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## DIRECT MARKETING EMPLOYMENT INDICATORS WEAKEN FURTHER, FINDS BERNHART ASSOCIATES SURVEY

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**April 15, 2008** — Continued layoffs and more hiring freezes appear to be on the horizon for direct marketers this spring, according to the latest Bernhart Associates employment survey.

"The glass is either half-empty or half-full depending on how you look at it," said Jerry Bernhart of Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC, which has been conducting the quarterly survey for eight years. "One out of five companies responding said they have a hiring freeze right now, but they're not expecting a big spike in layoffs and more than half of those surveyed said they are still planning to hire."

Bernhart said this is the second consecutive quarter that the overall jobs outlook has deteriorated. Among those companies that have announced hiring freezes, Bernhart noted that the vast majority could not give any indication when the freezes would be lifted, reflecting continued uncertainty.

According to the survey, 54 percent of the companies responding said they will be filling new positions during the current spring quarter, down from 58 percent last quarter. The percentage of companies that have imposed a hiring freeze jumped to 20 percent, compared with 13 percent last quarter and more than double the rate just six months ago. Planned layoffs remained unchanged at 12 percent.

"If you look at what's going on now and compare it with what happened during the last downturn in 2001-2002, things are still holding up better on the jobs front," said Bernhart. "All of our indicators were weaker back then. Direct marketers this time around are turning more to hiring freezes and doing what they can to avoid significant cutbacks in staff. They know that when things turn around, talent will be more difficult to come-by."

Even in the current environment, said Bernhart, many companies are still having a challenging time finding qualified candidates for certain positions. "Nearly three-quarters of those responding said they are having some degree of difficulty filling openings," said Bernhart. "For the most part, these jobs are more specialized lower to mid-level positions, or they are in geographic locations where the available direct marketing labor pool is relatively small."

When asked what positions will be in greatest demand during the coming three months, Bernhart said sales dominated the list. "This is similar to what we saw during the last downturn. Many companies apparently believe that a good way to weather an economic downturn is to increase the effectiveness of their sales force, and that's exactly what many of them are doing," Bernhart said analytics was a close second, followed by account managers.

A total of 139 companies responded to the random survey which was emailed the week of April 1.

Results of past surveys can be found in the DMA's *Statistical Fact Book*. Companies interested in participating in the Bernhart Associates Executive Search Quarterly Direct Marketing Employment Survey should send an email to [survey@bernhart.com](mailto:survey@bernhart.com) with "Opt-In" in the subject line.

### 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 one of the most widely followed and quoted employment reports in the direct marketing profession and is published annually in the Direct Marketing Association's (DMA) *Statistical Fact Book*, the most comprehensive publication of facts and trends in the direct marketing community. Viewed as a leading authority on issues related to executive search and hiring in the direct marketing field, 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 [directmarketingcareers.com](http://directmarketingcareers.com). Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC, uses Alterian's Dynamic Messenger email solution to serve as the engine for the quarterly *Direct Marketing Employment Survey*.

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