CFOs expect to raise prices, but not employee pay

The good: CFOs think the economy is on an upswing. The bad: They also believe the Japan disaster will impact the US. The ugly: More of them than before plan to raise prices. The uglier: Even as CEO pay soars, most other employees can't expect the same for their compensation.

That's according to a biannual survey of CFOs conducted by Grant Thornton. It questioned 318 CFOs and senior comptrollers, 59 of whom were from the Northeast.

Specifically, 48 percent of CFOs overall and 52 percent of Northeast respondents think the economy will improve over the next six months.

As for Japan, 98 percent of CFOs in the Northeast and 93 percent nationally think the US economy will be impacted by the situation in Japan.

And 50 percent of overall respondents and 44 percent in the Northeast expect prices or fees charged by their company to increase. Six months earlier, 27 percent of CFOs in the Northeast indicated they'd raise prices. A year ago, that number was 14 percent.

And another thing: At the same time that companies are reporting nice pay increases for their CEOs, it looks like CFOs don't expect other employees to get the same treatment. Fifty-eight percent of respondents nationally and in the Northeast will keep employee salaries the same. Sixty-three percent nationally and 61 percent in the Northeast will maintain the same level for bonuses.

Hmm.

There was at least one striking difference between CFOs nationally and in the Northeast. In the Northeast, optimism about the economy doesn't translate to positive expectations for their companies. Only 39 percent in the Northeast expect their firm's financial prospects to improve compared to 54 percent of overall respondents.