

Ad Firms' Fortunes On The Rise

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Here's another sign that the economy is turning around: In a national Strata survey of ad agencies, more than 47 percent said their business had picked up in the first quarter, almost double the portion that felt their fortunes was improving a year ago.

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One-quarter of the agencies surveyed plan on hiring staff this year and more than 16 percent said their clients are increasing budgets. Strata surveyed 60 agencies via phone and the Internet from January-April.

As is obvious to all, ad dollars continue to shift out of traditional media, with 68 percent of agencies saying their clients are more focused on digital and about an equal number saying they are less focused on print than they were a year ago.

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More surprising is Strata's finding that social media and search are catching up to online display. Nearly 90 percent of agencies said they would use Facebook in client campaigns, either by creating dedicated pages or advertising directly on the site. Twitter placed second (57 percent), followed by YouTube (39 percent).

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"No question, it's considered part of the advertising strategy," said John Shelton, president and CEO of Strata, a seller of media-buying and -selling software, owned by Comcast Cable. "It's a little bit more than online display; it's search and social media as well."

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