

# FOCUS ON ACCOUNTING

## Software know-how key for accounting careers

The computers and applications used in the accounting field keep growing in sophistication. Staying current on new software and improving skill sets is just as important as ever.

"A recent survey by our company found that 39 percent of chief financial officers expect accounting professionals to have a greater influence on technology and information systems initiatives over the next five years," writes Max Messmer, chairman and CEO of Robert Half International, in the January 2003 issue of Strategic Accounting magazine. "This makes it even more important to assess and improve your technical proficiency on a regular basis."

RHI's latest Financial Hiring Index surveyed 1,400 chief financial officers and found that seven percent of them planned to add staff in the first quarter of 2004. RHI's "Salary Guide 2004" reports that the healthcare, financial service and real estate industries will show the greatest demand for accounting professionals in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio. The most sought positions will be senior cost accountants, financial analysts and internal auditors. Positions like general accounting, bookkeeping and accounts receivable may also be in demand.

"Proficiency in different packages brings on salary increases commensurate with going from a small company to a larger corporate position," notes Nicole Crowley, branch manager for Ajilon Financial's Loop office.

There are many software solutions scaled to a company's needs, Crowley says: "Small companies may still use programs like Peachtree, QuickBooks or even Quicken. Great Plains is used in medium to large sized businesses. Some not-for-profits and many advertising agencies use it. Companies with a lot of time billing might use CMS. Larger companies utilize SAP when they have a network of several locations, like a hotel chain.

"PeopleSoft is used by corporations managing distinct corporate identities. Or a more diversified corporation might use Hyperion for consolidations, where each entity only sends their books to the parent office at the end of each month. Elite Systems is another time billing system used by many law firms, and some advertising, consulting and CPA firms. Companies where the accounting is mainly for payroll will be using ADP, while more retail stores are turning to J.D. Edwards.

"The positions that are going to be hard to fill are the ones using Hyperion, Elite and CMS," says Crowley. "Oracle-based systems and AS400 will also be in demand."

The larger networked packages, or Enterprise Resource Planning systems, represent a greater challenge for financial staffers, but there's also room to grow with basic, out-of-the-box programs. "There are many levels of expertise in Microsoft Excel," explains Ryan Skubis, Chicago branch manager for the AccounTemp's division of RHI. "A lot of companies require at least intermediate skills. It's a given that all accountants know how to set up Excel spreadsheets."

Messmer's article suggests that financial professionals can start learning new skills at work by volunteering for new technical projects like an upgrade or migration to new software. IT staff can offer hands-on training, and may want end-user input on interface design, or to ensure the software meets company goals.

Colleges offer continuing education courses from database design to advanced computing principles. Seminar providers have training courses from one afternoon to several evenings. Training that leads to advanced accreditation, like certified information technology professional (CTIP) or Microsoft certified professional (MCP) certificates, can be a big step to higher-paying positions. Professionals working through placement firms like Ajilon or AccounTemp's may receive free training or certification programs at their firms' branch offices or online.

Accountants have another resource in their own professional organizations. Member libraries, help desks and certification programs can be offered by professional organizations like the Institute of Management Accountants.

Software vendors might sponsor local user groups, with regular meetings and resource libraries. These user groups host web forums for quick answers.

Skubis says while demand for accounting professionals is increasing, it will be a while before hiring activity equals 1990s levels. "Today, [companies] won't even talk to anyone who doesn't meet all of their requirements. There has been a trend to work with new people who show great potential to learn a system and run with it. But usually, if you don't have that background, you won't get in the door."

— Mark McDermott

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### Accounting

Maple Leaf Frozen Bakery, the dominant North American force in ready-to-serve bakery products, has exceptional opportunities for the following at its North American Headquarters in Des Plaines, Illinois:

#### SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

The ideal candidate will have 4-6 years of progressive financial accounting experience. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Month and year end closes
- Internal and external reporting
- Complete control of the G/L, including reconciliations, accrual management, fixed assets and more
- Monthly variance analysis
- Assist with annual budget and audit
- CPA preferred, experience with BPCS and/or Hyperion a plus

#### STAFF ACCOUNTANT

The ideal candidate will have 0-2 years of progressive financial accounting experience. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Assist with month and year end closes
- Assist with internal and external reporting
- Bank and G/L account reconciliations
- Prepare monthly commission statements for our brokers
- Special projects as assigned
- CPA preferred, experience with BPCS and/or Hyperion a plus

#### COST ACCOUNTANT

The ideal candidate will have at least 3-5 years of related experience, preferably in the food industry, a Bachelor's degree in Accounting, knowledge of Excel and BPCS, and possess strong organizational, analytical and problem solving skills. Responsibilities include:

- Coordinate annual plant budgets for overhead and direct costs
- Assist in the alignment of operational reporting and procedures for all plants throughout North America
- Analyze/forecast cost variances, inventory control, maintaining standard cost system, & new product costing
- Must be willing to travel

If you have a proven track record in finance and thrive on a challenge, we would like to hear from you. To apply for any of the above positions, or for more information on other positions available at Maple Leaf Bakery, please contact our Maple Leaf Foods Career Center at [www.mapleleafcareers.com](http://www.mapleleafcareers.com)

Please include a cover letter with your resume, your most recent compensation and position you are applying for. Only resumes with most recent compensation information will be considered. No phone calls, please. EOE



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#### HELP WANTED

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- Customer Service
- Advertising/Promotions
- Marketing/Sales
- Public Relations
- Branch Management

We offer career opportunities and paid training. Help us create & execute promotional campaigns for sports teams.