysis led you to change your perspective or approach on a project?
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## | Problem-Solving Approach

- Can you walk me through a complex problem you solved at work? What was your step-by-step process?
- Describe a situation where you had to solve a problem with incomplete information. How did you handle the uncertainty?
- Tell me about a time when you had to prioritize multiple issues that needed attention. How did you decide what to focus on first?
- Share an experience where you had to think creatively to solve a problem. How did you come up with your innovative solution?
- Describe a time when your initial approach to a problem didn't work. How did you adapt and what did you do differently?
- Can you give an example of how you've used root cause analysis to solve a recurring problem? What was your process?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to break down a complex problem into smaller, manageable parts. How did you approach this?
- Describe a time when you had to solve a problem that affected multiple departments or teams. How did you ensure a comprehensive solution?
- Share an experience where you had to solve a problem under tight time constraints. How did you balance thoroughness with the need for quick action?
- Can you walk me through a situation where you had to use a structured problem-solving method (like PDCA or Six Sigma)? How did you apply it?
- How do you ensure that the data you use to solve problems is accurate and relevant?
- Have you ever had to convince others to change a process based on data? How did you approach it?
- Can you describe a time when you faced resistance to a data-driven solution? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to use both qualitative and quantitative data to solve a problem. How did you balance the two?
- What techniques do you use to validate that a problem is fully solved rather than just temporarily fixed?
- Have you ever used A/B testing or experimentation to solve a business challenge? What was the outcome?

- Can you describe a time when you had to find a workaround for a problem due to limited data availability?
  - Tell me about a time when you had to challenge existing assumptions or business norms to solve a problem effectively.
  - What methods do you use to track the impact of a solution you implemented?
  - Can you provide an example where problem-solving through data led to a measurable business improvement?
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## | Data-Driven Decision-Making

- Tell me about a significant decision you made based on data. How did you ensure your interpretation was accurate?
- Can you give an example of a time when data contradicted your initial assumptions? How did you reconcile this and proceed?
- Describe a situation where you had to balance data-driven insights with other factors (like experience or intuition) in decision-making. How did you approach this?
- Share an experience where you used data to influence a business decision. How did you present your findings to convince others?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a quick decision based on limited data. How did you approach this, and what was the outcome?
- Describe a situation where you had to use data to support or refute a proposed course of action. How did you present your analysis?
- Can you share an example of how you've used data to predict future trends or outcomes in your work? What was your process?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision without having all the data you wanted. How did you proceed?
- Describe an instance where you used data to evaluate the success of a project or initiative. What metrics did you use and why?
- Share an experience where you had to use data to justify a resource allocation or budget decision. How did you build your case?
- How do you determine which data points are most critical when making a high-stakes decision?
- Have you ever had to deal with conflicting data sets? How did you determine which data to trust?
- Tell me about a time when you identified a gap in data availability that affected decision-making. How did you address it?
- Can you describe a situation where you had to measure risk using data before making a decision? What approach did you use?
- How do you ensure that the data you rely on for decision-making is accurate and unbiased?

- Have you ever had to explain a data-driven decision to someone who was skeptical of data? How did you communicate your reasoning?
  - What frameworks or methodologies do you use to incorporate data into your decision-making process?
  - Can you give an example of when you had to pivot a decision based on new data? What was the impact?
  - How do you track and measure the long-term impact of a decision you made using data?
  - Have you ever used data visualization tools to aid in making or presenting a decision? How did it help?
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## | Measuring Success & Performance

- How do you define success in your role using data? What specific benchmarks do you rely on?
- Can you describe a time when you set a performance goal and tracked your progress? What adjustments did you make along the way?
- How do you identify key performance indicators (KPIs) in your work? What factors do you consider?
- What metrics do you track regularly to ensure success? How do you use them to make strategic adjustments?
- Have you ever adjusted your approach based on data insights? Walk me through that process.
- How do you measure the impact of your work on overall company goals? What data points are most valuable?
- Tell me about a time when you used data to justify a business decision. How did you present your findings?
- How do you ensure alignment between business goals and the data you track? What steps do you take?
- What steps do you take to ensure your performance measurement is objective and accurate?
- How have you used data to improve your personal efficiency at work? Can you share an example?
- Have you ever identified a key performance metric that others were overlooking? How did it change decision-making?
- Can you describe a situation where you had to measure the effectiveness of a new initiative? What methodology did you use?
- Tell me about a time when you had to compare performance across different teams, locations, or time periods. How did you ensure a fair evaluation?
- How do you use historical performance data to make future improvements?

- Have you ever built a performance dashboard or reporting system? What metrics did you include and why?
  - Describe a time when data revealed that a project or strategy was not performing as expected. How did you respond?
  - How do you track and report on long-term performance trends rather than short-term gains?
  - Tell me about a time when you had to demonstrate ROI (return on investment) using data. What was your approach?
  - How do you use qualitative feedback (such as employee or customer surveys) alongside quantitative metrics to measure success?
  - What is the most important lesson you've learned about measuring performance effectively through data?
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## | Customer & Business Impact

- Tell me about a time you improved a customer experience using data. What was your approach?
- How do you track and measure customer satisfaction in your role? What adjustments have you made based on the results?
- Have you ever used data to adjust a process based on customer feedback? How did you implement changes?
- What data points do you use to assess business success in your role? Why do you prioritize these?
- How do you analyze trends in customer behavior? What insights have led to key business decisions?
- Describe a time when you used data to support a business case or proposal. How did you gather and present the data?
- What types of data are most important in evaluating company performance? How do you track them?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of a new initiative or campaign? What adjustments have you made based on findings?
- Have you ever built a report or dashboard to track key metrics? How did you ensure it was actionable?
- How do you communicate data findings to non-technical stakeholders? What strategies have been most effective?
- Can you describe a time when data analysis helped you reduce customer churn or improve retention?
- Have you ever used customer segmentation data to tailor business strategies? How did it impact the outcome?

- How do you ensure customer feedback is translated into measurable business improvements?
  - Tell me about a time when you identified a new revenue opportunity using data. What process did you follow?
  - How do you balance business goals with customer satisfaction metrics when making data-driven decisions?
  - Can you share an example of a time when operational data helped you streamline customer interactions?
  - Have you ever used predictive analytics to anticipate customer needs? What was the impact?
  - How do you ensure that data insights align with broader company objectives?
  - Tell me about a time when you identified a business risk through data analysis. What actions did you take?
  - How do you measure and communicate the long-term impact of customer-focused initiatives?
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## **Technical Skills & Tools**

- Tell me about a time you had to learn a new tool or reporting system on the job. How did you get up to speed and what did you do with it once you did?
- Can you share an example of how you've used spreadsheets or other basic data tools in your work? What did you use them for, and how did they help?
- Tell me about a time when you had to create a visual representation of data (like a chart or graph). How did you decide what type of visualization to use?
- Describe an instance where you had to work with a large amount of information. How did you organize and manage it effectively?
- How do you decide what information is worth tracking versus what creates noise? Can you give me an example?
- Can you give an example of how you've used data validation techniques in your work? What was your approach?
- Describe a time you had to pull together information from more than one source to tell a complete picture. What did that process look like?
- Have you ever looked at a report or dashboard and suspected the numbers were off? What did you do?
- Share an experience where you had to use technology to streamline a data-related process. What improvements did you implement and how?
- Can you walk me through how you typically set up a system to track important information in your role?
- Have you ever used a dashboard or reporting tool to monitor key metrics? How did it improve your work?

- How do you determine which tools or approaches are most appropriate for a given data problem?
  - Have you ever used a CRM or reporting tool to inform a decision? How did it change what you did?
  - Can you describe a time when you had to troubleshoot why data wasn't telling a consistent story? What steps did you take?
  - How do you ensure accuracy when pulling information from multiple places?
  - Have you ever had to help a colleague understand how to use a tool or interpret a report? How did you approach it?
  - What do you do to stay current on tools and approaches relevant to your work?
  - Describe a time you had to make a decision with imperfect or incomplete data. How did you account for the gaps?
  - Have you ever identified a flaw in how data was being collected or tracked? What did you do with that information?
  - Tell me about a time when getting clearer on the data changed the direction of a project or decision.
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## | Feedback, Training & Performance Conversations

- Tell me about a time you had to deliver feedback based on performance data. How did you use the numbers to frame the conversation?
- Describe a situation where data changed what you thought about someone's performance. What shifted and how did you handle it?
- Have you ever been in a feedback conversation where the data and the person's experience didn't match? How did you navigate that?
- Tell me about a time you used results or metrics to set a performance goal with someone. How did you make sure the goal was grounded in something measurable?
- Describe a time you noticed inconsistency in how performance was being tracked or measured across your team. What did you do with that information?
- Have you ever had to explain performance data to someone who pushed back on what it showed? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time you suspected the data you were using to evaluate performance wasn't accurate. How did you figure that out and what did you do next?
- Describe a situation where you used data to identify a training gap. How did you connect what you were seeing in the numbers to what was happening in practice?
- Have you ever tested whether a training or process change actually worked? What did you measure and what did you find?
- Tell me about a time you had to explain results to someone who wasn't comfortable with data. How did you make it land?

- Describe a situation where the data pointed to a systemic issue rather than an individual performance issue. How did you recognize that distinction and what did you do with it?
  - Have you ever used data to make the case for changing how something was being trained or taught? What was the outcome?
  - Tell me about a time when recognizing a flaw in your data actually helped you solve a problem faster. What was the flaw and how did you catch it?
  - Describe how you approach a performance conversation differently when you have strong data versus when the data is incomplete or inconsistent.
  - Have you ever had to separate what the numbers showed from what your gut was telling you in a performance or coaching conversation? Which did you follow and why?
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## | Data Ethics & Governance

- Describe a time when you had to handle sensitive or confidential information. What steps did you take to ensure its privacy and security?
- Share an experience where you had to consider the ethical implications of using certain data. How did you approach this situation?
- Tell me about a time when you had to ensure the accuracy and integrity of data you were working with. What measures did you take?
- Can you give an example of how you've promoted responsible use of data or information in your work? What was your approach?
- Describe a situation where you had to address potential biases in data or information. How did you identify and mitigate these biases?
- Tell me about a time when you had to explain data privacy regulations to colleagues. How did you ensure understanding and compliance?
- Share an experience where you had to handle a data breach or loss. What steps did you take to address and prevent future incidents?
- Describe a situation where you had to balance transparency with data protection. How did you navigate this challenge?
- Can you give an example of how you've ensured fair and ethical use of data in decision-making? What principles did you follow?
- Tell me about a time when you had to refuse a request for data due to ethical or privacy concerns. How did you handle this situation?
- How do you determine whether data collection methods comply with ethical guidelines and industry standards?
- Can you describe a situation where you had to ensure data compliance with legal or company policies? What steps did you take?
- Have you ever identified a case where data was being misused? How did you handle it?

- What frameworks or best practices do you follow to ensure ethical data governance?
  - How do you approach training or educating others on ethical data practices?
  - Can you share an example of how you've worked to make data governance processes more efficient or transparent?
  - Describe a time when you had to audit data sources for reliability and compliance. How did you conduct this review?
  - How do you assess the risks associated with using third-party data?
  - What role does bias detection play in your approach to ethical data analysis? How do you mitigate bias in your work?
  - Have you ever had to advocate for stronger data protection measures within your organization? How did you present your case?
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## **Communication & Stakeholder Management**

- Tell me about a time when you had to explain complex data to non-technical stakeholders. How did you ensure they understood the key insights?
- Describe a situation where you had to present data-driven findings that contradicted popular opinion. How did you approach this sensitive topic?
- Share an experience where you had to tailor your communication of data-driven insights for different audiences. How did you adapt your approach?
- Can you give an example of how you've used data visualization to communicate insights effectively? What was your process for creating this visualization?
- Tell me about a time when you had to manage stakeholders' expectations regarding data analysis or results. How did you handle this?
- Describe a situation where you had to defend your data-driven recommendations to skeptical colleagues. How did you address their concerns?
- Have you ever had to collaborate with other departments or teams to interpret and apply data insights? How did you ensure effective teamwork?
- Can you share an example of how you've used storytelling techniques to make data more engaging and memorable?
- Tell me about a time when you had to simplify complex data concepts for a general audience. How did you make the information accessible?
- Describe a situation where you had to use data to build consensus among diverse stakeholders. How did you align different perspectives?
- How do you ensure that data insights lead to actionable business decisions rather than just being reported?
- Have you ever had to present a data-driven recommendation to senior leadership? What was your approach?
- Can you describe a situation where data was misinterpreted by stakeholders? How did you correct the misunderstanding?

- Tell me about a time when you had to negotiate with stakeholders who had conflicting views on how to use data insights.
  - How do you handle pushback when stakeholders prefer to rely on intuition rather than data-driven recommendations?
  - Have you ever used interactive dashboards or reports to communicate data insights? How did they improve stakeholder engagement?
  - Describe a time when you had to train others on how to interpret and use data effectively. What approach did you take?
  - How do you balance the need for clear, concise communication with the complexity of data-driven insights?
  - Can you share an example of a time when you had to bridge the gap between technical and non-technical teams in a data-related project?
  - What strategies do you use to ensure that data-driven insights are received and acted upon by stakeholders?
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## **Project Management & Execution**

- Describe how you typically plan and organize a project that involves data analysis. What steps do you take to ensure its success?
- Share an experience where you had to manage multiple data-related tasks simultaneously. How did you prioritize and stay organized?
- Tell me about a time when you had to ensure the quality of data throughout a project. What measures did you put in place?
- Can you give an example of how you've improved a data-related workflow or process? What was your approach to optimization?
- Describe a situation where you faced unexpected challenges in a data project. How did you adapt and overcome these obstacles?
- Tell me about a time when you had to coordinate with multiple teams to complete a data-driven project. How did you ensure smooth collaboration?
- Share an experience where you had to meet tight deadlines for a data analysis project. How did you manage your time and resources?
- Describe how you typically document your data analysis process and findings. Why is this important and how do you ensure it's useful for others?
- Can you give an example of how you've used project management tools or techniques in your data-related work? What benefits did this bring?
- Tell me about a time when you had to pivot or change direction in the middle of a data project. How did you manage this transition?
- How do you ensure that data-driven projects align with overall business goals and priorities?

- Have you ever had to manage a project where key stakeholders had different expectations? How did you navigate that challenge?
  - Describe a situation where you had to track project performance using data. What metrics did you rely on?
  - Can you share an example of a project where you had to balance speed and accuracy in data analysis?
  - Tell me about a time when you had to communicate project risks related to data quality. How did you address them?
  - Have you ever managed a project where you had to integrate multiple data sources? How did you ensure consistency?
  - How do you handle scope changes in data-driven projects? What process do you follow to evaluate impact?
  - Describe a time when you had to implement a new data process within a team. How did you ensure successful adoption?
  - What role does continuous improvement play in your approach to project management? Can you give an example?
  - How do you measure the long-term success of a project that relied on data insights?
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## **Continuous Learning & Business Acumen**

- Describe a recent skill or tool related to data analysis that you've learned. How did you apply this new knowledge?
- Tell me about a time when you learned from a failed project or analysis. How did you use this experience to improve?
- Share an example of how you've improved a data process based on lessons learned. What was your approach to implementing these improvements?
- Can you describe how you balance the need for quick results with the desire for thorough analysis? How do you make this decision?
- Tell me about how you stay updated on new techniques or best practices in data analysis relevant to your role. What methods do you use for continuous learning?
- Describe a situation where you had to adapt your data analysis approach due to changing business needs. How did you manage this transition?
- Share an experience where you mentored or trained someone else in data analysis skills. What was your approach to teaching?
- Can you give an example of how you've incorporated feedback to improve your data presentation or communication skills?
- Tell me about a time when you had to unlearn an outdated approach to data analysis. How did you identify the need for change and adapt?
- Describe how you evaluate the effectiveness of your own data analysis methods. What criteria do you use and how do you implement improvements?

- How do you ensure that your data-driven insights align with broader business goals and strategies?
  - Have you ever identified a business opportunity through data analysis? What steps did you take to act on it?
  - Can you describe a time when you had to explain the financial impact of a data-driven decision to leadership?
  - How do you assess the competitive landscape using data? Can you provide an example?
  - What role does industry benchmarking play in your decision-making process?
  - Tell me about a time when you used data to influence strategic business planning.
  - How do you determine which data trends are worth acting on versus those that are just noise?
  - Have you ever worked on a cross-functional initiative that required you to align business and data objectives? How did you approach it?
  - What strategies do you use to measure the long-term impact of data-driven decisions on business outcomes?
  - Can you share an example of how you've helped an organization become more data-driven in its decision-making approach?
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## Final Thoughts: Building a Smarter Hiring Process

The candidates who will move your organization forward are the ones who can think clearly when information is messy, adapt when the data shifts, and make decisions without waiting for someone to hand them a playbook. That's what you're actually evaluating in these conversations.

A better question bank gets you past the rehearsed answer and into how someone actually operates. That's where the real signal is.

Building a more intentional hiring process, restructuring your talent strategy, or filling a critical leadership role takes more than good questions. If your organization is ready for that work, this is where it starts.

**Start the conversation at [we-thrive-collective.com/work-with-nicole](https://we-thrive-collective.com/work-with-nicole)**

*No pitch. No obligation. If there's alignment, we'll figure it out together.*

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## **Work With Nicole**

Consulting inquiries, speaking engagements, executive recruitment, and strategic partnerships:

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## **Connect on LinkedIn**

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