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operations is that it opens the door to recruiting talent from everywhere.

Paul McDonald • Feb. 23, 2023



You were proactive and diligent about readying your accounting firm for tax season, and yet you're still facing staffing gaps precisely when you need all hands on deck. You'd like to hire some new employees, but your search for viable candidates isn't yielding the results you'd hoped for.

Know that you're not alone in your recruitment struggles: research for [Robert Half's 2022 Demand For Skilled Talent report](#) found that 87% of finance and accounting

managers are challenged in finding skilled professionals — including for general

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Who can replace these workers? Not the newly minted accountants coming out of colleges and universities. There simply aren't enough of them, and as noted above, just because they earn an accounting major doesn't mean they'll stay in the profession. The number of U.S. students completing a bachelor's degree in accounting has been on the decline since 2012, according to [the AICPA's 2021 Trends report](#). The AICPA also notes that fewer accounting students are earning the CPA designation.

This is admittedly a grim outlook for CPA firms everywhere in need of talent, and not just at tax time. To turn things around, managers need to get creative. Here's a look at three ways to address your accounting firm's last-minute staffing needs while also laying the foundation for a staffing strategy that will help ensure you can always access a supply of skilled accounting talent when you need it.

Apprenticeships

Hiring apprentices may not sound like a fast path to solving critical staffing gaps in your organization. However, these arrangements can give you immediate access to a broad pool of talented, driven candidates who could potentially become your full-time employees after they complete their apprenticeship. And what better time than tax season to provide on-the-job learning to an aspiring accountant who is eager to grow their skills and knowledge?

Many firms also work with reputable apprenticeship programs as a way to help them employ [a more diverse workforce](#) and advance their environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives. Robert Half's [apprenticeship program](#), as an example, provides career opportunities to professionals in underrepresented communities while helping employers to expand their social impact.

Remote work

This suggestion is about more than offering your employees a flexible work model —

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Of course, your firm also needs to be prepared to support the success of remote team members, from investing in the right technology tools to [staying attuned to their needs and concerns](#).

Contractors

Many accounting firms turn to contract professionals when they need extra help during busy periods such as tax season. But like many employers today, they're also finding that it benefits their business to use this staffing strategy throughout the year to access specialized talent whenever they need it and help ensure that their core teams aren't overburdened.

[Robert Half surveyed](#) more than 950 hiring managers in the U.S. for our 2023 Salary Guide and learned that 55% of companies plan to bring in *more* contract talent this year. Also, findings from that same survey suggest the number of employers deciding to convert contract professionals into full-time hires is rising. The upshot: even competition for these professionals is intensifying — and more firms are seeing the value of using these arrangements as a way to identify potential hires.

Those are just three options for addressing your accounting firm's staffing needs. Additional sources of skilled talent to consider leveraging are:

- **Passive candidates** — These are skilled, experienced professionals who may not be actively looking for a new job but would consider making a move for the right opportunity. Working with a talent solutions firm can help you connect with these [hard-to-reach candidates](#).
- **“Boomerang” employees** — Think about people who left your firm on good terms who you would hire back in a heartbeat. Ask if they'd be open to coming back to work for you on either a full-time or part-time basis, and what you would

need to provide them (for example, higher salary, better perks, flexible scheduling,

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

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