

What's The Job Market Like?

At Century Group, I interact daily with C-suite executives (Chief Financial Officers and Chief Executive Officers), and the #1 question I am asked is; "what's the market like?"

My answer: The market is as good or as bad as you think. In my experience, opportunity prevails. During the "bad economy" of these past few years, I steadily placed global equity controllers, Directors in Management Consulting, Managers in Audit, Senior Financial Advisors in Litigation, Senior Financial Technical Reporting Managers in retail, and across a variety of industries.

The reality I experience on the ground is very different from what I read in the news where the focus is on doom, drama, doubt and despair.

A number of leading forecasters, including the highly respected; 'Institute for Trend Research' (ITR), have quietly been calling for an improving economy in 2012. ITR recently noted that "The Conference Board's July 2011 US Leading Indicator is suggesting that the economy will be reaccelerating in the second half of 2012.

Everyone wants to know what the job market is like. The job market is largely irrelevant. There are really two important questions (and our answers):

What are the "Best" companies doing to win the Talent Wars?

- ✓ **Innovate to Win** (Finance leaders are often the driving force behind internal innovations and changes in process and infrastructure that help companies reduce costs and improve margins). Wayne Gretzky was once asked what he attributed his successes to and he responded, "I skate to where the puck is going to be; not to where it has been." This is analogous with winning strategies in the market.
- ✓ **Put People First** (and Last) – If you want to attract the best you have to be the best (or at least on your way). You need to be committed to bringing in world class professionals, commensurate with this forward thinking approach.
- ✓ **Get a Transfusion** (good ideas exist outside of your company) – whether it entails hiring outside of your organization or bringing in consultants – change and innovation will not occur if you don't have some change in the ranks.

What are the "Best" accounting and finance professionals doing to succeed?

- ✓ **Become Resilient** – Professionals need to have an open-mind and pursue new skills, experiences, and industries. As Steve Jobs, founder of Apple eloquently stated: "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do." "If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on."
- ✓ **Three Letters Matter More than You Think** – CFA, CIA, CISA, CPA, Esq., MBA, etc. It's not alphabet soup its part of your personal brand.

- ✓ **Dig Your Well Now** – What’s your professional networking strategy? Networking without a strategy is largely a waste of time. You need to be a member of relevant executive networks and contribute to the network. Whether Analyst or CEO it is equally important to network with the individuals that are influential and highly recognized in the market. Next, be that leader.

Ok so having said that the job market is largely irrelevant, what are we seeing as a leading Accounting and Finance professional search firm in Los Angeles?

- ✓ **The number of Search Assignments doubled in the past 12 months.** As a leading professional search firm in Accounting & Finance we are seeing a dramatic upswing in the demand for highly qualified professionals and executives.
- ✓ **Our clients are still doing business, investing in the future and planning for growth.** We are seeing IPO, merger and acquisition, Private Equity and Venture Capital activity across a range of industries. Good business models are thriving and driving demand for sophisticated financial talent on a full-time, project and interim basis.
- ✓ **Follow the Project and Interim road to success.** Both client companies and Financial Professionals are leveraging expertise on a just-in-time, flexible basis. These project and interim service options provide a cost-effective alternative to traditional CPA and Management Consulting firms and deliver high impact results. .

Each and every one of us can create opportunity and success. Sometimes, all it requires is stepping outside of our comfort zones and making a few focused changes.

Erin Cohen is Associate Director of Client Service for Century Group, an executive services firm providing Executive Search, Project Consulting and Interim Services in Accounting & Reporting, Finance, Financial Systems, Internal Audit and Tax. The firm’s clients include emerging companies, middle market and Fortune 500 companies.