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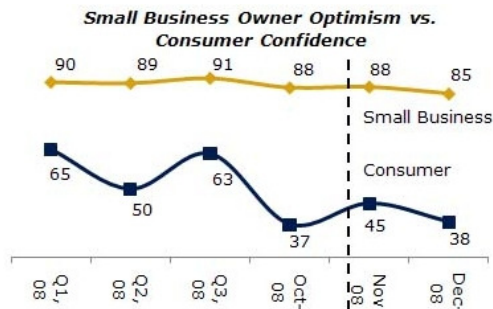


The Return Of Optimism... Or Flat Is The New Up!

Posted by **Fredric Paul** Tuesday, Feb 3, 2009, 08:04 PM ET

By most accounts, the economy continues its death spiral. But even amidst the ongoing turmoil, smaller companies are showing signs of hope -- relatively speaking anyway.

According to [Warrillow & Co.](#), "While small business confidence has dropped five points from the start to the end of 2008, it is basically flat in comparison to the 28 point decline in consumer confidence over the same period."



Source: NFIB SBET Jan 09, The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Survey, Jan 09

Another survey, this one by online payroll service [PayCycle](#), shows that the percentage of small business owners who are "very worried" about the economy actually dropped from 56% in October 2008 to 39% in January 2009. Some 48% remain "somewhat worried" compared to 35% in October. These days, that counts as unbridled optimism!

Enterprises, Warrillow says, appear just as panicked as consumers: "Preliminary reads on Warrillow's 2009 spend tracker show over 40% of Enterprise companies surveyed are 'bracing' for the year ahead. This is a strong statement, but with news agencies tracking layoffs on a daily basis it is easy to understand this outlook."

Warrillow says that there is good reason for small businesses to be more optimistic than consumers or enterprises: "Small business owners quickly react to economic conditions, have largely cash flow positive businesses, and possess overall 'can-do' attitudes." They don't need a savior, Warrillow says: "The little guys of the small business market aren't looking for a bailout... They are fiercely independent and determined individuals who make hard choices every day."

Jim Heeger, president and CEO of PayCycle, also cites the "can-do" spirit, but also credits the new presidential administration. But it's a good thing small business owners aren't looking for a bailout, since they don't believe they're gonna get one. According to PayCycle's survey, 48% of small business owners are "Not at All Confident" that Washington's stimulus package will address their needs.

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