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Research: Fewer but Still Significant Number of Consumers Cutting Back on Dining Out

42% dined out less in 2009, while 46% are eating home-cooked meals more often, says a new study on consumer shopping behavior.

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[PRESS RELEASE] CLEVELAND, OH--(Marketwire - 09/30/09) - One year after the Lehman Brothers collapse sent the stock market into a tail spin and a subsequent increased climb in the unemployment rate, the American workforce's outlook on the economy is brighter, yet its mindset continues to show caution.

In a review of BIGresearch's CIA-Trends from 2007 to 2009 by WorkPlace Media, a marketing solutions firm that monitors the shopping behavior of the country's workforce, data shows that increased confidence doesn't mean a quick return to a greater focus on wants or to previous rates of discretionary spending on things such as dining out.

| Working Consumers ----- | Sep '07 | Sep '08 | Sep '09 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Confident/Very confident in the economy | 43.6% | 29.4% | 33.4% |
| More practical in purchases | 47.2% | 56.9% | 56.4% |
| Focus more on needs vs. wants | 52.8% | 62.2% | 59.4% |
| Reduced dining out | 35.9% | 53.7% | 41.6% |

Source: BIGresearch, Consumer Intentions and Actions Trends

As a result of saving money through reduced dining out, the 2009 survey shows that nearly half (46.1%) of workers report eating home cooked meals more often, suggesting that saving money through eating habits remains high.

"As consumers start to migrate toward their own kitchens, restaurant marketers need to find ways to attract new customers, nurture loyalty, and appeal to the economy-conscious mode," said Dan Wheeler, WorkPlace Media's Executive Vice President and Restaurant Category Leader.

Indeed, the very reason that working consumers are drawn to eating out -- convenience, convenience, convenience -- bodes well during cost-cutting times for consumer packaged goods companies who produce on-the-go meal solutions.

"Working consumers, like all consumers, are looking for ways to save money, and some have done this through decreased dining out. Yet, the workforce has the added element of finding meal solutions that not only save money, but also complement their rushed mornings and hectic evenings," said Stephanie Molnar, CEO of WorkPlace Media. "Therefore, many are meeting these needs through simple, portable products that are great for meals and snacks which can be eaten on the way to work or while sitting at a desk."