

## What Do Finance and Accounting Recruiters Look For?

There may always be competition in the job market, but understanding how to stand out from the crowd could be the key to landing your next position. Kforce wants to help you get noticed by finance and accounting recruiters and employers with a few simple tips. We surveyed top staffing specialists in our Tampa based National Recruiting Center (NRC) to find out what finance and accounting recruiters really look for in candidates. Whether you are a seasoned finance and accounting professional or looking for your first position, Shannon Leigh, Kforce NRC Manager, offers the secrets to grabbing the attention of recruiters on your resume, social media pages and beyond.

While the experience of entry, mid and senior level candidates may vary, below are a few factors that can make any finance and accounting professional stand out:

- **USE ACTION WORDS ON YOUR RESUME**

“We want to know which candidates can effectively communicate and articulate their experience,” says Leigh. “Action words are important because it gives a recruiter perspective on exactly what your experience is.”

For example, don’t just put down you have experience with general ledgers. Instead, list your interactions and responsibilities with the general ledger, such as “reconciled the general ledger” or “added or edited entries into the general ledger.”

- **FOLLOW-UP WITH YOUR RECRUITER**

An estimated 73% of recruiters surveyed said they were more likely to consider candidates who diligently follow-up. “Candidates who follow up once a week are fresh in our mind when it comes to available jobs,” says Leigh. Consider scheduling a set time, once a week with your recruiter when you can give an update on your job search.

- **CONSIDER TEMPORARY POSITIONS**

“With the constant change in the economy, we have seen many companies offer a 3-6 month contract, for example, and a lot of times that can become a permanent position,” says Leigh.

## Top 3 things finance and accounting recruiters look for at each career level

### Entry Level

Those with less than a year of experience in finance and accounting are generally considered entry level professionals. At this point in your career, recruiters will be looking for you to fill positions in accounts payable/receivable or staff accounting roles.

“Applying for these positions can provide you with relevant experience and help you to the next step in your career, especially if you are working with an enterprise level company,” says Leigh.

In order to obtain an entry level position, recruiters will look at the following areas when considering candidates:

#### 1. Education

Eighty-seven percent of recruiters surveyed typically prefer candidates with a bachelor’s degree. Those with an associate’s degree can still have a shot at entry level finance and accounting positions, if they have a fundamental knowledge of generally accepted accounting principles and previous experience from another role or internship.

#### 2. Internships

“Internships can give entry level professionals a perspective into the day-to-day tasks of a particular job, especially if they interned at a larger company,” says Leigh. “As positions become more competitive, an internship is going to be that one piece that can make a candidate stand out.”

#### 3. Relevant Skills

For those without previous work experience, recruiters will look for applicable skills. “Even though these professionals are at the entry level, they should be proficient in using Excel, working with macros, pivot tables and able to manipulate data,” says Leigh. “It’s not all about gathering the data either, we are also looking for those candidates who are able to present it to their team or managers.”

### Mid-Level

Recruiters consider mid-level finance and accounting professionals as those with two to four years of work experience. In addition to holding a bachelor’s degree, at this point in your career you may be expected to have experience with enterprise level clients. Recruiters will focus on the following areas when considering mid-level candidates:

#### 1. Specialized Roles

Due to changes in the economy, more organizations are increasing the number of niche roles, such as mid-level financial analysts and staff accountants. As an alternative to hiring additional senior level associates, these mid-level professionals are being sought by recruiters to help assist in mergers and acquisitions or forecasting, for example.

#### 2. References

No matter what level, great references are a must. For those mid-level professionals with gaps of unemployment due to the economy, recruiters will especially focus on solid references. Now, Leigh says recruiters frequently consider candidates with gaps of unemployment up to 12 months.

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“If there was a layoff involved, a positive recommendation from a former supervisor can certainly help a candidate overcome the challenge of having a large gap of unemployment,” says Leigh.

### 3. Advanced Experience

Accurately describing your experience can also be a deciding factor on whether you catch the attention of a finance and accounting recruiter. First, recruiters will likely expect mid-level professionals to be proficient in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems such as PeopleSoft or Oracle. Also, remember that including action words when describing advanced experience or job duties on your resume can help you stand out.

“If you were a manager, recruiters want to know how many people you directly or indirectly managed and what duties you may have directed others in,” says Leigh.

### Senior Level

Senior level finance and accounting professionals should have five years or more experience. In addition to holding a bachelor’s or master’s degree, senior level candidates should have supervisory experience, especially with enterprise level companies. Recruiters surveyed said this experience is in high demand for audit and compliance and financial analysis roles.

#### 1. Accomplishments

While it’s important to remember to use action words on your resume, it’s more important to describe what you accomplished through each job skill. Leigh says you should include all quantifiable project accomplishments on your resume.

“Even if it means including just one bullet point under each position on your resume, explain where you excelled,” says Leigh. “Recruiters and employers want to see what you brought to the table.”

#### 2. Certifications

While a master’s degree is preferred, recruiters will expect senior level candidates to hold relevant finance and accounting certifications. For example, this may include an active or inactive CPA certification, showing the candidate has experience in public accounting.

#### 3. Extended Resume

A thorough and complete resume is expected at the senior level, however lately recruiters say they are looking beyond a piece of paper. LinkedIn has gained popularity amongst staffing specialists looking for additional information on potential candidates. Leigh says it’s a good idea to join LinkedIn and continually update your profile to include your most recent experience and recommendations from current or former co-workers.

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## What Finance and Accounting Recruiters Look for on Your Social Media Page

Participating in social media has become essential to the job search. LinkedIn, considered the most professional social media site, and Facebook allow you to join various groups and engage in conversation with other members. Additionally, Twitter provides you with instant updates on industry news and jobs. Finance and accounting recruiters and employers constantly monitor these social media sites, making it important to extend your resume to the cyber world.

**Your Information** - An estimated 2 out of 10 candidates are sourced through LinkedIn each week, according to our finance and accounting recruiters surveyed. This means updating your profile with current experience is crucial. Recruiters want to find out everything they can about you to make sure you are the best candidate for the job.

**Your connections** - You've heard the saying, "*it's all about who you know*". That same phrase goes for social media. Recruiters may check your connections to other members to see who you are communicating with or learn more about a colleague who recommended your work. Finance and accounting recruiters also use social media to view the industry and professional groups you have joined, such as 'CPA' or 'Accounting Professionals', to gain additional insight into your professional interests.

**Your discussions** - Creating and updating your profile and contacts shouldn't be the end of your involvement on social media. Especially at the senior level, finance and accounting recruiters want to see how you are interacting on social media sites and what kind of expertise you may offer on discussion boards.

"Just having your name and where you worked doesn't give us [recruiters] a lot of perspective of who the candidate really is," says Leigh. "We like to see how candidates are leveraging social media and engaging in discussions to see what their thought process is."