

Teamwork and Leadership in Data Science

Dr. Irina Kukuyeva

August 12, 2026

AI Due Diligence



AI Due Diligence

FEBRUARY 2025

When High Accuracy is not Very Accurate

Advice for AI diligence



FEB 3, 2025 • IRINA KUKUYEVA PHD

*"Half the money I
spend on advertising is
wasted; the trouble is,
I don't know which
half."*

ikukuyeva.substack.com/p/when-high-accuracy-is-not-very-accurate

AI Due Diligence

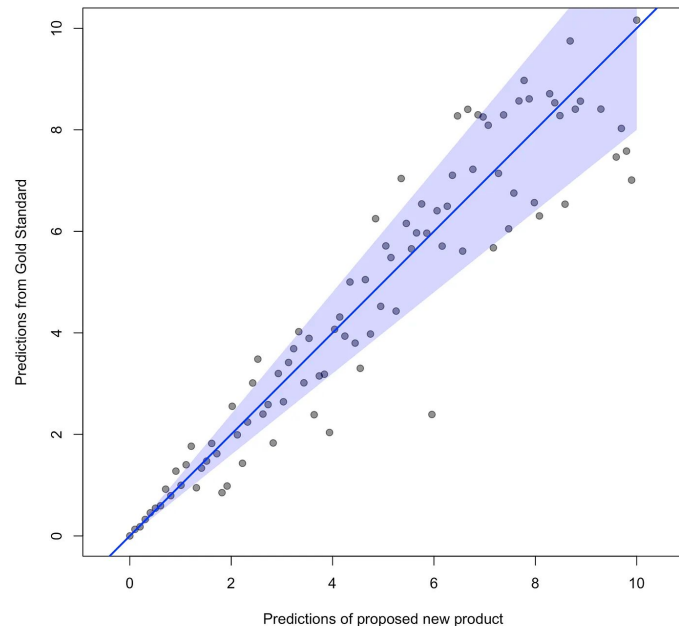
APRIL 2026

Validation Fail: Why Fan-Shaped Validation Plots Betray the Team

We all want healthcare procedures to be less invasive and more informative! Fan-shaped validation plots tell us this...



APR 27 • IRINA KUKUYEVA PHD



ikukuyeva.substack.com/p/validation-fail-why-fan-shaped-validation

AI Due Diligence | Mentor | Advisor



FOUNDER
INSTITUTE



VENTURE

ACCELERATOR

AT UCLA ANDERSON



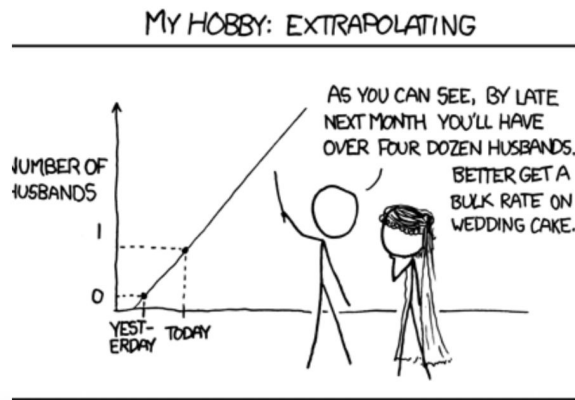
techstars_



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DEAR ADVISOR: HOW DO I AVOID THE BIGGEST DATA/AI/ML MISTAKES OTHERS MAKE?

Post was originally published in June 2020 and has been updated in August 2020, September 2020, April 2021, and April 2022 for relevancy.



Inventor



Ph.D. in Statistics



Jet Propulsion Laboratory
California Institute of Technology



[[ref](#), [ref](#)]

Scaled AI Globally | Led Global Teams



Ph.D. in Statistics



Jet Propulsion Laboratory
California Institute of Technology



sabio 



netlify

Invented, Implemented, Scaled AI Globally



Ph.D. in Statistics



Jet Propulsion Laboratory
California Institute of Technology

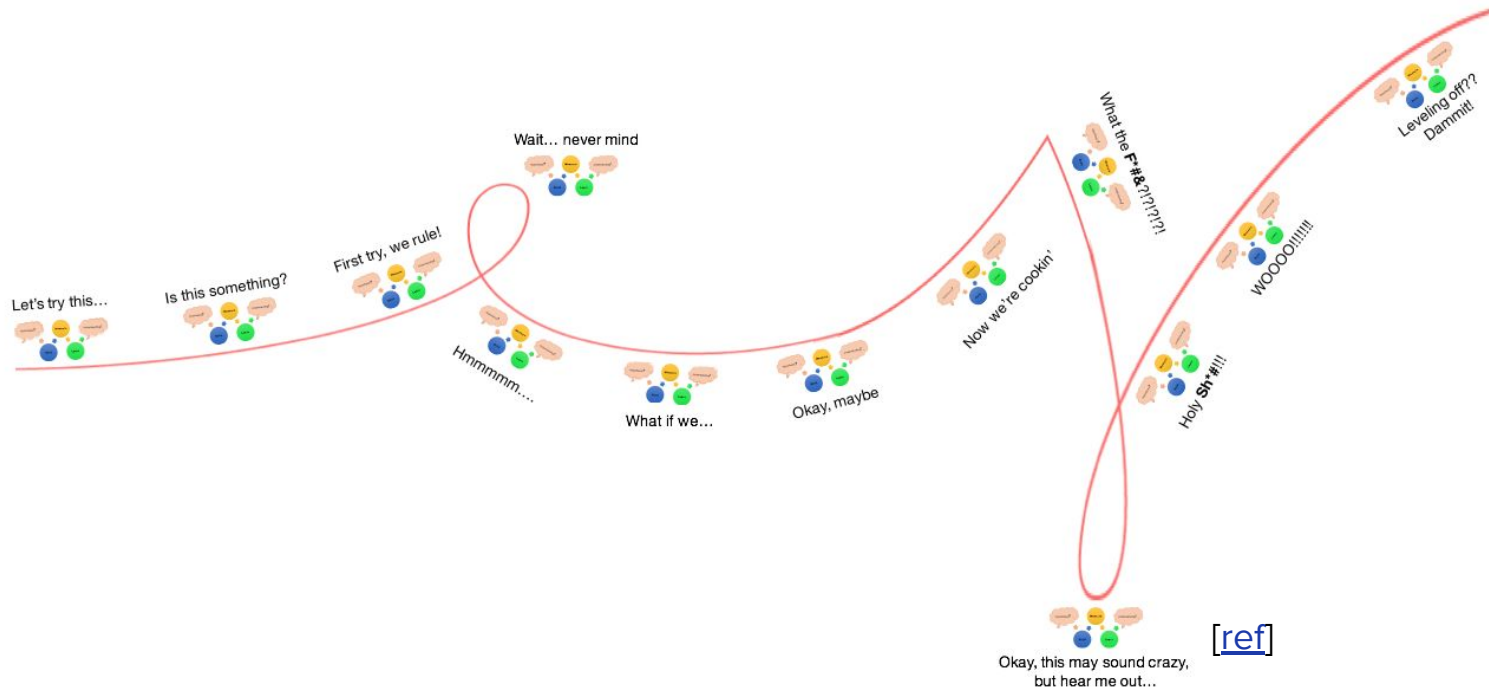
FashionTech
eCommerce
Hospitality
FinTech
SaaS
IoT

sabio 



netlify

My Career Journey



Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

UCLA CES



Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

UCLA CES



Goal: PhD → JPL

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

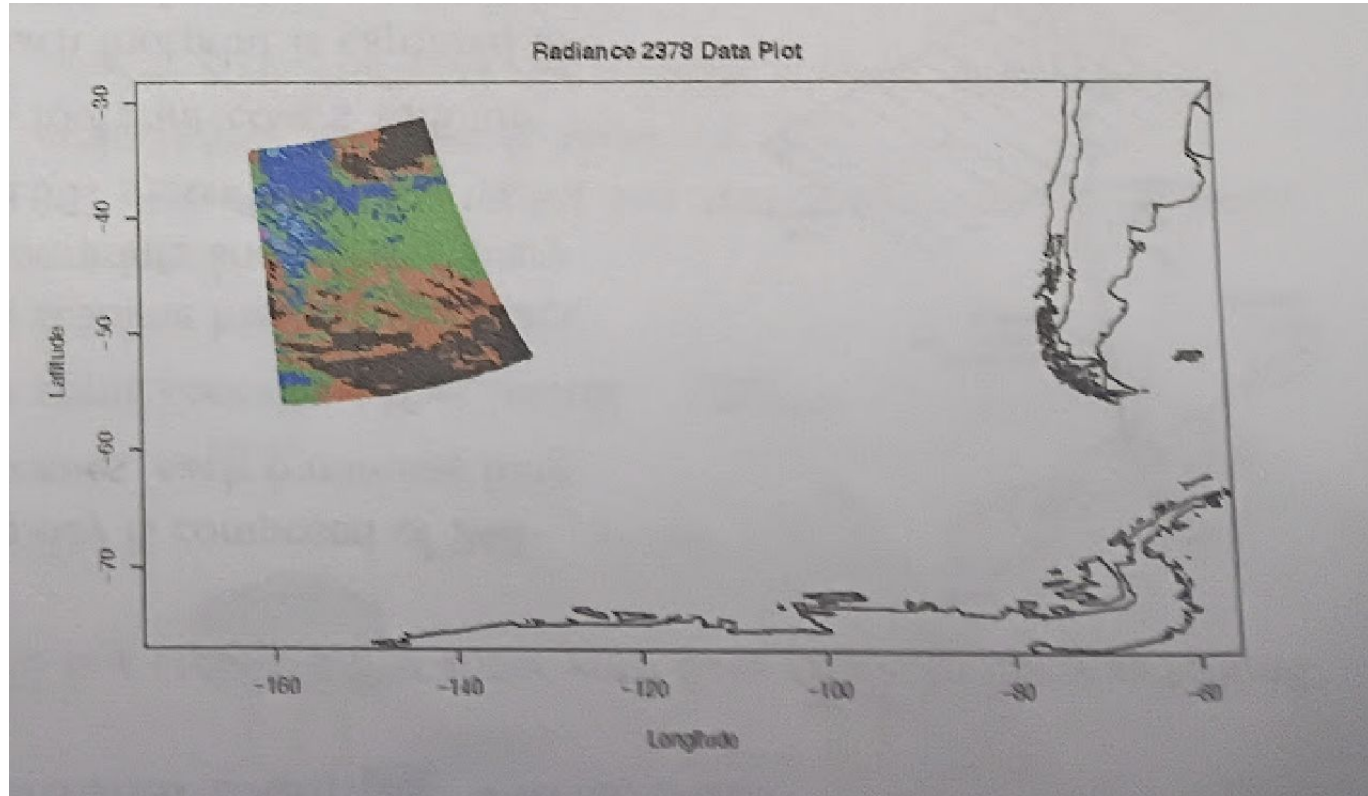
UCLA CES



Fellowships Alerts ([URL](#)):

*NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION
(NASA) GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCHERS PROGRAM*

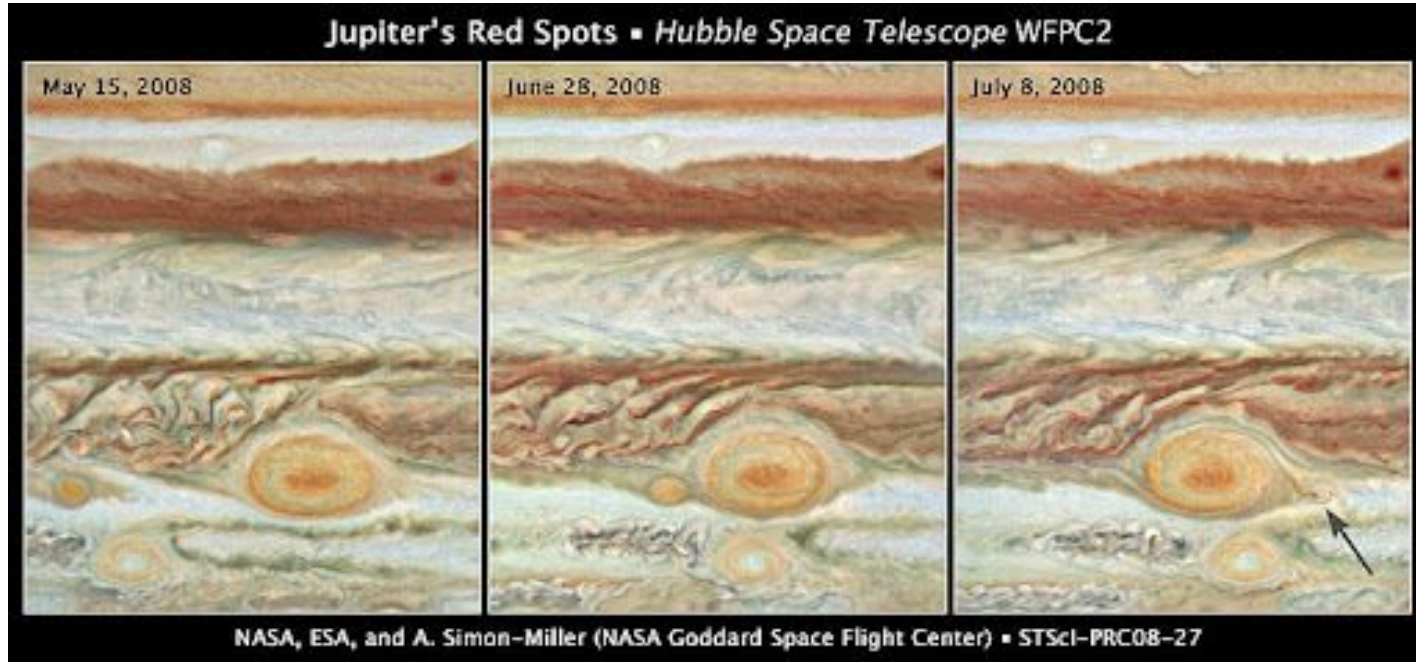
Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist



Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

- Earth's Atmosphere: [AIRS](#)
 - [2,378](#) wavelengths
 - 8.4mi x 8.4mi footprint
 - ~95% coverage of globe in 1 day
 - ~ 14 orbits per day

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist



<https://theplanets.org/jupiter/jupiter-red-spot-facts/>

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

- Jupiter's Atmosphere: [Hubble Space Telescope](#)
 - 13 wavelengths
 - 1 time point

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

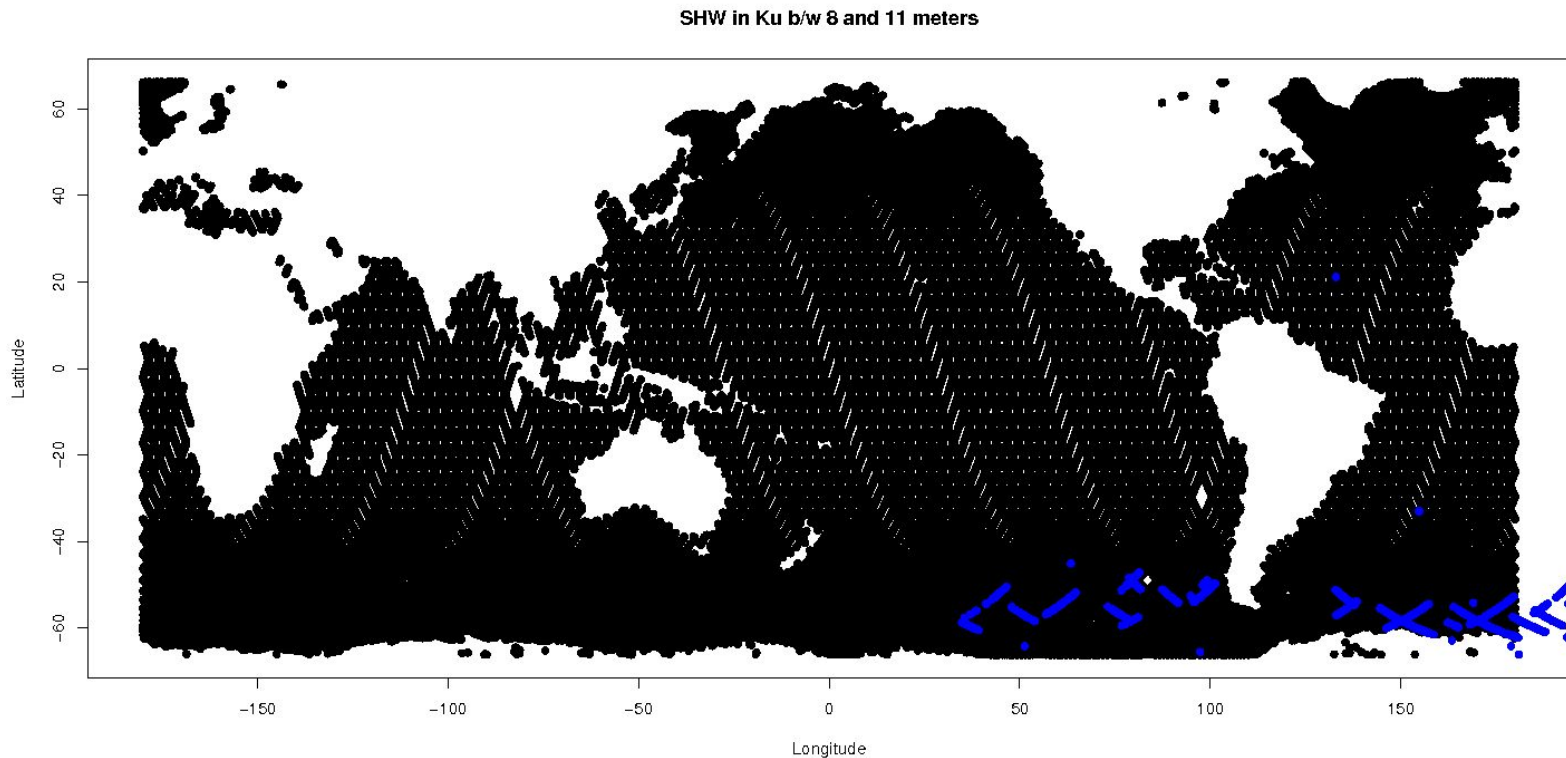
- Jupiter's Atmosphere: [Hubble Space Telescope](#)
 - 13 wavelengths
 - 1 time point
- *PhD Pivot*

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist



[[ref](#), [ref](#)]

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist



Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

- Rogue Waves: Jason-1
 - ~ 90% coverage of globe in ~ 10 days

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

- Rogue Waves: Jason-1
 - ~ 90% coverage of globe in ~ 10 days
 - Raw vs (how) processed data?

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

~ Week in Life of:

- End goals: review grant proposal, goals

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

~ Week in Life of:

- End goals: review grant proposal, goals
- What exists: borrow *lots of* books

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

~ Week in Life of:

- End goals: review grant proposal, goals
- What exists: borrow *lots of* books
- Iterate:
 - Discuss what will try
 - Implement + interpret
 - Share findings

Non-Linear Path 195: NASA Data Scientist

No Vacancy

Non-Linear Paths 196 – 199

Non-Linear Path 196



MS referral, June

1 DR, 2+ IR

64 countries

Non-Linear Path 197



R Meetup newsletter

3 ICUs, 20+ clinicians

100+ hospitals

Non-Linear Path 198



Try #1

1st Client: Women Who
Code newsletter

Startup C-Suite

Non-Linear Path 199



LinkedIn

Fortune 500 C-Suite

Transferable Skills

Transferable Skills

<action verb> **X** in <client> industry
~**X** <another>

Transferable Skills

<action verb> **X** in <client> industry
~X <another>

EX: AdTech → Healthcare

Transferable Skills

<action verb> **X** in <client> industry
~X <another>

EX: FashionTech → FinTech

Framework

<what exists>

<what exists>

<gaps>

<what exists>

<gaps>

<POC>

<what exists>

<gaps>

<POC>

<(in)validate>

<what exists>

<gaps>

<POC>

<(in)validate>

<next hypothesis>

<what exists>

No surprises!

<gaps>

<POC>

<(in)validate>

<next hypothesis>

Teamwork

Teamwork: Symptoms of Communication Problem



what
stakeholder
described



what data
looked like

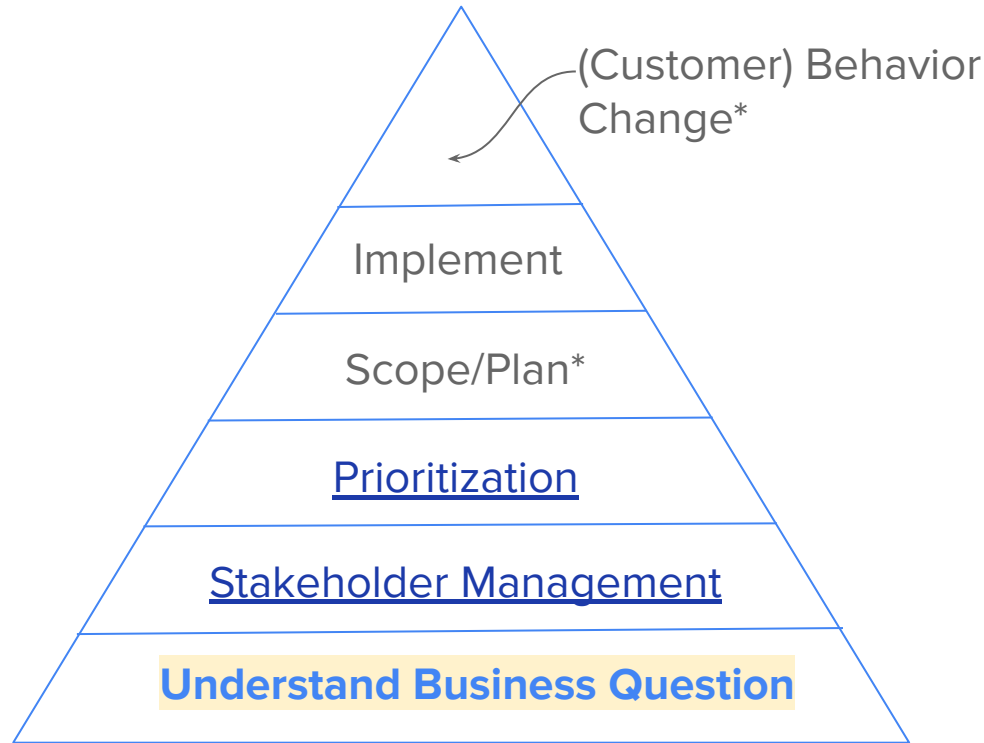


what we
delivered



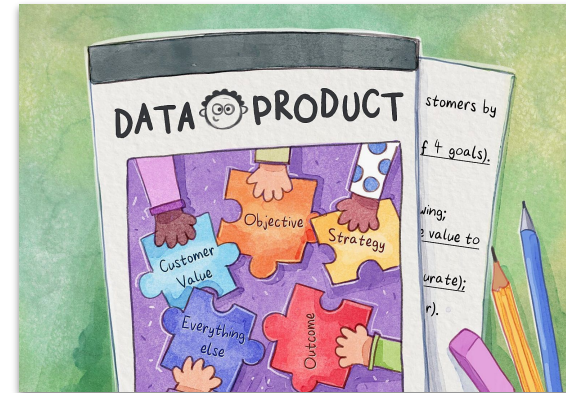
what
stakeholder
wanted

Teamwork: Data Product (POC) Hierarchy of Needs



Teamwork

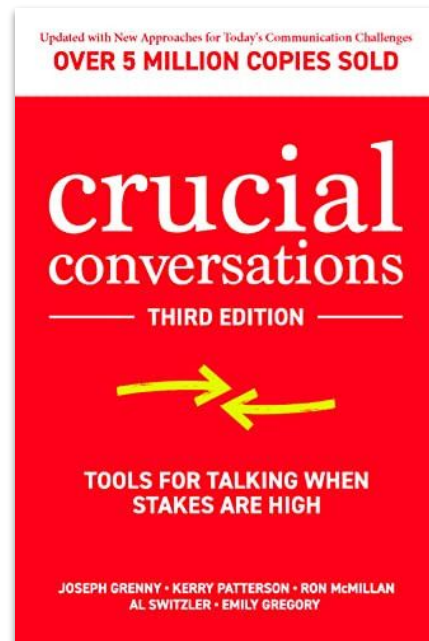
- No surprises!
- Outcomes: Tailor project to answer business question
- “Dark Arts” of Stakeholder Management



Teamwork

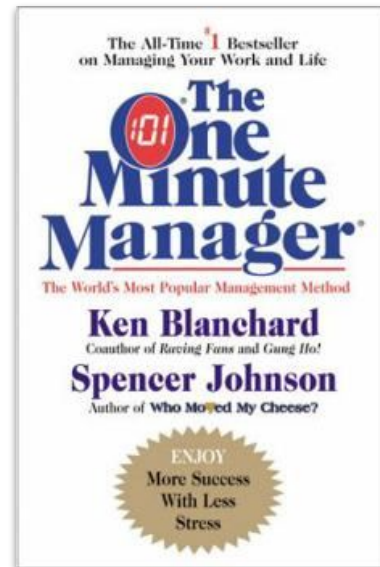
Leadership

- No surprises!
- Outcomes + Context



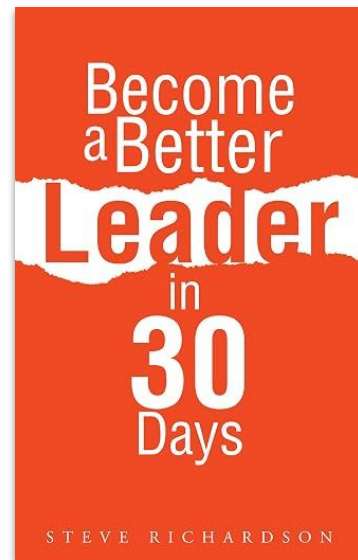
Leadership

- No surprises!
- Outcomes + context
- Feedback, feedback, feedback
 - Fact(s) + Impact ([SBI](#))
 - Immediate*
 - Both ways!
 - “[Ask a Manager](#)” blog by Alison Green



Leadership

- No surprises!
- Context, context, context
- Feedback, feedback, feedback
- Over Communicate!



Leadership

- No surprises!
- Context, context, context
- Feedback, feedback, feedback – both ways!
- 1-on-1s
 - 1st 1-1
 - "Ask a Manager" advice (#4)
- “First 90 days”



Leadership

- No surprises!
- Context, context, context
- Feedback, feedback, feedback – both ways!
- 1-on-1s
 - 1st 1-1
 - "Ask a Manager" advice (#4)
- “First 90 days”
- Eduardo’s [Course materials for ECBS5256: Managing DS Teams](#)

Nonlinear Path 307

Non-Linear Path 307: Lean into *Interests*



+



Girls in Tech Meetup

Ladies Get Paid

Non-Linear Path: *Raise Hand*

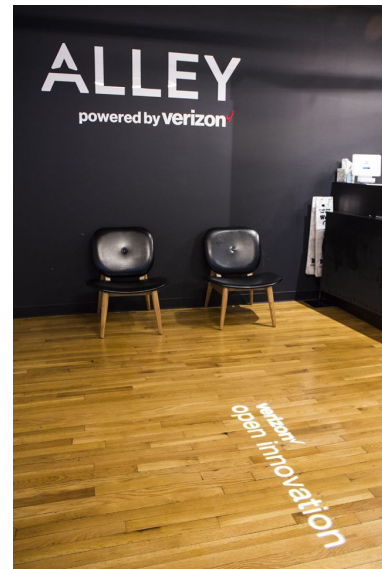


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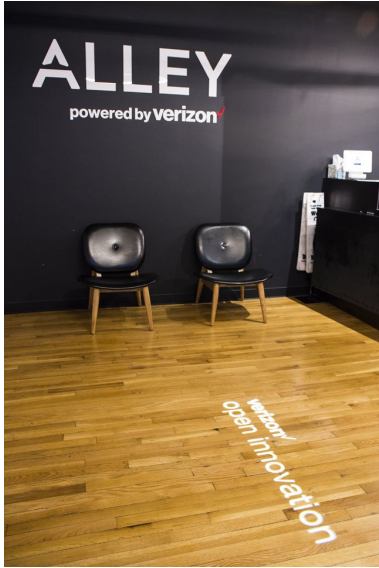
Girls in Tech Meetup

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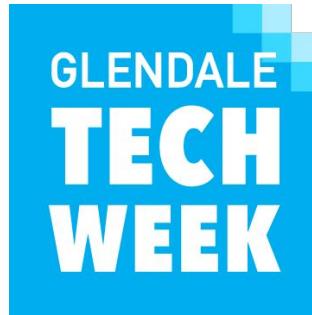
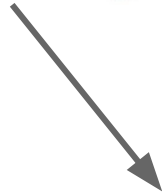
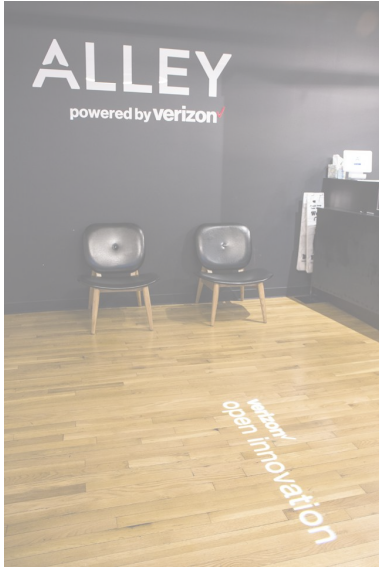


→ Raise Hand

Non-Linear Path: *Raise Hand*

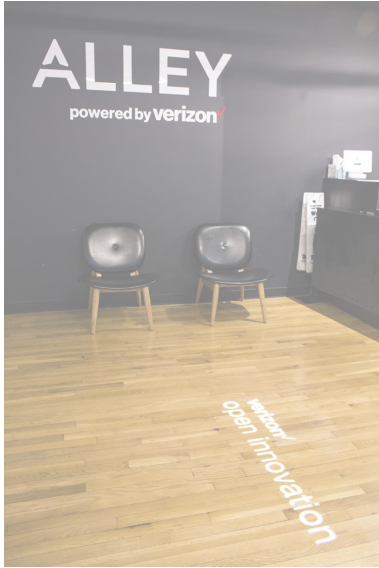


Non-Linear Path: *Raise Hand*

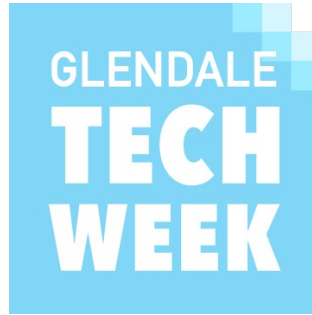
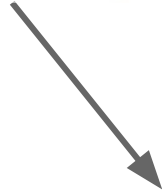


City of Glendale [Newsletter](#)

Non-Linear Path: *Raise Hand*



PMF Talk

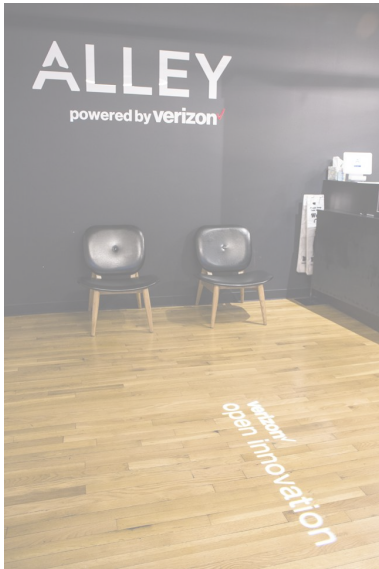


City of Glendale Newsletter



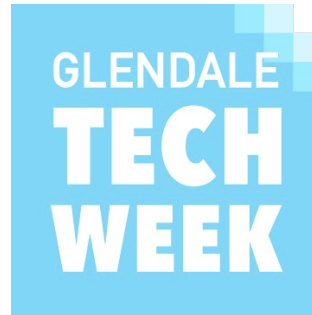
Newsletter +
Raise Hand

Non-Linear Path: *Lean into Asks*



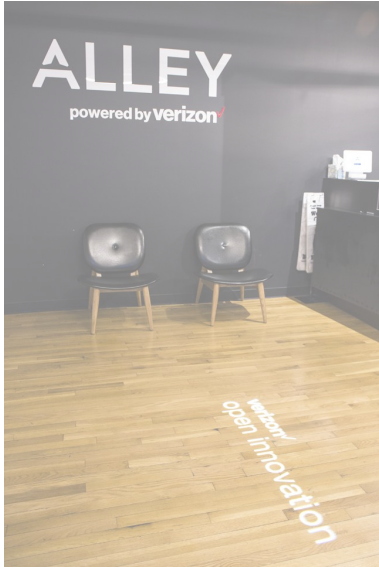
Newsletter +
Raise Hand

techstars



City of Glendale Newsletter

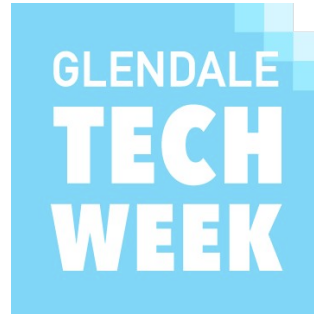
Non-Linear Path: *Lean into Asks*



Newsletter +
Raise Hand

techstars

AI DD



City of Glendale Newsletter

More Career Advice

Reviewed 100s of Resumes ('12-'22)

- Right role?

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- Training after onboarding?
- ROI?

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- Communication?
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Reviewed 100s of Resumes ('12-'22)

- Right role?
- Training after onboarding?
- ROI?
- Communication?
- Decision-making?
- Deploy + support ML in prod?

Advice to Break-in: Networking

- Goal: Build relationships!
 - Book: “Networking for People Who Hate Networking”
 - Reach out with specific question(s)!
 - Goal: Learn and NOT to ask for job!
 - Follow-up!

More Advice on Networking

- [Newsletters](#) → Jobs + Communities → Slack/Discord
- LinkedIn: *follow* (recruiters, managers, etc.)
- Volunteer ([Women in CleanTech + Sustainability](#))

Networking On Campus

- Accelerators on campus:
 - [Bruin Entrepreneurs](#)
 - [Magnify at CNSI](#)
 - [Startup-in-a-Box](#)
 - [Startup UCLA](#)
 - [UCLA Anderson Venture Accelerator](#)
 - [UCLA Biodesign](#)
 - [UCLA Health TechQuity](#)
- More resources: [UCLA Entrepreneurship Lab](#) + Events: [Nucleate](#)

Networking On Campus (cont'd)

- Mentor at UCLA [DataFest](#)
- UCLA Career Center ([events](#))
- [UCLA Clubs and Organizations](#)

Networking Off Campus

- [DataCon LA](#) (August 22, annual)
- [OWASP LA](#) (monthly)
- [UCLA Alumni Events](#)

Networking in DeepTech

- [JIFRESSE](#) Post-doc*
- [SoCal DeepTech Week](#) in September
- [BR-DGE](#) events
- Aerospace meetup in [August](#)
- SpaceTech Expo in [2027](#)
- Economist's [Space Summit](#)

Advice to Break-in: VC

- Opportunities
 - [Women Founders Network Due Diligence Analyst Program](#)
 - Ivelina Dineva's [list](#) of 150 VC fellowships
 - [PledgeLA's VC Fellowship](#) for grad students
- [Girls into VC](#) at UCLA ([LinkedIn group](#))
- More resources on [Where to Find Roles](#) + [What to do as a Student](#)

More Advice to Break-in

- [H1B Salary Database](#): salaries + companies hiring w/visa
- [Technical Interview 2026](#) + Steve's [Learnings from 1000 Amazon Interviews](#)
- Next Play's advice on [how to add value](#) and break in
- [How to Break into a Data Role in Industry?](#)
- *Lean into Interests + Asks + Raise Hand*

More Advice to Break-in: Mentors

- Mentorships
 - [UCLA Alumni Mentor Program](#)
 - [Learn Teach Code](#) (monthly)
 - [Advice on how to be your own mentor](#)

Apply!

Where to Find Full-Time Roles

- Start-ups:
 - [Sr DE at Plug](#)
 - [Wellfound](#), [Built in LA](#), [a16z Alpha Fellowship](#)
 - Accelerator cohort job boards: [Techstars](#), [Cedars-Sinai](#), [Alchemist](#), [YC \(LA\)](#), [MedTech Innovator](#)
 - Investors' portfolio company job boards: [a16z](#), [Alumni Ventures](#), [Bessemer Ventures](#)

Questions?

<https://www.ikukuyeva.com/community/guest-lecturer>