

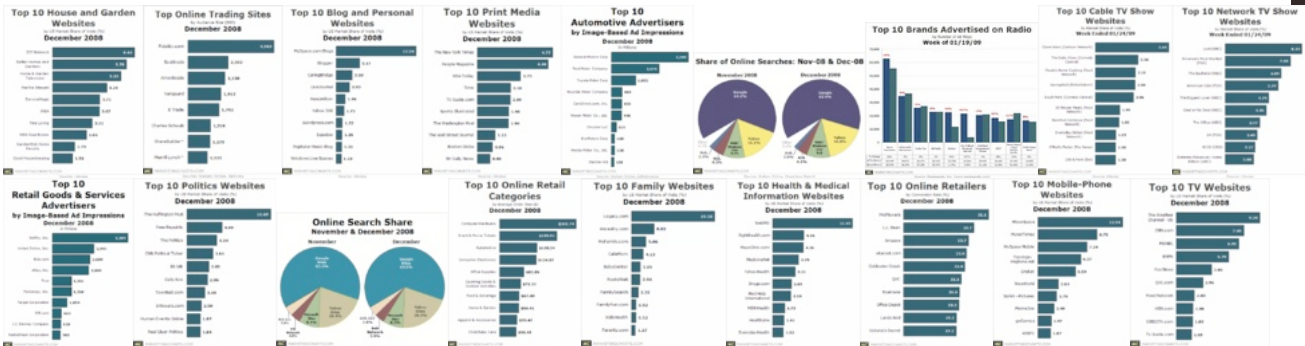


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Direct marketers are coping with the slumping economy by cutting their hiring plans for the remainder of 2008, imposing hiring freezes and laying off workers, according to the latest employment survey from executive search firm [Bernhart Associates](#).

Only 31% of companies responding say they plan to add to headcount during Q4 2008, down sharply from 47% last quarter. Hiring freezes jumped to 34%, compared with 20% over the summer. The percentage of companies planning layoffs rose 12% from last quarter - to 17%, a new high for the survey.

On a more positive note, some job categories are holding up much better than others, the survey found. Sales and sales analytics positions dominated the list of positions employers plan to fill during the coming fourth quarter.

“Every one of our major employment indicators showed significant declines compared with summer and now stand at their lowest levels since the survey began eight years ago,” said Jerry Bernhart, owner of Bernhart Associates. “We always ask companies that have a hiring freeze when they plan to lift it, but very few were able to give us a definite time frame. In addition, most of the new hiring will be replacements rather than new additions.”

Though Bernhart acknowledged that results could have been influenced by the timing of the survey, which was sent out just as the credit squeeze was reaching crisis levels, he said that direct marketing employment has been in a downtrend all year.

About the survey: A total of 110 companies responded to the random survey which was emailed in mid-September. Bernhart Associates Alterian’s Dynamic Messenger email solution for the survey.

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