

Small business exhibits persistent optimism.

MARCH 2015

The WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index was 114.5 in the March 2015 survey, just below the 115.5 in January and February.

115.5%

Feb 2015

114.5%

Mar 2015

Up 7 points

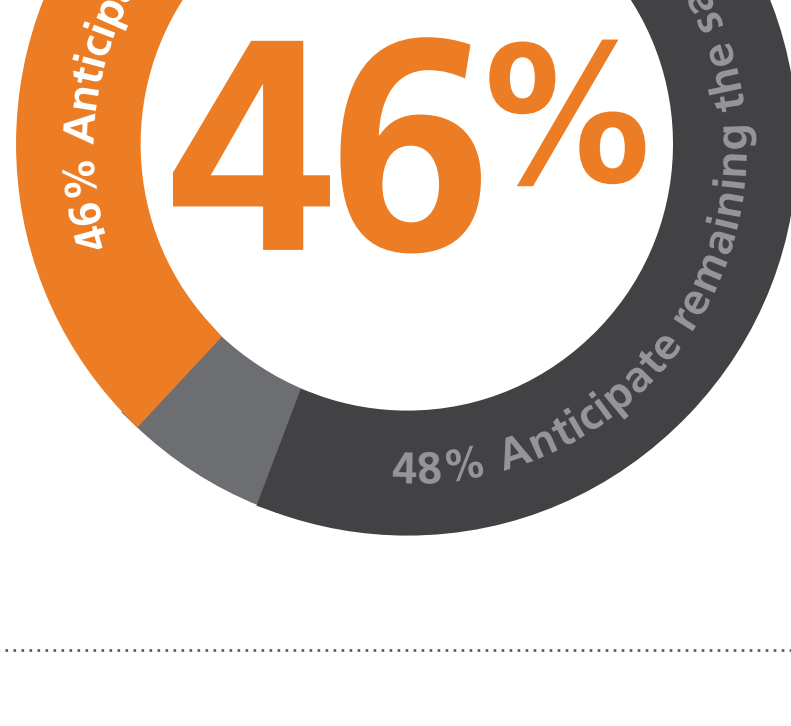
Year over year

Economy

62% of CEOs reported that overall economic conditions in the U.S. have improved in the past year.

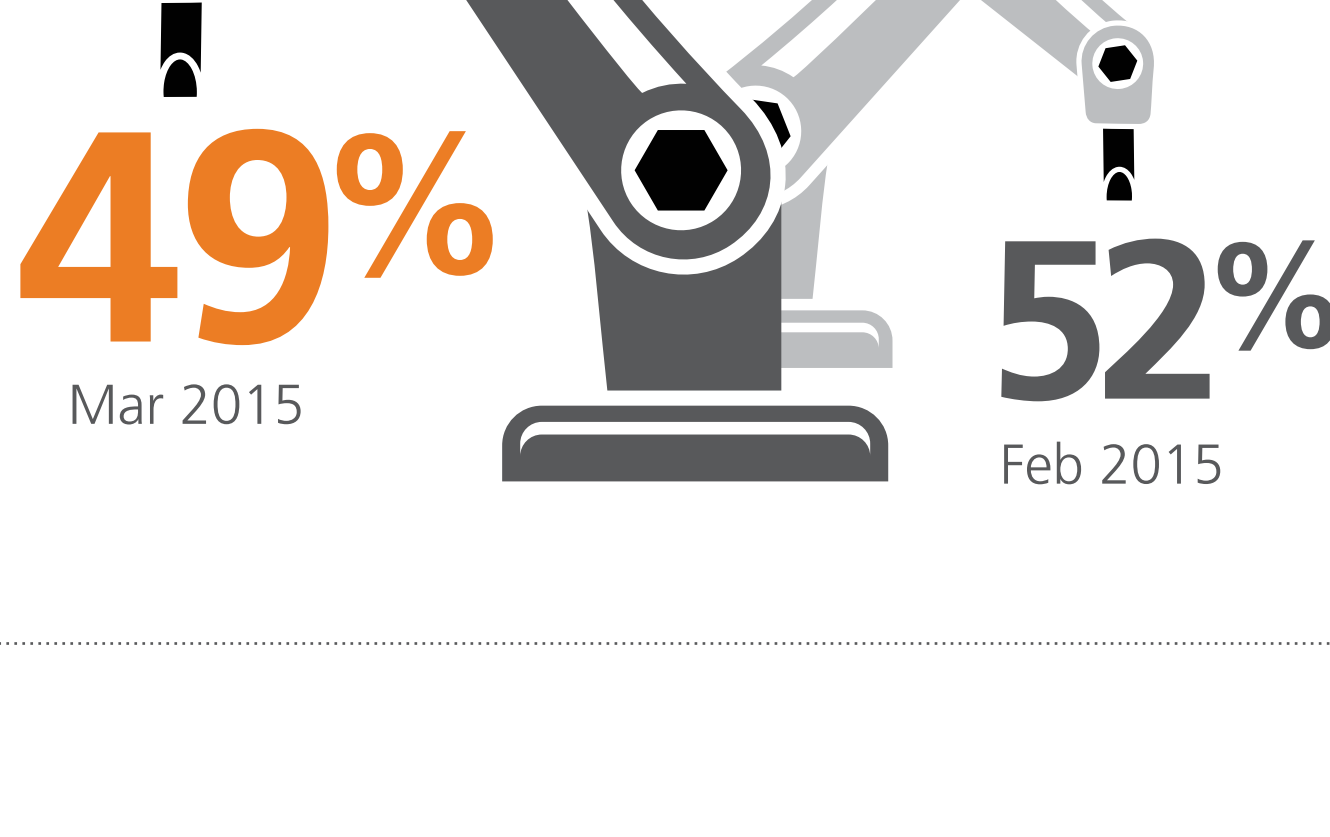


46% of CEOs anticipate economic conditions will improve in the next 12 months, compared to 48% who anticipate it will remain the same.



Investments

49% of CEOs plan on increasing the size of their investments in plant and equipment during the year ahead, just below last month's peak of 52%.



Lending

31% of CEOs applied for a small business loan or line of credit in the last six months.

85%

were approved

5%

were denied

53% applied for a loan **under \$500,000.**

47% applied for a loan **over \$500,000.**

25% applied for a loan **over \$1,000,000.**

Finance



90% of small firms had a small finance team, numbering five people or less. 17% use an outside contractor rather than in-house staff.

HIRING



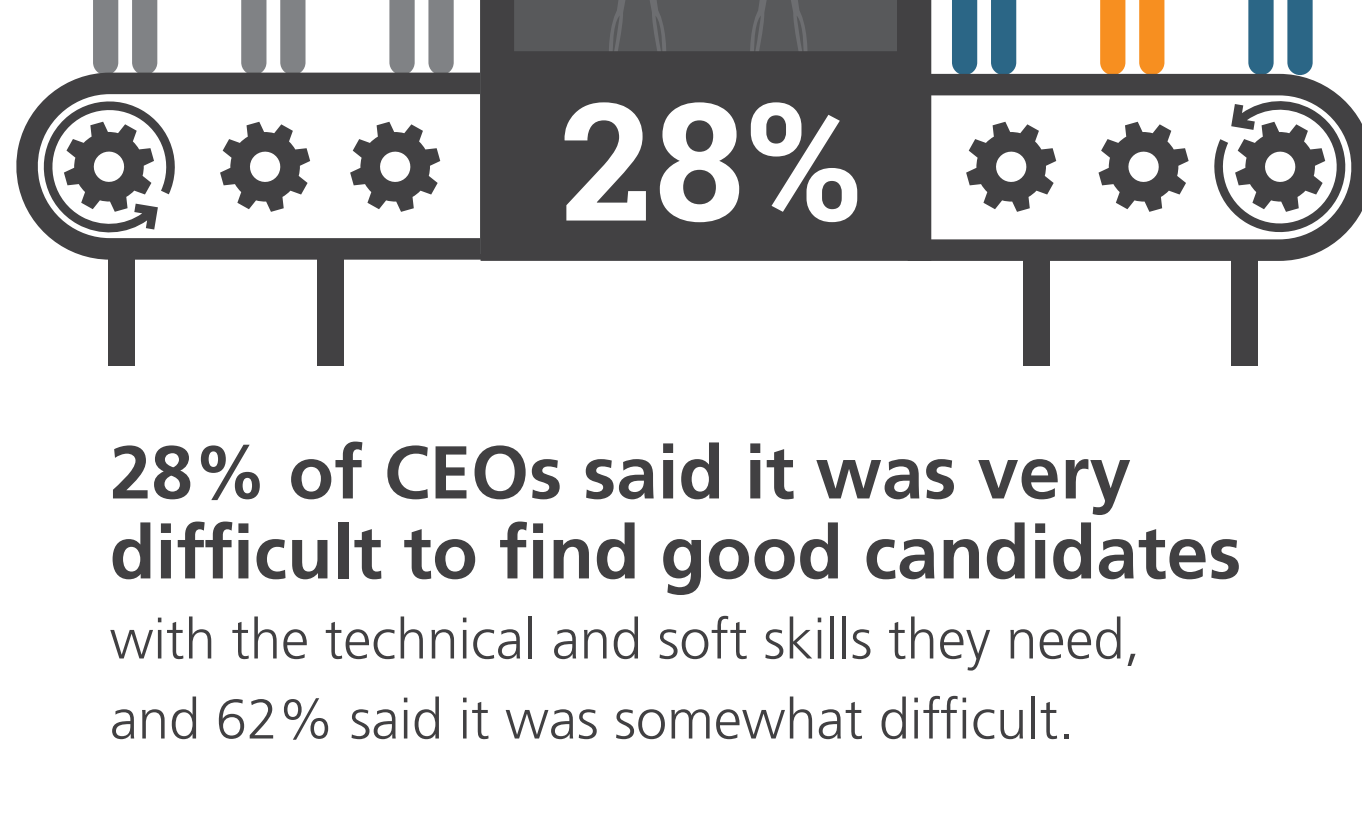
63% of all small firms reported that they intended to expand their total workforce during the year ahead.

When asked about the relative importance of technical skills that require specialized training compared with soft skills (reliability, communication, teamwork, motivation), CEOs responded:

55% Technical and soft skills are equally important

36% Soft skills are more important

6% Technical skills are more important



28% of CEOs said it was very difficult to find good candidates with the technical and soft skills they need, and 62% said it was somewhat difficult.

The top skills that job candidates are missing:

24% Motivation to excel

21% Problem-solving

18% Communication

14% Taking on responsibility

11% Team worker

7% Reliability and punctuality

[VIEW COMPLETE RESULTS](#) ►