

WilliamCharles

Executive Search

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Sentiment Mixed but Management-Level Jobs Expected to Grow This Year— Sales, Marketing and IT Positions Lead the Pack

Results Are In: 4th Annual West Michigan Executive Hiring Outlook Survey

GRAND RAPIDS, MI., January 9, 2007—Sixty percent of major West Michigan companies are optimistic about the local economy, with 61 percent planning to hire *management level* talent this year—up 18 percent from 2006, according to the 326 companies surveyed in the *4th Annual West Michigan Executive Hiring Outlook Survey* released today by WilliamCharles Executive Search, a professional recruiting and executive search firm based in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

“While West Michigan sentiment about the growth of the local economy appears to be gaining momentum, it is still far below where it was back in 2003 and 2004 when we conducted our first two Executive Hiring surveys,” said Chuck Smeester, principal and co-founder of WilliamCharles Executive Search. “The good news is that 60 percent of the respondents are upbeat about the economy in general, and feel that overall hiring will improve in West Michigan this year. Almost 50 percent of the companies that responded see increased hiring needs within their organization in 2007. Given the normal tone of stories we see about hiring, this tells us that there are still many companies out there that will be looking to hire.”

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The survey tested for economic sentiment, hiring plans, the use of search firms to find management level talent, expected growth rates, and job search trends among West Michigan presidents, CEOs, and human resource executives representing a wide variety of industries. Annual revenue categories ranged from less than \$25M to over \$500M with the bulk of companies in the \$100M to \$500M range.

Summary of Significant Findings:

- Management level hiring is expected to be on the rise: Sixty-one percent of respondents said they plan to hire management level talent in 2007, up from 43% in 2006 and 36% in 2005.
- While the majority of companies (58%) still feel there is *no shortage* of qualified, *local* talent, that number is down from 70% last year.
- Nearly two thirds of companies seeking to fill primarily management/senior management and vice president/executive level positions will seek the expertise of executive search firms this year. This is an increase of about 25% from last year, potentially indicating that in some sectors it is becoming more challenging to find talent.
- Forty nine percent of companies foresee an increase in hiring within their own organization in 2007, which is down somewhat from last year when 64% projected hiring increases.
- Looking at growth trends, 43.2% of respondents expect annual growth rates to exceed 10% in 2007 with the remainder of respondents expecting growth to be at least in the 0–10% range.
- Sales, marketing and IT positions lead the pack over the next one-to-two years. Other hiring initiatives mentioned included finance, operations, engineering and human resources.

WilliamCharles Executive Search is a Grand Rapids-based executive search company with two additional offices in New York. For more information about WilliamCharles Executive Search, visit www.william-charles.com

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-COMPANY BACKGROUND-

About WilliamCharles Executive Search:

Founded in 2001, **WilliamCharles Executive Search** is a West Michigan-based executive search firm that specializes in providing trusted assistance to many of the area's top business decision-makers by delivering the right people and the right organizational impact. The firm provides both retained and contingency services, depending on the needs of its clients.

WilliamCharles Executive Search recruits for executive-level positions such as President and Chief Executive Officer, in addition to placing senior and mid-level professionals in specialty disciplines including human resources, legal, operations, and sales/marketing. Visit www.william-charles.com for additional information.

Subsidiary, **Financial Edge Executive Resources** provides specialized expertise for the financial industry, delivering financial-related talent recruitment and project solutions. With offices in Michigan and New York, Financial Edge's senior-level recruitment team has extensive financial recruiting experience and financial industry knowledge. Visit www.fin-edge.com for additional information.

About Co-Founder and Principal, Chuck Smeester:

Chuck Smeester, co-founder and principal of WilliamCharles Executive Search, is a financial service industry executive with more than 16 years of operations, human resources, and general leadership experience. Prior to entering the executive search profession, Chuck spent 12 years at a \$20 billion banking and financial services firm in Michigan, where he served as senior vice president and manager of corporate operations, and vice president and director of human resources.

Chuck has several years' experience recruiting managerial and senior level executives. Having sat on the executive side of the desk for many years, Chuck combines extensive industry knowledge and contacts with a natural ability to recruit the best candidate to every assignment. Chuck understands the value of his client's time, and has implemented a rigorous internal screening and interviewing process prior to presenting clients with any candidate.

Chuck received a master's degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from the University of Wisconsin, and bachelor's degrees in Business Administration and Psychology from St. Norbert College in Wisconsin.

Chuck is active in his community, and serves on the board of Michigan Works! Kent and Allegan Counties which is the Kent/Allegan Workforce Development Board; where he chairs the Adult Education Committee. For more about WilliamCharles, visit www.william-charles.com.