

The CFO's Guide to Building a High Impact Finance Team



Introduction: The High-Stakes Challenge of Building a Finance Team

As a CFO or Finance Director, your team is more than just number-crunchers, it's your engine for insight, compliance, strategy, and growth. But building a high-performing finance team is hard.

- How do you structure it for today and tomorrow?
- What separates great finance talent from the good?
- How do you avoid the trap of “busy” hires that don't move the dial?

This guide is your strategic playbook — drawn from dozens of successful hires made in scaling, transforming and high-pressure environments.



Define the Right Team Structure

The problem:

Many teams evolve by accident — a mix of legacy roles, “gap fillers” and reactive hires.

The fix:

Design your team around business outcomes, not job titles.

- Start with the future state — what will Finance need to deliver in 12–24 months?
- Identify capability gaps: reporting, planning, commercial, systems, leadership
- Think in layers: strategic, operational, transactional

Ask yourself:

“If we doubled revenue tomorrow, what would break first in this team?”



What 'Great' Looks Like in Finance Hires

Traits top performers share:

- Strategic awareness and commercial acumen
- Tech-savviness (especially around automation and analytics)
- Proactive, not just reactive
- Stakeholder confidence, they influence, not just report

What's changing:

- Technical strength is expected — business partnering is the differentiator
- Hybrid and remote environments demand more initiative and autonomy

Interview for mindset and adaptability. not just qualifications



Hiring for Strategy vs. Execution

Misstep: Hiring a doer when you need a driver. Or vice versa.

Solution:

Be brutally clear on:

- The strategic scope of the role
- Whether you're hiring for scale, transformation, or stability
- How much of the role is proactive vs. responsive

Tip: Map out the 5 biggest problems you want this person to solve. Build the job spec from there.



Culture Fit and Leadership Potential

Your future Finance leadership team is likely sitting inside your org today. But only if you hire with that potential in mind.

- Look for leadership indicators: self-awareness, communication range, resilience
- Don't over-prioritise industry fit, focus on problem-solving in similar environments

Ask better questions:

- “What kind of culture brings out your best?”
- “When did you lead others without formal authority?”



Build a Hiring Process That Reflects Your Standards

Top candidates judge you by your hiring process.

If it's messy, slow, or vague they'll assume the same about your team.

Make it sharp:

- Use a structured interview plan with scoring criteria
- Communicate clearly (especially timelines and expectations)
- Involve the right people, early

Remember:

The best candidates are being assessed and doing the assessing.



Onboarding for Impact

Hiring doesn't stop at the offer.

Great onboarding:

- Aligns expectations early
- Accelerates value delivery
- Reduces dropouts and early underperformance

Your 30-60-90 plan should include:

- Key stakeholders to meet
- Metrics to aim for
- Check-ins with leadership
- Quick wins for confidence & credibility



Toolkit: Pre-Hire Gut Check

Before you approve the next hire, ask:

1. What problem are we solving with this hire?
2. How will this role scale as the business grows?
3. What outcomes should they deliver in the first 90 days?
4. Have we built a process that reflects the calibre we want to hire?
5. Who is responsible for onboarding, and is that plan ready?



Final Thoughts

You don't just want to fill roles.

You want a Finance team that scales, challenges, leads, and delivers.

That starts with hiring intentionally — and ends with long-term impact.

Ready to design a hire impact hiring process?

At Gravitate, we help CFOs and Finance leaders hire with clarity, pace, and confidence.

Whether you're building a team from scratch or refining your leadership layer, we're your partner in getting it right.



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how we can
help.**

