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EMBARGOED UNTIL DECEMBER 13, 2011 AT 12:01 A.M. EDT

Manpower Employment Outlook Survey Reports Most Promising U.S. Hiring Outlook Since 2008

Employers Indicate Rise in First Quarter Job Prospects Amid Continued Labor Market Uncertainty

MILWAUKEE (Dec. 13, 2011) – U.S. employers expect hiring to increase slightly in the first quarter, according to the latest [Manpower Employment Outlook Survey](#) released today by ManpowerGroup. When seasonal variations are removed from the survey results, the Net Employment Outlook for Quarter 1 2012 is +9%, an increase from the +7% Outlook during Quarter 4 2011, and stable compared to one year ago when the Outlook was +8%. This represents the most promising hiring Outlook since 2008.

This quarter's survey reveals:

- **Nine Straight Quarters of Employment Growth:** According to seasonally adjusted data, U.S. employers have now conveyed a steady, but positive overall hiring Outlook for nine straight quarters, following three quarters of pessimistic employment plans in 2009. This is the first increase in quarter-over-quarter hiring intentions since Quarter 1 2011.
- **Historically High Level of Employers Unsure About Plans:** Seven percent of employers report they are unsure of their hiring intentions going into the new year. The rise from three to seven percent is the most significant quarterly increase since 1977 and represents the highest percentage of uncertain employers surveyed since 2005.

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- **Varying Regional Strength:** Employers in all four U.S. regions surveyed report a positive Net Employment Outlook, with those in the Midwest region reporting the strongest at +10%. Supported by an increase in the Manufacturing industry sectors, this represents the most favorable hiring Outlook for the Midwest since Quarter 3 2008. Employers in the West region continue to offer the weakest Outlook with +6%.
- **Pockets of Considerable Increases:** Employers in 45 states report positive hiring intentions for Quarter 1 2012, as was the case in Quarter 4 2011. The Outlook in Florida and South Dakota, which were among the weaker labor markets one quarter ago, improved significantly. Now the two states are among the brightest hiring forecasts.

“Slow, but steady momentum has improved employer confidence, which is likely why more employers are planning to hire in the first quarter,” said Jonas Prising, ManpowerGroup president of the Americas. “This uptick is encouraging, but the historically high proportion of employers that are unsure of their hiring plans indicates continued uncertainty about the future and ongoing caution when it comes to staffing plans.”

Of the more than 18,000 employers surveyed, 14 percent anticipate an increase in staff levels in their Quarter 1 2012 hiring plans, while nine percent expect a decrease in payrolls, resulting in a Net Employment Outlook of +5%. When seasonally adjusted, the Net Employment Outlook becomes +9%. Seventy percent of employers expect no change in their hiring plans. The final seven percent of employers indicate they are undecided about their hiring intentions.

“There’s no doubt that employers need more hiring flexibility, but at the same time, they continue to struggle to find talent with mission-critical skills,” said Prising. “On one hand you have CEOs starting and stopping hiring based on market trends, but on the other hand their hiring managers are struggling to find the talent with specific skills. These dynamics, the lack of demand for products and services and the ongoing skills mismatch, profoundly impact hiring decisions. With growing uncertainty, employers rely on contingent labor more and more as they move people in and out of their businesses as demand for their products and services fluctuates.”

Hiring Outlooks for Industry Sectors and Regions

For Quarter 1 2012, employers have a positive Outlook in 12 of the 13 industry sectors included in the survey: Mining (+16%), Leisure & Hospitality (+14%), Wholesale & Retail Trade (+9%), Professional & Business Services (+9%), Durable Goods Manufacturing (+8%), Information (+8%), Financial Activities (+8%), Nondurable Goods Manufacturing (+4%), Other Services (+4%), Education & Health Services (+3%), Transportation & Utilities (+2%) and Government (+1%). Employers in one industry sector have a slightly negative Outlook: Construction (-7%). When the industry sector data is compared quarter-over-quarter, employers in the Leisure & Hospitality sector anticipate a moderate hiring increase, while employers in the Government sector anticipate a slight hiring increase. Staff levels are expected to remain relatively stable among employers in eight industry sectors: Mining, Durable Goods Manufacturing, Transportation & Utilities, Information, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Education & Health Services and Other Services. The Construction and Nondurable Goods Manufacturing sectors anticipate a slight decrease in the hiring pace, while Wholesale & Retail Trade employers intend to moderately decrease hiring.

A positive Net Employment Outlook is reported in all four U.S. regions. Quarter-over-quarter, plans to add employees are slightly up among employers in the Northeast and remain essentially the same among employers in the Midwest, South and West. Compared to one year ago at this time, employers in all regions project a relatively stable hiring environment for Quarter 1 2012.

The next Manpower Employment Outlook Survey will be released on March 13 to report hiring expectations for the second quarter of 2012. To receive e-mail notification when the survey is available each quarter, visit <http://press.manpower.com/signup>.

*The **Net Employment Outlook**, often shortened to simply Outlook or NEO, is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in hiring activity and subtracting from this the percentage of employers expecting a decrease in hiring activity.

About the Survey

ManpowerGroup's quarterly Manpower Employment Outlook Survey measures employers' intentions to increase or decrease the number of employees in their workforce during the next quarter. It is the only forward-looking survey of its kind, unparalleled in size, scope, longevity and area of focus.

The Manpower Employment Outlook Survey is conducted using a validated methodology in accordance with the highest standards in market research. In the U.S., the survey is conducted by an independent, third-party research firm and includes a select sample of more than 18,000 U.S. employers. This sample represents the top 100 Metropolitan Statistical Areas based on business establishment count and all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The mix of industries within the survey follows the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Supersectors and is structured to be representative of the U.S. economy. With this number of interviews, the overall U.S. survey carries a margin of error of +/-0.61%, with a 90% confidence index.

The complete results from the U.S. national Manpower Employment Outlook Survey are available for download at press.manpower.com, where you will also find the survey results for the 100 MSAs, 50 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico.

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