

Majority of Irish SME Owners Expect Business Improvement in 2012

The see-sawing trends in Irish business optimism are continuing this month, with research published by Microsoft Ireland indicating that 59% of SMEs owners here expect the business environment to improve over the next 12 to 18 months.



Further results from the Vanson Bourne-compiled survey show that 32% of respondents expect to be more successful in 2012 than they were this year, while 29% say they expect to hire new staff. Just 7% think that they will need to make redundancies.

Cloud computing and IT look set to play a central role in business owners' perceived chances of growing their firms and creating jobs, according to the findings.

Commenting on the survey results, Paul Rellis, managing director, Microsoft Ireland, said: "Despite the continued economic uncertainty in the eurozone and the challenging

local environment, there continues to be a lot of positive activity within the indigenous economy.

"I have long held the view that while continued investment by multinationals is essential for growth, in order to have a sustainable economy for the long term we are dependent on ensuring that there is a healthy indigenous business community as this will provide the foundation of our future success."

Key results of the survey shows that:

- 49% of respondents think the use of computer technology will be the deciding factor in whether their business thrives or just survives.
- SME owners in Ireland passionately believe in the importance of their role to the wider economy, with 80% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that small- and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the economy.
- A majority of SME owners agree that their business can make a difference to the bigger economic picture (59% agree; 5% disagree).
- Three-quarters (75%) say it is "businesses like mine that will be most responsible for providing the jobs and innovation to bring back the good times".
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents go further, saying the conditions are right for the economy to rebalance towards smaller, agile, innovative businesses and employers.



Exports Up 4% In First Nine Months

The value of exports in October this year was unchanged compared to the same month last year at €7.5bn.

That's according to the latest figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), which show that the value of exports out of Ireland during the opening nine months of 2011 was 4% higher at €69.4bn.

In the first nine months of 2011, 23% of exports went to the USA, 15% to Belgium and 14% to Britain. Exported goods to the US increased by 4% or €682m, to France by 14% or €470m and to Switzerland by 13% or €318m.

The value of goods imported into the country in October was €3.9bn, up 7% year on year. In the nine months to September, imports increased by 6% to €36.2bn.

Imports from Britain rose by 17% or €1.7bn and from Germany by 14% or €347m. In the first nine months of 2011, 53% of Ireland's imports came from Great Britain, the USA and Germany

Imports of petroleum increased by 24% or €771m, medical and pharmaceutical products by 23% or €586m and organic chemicals by 27% or €421m.

The CSO said that the trade surplus of €3.6bn in October 2011 was down 6% from 12 months earlier.

Exports of medical and pharmaceutical products increased by 11% or €1.9bn, organic chemicals by 10% or €1.3bn and petroleum by 51% or €325m. Exports of computer equipment fell by 9% or €287m.