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Five High-Demand Jobs in 2008

by Robert McCauley, Robert Half International

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Professionals in many fields will have something to smile about in 2008. Employers are willing to increase compensation to recruit those with experience in high-demand specialties. Here are some of the hottest positions for the new year, based on research gathered for the "2008 Salary Guides" from Robert Half International.

Public Accountants

Demand continues to grow for [public accountants](#) as firms look for professionals to deliver diverse service offerings. Average starting [salaries](#) for senior managers and directors at midsize firms (\$25 million to \$250 million in sales) are projected to increase 7.7% in the year ahead, to between \$88,250 and \$129,250 annually. Even those just entering the profession will benefit from the trend. At small firms (up to \$25 million in sales), professionals with one to three years of experience can expect a 7.7% increase in average starting salaries, to a range of \$44,750 to \$53,250 per year.

Candidates who possess a certified public accountant designation and public accounting experience are the most highly sought, both within public accounting firms and within corporate accounting departments. Despite the need, employers have become increasingly discerning when it comes to new hires. Organizations are looking for accountants who, in addition to having financial skills, are proficient with technology and are good communicators.

Senior-Level Administrators

In the [administrative field](#), experience leads to job opportunities. Senior-level professionals are seeing higher starting salary increases compared to other support positions because individuals in these roles are being asked to take on tasks such as budgeting and project management. In addition, companies are placing increased weight on industry experience and advanced skill sets when evaluating applicants. Senior executive assistants, for instance, can expect base compensation to rise 3.7% over 2007 levels, to the range of \$40,500 to \$56,750 per year. Salaries for senior administrative assistants will rise 3.6%, to between \$31,000 and \$40,500 annually.

Administrative professionals at all stages of their careers can benefit from certification. Our research shows employers are willing to offer an average of 7% more to candidates with designations such as certified administrative professional and certified professional secretary, and an average of 11% more to those who possess the Microsoft Office Specialist certification.

Lead Applications Developers

In the [technology](#) field, [lead applications developers](#) -- professionals who manage software development teams and projects -- will see the greatest starting salary gains of any IT job classification in 2008. Base compensation for these individuals is expected to rise 7.6%, to between \$80,250 and \$108,000 annually.

Hot development skills include experience with .NET framework, C#, XML and Java Enterprise Edition, as well as the ability to interface with Microsoft SQL Server and Oracle database applications. In particular, companies seek skilled lead applications developers with the ability to understand and solve business problems.

Attorneys

It's a good time to be in the [legal](#) field. Licensed [attorneys](#) with one to three years of experience at large law firms (75 or more attorneys) will see average base compensation rise 8.2%, to the range of \$114,000 to \$147,500 annually. Attorneys with experience in high-growth specialties such as intellectual property, corporate transactional law and litigation are likely to receive the highest salary offers.

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In addition to possessing legal skills, attorneys need to be computer-proficient. Employers now routinely expect candidates to be adept at online searches and able to use tools such as docketing databases and case management database software.

Web Design Professionals

For many organizations, the Internet is the primary channel for communicating with customers and building brand identity. As a result, Web design professionals are in high demand. For example, [website designers](#) can expect starting compensation of \$46,500 to \$68,500 per year in 2008.

The most in-demand applicants can leverage print and Web design expertise to create cohesive, compelling marketing campaigns. Consequently, Web designers who possess a thorough understanding of front-end development, and expertise in applications such as HTML, Cascading Style Sheets and Flash ActionScripting, will command the highest salaries.

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