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## TECHNOLOGY

# City's top employers are hunting for workers with these two tech skills

BY RYAN DEFFENBAUGH

New York employers expect to boost their hiring for technology jobs this year, with workers who have expertise in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence in especially strong demand.

Employers expect that jobs requiring those skill sets will be the hardest to fill, according to a survey of 300 C-suite executives based in New York City. The survey was released last Tuesday by Tech:NYC and Accenture. At least half of respondents—spanning several industries—plan to increase hiring by up to 20% compared to last year.

The most in-demand positions for those employers are in cybersecurity and AI. More than 70% of respondents said they are seeking to fill cybersecurity positions. Almost 65% said they plan to fill AI jobs.

The skills answer two major needs for companies: to develop more efficient virtual systems and to keep those systems secure from hacks and other threats.

"Everybody is ramping up their cybersecurity requirements, even more so than a year ago, and the same in AI," said Lynn McMahon, Accenture's managing director for the New York metropolitan region. "These are areas that demand is outstripping supply."

About a quarter of companies expect to have difficulties finding candidates for cybersecurity jobs, and 28% predict AI candidates will be difficult to find, according to the survey.

**"I can certainly vouch for that," said Pieter Nel, chief technology officer at Oculolus, a fintech startup in the Financial District.**

**Oculolus uses AI software to rapidly process and analyze documents. The seven-year-old company, which was not a participant in the survey, doubled its team of engineers during the past year to 80 employees, Nel says, with a special focus on machine learning and security skills.**

Those skills are highly specialized, often requiring advanced degrees, and competition among employers is fierce. JPMorgan Chase, the city's second-largest employer, is looking for hundreds of AI professionals and has built relationships with Carnegie Mellon University and other schools to recruit candidates, *The Wall Street Journal* recently reported.

**For Oculolus, there is big-time competition from the FANG companies—Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google—for the top AI talent, while financial institutions often gobble up workers skilled in cybersecurity. Nel said Oculolus pitches prospective employees on the chance to join a more nimble operation with access to data to create new products.**

**"We have more than enough production of talent," Nel said. "The issue is more, can you compete with everyone else to get that talent?"**

The competition is a good thing for job seekers. New York tech workers skilled in machine learning—a type of AI—earned \$160,000 on average last year, a \$15,000 bump from 2019, according to data from Hired and Vettery, affiliated job-listing sites. Cybersecurity-related jobs paid \$149,000 on average in New York last year, up from \$136,000 a year earlier.

The survey found skills in cloud computing, blockchain engineering and quantum computing also were in strong demand.

## Big Apple optimism

Despite the competition, about 80% of New York employers said they expect to find the talent they need in New York, rather than hiring from elsewhere, according to the Tech:NYC and Accenture report.

"For skills like AI and cybersecurity, these companies by and large are confident they can accomplish their hiring here," said Julie Samuels, executive director of Tech:NYC. "That really shows a sense of optimism about the New York market."

Samuels added that the report shows that the next mayor and the City Council must focus on technical skills to prepare New Yorkers for the jobs of the future. That would include boosting early computer science education as well as collegiate programs. ■

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