

Hey25-49! What's New? 20

Build a Financial Planning and Analysis Team That Drives Real Business Impact

Canadian finance and accounting leaders are under pressure from all sides. Robert Half's latest [Demand for Skilled Talent report](#) reveals that 65% are dealing with skills gaps on their teams, and 57% say the impact of those gaps has increased over the past year.

According to an article in the May issue of FEI Canada's *F. A. R.* newsletter, "the talent crunch makes everything harder. With nearly half – 48% – of Canadian finance and accounting leaders facing headcount budget limits and 93% struggling to find qualified candidates, you need to be strategic about where you invest your limited resources."

It goes on to say that "when your FP&A team clearly understands company goals, they focus on work that truly moves the business forward. However, working across departments remains a major challenge. Robert Half found that 41% of Canadian finance and accounting leaders identify cross-functional collaboration as their biggest obstacle. Breaking these silos down requires deliberate planning and consistent communication between teams."

The article then offers some key considerations to keep in mind when recruiting and hiring for your FP&A team, to ensure it delivers consistent results:

- **Emphasize strategic impact in job descriptions:** "Top finance candidates are attracted to roles where they can influence decisions. Show applicants that your FP&A positions involve real business partnerships rather than back-room calculations."
- **Look beyond technical skills:** "Financial modelling expertise matters, but the best financial planners blend this with business sense and communication skills. Assess how clearly candidates translate complex data into insights, particularly when they explain their approach to budget forecasting."
- **Include operational leaders in the interview process:** "Let potential FP&A hires meet the business leaders they'll support. This demonstrates your commitment to cross-departmental collaboration and gives candidates practical insight into how FP&A actually works in your organization."
- **Consider non-traditional backgrounds for financial planning roles:** "Some of the best FP&A talent sometimes comes from adjacent fields like business analysis, data science or operations. These professionals often bring fresh perspectives and complementary skills that enhance forecasting techniques. Look for candidates with analytical mindsets and business acumen who can be trained in finance-specific knowledge."
- **Create a compelling employer brand for finance talent:** "The FP&A professionals in highest demand research potential employers carefully. Showcase your financial planning team's achievements and impact through social media highlights, industry speaking engagements, and case studies placed on the company website careers page or on the firm's LinkedIn page."

Once you've assembled your FP&A team, your talent management work isn't completely done, the article notes. "Even the most skilled professionals need ongoing development to keep pace with forecasting trends and demands."

It also says that "advanced modelling and scenario planning top the list of must-have capabilities. Your analysts need to create solid models and run multiple 'what-if' situations to explore different possible futures. When teams regularly practice scenario planning as part of budget forecasting, they become much better at spotting risks and opportunities early and adapting quickly."

The article also suggests that savvy finance leaders give promising team members temporary assignments in operational departments. "This hands-on experience gives planning staff real insights into market conditions and business challenges, making them much more effective partners when applying various forecasting techniques."

Another key skill for finance teams is effective communication. "When your team members are able to explain complex data clearly and connect it to business goals, executives listen. Finance professionals who present technical budget forecasting findings as compelling stories about business opportunities gain a stronger voice in key decisions and become trusted advisors rather than just report creators. Consider implementing monthly practice sessions where analysts present their findings to colleagues who roleplay as executives, with constructive feedback to sharpen their storytelling and presentation skills."

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