Corporate Finance & Accounting

Overview of the Corporate Finance & Accounting Industry

Corporate Finance professionals manage an organization’s money, including forecasting where it will come from, knowing where it is, and making recommendations for spending to ensure the greatest return. Activities may involve poring over spreadsheets detailing cash flow, profitability, and expenses, looking for ways to free up capital, increase profitability, and decrease expenses. Within corporations, any department wishing to make a large expenditure must typically run it by the Finance department to ensure funding. Opportunities for career progression can be in Treasury, Financial Planning and Analysis, Financial Reporting, Operations Accounting, etc.

Two key functions within the industry are accounting and finance.

Accounting: day-to-day operations. Balance the books, track expenses and revenue, execute payroll, and pay the bills. Compile all the financial data needed to issue a company's financial statements in accordance with government regulations.

Finance: analyze revenue and expenses to ensure effective use of capital. Advise businesses about project costs, make capital investments, and structure deals to help companies grow.

For updated salary information on the various positions within the Corporate Finance & Accounting industry, check out the following websites:

www.glassdoor.com
www.simplyhired.com/a/salary/home
www.salary.com
www.bls.gov/ooh

Interested in getting more involved with other students who share your same interests? Check out the following student organizations to learn more!

Finance Club
http://business.wfu.edu/default.aspx?id=1807

All School of Business Clubs
http://business.wfu.edu/default.aspx?id=190
Corporate Finance Career Tracks:

**Staff Accountants:** Consolidate information for the official corporate financial reports—primarily comparing the present to the past.

**Financial Analysts:** Assigned to either a product line or business unit. Help management set up profit objectives, analyze current unit results, and anticipate future financial performance. Over time, financial analysts and staff accountants eventually specialize in one of the areas described below.

**General Accounting:** General accountants are responsible for producing all of the financial records a corporation uses to track its progress internally and to meet government regulations. Such workers also gather all the information needed to compute a company's balance sheet, profit and loss statements, and income statements. They also track the corporate budget, cash flow, and pay all the bills. Usually, your first job in general accounting will be in accounts payable or accounts receivable. Success in accounting might lead you to a position as a controller, overseeing a larger group, aggregating information, or working on portions of the corporate budget.

**Internal Audit:** When most people think of an audit, they think of an outside audit—a large accounting firm like Ernst & Young checking the corporate books on behalf of the shareholders. However, most large companies have an internal audit group that regularly visits individual company branches and checks the company’s accounting systems. Internal auditors perform the investigative and corrective work that ensures the external auditors don’t find anything. The internal audit group reviews the quality of the data, making sure it’s both accurate and complete. They also evaluate whether the corporate accounting procedures are effective and universally followed. Finally, internal auditors introduce or revise procedures to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

**Divisional Financial Services:** In this area, you work with each division's business team to prepare financial plans, make forecasts, and compare actual financial results to forecasts. You may also evaluate the financial consequences of alternative strategies. Responsibilities include everything from analyzing new business opportunities to restructuring a business or developing a capital spending program. The primary concerns are to find better ways of using company assets, reduce costs, and research better methods of forecasting. Financial services evaluates the risks versus potential return of any course of action and develops recommendations so that managers can pick the most profitable strategies, depending on their goals.

**Tax:** Activities in this area involve administering taxes (i.e., paying taxes on time—or finding loopholes to avoid paying them) and determining how to decrease the company’s tax burden. Responsibilities include working with attorneys on tax litigation, researching tax laws and reporting requirements by nation (if the company is international), and keeping up with new government rules and regulations. Large companies have an entire department dedicated to recommending methods to minimize the tax impact of any business decision such as a new division launch, a capital spending plan, or purchasing a new company. Investments and pensions also need to be managed with an eye toward minimizing taxes. The tax department helps structure transactions, makes recommendations on the timing of acquisitions or sales based on what else will be written off that year, and can decide what corporate reporting structure reduces taxes—for example, creating a wholly owned subsidiary versus having an internal division.

**Treasury:** The treasury department is responsible for all of a company’s financing and investing activities. This department works with investment bankers who help the corporation raise capital with stock or bond sales or expand through mergers and acquisitions. Treasury also manages the pension fund and the corporation’s investments in other companies. The department also handles risk management, making sure that the right steps are taken to safeguard corporate assets by using insurance policies or currency hedges.

**Cash Management:** This is a company's piggy bank. The cash management group makes sure the company has enough cash on hand to meet its daily needs. The group also sees to it that any excess cash is invested overnight by picking the best short-term investment options. And it negotiates with local banks to get regional business units the banking services they need at the best price.

**Corporate Development and Strategic Planning:** Corporate development involves both corporate finance and business development. Finance experts in corporate development study acquisition targets, investment options, and licensing deals. Often they assess firms to buy or invest in, such as pre-IPO cutting-edge technology companies with complementary products that could either extend the company’s product line or mitigate competition.
Learn More

Define Finance http://www.definefinance.com
Brief overview of the different areas within financial services and information about the banking sector.

Information on careers in fields like investment banking, real estate and financial planning.


(*must use your WFU email to access)
Check out industry, career, and employer guides, plus hot links to finance firms, interview information and more.

Wall Street Oasis http://www.wallstreetoasis.com
Online financial community with access to industry and interview guides.

WetFeet http://www.wetfeet.com
Learn about financial industry trends, markets, major players, requirements, career tracks, and job outlooks, and more.

Mergers and Acquisitions http://www.mergersandinquisitions.com
An excellent resource for students interested in investment banking.

DealBook http://dealbook.nytimes.com/
DealBreaker http://dealbreaker.com/
PeHUB http://www.pehub.com/
CFO Magazine http://www3.cfo.com/
Investopedia http://www.investopedia.com/
The Wall Street Journal http://online.wsj.com/home-page
Financial Times http://www.ft.com/home/us
Bloomberg http://www.bloomberg.com/
Barron's http://online.barrons.com/home-page
The Economist http://www.economist.com/
The Street http://www.thestreet.com/
Yahoo Finance http://finance.yahoo.com/
Morningstar http://www.morningstar.com/Cover/Bonds.aspx

Professional Associations

American Bankers Association www.abacom
American Finance Association http://www.afajof.org/
American Academy of Financial Management http://www.aafm.us
American Institute for Certified Public Accountants http://www.aicpa.org/Pages/Default.aspx
Association for Finance Professionals http://www.afponline.org
European Finance Association http://www.efa-online.org/r/default.asp?lid=ILGLJ
CFA Institute https://www.cfainstitute.org/pages/index.aspx
Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) http://www.finra.org

Industry Job Sites

Accounting Career Network http://www.searchaccountingjobs.com
BankJobs.com http://www.bankjobs.com
eFinancialCareers http://www.eFinancialCareers.com
Financial Job Network http://www.financialjobnet.com
Financial Job Site http://financialjobs.com