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Manpower Employment Outlook Survey Finds That Healthy U.S. Job Picture Is Expected to Continue Through June

MILWAUKEE, March 15, 2005 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- The strong hiring activity that U.S. employers predicted for the first three months of the year is expected to continue into the second quarter, according to the seasonally adjusted results of the latest Manpower Employment Outlook Survey, conducted quarterly by Manpower Inc.

"After three years of volatility in their job outlook, U.S. employers have shown stability in their hiring plans for more than a year now. Companies have seemed to find a rhythm in their hiring practices. What we are witnessing from U.S. businesses is that they are very willing to increase headcount to meet demand for their products and services but will only do so if tied to measured demand, as opposed to an anticipation of demand," said Jeffrey A. Joerres, Chairman & CEO of Manpower Inc.

Of the 16,000 U.S. employers that were surveyed, 30% plan to add staff in the second quarter, while 7% expect to reduce their payrolls. Fifty-eight percent of the hiring managers polled anticipate no change in staff levels for the coming quarter, and 5% are unsure of their hiring plans. When seasonal variations are removed from the data, the Net Employment Outlook is the same as it was for the first three months of the year and is similar to last year at this time. In fact, this marks the fifth consecutive quarter in which employers have reported hiring expectations that rival those last seen in the beginning months of 2001.

Quarter over quarter hiring plans are remarkably similar across the 10 industry sectors surveyed. The most notable differences are among Education and Public Administration employers who anticipate a slightly more active hiring pace than in the first quarter of 2005. Durable Goods Manufacturing and Wholesale/Retail Trade employers, on the other hand, intend to decrease staff levels, albeit on a very small scale, from April to June.

"Over the past several quarters, Education and Public Administration employers have trailed other sectors in their readiness to forecast stronger job opportunities. Their hiring outlook for the second quarter, however, shows us that their optimism is growing," said Joerres.

Little change is in store for second quarter hiring activity across the four U.S. regions. Employers plan to keep job levels consistent with last quarter and a year ago. Job seekers are likely to find that the West offers the most promising job picture for the April - June period. For the fifth consecutive quarter, employers in the Northeast intend to hire at a more conservative pace than the other regions.

In addition to the United States, the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey is conducted in 20 other countries and territories, including more than 40,000 employers across the globe. Second quarter employment prospects are set to improve most notably for the second quarter in Japan, Germany, Mexico, Norway and Australia.

Employers in 19 of the 21 countries and territories surveyed expect positive hiring activity in the coming quarter, and 11 of those 19 countries are reporting stronger hiring intentions compared to last quarter and last year at this time, based on seasonally adjusted data. This quarter marks the first time that the survey has been conducted with employers across China and Taiwan, and the results indicate strong hiring activity is ahead for the second quarter in both markets.

"In the majority of labor markets we survey across Asia Pacific and North America, employers are expecting strong hiring activity ahead, with Japan, Mexico and Australia reporting their most optimistic outlooks since we began the survey in these countries," said Joerres, chairman and CEO of Manpower Inc. "Employers in the majority of European countries surveyed are saying that they will add more staff compared to the previous quarter."

The Manpower Inc. survey shows a continuation of strong hiring across Asia Pacific. Employers are most optimistic in Japan and Taiwan and least optimistic in Singapore. While still positive, Hong Kong employers reported an outlook that reversed a six-quarter growth trend.

"Hiring in Japan is expected to be robust in the second quarter, beyond what is normally anticipated in this, their peak hiring quarter," said Joerres. "The data shows the greatest hiring expectations in the Manufacturing, Finance/Insurance/Real Estate and Wholesale & Retail Trade sectors. As we expected, employers in China and Taiwan enter the survey with strong hiring

intentions across all industry sectors."

The next Manpower Employment Outlook Survey will be released on June 14, 2005 to report hiring expectations for the third quarter of 2005.

Note to Editors

Graphical illustrations and full survey results for each U.S. region and industry sector can be found in the Manpower Employment Outlook survey report. The report can be accessed in the Manpower Press Room at www.manpower.com/meos. Here you will also find results of the surveys conducted in the other 18 countries. All graphs from the full report are available to be downloaded for use in publication or broadcast from the Manpower Online Visual Library, also located in the Press Room on <http://www.manpower.com/library>.

Manpower Employment Outlook Survey data is available for more than 460 U.S. markets across the country. Local findings can be obtained by contacting Lisa Tagliapietra at 414.906.6540 or lisa.tagliapietra@na.manpower.com.

About the Survey

The Manpower Employment Outlook Survey is conducted quarterly to measure employers' intentions to increase or decrease the number of employees in their workforce during the next quarter. It is the only forward-looking survey of its kind, unparalleled in its size, scope longevity and area of focus. The survey has been running for more than 40 years and is one of the most trusted surveys of employment activity in the world. The Manpower Employment Outlook Survey is based on interviews with more than 40,000 public and private employers worldwide and is considered a highly respected economic indicator.

The Manpower Employment Outlook Survey is currently available for 21 countries and territories: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the United States. The program began in the United States and Canada in 1962, and the United Kingdom was added in 1966. Mexico and Ireland launched the survey in 2002, and 13 additional countries have been added to the program in 2003. New Zealand joined the program in 2004 and China and Taiwan joined in 2005. For more information, visit the Manpower Inc. Web site at www.manpower.com and enter the Press Room.

About Manpower Inc.

Manpower Inc. (NYSE: MAN) is a world leader in the employment services industry, offering customers a continuum of services to meet their needs throughout the employment and business cycle. The company specializes in permanent, temporary and contract recruitment; employee assessment; training; career transition and organizational consulting services. Manpower's worldwide network of 4,300 offices in 67 countries and territories enables the company to meet the needs of its 400,000 customers per year, including small and medium size enterprises in all industry sectors, as well as the world's largest multinational corporations. The focus of Manpower's work is on raising productivity through improved quality, efficiency and cost-reduction, enabling customers to concentrate on their core business activities. In addition to the Manpower brand, the company operates under the brand names of Right Management Consultants, Jefferson Wells, Elan and Brook Street. More information on Manpower Inc. is available at <http://www.manpower.com>.

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