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Citadel Securities is looking for business-savvy coders. Here's what you need to know to land a technologist job.

By Bianca Chan

- **Finance firms are starting to shift what they want in new tech hires.**

- **At Citadel, hiring managers are prioritizing engineers with business aptitude and interest.**

- **Here's what senior tech leaders and managers say they want to see in the interview process.**

CITADEL SECURITIES

Citadel Securities engineers on the options technology team in the Chicago office.

Being a solid coder isn't going to cut it at Citadel Securities anymore.

"Your career path will be defined by your ability to solve problems. The days of 'I'm a good programmer' are becoming numbered," Ken Griffin, founder of the market-making titan, told interns this summer. The rise of generative AI is transforming the job of software developers by generating their code and streamlining processes.

Citadel Securities, which generated about $7.5 billion in revenue last year, is now focused on hiring thoughtful technologists who drive commercial outcomes for the firm.

The trading house matches sellers and buyers of stocks, bonds, and currencies worldwide. The tech teams build everything from the trading platforms to the plumbing that ingests market data feeds, and tools that help analyze petabytes of data to model the market.

"We're not looking for people who are focused on tech-nology for technology's sake or the latest trend. We're looking for people who can drive a big commercial impact for the firm," Aaron Moss, head of technology recruiting for Citadel Securities, told Insider. That could look like building a cloud-based solution low on compute power and memory — and costs.

Citadel Securities's tech leadership has made commercial thinking one of the key pillars of the engineering organization, which employs hundreds and is one of the largest teams at the firm. As Josh Woods, the firm's chief technology officer, strategizes about the firm's future, he wants engineers who demonstrate they can solve challenging, ambiguous problems and prove they can drive the business forward.

It's not just Griffin's shop where business aptitude and interest in finance go a long way. Olga Naumovich, who is in charge of Millennium Management's tech build-out in

Citadel Securities CTO Josh Woods speaks to early-career engineers in Miami.

Miami, previously told Insider she wants to hire engineers with "a passion for learning about financial markets," even more importantly than having "a deep understanding of technology."

"No longer are technical skills enough to land a job, but candidates must be able to connect the dots and make an impact to the bottom line for the firm," Jayson Bevacqua, a technology recruiter at Solaris Search Partners, said. He added he's seen an uptick in fresh grads looking to join elite trading firms over big tech names.

It's competitive to land a tech job at Citadel Securities — the firm receives thousands of applications for dozens of positions every year — but doing so could result in a base salary of up to $350,000, according to a recent job posting for a software engineer.

The firm, which has about 10 open positions posted on its website, has an unrestrained appetite for top tech talent. It hires opportunistically, meaning its willingness to hire the right candidates does not fluctuate with the market's ups and downs, which can be helpful when the market for tech talent is a mixed bag. In one recent case, Citadel Securities extended an offer to a promising intern, even though the hiring manager had been looking for a more experienced hire.

Here are 5 do's and don'ts for applicants, according to 4 senior tech leaders and hiring managers at Citadel Securities:

1. Show off your low-level skills

For Citadel Securities's head of systematic trading technology, Damien Neff, it's been increasingly challenging to find low-level systems engineers who work close to the hardware and understand how computers work. But such engineers are necessary at a high-frequency trading firm like Citadel Securities, where ingesting and turning around a piece of market data and sending an order out nanoseconds later relies on hyper speed and ultra-low processing times.

"The industry is getting very high level with things like AI, which push people even further away from that understanding," Neff told Insider.

Indeed, tools like AI, automation, and even some accessible coding languages like Python can make technologists' work more efficient. But that efficiency can strip away some of the understanding and experience of interacting with the hardware.

2. Take ownership of your work — and the associated tech spend

Senior tech leaders expect their new hires to own their work and keep costs down.

Take the public cloud, which has become a valuable part of Wall Street's plumbing but which can also add up in costs. And those costs can be largely dependent on the people consuming the tech because the public cloud is billed per the amount of computing and memory used.

"Generally speaking, cloud can be inexpensive, but it can add it up quickly. If you're not careful, you can spend all your money there," Costas Bekas, a veteran technologist who heads up CitSec's research platform, told Insider. "That's just one example of when it's important to have a commercial mindset — of why we need people to become owners of what they do."

3. Highlight your soft skills, especially effective communication

When thinking about his team's bench strength, Neff looks for a well-balanced team, which is easier said than done. Neff leads three teams (about 80 people) who build, operate, and implement software.

"A lot of people in our field are very analytical. They're happy to be focused on the problem, and I need that, but I also need the people who can communicate within and across teams," Neff said.

His team consists of software engineers, system-reliability engineers, high-level architects, and mechanical engineers who work closely with the hardware — but most of all, he needs extroverts who are comfortable communicating with all sorts of people, from quantitative researchers to the CTO.

Another soft skill to showcase is teamwork and your willingness to roll up your sleeves to help out, Bekas said. He recently interviewed an "incredibly talented" engineer from a tech company who didn't get an offer because Bekas said he thought the person wouldn't jump in to help the team with thorny edge cases and assignments.

4. Show that you are passionate about something

One of the best things you can do during an interview is put your passion on display, Neff said. A candidate could be excited about new capabilities of a given coding language or be enthralled by equities trading — whatever it may be, just ensure it shines through the interview. For Neff, who joined the firm in 2022 from the video game industry, passion translates to motivation.

"I just need to shape it in the direction that the firm needs to get business value out of it," Neff said.

5. Don't come in unprepared

Citadel Securities head of tech recruiting, Moss, said the biggest red flag is not doing your due diligence before the interview process, which usually spans five meetings.

The candidate should research the business area they are interviewing for and learn about who they are meeting with — even look the person up on LinkedIn.