

US layoffs, hiring freezes hit multi-year lows

OWATONNA, US: Digital and direct marketers are planning a surge in hiring this winter with agencies leading the way, according to Bernhart Associates' *Quarterly Digital and Direct Marketing Employment Report* for the first quarter of 2011.



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"I expected a bounce, but nothing like this, which is very encouraging," said Jerry Bernhart, principal of Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC, which conducts the quarterly employment survey. "This is the most positive quarterly improvement we've ever seen in the 11-year history of our quarterly survey."

The following are key findings from Bernhart Associates' Quarter 1 (Q1) survey:

- 52% of companies responding to the survey said they plan to add to staff in Q1, up from 41% last quarter (Q4).
- 16% of respondents currently have a hiring freeze, down sharply from 35% in Q4.
- The percentage of companies planning layoffs in Q1 dropped to 4%, compared with 8% in Q4.
- 63% of agencies responding to the survey plan to add staff, with none planning cutbacks and only one agency reporting a hiring freeze.

Marketing budgets still feeling the pinch

Survey results show that marketing hiring budgets are still being pinched on the client side, which are lagging the agencies and service providers in planned hiring. However, Bernhart notes that nearly one out of every two marketers still will have positions to fill in the current quarter.

"Business-to-business hiring plans outpaced business-to-consumer, and also reported fewer expected layoffs and hiring freezes," added Bernhart.

He said that while direct marketing staffing in the coming year may not reach the boom levels seen prior to 2008, he expects hiring to continue building momentum in 2011, noting the following key trends:

- Digital and direct marketers are revising upward their projections for 2011 as margins improve and demand picks up, creating the need for more headcount.
- The number of online digital and direct marketing-related job listings has been up sharply in the past

couple months.

- Bernhart Associates, a nationally recognised digital and direct marketing recruiting firm, has seen a "dramatic" decline in the number of resumes from recently laid-off digital and direct marketers.
- Bernhart further noted that he is fielding more calls from companies asking about executive searches adding, "you don't see that happen unless job recovery is taking hold."

Good news for digital and direct marketing practitioners

Among those companies planning to add staff, Bernhart said digital and direct marketing openings will be across the board and at all levels. "Usually we see a couple of job categories stand out, but this time it's very broad-based with marketing, analytics, and sales topping the list, along with a strong showing among IT-related positions."

Bernhart Associates' Q1 hiring survey was emailed on January 5 and 12 to more than 11 000 senior executives, hiring managers, human resource officials, and other key participants in online and offline direct marketing. A total of 399 organisations responded to the widely followed employment-trends survey.

According to the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), in 2009, marketers - commercial and non-profit - spent US\$149.3 billion (about R1050 billion) on direct marketing, which accounted for 54.3% of all ad expenditures in the United States. Measured against total US sales, these advertising expenditures generated approximately US\$1.783 trillion (about R12.481 trillion) in incremental sales. DMA further reported that, in 2009, there were 1.4 million direct marketing employees in the US. Their collective sales efforts directly supported 8.4 million other jobs, accounting for a total of 9.9 million American jobs.

Past surveys

Results of past surveys can be found in the [DMA's](#) annual Statistical Fact Book and on Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC's website.

Companies interested in participating in the Bernhart Associates' Quarterly Digital and Direct Marketing Employment Report should send an email to survey@bernhart.com with "Opt-In" in the subject line, or they can sign up directly on the Bernhart Associates' website.

About Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC

[Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC](#), is owned by Jerry Bernhart, a leading and nationally recognised digital and direct marketing recruiter, writer, and speaker. Founded in 1991, Bernhart Associates today recruits for positions at all levels in multichannel direct marketing, CRM, e-commerce, database marketing business development, and marketing analytics. Respected as a leading authority on issues related to digital and direct marketing recruiting, Bernhart is a frequent speaker at national marketing conferences and is often quoted by the industry news media. He has written dozens of articles for the leading online and offline multichannel marketing publications.

The Bernhart Associates' *Quarterly Digital and Direct Marketing Employment Survey*, now in its 11th year, is claimed to have become the most widely followed employment report in digital and direct marketing and measures employers' hiring plans for the coming quarter. It is reputedly the only forward-looking employment survey of its kind in digital and direct marketing and is said to be unparalleled in size and scope.

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