

HIRING GUIDE: **FINANCE & ACCOUNTING** 2026

United States | Industry agnostic



CONTENTS

01. INTRODUCTION	<u>03</u>
02. MARKET OVERVIEW	<u>04</u>
03. SIX KEY SKILLS EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR	<u>05</u>
04. SIX THINGS THAT CANDIDATES ARE LOOKING FOR	<u>06</u>
05. HIRING TRENDS BY FUNCTION	<u>07</u>
06. SALARY GUIDE	<u>08</u>
07. HOW EMPLOYERS CAN COMPETE FOR TALENT	<u>10</u>
08. ADVICE FOR CANDIDATES	<u>11</u>
08. OUTLOOK BEYOND 2026	<u>12</u>

01.

INTRODUCTION

Finance and accounting hiring in the US has entered a more selective, skills-led phase.

Organizations are still hiring, but they are being more deliberate about where they invest. The strongest demand is not simply for technical finance capability, but for leaders who can help businesses navigate complexity: margin pressure, cost discipline, AI adoption, ERP transformation, regulatory scrutiny, investor expectations and more volatile planning cycles.

For employers, this means competition remains intense for finance and accounting professionals who combine strong controls, commercial judgment and technology fluency. According to our own data, salary growth has moderated to an average of **2% year over year**, but employers are continuing to pay premiums for specialist skills, particularly in AI, financial reporting, compliance, data analytics, financial modeling and ERP capability.

The talent supply picture remains tight. The [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) projects employment of accountants and auditors to grow **5% from 2024 to 2034**, faster than the average for all occupations, with around **124,200 openings each**

year over the decade. This is being felt most acutely in accounting leadership, controllership, technical accounting, FP&A and transformation-focused finance roles.

At the same time, finance functions are expected to do more with better data, faster reporting and leaner teams. [Deloitte's 2026 finance trends research](#) highlights the growing strategic role of finance leaders, with priorities including advanced scenario planning, AI and cloud adoption, cost discipline, and the blending of finance expertise with data and technology skills.

The result is a market where candidates are cautious, employers are exacting, and the best hires are often those who can bridge the gap between governance and growth.

Leonid's hiring guide explores all of this in detail, along with up to date salary tables for each sub section of finance & accounting. Naturally, these salary bands are fairly broad, with factors such as geography, size of organisation and industry sector all influencing the levels. For more bespoke salary benchmarking, please do reach out to me directly for further information and I'll be happy to help.



Adam Bond

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02.

MARKET OVERVIEW

Finance is becoming more strategic, and more operationally exposed

The finance function is no longer viewed solely as a reporting, budgeting or control function. CFOs and senior finance leaders are increasingly expected to shape business strategy, advise on capital allocation, lead transformation and help organizations respond quickly to changing market conditions.

[Deloitte's North American CFO](#) research found that CFO confidence rose in late 2025, with finance leaders entering 2026 focused heavily on digital transformation, customer retention, M&A opportunities and efficiency. The same research notes that digital transformation has moved to the forefront of CFO priorities, replacing enterprise risk management as the leading area of focus for many finance chiefs.

For hiring, this is changing the profile of in-demand finance talent. Employers are placing greater value on candidates who can translate financial information into commercial action, challenge assumptions, build scalable processes and influence cross-functional decision-making.

Accounting talent remains difficult to secure

The accounting shortage continues to contribute to compliance issues and is pushing up salaries for the professionals needed to address reporting, controls and regulatory demands.

This is particularly relevant for organizations with complex revenue recognition, multi-entity structures, international operations, audit readiness challenges or recent acquisitions. Candidates with public accounting foundations, CPA credentials, SEC reporting exposure, SOX knowledge or technical accounting expertise remain highly sought after.

Employers are increasingly competing not just on salary, but on role scope, quality of leadership, technology investment, flexibility and career growth.

FP&A is gaining influence

FP&A continues to move closer to strategy. The most in-demand FP&A professionals are those who can go beyond budgeting and variance analysis to provide forward-looking insight, scenario modeling, revenue forecasting and business partnering.

As organizations face ongoing uncertainty around pricing, demand, labor costs, supply chain pressures and investment decisions, the ability to model multiple futures and communicate financial implications clearly has become a core capability.

Financial planning, AI implementation and ERP upgrades are where we see the most visible talent gaps.

AI and automation are reshaping finance teams, not replacing them

Automation is changing finance and accounting work, but it is also creating demand for people who can lead implementation, interpret outputs and redesign workflows. Finance and accounting leaders are seeking candidates with specialized skills, especially in AI, to guide strategic decision-making and upgrade workflows and operational systems.

[The Richmond Fed's CFO](#) Survey found that more than half of surveyed firms had made AI-related investments in the previous 12 months, with large firms significantly more likely to have invested than smaller firms.



03.

SIX KEY SKILLS EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

1. Finance leaders who can connect numbers to strategy

Employers increasingly want CFOs, SVPs and VPs of Finance who can act as strategic operators. Technical finance capability remains essential, but senior candidates are expected to bring commercial judgment, board-level communication, capital allocation experience and the ability to support growth.

In middle-market and large organizations, CFOs are often expected to lead or influence pricing strategy, M&A activity, working capital management, investor relations, debt financing, transformation and enterprise risk.

2. Strong controls and accounting discipline

As finance functions modernize, the foundations still matter. Employers are prioritizing candidates who can strengthen close processes, improve audit readiness, enhance controls, manage technical accounting issues and build scalable reporting infrastructure.

This is particularly important in businesses that have grown quickly, expanded internationally, completed acquisitions or are preparing for a transaction.

3. Data, systems and transformation capability

ERP transformation, AI adoption, automation and better management reporting are central to many finance hiring briefs. Candidates who have led system implementations, improved reporting

architecture or built more automated planning processes are in high demand.

[Deloitte's 2026 Finance Trends](#) report identifies the blending of finance and technology talent as one of the key themes shaping finance functions.

4. Business partnering and influence

Hiring managers are looking for finance professionals who can work credibly with commercial, operational, product, sales, HR and executive teams. In FP&A especially, the strongest candidates are those who can challenge assumptions without creating friction, simplify complexity and help non-finance stakeholders make better decisions.

5. Change leadership

Many finance and accounting roles now involve transformation: upgrading systems, redesigning operating models, improving data quality, shortening the close, integrating acquisitions or professionalizing reporting. Employers want candidates who can bring structure, pace and calm to change-heavy environments.

6. Talent development

With the accounting and finance talent market under pressure, employers are placing more emphasis on leaders who can build teams, retain high performers and develop future capability. This includes the ability to upskill teams in analytics, automation and business partnering.



04.

SIX THINGS THAT CANDIDATES ARE LOOKING FOR

1. Competitive compensation; but not salary alone

Candidates remain highly compensation-aware.

However, senior finance and accounting candidates are increasingly evaluating the full package: base salary, bonus, equity, benefits, retirement contributions, healthcare, paid time off, flexibility and long-term career opportunity.

2. Flexibility and trust

Hybrid working remains an important differentiator, especially for experienced candidates who have proved they can operate effectively without being in the office five days a week. Employers who require full-time office attendance may need to compensate accordingly.

3. A clear mandate

Senior finance candidates want to understand what they are being hired to achieve. Is the role about transformation, stabilization, growth, turnaround, transaction readiness, public company discipline or team development?

Ambiguity around expectations can deter strong candidates, particularly at CFO, CAO, Controller and VP FP&A level.

4. Modern systems and realistic resources

Candidates are wary of roles where the expectations are high but the infrastructure is weak. Finance professionals are increasingly assessing whether a company has invested – or is willing to invest – in ERP, planning tools, data quality, automation and team capability.

5. Strategic access

Experienced finance leaders want a genuine seat at the table. Candidates are more likely to engage with roles where finance is treated as a strategic partner rather than a back-office function.

6. Career growth and meaningful scope

For Director and Manager-level candidates, career growth remains a major decision factor. Candidates want roles that expand their exposure, develop leadership capability and provide access to senior stakeholders.

05.

HIRING TRENDS BY FUNCTION

CFO

The CFO role continues to broaden. For companies between \$100M and \$1B+ revenue, the CFO is expected to combine financial stewardship with commercial leadership. The strongest candidates can manage capital, lead finance transformation, advise the CEO and Board, and build finance functions that support scale.

In private equity-backed or transaction-oriented environments, CFO hiring is often driven by value creation, exit readiness, M&A integration, debt management and improved reporting cadence. In founder-led or high-growth businesses, the priority may be professionalizing finance, building controls and introducing better planning discipline.

Finance

Finance leadership roles are becoming more commercially embedded. SVPs, VPs, Directors and Finance Managers are expected to provide insight, not just reporting. Employers want candidates who can truly partner with the business, as well as improve forecasting accuracy, manage performance and bring financial discipline to growth decisions.

Candidates with experience in transformation, operational finance, pricing, margin analysis, multi-site environments or international expansion are especially attractive.

Accounting

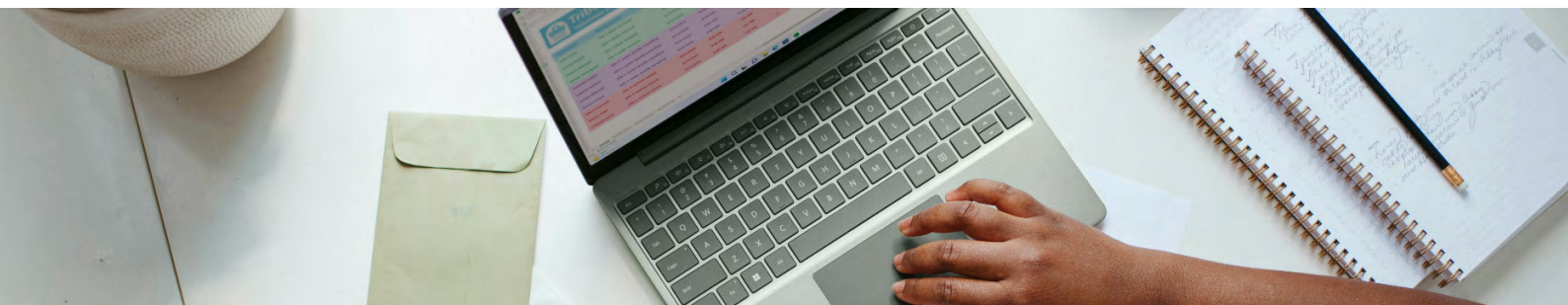
Accounting roles remain among the most difficult to fill, particularly where employers require CPA credentials, public accounting experience, technical accounting depth or public company reporting exposure.

Chief Accounting Officers, Controllers and Assistant Controllers are being hired to strengthen governance, enhance close processes, improve audit outcomes and ensure financial statements can withstand scrutiny.

FP&A

FP&A hiring is increasingly linked to growth, uncertainty and better decision-making. Employers are looking for candidates who can create more dynamic planning cycles, improve forecast accuracy, build scenario models and communicate financial trade-offs clearly.

The best FP&A candidates are commercially curious, analytically strong and able to tell a compelling story with data.





06.

SALARY GUIDE

Methodology and notes

The salary tables below provide indicative US national base salary ranges for industry-agnostic, non-financial services organizations. They are designed as a practical benchmark for hiring and workforce planning.

Ranges have been informed by Leonid's proprietary data.

Actual compensation may vary significantly based on:

- location and local labor market
- company size and complexity
- public vs. private ownership
- private equity sponsorship
- bonus and equity participation
- international footprint
- transformation or transaction requirements
- CPA, MBA or public accounting background
- systems and data transformation experience
- board, investor or audit committee exposure

CFO salary by company revenue

Company revenue	Base salary range
\$100M—\$250M	\$250,000—\$375,000
\$250M—\$500M	\$325,000—\$475,000
\$500M—\$1B	\$425,000—\$625,000
\$1B+	\$550,000—\$850,000+

Market note: CFO compensation can vary substantially depending on ownership structure, bonus potential and equity. Public company, PE-backed, pre-IPO and transaction-heavy roles often command higher total compensation than base salary alone would suggest.

Finance salary table

Role	Salary Range (per year)
SVP Finance	\$275,000—\$425,000
VP Finance	\$220,000—\$325,000
Director, Finance	\$165,000—\$240,000
Senior Manager, Finance	\$130,000—\$175,000
Finance Manager	\$105,000—\$145,000

Accounting salary table

Role	Salary Range (per year)
Chief Accounting Officer	\$275,000—\$450,000
Controller	\$175,000—\$275,000
Assistant Controller	\$130,000—\$180,000
Director, Accounting	\$155,000—\$250,000
Accounting Manager	\$105,000—\$145,000

FP&A salary table

Role	Salary Range (per year)
Head of / VP, FP&A	\$220,000—\$360,000
Director, FP&A	\$165,000—\$250,000
Senior Manager, FP&A	\$130,000—\$200,000
Manager, FP&A	\$110,000—\$160,000
Senior Manager/Director	\$160,000—\$250,000+

Skills commanding a premium

Across finance, accounting and FP&A, employers should expect to pay more for candidates with:

- CPA or public accounting background
- Technical accounting expertise
- SEC reporting or SOX experience
- PE-backed or transaction experience
- M&A integration exposure
- ERP implementation experience
- Advanced Excel, Power BI, Tableau or data visualization skills
- Financial modeling and scenario planning expertise
- AI, automation or process improvement experience
- Multi-entity, multi-state or international experience
- Board, audit committee or investor-facing experience

07.

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN COMPETE FOR TALENT

Move quickly, but not carelessly

Strong candidates are unlikely to remain available for long. Employers should ensure the hiring process is structured, timely and clear from the outset. Delays between interview stages can signal indecision or lack of alignment.

Be clear on the mandate

Before going to market, define what the role is really there to deliver. A CFO hired for exit readiness is different from a CFO hired for operational transformation. A Controller hired to stabilize the close is different from one hired to build a public company-ready function.

Benchmark compensation before launching the search

Compensation misalignment remains one of the most common causes of failed hiring processes. Employers should benchmark salary, bonus and equity expectations early, particularly for CFO, CAO, Controller and VP-level roles.

Sell the opportunity, not just the company

The best candidates are evaluating the quality of the role, leadership team, culture, systems, resources and career trajectory. Employers should be prepared to articulate why the opportunity is compelling.

Assess for adaptability

Finance functions are changing quickly. Hiring only for what has worked historically may limit future capability. Employers should assess how candidates have handled ambiguity, transformation, automation and cross-functional influence.

Consider adjacent backgrounds

For some roles, particularly in FP&A and finance transformation, the best candidate may not come from an identical industry. Industry experience can be useful, but capability, scalability and stakeholder impact are often more important.



08.

ADVICE FOR CANDIDATES

Position yourself as a business partner

Technical ability is expected. What differentiates candidates is the ability to use finance to improve decisions, influence strategy and create value.

Show measurable impact

Employers want evidence. Candidates should be ready to discuss examples such as reducing close timelines, improving forecast accuracy, leading ERP implementation, strengthening controls, improving margin visibility or supporting M&A.

Build technology fluency

Finance professionals do not need to become technologists, but they do need to understand how systems, data, automation and AI can improve finance operations.

Be clear on your preferred environment

Different finance roles require different temperaments. High-growth, PE-backed, public company, founder-led and turnaround environments all come with different expectations. Candidates should be clear about where they do their best work.

Understand your market value

With candidates negotiating more confidently, preparation matters. While finance and accounting professionals typically feel confident negotiating salary offers, some struggle with knowing what is negotiable, justifying requests and determining market value.



09.

OUTLOOK BEYOND 2026

The US finance and accounting hiring market is likely to remain competitive, but more nuanced than in previous years.

Employers are not hiring indiscriminately; they are investing in roles that improve resilience, visibility, governance and growth.

The strongest demand will continue to sit at the intersection of finance, technology and strategy. Accounting leaders who can strengthen controls and reporting will remain difficult to secure. FP&A candidates who can improve planning and decision-making will command attention. CFOs who can act as both strategic adviser and operational leader will remain among the most valuable hires a business can make.

For employers, the challenge is to move beyond reactive hiring and build finance capability that supports where the business is going next. For candidates, the opportunity lies in demonstrating not only what they know, but how they help organizations make better decisions in more complex conditions.

Key takeaways

- **Finance and accounting salary growth has moderated, but competition remains high for specialist and leadership talent.**
- **Accounting shortages continue to increase pressure on controllership, reporting and technical accounting hiring.**
- **FP&A is becoming more strategic, with strong demand for forecasting, modeling and scenario planning capability.**
- **AI, automation and ERP transformation are reshaping finance roles and increasing demand for tech-fluent finance professionals.**
- **Candidates are assessing total compensation, flexibility, career growth, systems maturity and leadership access.**
- **Employers need to benchmark pay carefully, define role mandates clearly and move quickly for high-caliber candidates.**



At Leonid, we hire across all areas of corporate governance, including legal, privacy, compliance, ESG, risk & audit. All of our global hiring guides for these sectors can be found [here](#) on our website.

Talent Intelligence — your secret weapon in hiring, retaining and future-proofing your team

As well as search-based hiring, Leonid Group is a talent advisory business with a consulting arm which can offer proprietary data and insights to help teams optimize their organisational design and help build a business case for change, such as unlocking budget for more hires.

If you would like to find out more about our [Talent Intelligence](#) service and book a FREE 'lite' presentation on your firm's attrition vs competitors, talent flow and an overview of what candidates in your industry really want — please contact [Adam Bond](#) to book a no-obligation meeting.





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