

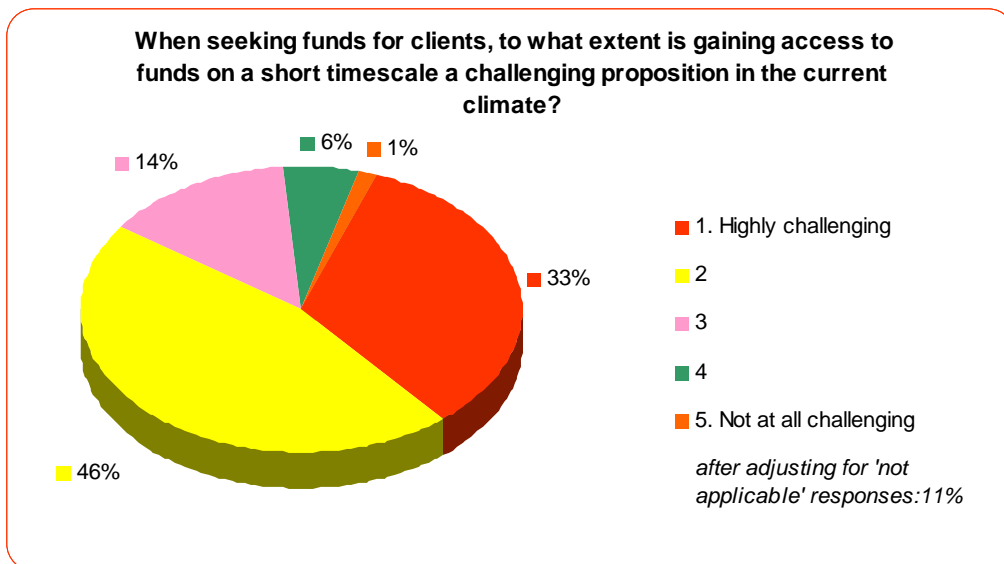
UKBAB 59 July 2007 Analysis

The July survey asked for panellists' views on seeking funds for clients, websites, Ministers for specific UK regions, professional standards – accreditation, gaining work, switching off machines, working from home, and 'complementary businesses'
In total 162 Business Advisers responded to this Survey.

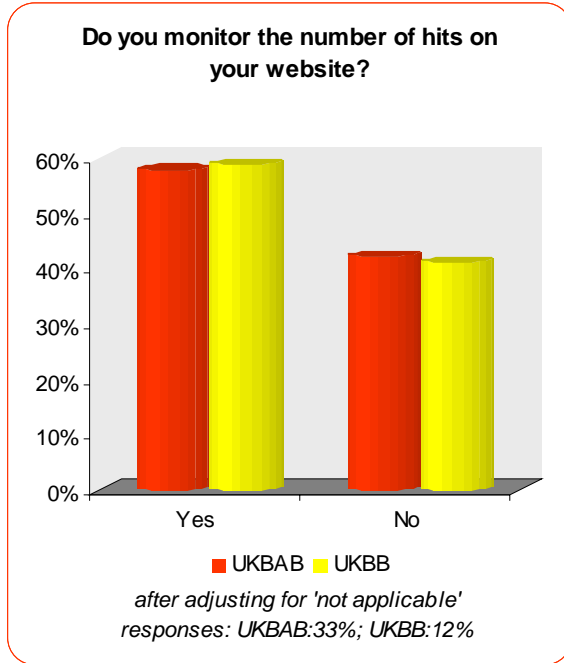
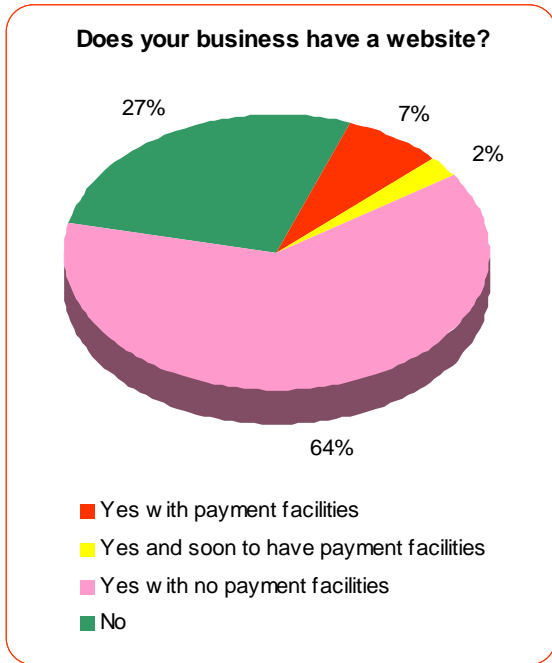
Survey Findings

Recent research has highlighted that professional advisers have a big role to play in supporting businesses by ensuring that they can understand and access the right funding solutions appropriate to their business and, crucially, at the right time. In the July survey business advisers were asked how challenging a proposition they think it is to obtain access to funds for their clients on a short timescale. Nearly 80% of respondents (after adjusting for 'not applicable' responses) said that it is highly or reasonably highly challenging.

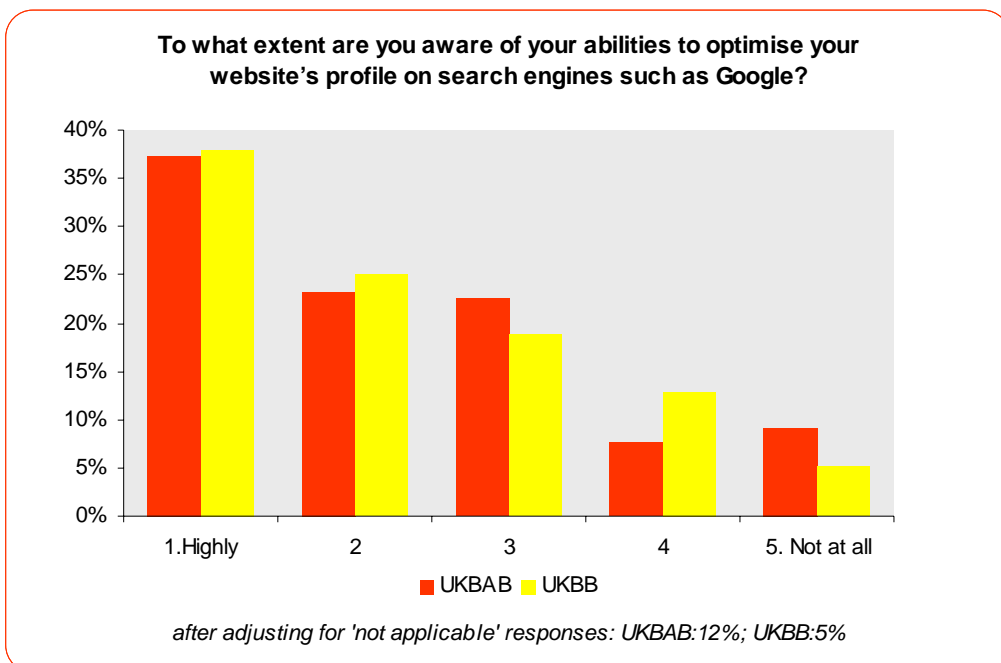
In the parallel survey of smaller businesses, the UKBB, panellists were asked if they have had to pass up business opportunities because of lack of timely funding and nearly 40% have had this experience.



The July survey included five questions about use of the internet for business sales and publicity. With a reported 80% increase in online retail sales in July 2007 over July 2006 ¹, the internet is now becoming far more important as a marketplace for goods and services. 27% of respondents to the July UKBAB do not have a website, and only 9% so far either have or are planning to have payment facilities within their websites. 58% of UKBAB and 59% of UKBB respondents monitor the number of hits on their websites (after adjusting for 'not applicable' responses).

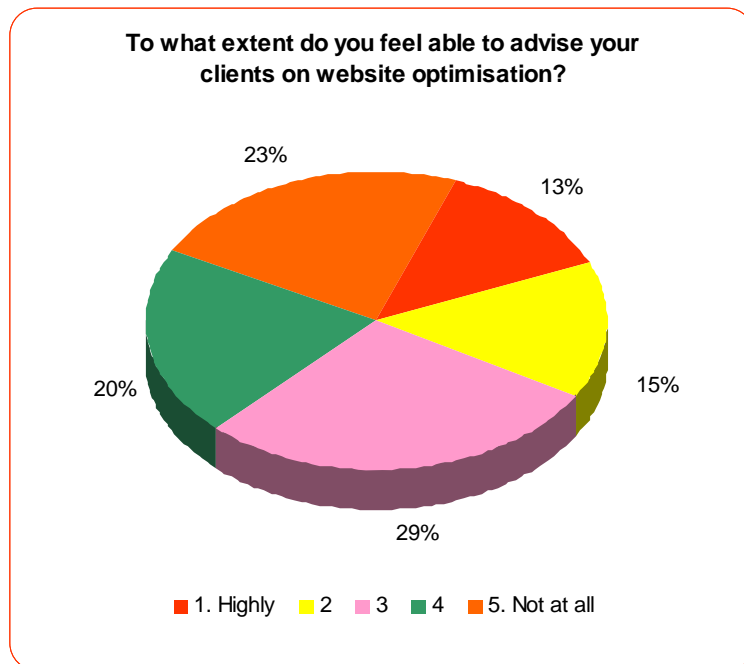


As the number of businesses with websites increases and the sophistication of search machines also increases, it becomes more difficult to ensure that a website receives visitors. Website optimisation is becoming more of a practical necessity. Panellists of both the UKBAB and the parallel survey of smaller businesses, the UKBB, were asked how aware they were of the possible optimisation of their own websites for search engines. Although 61% of UKBAB and 63% of UKBB respondents said they were highly or reasonably highly aware, there is clearly a potential for more information to help business advisers and smaller businesses in this area.

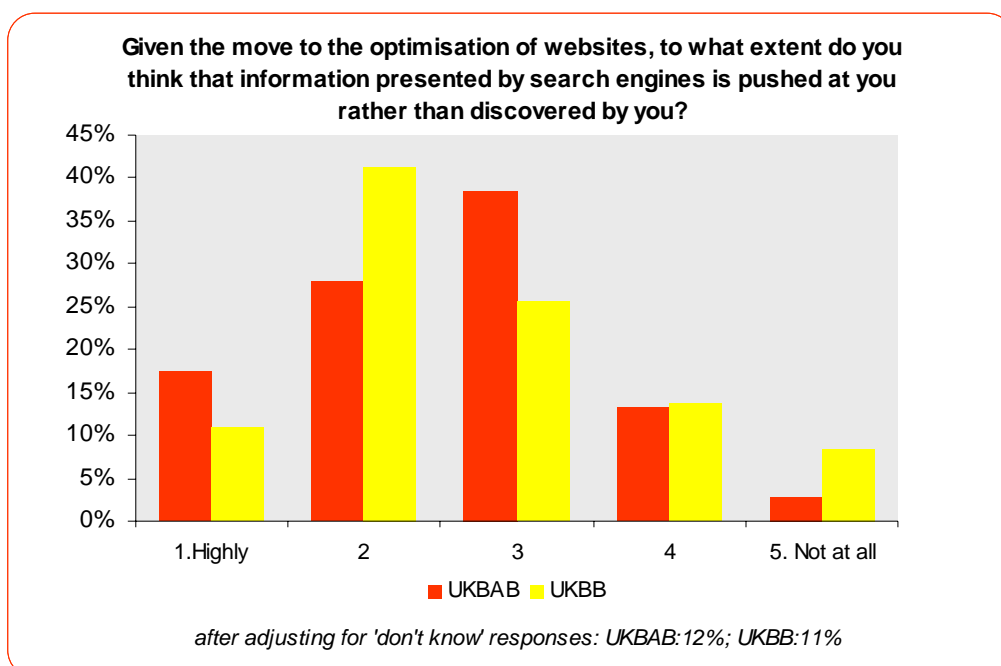


¹ IMRG e-Retail Sales Index Press Release 20 Aug 2007

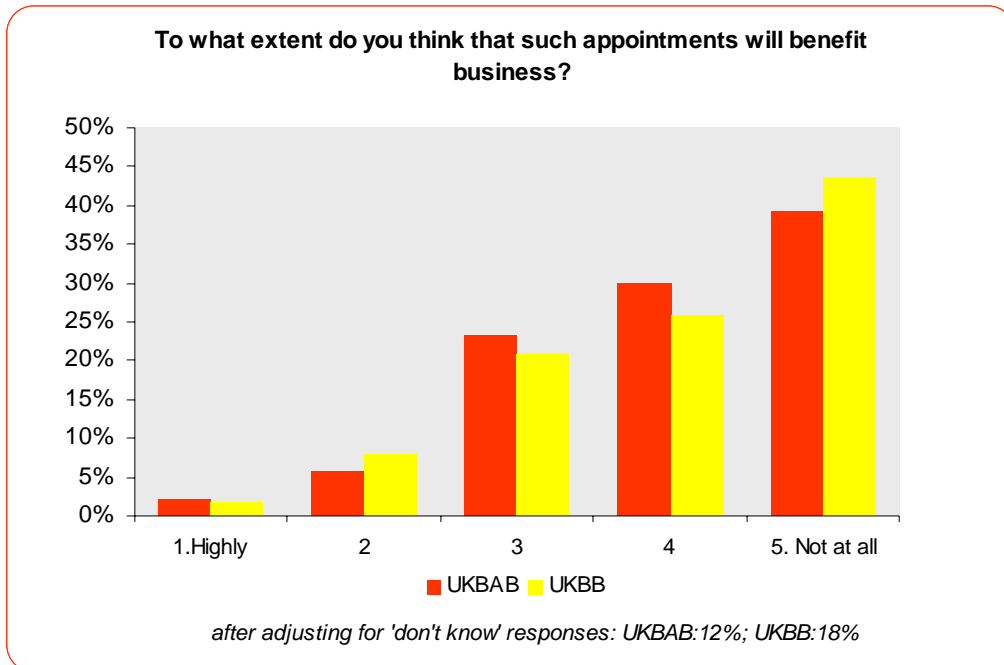
28% of business advisers responding to the July UKBAB survey feel highly or reasonably highly competent to advise their clients on website optimisation, with a further 29% who feel they can give a moderate level of advice.



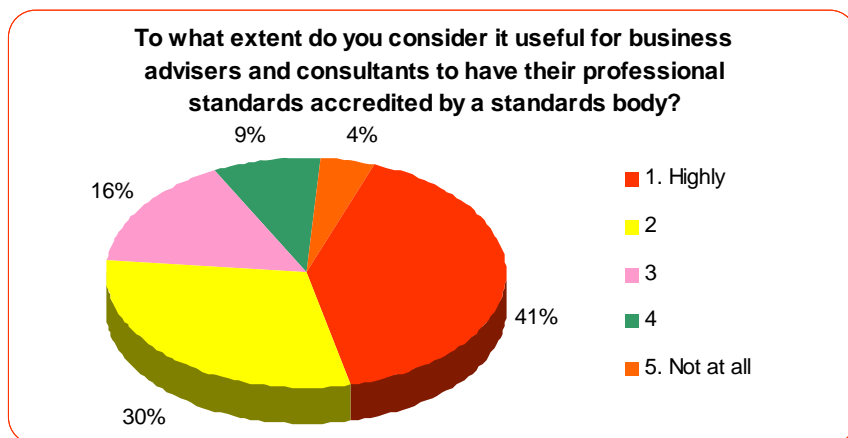
From the point of view of users of search engines, optimisation techniques may result in some search results that are less helpful than in the past because they pick up some 'optimised' entries that are much less relevant and display them near to the tops of entry lists. After adjusting for 'don't know' responses, 45% of UKBAB respondents and 52% of UKBB respondents thought, to a high or relatively high extent, that search engine information is pushed at searchers rather than discovered by them. 16% of UKBAB respondents and 22% of UKBB respondents disagreed, choosing the 'not at all' category or category 4.



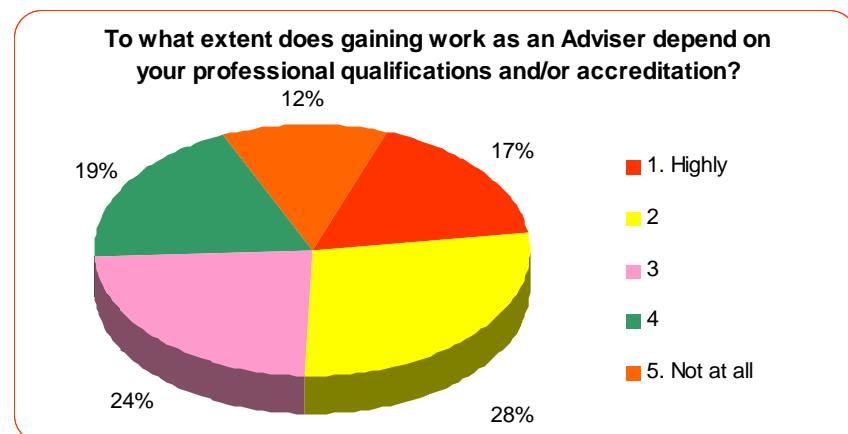
Appointments were made recently of Ministers and Shadow Ministers for specific UK regions and cities such as the East Midlands, Nottingham and Leicester. Regional ministers' functions undertaken will be "clustered around the Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies particularly in relation to economic development." ² At present only 8% of UKBAB and 10% of UKBB respondents to their respective surveys think that such appointments will benefit business highly or relatively highly and 69% of respondents to each of the surveys think that there will be no or very few benefits.



Professional accreditation is clearly very popular amongst the respondents to the UKBAB. 71% consider it useful to a high or comparatively high extent although 13% think it is of little or no use.

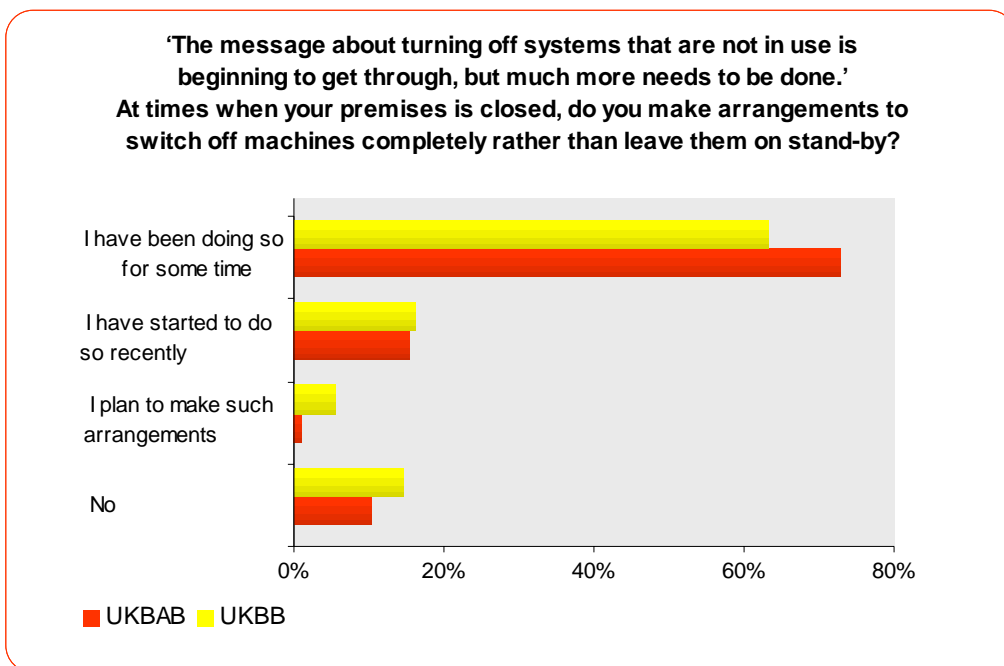


Although professional accreditation is generally thought to be useful, only 45% depend on accreditation and/or qualifications for gaining work to a high or fairly high extent and 31% say that they either do not, or only slightly, depend on them.

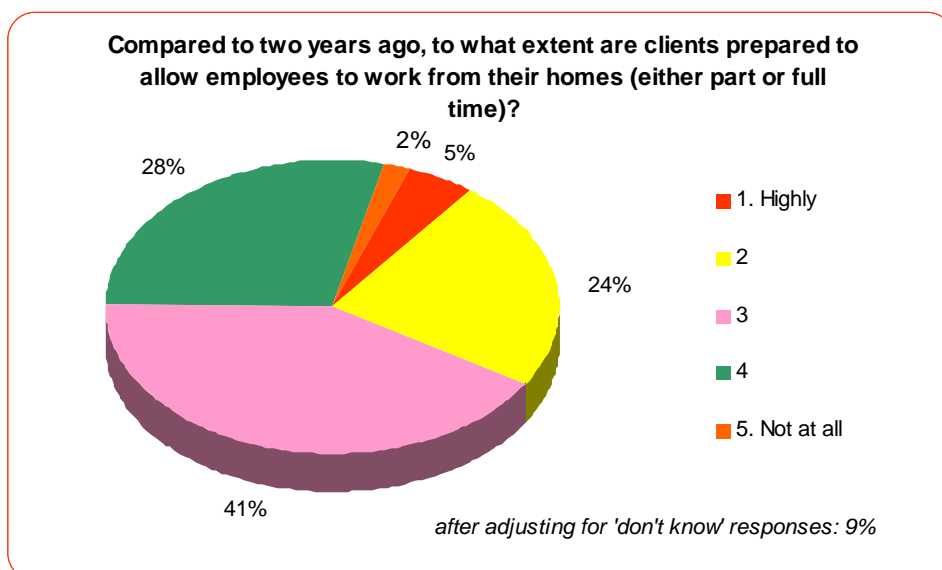


² The Governance of Britain Green Paper, July 2007

The Green Technology Initiative has been set up to encourage the reduction of firms' carbon footprints particularly by reducing power used by IT equipment. Panellists of both the UKBB and the parallel survey of business advisers, the UKBAB, were asked the same question and it seems that the majority of respondents to both surveys are well aware of the savings to be made from switching off machines rather than leaving them on standby since only 11% of UKBAB respondents and 15% of UKBB respondents say they don't switch off. 16% of UKBAB respondents and 22% of UKBB respondents are recent converts, either having started to do so recently or planning to make such arrangements, while 73% of UKBAB and 63% of UKBB respondents have been doing so for some time.



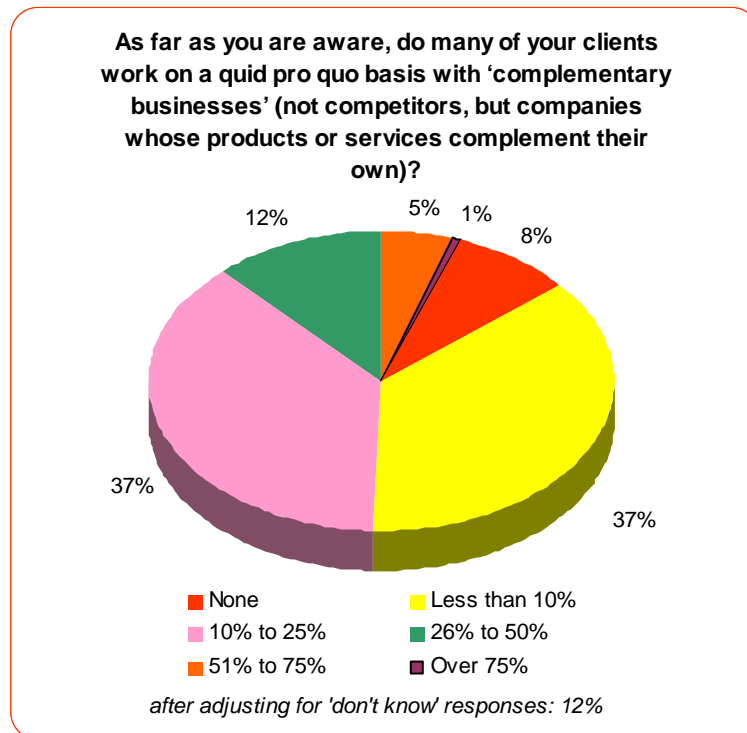
Increased traffic congestion together with insufficient public transport and increasing awareness of the cost of fuel pollution all contribute to increasing pressure on today's transport systems. In 2006-2007 the number of passengers travelling by train grew by 7.5%.³ Numbers of vehicles registered for use on UK roads continued to climb as did estimated traffic levels, while the average vehicle delay on the slowest 10% of journeys increased by 8.7% compared to 2004-2005.⁴ 29% of respondents say that clients are highly or relatively highly prepared to allow more home working by their staff, although 30% say clients are unlikely to be or not at all prepared to do so.



³ Office of Rail Regulation

⁴ Road Statistics 2006: Traffic, Speeds and Congestion – Department for Transport

Working with complementary businesses is less common among the clients of the business advisers who responded to the July UKBAB survey than with the smaller businesses responding to the July UKBB survey. The UKBAB survey found that 43% of advisers say that 10% or less of their clients work with complementary businesses, 49% of advisers think that between 10% and 50% of their clients do, and only 6% of advisers think that over 75% of their clients work like that. The overall average number of clients working with complementary businesses is 17%. The UKBB survey found that 72% of responding businesses have co-operated with complementary businesses.



Listed below are some of the personal views supplied in feedback received from respondents to Survey BAB 59 July 2007

Views expressed are those of individual panellists and may not represent those of the University.

Consultants who work for smaller businesses often get more of their business through word of mouth (which is the best way anyway) rather than through the web and often too much attention is paid by bodies such as Business Link to such things as the web and accreditation. In fact there was an accreditation scheme set up a few years ago which must have been a good money making process for those running the scheme and gave little if any assurance to the ultimate customer. Firms which were prepared to pay the joining fee and go through the rigmarole but which might be very marginal got accreditation. Today we have accreditation rigmarole for parts of Business Link and it gives little assurance for the ultimate customer in my view.

Qu 9 is a hard one - I work in a Business Link where some advisers have high qualifications and some less so but we all need a standard at least to work.

9. To what extent does gaining work as an Adviser depend on your professional qualifications and/or accreditation?

There are web sites which i direct clients to. However, i have never had feedback as to how user friendly they are. I work for an agency organisation and do not have dealings with the web site

6. To what extent do you feel able to advise your clients on website optimisation?

Ref Business Adviser accreditation. Please lets not have yet another round of useless bodies overseeing things. Many Advisers are already accredited e.g as Chartered Engineers, Chartered Accountants etc, I do not see the need for more other than add adviser skills as part of CPD.

Q8 - depends on type of advice given eg HR or H&S vs SEO or general advice.

8. To what extent do you consider it useful for business advisers and consultants to have their professional standards accredited by a standards body?

Re: professional standards / accreditation. As a firm of practicing accountants we are deeply disturbed by the proposals to further reduce compliance requirements for small businesses - and in particular those which are currently designated as micro (turnover under £1,000,000). In our view these are exactly the businesses which most need experienced, qualified advice; and the application of compliance requirements acts as a significant control for good business practices. The proposed relaxation of these requirements will probably result in a reduction in business quality. In addition, it is becoming increasingly questionable as to the economic benefit of qualified accountants operating in this market place - resulting in reduced competition; or competition only from unqualified and unregulated accountants.

Most of my clients are, like me, small and not planning to expand significantly. None of us are advertising, so certainly wouldn't be interested in having websites. Most of this survey was therefore not applicable to me and my clients.

Business Link's latest offering/support services via RDA's is very confusing and not customer focused. Finding funds and fulfilling criteria is increasingly difficult.

No direct pay facilities, but done through 3rd parties (KAGI and RegSoft)

2. Does your business have a website? (option 1 - Yes with payment facilities)

I do not have my own website but I do have a strong web presence, and I have bought the appropriate .co.uk and .com URLs to prevent anyone else from buying them. Ministers should be appointed in areas that need them, and they should only stay in place if they deliver what the public needs. Incompetence should be punished by dismissal, just like it is in the real world! I operate within what I consider to be a highly ethical framework. It is this and not the letters after my name that wins me business. Heaven help us if we have to cope with proving that we are ethical just to please some jumped up oik in the lower levels of Government! I thought everybody switched off everything that wasn't a crucial server every night anyway. What earthly good is served by not doing so? Everybody and every business I meet is highly interested in "joint ventures", and my reputation is enhanced every time I put such pairings in touch with each other.

Re: Q9: Private clients buy what/who they like on a personal basis - but government and the Public Sector will not even meet with advisers who do not have the specified qualification - what ever that is at the present time. Currently it seems to be 'on the new register'!

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