

Survey

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spend money on improvements and new hires after years of cutting costs, said John Hover, president and chief executive. "I would expect our employment to grow, and we are going through a stringent process right now to evaluate that."

During the economic downturn, Buck & Pulleyn — a Pittsford marketing and communications agency — didn't necessarily lose clients. "Most of them did cut their budgets," said Chris Pulleyn, chairwoman and chief executive. "But business is slowly creeping back to life, which is wonderful." This year, Buck & Pulleyn's income jumped 6 percent, and three more workers were hired. The agency expects at least the same for 2004.

But experts cautioned against using the survey as an economic barometer for the future. The smaller companies were weighed just as heavily as the larger employers, possibly skewing the results, said Kent Gardner, director of economic analysis and public policy for the Center for Governmental Research. Plus, this is the alliance's first outlook survey, so its predictability can't be measured against past survey results.

Some companies also said more business doesn't necessarily mean more hiring.

Paul Foti, a vice president with Mark IV Construction, said his company might choose to tap temporary contractors and new technology that will enable the same number of employees to handle more work.

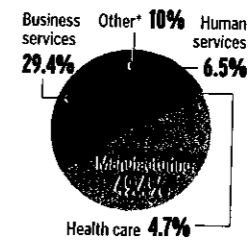
The Health Economics Group Inc. in Rochester is thinking along the same lines, said President Stephen Hooper. Business might be on an upswing, but the third-party administrator hopes to invest more in its computer system to "handle more business with the same staff," he said.

Perinton-based Parlec Inc., a machining company, however, expects to add more employees this fall, said Michael Nuccitelli, president and chief executive. Business is growing, Nuccitelli said, as Parlec recently bought a British firm. Nuccitelli said com-

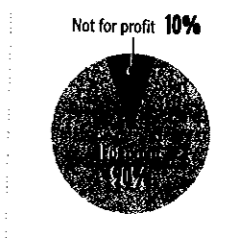
Rochester Business Alliance survey results

Most of the 170 local businesses polled expect better economic conditions in 2004.

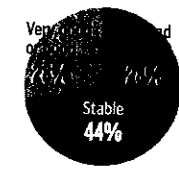
Types of organizations



Organization status

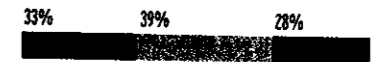


What is your perception of business conditions in your industry at this time?



Key for the following questions ■ Increased ■ Same ■ Decreased

How has the number of individuals employed by your company changed during the last year?

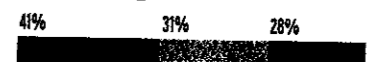


How do you anticipate the number of employees will change next year?



Key for the following questions ■ Better ■ No change ■ Worse

How does the current level of sales of your company compare with the level of one year ago?



How do you think sales will be one year from now?



* Other includes retail, education and financial companies.

SOURCE: Rochester Business Alliance

TRICIA POWERS staff ar



John Hover
Manufacturing company CEO is evaluating plans to add to company's work force.



Chris Pulleyn
Marketing executive says clients are beginning to expand their advertising budgets again.

"But this survey isn't an exact science. It's just presenting a general tone that is indeed positive."

THOMAS T. MOONEY

Chief executive, Rochester Business Alliance

panies that survived the economic downturn "learned what it takes to compete on a global level. We're learning how to deal with the new global economy."

Carl Sassano, president and chief executive of Transcat Inc., a Rochester distributor of measuring equipment and calibration services, also responded to the survey. He is seeing positive signs, but is not ready to say the economy is improving.

"My sense is there are a few more people out there now looking to close a purchase, whereas

two or three months ago, they were only out bargain-hunting or saying we're not quite ready to buy yet," Sassano said.

Still, the survey results are heartening, he said.

"Nobody wants to be at the front of the parade saying the recovery is here," he said. "But in the consensus (in the poll) is that strong, it makes you feel a lot better about things." □

JDAVIA@DemocratandChronicle.com

Includes reporting by staff writer David Tyler.