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Layoffs and Freezes Forecast for DM Employment

Apr 16, 2008 8:04 AM

The direct marketing job arena will contract for the second straight quarter, according to a new DM employment survey.

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.

According to the survey, 54% of respondents will be filling new positions during the current spring quarter, down from 58% last quarter. And 19% have imposed a hiring freeze, up from 13% a quarter ago. Planned layoffs remained unchanged at 12%.

"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 Jerry Bernhart of Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC, in a statement. Bernhart Associates has been conducting the quarterly survey for 8 years.

Bernhart continued, "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."

Bernhart added that among those companies announcing hiring freezes, the vast majority could not give any indication when the freezes would be lifted, reflecting continued uncertainty.

Even in the current environment, 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," according to 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."

Sales top the list of positions likely to be in highest demand during the coming three months. "This is similar to what we saw during the last downturn," Bernhart added in a statement. 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 129 companies responded to the survey, which was emailed the week of April 1. Companies interested in participating in the Bernhart Associates Executive Search Quarterly Direct Marketing Employment Survey should send

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