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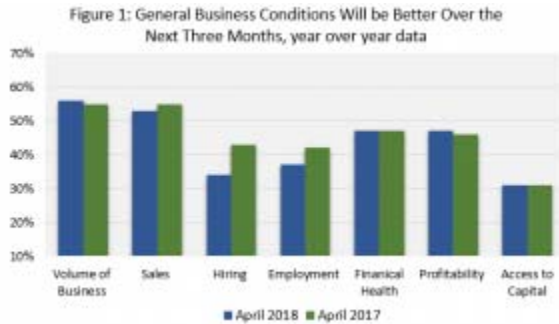
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Georgia CEO Q1 2018 survey shows business leaders' confidence remains optimistic

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The results of the 2018 first quarter (Q1) survey by Georgia CEO, a news source that shares the state's most important features, videos and newswires with Georgia's top business leaders, suggest that Georgia business leaders' confidence levels remain optimistic.

The purpose of the survey is to understand how general business conditions impact and influence Georgia CEO subscribers on a quarterly basis. The news outlet partners with

the Georgia Southern University Center for Business Analytics and Economic Research (CBAER), formerly the Bureau of Business Research and Economic Development, to prepare, distribute and analyze the survey.

In Q1 of 2018, survey participants' confidence levels remain elevated due to a perceived improvement in the overall economy (i.e., local factors) and by the passage of legislation that is seen as being 'business-friendly' (i.e., national factors).

"In this quarter's survey, participants' views returned to a normal range compared to the January findings [from 2017 Q4]," said Ben McKay, assistant director of CBAER. "It is clear that optimism about the future is still present based on these results."

Though optimism levels did show an 8 to 10 percent drop across most metrics and sentiment returned to normal levels, 61 percent of Q1 survey respondents believe volume of business activity is increasing with volume of business and sales. Participants also note that increasing demand is driving optimism. Potential restraints felt by the business community continues to be a shortage of skilled labor and poor access to capital in smaller markets. Survey respondents also express concerns about the supply of skilled labor but were generally positive about overall economic conditions. Year over year, survey respondents' sentiments are roughly equal to this time last year in most metrics (volume of business, sales, financial health, profitability, access to capital), according to McKay, except in hiring and employment.

When asked directly about general business conditions, 60 percent believe conditions will improve, while 34 percent view conditions as unchanged, a +2 percent change and -3 percent change, respectively, from the previous quarter's survey results.

Looking to the next quarter, the primary factors influencing outlook are increased demand and government policy. However, survey participants also show growing concerns about political conditions. While general sentiments remain positive, they point towards stability rather than improvement.

A convenience sampling technique was used for this study and the questionnaire was emailed to subscribers of each of nine Georgia CEO daily newsletters, in addition to being posted on CBAER and Georgia CEO social media

platforms. Georgia CEO publishes a newsletter in Albany, Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Middle Georgia, Newnan, Savannah and Valdosta. The survey was open from April 3 through April 16, 2018, with 230 valid responses recorded.

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