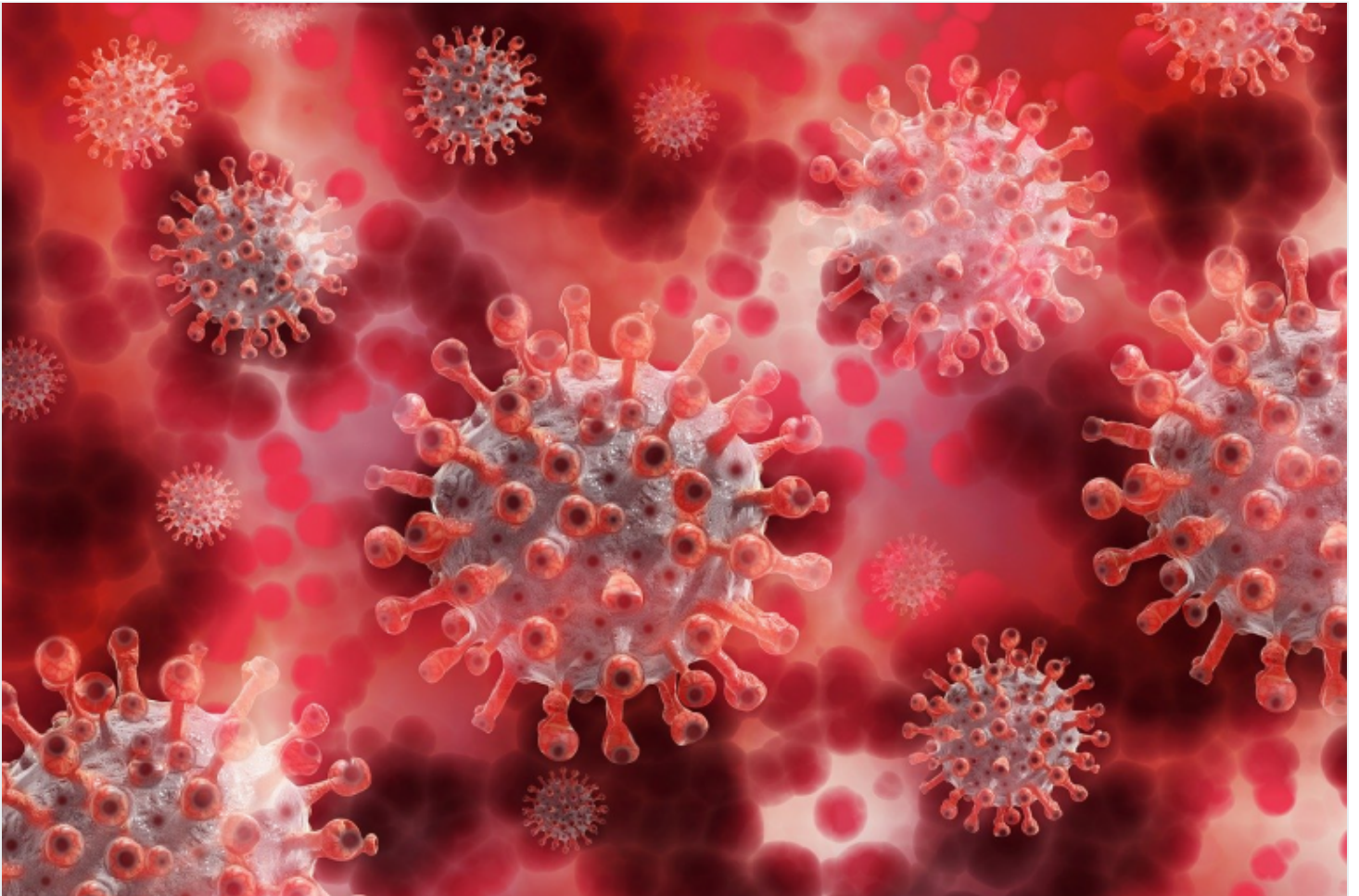


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caused accounting and finance managers to rethink their recruitment, staffing and retention strategies. The changes may have been sudden, but many of them are ultimately ...

Paul McDonald • Mar. 09, 2021



Even as companies have adapted to the new business environment, it's far from business as usual. The pandemic forced a sea change in the work environment for most companies, including with recruitment.

However, research for talent solutions and recruiting firm Robert Half's [The Demand for Skilled Talent in the COVID-19 Landscape](#) found many employers are still hiring

for on-site and remote accounting jobs, and candidates with in-demand skills

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One of the key drivers compelling the change in staffing and management strategies is the dramatic shift in where and how we get work done.

- **Remote work is the new norm.** In a Robert Half survey, [77% of employees reported that they've been working from home](#) since the pandemic began. Perhaps more important, 63% said they realized they can do their job from home, and 60% reported improved work-life balance due to the lack of a commute. So it's no surprise 74% said they'd like to telecommute more when shelter-in-place restrictions are lifted. There's growing evidence that productivity has remained the same as or even improved over pre-pandemic levels, so employers may want to consider keeping some work-from-home options.
- **Remote hiring and onboarding might stick around.** Over half of employers (53%) in a separate survey said they'd hired full-time or temporary workers remotely during the pandemic, and 75% of senior managers said they'd conducted online interviews and onboarding since moving to remote work. Hiring managers and human resources professionals are seeing benefits to the practice, including faster hiring and more efficient onboarding of new employees. Expect many employers to continue these processes remotely, even after most employees return to the office.

Boosting employee morale

Unexpected, dramatic change — like the abrupt transition to remote work — can cause a dip in morale. And certainly, many employees and managers have struggled to adjust to the new reality at times.

Despite the advantages of working from home — including flexible schedules, higher productivity and more room to come up with innovative solutions — many workers are uncertain about the future, which can lead to lower morale. And many managers are concerned about employees suffering burnout as they juggle their jobs and

personal responsibilities, and sometimes take on additional projects and duties from

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- **Show workers that they're valued.** Some ways companies used to show appreciation to employees, from free snacks to on-site gyms, are out of the picture right now. That makes employee recognition more important than ever. Low-cost awards and spot bonuses are great, and regularly reassuring employees that their work is critical to the organization's goals goes a long way. So does sincere appreciation for a job well done.
- **Focus on wellness.** Firms can also help employee morale by promoting wellness perks like free webinars and programs about stress management, meditation and coping with uncertainty. Managers can also encourage workers to take their paid time off. Even if travel is a no-go, taking a day or two to simply relax at home can help employees recharge.
- **Pay top performers well.** Of managers who said they're worried about retention in the survey noted above, 39% cited salary reductions or freezes as the main reason for their concern. It may seem like there aren't a lot of jobs out there, but there are [opportunities for high performers](#). If you aren't meeting or exceeding what other organizations are paying for similar work, your most valued employees may consider moving on.

Hiring in a new era

Currently, [accounting and finance teams are focusing](#) on accounts receivable and collections, accounts payable and disbursement management, cashflow projections and treasury management, financial reporting, and Sarbanes-Oxley and internal controls. As a result, employers are seeking professionals to support day-to-day accounting needs, compliance and reporting requirements, and demands related to lending programs.

CPAs, controllers, auditors, analysts, full-charge bookkeepers and staff and senior accountants are in demand. Because of the need to adapt to remote work and further uncertainty, firms are emphasizing soft skills when hiring accounting and finance

professionals, such as the ability to work independently, a positive attitude,

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professionals are working remotely, you can consider candidates from other physical areas. In a Robert Half survey, 61% of senior managers said that they've advertised fully remote jobs since the pandemic hit, and 60% reported expanding their search geographically to access a wider candidate pool.

- **Don't forget about passive job seekers.** Yes, there are a lot of active job seekers out there. Though some of the best candidates might still be employed — but open to a change if the right opportunity came up. A good recruiter can help you reach these professionals.
- **Consider promoting from within.** Has someone on your team really stepped up during the pandemic? Think about promoting them. It's good for morale and provides stability by placing someone with institutional knowledge in a leadership position.

There's no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has redefined how we work and caused accounting and finance managers to rethink their recruitment, staffing and retention strategies. The changes may have been sudden, but many of them are ultimately leading to increased efficiency and productivity — and very well might be here to stay.

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Paul McDonald is senior executive director at talent solutions and recruiting firm [Robert Half](#). He writes and speaks frequently on hiring, workplace, leadership and career-management topics. Over the course of more than 35 years in the staffing industry, McDonald has advised thousands of company leaders and job seekers on how to hire and get hired.

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