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Employment Survey Shows Small Gains In Hiring

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Nearly one in three direct marketing companies will add staff during fourth quarter 2009, up from 20% in the third quarter, according to a new employment survey.

The percentage of firms anticipating layoffs remained steady at 8%, according to Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC, which conducted the research.

Company principal Jerry Bernhart attributed at least some of the jump in the anticipated Q4 hiring freeze index to seasonal variations. "We've seen this happen in our past fourth-quarter surveys when companies have held off on hiring decisions until after the holidays," he said in a statement. "That may have been exacerbated this last quarter by the recession's severity."

Bernhart's research also found that 45% of firms have instituted hiring freezes, up from 30% during the third quarter. Additionally, business-to-business firms are more upbeat about hiring, and anticipate fewer layoffs, during the fourth quarter than consumer companies.

Most of the new hiring, Bernhart noted in a statement, is expected to take place on the services side with 41% of participating service providers reporting that they plan to add to staff in the last three months of 2009. Agencies were a close second at 39%, and client-side companies, at 18%, said they plan to make the fewest new hires.

Among B-to-B direct marketers, 33% said they will hire during this final quarter, compared with 24% on the consumer side.

Despite the continuing surplus of job seekers, nearly 60% of respondents said it was either "very difficult" or "somewhat difficult" to fill certain positions.

"Companies are looking for the perfect candidate, so what we're seeing here is an apparent inability to recruit applicants who meet each and every one of the required criteria needed to trigger a hire," Bernhart said in a statement.

Analysts, salespeople and account managers were the most frequently mentioned positions available.

Bernhart Associates' fourth quarter survey was e-mailed to more than 8,500 senior executives, human resource officials, and other participants in online and offline direct marketing the week of September 28. Results are based on 359 responses.

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<http://www.directmag.com/news/employment-survey-bernhart-gains-1014>

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