



# The Robert Half Professional Employment Report

Q1 2012

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## About the Report

The *Robert Half Professional Employment Report* is the first quarterly hiring survey of its size and scope to focus exclusively on professional-level hiring. The results are based on telephone interviews with more than 4,000 executives throughout the United States to determine their hiring plans for the upcoming quarter. Among those surveyed are chief financial officers (CFOs), chief information officers (CIOs), senior human resources (HR) managers, lawyers, and advertising and marketing executives. Respondents offered their views on hiring plans within their respective fields and the challenge of finding skilled professionals. The survey also measures executives' confidence in their companies' prospects for growth in the first quarter of 2012. Robert Half has been reporting employment data through its Hiring Index program since 1992.

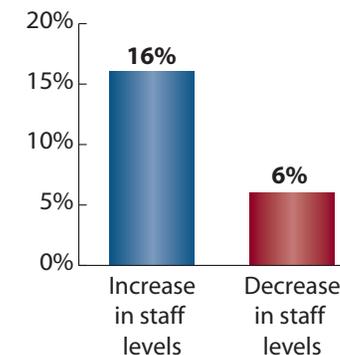
We hope the *Professional Employment Report* is useful and invite you to contact us for help with any of your staffing needs. For additional information, visit [www.roberthalf.us/per](http://www.roberthalf.us/per).

<sup>1</sup> West North Central: IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD

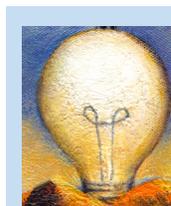
## Key Findings

- A net **10 percent** of executives plan to add professional-level staff in the first quarter of 2012, according to the *Robert Half Professional Employment Report*, a quarterly survey of hiring executives.
- **Sixty-seven percent** of survey participants reported encountering recruiting challenges, up eight points from the fourth quarter.
- The legal and marketing fields are expected to see the strongest hiring, with a net **27 percent** of lawyers and a net **14 percent** of advertising and marketing executives planning to increase staff levels.
- The technology and accounting and finance fields showed the largest quarter-over-quarter hiring projections.
- Businesses in the West North Central<sup>1</sup> states project the most hiring activity, with a net **15 percent** of executives from this region planning to add professional-level staff in the first quarter.
- A net **19 percent** of executives in the transportation sector anticipate staff additions, the most of any industry surveyed.
- **Forty percent** of executives said they are "very confident" in their organizations' ability to grow in the first quarter; **47 percent** are "somewhat confident."

## NATIONAL HIRING PROJECTIONS FIRST QUARTER 2012



Source: More than 4,000 executives at U.S. companies



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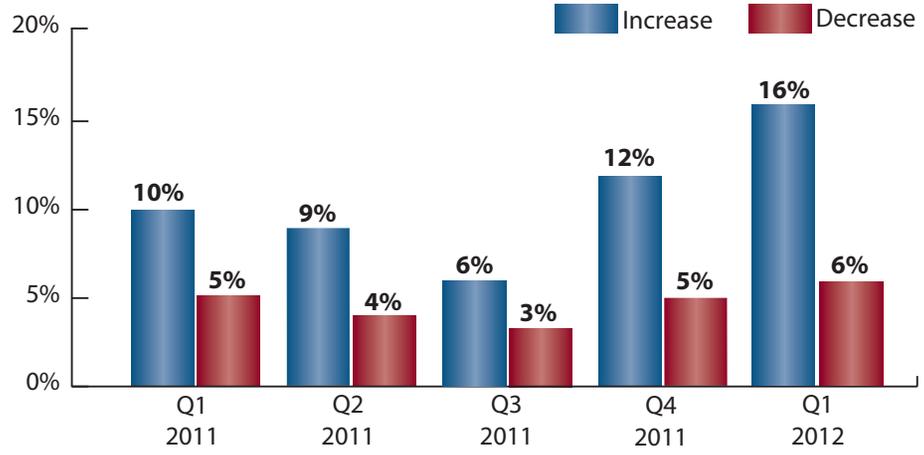


# Hiring Projections Over the Past Year

## Hiring Heats Up

A net 10 percent of executives plan to hire in the first quarter of 2012, up three points from fourth-quarter hiring projections.

### PROJECTED HIRING BY QUARTER



Source: More than 4,000 executives at U.S. companies

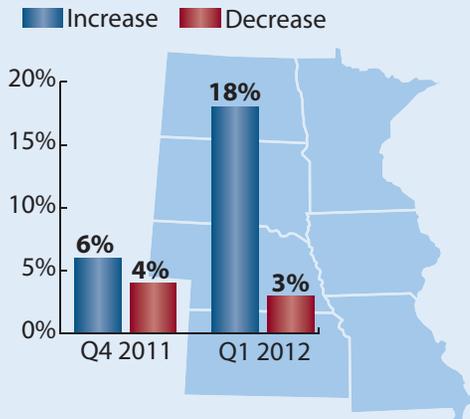
Executives interviewed will be hiring more actively in the first quarter of 2012. Sixteen percent of respondents said they expect to add professional staff in the next three months. Six percent of respondents said they foresee staff reductions. The net 10 percent increase is the highest in the past year and three points above the previous quarter's forecast.



# Professional-Level Hiring – By Region

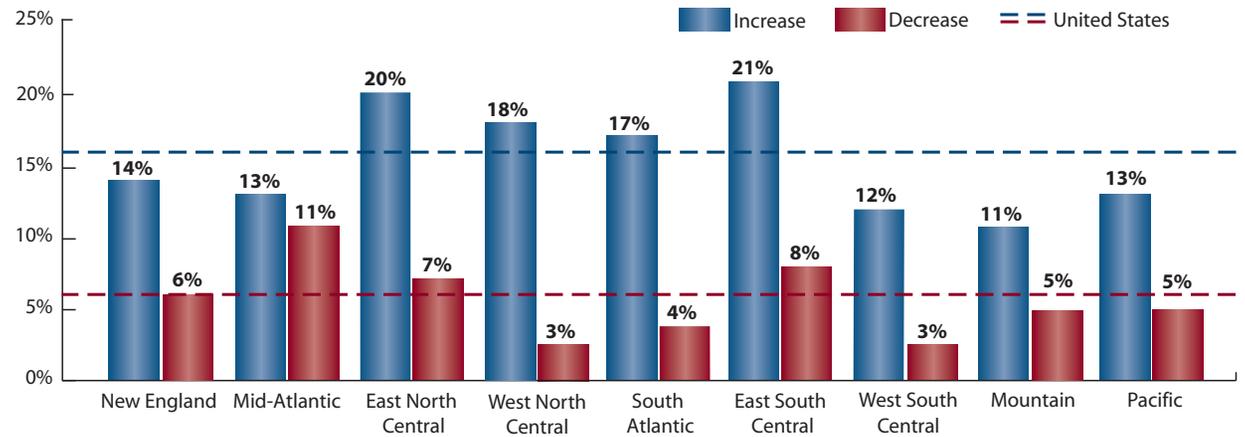
## West North Central: The Top Region for Professional-Level Hiring

Percentage of executives who plan to increase or decrease staff levels:



West North Central: IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD

## PROJECTED HIRING BY REGION – ALL PROFESSIONS



New England: CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT  
Mid-Atlantic: NJ, NY, PA  
East North Central: IL, IN, MI, OH, WI

West North Central: IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD  
South Atlantic: DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV  
East South Central: AL, KY, MS, TN

West South Central: AR, LA, OK, TX  
Mountain: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY  
Pacific: AK, CA, HI, OR, WA

Source: More than 4,000 executives at U.S. companies

Executives in the West North Central region are most optimistic about hiring, with a net 15 percent expecting to add staff in the first quarter of 2012, five points above the national average.

Healthcare, manufacturing and financial services companies are responsible for much of the hiring in the West North Central region. In particular, these organizations seek accounting operations professionals (e.g., payroll and accounts payable), customer service representatives, web developers and information technology (IT) systems administrators, among other roles.



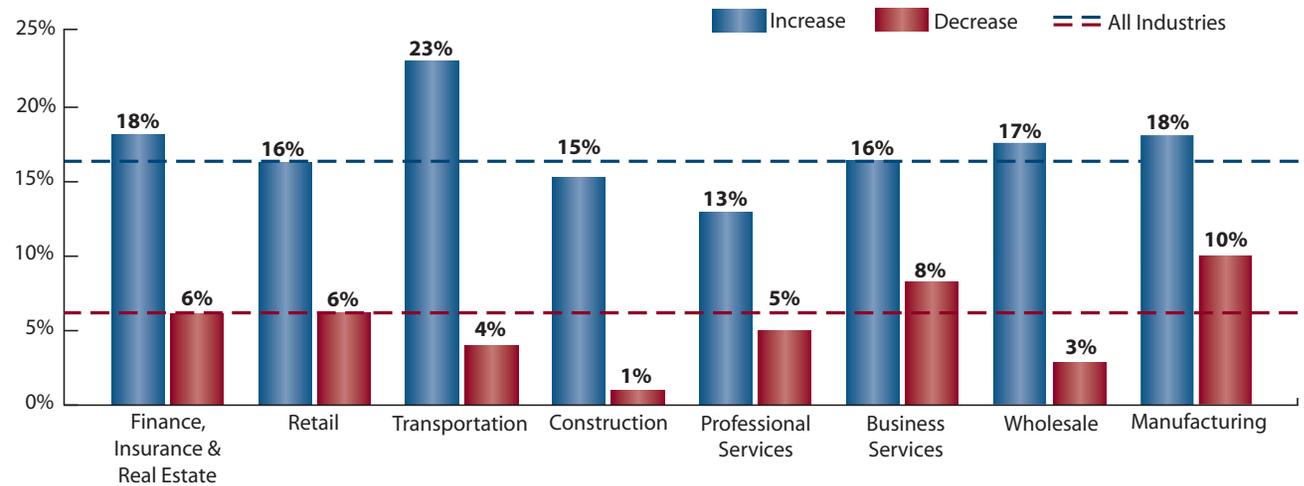
# Professional-Level Hiring – By Industry

## Top 5 Industries for Professional-Level Hiring

These industries show the highest projected net increase in hiring activity:

1. Transportation (+19%)
2. Wholesale (+14%)
3. Construction (+14%)
4. Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (+12%)
5. Retail (+10%)

## PROJECTED HIRING BY INDUSTRY – ALL PROFESSIONS



Source: More than 4,000 executives at U.S. companies

Executives in the transportation industry expect the most active hiring of professional-level staff, with a net 19 percent of hiring authorities planning to increase personnel levels. In both the wholesale and construction sectors, a net 14 percent of executives anticipate hiring in the first quarter of 2012.

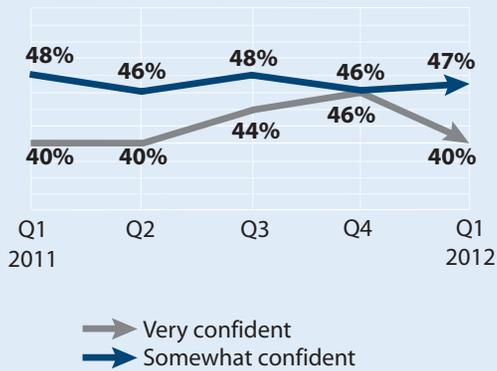
In the finance, insurance and real estate industry, 18 percent of executives anticipate hiring in the coming months, and 6 percent expect staff declines, for a net 12 percent projected hiring increase. Executives in the retail sector forecast a net 10 percent hiring increase for the first quarter of 2012.



# Recruiting Challenges

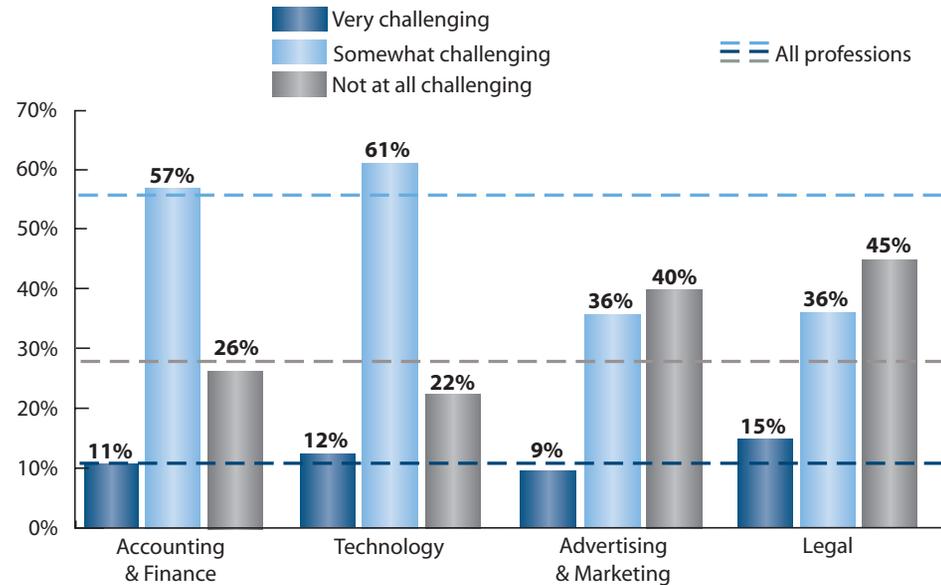
## Business Confidence

Percentage of executives who are confident in their companies' growth prospects by quarter:



Source: More than 4,000 executives at U.S. companies

## CHALLENGE IN FINDING SKILLED PROFESSIONALS



Source: More than 3,500 executives at U.S. companies

Locating the right job candidate continues to be more difficult for executives interviewed. Sixty-seven percent of all respondents said it is somewhat or very challenging to find skilled professionals today, up eight points from the prior quarter.

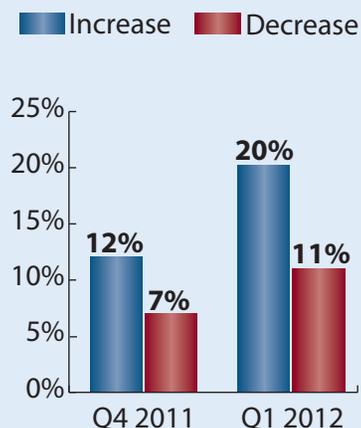
CIOs are struggling the most in finding skilled workers: 73 percent said it is challenging to locate experienced IT candidates, a seven-point increase over the fourth quarter. CFOs also are seeing a tighter candidate supply: 68 percent of financial executives said it is either somewhat or very challenging to find skilled accounting and finance professionals, compared to 59 percent in the previous quarter.



# Hiring Trends – Accounting & Finance

## Hiring Projections

Percentage of CFOs who plan to increase or decrease staff levels:



Source: More than 1,400 CFOs at U.S. companies

## Top Industries

- Construction (+18%)
- Transportation (+18%)
- Financial Services (+14%)

## Top Regions

- Mountain (+16%)
- New England (+16%)
- South Atlantic (+15%)

Mountain: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY

New England: CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT

South Atlantic: DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV

Percentages reflect the net increase.

## Overview

CFOs are optimistic about the hiring outlook for the first quarter. A net 9 percent of financial executives said they plan to increase staff, up four points from the previous quarter's forecast. In addition, most finance executives – 87 percent – expressed confidence in their companies' business prospects for the first three months of the year.

Organizations are hiring to relieve the burden on employees who have taken on added responsibilities over the past few years and bringing in staff who can support growth initiatives. As the job market in accounting and finance improves and professionals become more comfortable about exploring new opportunities, firms also are recruiting to backfill vacated positions.

Employers, however, are expected to face a more difficult hiring environment. Nearly seven in 10 CFOs (68 percent) said it is challenging to find skilled financial professionals today, up nine points from the fourth-quarter survey and up 27 points from the third quarter.

## Positions in Top Demand

- **Financial analysts** – Businesses seek financial analysts who can evaluate financial plans, forecasts and budgets, and identify ways to grow profits while controlling costs. Professionals with functional expertise and outstanding interpersonal skills are in strongest demand.
- **Staff and senior accountants** – Firms are hiring experienced accountants to manage fundamental accounting needs, including preparing financial statements, maintaining the general ledger and performing account analyses. Individuals who have earned the certified public accountant designation and possess public accounting experience are particularly valued.
- **Business systems analysts** – Business analysts with a combination of finance and IT expertise are sought by firms looking to enhance their existing systems and leverage new hardware and software.

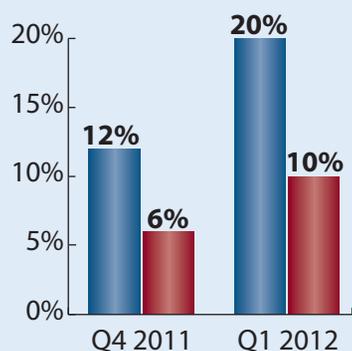


# Hiring Trends – Technology

## Hiring Projections

Percentage of CIOs who plan to increase or decrease staff levels:

■ Increase ■ Decrease



Source: More than 1,400 CIOs at U.S. companies

## Top Industries

- Retail (+17%)
- Business Services (+16%)
- Manufacturing (+11%)

## Top Regions

- West South Central (+23%)
- West North Central (+18%)
- East South Central (+15%)

West South Central: AR, LA, OK, TX

West North Central: IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD

East South Central: AL, KY, MS, TN

Percentages reflect the net increase.

## Overview

Hiring projections for technology professionals continue to rise. Twenty percent of CIOs interviewed said they plan to hire in the first quarter of 2012, and 10 percent expect to reduce staff. The net 10 percent anticipated increase in overall hiring activity is four points above the previous quarter's projections and seven points higher than the forecast for the first quarter of last year.

CIOs also expressed greater optimism in the potential for IT investments. Forty-two percent of technology executives rated the likelihood that their companies will invest in IT projects in the fourth quarter a "4" or higher on a five-point scale (with "5" being the most optimistic).

IT hiring has shifted into high gear within many firms. In some areas – networking, security and applications development, to name a few – there exists an abundance of positions and a shortage of skilled candidates. In fact, 73 percent of technology executives said it is challenging to locate skilled IT professionals, up seven points from the fourth-quarter survey.

## Positions in Top Demand

- **Network administrators** – Companies continue to seek experienced network professionals to help them manage more complex networks. Those with solid knowledge of cloud computing, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Software as a Service (SaaS) have an advantage in the job market.
- **Windows administrators** – Windows administration skills are sought by many enterprises that are implementing and maintaining existing and upgraded systems. Professionals with experience in Windows Server 2008 and Windows 7, in particular, often earn higher compensation for these skills.
- **Help desk and desktop support professionals** – Providing support to customers and end users remains a priority for organizations. Relatively high turnover rates among support personnel have contributed to an ongoing need for these professionals. Businesses are relying on support staff on both a project and full-time basis.

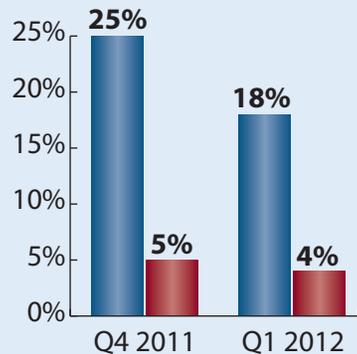


# Hiring Trends – Advertising & Marketing

## Hiring Projections

Percentage of advertising and marketing executives who plan to increase or decrease staff levels:

■ Increase ■ Decrease



Source: 125 advertising executives and 375 marketing executives at U.S. companies

## Overview

Active hiring continues in the creative industry, although not at the levels reported in the previous quarter. Agency business is picking up as clients seek help developing innovative marketing campaigns and expanding their online presence. This is driving demand for account services and interactive professionals. A net 14 percent of advertising and marketing executives interviewed plan to increase staff levels in the first quarter of 2012.

Sustained business confidence may be a contributing factor: 89 percent of advertising and marketing executives surveyed said they are either somewhat or very confident in their firms' first-quarter growth prospects. However, finding talent with the right mix of technical and soft skills remains difficult: 45 percent of executives interviewed said it's challenging to find skilled creative professionals today.

## Positions in Top Demand

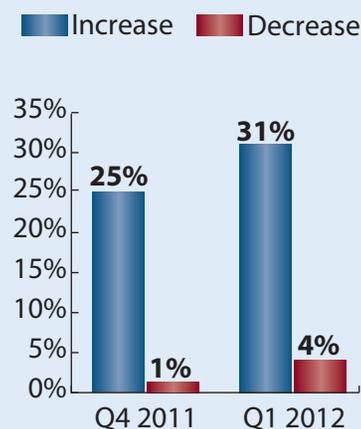
- **Account managers** – Professionals with extensive experience managing creative and production teams are in strong demand. These professionals are needed to develop advertising strategies that meet clients' goals and ensure campaigns are implemented on time and within budget.
- **Brand/product managers** – As companies seek to refresh their branding to reflect new product and service offerings, they seek individuals who can conduct market research, anticipate competitive and industry trends, and provide brand direction to meet business objectives.
- **User experience (UX) designers** – Demand remains strong for experienced UX designers who can create rich, intuitive online experiences for an organization's customer base.



## Hiring Trends – Legal

### Hiring Projections

Percentage of lawyers who plan to increase or decrease staff levels:



Source: 100 lawyers at law firms and 100 corporate lawyers in the United States

### Overview

To expand legal service offerings and grow revenue, many law firms are hiring senior-level associates with a solid client portfolio, strong business development skills and expertise in high-demand practice areas. A net 27 percent of lawyers surveyed at law firms and corporations said they will add staff in the first quarter of 2012. Most of the hiring is expected at law firms.

Among lawyers surveyed, 73 percent said they are at least somewhat confident in their organizations' ability to expand in the first quarter. Those interviewed also acknowledged difficulty in locating top candidates: 51 percent said they thought it was somewhat or very challenging to find skilled legal professionals today.

Lawyers, paralegals and legal secretaries are the positions in greatest demand for the first quarter. Lawyers cited bankruptcy/foreclosure, litigation, and labor and employment law as the areas that will experience the most growth in the next three months. In addition, general business and commercial law, as well as intellectual property, are strong in certain markets.

### Practice Areas in Top Demand

- **Bankruptcy/foreclosure** – Lawyers and paralegals with experience in bankruptcy, foreclosure and restructuring are in demand across the country due to continued activity in these areas.
- **Litigation** – A surge in corporate and commercial litigation is driving demand for associates, paralegals and legal secretaries with litigation expertise, as well as skilled lawyers, JDs and paralegals who specialize in e-discovery and document review.
- **Labor and employment** – Lawyers and legal support professionals with employment law backgrounds are sought by companies to assist with personnel policies, compliance matters, and mergers and acquisitions, as well as litigation.



## Finding a Good Fit: Hiring for Needs

### Spotlight: Assessing Job Candidates

Aside from poor performance, the factors most likely to lead to a failed hire:

Mismatched skill set	36%
Unclear performance expectations	30%
Personality conflicts	17%
Failure to fit into corporate culture	14%
Don't know	3%

Source: More than 1,400 CFOs at U.S. companies

### Avoiding the “Bad Match” Syndrome

Executives interviewed in a recent Robert Half survey said the top factor leading to a failed hire, aside from performance issues, is a poor skills match. Setting unclear job expectations also was a contributing factor. Assessing a candidate’s fit isn’t an exact science, but when done right, it can avoid the “bad match” syndrome and can help employers save on turnover costs later.

Below are five tips for making better hires:

- 1. Be specific.** Hiring managers often recycle the job description they used the last time they filled a position, but chances are the role has changed. Taking a fresh look at current needs can pinpoint the desired skills to add to the team. A detailed job description using key terms will help reduce the number of resumes employers receive from unqualified applicants.
- 2. Look for the intangibles.** A candidate’s skill set is not limited to functional abilities – it also includes how well he or she works in a collaborative environment. Employers that don’t take soft skills, such as leadership and communication, into account may set themselves up for a bad match.
- 3. Make a personal connection.** Hiring is more than just identifying a strong resume or profile – it involves having conversations with applicants to establish a rapport. Interviews, for example, allow managers to delve deeper into an applicant’s qualifications and assess whether he or she is a fit with the corporate culture.
- 4. Tap all resources.** A hiring manager may have the final say, but hiring should never be a solo effort. Organizations can take advantage of tools already available – for example, human resources can help with the job description, and employees may be able to offer referrals.
- 5. Court top choices.** People in high-demand specialties commonly have multiple job offers. Employers need to show them the benefits of working with the firm and offer a competitive compensation package in line with – or ideally above – market rates.

Working with a recruiter specializing in a given field can help hiring managers identify job candidates using the appropriate skills testing, providing added assurance that a prospective employee’s skills are a match.



## About the Survey

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The quarterly *Robert Half Professional Employment Report* was developed by Robert Half and conducted by an independent research firm. The study is based on more than 4,000 telephone interviews with executives from a random sample of U.S. companies across a number of industries, including more than:

- 1,400 CFOs at companies with 20 or more employees
- 1,400 CIOs at companies with 100 or more employees
- 500 senior HR managers at companies with 20 or more employees
- 100 lawyers at law firms with 20 or more employees and 100 corporate lawyers at companies with 1,000 or more employees
- 125 advertising executives at companies with 20 or more employees and 375 marketing executives at companies with 100 or more employees

### About Robert Half

Founded in 1948, Robert Half, the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm, is a recognized leader in professional staffing services. The company's specialized staffing divisions include Accountemps®, Robert Half® Finance & Accounting and Robert Half® Management Resources, for temporary, full-time and senior-level project professionals, respectively, in the fields of accounting and finance; OfficeTeam®, for highly skilled office and administrative support professionals; Robert Half® Technology, for project and full-time technology professionals; Robert Half® Legal, for project and full-time staffing of lawyers, paralegals and legal support personnel; and The Creative Group®, for interactive, design, marketing, advertising and public relations professionals. Robert Half has staffing operations in more than 350 locations worldwide. For more information about the specialized staffing and recruitment divisions of Robert Half, visit [roberthalf.us](http://roberthalf.us) and follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/roberthalf](https://twitter.com/roberthalf).