

Amidst Bleak Economic Outlook, New Study Reveals Opportunities for IT Suppliers Among Small Business

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Millward Brown, Research International, and Lightspeed Research collaborate with LinkedIn to survey IT decision-makers

Despite concerns surrounding the current global recession, a new survey among IT professionals reveals that the majority of small businesses are cautiously optimistic and making fewer cut-backs in technology investments compared to those within mid-market and enterprise-sized companies.

The survey, conducted among 450 IT professionals across industries in the U.S. and UK, was a collaborative effort between Millward Brown, Research International, and Lightspeed Research to leverage the perspectives of LinkedIn members via the LinkedIn Research Network.

According to the research, IT professionals within larger companies are much more focused on short-term challenges such as lowered budgets and reduced staff, while those in smaller organizations are more likely to report an increase in technology expenditures over the next 12 months (37% compared with 26% for enterprise organizations).

"These findings represent a silver lining for technology providers in what is proving to be a challenging time, with small companies seemingly more resilient and optimistic regarding the future, while many larger companies are struggling to adapt within an environment of hiring and spending freezes and cut backs," said Steve Ingledew, Managing Director for Millward Brown's North American Technology Practice.

Of particular interest among small businesses is finding new ways to maximize the benefits of the Internet for their companies. A staggering 75% of small business participants stated this as one of their top three technology priorities for 2009, compared with 27% and 13% for medium and enterprise companies respectively.

According to Ingledew, "While many larger businesses have already tapped into Internet-based solutions, smaller companies are seeking guidance from IT suppliers on how best to leverage the Internet to drive their businesses. This presents an opportunity for technology firms well poised to meet the technology needs of the burgeoning small business segment."

In line with these needs, the top three trends cited by small business technology buyers as impacting their industry over the next five years were Web-oriented architectures (52%), social software and social networking (45%) and unified communications (34%).

The survey, fielded December 2008, yielded an 18% response rate among IT and business decision-makers in the LinkedIn community, an indication of the effectiveness of professional networks as a sampling source for conducting research among hard to reach B2B and IT audiences.

For more information about the LinkedIn Research Network, email surveys@linkedin.com.