



New Survey from LegalZoom Finds Small Business Optimism Is Climbing in 2026

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60% of small business owners describe their outlook for 2026 as optimistic

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Apr. 23, 2026-- LegalZoom (Nasdaq: LZ), America's #1 online legal services company, today released a new survey revealing how small business owners are navigating a complex environment shaped by fluctuating costs, evolving technology, and economic volatility. The survey comes at a time when more Americans are stepping into entrepreneurship: LinkedIn data shows a 69% year-over-year increase in U.S. members adding "founder" to their profiles, underscoring a growing shift toward building something of their own. The results offer a snapshot of how entrepreneurs feel about 2026; optimism is building while uncertainty continues to shape decision-making.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20260423626535/en/>



LegalZoom Small Business Outlook: From Formation to Today

To better understand how founders are navigating this moment, LegalZoom surveyed nearly 1,000 small business owners across the U.S. about why they started their businesses, the current health of their businesses, funding confidence, cost pressures, and plans for the year ahead. The survey also examined how artificial intelligence is influencing day-to-day business operations and long-term strategy.

For many entrepreneurs, independence remains the defining spark. Forty percent say their primary motivation for starting a business was the desire to be their own boss. That entrepreneurial drive comes with a commitment to building something new, from navigating early-stage decisions to managing complexity as the business grows, making access to trusted tools and professional guidance an essential part of the journey.

LinkedIn research finds that more than half of small business leaders are optimistic heading into 2026, a sentiment LegalZoom's survey strongly reflects, with 60% of founders describing their outlook as "optimistic," including 21% who say they are "very optimistic." Founders are enthusiastic about the road ahead while remaining candid about the pressures shaping their decisions.

Cost pressures are a defining theme across these responses, with 53% reporting that operating costs have increased over the past year, forcing them to prioritize financial stability over investing in growth. Access to capital also remains uncertain for many entrepreneurs, with 30% not confident in their ability to secure funding in 2026 if needed.

As founders set their sights on the future, many are looking to artificial intelligence for help. More than half (52%) of small business owners are preparing to expand their use of AI tools in 2026, and among those, 30% believe it will make running their business "much easier." LinkedIn's Work Change Small Business Report reflects that same momentum: 54% of U.S. small business leaders say AI is already essential to their growth, and nearly 60% of small business executives plan to adopt AI tools across their organizations in 2026.

"Entrepreneurs have always thrived in uncertainty, that's the job description," said Jeff Stibel, LegalZoom Chairman & CEO. "What's striking about 2026 is the combination of rising costs, real economic headwinds, AI enablement, and yet more people than ever are choosing to build. That's not denial. That's confidence."

About LegalZoom

LegalZoom is America's #1 online legal services company, transforming how individuals and small businesses navigate the legal system. By combining intuitive technology with access to experienced attorneys, we offer the tools and guidance people need to confidently manage everything from business formation and compliance to intellectual property protection and ongoing business management and legal support.

As AI reshapes how legal work gets done, LegalZoom is at the forefront of the human-in-the-loop approach, ensuring that the speed and efficiency of AI is always backed by the judgment and accountability of qualified professionals. With over two decades of experience and millions of customers served, LegalZoom helps individuals and small businesses navigate legal needs with confidence. For more information, please visit www.legalzoom.com.

Methodology

To better understand how small businesses are navigating 2026, we surveyed small business owners across the U.S. about their motivations at formation, current business health, funding confidence, cost pressures, and plans for the year ahead. The sample included businesses across a range of industries, sizes, and revenue levels.

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Investor Relations
investor@legalzoom.com

Press
press@legalzoom.com

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