



2026

HIRING & SALARY GUIDE

As a finance leader and hiring manager, you understand the importance of investing in top talent to ensure financial stability and sustained growth.

In our 2026 Hiring Guide, we provide valuable information designed to help you beat the competition, hire the best fit for your team, and retain your top employees.

 The CSP Group
Finance & Accounting Recruitment

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SAN DIEGO CURRENT JOB MARKET FOR FINANCE & ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONALS



Demand for finance and accounting professionals is among the highest of any category of worker in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, overall unemployment in the US was 4.2% at year-end in 2024 and 4.4% at the end of September 2025. For finance and accounting professionals, there was stronger demand with significantly lower unemployment rates. As a broad category, the unemployment rate for finance professionals averaged between 2.3% and 2.5% for 2024 and 2.5% for 2025. Unemployment rates for accounting-specific occupations were even lower, with accountants, auditors, and adjacent workers in the 1.3 to 2.0% range, bookkeepers at ~1.7%, credit analysts at ~1.5%, and accounts receivable clerks at ~1.4% for both 2024 and 2025. Overall San Diego unemployment rates were in-line with national averages, but data is not available for finance and accounting professionals as a category. The San Diego job market for finance and accounting professionals in 2025 was overall very positive. The CSP Group observed lower demand in the first 4 months of the year with a surge in demand starting in May. We had our best year ever and continue to see strong demand for finance and accounting professionals.

The outlook for finance and accounting jobs in 2026 is strong, with steady demand, rising salaries, and evolving skill requirements. Employment opportunities will remain plentiful, but competition will be high as technology reshapes the industry.

To onboard these skilled professionals, employers need to understand hiring challenges, common pitfalls to avoid, and best practices required to find and vet candidates while also standing out from their competition.

HIRING CHALLENGES & PITFALLS



The most significant challenges and pitfalls to hiring skilled accounting and finance professionals are:

▪ A Thin Talent pool

The most significant drivers of this trend include a large number of retiring baby boomer accountants, declining enrollment in accounting programs, increasing business complexity, evolving regulations, the need for data analysis skills in the accounting field, and the integration of new technologies like artificial intelligence.

▪ Time & Effort

Hiring a skilled professional requires significant focus and attention over many weeks or, more likely, months. Taking time away from finance duties can put a strain on the entire department, which may already be down an employee for the role that needs to be filled.

▪ Failing to Follow a Process

Not having a thought-out, structured, and consistent hiring and onboarding process with the appropriate amount of due diligence significantly increases the chances of hiring someone who will either be a bad employee or leave after a short period of time.

▪ Lack of Resources

Most hiring managers don't have an adequate internal recruiting team, access to a robust network of qualified candidates, or the technology required to find them.

▪ Inadequate Knowledge

Knowledge of a successful hiring process, market compensation, and the local job market in terms of companies and candidates are critical to successfully onboarding a skilled professional. San Diego has hundreds of established companies with professional finance and accounting departments, and all are unique.

Some have good leaders who train their staff to be the best of the best, others have poor leaders that don't know what "good" looks like, don't train their staff, and pay less than the market. All this information is extremely useful, but it takes years to learn.

▪ Failing to Pay Competitively

It is possible to pay less-than-market salaries for skilled professionals, but the trade-off is always going to be sub-par employees, lower productivity, and higher turnover. (See 2026 Salary Guide on Page 13).

BEST PRACTICES

Business.com, referencing the U.S. Department of Labor, estimates the average cost of a bad hire to be about 30% of the bad hire's base salary, while the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) estimates an average of 40% of the bad hire's base salary. Some employers — especially in small businesses or when senior roles are involved — report much larger losses: including repeated recruiting/training costs, lost productivity, turnover ripple effects, and culture/ morale damage. Under those broader definitions, "cost of a bad hire" can climb well beyond the "average."

Time and effort up front are necessary to mitigate the risk of a bad hire. Here are some best practices for a successful hiring process:

1 Define the Role Clearly

- Develop a detailed job description: Include key responsibilities, required skills, qualifications, and success metrics.
- Understand the value of the position: Identify how this role aligns with your organization's financial goals.
- Highlight growth opportunities: Showcase how this role contributes to long-term career development within the company.
- Other Considerations:
 - Tailor descriptions to attract candidates who match your company culture and strategic priorities.
 - Specify technical expertise, such as proficiency in financial systems or industry-specific regulations.

2 Identify Core Competencies

- Analytical ability: Capability to interpret data and make informed decisions.
- Technical expertise: Knowledge of relevant financial tools, accounting principles, and industry standards.
- Soft skills: Leadership, communication, emotional intelligence and adaptability.
- Cultural fit: Ability to integrate into your team and work collaboratively.

3 Use a Structured Recruiting Process

- Partner with HR and recruiters: Collaborate to tap into their networks and expertise.
- Leverage technology: Use applicant tracking systems and platforms like LinkedIn to streamline sourcing.
- Keep an open mind: Ensure the hiring process is inclusive and avoids unconscious bias.
- Evaluate referrals: Encourage referrals from trusted colleagues and industry contacts.

Conduct Rigorous Interviews

- Use structured interviews: Prepare a standardized set of questions to evaluate candidates consistently.
- Assess problem-solving: Pose hypothetical scenarios to test critical thinking.
- Evaluate leadership potential: Ask about experiences managing teams or overcoming challenges.
- Involve key stakeholders: Include team leaders or department heads in the process for diverse perspectives.

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Assess Skills When Applicable

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- Case studies: Present a financial scenario for candidates to analyze and propose solutions.
- Practical assessments: Assign tasks that reflect the job's real-world challenges, such as creating a budget or analyzing a balance sheet.

Prioritize Cultural Fit

- Assess alignment with company values during interviews.
- Look for candidates who demonstrate adaptability, collaboration, and enthusiasm for your company's mission

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Craft an Attractive Offer

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- Offer competitive compensation and benefits package: Use incentive compensation such as bonus and equity not just as a reward but a long-term retention tool.
- Work-life balance: Offer flexible schedules, hybrid, or remote options if possible.
- Career advancement: Provide mentorship opportunities and clear paths for growth.
- Company vision: Share a compelling narrative about your organization's mission and impact.

Onboard Strategically

- Set clear expectations: Provide a roadmap of short- and long-term objectives.
- Offer training and resources: Ensure new hires have the tools to succeed.
- Foster connections: Facilitate introductions with team members and stakeholders

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Measure and Optimize Hiring Efforts

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- Collect feedback from new hires and interviewees to improve the process.
- Track hiring metrics like time-to-fill, cost-per-hire, and employee retention rates.
- Stay updated on market trends to remain competitive.

ABOUT THE CSP GROUP

We are San Diego's Premier Finance & Accounting recruitment experts. With our clients, we achieve a higher level of consistent success together.

At The CSP Group, we believe that trust-based and transparent relationships can manifest amazing results. When you work with us, you gain more than access to the most sought-after finance and accounting talent—you gain a real partner.

MEET THE TEAM



James Cairns
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James is a former corporate accounting professional with Big 4 audit and controllership experience. He founded The CSP Group in 2014 and offers expertise in finance and accounting recruitment to both employers seeking talent and professionals seeking their next career move. James is a CPA (inactive) with a MAcc from Florida State University and a BS in Accounting from the University of Florida.

In his off-time, James is a sports fan, outdoorsman and amateur guitar player.



Marc Godbold
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Marc is a former United States Marine with over 14 years' experience in professional communications and public safety. His focus now is finding the best talent for his network of hiring managers and providing candidates with the optimum opportunities that align with their career goals. He has over 5 years of recruiting experience in finance and accounting and is passionate about leaving a positive impression on everyone he works or connects with.

In his off-time, Marc is an avid sports fan that enjoys coaching youth sports, umpiring high school baseball, and playing golf.

TRACK RECORD

Companies who use The CSP Group for talent acquisition experience faster candidate delivery, a higher offer-to-acceptance ratio, and a higher employee retention rate. On average, we deliver 3 qualified candidates within 12 business days, our offer-to-acceptance ratio is 90% (compared to the estimated industry average of ~75%), and 97% and 92% of our candidates remain in the job after one and two years, respectively.

SEARCH SERVICES

We take a customized approach to serving our clients. Here are our recommended options:



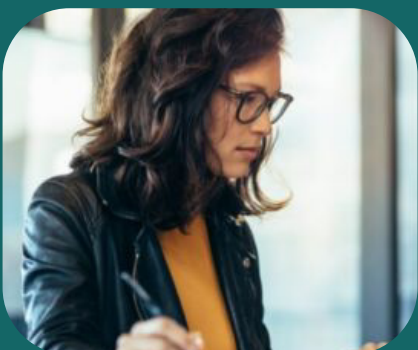
Committed (Most Popular)

A 4-week period of exclusivity allows us the opportunity to prioritize your search above all other concurrent searches. This is our recommendation if the position is urgent. We dedicate our resources to meet your timeline with communication, service, and efficiency. If you are not satisfied with the results after 4 weeks, you may engage other search firms. \$5k down payment due up front. The remainder of the fee is due only if we successfully fill your open role. 120-day candidate replacement guarantee.



Retained

A true partnership model. We source from our pool of highly qualified, top-performing talent and proactively engage passive candidates employed by your industry competitors. This approach is continually refined through periodic status calls with the hiring team to identify and discuss candidate resistance, market challenges, and strategy. 1/3rd of the estimated total fee is due up front and the remainder when we fill the role. 180-day candidate replacement guarantee.



Contingent

Our proactive approach grants hiring authorities access to our current pipeline of active and passive candidates. The candidates we work with are responsive, engaged, and qualified. We specialize in placing candidates for our clients looking to fill impactful, niche roles without any financial obligation up front. Full fee is due only if we fill your open role. 90-day candidate replacement guarantee.

RECENTLY COMPLETED SEARCHES



Executives

- **CFO**, \$300m International Manufacturer
- **CFO**, \$90m Cannabis Company
- **CFO**, MO Non-Profit Bond Issuance Facilitator
- **VP Finance**, \$30m Entertainment Company
- **CFO**, \$200m Construction General Contractor
- **CFO**, \$40m Distributor of Sporting Equipment
- **CFO**, \$20m Recreational Service Company
- **Treasurer**, \$1B Global Manufacturer

Vice Presidents & Directors

- **Controller**, \$300m General Contractor
- **Controller**, \$100m General Contractor
- **Controller**, \$100m Manufacturer
- **Controller**, Private Equity Firm
- **Controller**, Start-Up Energy Company
- **Controller**, \$1B Global Manufacturer
- **Controller**, PE Owned Retailer
- **Director of Operations Accounting**, \$1B Global Manufacturer
- **Director of Finance & Accounting**, Startup Metal Mining Company
- **Controller**, \$100m International Manufacturer
- **Controller**, \$10m Pipe Distributor
- **Controller**, \$1B PE Owned Manufacturer
- **Controller**, \$150m PE Owned Equipment Rental Company
- **Controller**, \$200m General Contractor
- **Fund Controller**, \$500m Private Equity Firm
- **Director of Finance & Accounting**, PE Owned Wastewater Treatment Solutions Company
- **Director of FP&A**, \$1B Manufacturer

Managers

- **Finance Manager**, Regional Real Estate Investment Firm
- **FP&A Manager**, \$150m Technology Company
- **FP&A Manager**, \$130m Data & Technology Company
- **Assistant Controller**, PE Owned Food Producer
- **Accounting Manager**, Local Accounting & Advisory Firm
- **Client Accounting Manager**, Fractional CFO Consulting Firm
- **Shared Services Manager**, Multi-Site Retail Company
- **Payroll Manager**, \$200m Construction General Contractor
- **Tax Manager**, Local Public Accounting Firm
- **M&A Integrations Manager**, \$2B Private Equity Owned Construction Company
- **Finance Manager**, Startup Metal Mining Company
- **FP&A Manager**, Startup Metal Mining Company
- **FP&A Manager**, \$2B Engineering Services & Software Company
- **Assistant Controller**, \$100m Equipment Leasing Company
- **Accounting Manager**, \$50m Fiber-to-Home Internet Provider
- **Financial Reporting Manager**, \$130m Wealth Management Firm
- **Payroll Manager**, \$130m Construction General Contractor
- **Tax Manager (International)**, \$1B Global Manufacturer
- **Corporate Development (M&A) Manager**, \$2B PE-Owned Construction Company
- **Data Analytics Manager**, \$750m Construction General Contractor

Senior Staff/Associates

- **Sr Financial Analyst**, \$500m Manufacturer
- **Sr Financial Analyst**, Pre-IPO Startup Metals Mining Company
- **Sr Accountant**, PE Owned Automotive Company
- **Sr Accountant**, \$100m Holding Company
- **Senior Cost Accountant**, PE Owned Wastewater Treatment Solutions Company
- **Staff Accountant**, \$1B Manufacturing Subsidiary of a Public Company
- **Staff Accountant**, \$40m Real Estate Service Provider
- **Staff Accountant**, \$100m PE Owned Manufacturer
- **Corporate Accountant**, \$80m PE-Owned Tire & Lube Company
- **Property Accountant**, Regional Real Estate Investment Firm
- **Financial Analyst (Business Unit)**, \$300m International Manufacturer
- **Corporate Development/M&A Associate**, \$2B PE-Owned Construction Company
- **Sr Financial Analyst**, \$400m Aviation Company
- **Sr Finance Associate**, Large PE Firm
- **Sr Corp Accountant**, \$1B PE Owned Manufacturer
- **Sr Accountant**, \$200m Construction Company
- **Sr Tax Associate**, Local Public Accounting Firm
- **Staff Accountant**, PE Owned Retailer
- **Staff Accountant**, Local Public Accounting Firm
- **Staff Accountant**, \$300m Food Producer
- **Cost Accountant**, \$200m Construction General Contractor
- **Financial Analyst (Corporate)**, \$300m International Manufacturer
- **Tax Associate**, Local Public Accounting Firm
- **Federal Tax Analyst**, \$10b Publicly Traded Manufacturer



CASE STUDY

CFO Search: A Case Study in the Power of a Local and Specialized Recruiter



Client Background

A mid-sized, vertically integrated manufacturer and retailer engaged our firm to conduct a confidential search for a new Chief Financial Officer. Their existing CFO had been instrumental in the company's growth, but there was a misalignment with the broader executive team's leadership style and cultural expectations. The Board member overseeing the search recommended The CSP Group based on our successful CFO placements with two of his previous companies.

The Challenge

While the company offered an exceptionally compelling opportunity – an industry leader with a strong history of growth – the search presented several complexities:

- Strict confidentiality was required to avoid disrupting business operations.
- The company needed a CFO with deep business acumen, specific industry expertise, strategic planning ability, and experience with ERP implementations and M&A activity.
- They also required a leader with high emotional intelligence, exceptional team-building skills, and a collaborative, low-ego leadership style.
- The industry itself posed a candidate-attraction challenge, limiting interest from executives.
- Time-to-hire was critical, as the organization needed to begin an ERP implementation and stabilize the finance function.
- The local market had very few CFOs with relevant industry experience.

The company needed a candidate who could confidently guide the finance function through its next phase while enhancing cross-functional trust and leadership alignment.

Our Search Strategy

Given the required confidentiality and the urgency of the assignment, we immediately leveraged the relationships we have built with local finance leaders over the last decade. We conducted targeted outreach within our existing network rather than a broad-market campaign, ensuring discretion and speed.

When it became clear that no local candidates possessed the exact industry background required, we expanded the search to include leaders from an adjacent industry facing similar operational challenges. Because of our long-standing relationships with these executives, this pivot could be made quickly and quietly without compromising confidentiality.

Candidate Identification

Within two weeks, we delivered a slate of six fully vetted, highly qualified CFO candidates—all sourced directly from our proprietary local network. Two candidates quickly emerged as top contenders:

1. A local CFO with transferable industry experience and a track record of driving process improvement.
2. An area native who had relocated out of state but was interested in returning for the right opportunity.

We had known the out-of-town candidate for more than six years, maintained regular contact with him, and were aware of his career progression, leadership style, and long-term goals. He excelled in every technical requirement and was widely regarded as a high-energy, people-first leader with a strong history of developing and retaining high-performing teams.

The Result

The interview process progressed smoothly, with increasing enthusiasm from both the client and the candidate at each stage. The company flew him in for meetings with key executives, and the cultural alignment became immediately clear.

The client extended a competitive offer, which the candidate enthusiastically accepted. The result was a genuinely mutual win:

- The client secured a strategic, emotionally intelligent, and highly respected CFO who exceeded their expectations.
- The confidentiality of the search was preserved from start to finish.
- The candidate was able to return his family to his home town while taking on a meaningful and strategic leadership role.

Why The Search Was Successful

This placement highlights the limitations of large national search firms focused on transactions, artificial intelligence, and LinkedIn/internet candidate sourcing, while demonstrating the advantage of partnering with a local, specialized search firm:

- Deep, long-term relationships with passive candidates – leaders who are not accessible through job postings, national firms, or online platforms.
- Real-time knowledge of the San Diego talent market.
- Speed and discretion, enabled by a curated, relationship-driven candidate pipeline.
- Expertise in evaluating cultural fit, not just technical capability.

At The CSP Group, our niche focus on finance and accounting talent allows us to deliver exceptional leaders—quickly, confidentially, and with a level of precision that only a specialized local firm can provide.



SALARY GUIDE FOR SAN DIEGO ACCOUNTING & FINANCE PROFESSIONALS

(Salaries range widely dependent upon size of company, complexity of the business, and specific skills and knowledge required. Figures do not include incentive compensation such as annual bonuses, stock, and other long-term incentives. We have excluded outliers below and above the 25th and 75th percentile, respectively.)

ACCOUNTING

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Entry Level Staff Accountant	\$58-72k	\$65k
Staff Accountant	\$65-90k	\$78k
Property Accountant	\$70-99k	\$85k
Senior Accountant	\$84-115k	\$99k
Accounting Manager	\$100-130k	\$115k
Director of Accounting	\$133-192k	\$163k
Assistant Controller	\$100-150k	\$125k
Divisional Controller	\$125-185k	\$155k
Corporate Controller	\$160-225k	\$193k

FINANCE

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Entry Level Financial Analyst	\$55-75k	\$65k
Financial Analyst	\$69-97k	\$83k
Senior Financial Analyst	\$91-124k	\$108k
Manager of Financial	\$105-148k	\$127k
Director of Financial	\$145-205k	\$175k
Vice President of Finance	\$177-\$265k	\$220k
CFO	\$200-\$340k	\$270k

COST ACCOUNTING

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Cost Accountant	\$75-98k	\$87k
Senior Cost Accountant	\$88-112k	\$100k
Manager of Cost Accounting	\$103-135k	\$120k
Plant Controller	\$120-140k	\$130k

DATA ANALYSIS

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Data Analyst	\$60-75k	\$67k
Senior Data Analyst	\$98-138k	\$118k
Manager of Data Analysis	\$125-170k	\$148k

FINANCIAL REPORTING

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Financial Reporting	\$73-98k	\$85k
Senior Financial Reporting Accountant	\$85-110k	\$98k
Financial Reporting Manager	\$115-165k	\$140k
Financial Reporting Director	\$135-194k	\$165k
Financial Reporting Analyst	\$95-122k	\$108k
Financial Reporting Manager	\$125-170k	\$148k
Financial Reporting Director	\$170-210k	\$190k

INTERNAL AUDIT

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Internal Auditor	\$72-105k	\$89k
Senior Internal Auditor	\$94-128k	\$112k
Manager of Internal Audit	\$120-165k	\$143k
Director of Internal Audit	\$150-240k	\$195k
IT Auditor	\$75-105k	\$90k
Senior IT Auditor	\$96-135k	\$115k
IT Audit Manager	\$125-176k	\$150k

FP&A

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
FP&A Analyst	\$75-92k	\$85k
Senior FP&A Analyst	\$90-115k	\$103k
FP&A Manager	\$110-165k	\$138k
FP&A Director	\$145-188k	\$167k

TREASURY

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Treasury Analyst	\$67-98k	\$83k
Senior Treasury Analyst	\$83-120k	\$100k
Treasury Manager	\$103-150k	\$125k
Treasurer	\$150-265k	\$208k

TAX

Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Tax Accountant	\$70-98k	\$84k
Senior Tax Accountant	\$90-120k	\$105k
Tax Manager	\$115-154k	\$135k
Tax Director	\$145-225k	\$185k

CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT


Title	Base Salary Range	Median Base Salary
Corporate Development Analyst	\$90-130k	\$110k
Corporate Development	\$130-170k	\$150k
Corporate Development Director	\$160-250k	\$205k
VP of Corporate Development	\$200-375k	\$288k



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