

## UKBAB 61 September 2007 Analysis

The September survey was a Special Edition questionnaire for UK Business Support professionals. Joining our regular panellists were consultants and advisers from the wider business adviser community, sharing their views on the state of UK business, their own roles and the health of the economy. This will provide a timely insight from the professionals working at the 'coal face' and will assist the new Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR) in developing appropriate policies. The total number of respondents taking part in the UKBAB Survey was 676.

### Survey Findings

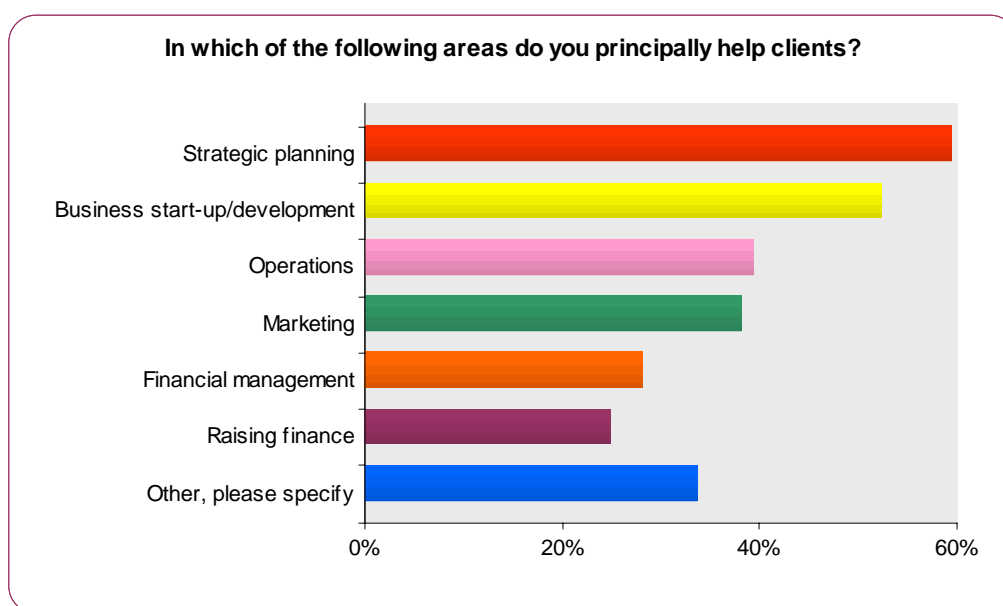
The Survey covered a broad raft of issues surrounding the work which business advisers do. It stimulated many extra observations from respondents, who provided valuable and thought provoking ideas and comments both directly arising out of questions and related more specifically to their own areas of expertise and the quality of advice being provide to new and growing businesses.

The opening question centred round the areas of guidance in which advisers principally offer advice to clients. Advisers chose as many of the options offered as they wished, which turned out to be an average of 2.75 selections per respondent.

Nearly 60% offer strategic planning advice and 52% offer help on business start-up and/or development, and 1/3 of respondents offer both of these.

The area offered by the fewest respondents was that of raising finance (25%), and Financial Management was offered by only a few per cent more: 28%, and only 15% offered both of these services.

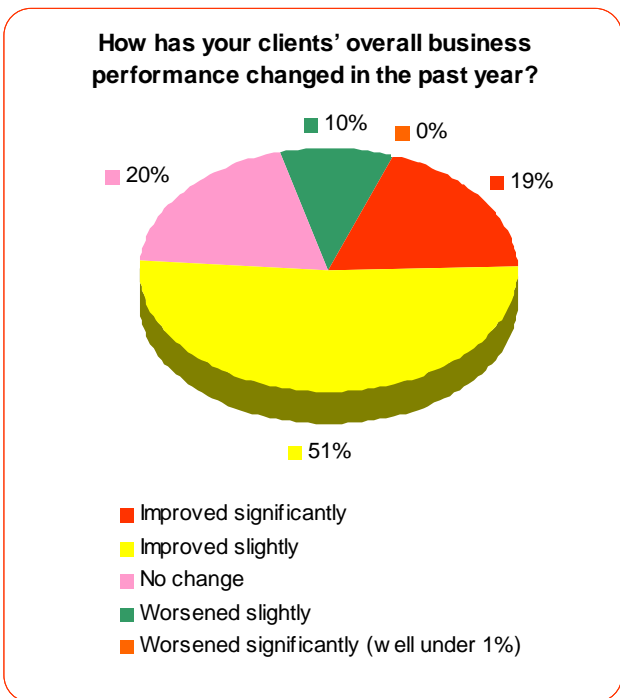
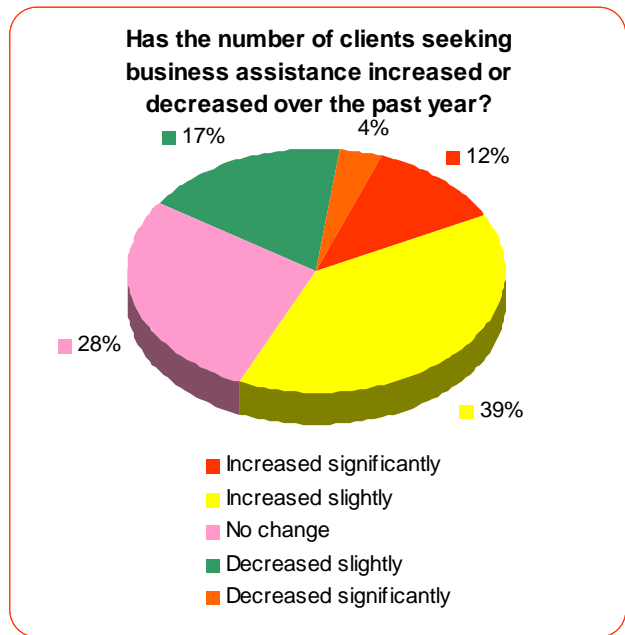
In response to the 'Other, please specify' option, areas in which respondents are active included Accounts and Tax, Business Processes, Change Management, Compliance, Corporate Governance, Customer Service, Exporting, Grant Funding, HR (many different aspects) and Investors in People, ICT, Innovation, Intellectual Property, Manufacturing, Materials Sourcing, Overseas Operations, Project Management, R&D, Risk Reduction, Social Enterprise, Web Commerce.



The last year has seen an overall increase in the balance of client numbers for business advisers.

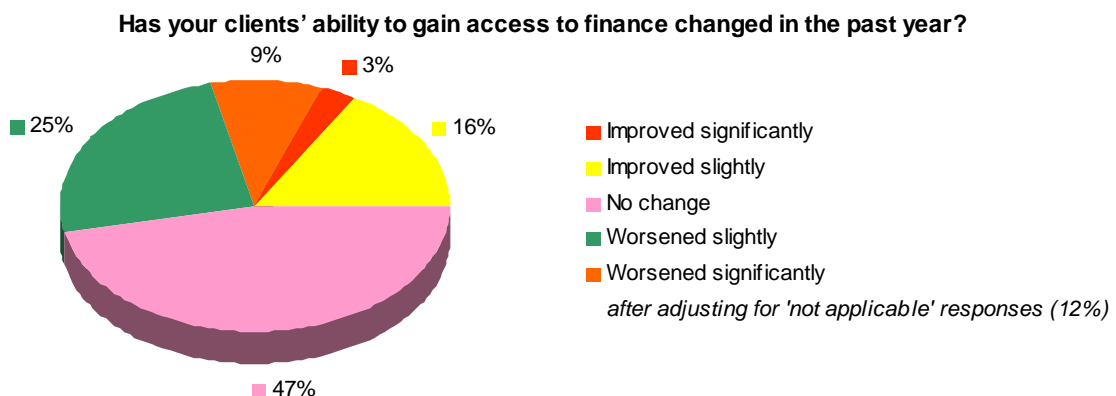
Over half the respondents increased their number of clients over the past year, with 12% experiencing significant increases in number.

21% of respondents have lost clients, with 4% having a significant drop in client numbers.

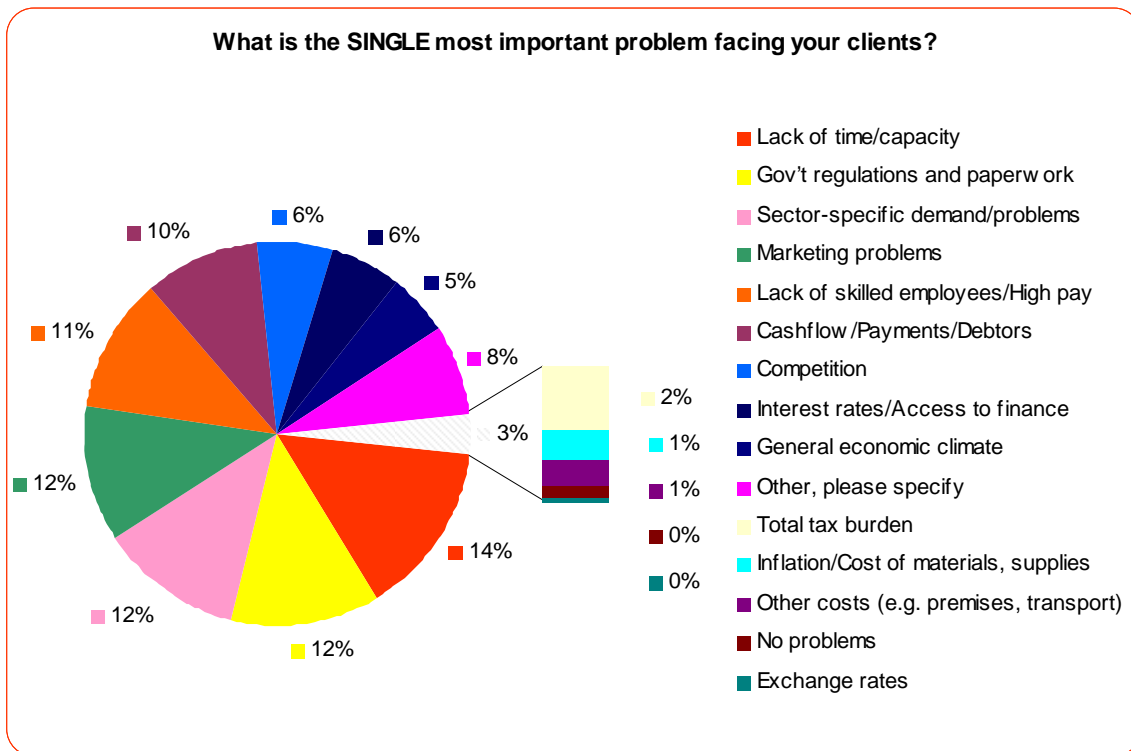


52% of respondents have seen small improvements in their clients' business performance over the last year, while 19% say that improvement in business performance by their clients has been by a significant amount. Only 10% say that performance has worsened.

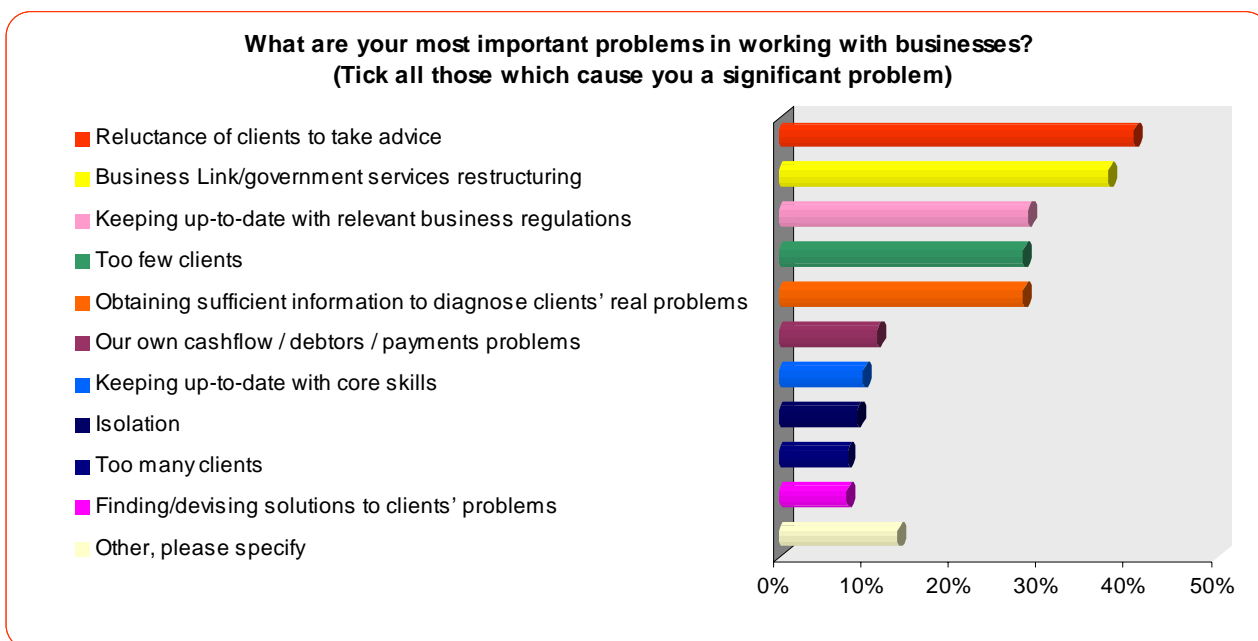
More Business Advisers say that their clients' ability to gain access to finance has worsened in the past year than say it has improved, although nearly half say there has been no change.



Lack of time and/or capacity came top of the list as the single most important problem faced by Business Advisers' clients, but government regulations and paperwork, sector-specific demand/problems, marketing problems and lack of skilled employees/high pay were all perceived by more than 10% of respondents as being the single most important problem for their clients. 8% of respondents think their clients face other more major problems, and these included reduced business support and funding, lack of personal & business management skills, and (inadequate) strategic planning and several others.



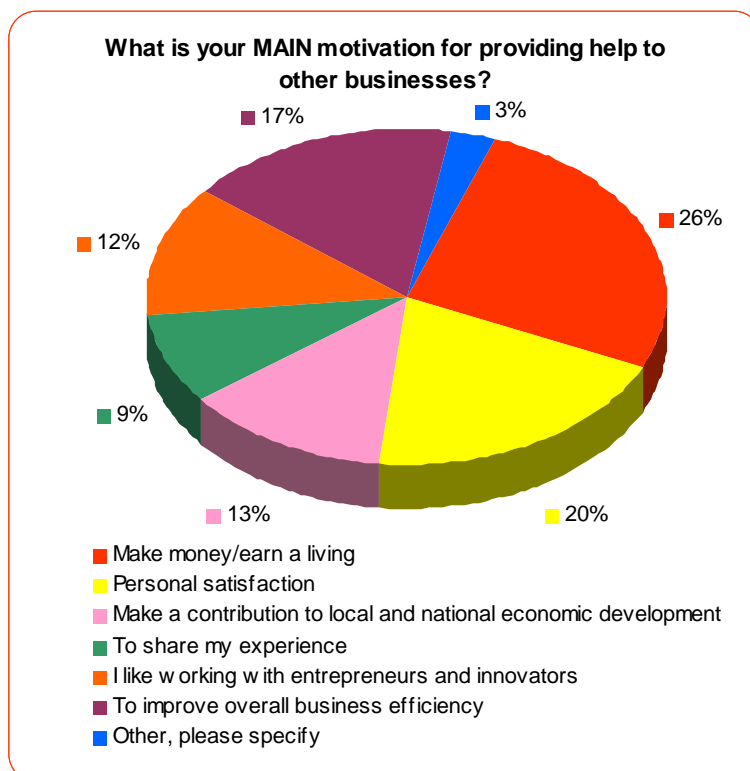
Panellists were asked to identify the most important problems encountered when working with businesses. The average number of boxes ticked per respondent was 2.2, and 40% said that clients' reluctance to take advice was one of their most important problems. The second most important problem was Business Link/government restructuring, chosen by 38%. 14% opted to provide alternative suggestions via the 'Other, please specify' responses. These included Both lack of support funding and too much of funded support culture, and many others.



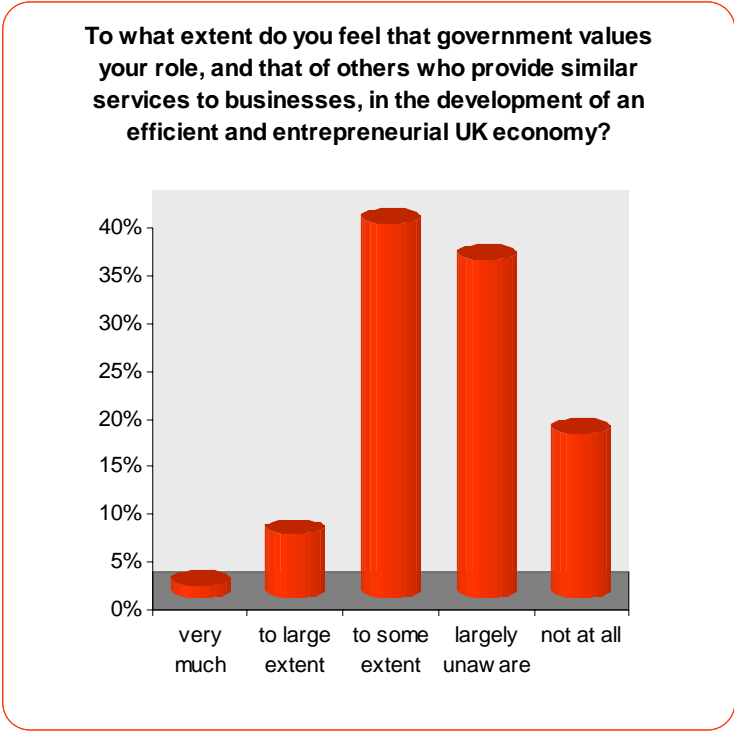
51% of respondents think that vision and leadership are the qualities most obviously lacking in UK business management, and while 45% chose personal management/development, 44% selected managing employees. Amongst other qualities and skills submitted via the 'Other, please specify' option were lack of basic business management skills/understanding, lack of ability to delegate or think strategically, and being risk averse.



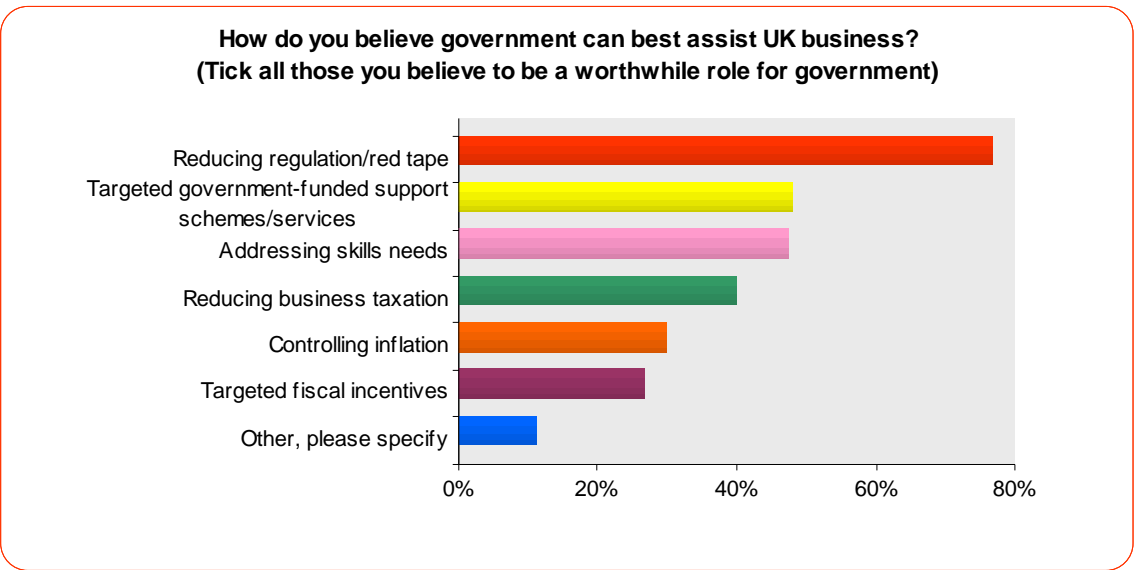
Over half of the respondents to the September UKBB survey say they are mainly motivated by wanting to help and improve business generally, with these responses being in the categories of: making a contribution to local and national economic development (13%), sharing their own experiences (9%), enjoying working with entrepreneurs and innovators (12%) and wanting to help improve overall business efficiency (17%).



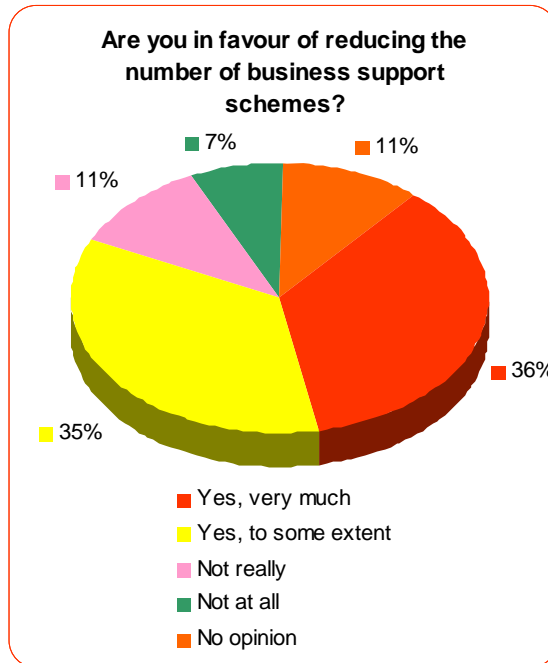
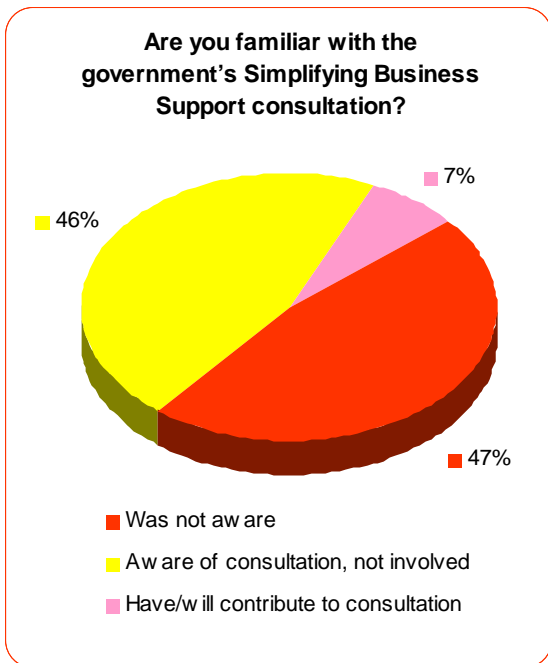
Over half (53%) of the respondents feel that government is largely unaware or not at all aware of the contribution to the economy made by business advisers and others providing similar services. However, amongst those who said that their main motivation for helping other businesses was to make a contribution to local and national economic development, the reaction was more positive in that 64% said that they think that their profession is valued very much, to a large extent or to some extent. Those whose main motivation is to make money/earn a living were the most disenchanted, with 65% feeling that government is largely unaware or not at all aware of their contribution.



Asked how panellists believe that government can best assist business, reduction of regulation and red tape was checked by 77% of respondents, targeted government-funded support schemes/services and addressing skills needs were selected by 48%. 11% of respondents added their own comments to this question and these encompassed a wide range of views across the spectrum from favouring no government involvement at all, to far more government input.



The Simplifying Business Support consultation was run by the Department for Trade and Industry and was open from 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007 until 14<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The government is seeking to reduce the number of business support schemes from 3,000 to 100 by 2010. 47% of respondents were not aware of the consultation and only 7% contributed to the consultation. The current proliferation of schemes is unpopular with the majority of respondents, as shown by the results of the last question in the survey. 71% said that they were in favour of reducing the number of business support schemes but 18% disagreed.



Listed below are some of the personal views supplied in feedback received from respondents to Survey BAB61 September 2007\*

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

\*If you would like a copy of the 14 page document containing all relevant comments, please send your request to Rick Eagles. Email: [rick.eagles@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:rick.eagles@nottingham.ac.uk)