

Employers Sought for Tech Trainees

A nonprofit organization that offers technology training in underserved communities is proposing to place its students in cybersecurity positions at hedge fund firms.

The Brooklyn operation, **NPower**, already has alumni working at large financial institutions including **Bank of America**, **Barclays**, **Citigroup**, **Morgan Stanley** and **TD Ameritrade**. In the fund-management world, 16 of its students or graduates also have obtained jobs through a relationship with the \$50 billion **Oak Hill Advisors** since 2016.

Those positions in most cases have started as internships that converted to full-time roles. At other times, NPower has recommended candidates based on job descriptions from credit-focused Oak Hill.

Now, NPower sees openings for similar arrangements with other firms. “That has inspired us to go back to the community of hedge funds,” said **Helen Kogan**, the organization’s executive director for New York and New Jersey.

NPower teaches technology skills to veterans and those who can’t afford college educations, maintaining a presence in California, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York and Texas. It expects to train 250 students in advanced cybersecurity and cloud computing this year while instructing another 1,100 in technology fundamentals.

Almost 40% of NPower’s cybersecurity alumni from the past five years have secured jobs in the financial sector.

Part of the group’s pitch to potential employers is that many of its students are women or people of color, offering a ready talent pool for companies seeking to diversify their staffs. “[Corporations] are coming to us and saying, ‘We are interested

in a more diverse population of technologists.’ Those conversations are happening a lot,” Kogan said.

With their employees working remotely throughout the coronavirus crisis, hedge fund firms have treated the hiring of cybersecurity specialists as a more critical task. At the same time, work-from-home arrangements have widened the universe of candidates by opening the positions to individuals around the country.

Previously, fund operators focused on applicants with experience at financial companies, largely to ensure a cultural fit. That often narrowed the typical pool to individuals in the New York metropolitan area. But many industry professionals see cultural alignment as less important in a work-from-home environment, which could continue beyond the pandemic.

Remote-working arrangements also have accelerated efforts by fund managers to shift their technology infrastructures from on-site servers to remote ones, further reducing the need for cybersecurity specialists to be in the office.

Because most people in those roles are familiar with **Amazon’s** widely used cloud-computing services, employers additionally are placing less weight on location and experience. “You get the same level of talent and same level of knowledge and skill set,” said **Sajawal Haider**, who heads information security at Oak Hill. “Also, you can arbitrage from a cost perspective. Hiring in Oklahoma is a lot cheaper than hiring someone in New York.”

Haider said those views were his own, with Oak Hill preferring to have staff on-site. ❖