What affluent business owners are thinking: Merrill Lynch survey

By Editor Test *Wed, Nov 28, 2012*

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When asked what the one greatest opportunity for business growth in 2013 is, 24% of large ($10-$250 million in revenue) business owners cited “introducing new products or services,” 24% cited “taking advantage of new technologies,” 21% cited “targeting a new kind of customer” and 21% cited “expanding domestic locations,” according to the latest Merrill Lynch Affluent Insights survey.

More business owners say they hired people (30%) than laid employees off (22%) in the past two years. In other changes: 38% said they targeted a new customer base, 37% expanded operations to take advantage of new opportunities, and 35% changed product or service to better meet market demands.

Most businesses still focus on U.S. market, with 89% receiving less than half of their revenue from international operations and sales. But 17% of business owners plan to expand their business internationally within five years and 32% believe that international expansion is worth the risk.

More than half (60%) of business owners are confident their business will continue to be successful after they retire, but only 35% of business owners are “very confident” in their ability to meet future financial and personal goals if they retired now, the survey showed.

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When asked whom they would trust to succeed them today, 51% of business owners said they would choose a current employee, 24% would choose a family member and 21% would choose an outsider.

If someone took over their company today, business owners would be most concerned with financial management (23%), leadership succession (20%), and business development and growth (16%).

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