



RECRUITMENT: TAX MARKET INSIGHT

[October 2026] Review by Founder, Hu Kabir

Firms are shifting focus from delivery bandwidth to capability, opening up strategic opportunities for highly specialised tax leaders before vacancies are ever published.

AT A GLANCE

The UK tax and accountancy market is shifting focus from general delivery bandwidth to specialised capability, with firms tightening cost discipline while aggressively investing in senior specialist talent. Because technology and consolidation handle routine workflows, the premium is now on individuals who can turn structural advantages into thriving specialist businesses. Consequently, the most compelling senior opportunities are creating commercial value and emerging long before a formal job description is ever written.

I've spent the past month looking closely at what is actually happening across the UK tax and accountancy market, and one trend keeps appearing. Firms aren't simply hiring or reducing headcount, they're becoming far more selective about who they are prepared to invest in.

Across the profession, we've seen a series of strategic moves. KPMG appointed its Head of Tax & Legal, Vicki Heard, as Group Managing Partner of its UK/Swiss Group. S&W has continued adding specialist tax partners across areas such as VAT and innovation incentives, while EY is going to market for a Salaried Partner in Funds Tax. In legal and advisory, Fieldfisher has strengthened its contentious tax capability, Kirkland & Ellis has expanded its UK tax disputes bench through senior lateral hiring, and MHA has grown a capital-allowances practice it expects to double in revenue.

At the same time, firms are tightening cost discipline. KPMG is reportedly reducing around 200 advisory roles, while PwC's latest UK results show revenue up 2% and profit per partner up 8%. Consolidation continues to build larger platforms with thousands of existing client relationships.

Taken together, the picture is clear: **The market is becoming less interested in capacity and far more interested in capability.**

Technology and AI are making routine work easier to produce. Consolidation is giving firms greater distribution. HMRC is becoming increasingly digital and data-led. The missing ingredient is no longer delivery bandwidth — it's the individual who can turn those structural advantages into a thriving specialist business. This is why some of the most compelling senior tax opportunities never begin with a published vacancy. A firm may not be actively recruiting an Employment Tax Partner today. But if it has just acquired thousands of owner-managed business clients and holds limited employment tax capability, the commercial case already exists. The same logic applies across private client, tax disputes, VAT, international tax, capital allowances, funds tax and other specialist disciplines.

For me, this is where senior tax recruitment becomes particularly interesting. The core question isn't "Who is hiring?" It's "Where could the right individual create enough value that a firm ought to hire them?" The best opportunities often exist long before the job description is ever written.



I'd be interested to hear from tax leaders and partners: are you seeing firms become more cautious about general headcount while remaining fully prepared to invest in genuinely differentiated specialists?

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ABOUT MAITLAND KABIR

Maitland Kabir is a UK search firm focused on senior appointments across the UK tax profession. Founded on a long-standing partnership and deep sector experience, the firm works directly with clients and candidates on senior, often discreet, searches across the tax market.

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