

## Yorkshire business sees positive signs

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By David Parkin - Editor



YORKSHIRE businesses are more positive about their prospects now than in January, according to a new survey by [The Alternative Board \(TAB\)](#), the peer-support and coaching organisation that is being launched in the UK today.

The online survey, conducted in association with TheBusinessDesk.com, found that 43% of respondents were “more optimistic” and 46% thought the outlook was unchanged.

By comparison, only 11% were “less optimistic”.

Optimism was greatest among companies with a turnover of between £1m and £10m. 67% of these were “more optimistic”, while the same proportion of businesses with turnover of between £50m and £250m were “less optimistic.”

Significantly, 36% of businesses expect to increase their workforce over the next six months – three times as many as expect to reduce the number of their employees (11%).

[TAB](#) is marking its UK launch at today's [Yorkshire International Business Convention](#).

When asked what they considered to be the major obstacles holding their company back, more than a third of respondents (39%) cited the “negative attitude prevailing in the media/business community”, while 14% identified operational issues and 11% “lack of orders/customers”. Only 4% considered the “availability of finance/ cashflow” to be an obstacle, the same proportion as cited “finding the right employees”. More than a fifth of respondents (21%) could not identify any specific obstacles.

However, nearly half (46%) of respondents said they regarded “effective marketing” as a significant concern, while 29% listed “meeting sales targets” and 25% “managing business operations” as matters of concern. Other areas causing significant concern were business taxes (18%), “managing growth” (18%) and “meeting payroll costs” (14%).

While nearly half (47%) of respondents said their businesses had contracted over the past 12 months, 21% said they had expanded and 32% reported no change.

Of those that had contracted, 18% said their businesses had shrunk by up to 5% and a further 18% said their contraction was in the 10% to 20% range. Only 11% had contracted by more than 30%. 14% of the businesses that had expanded did so by up to 5% and a further 7% achieved 10-20% growth.

Commenting on the result of the survey, Martin Allison, chairman of [TAB UK](#), said: “Small businesses are the backbone of our regional economy, so it is really encouraging to see the high percentage of businesses in the £1-10m turnover bracket who are more optimistic about their prospects than they were six months ago.

“It is a clear indication that they believe the worst of the recession is over.

“It’s now up to all of us who provide support to these business owners – whether we are in the public or private sector - to make sure they get the best possible help to capitalise on this optimism.

“Working together, we can overcome the obstacles and address the concerns – it’s no time to be alone!”

Respondents were asked to give their top tips on how to survive the recession. While a number offered sound practical advice, eg to manage cashflow and keep tight controls on spending, others advised businesses to have a robust mental approach – eg “work smart, keep positive and never give up.”