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Manpower Employment Outlook Survey Paints Familiar Picture for U.S. Hiring Plans in Quarter 1 2008

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MILWAUKEE, Dec 11, 2007 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Employers in the U.S. plan to maintain a steady approach toward hiring during the first quarter of 2008, according to the seasonally adjusted results of the latest Manpower Employment Outlook Survey conducted quarterly by Manpower Inc.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20060221/CGTU012LOGO>)

"Our survey data suggests it will be a solid start to the year when it comes to hiring in the United States," said Jeffrey A. Joerres, Chairman & CEO of Manpower Inc. "Overall, employers anticipate only marginal changes compared to three months ago, with the brightest job prospects reported by employers in the Mining and Services sectors. On the other hand, finding job opportunities in the Construction and Education sectors is expected to be more challenging for job seekers."

Of the 14,000 U.S. employers surveyed, 22% expect to add to their payrolls during the first quarter of 2008, while 12% expect to reduce staff levels. Sixty percent expect no change in the hiring pace, and 6% are undecided about their January - March hiring plans.

The seasonally adjusted survey results show that hiring activity is expected to maintain or increase in half of the industry sectors compared to the fourth quarter of 2007. Hiring expectations are stable in the Durable Goods Manufacturing, Wholesale/Retail Trade and Finance/Insurance/Real Estate sectors, while Mining and Transportation/Public Utilities employers expect a slight uptick. Employers in the Construction, Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing, Education, Services and Public Administration sectors report a decline in hiring confidence.

"Looking at the industry sectors, hiring plans are relatively stable from three months ago and just slightly softer compared to last year at this time," said Jonas Prising, President of Manpower North America. "You might say that employers are getting one less latte a week -- but they are still going to the coffee shop regularly."

At the regional level, there are minimal changes in hiring expectations compared to the fourth quarter of 2007. Employers in the Northeast, South and West project similar employment activity levels, while those in the Midwest anticipate slightly weaker hiring conditions during the next three months. Among survey participants, those in the West are the most confident about hiring, and those in Northeast are least optimistic.

In addition to the United States, the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey is conducted in 26 other countries and territories. The quarterly report from Manpower Inc. is the most extensive, forward-looking employment survey in the world, gathering data from nearly 52,000 employers across the globe each quarter. All reports are based on seasonally adjusted data, where available.

Optimism in the global labor market is varied, with employers in 16 of 27 countries and territories indicating softer hiring plans compared to one year ago, but improved job prospects quarter-over-quarter in 12 countries and territories. German and Indian employers anticipate a continued positive hiring pace, although slightly slower than three months ago.

The strongest first quarter hiring prospects reported globally were in Peru, Singapore, India, Argentina, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, South Africa, Australia, Japan and Norway. Meanwhile, Irish employers reported the weakest hiring plans globally.

Of the countries surveyed in Europe, employers in Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Sweden and the UK are forecasting the brightest first quarter hiring plans. Conversely, employers in Ireland are forecasting the weakest hiring pace in four years.

With the exceptions of Argentina and Canada, hiring activity is expected to slow slightly in the first quarter among the countries surveyed in the Americas. Employers in Peru, Argentina and Costa Rica are most optimistic about hiring in the next three months. Mexican employers continue to report a healthy outlook, similar to that of the first quarter 2007, while the pace of hiring in the U.S. is expected to be slightly weaker compared to one year ago. Interestingly, Canadian employers anticipate the strongest first quarter hiring activity in seven years.

Although hiring activity in the eight countries and territories surveyed across the Asia Pacific region is expected to be positive, employers in Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan indicate they will slow the pace of hiring compared to last year at this time. However, Net Employment Outlooks improved from three months ago in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan. The strongest hiring plans were reported in Singapore and India, while employers in Taiwan and China reported the weakest hiring expectations in the region.

The next Manpower Employment Outlook Survey will be released on March 11, 2008, to report hiring expectations for the second quarter of 2008.

About the Survey

Employment services company Manpower Inc. releases the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey quarterly to measure employers' intentions to increase or decrease the number of employees in their workforce during the next quarter. It is the only forward-looking survey of its kind, unparalleled in size, scope, longevity and area of focus. The survey has been administered for more than 40 years and is one of the most trusted surveys of employment activity in the world. A highly respected economic indicator, the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey reports on findings from 27 countries and territories around the world. The U.S. results are based on interviews with more than 14,000 public and private employers in 460 market areas across the country.

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