

Upfront: Demand for Top Finance Talent Stays Strong

by [Donna Nabel](#)

Count on another banner year for [finance](#) and accounting career prospects. According to Ron Blair, senior vice president and managing director of the Glendale, Calif., office of executive search and project placement firm Century Group, competition for top talent will continue to grow in 2007. Conditions in the field, such as a persistent shortage of workers, rising regulatory requirements and [hiring](#) for short-term projects, will keep A&F professionals at the top of the heap, he says.

"For 2006, we saw [salary](#) increases typically ranging from 5 percent to 10 percent, and we expect the trend to continue in 2007 with forecasted increases ranging from 4 percent to 16 percent," Blair predicts.

At Menlo Park, Calif.-based Robert Half International, a consulting and [staffing services](#) firm, the forecast is similar. "There are myriad opportunities available for experienced accounting and finance professionals in today's market," says Max Messmer, chairman and CEO. "Those who combine functional expertise with strong strategic decision-making, communication and technology skills are in the greatest demand and often can command higher compensation."

Although F&A skills are coveted across the board, some positions are poised for high growth in the current competitive environment, according to data from Robert Half International's 2007 Salary Guide:

- **Certified internal auditors** are in high demand. An internal audit manager's beginning [compensation](#) is expected to rise an average of 5.8 percent this year over 2006.
- **Chief compliance officers** with SEC experience will likely see a jump of between 9.3 percent and 14.4 percent in their starting [salaries](#).
- **Financial analysts** at the senior and management levels will start out with a 5 percent to 5.6 percent hike in pay over last year's crop.
- **Staff accountants** with three or more years of experience will see the greatest gains at large companies, where initial salaries will increase 5 percent.
- **Senior external auditors**, particularly CPAs, are highly valued at public [accounting firms](#) deluged with work. Their starting salaries will climb 5.2 percent.

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