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**Slowing trend in direct marketing hiring continues**

Story posted: October 9, 2007 - 12:23 pm EDT

Owatonna, Minn.—Direct marketers can expect little change in the employment outlook for the remainder of 2007, but a slowing trend in new hiring continues, according to the latest survey by Bernhart Associates Executive Search.

According to the survey, 60% of direct marketing companies polled said they plan to add to staff by the end of the year, down slightly from 61% during the third quarter. The record high for the index occurred in the fall of 2005, when the new hire percentage reached 80%.

The latest survey found that 9% plan to reduce staff, while 29% expect no change in hiring plans for the remainder of the year.

The survey also examined the degree of difficulty companies are having in finding talented people. The vast majority—85%—indicated they are having either a “very difficult” or “somewhat difficult” time finding qualified applicants for open positions. Only 15% said they are having little or no difficulty.

“The numbers are showing little change compared with summer,” said Jerry Bernhart, president of Bernhart Associates, in a statement. “At the same time, the new hire percentage continues to show a slow and steady decline which began about a year and a half ago. While hiring is not at the heated pace it was a couple of years ago, the supply of qualified applicants remains tight, and in some job categories it’s apparently getting tighter.”

The skill set that will be in highest demand is analytics, according to the survey findings. That includes statisticians, database marketing analysts and circulation analysts.

A total of 116 companies responded to the survey e-mailed the week of Oct. 1.

—Carol Krol

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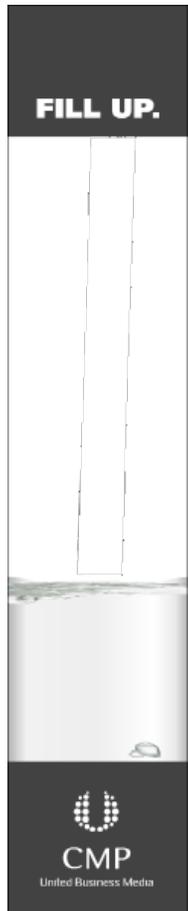
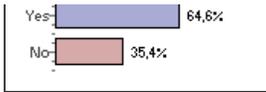
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