

Our first market update of the year and a chance to recap on the hiring trends we've observed over the past 12 months.

If you're a regular reader of our Market Update, you'll know that 2021 was a busy year for hiring across the sector. We saw a 55% year on year increase in the number of vacancy instructions received, with a particularly busy final quarter period (an 85% increase on Q4 2020).

The year ahead looks highly likely to continue in the same upwards trajectory, with January 2022 seeing a 150% increase on vacancies instructions from January 2021.



The **ever-increasing demand** is of course a great indicator of the **legal sector's thriving success**, but it's not all plain sailing. The volume of active jobseekers fell steadily throughout 2021, creating a growing supply and demand challenge for hiring firms and recruiters alike.



With a **reduction in active jobseekers**, together with a void of entry level/developmental hires over recent years, **many firms are now struggling to hire** unless at the top end or above their anticipated salary budgets. **With generous pay increases and financial bonuses** also prevalent across the sector and a heavy focus on retaining staff at all costs, relying on financial progression alone can be a costly approach.



So what's the solution? Firstly, **hiring employers need to be realistic about the candidate market right now.** For a whole range of reasons, there is lower appetite for change currently. Focusing purely on **candidates with like-for-like experience** will involve persuading an **individual to accept the risks of a career move** whilst making a sideways move. That's **perfectly achievable** when they are very **motivated to leave their current firm**, but less so when they've just got itchy feet.



The **firms who are committed to training and developing staff**, who can offer **genuine change and progression** will inevitably **find hiring a lot easier** than those who are solely focused on 'plug and play' applicants. Where that's not possible, what else is on offer? Hybrid working? Greater work life balance? Study support? More autonomy? High staff engagement levels? **In a candidate driven market**, the **focus for the hiring firm** when engaging with and **interviewing applicants** needs to be just as much on **'Why us?' as it is 'Why you?'**.

legal accounts salary survey



Our 2022 Salary Survey is now 'live' and we would love your support to help in compiling the all-important data. It takes only a few minutes to complete, and is 100% confidential, with the option to enter a prize draw for a magnum of Champagne if you're feeling lucky!

In this year's survey, alongside salary and bonus benchmarking, we'll also be collecting data on the hybrid working patterns available across the market. With most firms' policies now confirmed, and it being a regular conversation when individuals are considering a career move, it's likely to be useful information to know what the majority of firms are offering.

[TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

quarterly summary



Areas in highest demand:

- Billing Coordinators
- Revenue Controllers
- Financial Accountants
- Finance Systems Analysts



Areas in short supply:

- Billing/Revenue Assistants
- Legal Cashiers
- Recently Qualified Accountants
- Finance Systems Analysts
- Pricing Analysts

key highlights



The supply of candidates continued to **fall sharply in December**, although the rate of **deterioration eased** for the **fourth consecutive month**.



Demand for staff continued to rise rapidly in December, although at the softest rate since April 2022.



Continued supply and demand issues saw salary growth inflation close to record highs.

successful appointments

Successful appointments over the past 3 months include:

International Client Accounting Manager

Billing Specialist

Finance Associate

Divisional Finance Manager

Billing & Collections Analyst

Legal Cashier

Accounts Payable Cashier

Billing Assistant

Partnership Accountant

Revenue Assistant

+ more

views from the team

"We're all a little wary about false dawns having lived through the rollercoaster of the last two years, but with the ongoing buoyancy in the hiring market over recent months (despite the wave of Omicron), it does at least appear that there is more cause for optimism for the year ahead. Those who have been actively exploring opportunities lately, particularly within billing/revenue, will likely have been surprised by the levels of hiring demand in the legal finance market currently. Hiring firms are generally acutely aware that these are difficult market conditions and are having to be competitive. Whether that's through raising salaries or through lowering experience requirements to offer a greater step up, or both, in 17+ years of recruiting within this niche sector I can't remember a better time to give your career and future earnings a boost."



Richard Hooper
Director



Neil Gibbs
Senior Consultant

"Alongside high levels of demand for permanent headcount, we've seen regular requirements arising for fixed term contract assignments over recent months, typically ranging between 3 months to 18 months in duration. Whilst shorter term contracts are usually urgent and only going to interest candidates between roles or returning to work, many firms who are hiring for longer term contracts of 12-18 months are prepared to wait a month to consider candidates currently in permanent roles. Whilst the security of a permanent contract will be priority for some, there are upsides of considering a contract if it's a move you're prepared to make. When approached strategically, a fixed term contract can act as a stepping stone to a role or salary level that might currently be out of reach. The additional experience gained from working within different teams, systems and processes can also be a great differentiator for future interviews when you're competing against others who've had less variety. Plus, you'll also be up against less competition for contracts too."