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possess a robust combination of functional, soft and technology skills. This demand, persistent talent shortages and the resulting intense competition for top candidates

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Paul McDonald • Aug. 14, 2019



You've found the perfect new employee for your accounting firm, and all you need to do now is tell them the good news and they'll sign on the dotted line. Right? Not so fast.

Skilled accountants and auditors are in high demand today, especially CPAs who

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Don't expect business as usual the next time you're ready to extend a job offer to your top pick. Keep these five tips in mind:

1. Lead with a competitive salary.

Some hiring managers start with a lowball offer in anticipation of having to negotiate it higher. That strategy can work against you, however, as many professionals see below-average compensation as a signal your firm doesn't value its candidates or employees.

Keep in mind your top applicants are likely other firms' favorites, as well, and research suggests they could be weighing more than just your opportunity. A Robert Half Finance & Accounting survey found [nearly six in 10 workers have received multiple job offers simultaneously](#). Start salary discussions with an attractive offer, or candidates may simply walk away.

2. Benchmark compensation.

You'll need to know what candidates are being offered by other organizations, including your competitors. Consult trusted resources, such as the [annual Robert Half Salary Guide](#), that report on starting pay for public accounting positions and trends in benefits and perks. [Customize salaries for your market](#), and come up with a figure that's attractive, fair and a fit for the firm — and has wiggle room for subsequent negotiation.

3. Don't dawdle.

As more employers vie for a smaller number of skilled candidates, we're seeing managers bringing up salary earlier in the hiring process. They recognize that delaying conversations about money only increases the chances of losing their first-

choice candidate to another firm. As soon as you've found a professional who meets

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Close all your bargaining chips.

Salary isn't the only part of the compensation package that's open to discussion. If you've hit your upper limit, consider additional incentives. Perhaps offer a signing or one-year anniversary retention bonus, for example.

Some of the most attractive perks don't even involve money. As workers increasingly attempt to balance their personal and professional lives, you could provide extra vacation days, limited travel and the option to telecommute a couple days a week.

The compensation negotiation process will be different for each job candidate. Understand what today's professionals seek and are being given by competitors, start with a strong offer, and remain flexible. Rest assured, today's accountants are ready to negotiate. By following these steps, you will be, too.

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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 35 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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