

Program Overview

In 2012, *BusinessFirst* Charlotte ambassadors interviewed 272 companies. This report incorporates those responses.

About *BusinessFirst* Charlotte:

BusinessFirst Charlotte is a business expansion and retention program of the Charlotte Chamber and the City of Charlotte focused on helping Charlotte-Mecklenburg businesses grow. Through problem solving and advocacy, *BusinessFirst* Charlotte serves local businesses by developing relationships to better understand the opportunities and challenges of growing businesses in Charlotte.

We enlist chamber and city staff and a team of 60 volunteer ambassadors to visit business owners and hear first-hand about their everyday problems and help identify solutions. The goal of our personalized meetings is threefold: to **identify challenges**, **solve business problems** and **thank you** for doing business in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

For more information about *BusinessFirst* Charlotte visit www.businessfirstcharlotte.com.

To schedule your *BusinessFirst* Charlotte meeting, call Ashley Hedrick at 704.378.1345 or visit www.businessfirstcharlotte.com to learn more.

Thank you Volunteers:

Ms. Katharine Arno, Speedpro
Mr. Luke Askins, BB&T
Mr. Rich Barker, Web Full Circle
Mr. John Bean, AdvCoach
Ms. Sherri Breault, Advantage Resourcing
Mr. Jamal Briggs, Bank of America
Mr. Charles Carnes, CLG
Ms. Brianna Castle, CEO, Inc.
Ms. Noelle DeAtley, Creative Thinking Group
Ms. Gail Dougherty, Charlotte Business Journal
Ms. Sharon Drake, Principal Financial Group
Ms. Lorna felts, Principal Financial Group
Ms. Leigh Finn, KW Commercial
Ms. Beth Ganoe, ECS Carolinas LLP
Mr. Russ Gill, Professional Communications Video Production
Mr. Steve Giolitti, Xpedx
Mr. Craig Goodson, Messer Construction Co.
Mr. Doug Grant, Ethos Business Advisors, Inc.
Mr. Scott Helms, Employee Benefit Specialist
Ms. Kelly Hensley, Advantage Higher Thinking
Mr. Daryl Hollnagel, Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick LLP
Mr. David Johnson, Principal Financial Group
Mr. Steve Kaplan, Kaplan Coaching & Consulting
Ms. Kristen Layton, Sharp Business Systems
Mr. Roy Lindland, Commerical Works
Mr. Brendan Maginnis, Ameriprise Financial
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Mr. Barry Ozer, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney
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Ms. Hope Prevette, Gibson Group Consulting
Mr. Heath Prior, WealthPlan
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Ms. Brittany Shannon, S. L. Bagby Company
Ms. Trish Shelton, Xtramile Soft LLC
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Ms. Caren Small, Advanced Disposal Services Carolina LLC
Mr. Preston Stanford, Carolina Premier bank
Ms. McKenna Stultz, Sharp Business Systems
Ms. Amy Sullivan, CohnReznick
Mr. Will Thompson, SPX
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Ms. Beth Wallace, neteffect technologies
Mr. James Warder, Solutions for Communications
Mr. Eric Welch, GCG Wealth Management



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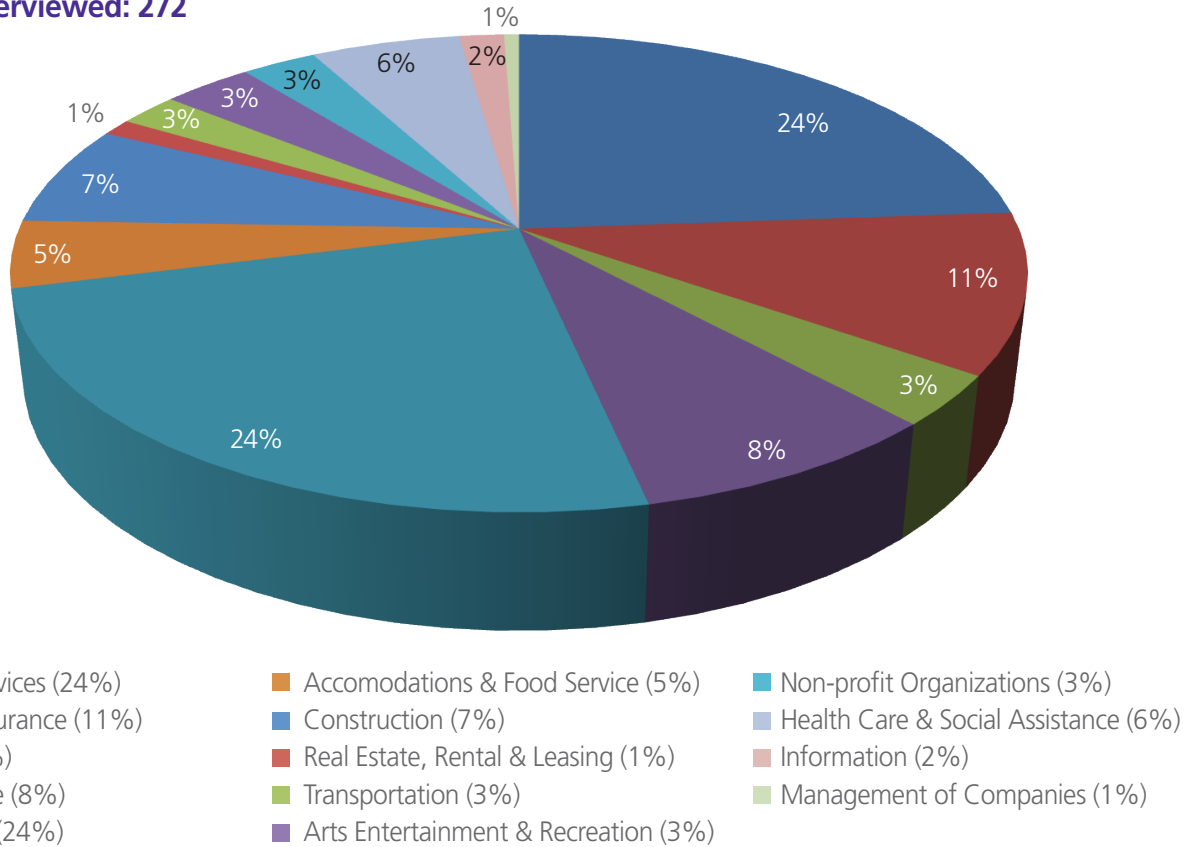
BusinessFirst Charlotte Executive Committee

Noelle De Atley, Creative Thinking Group – Chair
Russ Gill, Professional Communications Video Production — Vice Chair
Stacey Randall, Randall Research – Immediate Past Chair
Ashley Hedrick, Charlotte Chamber

Industry Type

Almost half of the company participants were in the professional services or manufacturing industry categories. However, we still managed to capture 15 different industries, making our data diverse. Collectively, these businesses represent approximately 44,500 jobs (or 10 percent of the Mecklenburg County workforce).

Companies interviewed: 272



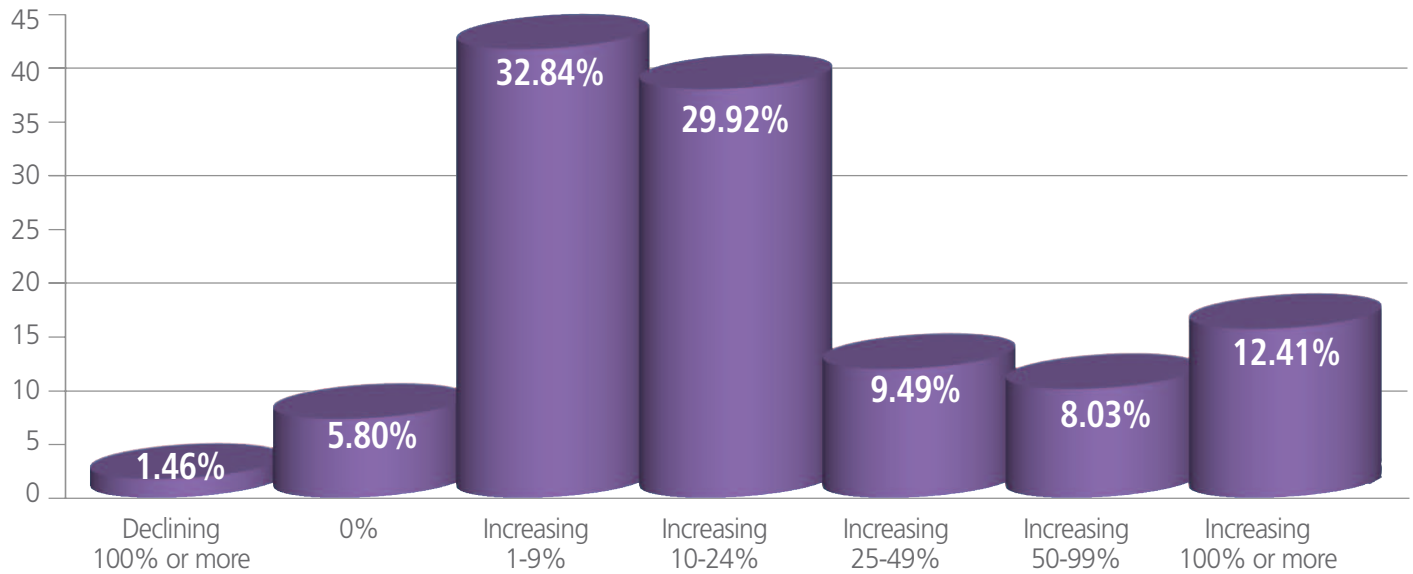
Employment Count & Expansion Plans

One-fifth of the companies interviewed said they had local expansion plans in the next 12 months; furthermore, they plan to add 607 jobs in 2013.

607

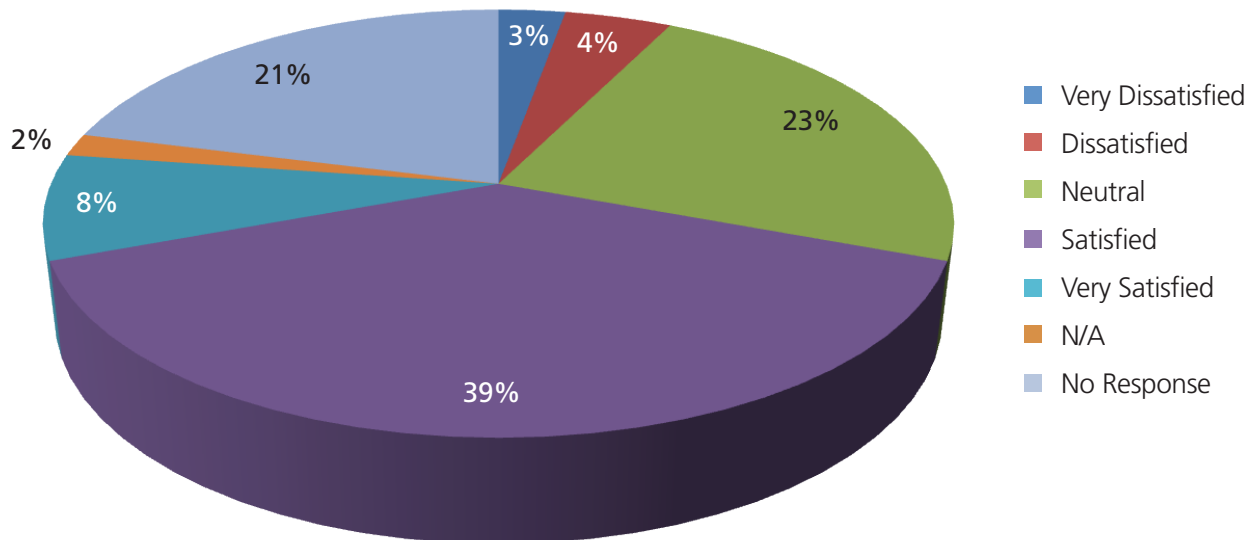
Projected Sales

Only 1.5 percent are expected to decrease their sales in 2013, while a little more than 90 percent of companies interviewed are expecting sales to increase.



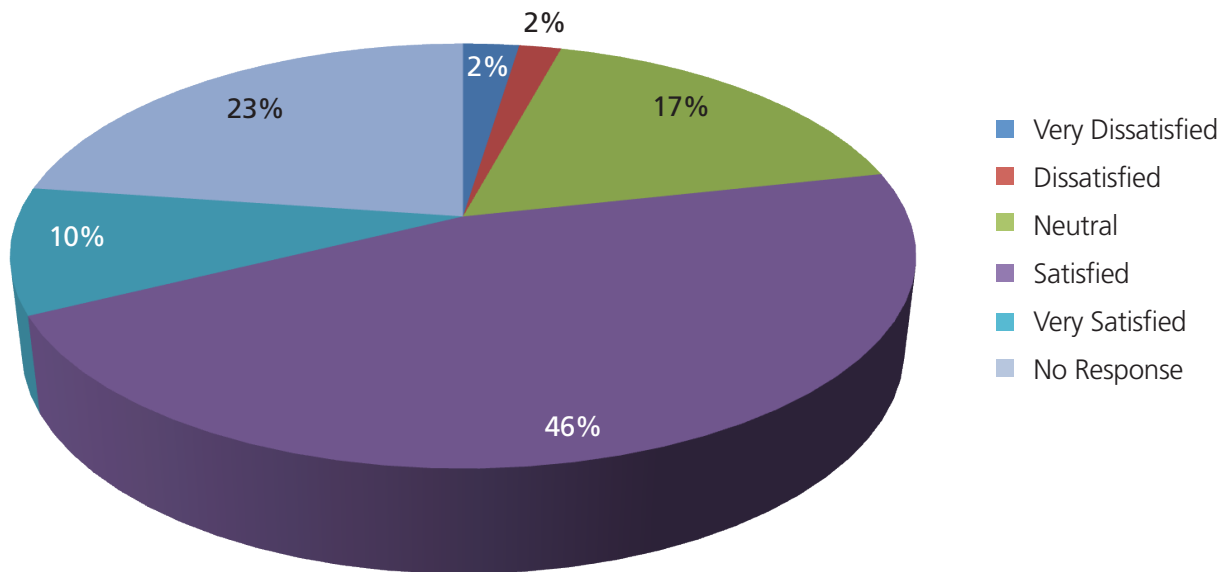
Cost of Doing Business

In 2012, 47 percent of the respondents indicated they are satisfied or very satisfied with the cost of doing business in Charlotte. This is compared to 58 percent in 2011, 40 percent in 2010 and 42 percent in 2009. The cost of doing business includes labor cost, utility rates, taxes, fees and the cost of living.



Local Business Climate

Over the past year, 56 percent of the respondents indicated they believe Charlotte has a positive business climate. This is compared to 66 percent in 2011.



BusinessFirst Charlotte Testimonial

"My first interaction with the *BusinessFirst* program happened several years ago when I received a call from a chamber volunteer asking if he could come visit Mallard Creek and give us an overview of the *BusinessFirst* Charlotte program. It just so happened at the time we were having an issue with the water department, and it was difficult finding the right folks to go and plead our case. The water department was raising our rates, which would have increased our water bill more than 10 times.

We met with the *BusinessFirst* ambassador and outlined our issue. Within days he came back to me with a written summary of our meeting and outlined contacts within the city's department who could help with our issue, and he brokered a meeting with the appropriate folks. The resolution to our situation did not go exactly like we

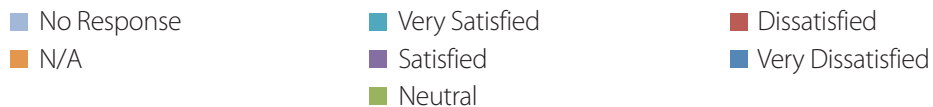
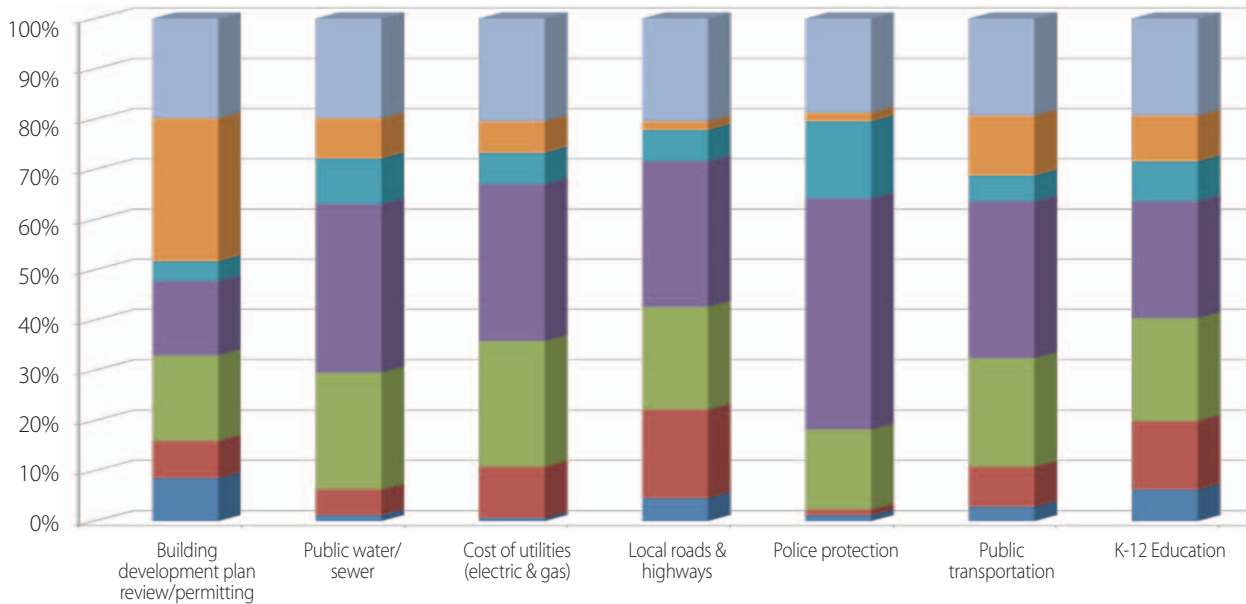
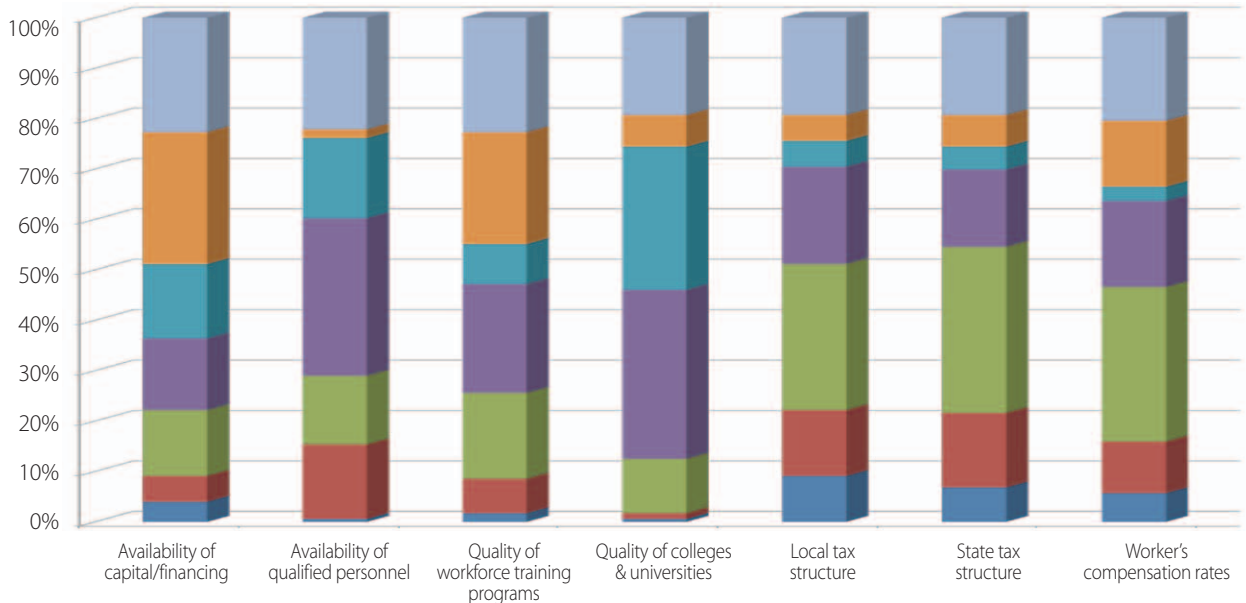
wanted, but the *BusinessFirst* program helped with getting the right people to the table, removed the barriers of communications and put Mallard Creek Polymers in a place that allowed us to state our case. Sometimes it is difficult for a small business to find the right people to assist with issues when they arise, and we have found that the Charlotte Chamber and *BusinessFirst* Charlotte program have been very responsive and helpful putting us together with the right people who can get things done. My interaction with the Charlotte Chamber folks and the *BusinessFirst* Charlotte program has been and continues to be a very positive experience."

Thanks so much for your support."

~ Dan Neri, Vice President and General Manager of
Mallard Creek Polymers

Business Climate

We asked companies to rank 14 business climate indicators from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. For the past four years, local businesses have rated area colleges and universities and police protection as the top business climate assets. Local roads and highways along with K-12 education continue to be major concerns for local companies.



Business Climate

During the interviews, *BusinessFirst* Charlotte participants were asked questions about doing business in Charlotte. Factors that make Charlotte companies successful...

Development in this region has made and will make this a great location for their office.

Diverse workforce/population, access to international airport and weather all make Charlotte a great place to do business.

Ability of the city, county and other entities to attract companies and keep them here.

Availability of good transportation and highways has encouraged companies to locate here and help us get our product in and out quickly. Large corporate headquarters have provided positive momentum for product sales channels.

Market share, community involvement, presence are all factors.

The local vibrant economy helps our business grow.

Experienced workforce, optimistic 'can-do' attitude and a belief that Charlotte businesses can be successful and that other businesses will support you.

Generally, the positive, community service attitude that is supportive of local and regional businesses.

Community service and outreach, our reputation for quality service.

Increase of manufacturing companies in N.C. and the surrounding area.

Favorable business climate, good airport.

Accessibility for travel, comfortable quality of life.

Supportive community.

Location, skilled labor force, energy costs, access to transportation, specifically the airport.

Skilled labor, airport access, weather, vibrant regional economic climate are all important.

We have many employees that travel internationally on a regular basis. The proximity to the Charlotte airport is a factor that lends to our success here.

Positive business attitude and environment.

Location. Very pleased with where we are located.

Charlotte's openness and willingness to be featured on the national news. City's identity is changing and it's growing, and it should use its status as a growing city to get more national TV exposure.

Available qualified personnel, quality workforce training programs, colleges and universities, cost of utilities.

Labor pool. Our company is very focused on customer services, quality of life, airport and education.

Costs of doing business, accessibility to airports are factors.

As we are the largest chemical company in the world, people want to work for us all over and are willing to relocate as Charlotte has a lot of great qualities such as climate, beach access and mountain access and a lot to offer in arts and sports and entertainment areas as well as nice home communities.

Quality workforce.

Proximity to mass transit.

Charlotte has done all the right things – it's an attractive place. The culture of public-private partnership is a very powerful attraction. The business community needs confidence in our tax environment and needs to know what to expect from the governments. We have got to focus on the positives. We are an energy hub, banking hub and transportation hub.

