



Meet David Margolin, Meteorologist at Citadel Investment Group, located in Chicago, IL

My professional career is nearing the ten year mark. I've had the privilege to work with commercial weather firms like The Weather Channel and AccuWeather, in energy with Reliant Energy (Houston, TX) and in finance with Citadel Investment Group (Chicago, IL) – where I currently work. I have really enjoyed working with these firms, in particular in the energy and finance worlds, where I've been able to practice operational forecasting and applied research, while expanding my business knowledge and working with incredibly talented and highly motivated people.

How did you first get interested in weather?

My story is similar to many other “weather weenies.” For as long as I can remember I've had an unusual fascination (bordering on obsession) with the weather – in particular snow and cold. When I was little, I couldn't sleep at night if there was even the slightest potential for a snow storm. I would stare out the window every 30 minutes to see if the snow had started or if the rain had changed to snow. Needless to say, if the storm did not materialize it made for a long next day. I have vivid memories of bringing a thermometer to school on days when the forecast called for rain changing to snow. I would strategically put the thermometer in a location outside the school where I could check it between classes.

I grew up in central New Jersey, which contributed to my interest in weather. As anyone from the area can tell you, there are many winter storms that produce rain in central New Jersey, while just a few miles up the road, in the hills of Northwest New Jersey, they produce heavy snows. On more than one occasion during high school, I drove over an hour from school to High Point, New Jersey to see the snow. To this day I still affectionately call High Point a poor man's Mount Washington because of the area's extreme weather in comparison to the rest of the state.

After high school I attended Plymouth State College (PSC) in hopes of pursuing a career in meteorology. After I graduated from PSC, I continued my education at Florida State University (FSU) to advance my analytical and research skills. I also briefly dabbled in on-air broadcast communications, but it just wasn't for me.

How did you find your first job, and what was it like? How would you describe your current job and how is it different from a forecasting job and other jobs you've had?

My first job was a temporary position with TWC immediately following graduate school. I found the position on the AMS jobs listings. It was a dream job for me, although it lasted for only a short while. In my brief stint at TWC I was exposed to many different forecast positions and had the pleasure of meeting and working with many great on-camera and off-camera meteorologists. The TWC experience is one I will never forget.

My current job at Citadel Investment Group is quite different from my work at TWC and AccuWeather. At those companies the target audience generally needed to know what the weather was going to be like for the next day or two. Therefore, our focus was generally on short-range

weather (one to five days ahead). At TWC it was also important that the product appeal to a broad audience and that meant the broadcast needed to include lots of bells and whistles.

At Citadel we produce medium-range and long-range weather forecasts (one to two weeks or longer). The communication style is quite different from commercial firms like TWC. At TWC we would normally provide deterministic forecasts, while in the energy/financial world we provide deterministic forecasts, as well as probabilistic forecasts (offering multiple scenarios). At Citadel, we also leverage the academic and research communities for advanced forecast techniques and insight into long range climate signals.



Figure 1. Dave briefing The Weather Channel on-camera meteorologists on the big weather events of the day.

What would you say to those interested in working in the private sector?

Here are a few key things I recommend:

Networking: The more people you get to know in the industry the more opportunities will come your way. I found out about the opportunity at Citadel through networking.

Multiple-skill sets: If I'm hiring a meteorologist, I look for someone with a broad set of talents (global forecast skills and experience, analytical skills, research skills, writing skills, business skills, etc.). If you are in school, or just out of school, I recommend taking extra classes to broaden your skill set.

Communications (written and oral): Many of the finest meteorologists I've worked with have also been the best communicators – and I don't think that's a coincidence. You need to be able to connect, convey, and convince. I recommend practicing in front of audiences and reading books on public speaking.

Attitude (working well with others): Team work is important. In this industry you cannot do it all by yourself. The ones who try to either fail or do not reach their full potential.

Persistence: There will be will almost certainly be setbacks along the way. Try to stay positive and focus on the big picture.

Internships: I highly recommend pursuing a summer internship with a firm. The experience can be rewarding and it looks great on your resume. Even if you don't get a summer internship – perhaps you can offer your services as a consultant for small research projects. A consultation can provide many of the same benefits as an internship.

Graduate degree in Meteorology or MBA: As a rule of thumb, the more education the better. The workforce is constantly becoming more competitive and a graduate degree may be what it takes to separate you from the other candidates. I was fortunate to get a piece of good advice from my undergraduate professor, Dr. Ashton Pyrefitte. Dr. Pyrefitte recommended that I pursue a master's degree, as it is the easiest degree to earn and is a relatively short program. I heeded his advice and I think he was absolutely right.

Be prepared to move: Depending on how you look at it – this maybe the biggest drawback to the field. You may need to move around quite a bit, especially early in your career, as there simply aren't very many private met jobs in most areas.

Pay your dues: Don't expect to jump into a six-figure salary immediately after getting your degree. Most people in our field have had to work in relatively low-paying positions for a few years, while gaining valuable experience and network connections, before breaking into to some of the better positions in energy and finance.