




**Lessons of student marketing:
It's not just about digital**

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The job market for direct and digital marketers is recovering more quickly than the rest of the nation, according to statistics released on October 13 by executive placement firm [Bernhart Associates](#).

The survey, which tallied the responses of 359 companies from September 28 to October 12, found that 30% of respondents said they will add staff members during the remainder of 2009, up 10% from the third quarter. The percentage of companies planning layoffs remained the same quarter-to-quarter at 8%. Last year, the percentage of companies planning Q4 hires was 31%.

“We're all hearing about the economists talking about unemployment continuing to creep higher, but as far as direct marketing and digital are concerned, we may have bottomed out already,” said Jerry Bernhart, principal of Bernhart Associates. “We have actually been crawling back since the spring, so we're hopeful that we have seen the worst of this.”

Only 16% of companies said they were planning to hire staffers during this year's second quarter, less than half of the number (34%) who said they would do so during last year's fourth quarter. Those statistics are a substantial drop from the fourth quarters of 2007, 2006 and 2005, when 60%, 67%, and 80% of respondents said they would hire in the fourth quarter, respectively. National unemployment was at 9.8% last month.

More than four in 10 respondents (41%) on the services side said they expect to add employees in Q4, while 39% of agencies said the same. Eighteen percent of client-side companies said they would hire during the fourth quarter.

One-third (33%) of business-to-business direct marketers expect to hire this year and 24% of consumer-facing marketers do so.

And while the percentage of companies reporting hiring freezes jumped from 30% during the third quarter to 45% for Q4, Bernhart said that his daily experience tells him hiring will increase in next year's first quarter.

“I hear it from a lot of companies I talk to on a day-to-day basis. They're saying, ‘Let's touch base after the new year,’” he said. “These are companies that have decided that they're going to hold off for now.”

The firm released [research](#) last month showing that direct marketing professionals have a harder time finding

new jobs than members of the general public. The median length of unemployment for that survey's respondents was nearly twice that of the national average.

Bernhart also said the statistics have a “strong seasonal variation,” due to the holiday retail season.

“That's why the first quarter of 2010 is going to be a major survey and is going to set the tone for all of 2010,” he added.