

Survey: Consultants bullish on economy

The economy is getting better as independent business consultants say they are seeing a growing demand for their expertise, an increase in client projects and their clients' willingness to move forward with new projects and initiatives.

That data comes from a survey of more than 700 consultants by M Squared Consulting, Inc. of San Francisco. The firm links independent business consultants with clients.

"The survey was implemented to uncover the business trends our consultants are seeing in their independent consulting businesses," says Marion McGovern, president and CEO of M Squared, in a written

statement. "These trends are further validated by the requests M Squared gets for independent consultants."

More than 54% said their revenues were higher in 2004 than 2003, compared to 50% in 2004 and 21% in 2003 stating the same about prior years. Since most (54% in 2004 and 48% on average the past three years) did not change their rates and many actually decreased their rates (27% on average the past three years) there is evidence of a growing demand for independent consulting expertise because their revenues are increasing, M Squared says.

When asked about the key trends independent consultants are seeing

with their clients, the single top trend is "launching new projects", followed by "moving forward cautiously on some new initiatives" and finally that their clients "seem to think there will be improvements this year," according to the survey. Consultants specifically mentioned several other trends and business issues they see their clients facing including "looking for more efficiencies internally," the impact of regulatory issues (Sarbanes-Oxley, Patriot Act and Check 21), offshore outsourcing as well as implementing new marketing strategies.

They survey was taken in January with the results released April 15.