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FIRM MANAGEMENT

How to Attract and Keep Top Performers in Accounting

Of course employees want to be fairly compensated for their skills and expertise, but they're also after the things that money can't buy, according to a recent Accountemps survey. These are the top three factors — besides salary — workers tend to ...

Paul McDonald • Oct. 09, 2018

to, as well as whether an employer is likely to offer the development and training to get them there.

Tips for attracting and retaining top accounting talent

High demand for specialized skills puts experienced accountants in the driver's seat. Your short-listed candidates are scrutinizing *everything* — not only the starting salary, benefits and bonus structure, but also the perks and their future quality of life. And remember, you're likely not the only one trying to land that amazing accountant, auditor or analyst.

So how can you recruit the workers you need and keep them happy in their jobs? Here are five tips:

1. Offer competitive wages. While salary isn't the only consideration for job seekers, low pay can be seen as a warning to candidates your firm doesn't value its employees. Use a trusted resource, like the [2019 Robert Half Salary Guide for Accounting and Finance Professionals](#), to make sure your offer meets or — better yet — exceeds industry standards.

But don't stop there. Benchmark salaries every year so that top performers' compensation remains competitive.

2. Get creative with perks. The majority of firms offer similar benefits packages. Differentiate what you provide with the little extras workers crave. For example, go all out to [thank your team after tax season](#). Make summer schedules more relaxed and casual. Throw an epic holiday party, including surprise gifts. Be sure to mention these enticing perks during the recruitment process and deliver updates on them to current staff.

3. Negotiate non-wage benefits. Not every accounting firm can compete with the largest companies when it comes to compensation. But where smaller employers *can* come out ahead is workplace flexibility. Top performers may be persuaded to sign on if you offer additional PTO, telecommuting days, a compressed workweek or Friday afternoons off during non-peak months.

4. Shape your organizational culture. To keep turnover low, you may need to take a more active role in [monitoring and nurturing your corporate culture](#). A supportive work environment tells job seekers and employees alike that you respect everybody. Keep your team motivated with meaningful work, and make sure they understand how they contribute to the company's mission. Team-building exercises, staff

outings and mentoring programs help colleagues build positive relationships and contribute to a vibrant work environment.

5. Discuss career paths. Don't leave top performers in the dark about their future with the firm. This may mean improving your communication with staff. Hold regular discussions about work-related goals, professional development and technical training. Give workers opportunities to take on different challenges and accept new responsibilities. And when the time is right, promote them to the next rung on the career ladder.

It's difficult enough to hire and retain top talent in times of extremely low unemployment. Don't make your job harder than it has to be. When you offer today's workers what they want, you reap the rewards of easier recruitment and a lower turnover rate.

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, McDonald has advised thousands of company leaders and job seekers on how to hire and get hired.

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