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The First eM+C/Bernhart Associates Employment Survey

Sluggish economy makes direct hit on hiring plans.

By *Melissa Campanelli*
 January 01, 2009

As online marketers' growth rates have slowed due to the stumbling economy, so too have their hiring plans. This was a key finding from the first exclusive eM+C/Bernhart Associates Employment Survey. eM+C is partnering with Bernhart Associates Executive Search, an Owatonna, Minn.-based executive search firm focusing on multichannel marketing, in what will become a regular feature in the magazine and on the eMarketingandCommerce.com Web site.

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Questionnaires were sent to the entire eM+C Weekly opt-in e-mail file in mid-November 2008. Responses from vendors and those uninvolved in hiring decisions were filtered out, so we wound up with a total of 177 qualified respondents.

Just 28 percent of those respondents said they'd be adding staff during the first quarter of 2009. "We obviously don't have a year-ago comparison, but based on what I was seeing in 2007, hiring plans are about half of what they were this time last year," says Bernhart Owner Jerry Bernhart.

In addition, 63 percent of respondents are planning no changes in staffing through March, according to Bernhart.

When it comes to staff reductions, e-commerce companies have been able to get by without significant layoffs, Bernhart says. "In fact, only 9 percent of respondents said they plan to cut staff in the next quarter — a relatively small percentage compared with other sectors of the economy that've been hit much harder," he notes.

Another statistic that bodes well for online marketing is that among companies that plan to hire, the number of new jobs will outnumber position replacements 10-to-1.

Web developers dominate the list of positions online marketers are looking to fill early this year. Results were top-heavy with anything related to Web site production, design and administration. This is due to three reasons, according to Bernhart:

1. Traditional brick-and-mortar retailers are devoting more resources to e-commerce and looking for new ways to break through.
2. The evolution of next generation marketing strategies may have surpassed in-house capabilities to fully execute those strategies, hence the need for more developers.
3. Simply a matter of supply and demand. Employers are putting Web developers at the top of their wish lists, making sure to scoop up best of breed when these employees become available.

As a result, online marketers will need to be especially competitive when it comes to compensating these types of employees. "Things like sign-on bonuses, flexible work arrangements and other perks can make the difference in attracting Web developers when you're at the top of your salary band," Bernhart says.

Some percentages didn't add up to 100 due to rounding. In our next survey in the March/April issue, we'll examine salaries in more detail.

To view the survey results, click [here](#).

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