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## Vistage CEO Confidence Index: International and Political Outlook

By Nathan Denny on Jan 9, 2012

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Last week's release of the latest Vistage CEO Confidence Index -- a survey of more than 1,600 small business owners in the U.S. -- is still reverberating through the U.S. business community.

For starters, the Index showed an increase of 18 percent in confidence among surveyed CEOs in the last quarter of 2011. That's the biggest quarterly gain since 2009, and it represents the highest confidence level since early 2011.

The positive findings have also been echoed by *Chief Executive* magazine, which found that, in 2012, "just under 69 percent of CEOs expect to see increased revenues, and 42 percent expect that they will increase capital expenditures. CEOs are investing in their businesses and are making acquisitions."



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### International: Confident on China, Nervous About Europe

Looking at the big picture, American CEOs are confident not only about prospects at home, but also regarding overseas competition. According to the latest index, 49 percent of CEOs "believe that in three years, **the U.S. will be the most improved economy in the world** with China posting 17 percent and South America at 14 percent."

However, international concerns still dampen the outlook a bit. "Persistent economic and political uncertainty remains a top concern, mentioned by nearly half of all CEOs, fueled by the debt crisis in Europe and the failure of Congress to address the national debt."

Some media have focused on the report's local findings. The *San Diego Business Journal* hones in on the 46 responses from San Diego-area CEOs to conclude that:

Some 35 percent of San Diego CEOs said they think U.S. economic conditions have improved during the past year, while 50 percent asserted they had stayed the same. Looking to the year ahead, 39 percent expect improvement, while 52 percent said they expect more of the same.

### Romney: The CEO's Candidate?

"The survey covered a variety of topics, including who will be the Republican nominee for president," the article continued. "Some 52 percent predict it will be part-time La Jolla resident Mitt Romney."

Nationally, CEOs also favor Romney. In the larger U.S. survey, Vistage CEOs felt confident that Mitt Romney would take the Republican nomination (49 percent), with Newt Gingrich registering a distant second (29 percent).

"None of the other candidates registered at higher than 2 percent," the original Vistage report states.

So ... did these results have anything to do with **Rick Santorum's recent remarks that "the president is not a CEO"**?

Searching for an angle of attack on the front-running Romney, Santorum said that "the nation doesn't need a CEO or manager — a knock on Romney's private-sector experience — and said the nation needs a leader with vision," reports *The Washington Post*.

"Being the president is not a CEO," Santorum said. "You can't direct ... members of Congress and members of the Senate as to how you do things. You've got to lead and inspire."

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### Interactive CEO Confidence Index Tool

Over the last few days here at Vistage Connect, we've covered a variety of angles to last week's CEO Confidence Index.

But we haven't covered it all. The Index documents almost two dozen specific findings and trends, including CEOs' anticipated hiring plans, political expectations, experiences acquiring credit, and lots more.

Don't miss out on any of it: Head over to the interactive [Vistage CEO Confidence Index Tool](#) available here at Vistage Connect and browse the rest of the Index's findings via a slick, downloadable graphic widget.

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