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staffing strategy. Determining your needed mix of full-time and temporary professionals — before holiday time-off — will set you on a course for success come 2016.

Paul McDonald • Nov. 03, 2015



With tax season looming, now is the time for accounting firms to ramp up their staffing strategy. Determining your needed mix of full-time and temporary

professionals — before holiday time-off — will set you on a course for success come

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to determine the staff levels you'll need for this tax season.

2. Revisit your error rate. Mistakes on recent years' returns could indicate you may be stretching your staff too thin. Be sure to analyze what you find. If the error or omission rate is also high during slower months, you may need to consider longer-term staffing corrections.

3. Do a morale inventory. Was there a worrisome number of complaints of stress in the workplace last tax season? Did you notice a higher-than-normal rate of absenteeism? Low employee morale could be a sign of understaffing. Extra hands going forward might help you take care of more clients and prevent burnout among your full-time accountants.

4. Ask for feedback from your core tax team. After each tax season, make it a habit to check in with your team about what worked and didn't. And if you missed the opportunity last year, there's no time like the present to get feedback as you prepare for the impending crunch.

Ask your staff to assess the manageability of workflow and identify obstacles, staffing shortfalls and areas for improvement. While providing valuable feedback, this exercise also will increase engagement and build morale as employees see you value their input and are committed to fostering a positive work environment.

5. Study what others in your field are doing. In the 2015 Benchmarking the Accounting & Finance Function report from Robert Half and Financial Executives Research Foundation, finance leaders reported they rely on interim staffing to manage workload peaks, secure specialized expertise and fill in for absent personnel. One of the biggest advantages of this strategy is flexibility: You can immediately access the specialists you need, when you need them, for as long as you need them.

Your network contacts are another source of valuable insights on managing through

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key projects on track and avoiding productivity declines.

In addition, reach out to your team for their referrals, and stay in contact with former employees who may be looking to make a move. As long as they left on good terms, your firm's alumni may welcome the opportunity to rejoin your organization. These professionals know your culture, and their learning curve will not be nearly as steep as someone completely new to your business.

Tax season is a stressful period for public accounting firms, but you can lessen the burden by being prepared. Whether you decide to onboard full-time or temporary employees — or both — the most important thing to remember is firms rely on their employees to build their reputation and business. For the best results, get a head start on tax season staffing sooner rather than later.

Paul McDonald is senior executive director with [Robert Half](#), the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm. Over the course of his 30-year career with the company, he has spoken extensively on employment and management issues based on his work with thousands of companies and job seekers.

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