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DIRECT MARKETING FOURTH QUARTER HIRING PLANS PLUNGE, BERNHART SURVEY FINDS

October 6, 2008 — Direct marketers are coping with the slumping economy by making deep cuts in their hiring plans for the remainder of 2008, according to the latest Bernhart Associates employment survey.

"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 Executive Search, LLC, and a leading direct marketing recruiter.

According to the survey:

- 31 percent of companies responding said they plan to add to headcount during the current fourth quarter, down sharply from 47 percent last quarter.
- Hiring freezes spiked to 34 percent, compared with 20 percent during the summer.
- The percentage of companies planning layoffs rose to 17 percent, also a new high for the survey and up from 12 percent last quarter.

"We always ask companies that have a hiring freeze when they plan to lift it," Bernhart said. "Very few were able to give us a definite time frame, and that really underscores the mood of uncertainty that's out there right now. In addition, most of the new hiring will be replacements rather than new additions."

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. But Bernhart said that direct marketing employment has been in a downtrend all year, and the continued economic malaise is only making things tougher.

"As a recruiter I'm in the trenches everyday talking with candidates and employers, and clearly the job situation is worsening," Bernhart said. "There are fewer opportunities out there, and it's taking longer for job seekers to land. Many have little choice but to seek out consulting work as a back-stop until things begin to improve."

"Despite the gloomy outlook, nearly one-third of survey participants are still hiring, and most don't have a hiring freeze," Bernhart added. "Certain job categories are holding up much better than others."

When asked what positions employers intend to fill during the coming fourth quarter, Bernhart said sales and analytics dominated the list.

A total of 110 companies responded to the random survey, which was emailed in mid-September.

In 2007, direct marketing accounted for 10.2 percent of total US gross domestic product.

Results of past surveys can be found in the [Direct Marketing Association'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 with "Opt-In" in the subject line.

Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC, uses Alterian's Dynamic Messenger e-mail solution to serve as the engine for its quarterly Direct Marketing Employment Survey.

About Bernhart Associates

Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC (<http://www.bernhart.com>) is owned by Jerry Bernhart, a leading and nationally recognized direct marketing recruiter and speaker on direct marketing employment trends. The Bernhart Associates Direct Marketing Employment Survey, conducted quarterly, has become the most widely followed and quoted employment report in the direct marketing industry and is published annually in the Direct Marketing Association's Statistical Fact Book, the most comprehensive publication of facts and trends in the direct marketing industry. Bernhart has written dozens of articles for leading direct marketing publications and is a Charter Board Member of Data University.

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