

Retention woes

Mobility is replacing stability as the hallmark of a successful career, according to the data from ExecuNet Inc., a Connecticut-based career network firm. Sixty-one percent of 505 employed executives polled said they're not satisfied in their current job. Of that group, more than three-quarters (77 percent) are planning to change jobs in the next six months. Moreover, this group has a pattern — over the past decade, executives have switched jobs every 2.8 years and gone to a new company every 3.5 years.

SUNDAY BUSINESS

Greener pastures

Many people belatedly realize they hate what they do for a living. As the economic recovery gains momentum, more job hunters will seek greener pastures in a different field. But it's risky to abandon your secure professional identity without taking some important steps first. Read more in Monday's Business section.

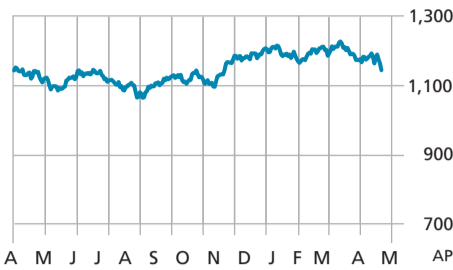
Dow Jones industrials
For the week ending Friday, April 15
-373.83
10,087.51
Record high: 11,722.98
Jan. 14, 2000



Nasdaq composite
For the week ending Friday, April 15
-91.20
1,908.15
Record high: 5,048.62
March 10, 2000



Standard & Poor's 500
For the week ending Friday, April 15
-38.58
1,142.62
Record high: 1,527.46
March 24, 2000



April 17, 2005

Wisconsin State Journal

Business editor: Teryl Franklin, (608) 252-6155

SPRING PLANTING

Double trouble



Photos by John Maniaci — State Journal

Though farming costs are rising this year, the outlook is still bright for dairy farmers such as Brian Brown of Belleville, who was tilling his field on Friday.

Farmers face higher costs for fuel and fertilizer, lower prices for their products

By Jason Stein
Wisconsin State Journal

As they till their fields and prepare for spring planting this week, local farmers are facing a squeeze — rising energy costs and lower prices for the goods they produce.

Milk prices for dairy farmers are still strong, and one UW-Madison economist sees a good chance for healthy farm profits in 2005. But with lackluster crop prices and double-digit percentage increases in the cost of diesel fuel and fertilizer, farmers seem unlikely to repeat last year's stellar results.

"Fuel prices are going to be a shock this year," said Belleville

farmer Brian Brown, who was tilling under last year's corn crop Friday to plant alfalfa. "It takes a lot of gallons to put crops in there."

Farmers also have a new pest to worry about — a soybean fungus that could wreak the same havoc for U.S. farmers that it has in South American countries such as Brazil.

A good or bad year for farmers has effects that ripple through rural communities and the entire state. In Dane County, for instance, growers and food processors sent \$3.2 billion cycling through the local economy in 2000.

The cost of energy, from the electric bill to the price at the pump, will be one big factor in determining this year's profits.

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"Fuel prices are going to be a shock this year," says Brown, who was tilling soil to plant alfalfa. "It takes a lot of gallons to put crops in there."

20 vie for best business plan prize

Seven of the young companies are in the Madison area.

By Judy Newman
Wisconsin State Journal

Their concepts sound like the type that could change the world: drugs to prevent Alzheimer's or influenza, a test for mad cow disease, a new construction material that could eventually replace steel.

They are local finalists in the Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest — seven young companies that are among 20 statewide being considered for a total of more than \$100,000 in cash prizes.

The competition, in its second year, drew 200 entries from entrepreneurs around the state.

"The quality of the entries this year was decidedly higher," said Tom Still, president of the Wisconsin Technology Council, which is coordinating the competition.

In the Madison area, the finalists are:

- ◆ **Avow**, Fitchburg, whose product is designed to help workers in factories or distribution centers choose the correct parts to assemble or items to pack. Using sensors, the technology finds the needed parts and lights the shelves where they're stored, in sequence. Co-founder Tom Wiesen, who's been working on the project for three years, said the goal is to increase productivity and reduce errors. He's still developing a prototype.

- ◆ **Blue Spark**, Madison, with a simulation that helps consumers understand the impact of their energy choices. Interactive software shows an area's electrical grid and demonstrates the effect of adding generation or transmission on power reliability, prices and the environment.

"It allows the consumer to understand the tradeoffs in providing clean, reliable, affordable energy," said company president and owner Deborah Still. The product is already used at conferences; Still also plans to make it available online.

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INTERNET TELEPHONES

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Talk gets cheaper
Voice over Internet telephony digitizes voice signals and sends them out on the Web, making it less expensive to talk long distance. VoIP can be used in a number of different ways, but here is one example:

Computer
VoIP can be used with your broadband connection while surfing the Web at the same time. Some VoIP applications don't require a computer.

Phone adaptor
Analog voice is digitized into individual "packets" on the way out and back to analog on the receiving end.

Cable modem
Digital voice packets are sent to, and received from, the Web.

SOURCE: IP xStream
Associated Press

Already hot in Japan, the cheaper, more flexible Voice over Internet technology is starting to catch on with American dialers.

By Matthew Fordahl
AP Technology Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Before business trips, Suneet Tuli used to leave behind a long list of numbers where he could be reached and told important clients to ring him on his cell phone. The routine was cumbersome and cost him about \$800 a month in phone bills.

Now, he has local numbers for New York, London and Mexico City despite no permanent presence in any of those cities. The lines automatically forward to another number that seamlessly transfers to a cell phone with the best rates for wherever he happens to be.

Because Tuli's calls are routed mainly over the Internet instead of the traditional voice network,

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ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

Credit card debt

The Federal Reserve reports that in January 2005, revolving consumer credit in the United States totaled \$801 billion or \$7,307 per household. According to Kathleen Johnson, research analyst at the Federal Reserve, approximately 90 percent of revolving consumer debt is composed of credit card debt.

Revolving credit per household has increased more than 300 percent since 1990 and more than ten-fold since 1980. Even after adjusting for inflation, total revolving credit increased 450 percent, in constant dollars, over the past 25 years. Historical data on consumer credit is available from the Federal Reserve Web site at: www.federalreserve.gov/releases/g19/hist/cc_hist_mt.html.

REVOLVING CONSUMER CREDIT
(Totals figures are in trillions)

	2005	2000	1990	1980
Total	\$801.6	\$610.9	\$217.9	\$56.1
Per household	\$7,307	\$5,835	\$2,335	\$694
Total — inflated to '05	\$801.6	\$678.0	\$320.3	\$130.7
Per household — inflated	\$7,307	\$6,477	\$3,432	\$1,617

SOURCE: U.S. Federal Reserve

QUESTIONS: Send questions, comments to UW-Extension professor Bill Pinkovitz at bill.pinkovitz@uwex.edu