



Online DATA CHALLENGE WEEK

Introduction

The postmaster PDEng Program Data Science has its own, unique way of assessing and educating students. The program has implemented Data Challenge Weeks, in which applicants and students cooperate in teams challenged by Big Data Sets provided by one of the industrial partners of the program. By observing and coaching, this week is an assessment for the applicants and an intense way of learning for the students of the program. Data Challenge Weeks can be regarded as a high pressure project in which both the process (how?) and the result (what?) count. Data Challenge Weeks are organized twice a year in the months September/October and April/ May. In 2020 the circumstances compel us to move the event to June and in an online environment.

Organization

In the online Data Challenge Week three groups of seven participants work on datasets from a host company. Each group has a group leader; each group is composed of three applicants and four trainees. An important aspect in the Data Challenge Week is the involvement of the trainees of the program in the preparation phase. The group leaders have the task to identify and specify themes from the provided dataset, one theme per team. Each team focuses on the theme as distinguished by the group leader. The goal of doing this is twofold. First, the group leaders get familiar with the full data set before the start of the Data Challenge Week. Second, they identify the themes, so that group work can be organized more efficiently. Third, identification of themes is a challenging task that is relevant in their future projects and jobs. The other students are prepared for their tasks as a member of the team as part of their professional development skill training.

Online social event

The online Data Challenge Week is also a social event. The trainees supported by program staff organize online social events during the week. The trainees and applicants are encouraged to interact outside of the formal program and to exchange experiences. For applicants this is a great way to learn more details about our program.

Schedule

The week starts on a Friday and ends the Friday thereafter. On the first Friday the applicants have a one-on-one online introduction with the program manager. Sunday afternoon is reserved for online team building activities; the team members introduce themselves, they inventory the knowledge, skills and experience; the group leader establishes the way to communicate throughout the week. On Monday morning the group leaders introduce the themes they distinguished from the provided dataset to all participants. After this introduction the participants breakup per their respective groups. From Monday morning till Thursday morning the teams work on their challenges. Each applicant will form a pair with one trainee; the pair will keep close contact throughout the week. The teams are visited, observed, and supported by the program manager, coach, and other staff members of JADS during these days. The final presentations, given by the applicants, take place online; the audience are the participants in the online DCW, the trainees of the program, and the representatives of the industrial host. Last Friday is reserved for application interviews. Directly after the interview the application committee informs the applicant whether or not he/she is allowed to enter the program. For non-EU applicants it takes about three months to get a visa, resident and work permits.