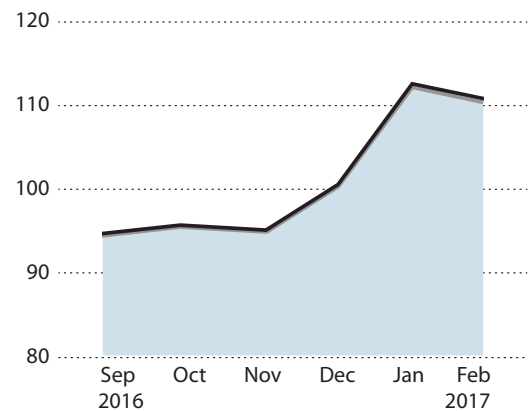


CEOs remain optimistic

After the rapid gains in economic confidence following President Trump’s victory, small firms have suspended any further gains until the actual details contained in legislation and new economic regulations are known. Importantly, the small recent variations in confidence indicate no change in the positive views about future economic conditions faced by small firms. The WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index was 111.9 in the February 2017 survey, just below the 113.5 in January, and the 112.0 in December, but well above last February’s 94.3. Indeed, the February 2017 survey recorded the largest year-to-year gain in the Confidence Index since November 2013. Overall, the current level of confidence among small firms is about as good as it has been since the survey began in 2012. The small February decline was mainly due to less favorable outlook for the economy, and consequently, a slight decline in the growth rate of their firm’s revenues and profits.

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

WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index



Visit vistageindex.com to see the interactive tool and view results from previous months.

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
1. Compared with a year ago, have overall economic conditions in the U.S. improved, remained the same, or worsened?	Improved	363	47%
	About the same	382	45%
	Worsened	21	7%
	Don't know/No opinion	6	1%
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?	Better	462	54%
	About the same	218	31%
	Worse	67	12%
	Don't know/No opinion	25	3%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
3. Are your firm's total fixed investment expenditures likely to increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?	Increase	362	48%
	About the same	332	44%
	Decrease	63	7%
	Don't know/No opinion	15	1%
4. Do you anticipate that your firm's sales revenues will increase, remain about the same, or decrease for the next 12 months?	Increase	598	77%
	About the same	135	17%
	Decrease	32	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	1%
5. Do you expect your firm's profitability to improve, remain about the same, or worsen during the next 12 months?	Improve	484	62%
	About the same	214	27%
	Worsen	67	10%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	1%
6. Do you expect your firm's total number of employees will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?	Increase	473	62%
	About the same	253	32%
	Decrease	39	4%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	1%
7. What is your exit/succession strategy?	Pass the business down to my family	91	12%
	Sell the business to an outside buyer	231	31%
	Sell the business to an internal buyer such as my partners or employees	149	20%
	Employee stock ownership plan	35	5%
	Close the business down	3	0%
	Unsure at this time	182	25%
	Other	49	7%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
8. When do you intend to exit from your company?	Within the next 12 months	23	3%
	Within the next 2-4 years	151	20%
	Within the next 5-10 years	291	39%
	More than 10 years from now	224	30%
	Unsure	44	6%
	Other, please explain	10	1%
	9. When you reach your exit or succession event, how do you want your transition to occur?	I intend and expect to leave the company immediately after exit to pursue other interests.	83
I intend and expect to remain with the company for a defined transition period such as 6-18 months and then leave to pursue other interests.		287	39%
I wish to remain with the company for the longer term but in a limited role of my choosing.		267	36%
Unsure at this time.		100	14%
10. Have you created a written plan outlining your business succession desires?	Yes	191	26%
	No	546	74%
11. Does your leadership team have the information they need to run the company without you?	Yes	495	67%
	No	239	33%
12. During your company's last fiscal year, what was its total employment?	1-9 employees	42	6%
	10-19 employees	124	17%
	20-49 employees	298	40%
	50-99 employees	172	23%
	100-499 employees	101	14%
	500-999 employees	5	1%
	1000-4999 employees	1	0%

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 to view an interactive tool with full results from previous months.