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[excerpt]

It's the economy, stupid: Or, more accurately, the Biden Administration's proposed "American Relief Plan" – the freshman president's COVID-19 stimulus plan, which is first and foremost on the minds of American executives.

That's according to the latest CEO Survey from accounting giant Marcum LLP and Hofstra University's Frank G. Zarb School of Business, which emerged this week with a whopping 78 percent of respondents supporting Biden's plan as a necessary driver of the nation's post-pandemic economic recovery. Surveying 267 mid-market chief executives, the poll is conducted, in conjunction with Marcum, as part of the Zarb School's MBA curriculum, and its Winter 2021 edition indicates "American businesses are still struggling to survive the impact of the pandemic," according to Marcum Chairman and CEO Jeffrey Weiner.

Among the key findings were the 48 percent of respondents rating their business outlook 5 or higher (on a 10-point scale), up from 35 percent in the [Fall 2020 CEO Survey](#). About 60 percent expect to require a COVID vaccine for workplace-returning employees, with technology access and talent availability remaining key challenges ([full survey here](#)). "While less than half of CEOs rated their economic outlook in the positive range of the scale, there was a definitive improvement in the upper ratings since our last poll," Weiner noted. "This is an indicator of the resilience of the middle-market that hopefully will strengthen in the months to come."