SEPTEMBER 2026 HIRING SNAPSHOT

ACCOUNTING & FINANCE

PREPARING ACCOUNTING & FINANCE TEAMS FOR Q4

As we move into Q4, finance leaders are balancing year-end demands with decisions about what their teams need to look like in 2027. Here's where employers should be focusing now.

HENDERSON SCOTT

ALWAYS RAISING THE BAR IN ACCOUNTING & FINANCE

Q4 HIRING OUTLOOK

A more considered market is raising the bar for hiring

Accounting and finance hiring typically becomes more measured toward the end of the year, with uncertainty around future budgets and the holiday period contributing to slower decision-making. Candidate movement can also slow as the holidays approach, creating a challenge for businesses that need to make critical hires quickly.

At the same time, expectations are changing. As AI becomes more integrated into accounting and finance functions, businesses are increasingly looking beyond traditional finance experience to professionals who can effectively utilize new tools, systems and technology.

WHERE DEMAND IS STRONGEST

Specialist expertise is becoming increasingly important

Controllers, VPs of Finance and CFOs remain consistently important hires as businesses grow, secure private equity investment and move through different stages of development. However, employers are becoming more specific about what constitutes the right candidate.

Rather than hiring a strong finance professional with broad relevant experience, businesses are increasingly prioritizing specialist sector knowledge, experience within high-performing organizations and the technical capabilities required to modernize the finance function.

Key areas of focus: Controllers, VPs of Finance, CFOs, specialist industry experience, AI and technology integration, and experience within top-tier organizations.

For some positions, experience with leading technology businesses is becoming particularly attractive as employers look for professionals who can bring established best practice into their organization.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

Finance leaders are already assessing what their future teams need to look like

Planning for 2027 headcount is already underway. Finance leaders are assessing their existing teams, identifying potential flight risks and comparing current hiring costs against likely requirements for next year.

Technology is also becoming a bigger part of these conversations. Businesses are considering how AI will change team structures, where specialist expertise will be required and whether existing employees have the capabilities needed to support future objectives.

COMPENSATION EXPECTATIONS

Senior finance talent is looking beyond base salary

Compensation priorities vary by seniority. Junior and mid-level professionals remain focused on base salary and bonus, while senior candidates place greater value on equity and long-term upside. Executives increasingly seek a share in the value they create.

When senior candidates have multiple opportunities, an offer that falls short on equity can quickly lose impact. Businesses that identify the right person need to ensure the overall package is competitive from the outset.

ATTRACTING TALENT

Accounting and finance professionals are assessing the complete opportunity when considering a move. The conversations taking place across the market increasingly center around:

- Competitive base salary and bonus
- Meaningful equity and long-term upside at senior level
- Opportunities to develop AI and technology capabilities
- Strong businesses with clear growth plans
- Hybrid working with appropriate flexibility
- Roles that offer genuine influence over future growth

As employers become more selective about talent, candidates will remain selective about the opportunities they pursue.

"Finance leaders are already thinking beyond year-end and considering what their teams need to look like in 2027. AI and technology are changing the skills businesses value. The businesses that assess their teams early and invest in the right capabilities now will be better prepared for what comes next."

LEOR KUSHNER, SENIOR BUSINESS DIRECTOR ACCOUNTING & FINANCE

Three ways to prepare for Q4

Assess your team now
Identify potential flight risks, future skills gaps and whether your current team has the capabilities required to deliver against 2027 objectives.

Build future-ready skills
Consider how AI and technology will shape your finance function. Upskilling existing employees now can reduce future competition for expertise.

Get ahead of critical hiring
If your future plans require different expertise, waiting until 2027 could mean competing with businesses already hiring for the same skills.

The bottom line

Finance hiring may move at a more measured pace as Q4 approaches, but candidates remain open to compelling opportunities. Businesses are becoming more selective as AI and technology capabilities are influencing future team structures.

Finance leaders that use Q4 to assess their existing teams, secure future budgets and identify the capabilities they will need in 2027 will enter the new year in a stronger position to compete for talent.