Perhaps more than any other executive, Marian Salzman is making it her mission to jumpstart her chosen industry in Fairfield County.

As for that marketing industry itself? It is cranking up like a car on a cold morning—and some think that it is one of the first sounds of increased traffic among businesses.

The CEO of Euro RSCG Worldwide Inc., which has an office in Wilton, Salzman is leading efforts to create a self-styled Fairfield County Creative Corridor in Connecticut. Even as she does so, some marketing executives say 2012 is off to a promising start and that more marketing work is a strong signal of overall improvement in the economy as businesses free up cash to spend on promotions.

“We are very optimistic in our pipeline that 2012 will be another strong year,” said Patrick Cummings, CEO of Marketing Management Analytics in Wilton. “In fact we are hiring aggressively to support that.”

Marketing Management Analytics (MMA) measures the impact of ads and other marketing on sales. MMA is a division of Paris-based parent Ipsos, which itself has an office in Norwalk and which the American Marketing Association (AMA) includes among the top five market research firms in the country, along with Danbury-based IMS Health Inc. which focuses on the pharmaceutical industry; and Kantar and The Nielsen Co., which like MMA, have offices in Wilton.

Last September, Chicago-based AMA said the largest market research companies appeared to be improving on a 5 percent gain in revenue in 2010. With MMA’s own revenue up a by a third last year, Cummings expects to hire as many as 18 people between its Wilton, New York City and Chicago offices. Entering February, the company listed two open jobs on its website.

“It’s not demand that is unqualified,” said Doug Brooks, executive vice president for MMA in New York City. “A year ago we were getting a lot of different (requests for information) that were very generic. Now we are getting very specific requests. Folks are moving up the maturity curve of using analytics to support marketing decisions … and they are at the point where they are wanting to implement them in a specific marketing plan.”

David Rothstein is not convinced that marketing is a lock-solid leading indicator of any general economic recovery, but said he is cautiously optimistic for his RTi Research’s prospects this year.

“I think that when it comes to marketing services, a lot of times they lag a little bit going down,” said Rothstein, president of Stamford-based RTi Research. “The bottom falls out but marketing services don’t necessarily get hit right way … There are a lot of good ideas that typically are developed in a recession or when times are tough. Those ideas generate marketing services at some point.”

For businesses large and small still leery of making any major spending commitments, David Parmet of Nurenu Brand Marketing L.L.C. in New Canaan notes that social media has provided a low-cost alternative for companies to keep up with active marketing campaigns, and the analytics are improving to help companies assess the impact of those campaigns.

“Social media is the first thing that starts to come back, then advertising, then public relations,” Parmet said.