

# ICT Educator Webinar Series

## 2021 Hiring and Compensation Trends for Creative and Tech Jobs

February 26, 2021

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## [00:00:00] Welcome

**STEVE WRIGHT:** Well, good morning, everybody. This is Steve Wright. I'm the statewide director of the ICT sector team, which is part of the Workforce and Economic Development Department of the California community college system.



And these webinars are brought to you by our entire sector team and produced by Nicole Sherman. The regional directors, there they are. The ideas and a lot of the contacts come from them. They work throughout the state. You may know some of them very well. All of our guest speakers volunteer their time for the sake of our students' success.

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- **March 5**—Cloud Curriculum Pathways and Updates in the LA/Orange Regions
- **March 12**—CompTIA’s Lifelong Learning Resources for Students and Faculty

Coming up soon... Next week, I believe, we have Cloud Curriculum Pathways for LA and Orange Regions. And then after that, James Stanger from CompTIA is going to talk to us about their new and upgraded learning resources for students and faculty.

## [00:01:12] Overview of Today’s Session



### PAUL FLAHARTY

Paul Flaharty is the District President for Robert Half overseeing Sales, Business Development, and Recruiting for Robert Half Technology ([www.rhft.com](http://www.rhft.com)) and The Creative Group ([www.creativegroup.com](http://www.creativegroup.com)) consulting/freelance and full-time placement operations in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles Metro Market.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** Today, we’ve got a friend at Robert Half. Paul Flaharty is going to speak to us. I think last time we spoke, it was just as the pandemic was starting, and he was in his garage, next to a washing machine. He hadn’t grown a beard at that time, I don’t think.

But anyhow, if you wanted to have a friend with insider knowledge of what’s happening in the hiring and everything that’s going on with remote and non-remote and jobs in tech and in creative, well, you’d want to know Paul. So, we’re going to bring Paul to you and get going right now. And let’s switch over. Welcome, Paul! How have you been?

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** I’ve been good, Steve. Thank you very much for having me again. I appreciate it. Thank you, Nicole. Hello again, and I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to be here and to present to all of you. A lot has changed, yet a lot, I guess, in some ways, has stayed the same since last we spoke. I am pleased to now be reporting live from inside the house, as opposed to from the garage.

So, what we’re going to be talking about today is hiring and compensation trends for creative and tech jobs here in 2021. By all means, at any point during my presentation, as we’re walking through the slide deck, feel free to jump in, ask for clarification on something that I discussed, ask a related or nonrelated question. I’d love for this to be as interactive as possible, and hopefully, you see value in the content that we’re presenting today.

I think that people will be excited to hear what we have to present because it’s been a very energetic and robust start to the year for us as it relates to the volume of opportunity that we’re working on and what we’re seeing in the job market, so I’m excited to share that with everyone.



**Paul Flaharty**  
District President  
Robert Half



So, that's a picture of pre-pandemic me—no beard, shorter hair, very corporate. But my company seems to be OK with it for now. We'll see if that continues, but we'll be talking about kind of corporate and business flexibility, but thankfully, they've been flexible in that regard.

Just a quick overview of what I do for Robert Half—I am a District President over their technology and creative services practices for the Los Angeles metro market, Orange County, San Diego, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. That's my geography, which is a little bit of a change from the last time I spoke to you folks, where I was managing Los Angeles and the Bay Area, so now it's the southwestern United States, which is a new change and something that's been really exciting. A lot of change, both with our clients and with Robert Half, so not surprising in that regard.

## [00:04:31] Hiring Environment



Source: <sup>1</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics  
<sup>2</sup> College-Degreed workers 25 and older

**PAUL FLAHERTY:** This first slide here talks about the hiring environment, what we've experienced year to date in January. When I first saw this slide, I was actually surprised. It certainly doesn't feel like we have a 6.3% unemployment rate in technology and creative, and it's good to see the unemployment rate for college grads is even lower than the national unemployment rate. But I can virtually guarantee you that 6.3% unemployment, if you took that statistic again, you looked at it exclusively from a tech and creative perspective, it would be much lower.

You see the unemployment rate over the past 12 months in a steady decline since when the pandemic initially started, and I will tell you that in the months of January and February, it has felt no different than how it felt during the busiest months that we had pre-pandemic, and that has been a golden trend over, I would say, the past 5 to 6 months in terms of clients with pent-up demand or forced to put their projects on hold, who have now started to hire again and do so aggressively.

So, we are back. We find ourselves back in a war for talent, where our clients are losing candidates to other opportunities. And one common theme that we'll talk about through this presentation is that we find ourselves in a place where we spend so much time on educating our client on the need to have speed with regards to their hiring process, because we have a lot of customers that feel like we're still in that sky-is-falling type environment where unemployment rates are incredibly high, and people are dropping out of the workforce.

And that's just not our reality today anymore, though the unemployment rate is higher than it was pre-pandemic. Every single month, it feels more and more and more like it did when we were at the busiest that I had ever seen us in 2019 and early 2020.

If you see *Employee Relocation Trends*, 38% of companies say they are allowing workers to relocate permanently. We're no different in that regard. We let people move wherever they're wanting to move, and they're staying there indefinitely. I'm fortunate to work for a company that has offices in almost every major metro market and even some suburban markets, but I think that the thought of having no tolerance whatsoever to worker relocation is really something that would make an employer quite uncompetitive at this moment.

And Steve and Nicole and I were talking about this, job postings out there. I'm sure people are seeing job postings that say, "This job starts remote, but at some point, we would like to have people come back on site, so we're looking for candidates that live within some mileage range of where the job will ultimately be performed on site."

One very interesting point I would make about that is we job postings start out with that requirement and then change midway through the lifecycle of the search based on the client's understanding that there may not be a substantial difference between having someone work two to three days a week on site versus no days a week on site, assuming the person is open and flexible to jumping on a plane every once in a while. So, certainly, not surprised to see that employee relocation trend number, and I think that that's a number that's just going to continue to grow.

[00:08:38] Challenges and Opportunities for Job Seekers



**PAUL FLAHARTY:** So, COVID-19 disruption brings challenges and opportunities for job seekers. So, thinking about the requirement of an organization, and candidates for that matter, to be resilient... We just talked about that shift in mindset in terms of *where does our talent need to live and need to sit?* That fierce competition that I mentioned, that, again, is very much our reality, and we are finding that candidates, once again, that we are getting to offer stage with... Our customers are receiving offers from various different organizations, but a new dynamic. And this is something that I've already alluded to, but at times in the past, the primary concern was when you were trying to hire someone that was highly sought after from a skillset perspective... The concern was *who else? What other competitors in your local market are also vying for that person's skills? That are trying to recruit the same sort of talent?*

Now you're not just competing with other organizations in your local market. You're competing with organizations all over the country. And I told Nicole and Steve as we were talking before the meeting started that I've never been more thankful to work for a company that has a national presence and a database of candidates that we can source nationally. Because there are situations and opportunities every single day where, if you sit in the Los Angeles market, you're being considered for opportunities that are in completely different geographies, sometimes a few time zones away.

So, I think that that's a really important comment that I would make for college grads, either impending or recent college grads, is that you've got to make sure that you're expanding those search parameters in terms of any job board that you might be looking at for work, because there are companies that even when people start going back to office, they're going to allow employees to work fully remote. And I think especially in jobs like technology-oriented skillsets and creative skillsets, that's particularly relevant.

### [00:11:03] Questions

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** And then Steve and Nicole, if there are questions that pop up in the chat that I'm not seeing, could you guys just call them out for me, just because I'm not monitoring that as I go? Have there been any questions that came up so far? Or anyone that has a question that they would like to ask at this point?

**NICOLE SHERMAN:** There are a couple of questions, actually. So, Courtney Brown is saying, *"Relocation has usually offered some compensation for home resources. Does telerelocation offer financial support for necessary broadband upgrades to meet telecommuting needs?"*

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** So, it's an interesting question. I'll talk about the relocation component first and foremost, and then I'll talk about stipends, if you will, or employer resources allocated towards improving the quality of people's remote offices.

So, the relocation... And I'll just speak from the perspective of my teams in California. I think everyone has read articles about people fleeing the high cost of living markets in California in droves for lower cost of living markets. Whether that's temporarily or permanently, whether it's due to tax structure, whether it's due to being closer to family, but there are no shortages of articles like that. I think that many

of them were blown out of proportion, but there were a number of employees that work for me in southern California that ended up moving to various different places. Seemingly, the majority of them moved to Texas for a variety of tax and cost of living related reasons.

But they moved, and they did so on their own volition, and certainly, there was no relocation-related assistance that we provided because we didn't ask them to move. They chose to move on their own. We were supportive of their move. We didn't make them change the nature of their job. They continued to be able to support clients and recruit candidates and build relationships with candidates in southern California, regardless of where they lived.

But our company has offered two rounds of stipends specifically for the purpose of improving the quality of wi-fi within people's home networks, in addition to allowing everyone to bring home most of their devices and peripherals. But I was pleased that we did offer kind of two rounds. That was all employees, whether they relocated or not, but I don't think that we're unique in offering that benefit to our staff, just because it didn't take long for people to get frustrated with laggy internet when that was the only way that you could connect with people, early on in the pandemic. I know my blood certainly boiled when I would be presenting in a meeting, and it would drop off.

So, hopefully, that answers the question, but I think that that's very common. I've heard that the vast majority of our clients have done the same thing, offered either loaner resources, routers, modems, or just money as kind of a one-time stipend associated with your payroll to help you to invest in upgrades to your home wi-fi.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** I would just like to ask a clarification. You mentioned relocation, but is that the same thing as saying, "You can still work remotely?" I mean, what's the difference between relocation and remote?

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** So, we're all 100% remote. Well, I shouldn't say that. The vast majority of my geography is 100% remote. There's a handful of offices that I have where people are eligible to go back into the office, which is just based on state law of whether the offices are, in fact, accessible. My Utah team, actually, they never left the office. The Utah team has been there the whole time. Vegas can go back in. Phoenix can go back in.

So, those teams have the ability to go into the office, but no one is required to, so there is 100% remote flexibility allowance on behalf of the company in terms of not being required to go into an office, and then we don't care what geography a person sits in either, by and large.

I would say that the disclaimer I would put out there in that regard is, if you are in a leadership role for the company, or if you aspire to move into a leadership role where you'll be supervising staff, there's less flexibility for remote leaders than there are people that are in staff-level opportunities. I mean, everyone is remote, again, but to move to a completely different market, because I think that the thought process is, if you're leading people and some of those people are back in the office, then it's going to the expectation that you have the ability to get into the office.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** And that observation is not just your company. You're seeing that across the board?

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** That's correct. Yeah. Yeah, we haven't quite gotten to a place where we're comfortable with fully remote leadership 100% of the time. And maybe that's where we go once things open up again, and the reason why we would do that, if we were to go that route, it would be 100% based on competitive equity, I would say. Or just wanting to present the same benefits and opportunities as other companies in our space. But I think we feel like it's going to be important for our leaders to have some face-to-face interactions with our staff once that's healthy.

But as it relates to going and visiting customers face to face, we're not... I personally very much miss the opportunity to interact with my customers face to face, but I know not all of my customers feel the same way. There's a lot of clients that I don't think that they're ever going to want to meet with us face to face ever again, and that's just fine. We've been conducting all of our client interactions through Zoom or Teams for a year anyway, so I think there's no reason why that can't continue and we can't do good business together, but I personally just miss the face-to-face interaction, but that's just me.

**JOSH KANGAS:** Could I ask a question kind of regarding this topic?

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Yes.

**JOSH KANGAS:** So, my name is Josh Kangas. I'm actually a high school engineering academy director, and I've been kind of joining these conversations this year and having my kids... You know, become privy to them. One of the kind of apprehensions I know of high school students right now is it seems like the world is kind of shifting to this online Zoom-based platform. There's a lot of opportunities here.

The professionals that we're bringing into our classrooms are talking about all of the positives of this side of things and how, given the opportunity, most of them are actually taking this road. It's a very scary world for our high school kids, though, because a lot of them aren't having positive experiences doing school through Zoom. So, the idea that they might be entering into college and the workforce after the fact and kind of being constrained to this...

I'm not looking for direct answers or anything like that, but just kind of something I wanted to throw out there, if anyone has any experiences or accolades they could offer to kind of help someone like me in having conversations with high school kids. Letting them know that all of these adults that are making these decisions have the opportunity at least to go to that brick-and-mortar, and these kids have the expectation that once they get out of school, they will, too. And now it sounds like a lot of them might not, so there is some stress and anxiety. I don't know if that's making sense, but just kind of something I wanted to kind of throw out there, if anyone had any thoughts surrounding that.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Sure. I'll open it up to anyone else before I give my thoughts on it, if anyone else has feedback, just because I don't directly interact with the high school population a huge amount.

**PAT MCCLANAHAN:** This is Pat McClanahan. I'm a computer science professor at Delta College in Stockton. Yeah, I've gotten similar types of conversations with some of my students. Some of them have actually stopped taking classes until we come back on campus, just because they don't do the remote thing well at all.

But to your question about the high school, you know, I don't know what the market will bring as we go down the road. We've had some really good luck in the whole realm of cybersecurity. And I think, if you talk to anybody that's in teaching any of that or interacting with industry, I've heard numerous industry individuals, people actually doing the hiring, saying that you do not need a bachelor's degree to do cybersecurity right now. You don't even need an AA degree or an AS degree in cybersecurity. There are so many jobs open.

So, I kind of always throw that out to my students that, "Hey, here's a place for you. You can go get some training and step into some really decent jobs right now." Yeah, you know, the tech world is going to continue to be the tech world, I think. You know, that's my opinion, and my opinion and \$2.49 will get you a large coffee over at your favorite coffee shop.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** You know, I would add to that, just also having young kids that are getting involved with Zoom learning, or we're involved with Zoom learning for the first time this year... And certainly, I don't mean to overly generalize, but I think that some of the Zoom burnout comes from being part of a large group of people that are listening to a lecture where there might not be a huge amount of engagement between the students listening to the content and the person presenting the content.

I know, as it relates to the way I train my teams now, at all costs, I try to avoid scenarios where I'm kind of the only person talking and presenting on subject matter, because it's so easy to multitask when you're taking a remote class. There's all this stimulus, right? There's all these little alerts that are popping up, whether it's on your phone, whether it's on your screen. There are so many distractors.

So, depending on the sizes of the teams that these high school students or recent college grads are stepping into, I think the smaller group or, ideally, one-to-one connection between the employee and the manager is a very different experience than what they have grown accustomed to in the educational settings, where it's just...

You know, I just find that the quiet voices and the people that historically are more comfortable not engaging, or just don't engage in that way, I have to seek them out. I have to try to avoid that format for them in general, and then I have to really make sure that I find time to connect with them one to one. That's probably a challenging thing. I would imagine that's a very challenging thing for educators to pull off at this point.

So, I would share that with high school students and college grads. Even if you have Zoom fatigue or video learning fatigue, hopefully, there's this relationship-building opportunity between yourself and your team, between yourself and your manager. I have blocked time every week for just one-to-one connection to talk about nothing but how they're doing. That's it, because I understand that if they don't get that in-the-office engagement and interaction with their staff and with their manager, it's really easy for people to get lost and feel like the company doesn't care, and no one is looking out for them, and it can add to stress and anxiety that people are naturally feeling right now.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** You know, Paul, we had a futurist on a few months back, Peter Coffee, who is with Salesforce. We asked him to speak on how COVID was changing the future, and his reaction was, "It's not. The future is here five years early." And the thing I'm taking from that, and I think I shared it with some of

these educators here where students are reluctant, is you've got to try to coach them through this, because I think this is the new normal. And if you're seeing that in the job world, too, then that's something we all need to kind of face and become comfortable with.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** No, I agree. And again, even when they start allowing us back into the office in places like southern California... I mean, every indication has been that it's going to be a hybrid schedule—you know, two days, three days. I haven't heard of anyone that's saying we're going back, and it's going to be all five. Even if that's their intention, I think that would be really scary for employees to hear that that's going to be the company's take on how they're handling this. But I mean, that's a really good point. I mean, I know it's frustrating, but I do believe that it's here to stay, so trying to look at the bright side and think about how it would be different, what the more positive experience would be.

The interaction between... I've actually heard a lot of feedback from our employees from a peer-to-peer perspective, their relationships have never been better. Never been better than they were... Like even comparative to when we were in the office because people call each other on video. We never call each other on our cell phones. We're always calling one another on... We use Microsoft Teams, so I'm face to face with people so much more often. It's virtual face to face, but it's so much more often than we ever were when we were in the office, and we had Teams then, too. I don't have my voice over IP phone sitting on my desk.

I mean, we're about to move to a new telephony system, and maybe that will change things, but I love the fact that the default within my company now when you need to talk to a person is a Teams video call. That makes me feel very connected to them, and I've had some relationships that have really never been stronger, kind of based on that dynamic.

[00:27:15] Top 3 Hiring Changes Due to COVID-19



**PAUL FLAHARTY:** So, if you look at these top 3 hiring changes due to COVID... Conducted remote interviews and onboarding—I don't think that would surprise anyone.

Shortened the hiring process due to the fact that maybe it was challenging to line up all stakeholders' schedules in light of the fact that people are remote and in so many different places. I've found that in some cases, the hiring process has been shortened. In a lot of cases, I actually saw it lengthen, so I'm not sure I 100% agree with that, based on my personal experience.

Whenever the hiring process is extended, it typically is due to a client with the mindset that they have the lion's share of options, and they can take their time and evaluate as many candidates as they want because they watch the news, and they see that the unemployment rates are so high. But again, I would tell you that that's not the reality in the technology space, certainly. And the creative space, that space was hit harder in a relative sense than technology, although we're seeing creative come back, especially digital creative, which is a slide that I'll reference as I move through the deck here. Digital creative is just as competitive as anything that we're doing in the technology space.

And advertised fully remote jobs—I think we already covered that. Nicole, it looks like there's some questions flashing up there? Maybe I'm wrong.

**NICOLE SHERMAN:** Just one popped up now. They were kind of comments before this one.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Oh, OK.

**NICOLE SHERMAN:** *How do you address the important component of equity? Many telework tools are very reminiscent of surveillance technology used against minorities and online harassment of women. What assurances can there be made for equity hiring?*

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** So, in terms equity, it's an interesting question because I'm actually participating on a panel discussion next month for International Women's Day, where we're talking about pay equity and the more severe impact that the COVID pandemic impact has had with women relative to men. Of course, it's certainly... I don't think that the company has ever had a higher... I mean, I'm talking about Robert Half, but I'm also speaking in general for most organizations. I don't think that we've ever had a period of greater

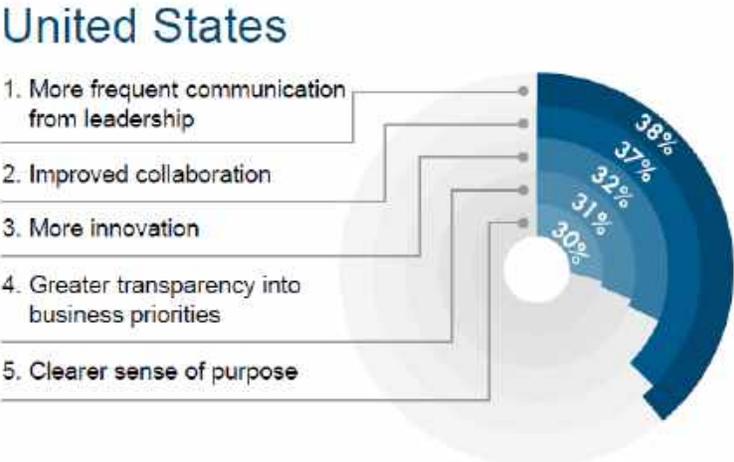
awareness as it relates to unconscious bias and the need for diverse candidate pools for our hiring pipelines right now. Various changes have been steadily building for months within our organization.

As it relates to the video technology, if you're asking in terms of candidate interviews, like how do we protect against the potential for discrimination with video in candidate interviews, I would say that most of our candidates that interviewed for jobs had some level of face-to-face interaction with the client before the pandemic. A lot of them were face to face with customers before. Now they're on video, so that's the substitute there.

So, I think there's a lot of similarities between those two that the clients still want the opportunity to meet talent face to face, but I would also say that I feel that our clients, and Robert Half personally, have never been more thoughtful about ensuring that before we make decisions on any hire that we have seen a diverse enough population of candidates such that we can say that we are hiring from the most qualified pool of available candidates as opposed to hiring exclusively people that maybe have the same background as the folks that currently work for Robert Half, or look like people that currently work for Robert Half, but we've worked really hard at that to try to chip away at preconceived notions and/or unconscious biases, and that's been a welcome change for us. So, I don't know if I perfectly addressed the question, but those are my thoughts there.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** I think probably more issues will come up over time as we realize what seems more or less fair about a video engagement for men or women or different people. Obviously, some people don't have the bandwidth literally, and they have some disadvantage, or they're in some area where they need help that way for the interview process perhaps. I'm sure these are all valid issues. I'm not sure what the answers are, but...

[00:32:28] Top 5 Changes Prompted by Working During COVID-19



Source: Robert Half survey of more than 2,800 senior managers in the U.S.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** We are constantly trying to strike that delicate balance between ensuring that we have enough video access such that we don't lose that sense of comradery and rapport that we had when we were all side by side together in the office, yet at the same time allowing people their own space. I mean, there's plenty of days where I've just got my hands full with the kids, and I just can't find that time for... I mean, I just can't... I think everyone knows it's hard to find the time for a shower that day, right? You just can't get the hair in order. You know, it is what it is.

I think that we're all experiencing that, so there's been absolutely... From my perspective, if someone doesn't want to turn their video on, it's not the end of the world. We just encourage them to do so when they do feel comfortable so that we have the ability to try to maintain the connectedness that looking at each other creates. But it has been a challenge, no question.

I've got a lot of slides left. There are just so many good conversations here that I feel like I'll have a hard time getting through this desk, but I really want to answer all these questions that people have. Maybe I'll try to just power through a couple here, just so at some point, we get to the compensation data, which I know people are interested in.

In terms of top 5 changes prompted by working during COVID, more frequent communication from leadership... I mean, every single month, our executives address the company in town hall-style format in these live events. I mean, the need for constant updates in terms of the health of the company, in terms of our strategy, in terms of how we are keeping a competitive advantage, in terms of the health and safety of people's jobs, health and safety in general, the future of work...

When we do surveys, we get more questions about the future work and *are you going to force us to come back into the office when we reach whether it's herd immunity or a point where a certain amount of people are vaccinated?* And that's a major concern for a lot of our employees.

The more frequent communication we get from our leadership, the calmer our teams feel, so that's definitely something that we've experienced. I said that that collaboration, I don't think it's ever been better, even though we're all working remotely. My whole life—we're on Zoom now, but literally I live in Teams. If I'm not in front of my computer, I ping people. I don't even really text anymore. It's all just the chat feature through Teams, and we can move seamlessly from the desktop to the cell phone. I know this probably sounds like a Teams sales pitch, but it's worked pretty well for us.

More innovation—if there's one team that's never been busier at Robert Half, and if you're thinking about what are the growth areas within very technical forward-facing organizations right now, I mean, for our team, it's business... For our organization, I would say, it's business transformation. The business transformation group within Robert Half, which is the team that works on things like collaboration tools and technological advancements and integrating new applications and creating greater efficiency, how can we do more with less... I mean, that's all what our BT team focuses on, and I don't know that there is a more exciting place within our organization to work right now. They haven't slowed down a bit.

There was so much coming at people in the beginning of the pandemic that there were some folks that said, "Can we please slow the pace of all of the innovation that we're doing right now? There are too

many upgrades coming at people too quickly right now. We're just trying to get people to adapt to a fully remote work life, and now you're throwing all of these new apps and tools at us."

And basically, the answer from the higher levels is, "No, we're not going to do that. We're not going to slow down the pace of innovation because it's what helps to keep us connected to one another and keep our competitive advantage. So, any opportunities in business transformation with companies—digital transformation, business transformation—to me are great career opportunities to look into.

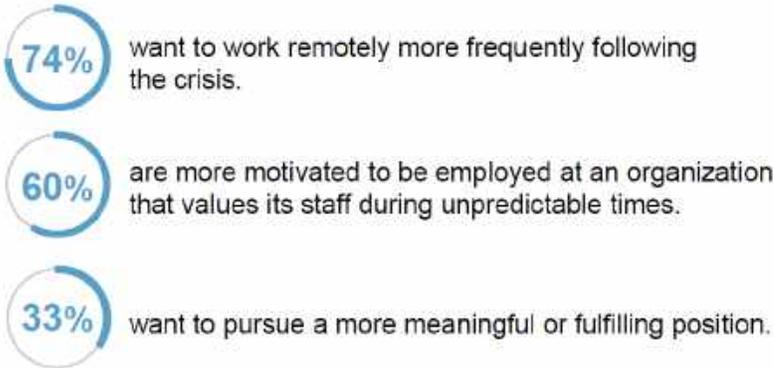
Greater transparency into business priorities—what is the company's featured fight today? How does that change quarter by quarter? That has been really important to our staff.

And then just clearer sense of purpose is just... You know, I don't think that there's ever... Part of the reason why I love my profession is I work in a sales organization, but at the end of the day, if I'm making sales, I'm helping people to put food on the table, to pay their mortgage, to put their kids through school, that feels really good for me. That sense of purpose tied to what we do and the need to remind people that we're doing good work that is impacting people's lives in a positive way has never been more important than right now, because people want to impact change positively. So, we've been reminding our staff of that with great regularity.

[00:38:12] Many Employers Worry About Keeping Top Talent



COVID-19 has many workers rethinking priorities



Source: Robert Half survey of more than 1,000 U.S. workers, 2020

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Many employers worry about keeping top talent. More than 8 in 10 managers are very concerned about retaining valued employees. So, I get that, especially with my people that have relocated to different markets. You know, if it ever becomes strained for them working on different zones... Like I have people that are supporting... I have someone that's supporting Silicon Valley living in Boca Raton. It's incredible where people are performing their jobs these days in relation to where their clients sit.

You know, one of the things that I always think about is, as the dust settles and things start to return to quote-unquote 'normal,' whatever that looks like, I have very real concerns about retaining our staff in light of the fact that there's going to be options and opportunities for them in that local market where they sit. My only hope is that if they do decide that they want to try something new, they do that with Robert Half.

But we spend an incredible amount of time thinking about employee morale right now. We've never spent more time thinking about morale and burnout, because the other component to virtual work is, theoretically, it never turns off. And we've had major problems with people working more hours than they ever did when they were working on site.

I mean, think about it from the perspective of Los Angeles. There were days where I was losing an hour and a half in commute each way to work. I know all the LA people and a lot of the southern California people know where I'm coming from with that, and that's a welcome change, not having to sit on the 405.

But in that time that I'm not sitting on the highway, I'm working, so I'm just working way longer hours. I work longer hours. I work at night. I mean, it's just hard to turn it off, and that's a major concern for employers, because sometimes it's coupled into the idea... I mean, there still is a lot of fear associated with this changing environment. Even though I'm giving you a lot of positive information and data, we've got a lot of fear for the stability of their role, so they have a hard time voluntarily taking time off, and they have a hard time stopping work, even outside of typical work hours.

So, that burnout factor is very real, and we are constantly brainstorming on different ways that we can help people manage that. I've tried myriad strategies to get people into a better headspace, and I was telling Steve and Nicole we've gone way out there in terms of things that we would traditionally try. I actually have a weekly mindfulness meditation that I'm doing with my teams to try to just get people to remember to breathe!

Initially, I just had... You know, I've got an Apple Watch, and anyone who has an Apple Watch, you know how it tells you to breathe all the time? I always feel like, because it's monitoring my beats per minute, maybe they can tell my heart rate is raising a little bit. Even sometimes when I'm very calm, it tells me to breathe.

But I had time-blocked time in my calendar early in the pandemic just to breathe, and then I realized that it wasn't enough because I would just multitask through that, and I would breathe while sending emails, breathe deeply while sending emails. But now we're actually getting people to block out 10 or 15 minutes of their week and just breathe with us to try to keep people's stress levels lower. Surprisingly, well received.

**JOSH KANGAS:** Can I ask another question?

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Sure.

**JOSH KANGAS:** Something that's also very kind of broad scale and probably too early to tell, but I saw a question in the chat kind of talking about how this kind of online platform is really creating equity, especially for places of rural areas, so people can have access to these types of job opportunities without having to live in cities. Has there been any type of inclinations or conversations about almost a universal-type salary structure, potentially, in the future.

You know, I'm just thinking from the fact of where I am in the Bay Area, a base salary for someone in computer science is around \$125,000, but back home, where I'm from, in Maine, it's about \$100,000, so what an amazing opportunity for somebody in Maine to, potentially, make an extra \$30,000 a year earning a California salary while living in a place that has a cost of living lower, like someplace like Maine. That seems like a cool way for employees to kind of hack a salary system, which is great. But is that at all a conversation yet? Are people talking about that? Or just take advantage of it if you can type of thing?

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** It's a great question, and I would tell you that the conversations are starting, but I don't think anyone feels like they have the answer to that question yet. Some of the initial discussions that I heard from clients were, we weren't even going to touch that until a year down the road, after all this started, where we start to think about market-driven pay equity. I mean, I hired all these people, like a lot of my staff, to work for me in some of the highest cost-of-living markets in the country, and none of them took pay cuts when they moved to lower cost-of-living places.

**JOSH:** Yeah, I think that was kind of... More specific to my question, are companies starting to consider salaries based off of where you're plugging in from? So, for instance, if you are living in Maine, working for us, would your salary be more adjustable to your cost of living versus someplace like the Bay Area?

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Yeah, no, I definitely understood that as your question, and I would say that that conversation is happening everywhere right now. I haven't heard about a company that is laying a defined timeline for it yet, but it's a logical conversation to have when it's not a temporary relocation, and I think it really does...

You know, it's contingent on the nature of the compensation plan for the organization, but I think I could see that having a pretty substantially negative impact on people that live in the higher cost-of-living markets, right? Suddenly, they're forced to pay cut because there are people in lower cost-of-living markets that can do those jobs. But at the end of the day, maybe that's where we're going. I don't know. And certainly, I don't have a crystal ball on it. I know that there's a lot of discussion about that.

I mean, I think that Twitter was one of the first companies to start talking about that because I think they came out and said, "We're remote forever," pretty early on. And then it was like, "OK, you're remote forever, but you hired so many of your people to do their work in this incredibly high cost-of-living market." At some point, there has to at least be some consideration for restructuring, but we're not talking about that at Robert Half at all yet. I've heard about my clients talking about it, but nothing defined yet.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** We had this conversation a little bit before. Sometimes I almost feel like we shouldn't have our conversations before because we cover a lot of cool stuff! The idea is that our students need to understand that people who are in areas where the cost of living is less may now be applying for jobs that are down the street from them, so that's more competition for them locally, so they also have to think about, "Where else can I apply?" So, we talked about... I think we used the word 'changing the filter on what you search on,' so you're looking nationwide now for jobs, instead of just in California.

And that actually goes back to the question we had—*how prepared should our students be for this virtual work environment?* It sounds to me like a key competitive advantage might be your ability to function anywhere, and those are all skills we need to learn.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Yeah, absolutely—being a good communicator, a good collaborator, someone that speaks multiple languages. And I don't even mean just the actual traditional definition of language, but just someone that can adapt well to the communication style of different cultures and different geographic areas—I think that that's really critical. Someone that can effectively communicate and build rapport in that exclusively virtual setting. I mean, these are some of the skillsets that I think need to be cultivated within schools right now, assuming that that has the potential to be the future of work.

## [00:47:22] The Creative & Marketing Salary Guide

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** So, we've got our... Robert Half releases a creative and marketing salary guide and a technology salary guide that talk through compensation data trends and what we're anticipating for 2021. It's all compiled with raw data from the placements that we made in 2020, so you can see exactly what the impact was from a compensation perspective across various different functional within creative, marketing, and technology, and then the anticipated growth percentage for those functional roles in 2021.

We conducted extensive interviews with executives, both in the technology space and in the creative and marketing space, to get their feedback on our data, and talk through what trends they're anticipating, what's driving business for them, what does business transformation look like for them, what are the initiatives that are taking priority for them within their organizations, so there's a lot of really helpful data in the creative and marketing guide and in the technology guide.

Anyone that's interested in downloading copies of these guides can do so on either the Creative Group or Robert Half Technology website, which is [www.CreativeGroup.com](http://www.CreativeGroup.com) or [www.RHT.com](http://www.RHT.com) for Robert Half Technology.

## [00:48:44] Helping Businesses Navigate a New Environment

**Helping businesses navigate a new environment**

Creative and marketing professionals are playing a vital role in helping companies:

- Market new offerings or recast their offerings to meet changing customer habits and preferences
- Improve customer communications and experiences
- Expand online services

**In focus: customer experience and digital opportunities**

- 61% of marketing departments have pivoted resources to improving customer-facing digital interfaces.
- 56% are changing their business models to focus on digital opportunities.

Source: The CMO Survey (2020) | Edition of more than 270 top marketing and IT professionals in U.S. companies in 2020

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** So, one bullet that you'll see here is in improving customer communications, expanding online services. I mean, certainly, ecommerce from a creative perspective has been a steady build, and that was a trend that was certainly well on its way before COVID, but now the ability to effectively sell your goods and services online and to engage customers digitally and to retain customers, rebranding and making sure that your message is really clear to your customers, has never been more important than it is right now.

I had already spoken about digital opportunities, but if you look here, you see 61% of marketing departments have pivoted resources to improving customer-facing digital interfaces. I mean, I don't know about you folks, but I get most of my groceries from Amazon Prime. We have a lot of clients that are developing or enhancing their mobile apps now because that's the way that they're maintaining a relationship with their core demographics, and I don't see that trend slowing down anytime soon.

56% are changing their business models to focus on digital opportunities, so money that maybe is being transitioned from traditional marketing, or certainly anything in the print space, all being transitioned over to digital. You know, Steve, when I think about this trend, to me, it's the future is five years early. So, we were on that path towards digital transformation. It just accelerated that much faster because COVID forced it.

[00:50:41] Creative & Marketing Skills in Demand



The slide features a title 'Creative and marketing skills in demand' in a blue font. Below the title is a bulleted list of skills: Marketing automation and demand generation software, CRM software, SEO and SEM tools, E-commerce platforms, UX and UI design, Front-end web development, AI and machine learning, Content strategy, and Copywriting. To the right of the list is a photograph of a man with short dark hair and orange-rimmed glasses, wearing a grey t-shirt, sitting at a desk and looking at a laptop. The background of the photo is a wall with a pattern of small, colorful dots.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** This is a list of creative and marketing skills that are in demand. Marketing automation and demand gen software... CRM software certainly is very popular. Customization of CRM software... SEO and SEM based on the amount of time people spend on the internet searching for things that they're interested in or want to buy, and making sure that you have prime placement for whatever your good or service is that you're trying to represent online. We already talked about ecommerce.

User experience and user interface design to create the most engaging and retention-driven applications, whether they be mobile or desktop. Front-end web development, I think, aligns very much with UX/UI. AI and machine learning—our business transformation teams have spent a lot of time and energy improving the machine learning and AI components to our internal salesforce database such that we can find, and get access to, the most qualified national candidates for any job order that we're working on with our clients locally.

We want the CRM to get smarter and smarter and smarter about where it looks for that talent such that we don't find ourselves in a place where we aren't considering candidates from maybe a geo that didn't naturally come to mind when we were searching for a particular position, but we want the system to get smarter such that wherever we go from here, we've got all of that experience kind of baked into the way our CRM thinks. Content strategy and copywriting—there's been a need to change how content is presented, and a lot of times, that also encapsulates a larger branding strategy overhaul as well.

[00:52:44] Which Industries are Hiring Creative Talent?



**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Which industries are hiring creative talent? These are what we commonly refer to as the trending industries within our ecosystem, but healthcare, technology, application building, manufacturing, insurance, finance, and education. I mean, education we had seen...

We continue to see explosive demand from an educational perspective as it relates to providing technical support for remote learning. Initially, it was we have an overflow of helpdesk tickets being logged for families that are having trouble with their Zoom or whatever it is that the students are learning on, whatever platform the students are learning on remotely, but schools would hire a particular number of people to help with that overflow. In almost every instance, it became a scenario where they didn't hire enough people because the tickets were increasing at a rate that was so much faster than what anyone anticipated because there really is a lot that goes wrong with these platforms when you're using them all the time. And then who knows how much longer it will continue to be that way, so the technology-trending industries are very similar to the creative and trending industries.

[00:54:16] Hot Creative and Marketing Jobs

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications specialist</li> <li>• Content strategist</li> <li>• Copywriter</li> <li>• Digital strategist</li> <li>• E-commerce marketing manager</li> <li>• Front-end web developer</li> <li>• Graphic designer</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional designer</li> <li>• Marketing automation specialist</li> <li>• SEO/SEM Specialist</li> <li>• UX/UI designer</li> <li>• UX researcher</li> <li>• Video production</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

PAUL FLAHARTY: Here’s another kind of overview for creative and marketing jobs, but I think we covered most of these. Communications specialist—just underscoring the importance of consistent communication.

[00:54:28] 2021 Salary Tables



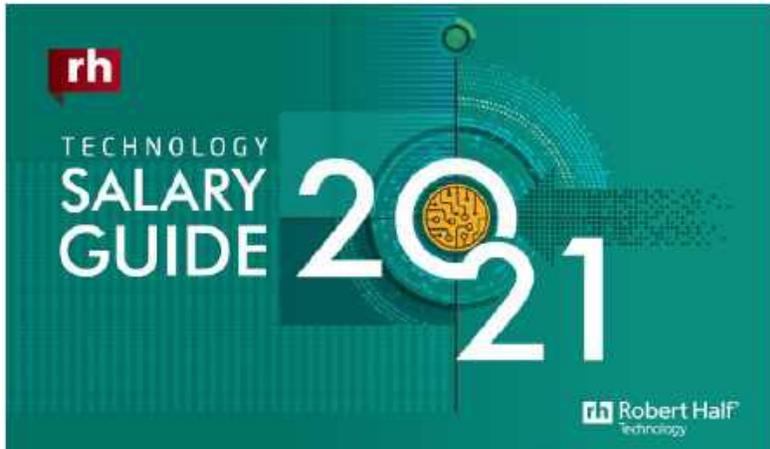
PAUL FLAHARTY: Steve and Nicole, I see we’re running out of time here, and I feel terrible just because I have a number of additional slides on the tech side. I can try to just kind of speed through some of these, if you’d like. I don’t know how hard the stop is for people.

STEVE WRIGHT: Yeah, if people have to go, they have to go. If you could just take whatever it takes, maybe another 5 or 10 minutes, and give us the overview of what you have here? And we’ll be posting the slides on the website as well. But just hear your take on a few of them.

PAUL FLAHARTY: OK, sure. This is just a snapshot for what our salary guide looks like. So, you’ve got two functional titles down here: web content coordinator, copywriter. And it shows you what is the national average for a candidate with little to no experience in that space, average experience, above average experience, and exceptional experience within that space. All of the numbers that are presented are national averages, and then you apply your local multiplier to that number, and that’s how you arrive at the average for a particular market. The San Francisco Bay Area will have a higher multiplier than Kansas

City, for example. So, anyone that's interested in that, again, they can go to our website, and they can download copies of these salary guides.

## [00:55:53] Technology Salary Guide



**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Then, this is Technology Salary Guide that we have listed here, and it talks about some of the key themes and trends that are driving growing within the technology industry. I would give kind of a quick overview to that.

Information security and the need to keep data secure in light of the fact that so many networks have expanded substantially, given how many of the employees are working remotely. That has certainly become a major focal point.

Application development for similar end goals, whether it's business transformation or improved collaboration within the technology space, has been key.

## [00:56:34] Digital Transformation: A Driver for Tech Hiring

### Digital transformation: a driver for tech hiring



Look for many businesses to invest more in digital transformation in the year ahead to either maintain competitive advantage — or play catch-up.

Many firms will seek tech skills such as:

- AI and machine learning
- Cloud computing
- Robotic process automation
- Data science and analytics

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**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Digital transformation, absolutely a driver for tech. We talked about AI and machine learning, cloud computing, RPA (robotics process automation), and data science. The data-driven skillset space for technologists is incredibly robust right now. People that can evaluate data differently, whether your business is growing or it's not growing, the need for people to come in and access large datasets such that they're motivating or recommending that the business make thoughtful decisions in terms of where they should pivot and where they should invest. I have never seen a greater need for data-driven professionals than right now.

## [00:57:27] Tech Skills Employers Seek in Today's IT Pros



### Tech skills employers seek in today's IT pros

- Agile and Scrum
- Angular
- ASP.NET
- C#
- Cloud (AWS, Azure, Google)
- Containerization (Docker, Kubernetes, Helm)
- Golang (aka Go)
- ITIL
- Java
- JavaScript
- Kotlin
- Linux
- PHP
- Python
- ReactJS and React Native
- Ruby on Rails
- SQL
- Virtualization
- VR/AR/MR/XR

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**PAUL FLAHARTY:** This slide gives an overview for the skillsets that we're seeing on job descriptions with the greatest regularity.

### [00:57:37] Employers Also Value Soft Skills



**Employers also value soft skills**

- Attention to detail
- Business acumen
- Change management
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Customer service
- Leadership
- Problem solving
- Project management

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Then I would just talk about the soft skills again, because we talked about the need to be able to effectively interface and communicate and build relationships with a very diverse, very distributed population of employers across different markets with different cultures and different values. So, I don't know that soft skills have ever been more important.

### [00:57:58] Top IT Certifications



**Top IT certifications**

- AWS Certified Solutions Architect – Professional
- Certified Cloud Security Professional (CCSP)
- Certified Data Professional (CDP)
- Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)
- Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)
- Cisco Certifications: (CCIE, CCNA, CCNP)
- CompTIA (A+, Cloud+, Security+)
- Microsoft Certifications: MCSA, MCSE
- Project Management Professional (PMP)

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Quick overview for the certifications that our clients are asking for with the greatest regularity... Again, we'll share this deck, so anyone has the ability to see these different certs that we're seeing requested the most frequently.

[00:58:15] Which Industries Are Hiring?

# Which industries are hiring?



PAUL FLAHARTY: And then these are our trending industries within the tech space: healthcare, financial services, technology, and government.

[00:58:22] Hot Technology & IT Jobs

**Hot technology and IT jobs**

- AI and/or machine learning specialists
- Business intelligence analysts
- Cloud architects
- Cybersecurity and data privacy experts
- Data reporting analysts
- Data scientists
- Developers (database, full-stack, web, software, mobile)
- Engineers (cloud, data, DevOps, network security, software)
- Help desk and user support professionals
- IT administrators (database, network, systems)

## 2021 salary tables



**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Technology salary guide data, very similar to the way it's structured for creative. Here's a DevOps engineer and a CRM technical developer—two very hot skillsets for us. Still again, national average is broken down by percentile there.

[00:58:43] Current Compensation Trends

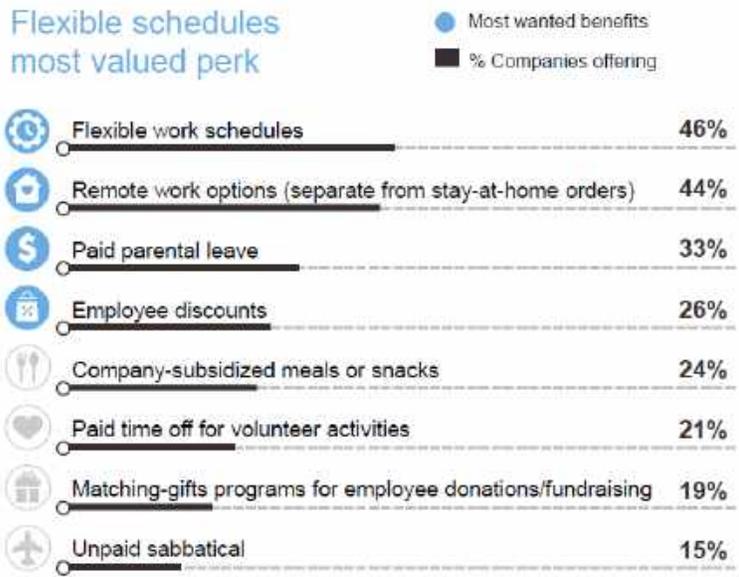
## Common benefits employees want most — and what employers are offering

### Health insurance tops workers' benefits wish list



### Most valued perk: flexible work schedules

### Flexible schedules most valued perk



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**PAUL FLAHARTY:** We've got an overview for benefits and what are the most valuable perks that employees are looking for when they're searching for their next job. So, I think those are really my critical slides there. Some of the other ones, I think, cover content that we've already been through.

#### [00:59:04] Our Salary Calculator

**Our Salary Calculator**

Our online Salary Calculator makes it easy to quickly customize salary data for your city:  
[roberthalf.com/salary-calculator](http://roberthalf.com/salary-calculator)

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** You can also find a salary calculator online, so you can look for compensation tied to a particular functional area. It also can be found from the Robert Half website.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** Well, I want to thank you, Paul. And I don't regret the time we spent discussing the general notion of what life is like now that we're deep into the COVID thing, because I think a lot of us felt kind of a shock or denial or awareness gap on what is really happening. So, I really welcome you coming here today and providing clarity. This job demand thing is really speaking to the fact that, hey, no matter how tough or weird and different it is, there's still demand.

And for a lot of our students, there's incredible hope. There are skills that are very precisely defined that they can get and compete well in the marketplace. A weird marketplace. A different marketplace. A national marketplace. But still, to me, it's a very optimistic viewpoint.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Agreed. And thank you, again, for the opportunity to present. I'm sorry that we had to rush there towards the end of the slides. It's good conversation, so I wanted to make sure I responded to everyone, but I really appreciate the opportunity to join you again. And anyone that has any questions, you can feel free to link in with me on LinkedIn, and I'll do my best to answer them for you.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** And we'll bring him back in about six months to see if you were right or not!

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Hopefully... I don't know—we'll see if the beard is still here or if I've gone corporate again by that point. So, we shall see.

**STEVE WRIGHT:** All righty, good. Well, thank you all and see you all next week for southern California cloud network curriculum. Bye-bye.

**PAUL FLAHARTY:** Thanks, everyone.