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JOB MARKET TIGHTENS FOR DIRECT MARKETERS

January 15, 2008 — Direct marketers can expect more hiring freezes and increased layoffs this quarter, according to the latest employment survey by Bernhart Associates.

"All of our hiring indicators are turning more negative," said Jerry Bernhart, President of Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC. "This weakness comes as no surprise given the recent news of layoffs and the current overall economic climate."

According to the survey, 58 percent of the companies responding said they plan to add to staff during the first quarter of 2008, down 2 percent from the previous survey in October. Direct marketers are also planning more layoffs with 12 percent indicating they plan to reduce payroll, up from 9 percent last quarter.

Bernhart said the biggest increase came in the percentage of companies that have imposed a hiring freeze for the first quarter, which jumped from 9 percent to 13 percent. When asked when they plan to lift their hiring freezes, Bernhart said most said they were unsure if they would be lifted by spring.

When asked about the degree of difficulty they are having attracting qualified talent, 19 percent of the companies responding said they were having a "very difficult" time. The remainder indicated it was only somewhat difficult or not difficult at all. Bernhart said those numbers represent a change from recent quarters when employers indicated they were having a more difficult time finding qualified candidates. "The pendulum is beginning to shift from a candidate-driven job market to more of an employer-driven market," said Bernhart. "That's good news for employers who are hiring, but it could mean more competition for job seekers."

When asked what positions will be in greatest demand, Bernhart said the survey showed that no one job category stood above the rest. "It's really across the board, from analytics to ecommerce to lettershop."

A total of 79 companies responded to the random survey which was emailed the week of January 7.

Results of past surveys can be found in the DMA's *Statistical Fact Book*.

About Bernhart Associates

Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC, is a leading and nationally recognized direct marketing search firm, owned and managed by Jerry Bernhart. The Bernhart Associates Direct Marketing Employment Survey, conducted quarterly, has become the most widely followed and quoted employment report in the direct marketing industry and is published annually in the Direct Marketing Association's *Statistical Fact Book*, the most comprehensive publication of facts and trends in the direct marketing industry. Bernhart is a frequent speaker at DMA conferences and has written dozens of articles for leading direct marketing publications. He is a Charter Board Member of Data University and is also owner of the Internet job posting site www.directmarketingcareers.com.

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