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accountants — not to mention specialists in information technology, marketing and business development. Bringing these professionals in, though, is easier said than done. Why?

Paul McDonald • Apr. 19, 2018



Public accounting firms require a steady pipeline of auditors, analysts and tax accountants — not to mention specialists in information technology, marketing and business development. Bringing these professionals in, though, is easier said than done. Why? There aren't many available.

Since 2013, the U.S. has seen a [57 percent increase in job openings](#), from 3.7 million jobs to 5.8 million. The [national unemployment rate](#) has hovered just north of 4

percent for several months, the lowest it's been in a decade. The rate is even lower

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professionals to evaluate for full-time positions.

To effectively staff your business, you may need to reassess your hiring strategies. Here are six steps to consider:

- 1. Use the right 'lure.'** To entice highly skilled accounting professionals, your job postings must stand out from the crowd. Start by highlighting the firm's **corporate culture** and values. Then segue into a high-level summary of the nontechnical skills and responsibilities for this role. Follow that with a more detailed list of what duties the position entails and the minimum requirements — degrees and certifications, years of experience — of the ideal candidate.
- 2. Loosen hiring criteria.** Don't drop your standards, but do re-evaluate whether certain requirements can be moved from the "required" to the "preferred" list. For example, rather than mandating applicants be proficient with a specific tax software, consider candidates who possess broader tax systems experience and have shown an aptitude to pick up new technology quickly? Also expand the net to include a wider geography, and then cover the new hire's moving costs.
- 3. Leverage your social media presence.** Job candidates do their research. What will they find when they read about your firm and peruse your social media accounts? Skilled professionals can afford to be choosy nowadays, and they're looking for signs of a workplace that appeals to them. Conduct an audit of your company's online presence, and then shore up your weak points. A good way to reel in strong candidates is to maximize your employer brand on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube with timely, high-quality content.
- 4. Streamline hiring.** A low jobless rate means a smaller talent pool, but top-notch job seekers are out there. They just get snapped up quickly. The way to land talented

accountants is with a hiring process that allows you to make fast yet informed

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right person. Make it contingent upon satisfactory reference and background checks.

5. Be prepared to boost compensation. In a candidate-driven market, your firm likely needs to increase starting salaries. Use resources such as the [2018 Robert Half Salary Guide for Accounting and Finance Professionals](#) to see what the latest compensation ranges are, i.e., what your competitors are offering.

Also, adjust your bucket of employee perks and benefits so they're in line with what professionals expect today. Some of the most in-demand offerings include flexible scheduling, telecommuting options, productivity bonuses, free food and generous leave policies.

6. Partner with a staffing firm. Hiring is complex and time-consuming, but working with a specialized recruiter eases the process. Your organization also gains access to a much larger network of job seekers than you may be able to tap on your own, including passive candidates who aren't necessarily looking for another position but would jump if the right challenge came along. A recruiter understands your company's specific needs and can help fill a variety of roles — from entry-level to executive, short-term contractors to full-time employees.

The best practices that worked five years ago may not be enough to attract top performers today. For the firm's future and your own productivity, it may be time to update your hiring strategies.

Paul McDonald is senior executive director at [Robert Half](#), the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm. He writes and speaks frequently on hiring, workplace and career-management topics. Over the course of more than 30 years in the recruiting field,

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