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I cover careers, jobs and every aspect of leadership.

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Where The Jobs Will (And Won't) Be In 2013

Though Florida is still recovering from the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008 and the state unemployment rate sits at 8.5%, almost a point higher than the national rate of 7.7%, some pockets of the state are experiencing strong job growth. In fact employers in the [Cape Coral](#)-Fort Myers area are projecting a net job increase of 23%, the highest in the nation, according to the [latest employment outlook survey](#) by the giant employment services firm, ManpowerGroup. One other Florida metropolitan area, [Lakeland](#)-Winter Haven, also landed in the top 15 cities for job growth, according to [Manpower](#).



In Pictures: Where The Jobs Will (And Won't) Be In 2013

To gauge companies' hiring plans, Manpower surveyed more than 18,000 employers in 100 metro areas. It used a research firm that questioned hiring managers and human resource professionals by phone and email. Over the first two weeks in October, the firm asked four questions about companies' plans for the first quarter of 2013: do you plan to add to your staff, do you plan to reduce your staff, keep your staff at the same level, or are you unsure. Then Manpower crunched the numbers and came up with a "net employment outlook." The survey is by definition a rough measure, since it doesn't count the number of jobs employers plan to add or subtract, but simply asks whether they plan to hire or fire.

Nationwide, 17% of employers said they expected to add to their workforces next quarter, while 8% forecast a decrease. Seventy-two percent expected no change while 3% were undecided. That results in a net employment outlook of 9%, but when seasonally adjusted, the number climbs to 12%, the best first-quarter showing in Manpower's survey since 2008, and significantly stronger than the weakest in the history of the survey, 4% in the first quarter of 2010.

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In Cape Coral, employment has gotten a boost from the recovering housing

market and the fact that the city has a low density rate, at 45%, so there is plenty of room to grow. As home construction has revived, property values have climbed, going up 18%-20% since the trough, says Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce President Mike Quaintance. Housing growth has also fueled growth in restaurants and retail chains, including 7-11, Dollar Stores and [Dollar Tree](#). Cape Coral is getting a new Wal-Mart and a Sam's Club store. Jobs at those budget retailers don't tend to pay well, concedes Quaintance. But the housing recovery is also funding better-paying construction-related jobs and home-based businesses like landscaping.

In neighboring Fort Myers, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Colleen DePasquale says job growth may in part be seasonal, because the population always swells in the winter months, and two baseball teams, the Twins and the Red Sox, go to Fort Myers for spring training. At the same time, clothing chain [Chico's](#) is based in Fort Myers and doing well, and the city just opened a new waterfront development, with plans for a hotel and other businesses.

Second on Manpower's list after Cape Coral-Fort Myers: two Arizona metro areas in a tie, Phoenix Mesa-Scottsdale, and Tucson, with a net employment outlook of 20%. Frank Armendariz, a regional director in Manpower's Phoenix office, says he's seen an increase in hiring at call centers, in the solar power business and across the board in professional services. Next on the list: San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont with a net hiring outlook of 19%. That's a turnaround for the Bay Area. A year ago, for the first quarter of 2012, it had a net hiring outlook of -2%. Next on the list: Salt Lake City, with a net hiring outlook of 18%. After that come two spots in Texas: Austin-Round Rock, and El Paso, both with a net hiring outlook of 25%.

At the other end of the spectrum, St. Louis has the worst employment outlook in the country at -5%. The next-worse is Portland, Me., at -2%, followed by Wichita, at -1%. Just a year ago, Wichita was one of the best cities for jobs, with a net hiring outlook of 12%. Spokane ranks fourth-worst, with a net hiring outlook of 0. That's an improvement from the first quarter of 2012, when Spokane tied with two other cities as the worst place for jobs, with a net hiring outlook of -4%. Three cities are tied for fifth-worse, Jacksonville, Fla., New York City and Jacksonville, Fla. at 1% net employment outlook.

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Melanie Holmes, a vice president at Manpower, explains that the net employment outlook tends to track the unemployment numbers put out by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, though the surveys count employment in different ways. While the BLS numbers look back in time, the Manpower numbers are based on employers' plans for the future. Like the nationwide unemployment rate, which has inched steadily downward from 8.6% last November to 7.7% this November (there was a blip in April when the rate fell to 8.1%, then inched up to 8.3% in August before falling again), the Manpower employment outlook numbers have been steadily climbing. "The improvements have been very slow but steady," says Holmes. "It's neither fabulous nor horrible, but it's slowly improving."

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