



The Ultimate Guide

to Hiring a Top Finance Executive



JustinBradley®

Securing the right person to be your financial executive is your top priority. Ours too.

Financial executives with years of experience can easily produce impressive looking resumes with lofty titles and organization-shaping responsibilities. How those titles and responsibilities transfer to a new organization, and whether an executive can function within an organization's pre-existing culture, comes down to factors that are not always on paper. Here, we lay out our advice on what to look for the next time you are adding a financial executive to the team.

In many ways, your CFO or Director of Finance is the face of the company to your stakeholder community. When hiring a financial executive, it's not only important to hire the right person for the job, but also for the company. Here are the key areas we suggest targeting when interviewing:

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Technical Skills
- ✓ Business Acumen
- ✓ Communication Skills
- ✓ Soft Skills



Leadership

Managing, mentoring, and directing a team takes talent and experience.

Everyone in your accounting and finance departments will tell you it's a team effort. Whether your team is focused on month-end close or they are forecasting revenue for the next quarter, a strong finance executive is essential. You need someone who is going to increase employee engagement, support a positive work environment, and help remove obstacles for the team.

How will you know? During the interview you can ask...

- ✓ Can you discuss a time where you had to manage your team through a difficult situation?
- ✓ Where and which role do you feel you made the most impact and why?



Technical Skills

A strong technical background is the foundation to every great financial executive, but having strong technical skills does not only mean being able to recite the newest accounting standards. A strong financial executive will be able to recognize when there is a potential technical issue and identify the resources needed to resolve it. They should also be able to answer tough questions and explain the numbers so everyone in the room understands.

How will you know? During the interview you can ask...

- ✓ What is one technical accomplishment you are most proud of?
- ✓ When have you performed a task without preexisting experience?
- ✓ Tell me about a time you had to re-evaluate an accounting treatment and what was the impact on the financial statements?

Business Acumen

Business acumen is not a single skill, but a wide range of complex competencies, knowledge, and awareness of multiple aspects of a business. **Your CFO or Director of Finance should be able to advise on realizing cost and corporate efficiencies, systems changes, vendor selection, contemplated capital expenditures and new business initiatives.** Executives who can speak to and relate to how their business functions enables them to make the best decisions for the business. When interviewing candidates, you want to uncover:

- How well do they understand the drivers of the business?
- Are they proactive about identifying risks and opportunities?
- Do they have strong relationships outside of the accounting or finance department?
- How well do they utilize the data so they can uncover actionable insights for the business?
- What is their exposure to influencing the strategy of the organization

How will you know? During the interview you can ask...

- ✓ Which role do you feel you made the most impact on business strategy? How did you accomplish this?
- ✓ How do you approach crafting a strategy for your team/company?
- ✓ What was the toughest decision you've had to make in your career?



Communication Skills

Effective communication skills are one of the most powerful tools for a successful leader. It's all about connection and inspiration – not just transmission of information. Therefore, communication skills should be a key area of focus when your interviewing Financial Executives. It's important to evaluate all four categories of a candidate communication skills: oral communication, listening skills, written communication, and presentation skills.

Dig deep. Good communicators are also good listeners. Listening fosters trust and respect. Good communicators also know their audience and can adjust how they present information so that it is engaging at all levels. They strive for transparency and openness. Great communicators stand out from the crowd. They listen. They know their audience. They are honest. They excel in communication because they value it - and you should, too.

How will you know? During the interview you can ask...

- ✓ Describe a time where you had to deliver bad news or poor results to the executive team?
- ✓ What is your approach when dealing with a strong objection?



Soft Skills

Intangible traits are also crucial when you are hiring. Why? Because, more often than not, soft skills are more difficult to develop than hard skills. Soft skills indicate how someone will work with others which is key to building relationships and solving problems.

Some common traits and behaviors exhibited by top-performing financial executives are:

- Strong organizational skills
- Close attention to details
- Trustworthiness
- Excellent communication skills
- Fosters collaboration
- Effective at synthesizing information
- Adaptability
- Diplomatic

How will you know? During the interview ask...

- ✓ Can you discuss a time where you had to manage your team through a difficult situation?
- ✓ Tell me about the biggest change that you've had to deal with and what did you do?

About JustinBradley

At JustinBradley, our search leaders have decades of experience as financial professionals and senior executives. With a reputation for trust, quality and time sensitivity, our relationships in the business community run deep—which means we have access to the most talented financial professionals in our market and beyond. With each search, we take a structured approach, conduct stringent due diligence, and bring our wisdom of experience to provide a balanced evaluation of candidates. Call us to discuss your hiring needs.

Find the Right Finance Executive for Your Business

Request a FREE Consultation

