

Press release

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Bold hiring intentions for finance teams allude to pent up demand amid a time of business complexity

- AI and automation implementation, ESG reporting and integration, and financial reporting and compliance are the top three strategic priorities within finance and accounting that employers plan to hire for in 2025
- **Highest intention to hire permanent employees:** Financial reporting and compliance, AI and automation implementation, and cost optimisation
- **Highest intention to hire contract employees:** Invoicing/AR/AP, improving planning, budgeting and forecasting processes, and refining data and analytics strategies
- The biggest challenges for attracting and retaining finance talent include meeting high salary expectations (32%) and lack of relevant industry experience among candidates (29%)

Sydney, 11 August 2025 – Areas of relative focus for specialised talent skilled in AI implementation, Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) practices and financial compliance and reporting is driving a strategic hiring evolution by businesses in their finance and accounting departments for the remainder of 2025.

However, the hiring landscape is marked by historically low unemployment¹ rates coexisting with a sustained decline in job advertisements². Companies who have intentions to hire are up against navigating a more cost-conscious and economically challenging environment.

New independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) finds employers are opting for a mix of contract and permanent staff, as they strive to meet immediate skills needs as well as transform their workforces for future capability. The dual talent strategy will also help organisations remain agile as they complete project-based work as well as navigate long-term growth in an increasingly complex environment.

"The true narrative of today's market is company-driven. While organisations express a clear need for talent, the current economic climate is prompting a more cautious approach, what we call the 'big slow' in hiring. We're observing a trend where cost is the primary concern, leading to companies hiring strategically and tentatively, often only after budget sign off or board approval," says **Lauren Haxby, Practice Director at Robert Half**.

AI and automation top the priority list in finance and accounting

While financial reporting, budgeting and invoicing are functions employers plan to recruit for in the finance and accounting space, businesses see the greatest need for talent who can aid in the implementation of new technologies. ESG reporting was also high on their priority list as it becomes a mandatory requirement in modern business.

When asked if they planned to hire permanent or contract staff this year to successfully implement strategic priorities in 2025, employers revealed the top five areas they are most likely to hire in:

1. AI and automation implementation
2. Financial reporting and compliance
3. ESG reporting and integration
4. Improving planning, budgeting and forecasting processes
5. Invoicing/AR/AP

¹ [Labour Force, Australia, June 2025](#)

² [SEEK, Employment Report – June, 2025](#)

“We have stepped into a time where the finance function relies on leveraging technology to gain critical insights and meet evolving regulatory landscapes. AI and automation skills are rarely mentioned in job ads as a requirement, but when probed, businesses say it's needed. Organisations see that these capabilities are fundamental to successfully executing their strategic priorities in 2025 and beyond,” Haxby says.

Permanent and contract workers required for different areas

Employers are prioritising permanent hires for strategic areas like financial reporting, AI implementation, and cost optimisation, while relying on contractors for operational needs such as invoicing, budgeting, and data analysis.

Employers hiring for <u>permanent</u> staff:	Employers hiring for <u>contract</u> staff:
1. Financial reporting and compliance	1. Invoicing/AR/AP
2. AI and automation implementation	2. Improving planning, budgeting and forecasting processes
3. Cost optimisation	3. Refining data and analytics strategies
4. ESG reporting and integration	4. ESG reporting and integration

Source: Independent survey commissioned by Robert Half among 200 hiring managers in finance.

“When it comes to building permanent teams, employers are strategically investing in roles that solidify their core financial integrity and future-readiness. The reliance on contractors for more transactional tasks is a smart approach to talent strategy to gain agility and efficiency without the overheads of permanent hires.”

“This flexible workforce model can accelerate strategic initiatives without disrupting core teams and can also allow organisations to scale capabilities precisely when and where needed,” says Haxby.

Planning to hire but not without its challenges

While the intention to hire is there, the majority (94%) of finance and accounting leaders say they are facing challenges in attracting and retaining talent to successfully implement their strategic priorities.

The top five challenges cited by finance hiring managers include:

- High salary expectations (32%)
- Lack of relevant industry experience among candidates (29%)
- Competition from other companies (28%)
- Candidates not having the right mix of technical and soft skills (28%)
- Scarcity of qualified candidates (25%)

“Hiring intentions paint a picture of opportunity, but the reality on the ground for companies to advertise and hire for the position is far more complex. Even in a candidate-rich market, the journey from intention to a successful hire is fraught with challenges, from finding the right niche skills to getting the green light from the business to financially commit to the hire. These bold hiring intentions for finance teams allude to pent up demand amid a time of business complexity,” concludes Haxby.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online in July 2025, by an independent research company of 500 hiring managers in finance, technology and human resources. Respondents are drawn from a sample of SMEs as well as large private, publicly-listed and public sector

organisations across Australia. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management, and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the global, specialised talent solutions provider that helps employers find their next great hire and jobseekers uncover their next opportunity. Robert Half offers both contract and permanent placement services, and is the parent company of Protiviti, a global consulting firm. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Melbourne South East, Perth, and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com/au.

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