



HP OFFICEJET PRO

BROUGHT TO YOU BY HP



Jacquelyn Smith, Forbes Staff

If it has to do with leadership, jobs or careers, I'm on it.

LEADERSHIP | 3/13/2012 @ 6:33AM | 45,267 views

The Best And Worst Cities For Jobs This Spring

The country added 227,000 new jobs in February, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the third consecutive month of gains of more than 200,000. That's a good sign that the labor market is strengthening and the economy is finally on the mend, even if unemployment remains at 8.3%.



[Click for full photo gallery: The Best And Worst Cities For Jobs This Spring](#)

A survey just released by [ManpowerGroup](#), an employment services firm, supports such optimism. It reveals that employers in all 50 states intend to increase their payrolls during three-month period ending in June. It also tells us exactly where they intend to increase them the most, and where their hopes lag behind.

Manpower surveyed more than 18,000 employers in 100 metropolitan areas to find out who's hiring, who's firing and who plans to maintain their current staff levels in the second quarter of 2012. Of the surveyed employers, 18% anticipate an increase in staffing levels in their second quarter hiring plans, while 6% expect a decrease in payrolls. The difference between those numbers gives you what ManpowerGroup calls a net employment outlook of 12%—or 10% when seasonally adjusted, which is still up from 8% for the same period last year. Seventy-two percent of employers expect no change in their staffing, and the final 4% of employers are uncertain.

“These are the most positive hiring intentions we’ve seen since 2008,” says Jonas Prising, president of the Americas at ManpowerGroup. “It’s encouraging seeing broad-based improvement across all industries, and stability and moderate improvement across all geographic areas, compared with last year and last quarter. To see both sequential and year-over-year growth is really great news, because it indicates we’re experiencing continued gradual improvement of the labor market from the lows of the recession.”

Melanie Holmes, a vice president with ManpowerGroup, adds, “The survey results are in line with expectations. We’ve seen slow and steady improvements in ManpowerGroup’s survey results and in other labor market indicators over the last three years. The employment situation is improving, albeit very slowly. Until we see significant changes in demand for goods and services, I think we’ll continue to see a slow and steady upward trajectory.”

In Pictures: The Best And Worst Cities For Jobs This Spring

The survey reveals that the metropolitan areas with the most optimistic forecast of all for hiring this spring are Greenville-Mauldin-Easley, S.C., and Knoxville, Tenn. Both regions enjoy a 24% net employment outlook, the percentage of employers that expect to add employees (26% and 25%, respectively) minus the percentage that expect to reduce their workforce (a mere 2% and 1%, respectively). Another 67% in Greenville-Mauldin-Easley said they anticipate no change, and 5% didn’t know. In Knoxville, 73% expect to maintain staff levels, while 1% of employers are uncertain about their hiring plans.

“Our area is strongly rooted in manufacturing, and we see an uptick in jobs coming from this sector,” says Ben Haskew, president and chief executive of the [Greenville Chamber of Commerce](#). “Within the past two weeks, many of our manufacturers participated in a job fair to attract new hires. We are especially strong in automotive and aviation.”

Greenville, the principal city of the Greenville-Mauldin-Easley metro area, once relied heavily on textile manufacturing. In fact, it was long known as the “Textile Capital of the World.” Today the city is better known for engineering and is home to more international manufacturing investment per capita than any other community in the U.S.

Some of the largest employers in Greenville-Mauldin-Easley include BMW, Michelin, GE, Fluor and Lockheed Martin—all of which have facilities or headquarters in the area.

“As a community, we are also fostering entrepreneurial growth by assisting start-ups with the resources they need to be successful,” Haskew says. “High-impact technology companies are being grown and attracted here as our talent pool in this area expands.”

In Knoxville, the health care industry, automotive suppliers, renewable energy services, and food manufacturing are doing particularly well right now, says Rhonda Rice, executive vice president of the [Knoxville Chamber of Commerce](#). Some of the biggest employers in the area are [Scripps Networks](#), Covenant [Health](#), [Energy Solutions](#), Exedy America, Pilot Flying J, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

“Through our existing industry visits we have seen companies beginning to hire again,” Rice says. “As the economy has picked up, even if only slightly, Knoxville companies are feeling more confident and are proceeding with expansion plans that have been on hold for the last couple of years.”

Employers in [Syracuse](#) and [Oklahoma City](#) also anticipate a significant upswing in hiring for the next quarter.

Nearly a third (23%) of Syracuse, N.Y. employers reported positive forecasts, while 2% drew a bleaker picture. Seventy-one percent said they wouldn’t be

changing their employment levels and the remaining 4% were unsure of their hiring plans. With a net employment outlook of 21%, Syracuse is the third best place for finding a job this spring.

Oklahoma City employers are expressing similar sentiments. Twenty-four percent of the southwestern metro area's hiring managers anticipate a bright second quarter. Meanwhile, 4% expect to decrease their payrolls, 67% anticipate no change and 5% are uncertain. This yields a net employment outlook of 20% and positions Oklahoma City as the fourth best place for finding a job this summer. Tulsa, Okla. enjoys the same rank.

"We're still far away from where we were before the recession, but it is good news to see that employers are planning to continue to hire next quarter, even if they are cautiously optimistic and hiring moderately," Prising says. "Once employers start to see signs of robust recovery—when they see an increase in demand for their products and services—we will start to see them hiring in heaps. For now, we're experiencing a slow and steady recovery, as there is still a great deal of uncertainty."

In Pictures: The Best And Worst Cities For Jobs This Spring

This article is available online at:
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/03/13/the-best-and-worst-cities-for-jobs-this-spring-2/>