

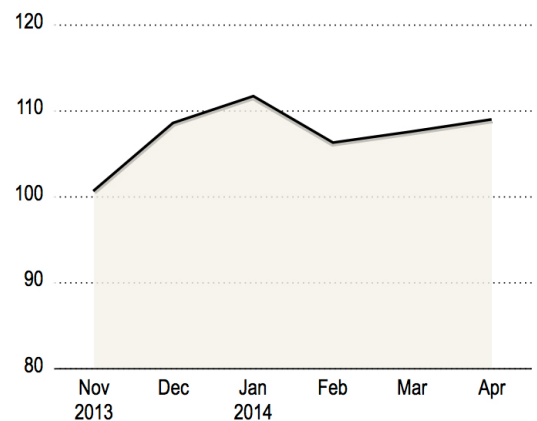
# Steady Gains in Confidence.

Small firms have steadily increased the level of their economic optimism, with the April survey recording the second highest level in the Confidence Index since the survey first began nearly two years ago. The WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index rose to 108.8 in the April 2014 survey, up from 107.4 in March and last April's 100.7. The April survey marks its eleventh consecutive year-to-year gain in confidence.

Small firms have maintained a confident outlook despite being challenged on multiple fronts that directly affect their revenues and profits. High levels of political and economic uncertainty as well as changes in regulations about health care, sick time, minimum wages, overtime policies, among other items, caused a diversion in time from their primary task of managing and expanding their firms. This diversion acted to diminish the benefits of what new small firms do best: create jobs. The April data indicates that small firms are now eager to expand their payrolls and to increase their investments in new equipment and structures to gain higher revenues. To be sure, firms anticipate modest economic gains in the year ahead and have expressed an abiding appreciation for not extending themselves too far ahead of actual economic developments.

*Analysis provided by Dr. Richard Curtin, University of Michigan*

**WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index**



Visit [vistageindex.com](http://vistageindex.com) to see the interactive tool and view results from previous months.

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
<b>1. Compared with a year ago, have overall economic conditions in the U.S. improved, remained the same, or worsened?</b>	Improved	358	49%
	Remained about the same	316	43%
	Worsened	52	7%
	Don't know/No opinion	2	0%
<b>2. During the next 12 months, do you expect the overall economic conditions in the U.S. will be better, about the same, or worse than now?</b>	Better	279	38%
	About the same	365	50%
	Worse	77	11%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	1%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
<b>3. Are your firm's total fixed investment expenditures likely to increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?</b>	Increase	322	44%
	Remain the same	331	45%
	Decrease	68	9%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	1%

<b>4. Do you anticipate that your firm's sales revenues will increase, remain about the same, or decrease for the next 12 months?</b>	Increase	542	74%
	Remain the same	148	20%
	Decrease	36	5%
	Don't know/No opinion	2	0%

<b>5. Do you expect your firm's profitability to improve, remain about the same, or worsen during the next 12 months?</b>	Improve	437	60%
	Remain the same	214	29%
	Worsen	76	10%
	Don't know/No opinion	1	0%

<b>6. Do you expect your firm's total number of employees will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?</b>	Increase	445	61%
	Remain the same	247	34%
	Decrease	36	5%

<b>7. Are you planning to hire additional workers over the next six months?</b>	Yes, I plan to add one or more full-time employees	400	55%
	Yes, I plan to add one or more part-time employees	37	5%
	Yes, I plan to add both full- and part-time employees	66	9%
	No, I don't plan to hire additional employees	216	30%
	Skipped	6	1%
	Other	3	0%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
<b>8. What is your biggest challenge in hiring?</b>	Finding qualified workers	333	46%
	Competing with larger companies for talent	44	6%
	Making sure employees stay long enough for in-house training to pay off	28	4%
	Finding employees who fit the company culture	177	24%
	Deciding whether to hire in anticipation of new demand or to respond to growing demand	122	17%
	Skipped	7	1%
	Other	17	2%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
<b>9. Roughly how much do you expect to pay Facebook this year, for Facebook advertising and/or to increase the number of Facebook "likes" on your business page?</b>	More than \$50,000	1	0%
	\$40,000 to \$49,999	1	0%
	\$20,000 to \$29,999	2	0%
	\$10,000 to \$19,999	7	1%
	\$5,000 to \$9,999	9	1%
	\$1 to \$4,999	99	14%
	None	601	83%
	Skipped	2	0%
	Other	6	1%

<b>10. If your business has paid for Facebook ads, has it seen a quantifiable increase in sales, revenue or brand awareness as a result?</b>	Yes	23	3%
	No	66	9%
	Unsure	42	6%
	Not applicable. We have not paid Facebook for ads or "likes."	572	79%
	Skipped	22	3%
	Other	3	0%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
<b>11. Large corporations such as Whole Foods, Starbucks, Amazon, Wal-Mart and PayPal have offered loans and operational assistance to small businesses. Has your business ever received any financial assistance from a major corporation that is not primarily a bank or lending institution?</b>	Yes, my business received a loan or line of credit from a corporation before the recession	5	1%
	Yes, my business received a loan or line of credit from a corporation after the recession	4	1%
	No, my business has never received financial help from a corporation outside of a bank or lending institution	706	97%
	Skipped	5	1%
	Other	8	1%

<b>12. In January, the FCC approved trials that will allow telecommunications companies to cut landline phone service in certain test markets and replace the service with internet based phone calling systems. How would your business be affected if landline phone service was replaced by internet phone service?</b>	It would have a negative impact on our business	59	8%
	It would have some impact but we would find ways to adjust	164	23%
	It would have no impact on our business	262	36%
	We have already shifted from landline to mobile or internet phone service	215	30%
	Skipped	3	0%
	Other	25	3%

# WSJ | VISTAGE

## SMALL BUSINESS CEO SURVEY

A monthly survey measuring the sentiment of U.S. small business CEOs and owners about the economy.

Visit [vistageindex.com](http://vistageindex.com) to view an interactive tool with full results from previous months.