

SEPTEMBER, 2014

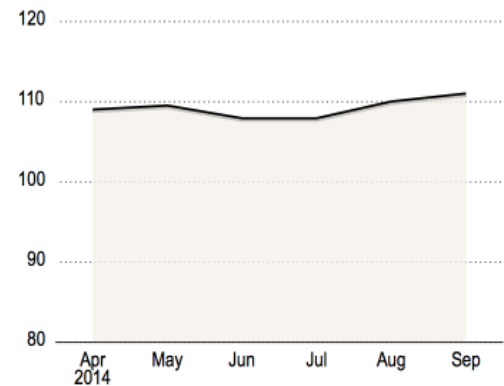
Confidence Rises as Summer Season Ends

Optimism among small firms in the September survey rose to its second highest level since the survey first began in June of 2012. The WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index was 110.8 in the September 2014 survey, up from 109.8 in August and posting a 5.2% gain from last year's 105.3. The steady improving level of confidence in recent months is certainly good news, but the more important finding is that since the start of the year small firms never lost sight of the underlying strength in the economy. Although this past winter's deep freeze put a temporary damper on growth, the underlying source of strength has been a reduction in uncertainty that was caused by federal regulations and policy actions as well as a federal government that suffered from repeated bouts of dysfunction. While the economy is no longer hobbled by home-grown uncertainty, rising geopolitical uncertainties may threaten future growth in the domestic economy.

Overall, small business owners hold modest expectations for continued growth in the national economy. Few anticipate a surge in the pace of economic growth, and few expect the economy to lapse into another downturn. While few small firms expect smoother sailing in the continued expansion, they no longer dread the unexpected cross-currents in regulations and policies that could sink their small boats. Small firms have learned how to cope in the changed landscape of the U.S. economy.

—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 United States improved, remained the same, or worsened?	Improved	412	51%
	Remained about the same	341	42%
	Worsened	45	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	1%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
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	305	38%
	About the same	425	53%
	Worse	68	8%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	1%
3. Are your firm's total fixed investment expenditures likely to increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?	Increase	382	47%
	Remain the same	348	43%
	Decrease	68	8%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	1%
4. Do you anticipate that your firm's sales revenues will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?	Increase	619	77%
	Remain the same	155	19%
	Decrease	29	4%
	Don't know/No opinion	2	0%
5. Do you expect your firm's profitability to improve, remain about the same, or worsen during the next 12 months?	Improve	483	60%
	About the same	257	32%
	Worsen	65	8%
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	474	59%
	Remain the same	306	38%
	Decrease	24	3%
	Don't know/No opinion	1	0%
7. A recent report from the Federal Reserve indicated that tight ship capacity was driving up prices for smaller importers. Is your firm being impacted by higher shipping costs?	Yes	141	18%
	No	538	67%
	I don't know	115	14%
	Skipped	4	0%
	Other	7	1%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
8. During your company's last fiscal year, what was its total employment?	1-9 employees	71	9%
	10-19 employees	159	20%
	20-49 employees	302	38%
	50-99 employees	187	23%
	100-499 employees	85	11%
	500-999 employees	1	0%

To view an interactive tool with complete results, visit vistageindex.com.



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.

The best companies don't look out their side windows, focusing on the competition.

They look out the front window, focused on where they are going.

Which window do you look out for your company? Who keeps you looking forward and challenges your answers? What's the biggest obstacle your company faces? With your Vistage "board of advisors," you can find the solution. Vistage Members get unbiased decision-making support from a team of trusted peers along with professional coaching/mentoring face-to-face every month.

Membership in Vistage is by invitation. We are currently seeking high-caliber local CEOs and presidents for a few openings in our Treasure Coast group.

Tim Kinane

Treasure Coast Vistage Chairman

772-485-1380

Timk@kinane.com



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