

No Job Experience? Your Innovative Ideas Can Help

Many payroll professionals just entering the job market know only too well about the great hiring Catch-22: You're not likely to get hired without experience, yet you can't get experience without a job. But a [recent survey](#) conducted by staffing firm Accountemps has some news that may cheer you up. Employers often value entry-level workers because they offer something in place of experience: enthusiasm and innovative ideas.

Wanted: creative thinkers

Twenty-three percent of 2,200 CFOs we polled in the survey said they are more active in hiring recent graduates than they were five years ago. This compares to just 12 percent who are *less* likely to do the same.

And when we [asked](#) them about their primary reason for hiring entry-level applicants, about a third (30 percent) said recent graduates bring “fresh ideas and an innovative spirit” to the job, while 22 percent value new hires' energy and enthusiasm. Experienced staff members have a tendency to settle into a routine that blinds them from opportunities for [innovation](#). By contrast, newer employees offer a fresh pair of eyes.

So how do you as a job seeker convince payroll managers that you can offer innovative ideas?

- In your [resume](#) and [cover letter](#), highlight projects you've initiated and problems you've solved as a student or intern.
- If you're invited for an [interview](#), have ready several examples of how you've overcome challenges with your creative-thinking skills.
- And when you [follow up on your application](#), reiterate your enthusiasm for the payroll position and company.

How to generate innovative ideas

Once you're hired, show how you can breathe some life into the payroll department. Here are a few tips for becoming one of those creative thinkers CFOs prize:

1. Do your research. Innovative ideas for your new department won't come easy without first digging into the company's mission statement, core values and business priorities. Read all you can internally and externally — in company newsletters, blogs and emails, as well as parsing current events within the company's industry sector. This isn't a necessity for the first few weeks on the job only: You need to be a [life-long learner](#) and stay continually informed about industry trends.

2. Be curious. Being in your first “real” job can be intimidating, especially when many of your colleagues have been with the company for decades. However, don't let that stop you from asking informed questions about why something is done a certain way. Perhaps the answer is “that's how we've always done it” or “because the technology doesn't support an alternative.” Such responses signal areas that may be ripe for your innovative ideas.

3. Deepen relationships. Innovative ideas often come via a collaborative process. Discuss work-related matters and exchange ideas with people you've found to be creative thinkers, especially those who are of a [different generation](#) than you. If you participate in a mentoring or [reverse mentoring](#) program, you'll have an even better opportunity to innovate.

As you become more experienced, keep doing those things that help you generate innovative ideas. Creative thinkers are always in demand, as there are always challenges to be faced and improvements to be made in the payroll process.

Accountemps, a [Robert Half](#) company, is the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm for temporary accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals. Accountemps has more than 325 locations worldwide. More resources, including job search services and the [Accountemps blog](#), can be found at [roberthalf.com/accountemps](#).