AI firm Sidetrade creates new career path for young people in the Midlands

Birmingham, England – 8 October 2019 | Sidetrade (Euronext Growth: ALBFR.PA), the AI-powered B2B customer platform, today announced the launch of The Code Academy in the Midlands, a sign of their commitment to the AI industry in the UK.

Sidetrade today announced the launch of The Code Academy at their Birmingham office, which will provide a four-week training programme for 12 graduates, with four data and software jobs up for grabs at the end. The announcement coincides with the first Birmingham Tech Week putting the city's tech innovation center stage.

The Academy is a coding bootcamp comparable to programmes in the UK such as General Assembly, Le Wagon, and Flatiron School, but distinguishes itself by its focus on the Midlands, workplace experience, and a chance to secure a data or software engineering job at the end.

To demonstrate their commitment to widening participation, Sidetrade will offer the programme free of charge, investing their own money and resources to run the Academy. The course will be held at The Spaces, in central Birmingham. Mark Sheldon, Chief Technology Officer at Sidetrade, explained:

> *Coding is a very important skill set, and we want to see more young people from a range of backgrounds getting a foot in the door. They need to be equipped for the new, emerging workforce when it comes to data science and AI. This can be achieved with fast-paced, job-ready tech programmes. Our Code Academy is designed to turn talented people into data and software engineers, quickly and affordably. It's life-changing for them. They learn cutting-edge AI standards and work, one-on-one, with professional mentors in the field."*

The Code Academy is the brainchild of Luke Hennerley, lead application engineer at Sidetrade, who wanted to see a disruptive form of training, and new paths into the AI industry. He said:

> *We're doing something special at Sidetrade: The Code Academy welcomes applicants who might not have a degree in a computing related subject, but who have a demonstrable interest in AI. It's a great way to increase intellectual diversity and innovate with fresh eyes. We're taking candidates from zero to full stack developer!"*

Sport science, retail workers… among those hoping for their big break into AI

New fellow coder Ben Staniforth graduated with a degree in sport science, then spent nine years in national and international B2B sales for a ceramics firm. The desire to turn a passion into a career spurred him to quit his job and embark on a new path. He signed up for a 12-week Java developer training programme and knew he'd made the right decision:

> *Sidetrade is offering all the things I wanted: more training, AI sector experience, and the chance to apply for the ideal job in Birmingham. I'm looking forward to this new chapter for me."*

Following an assessment day on 25 September, the 12 successful students will spend 150 hours with data scientists and data engineers, learning the fundamentals of real-life AI for business, as well as how to code, using C# (C Sharp) coding language. Five of the 12 successful candidates are women.

Natasha Rollason recently completed a demanding four-year master's degree in physics at Cardiff University. She juggled her time between investigating quantum lasers and part-time jobs in retail:

> *I'm looking forward to enhancing my coding skills as I think it's useful, and it's a chance put some of the more relevant degree study into practice."*

She's also pleased that they'll be a good mix of male and female candidates on the programme:

> *I've never felt being a woman was a problem during my physics studies. There were lots more guys, but it wasn't an issue, and I had a nice friendship group with the girls, so it'll be interesting to meet like-minded women on The Code Academy, too."*

Ines Ventura is from Lisbon, Portugal, and came to England to study for an MBA. As part of her degree she did a work placement, giving her a first taste of data analytics in business:

> *It'll be my first-time learning coding, but The Code Academy welcomes non-computing graduates which is a massive plus for me. To anyone interested, I'd say don't be afraid to apply, even if you don't have a computing degree. Coding is the new global language of business, and AI is becoming a part of everyday life."*

The intensive course has significant levels of support, with students spending one full day per week in the office, over 30 hours of Q&A sessions, and a bustling Slack community of mentors. It culminates with a day of project-based presentations to senior staff and engineers, demonstrating their skills in full-stack development.

Commitment to the AI sector, 18 new Tech jobs in 2020

Sidetrade aims to create 18 new AI-related jobs in 2020. Tech teams are currently spread across Birmingham, Paris, Dublin, and London. The Birmingham office, which already employs 16 full-time staff, is set to expand as it relocates to a new office in central Birmingham.

Developing the next generation of AI talents is important for Sidetrade to maintain its position as a leading AI-powered customer platform. The Code Academy, which was piloted last year, is part of Sidetrade's commitment to providing engineering skills and jobs for young people in the Midlands, to keep the UK at the forefront of the AI industry.

Earlier this year, Birmingham saw the launch of the 'Aspiration for All' programme, which provides work placements to young people in the region. With The Code Academy, Sidetrade wants to align itself with other outstanding regional efforts.

Sidetrade also seeks to support government efforts. On 21 February this year, the UK government announced a nationwide programme of industry-funded AI master's degrees and PhDs to increase the UK's talent pool and research strengths, as part of its AI Sector Deal, which is supported by industry funding and around £110 million from government.

Pilot programme students thriving in data and AI jobs

The pilot programme of The Code Academy saw three candidates secure jobs with Sidetrade in 2018. They were Kieran Raine, 26, a music technology graduate from Coventry University; Thomas Hendry, 21, who graduated in 2018 from Aston University with a degree in computer science and business; and James Mason-Durst, 23, who also graduated in 2018 from Birmingham University with a degree in theoretical physics and applied Mathematics.

Meet Kieran Raine, Software engineer at Sidetrade

"I really enjoyed the Academy and I'm doing well in my career. I'm currently focusing on the user experience side of things for our clients. I've got a new career path doing something I really enjoy. It has changed my life. I will forever be grateful to Sidetrade."

- 26 years old, originally from Reading
- Graduate in music technology from Coventry University
- Held jobs in retail and Bartending
- Taught himself the basics of computing and programming
- Selected for Sidetrade's The Code Academy
- Joined Sidetrade in November 2018
- Has thrived in his role as a data engineer and now as a software engineer

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About Sidetrade (www.sidetrade.com)
Sidetrade (Euronext Growth: ALBFR.PA) accelerates growth by laying the cornerstones of the customer journey: acquisition, upsell/cross-sell, churn reduction, and payment acceleration. Integrated with your CRM and your ERP, Sidetrade's revolutionary AI system called Aimie reveals unseen factors that can generate leads, drive new sales opportunities, improve retention and shorten payment delay. Over 1,500 businesses in 80 countries use Sidetrade technology to give their Marketing, Sales and Finance teams a competitive edge on their markets.

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