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DIGITAL AND DIRECT MARKETING EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK SHOWS IMPROVEMENT FOR Q4, ACCORDING TO BERNHART SURVEY

October 14, 2009 — With the drumbeat of layoffs diminishing only faintly, the latest Bernhart Associates Quarterly Digital and Direct Marketing Employment Report shows digital and direct marketers are poised in the current fourth quarter (Q4) to add to payrolls for the third consecutive quarter.

"Clearly, it remains a difficult job market in the digital and direct marketing industry, but the overall trend is definitely moving in an encouraging, positive direction," said Jerry Bernhart, principal of Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC, a leading digital and direct marketing recruiter who has been issuing quarterly direct marketing employment reports since 2001.

With 352 companies responding to a survey that was in the field from September 28 through October 12, here are the key findings:

- 30 percent of the respondents said they will add to staff during the remainder of 2009, up from 20 percent in the Q3 survey (July through September 2009).
- The percentage of companies planning layoffs was unchanged at 8 percent.
- Companies reporting hiring freezes spiked to 45 percent, compared with 30 percent in Q3.
- B-to-B marketers are more upbeat about Q4 job prospects with more planned hires and fewer layoffs than their B-to-C counterparts.

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. "That may have been exacerbated this last quarter by the recession's severity."

Most of the new hiring, Bernhart pointed out, is expected to take place on the services side with 41 percent 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 percent, and client-side companies, at 18 percent, said they plan to make the fewest new hires. Among B-to-B direct marketers, 33 percent said they will hire during this final quarter, compared with 24 percent on the B-to-C side.

Despite the continuing surplus of job seekers, nearly 60 percent of companies responding to the survey said it was either "very difficult" or "somewhat difficult" to fill certain positions. Bernhart explained this apparent inconsistency with what he calls the "checkbox" syndrome. "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."

"Companies that made hiring mistakes in the past are now holding out until they feel highly confident that the candidate's personality and work style will complement the workplace," Bernhart continued. "To help measure that, many are putting candidates through a more extended interview process, including assessment tests. For example, I just had a candidate interview with eight different department heads within a single company. While that's a more extreme case, it gives you a sense for how important that aspect of the hiring process has become."

In addition, Bernhart observed, "Employers who laid-off workers are squeezing more work out of those who remain. This increased productivity is enabling companies to maintain or even boost output without having to add to headcount."

As for what specific positions will be in greatest demand by industry employers this holiday quarter, Bernhart said the list of job categories named was wide and varied—with analysts, sales, and account managers getting the most frequent mention.

Looking back on this year, Bernhart said the employment picture has brightened considerably since February 2009 when the numbers sank to record lows. "Economists are predicting that the overall US unemployment rate will continue to climb into 2010," said Bernhart. "However, our survey is showing that, for online and offline direct marketers, it's possible we've bottomed out."

Still, Bernhart added, given the severity of the economic downturn, any rebound in digital and direct marketing jobs likely will be subdued as we move into 2010.

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.

Bernhart noted that "Digital" has been added to the title of the quarterly survey to reflect the growth of digital media in the marketplace, as well as the increased number of Internet-based companies that have asked to participate.

According to the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), in 2009, direct marketing advertising expenditures as a portion of total US advertising expenditures will grow to over 54 percent, and they will generate 8.3 percent of US GDP.

Results of past surveys can be found in the Direct Marketing Association's (DMA) 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 e-mail 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

About Bernhart Associates

Bernhart Associates Executive Search, LLC is owned by Jerry Bernhart, a leading and nationally recognized digital and direct marketing recruiter, writer,

and speaker focusing on senior-level multichannel direct marketing, e-marketing/e-commerce, CRM, database marketing, business development, and quantitative analysis positions. The Bernhart Associates Employment Survey, now in its eighth year, is has become one of the most widely followed employment reports in digital and direct marketing. In February 2009, Bernhart Associates partnered with the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) in providing exclusive analysis for the DMA's 2009 Employment Outlook Report, a comprehensive study of trends in hiring and employee retention in direct marketing, available for sale at the DMA Bookstore.

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