**2018 Executive Survey Results**

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| --- | --- |
| **Total Responses** | **53** |
| Responses in Manufacturing  | 8 |
| Responses in Healthcare | 7 |
| Responses in Financial Services | 4 |
| Responses in Retail | 6 |
| Responses in Hospitality/ Food Services | 2 |

1. **Business Climate**

Which of the following best describes the 7 Rivers Region as a place to do business?

Excellent **32.1%**

Above Average **43.4%**

Average 22.6%

Below Average 1.9%

Poor 0%

In the last year, did the 7 Rivers Region become a better place to do business, a worse place to do business, or has no change occurred?

Better **43.4%**

Worse **7.5%**

No Chance **49.1%**

In the following categories, please mark if you expect an increase, decrease, or no change in the coming year.



Number of Customers

 Decrease 4

 No Change 11

 Increase 38

Sales – Total Revenue

 Decrease 4

 No Change 15

 Increase 34

Profits – Net Revenue

 Decrease 9

 No Change 17

 Increase 27

How would you rate the economic strength of the 7 Rivers Region?

Excellent **18.9%**

Above Average **50.9%**

Average 30.2%

Below Ave/Poor 0%

How would you rate the economic strength of your company?

Excellent **20.8%**

Above Average **47.2%**

Average 26.4%

Below Ave 3.8%

Poor 3.8%

1. Infrastructure

Do you have access to high speed internet?

Yes 98.1%

No 1.9%

Are you satisfied with the speed and reliability of your current internet service?

Yes 84.9%

No 15.1%

What level of impact does reliable internet service have on the efficiency of your business?

High Impact 84.9%

Some Impact 13.2%

Not sure 1.9%

How satisfied is your business with the following transportation systems?

Local Roadways

 Dissatisfied 19

 Neutral 13

 Satisfied 19

 Not Applicable 2

State and Federal Roadways

 Dissatisfied 11

 Neutral 13

 Satisfied 26

 Not Applicable 3

Commercial Air Service

 Dissatisfied 8

 Neutral 16

 Satisfied 14

 Not Applicable 14

Barges/Waterways

 Dissatisfied

 Neutral 16

 Satisfied 15

 Not Applicable 22

1. **Business Conditions**

Which of the following best describes your company’s business activity?

Too much business; capacity is strained 30.2%

Business activity is just right 45.3%

Too little business; excess capacity 30.2%

Do you expect to create new positions in the coming year?

Yes 48.1%

No 51.9%

Has your company had trouble finding qualified workers in the past year?

Yes **66%**

No 34%

If yes, at which skill levels/job qualifications? (Select all that apply) (37 Responses)

Professionals 51.4%

Managers, Administrators, Supervisors 45.9%

Office Workers 43.2%

General Skilled Workers/Laborers 56.8%

Entry Level Workers 54.1%

In the following categories, please mark if you expect an increase, decrease, or no change I the coming year.

Seasonal Employees

 Increase 11

 Decrease 2

 No Change 39

Part Time Employees

 Increase 18

 Decrease 3

 No Change 31

Full Time Employees

 Increase 21

Decrease 3

 No change 28

In the list below, please rank each factor based on its expected impact on your business over the next three years.

Workforce Availability

 High Impact 28

 Some Impact 10

 Low Impact 8

 No Impact 2

 Unsure 4

Changing Consumer Tastes

 High Impact 13

 Some Impact 23

 Low Impact 9

 No Impact 8

 Unsure 0

Domestic/Foreign Competition

 High Impact 4

 Some Impact 8

 Low Impact 10

 No Impact 28

 Unsure 3

Raw Material Costs

 High Impact 11

 Some Impact 10

 Low Impact 10

 No Impact 17

 Unsure 5



Would you be willing to subsidize employee childcare if it would guarantee availability?

Yes 13.2%

No 34%

Maybe **52.8%**

Does your company offer programs to help offset the cost of child care?

Yes 20.8%

No 79.2%

If yes, what type of programs do you offer? 11 responses

Flex Spending 7/11 = 63.6%

Lower Childcare rate on campus – 1 repsones

Flexible Hours – 1 Response

What percentage of your employees received a raise in the previous year?

0% 3

1. 6

25-49% 0

50-75% 9

75 – 100% 27

From the factors below, what does your company consider to be significant barriers to growth or expansion? ( Select all that apply?)



How concerned are you about tariffs impacting your business?

Very Concerned **23.1%**

Somewhat Concerned 36.5%

Not Concerned 40.4%

Did your company benefit from the tax reform package passed by Congress this year?

Yes 38.5%

No 40.4%

N/A 21.2%

If so, how do you plan to use the additional money? Please check all that apply (39 responses)



1. **EMPLOYEE CONDITIONS**

Please rank these challenges, in order of severity, faced by your employees. (1-4)

Affordable Housing

* 1 (9)
* **2 (19)**
* 3 (8)
* 4 (14)

**Affordable Health Care**

* **1 (23)**
* 2 (8)
* 3 (8)
* 4 (11)

Transportation Access

* 1 (6)
* 2 (11)
* 3 (14)
* **4 (18)**

 Affordable Childcare

* 1 (11)
* 2 (12)
* **3 (20)**
* 4 (7)

In your opinion, does the 7 Rivers Region offer affordable, equitable housing?

Always 14%

**Sometimes 82%**

Never 4%

**What is your opinion of housing development in the 7 Rivers Region?**

Too much development is occurring 0%

There is an appropriate amount of housing 42.9%

**Too little development is occurring 57.1%**

How would you rate the ability of employees at your company to identify challenges related to business operations of processes?

Excellent 12%

Above Average 32%

**Average 40%**

Below Average 16%

Poor 0%

How would you rate the ability of employees at your company to solve problems?

Excellent 17.3%

Above Average 51.9%

Average 26.9%

Below Average 3.8%

Poor 0%

How would you rate the work/life balance of employees at your company?

Excellent 15.4%

Above Average 36.5%

Average 32.7%

Below Average 13.5%

Poor 1.9%

1. **TRADE**

Is your company currently involved in international trade?

Yes 13.2%

**No 86.8%**

If no, what is preventing your company from expanding into foreign markets?

**Business is designed to serve a specific area 89.7%**

Lack of Export Knowledge 5.1%

Costs are too high 2.6%

Tough Competition 2.6%

Is your company looking to expand into export markets in the next 12-14 months?

Yes 4.1%

**No 93.9%**

Maybe 2%

**OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS**

What is your firm’s biggest challenge or obstacle right now?

Anti-Government sentiment

Lack of qualified applicants

Employees

Budgets are decreasing - we are a government agency

finding employee

recruiting and keeping qualified employees

Aging workforce

Changing technology

Changing trends in the market/becoming obsolete because of technology

workforce shortage

Management and long-term strategic planning

Utility costs

Finding new customers

Healthcare reimbursement

Succession. Finding person to take over company

reimbursement issues

Trade uncertainty among our largest customer segments, the auto industry.

Tariff's imposed and oversupply of ag commodities

Corporate national expansion is limiting focus on our operations in La Crosse

How to get the people (mostly White People) who really can benefit from an education series about privilege, equity and social justice to attend, participate and consider new options to take action in the future when thinking about non-White individuals.

Lack of housing inventory to sell

sales

hiring enough employees

Cash flow and finding dependable skilled workers

Levy limits, lack of local funding options for providing services

Costing heath coverage out of control

Economic stability in the USA

Finding good team members and retaining them

Levy limits

Government regulations and political decisions

staffing

Government regulation

Volunteer engagement

CASH FLOW

Sales

Staffing

Finding qualified workers.

Space and market changes

This area not attractive to talent due to lack of medium income housing

Getting more long customers

High income over living expenses

housing

What trend in your industry is most likely your impact your future business?

lack of honesty, culture of ridiculousness

UI Rate going up

budgets

tarriff

recruiting and keeping qualified employees

Technological changes

Renewable Energy

technology

workforce

Consumer habits

Utility costs

Lack of skilled trades people - i.e. machinists

Shift in payment structure

Technology, Lack of small business owners/operators

healthcare mergers

Offshoring

consolidations and capital requirements

Streaming content, both opportunity and challenge

Technology advances

Rising interest rates

uncertainty in the international market place

Minnesota legislative issues/staffing

Trump's leadership will lead to a depression

Levy limits, lack of local funding options

Worker shortage

Financial markets improvement / interest rates stability

Wage inflation and getting people to work in manufacturing

Continued levy limits

lack of staff

technology - internet of things

Rates

Technology

LOW AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY PRICES

Energy efficiency

Changing customer base and preferences

Lack of qualified workers.

Tariffs

telework rather than travel and face to face meetings, a negative trend

Ordering online

More and more computerized work

lenders

**What tactics does your firm employ to promote business and expand into new markets?**

facebook, newsletter,

Many

use of electronic media

hired salesperson

advertising differently than in the past

Outreach to likely clinets

TV, Mail, internet

Advertising, invitations, social media,

training, surveys

Social Media

Make opportunities available to our businesses in the Village

Internet Marketing

Transparency

Internet

n/a

We employ a business development manager.

aquisitions

Buy companies, invest resources

A personal approach

Educational workshops/educational press

Internet marketing

active sales prospecting program

we are not expanding

Word of mouth, advertising, social media, radio interviews

NA

Visual marketing , community support .

Networking

Direct Sales force, Independent rep firms, internet, google addwords

None

great marketing communication to stakeholders

Acquisition

Addressing labor shortage issues

ONLINE, PERSONAL SALES

Social media

Internet marketing

We are very word of mouth, facebook and our newsletter are important with a smattering of radio, flyers, posters and newspaper.

social media marketing

Webinars, telephone outreach, some live events

lots of advertising to get the word out about our business

social media

none

advertising

Would you be interested in having a local economic development professional meet with you to learn about your needs, and how they can be of support? If yes, who should we contact?

sure -- Mark Glahn

Mary Jo Hill

maybe. contact Hank Kokke; hank@ssmp.net

Jason Gilman or Andrea Schnick

Yes, Cary Winch

Sheila Marx

I'm taking a Co-Starters course in starting a business but have little legal protection and little money to protect my ideas.

**Part 2: Sector Specific**

52 Responses

**Finish Survey 46.2%**

**Manufacturing 15.4%**

Retail 13.5%

Hospitality/Food Service 3.8%

Financial Services 7.7%

Healthcare 13.5%

**Manufacturing**

What types of products does your firm manufacture?

automation equipment

Injection Molding Services

Service-Real Estate

Plastic Mold Tooling

precision thermoplastic injection molded parts

Idenity signs

Printed labels, overlays and printed electronics

electric motors

Camping trailers

What do you believe is the biggest concern facing your firm?

**Worker Shortage 62.5%**

Geopolitical Uncertainty 25%

Supply Chain Disruptions 12.5%

Please identify a practice/behavior that has delivered the biggest returns in the past three years.

**Operational Improvements 44.4%**

Digital Technologies 22.2%

Hire Sales Person 11.1%

More emphasis on marketing and sales 11.1%

Development of new product line for appliance industry 11.1%

Does your firm have any plans to form a new business alliance or joint venture within the next year

**No 77.8%**

Yes 11.1%

Maybe 11.1%

What do you think is the most strategically important for your business in the next 5 years? 1- high, 5 least)

Cyber Security 5

**Mobile Technologies for Engaging Customers 2**

Robotics of Products and Services n/a

High or Volatile Energy Costs 4

**RETAIL**

What is the most important to increasing revenue?

**Customer Experience 46.2%**

Making the next sale 7.7%

Employee training 7.7%

Increasing Brand Loyalty, reward programs, relationships 7.7%

Marketing, awareness, deals 23.1%
Invention of new products 7.7%

**Is your firm currently looking for new markets?**

Yes 78.6%

No 21.4%

**If yes, what kind of market?**

The use of robots

Commercial Sale-On Line Real Estate

Manufacturing Consulting

new customer base markets

Selling a new product to existing markets

Volume buyers

identifying trends

millennials in manufacturing

local

If no, why not?

**Resources 66.7%**

Struggle to find reliable partners or investors 33.3%

If yes, what strategies are you using to identify new markets?

Professional Network 27.3%

Trade associations 18.2%

Word of Mouth 9.1%

**Online Tools 45.5%**

What are the most effective strategies in the retail industry in the next 5 years?

**Enhancing Customer Experience 1**

Personalization of products and services 2

Giving Consumers more payment options 5

Adopting in-store mobile devices 3

**Hospitality/Food Service**

What has delivered the best returns in the past 5 years?

More appealing customer experience 100%

What are the most effective marketing strategies used by your organization

Social Media, You ask strategies (plural), but only allow one answer. A combination of social media, paired with our dynamic website and regular newsletter seem to deliver the biggest punch for the money

What are the biggeset concerns facing growth to your organization? Check all that apply.

Changing labor conditions, Energy Costs

Which trends are going to be most important to your organization when making future business decisions (1 – important 5 not)

Customer service

**Financial Services**

What are the top challenges facing banks and financial institutions?

Regulatory Pressure, Satisfying more demanding customers

What practice/behaviors does your organization regularly engage in to combat cyber security? Check all that apply.

Implementing Safeguards, engaging with regulators, educating employees at all levels

What is your organization’s top safety concern?

Cybercrime, accounting fraud

Which trends do you believe will become most important to success in your industry over the next 5 years? (1 important)

**Customer Relations,** new markets, innovative technology

**Healthcare**

What are you most concerned about?

Financial Challenges

**Healthcare reform information**

Patient satisfaction

**Personnel shortages**

Government Mandates

Technology



On a personal level, what is your biggest challenge?

**Finding and recruiting top talent 71.4%**

Adaptability 14.3%

Meeting Customer Expectations 14.3%

What trends are going to be most important to your organization when making future business decisions?

Escalating drug prices, Technological Advancements, Healthcare moving to the home, high-tech databases

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**Feedback**

Look forward in seeing the results.

I appreciate your efforts to continually improve what is already an amazing region to live and do business in. Thank you.

I did not know this group existed until a LinkedIn follower posted the survey.

Survey didn't quite apply to my specific business but is well designed.

this was longer than I hoped it would have been.

thanks for compiling this input

Doesn't seem to fit local government

I would be helpful to understand the number of people working in human service in the 7 Rivers region and how to support their continued impact. The cost of loss of human service organizations due to lack of funding will make it even more difficult for other businesses to make up the loss.

I appreciate that you create this survey. It seems to evolve each year and that is important. Asking about the effect of the "tax break" is great, but there was nothing asked about how we think our customers feelings about the current political climate effect their decision business/decision making. For example, I am not sure how to word it, but some people in the bar business think they are so busy because people are depressed and entirely uncertain about their future (and that of their country, the elderly, infrastructure, education...). Some people are getting out of the stock market (while clearly, others buy in), some take out loans as they think the days of low interest are over. Many are not investing in solar as the breaks for doing so are gone. I own a restaurant. The fires raging in California as well as the lack of workers to pick crops have contributed to a 30% increase in my raw ingredients in one calendar year. I cannot command a 30% price increase on my menu. Again, thank you for taking the time to do this.