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COVID-19

11 Tips for Hiring Remotely

Nobody knows how long the pandemic will last or what will happen next. But firms that have been able to update their hiring processes, harness the full potential of their remote workforce and create meaningful, lasting change can position themselves to...

Paul McDonald • Nov. 09, 2020



Before 2020, remote hiring was nearly foreign in finance and accounting fields. In-person interviews and meetings — getting face time — was ingrained in the business culture.

Then a global pandemic hit. Firms that wanted to stay operational had to shift many aspects of their operations — including recruitment — to adapt to the new normal. And some did so with remarkable speed and agility. Research by global staffing firm Robert Half reveals **more than half (53%) of organizations have hired new staff remotely** since the pandemic began.

With this trend set to continue at least in the near-term, hiring managers in finance and accounting are finding advantages and fine-tuning the process — and establishing de facto best practices any company can learn from.

Embracing change

Switching to fully remote hiring may seem daunting, but there are big benefits to making the leap:

- **A bigger talent pool** — The move to virtual teams means businesses are no longer restricted to people in their geographic region. This opens up **a much wider candidate pool** with access to specialized or hard-to-find skills across the country — or even the world.
- **Increased automation** — HR tech tools are helping streamline recruitment, from evaluating resumes to onboarding. Many firms now use AI-powered hiring to shortlist candidates, along with applicant tracking systems to instantly access candidate info and share feedback online.

Overcoming challenges

With these advantages to hiring remotely also come a few pain points. Here are 11 tips on how to overcome them:

1. **Adjust your advertising approach.** With job fairs and networking events canceled for the foreseeable future, the nature of advertising open jobs has changed. Savvy recruiters are focusing their efforts on social media platforms, web-based job boards and online job portals to access finance and accounting talent.
2. **Use specific job titles.** You want the role to sound interesting and dynamic, but it's best to stick to traditional titles that candidates will actually type into search fields. Advertising for an “Accountancy Wizard” or “Rockstar Excel Champion” is meaningless outside your office — and unlikely to rank well in search results.
3. **Include remote-related keywords.** If you want to interview candidates for a remote-only position, make your wording crystal clear. Use commonly searched terms, such as “work at home,” “remote,” “virtual” and “flexible” to ensure your

listing appears in searches by candidates looking for remote roles. And be explicit about what remote and flexible actually mean. For example, are employees required to attend occasional in-person meetings? Can they implement windowed working hours when logged in from home? Will the position eventually change to being in-office?

4. **Be transparent.** Being upfront about what the job involves is even more vital when the role is remote. As well as listing desired CPA qualifications, the job specification should describe a typical workday and be forthcoming about any remote-related challenges. Not only does this set realistic expectations about the role, but you're more likely to attract the right candidates and avoid a deluge of unsuitable applications.
5. **Imagine your ideal candidate.** This is a good place to start when recruiting for any job, but especially if you won't be meeting candidates in person. If you believe a certain personality type would work best for a remote position, include that in your listing. To narrow down your shortlist, ask candidates to take an online assessment or behavioral test as part of your initial process.
6. **Focus on soft skills.** Hiring for a virtual team means looking beyond vocational expertise. Candidates must also have the skills needed to excel at working remotely. These might include great communication, time-management, self-discipline and accountability. Plus, an analyst who can't present their data effectively on-screen or a public accountant unable to strike a virtual rapport with clients will struggle to do their job effectively using remote working tools.
7. **Emphasize company culture.** Evaluating candidates for the ability to mesh with and even energize your existing team can be challenging face to face, let alone when the interaction is virtual. Start by identifying your company values, and translate these ideas into assessments or interview questions that you can score candidates on. For instance, if one of your values is "always be learning," ask candidates to tell you what they've learned professionally over the past year.
8. **Offer fair compensation.** The hiring pool may have grown during the pandemic, but salaries are expected to remain stable, according to research from the [2021 Robert Half Salary Guide for Accounting and Finance Professionals](#). For example, despite challenging economic conditions, CPAs are in high demand to help firms stay afloat. Organizations that hope to attract top talent should expect to pay competitive wages for people with business-critical skills such as forecasting, analysis and auditing.
9. **Consider a trial period.** Even once you've found the right candidate, it's still hard to know how well they'll perform on the job. Rather than extending a firm offer, many CFOs and hiring managers have a policy of offering contracts or trials of 30-

90 days when hiring remote workers. This should be long enough to reveal any issues without negatively affecting morale.

0. **Virtual onboarding is vital.** Ensure new hires have access to the equipment and resources they need before their first day, including accounts, tools and software. Send a welcome package, arrange virtual “meet the team” sessions — with groups and individual coworkers — and make sure fresh recruits know that your virtual door is always open.
11. **Stay flexible for the future.** Even when the pandemic subsides, it’s likely that remote hiring will continue to some extent as companies realize the value of the widened talent pool and other factors. And flexibility is key, as well. During times of uncertainty, firms must be agile and ready to adapt to a changing business landscape. Finance leaders are turning to [an adjustable staffing mix of interim and full-time professionals](#) so they can push forward with high-priority projects while meeting routine needs.

Nobody knows how long the pandemic will last or what will happen next. But firms that have been able to update their hiring processes, harness the full potential of their remote workforce and create meaningful, lasting change can position themselves to emerge from the crisis more resilient and competitive than ever.

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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 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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