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Mother Nature was kind enough to turn off the faucet long enough for the EDC Chamber to facilitate a ribbon cutting of the Tesla & ChargePoint Electric Charging Hub at Hangtown Village Square on December 12, 2019.

Small Business Confidence Index Hits Highest Level in Survey's History

Posted By Michael Guta, Small Business News

More than one index is reporting small businesses in the U.S. are feeling more confident than ever. The latest MetLife & U.S. Chamber of Commerce Small Business Index echoes that sentiment. And in this case, the index reached an all-time high with 71.3 for the fourth quarter of 2019.

Q4 2019 Small Business Index

All 50 states are reporting small businesses saw revenue growth in 2019, unemployment is at a 50 year low, and they are also approving of the job the President is doing at record highs. And this optimism is taking place while the trade talks with China are going along with other economic uncertainties.

But even with these uncertainties, small businesses are doing better. In the press release for the index report, Tom Sullivan, vice president of small business policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, says as much. Sullivan says, "Through this quarter, small business optimism has continued to grow reaching unprecedented levels. These high levels of confidence have prompted Main Street employers to increase hiring." Adding, "It is remarkable that millennial-owned and minority-owned small businesses have aggressive hiring plans despite the tight labor market."

Highest Number in Index History

According to the survey for the index, 71% of small business owners have a strong outlook on their environment. Furthermore, they feel optimistic about the health of their business. This is responsible for the high 71.3 overall index number regarding their confidence level about their businesses and financial future.

What is more, their confidence level is responsible for 20% of the owners reporting they increased the size of their staff in the past year. By the way, this is also the highest percentage in the history of the index. Additional factors driving this optimism include positive outlook in their local economy (62%) and they believe the U.S. economy is in good health (57%).

Other Key Findings

More than two thirds or 69% are reporting overall good health, up by three percent from the last quarter. This is the first time it has gone up four consecutive quarters (66% in Q3 2019, 65% in Q2, and 64% in Q1). Another strong number is 83% of small businesses feel comfortable with their cash flow, which is also another high. Strong cash flow greatly determines how small businesses do moving forward. Whether it is expanding to another location or just investing in their company, strong cash flow is key.

8 Illegal Interview Questions (They're Not All Obvious) and Other Interview Practices to Avoid

By Anne Shaw

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has strict laws in place to protect job candidates and employees from discrimination. You should avoid asking job interview questions about age, disability, genetic information, race or ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation, national origin, religion, marital status, having children, pregnancy, or planning to start a family. You can stay in the EEOC's good graces by avoiding questions that can appear to be discriminatory — ones that relate to where a candidate lives, their age, their arrest record, national origin, credit history, family status, financial status, marital status, pregnancy, race or color, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Sometimes, though, you may need to cover some sensitive topics—like availability, legal convictions, physical health, and education — to decide if a candidate is fit for your job. When you do, be careful about how you discuss them. Specifically ask candidates about their ability to carry out exact tasks and responsibilities that relate to the job. Here are some good rules of thumb to avoid the appearance of discrimination when hiring:

- Stay away from anything that isn't related directly to the job.
- Resist the temptation to delve into personal conversation.
- Don't ask about anything you can learn from another source or in another way.
- Be direct about what traits and skills they'd need for the role and ask the candidate to speak to those things.

8 Illegal Interview Questions You DON'T Want to Ask

While some illegal questions like "How old are you?" are more obvious, others are less so. Some questions masquerade as "cultural fit" questions, and others simply pop up when you let the interview meander off into small talk. If you'd prefer never to deal with the EEOC, then remember the rules of thumb from above, and avoid letting your interview conversation head toward questions like these:

1. "What Part of Town Do You Live in?"

This seems like a harmless question — one that would be asked out of curiosity — but it could be interpreted as an attempt to figure out if a candidate lives in a part of town where mostly minorities live. It's best to avoid it. If you want to know whether they live nearby because punctuality is important to you and traffic is heavy where you are, then ask candidates if there's any reason they might not arrive to work on time each day.

2. "What Class Were You in at Rydell High?"

While you may ask a question like this simply because you found something in common with your candidate, it's no longer innocent when you go in a direction that could help you figure out their age. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) prohibits any interview questions that could indicate age discrimination.

3. "Being a Start-Up, We Tend to Have Younger Managers. Would That Be a Problem?"

This is another indicator of potential age discrimination. While it may seem like a valid question about whether you and the candidate will work well together, by asking this question in this way, you imply that you've noticed the applicant's age and see it as a potential reason not to hire them. A better way to ask this is by leaving out references to age altogether. You could say, "Would you be comfortable taking direction from someone who has less on-paper business experience than you do?"

4. "When Was The Last Time You Used Drugs?"

Businesses are not allowed to discriminate against recovering addicts or people who take prescription drugs for health conditions, so your questions must pertain to the current use of illegal drugs. Better yet, follow the rule of thumb not to ask something you can learn from another source. Strike this question from your interview list altogether and simply ask candidates whether they are comfortable taking a drug test prior to and during their employment.

5. "Have You Ever Had a Brush With the Law?"

Asking candidates for information about their arrest record is a no-go zone. The EEOC notes that statistically some minorities are arrested more often, so a question like this could lead to underlying racial discrimination. If you need to assess whether your accounting candidate is trustworthy, you can ask if they've ever been convicted of fraud. Ask references whether the candidate was ever disciplined for violating company policy.

6. "I Hear An Accent. Where Are You From?"

You may just be curious, but when it comes to national origin discrimination, this question is a red flag. Asking it could hint that you might discriminate against a potential employee due to their accent or the fact that they may be from a different country. If language fluency is important in the role, ask candidates direct questions about which languages they are fluent in. You can also formally evaluate their communication skills as part of your interview process. Just don't ask them if they're native speakers or whether English is their first language.

7. "How Many Kids Do You Have?"

Even if you've gone in to the small talk zone with a candidate who has already mentioned having kids, don't ask this. In fact, even if you've already related to each other about having kids, try to avoid asking any further questions around this topic. Asking candidates about their children or if they plan to have children can signal discriminatory hiring practices.

8. "What Are You Currently Making?"

If your business is in NYC, Philadelphia, Massachusetts, Delaware, California, Oregon or Puerto Rico, there is a salary history ban. The ban is limited to certain areas — and sometimes only publicly held companies — for now, but this trend is likely to continue. In fact, lawmakers are already pursuing bans on employer inquiries about salary history in Pittsburgh and New Orleans, so if asking candidates about their previous salaries is one of your go-to questions, you may want to drop the habit sooner rather than later. Instead, ask candidates about their salary expectations.

Other Interview Practices That Can Get You Into Trouble

It's not just illegal interview questions that can come back to haunt you. You also can cross legal lines when you do the following things while interviewing:

Making Promises You Can't Keep

When trying to win over your favorite candidate, it can be tempting to hint at all they could achieve and acquire while working for you, especially if you're a small start-up with huge potential, but be careful. If you imply a specific career path or promise long-term job security, you could end up with a lawsuit. Don't say things like, "I could really see you growing with my company. Who knows? If we do well, you could be VP of Marketing and build your own team in the next three years," or "With your skills and our culture of internal promotion, you could happily work here for the rest of your career."

Neglecting to Use a Standard Set of Questions for Every Candidate

Why is this bad? Because if a candidate finds out you asked them a question that you didn't ask most other candidates, they'll probably wonder why. And their deductions may lead them to believe you discriminated against them in your hiring decision. Asking only female accounting candidates about their availability to work longer hours at month end, for instance, points toward potential gender discrimination. Avoid these situations by using a regular list of questions that cover the basics. Only vary questions when it comes to specific items in a candidate's background, skills, or experience.

The appearance of discrimination is terrible for your reputation, and the related legal battles aren't easy on the wallet either. Avoid being accused of discriminatory practices by understanding the ins and outs of what is and is not allowed in interviews. It is possible to conduct your job interviews in a fair, legal manner and still land strong new hires. Who knows? Maybe you'll even hire someone amazing — someone you might have overlooked otherwise.

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JANUARY 2020 COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Community Observatory
Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center, Campus Dr. Free. \$2 Parking (530) 642-5621 or communityobservatory.com

UCCE/El Dorado County Master Gardener Classes
Jan 4, 9 a.m. – 10 a.m., 1st Saturday Public Tour/Observatory Safe Solar Viewing, \$2 parking - Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville
Jan 11, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m., Second Saturday Open Garden Day, \$2 parking Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville
Jan 25, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m., Spring and Summer Vegetables, Bethel-Delfino Agriculture Building, 311 Fair Lane, Placerville
UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County Office, (530) 621-5512 or www.ucanr.edu/edmg

Haunted Hangtown Ghost Tours
Fridays and Saturdays. (530) 748-0435 or visit https://haunted-hangtownghosttours.com/tours/

Pizza Factory Karaoke Night
Saturdays, 6:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m., 1242 Broadway, Placerville. (530) 626-3034, www.facebook.com/placerville.pizza.factory

Bingo
Tuesdays. Doors open at 5 p.m. Dinner is available at 5:15 with speed games starting at 6:15. Minimum buy-in is \$10.00 and includes 12 regular games. Pollock Pines/Camino Community Center. 530-647-8005, www.pollockpinesca.org

Old Coloma Theatre Presents
Family Theatre Melodrama. (916) 995-8399; email: oscaro@pbic.net or www.oldecolomatheatre.org

Boeger Winery Harvest Tours
Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. tours@boegerwinery.com, www.boegerwinery.com/events

Apple Jack's and Jill's Square Dancing
Wednesdays, 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m., 916-817-9691

Jan 4-5 Placerville Gun Show,
9 a.m. – 6 p.m., El Dorado County Fair & Events Center,(530)

621-5860 or go to https://10times.com/gun-show-placerville

Jan 5 Bingo at the Elks Lodge
Every 1st Sunday of Each Month. Elks Lodge Shingle Springs, 3821 Quest Ct, Shingle Springs. (530) 672-9120, www.placervilleelks.org, parados2@comcast.net.

Jan 08 EDC Chamber Business Luncheon
Guest speaker - Jamie Johnson, Chief Executive Director, Marshall Foundation
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. \$15 member/\$20 non-members. Prepaid reservations required. eldoradocounty.org

Jan 11 Community Breakfast
2nd Saturday of Each Month, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m., Pollock Pines Community Center, Sanders Drive. www.pollock-pines-caminorotary.org

Jan 11 Swap Meet in the Barns
9 a.m. – 2 p.m., El Dorado County Fair, 100 Placerville Dr., Placerville. 530-621-5860, eldoradocountyfair.org/swap.html

Jan 17 Puppet Show
3:30 p.m. – 4 p.m., Placerville Library, 345 Fair Ln, Placerville. www.eldoradolibrary.org

Jan 18 Art & Wine with Something MORE
6 p.m. – 9 p.m., El Dorado County Fairgrounds, 100 Placerville Drive. (530)622-4848 or NuttallK@morerehab.org , www.more-rehab.org/events/art-wine-with-something-more-2020.

Jan 18 Stagecoach Rides
Davey Wisner & Crew, Noon. Placerville Downtown Association, (530) 672-3436, (530) 295-3496 or go to www.placerville-downtown.org

Jan 18 Cooking with Lisa Scott at Mediterranean Vineyards
3 p.m. – 5 p.m., \$15 for club members and \$25 for non-club members. info@medivineyards.com or 530-497-0175, www.medivineyards.com

Jan 18 Third Saturday Art Walk

5 p.m. – 9 p.m., Placerville Downtown Association, (530) 672-3436, (530) 295-3496 or go to www.placerville-downtown.org

Jan 18 Rotary Club of El Dorado Hills Crab and Tri Tip Feed
6 p.m., EDH Community Services District gym, 1021 Harvard Way. www.edhcrabfeed.org

Jan 25 El Dorado Search and Rescue Council Crab Feed
5:30 p.m. – 11 p.m., El Dorado County Fairgrounds, 100 Placerville Dr. (530)626-7111, http://edsar.org

Jan 25 – 26 Gold Rush Paper Show
10 a.m. – 6 p.m., This event showcases Buying and Selling antique paper from the California Gold Rush & U.S History. Holiday Inn Express, El Dorado Hills. (916) 358-3100 or go to https://10times.com/sacramento-gold-rush-paper-show

Jan 25 History and Art of Quilting
1 p.m. at the Coloma Schoolhouse at Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park. The lecture will be followed at 1:30 p.m. by a work session. Materials will be provided for participants to get hands on experience in quilting. First exploration of the domestic skills historically performed by women, in a year-long celebration of the centennial of the passage of the 19th amendment which guarantees and protects women's constitutional right to vote. (530) 622-2470.

For more information on these and other events, visit www.visiteldorado.com Event date, time, cost or locations are subject to change. Prior to attending an event please confirm the information.

Meetings:

- Jan 02 Diplomats, noon, Chamber Conf. Room, 11 a.m.
- Jan 06 EDC2, EDCOE, 11 a.m.
- Jan 08 Business Luncheon, Red Hawk, Henry's Steakhouse, 11:30 a.m.
- Jan 09 Joint Chambers, 7:30 a.m., EDCOE
- Jan 23 Annual Installation Dinner – No Mixer
- Jan 15 Ag Council, 7:30 a.m., Ag Building

Best Sellers to Help You Do Business

2020 California and Federal Employment Poster
You must post a compliant Employment Poster in a conspicuous place in the workplace where all employees and applicants can see it. The poster also must include information about your workers' compensation benefits, payday schedule and emergency contacts. You may need to order several to ensure that your business, branches and satellite offices are displaying the poster according to the law. Failure to comply can result in severe penalties and fines by the state of California. If any of your company's workers are Spanish-speaking, you will need to order the Spanish version.

2020 HR Quick Guide for California Employers (HR Handbook)

These products are produced by the California Chamber of Commerce, a publisher of top-quality human resource products and services with more than 125 years of experience helping California business do business. Substantial discount when you purchase through the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce.

Includes color-coded easy reference sections. Required and recommended forms for California businesses available to download using a special URL provided in the book.

Required Pamphlets Kit
Contains 20 copies of each of six pamphlets that employers must distribute to employees.

California Labor Law Digest 2020 Edition
This comprehensive, California-specific Digest puts answers to labor law questions right at your fingertips, updated with new case law and regulations.

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*Laminated poster w/Poster Protect @ \$63.49

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_____ **2020 HR Quick Guide for California Employers** \$_____ @ \$64.99

_____ **2020 California Labor Law Digest** @ \$174.99 \$_____

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Another business solution brought to you by the California Chamber of Commerce

Tourism Sector Up: Visitors Spend Record \$140 Billion on Travel in State

By CalChamber

For the ninth year in a row, California's travel and tourism economy surged, adding \$79 billion to the state's gross domestic product (GDP). Visit California's Economic Impact of Travel in California report for 2018 shows that visitors spent more than \$140 billion in the state on travel, a 5.4% increase from 2017. The travel and tourism sector also added more than 19,000 new jobs, pushing employment in the industry to 1.2 million jobs statewide. Travel and tourism plays a major role in California's economy. The industry is represented by accommodations, transportation and rental cars, restaurants, retail stores, attractions, gasoline service stations, and other businesses that serve travelers. All of the state's tourism providers benefited from increased visitation in 2018, with direct traveler spend-

ing supporting all industry segments in all regions of the state. Increased travel spending is leading to more than \$4 billion in annual investments in theme park, restaurant and other tourism-related infrastructure. These projects create secondary employment effects, generating jobs in building and construction. Not only does tourism support the state's economy, the industry is a boon for city and county budgets. Last year, visitor spending generated \$11.8 billion in tax revenue for state and local jurisdictions, and was among the top three sources of funding for many counties. This revenue helps fund vital programs and infrastructure projects, and saves California households an additional \$890 in taxes each year to maintain state and local services, according to Visit California. To read Visit California's Economic Impact of Travel in California report, visit industry.visitcalifornia.com.

3rd Annual Tourism Summit Tickets on Sale Now! January 17, 2020 @ 9am - 5:30 pm

The El Dorado County Visitors Authority invites you to attend the 2020 Tourism Summit at the Holiday Inn Express in El Dorado Hills from 9:00am to 5:30pm. Tickets are \$45 and include lunch catered by Old Town Grill, refreshments all day and a wine reception from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. featuring El Dorado County Wines. Attendees will hear from industry leaders on timely topics covering social media tourism trends and the value and use of the on-line travel advisors/planners like TripAdvisor. This is your opportunity to learn how to work with travel bloggers and their unique form of communication, what they want, need and expect from you. Find out what the El Dorado County Visitors Authority has in mind for 2020 and how Visit California is inspiring national and international visitation to the state and Gold Country Region. Find out more at https://visit-eldorado.com/industry-info-resources, By email: tourism@eldoradocounty.org. By phone: 530 – 621- 5885

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You Can Submit Your Event Online!

Did you know that the Chamber keeps a community calendar of events? El Dorado County events can be submitted to <http://visiteldorado.mhsoftware.com/EditItem.html>. Once approved, your event will appear on the online calendar at www.visiteldorado.com and also printed in the Voice of Business newsletter as space allows.