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Manpower Survey Shows Hiring Activity to Remain Stable Into First Quarter

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MILWAUKEE, Wis., Nov. 18 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- The new year will bring a much brighter job forecast across the country than last year at this time, but the improvements in hiring intentions are moving at a marginal pace for the second straight quarter, according to the Employment Outlook Survey, conducted by Manpower Inc. since 1976.

"There continues to be a high level of uncertainty among employers, which is reflected in the survey results this quarter," said Jeffrey A. Joerres, Chairman and CEO of Manpower Inc. "Nonetheless, the survey data reveals hiring levels above those seen during the post-recessionary period of the early 1990s, and they are holding steady in the key sectors of Durable and Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing and Services, with a moderate improvement in the Wholesale/Retail Trades expected for first quarter," he added.

Of the nearly 16,000 employers interviewed, 20% said they expect to hire more people during the first quarter of 2003 compared with 24% in the fourth quarter of this year. Twelve percent intend to reduce their workforce compared with 9% in the previous quarter. A steady 62% of companies plan to maintain their current staff levels and 6% are uncertain. The first quarter is traditionally a slow hiring period and these results are consistent with that pattern, however, when the seasonal variations are removed from the data, employment prospects are expected to be slightly above the past two quarters.

Employers' expectations are much more optimistic than they were in the first quarter of 2002 when 16% expected to hire additional employees, 16% expected to reduce their staff levels, 61% anticipated no changes and 7% were uncertain.

Joerres noted, "across the country, the survey results are remarkably consistent, except in the West, where hiring intentions have improved significantly to catch up with the other regions, after lagging behind last quarter. The West is expected to benefit primarily from stronger hiring activity in the Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing sector."

Survey Results by Industry Sector

MINING: Eleven percent of employers in the Mining sector intend to hire more people in the first quarter of the year and 10% report that they will be reducing their workforces. When seasonal variations are removed, this is an improvement over the fourth quarter survey results, but slightly weaker than the sector reported in first quarter of 2002. Hiring will be strongest in the Midwest and weakest in the Northeast.

CONSTRUCTION: Sixteen percent of construction firms said they expect to hire at a quicker pace in the first quarter, and 19% plan to slow it down a bit when the calendar turns. On a deseasonalized basis, workers can expect job availability to remain stable through March of 2003 -- a modest improvement over the same quarter of last year. Construction firms in the Northeast are anticipating weaker staffing demands than the other regions.

DURABLE GOODS MANUFACTURING: Employers in this sector expect to maintain their current hiring patterns through the first quarter, with 21% intending to increase their payrolls and 13% planning to reduce their hiring activity. Across the country, Durable Goods Manufacturers intend to hire significantly more people than in first quarter of 2001 when cutbacks were the norm. The Midwest and South show a much bigger improvement over a year ago than the other two regions.

NON-DURABLE GOODS MANUFACTURING: Workers will find an increasing number of job opportunities at Non-Durable Goods Manufacturers across the country in first quarter, as 21% of employers plan to continue hiring more people and only 9% expect a decline in job postings. The employment outlook for this sector is stronger in all regions, with the West expecting to pick up the pace considerably through March.

TRANSPORTATION/PUBLIC UTILITIES: Sixteen percent of employers in this sector plan to hire more people in first quarter and 9% expect demand for workers to slacken. Job prospects will be best in the West and weakest in the Midwest.

WHOLESALE/RETAIL TRADES: The Wholesale/Retail Trades tend to reduce their hiring levels in the first quarter after the holiday shopping season has passed, but this new year brings an upswing in activity, on a deseasonalized basis, as employers will have an increasing number of job opportunities compared to the outlook from both a year ago and the current quarter. Twenty percent of employers will be adding more people to their payrolls and 17% say they will cut back. The Midwest is headed for the strongest job prospects while the West will lag the other regions for the second straight quarter.

FINANCE/INSURANCE/REAL ESTATE: Twenty-one percent of employers in the Finance/Insurance/Real Estate sector anticipate higher staffing levels in the early months of 2003 as only 8% report a gloomier job outlook. People seeking employment in this sector can expect about the same amount of opportunities as they are seeing now in the fourth quarter, which is a moderate improvement over the early months of last year. The picture is the same across the country, except in the Northeast where jobs will be more difficult to find.

EDUCATION -- PUBLIC/PRIVATE: The weak job market in Education will remain stable into the New Year, consistent with both the current quarter and the beginning of last year. While 14% of employers expect to hire additional personnel, 7% are anticipating weaker employment levels. The story is consistent across the country, except in the West, where there will be a precipitous drop in the number of jobs available compared to first quarter of last year.

SERVICES: The Services sector will continue hiring at a steady pace over the next several months, with 22% of employers adding personnel and 8% intending to pull back. These results are substantially stronger than the same time last year, with the South poised to make the biggest year-over-year

gains.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: The deep freeze in employment prospects will continue in the Public Administration sector through the first quarter, with all regions preparing for a decreased level of hiring activity, particularly in the Northeast where significant cutbacks are imminent. An anemic 12% of those surveyed plan to increase their payrolls beyond current levels and 10% expect their hiring activity to slow.

About the Employment Outlook Survey

Manpower Inc. conducts the Employment Outlook Survey in the United States on a quarterly basis. It is a measurement of employers' intentions to increase or decrease the permanent workforce, and during its 27-year history has been a significant indicator of employment trends. The survey is based on telephone interviews with nearly 16,000 public and private employers in 470 U.S. markets. For more information, visit Manpower's U.S. Web site at www.us.manpower.com. Manpower Inc. is a world leader in the staffing industry, providing workforce management services and solutions to customers through 3,900 offices in 61 countries.

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