



KEYNOTES FROM MARCH

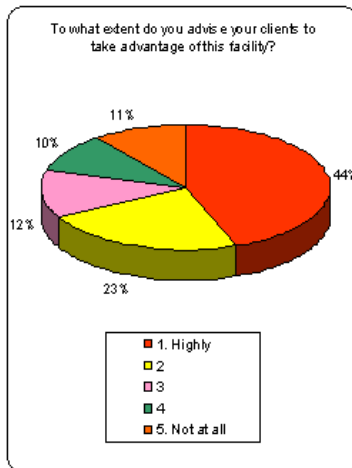
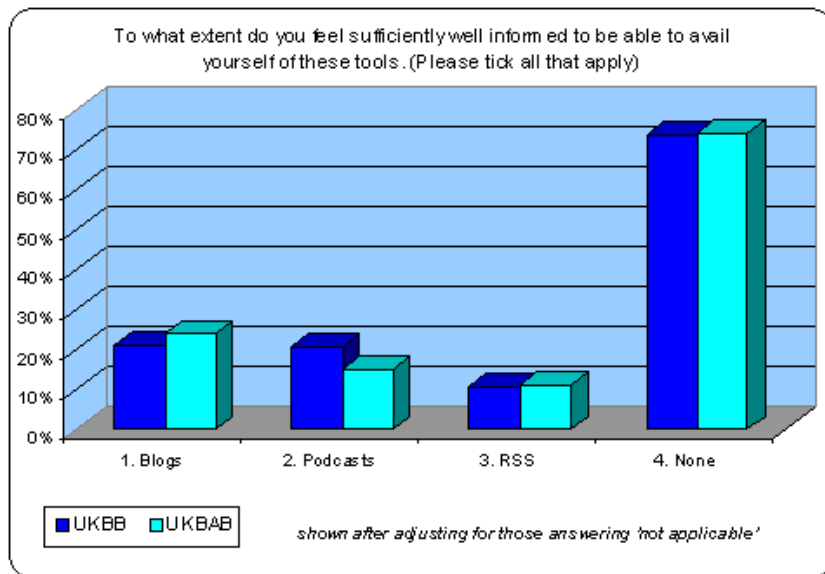
Blogs and Podcasts — your views on the latest marketing ‘must dos’?

Businesses slow in joining the Podcast revolution.

Blogs and Podcasts are familiar territory for the i-pod generation, but how well informed are business advisers when it comes to these issues?

The Panellists’ view:

74% of UKBB respondents said that they didn’t feel sufficiently well informed on these issues and, of the 23% who did, Blogs are far more familiar than Podcasts and RSS.



Businesses slow to follow advisers’ lead.

The Government is encouraging small businesses to join the digital age by offering incentives of tax-free payments to employers who fill in tax returns online

Business advisers were asked to what extent they advise clients to take advantage of the online facility. Results showed that 67 per cent of respondents offer this advice to a high or relatively high degree.

On the university’s UK Business Barometer, small businesses responding to the same question, revealed that 44 per cent of them already make the annual PAYE returns online and one-quarter have filed VAT returns online. 39 per cent stated that they have not yet participated in the scheme.



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> ANALYSIS FOR MARCH 2006

Marketing “must do’s” and advice to RDAs are among the topics explored this month.

Q1. Blogs, Podcasts and RSS are being hailed as the latest marketing “must do’s”. To what extent do you feel sufficiently well informed to be able to advise on these issues?

Q2. Do you feel that increased business representation and advice to RDAs is the best way to improve business support?

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Q4. In order to raise the value of the Business Barometer experience to panellists, we are considering offering the following, optional features.

a panellist only links page to facilitate B2B contact between panellists
a panellist only online forum allowing panellists to air views and discuss business issues
a panellist only question search facility of past questions and results

Q5. Government is offering incentives to those who fill in tax returns online. To what extent do you advise clients to take advantage of this facility?

Q6. Which of the following options would you recommend to clients as useful means of monitoring competitors’ prices?

telephone enquiries, request for quotations, request for brochures, via visits to websites, through trade journals, via visits to competitor’s premises

Q7. When clients are dealing with suppliers, what do you consider to be the most important factor for their businesses?

delivery times, location, payment terms, quality of product/service, price, relationship with suppliers, reliability

Quarterly Trends Questions

The following set of questions has been asked of the panel each quarter since six September 2003:

Q8. Has the number of clients seeking business advice increased over the past 3 months?

Q9. Over the past 3 months, to what extent have you witnessed a change in the number of people wanting to start up a business?

Q10. Has your clients ability to gain access to finance changed in the past 3 months:
(Improved significantly, Remained the same, Worsened significantly)

Q11. Approximately what percentage of your client businesses find that there is a shortage of appropriately skilled labour?

Q12. In your estimation, what proportion of your clients’ businesses will have ceased trading in the next 12 months as a result of the problems that they confront?

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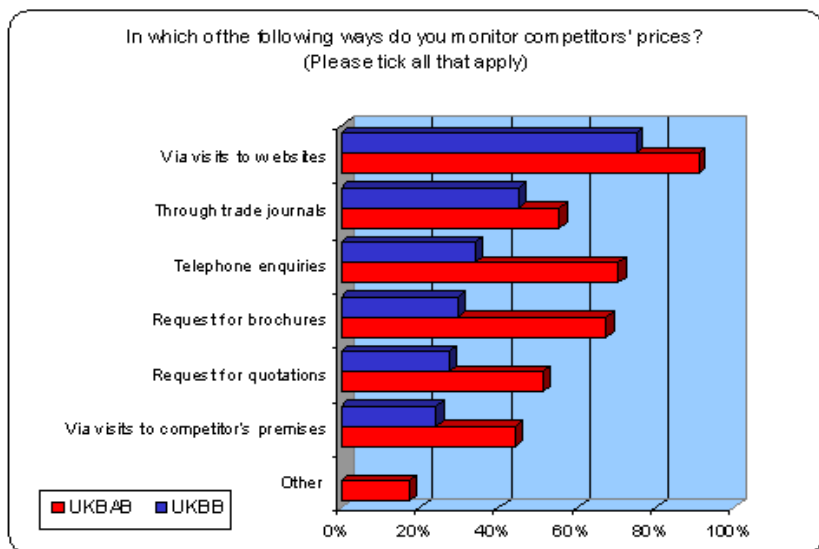
Monitoring Competitor's Prices

The best way is to visit their websites or give them a call but, some panellists beg to differ*

***The Panellists' view:**

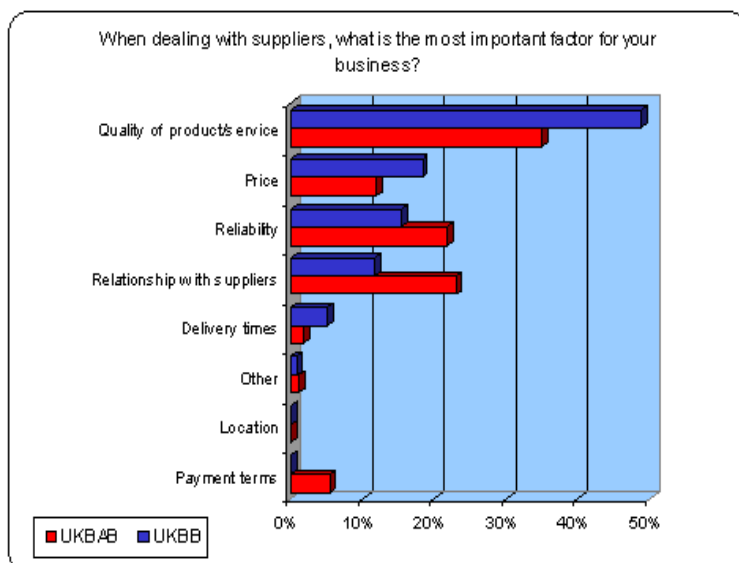
“We monitor prices by asking customers.”

“Where variable items or service are for sale the price is often negotiated on a per job basis. The only effective way of monitoring the competitors in these situations is to ask the customer what others quoted.”



Clients and their suppliers

Businesses and Advisers agree on 'Quality of product'



What is the most important factor for businesses?

Unlike big business, smaller businesses may have little influence over their suppliers. We asked panellists what they thought were the most important factor in their clients' dealings with suppliers. Quality of product or service was preferred by 35% of respondents, but the second most frequently chosen option was the relationship with suppliers (23%) very closely followed by reliability. Whilst agreeing with the advisers' first and third choices, businesses responding to the university's UKBB survey of smaller businesses chose Price as their second option.

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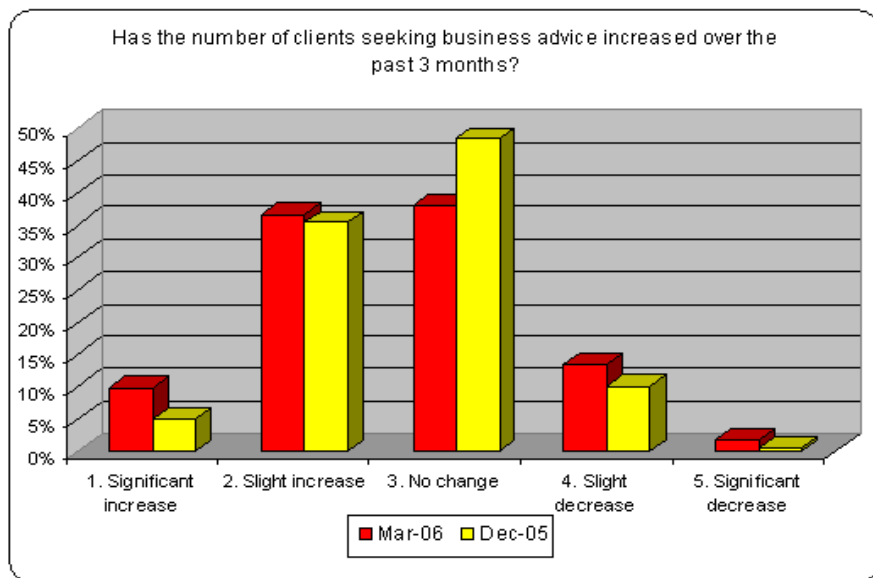
> ANALYSIS FOR MARCH 2006

FIRST QUARTER TRENDS 2006

March sees continued increase in number of clients seeking advice.

The average number of clients seeking business advice continued to increase in the March quarter with the number of advisers experiencing increases in enquiries outpacing the number experiencing Decreases.

To view the full set of March Trends graphs, visit:



Other trends in brief: overall increase in start ups—no improvement in access to finance.

To view the full set of the March trends, visit the UKBAB website at www.ukbab.ac



Greater transparency of business needs as observed by the adviser community

For an in depth look at Advisers views on the March issues and to find out how they differ from those of the businesses, access the full version of the March findings on the 'Analysis' pages of the UK Business Adviser Barometer site at:

www.ukbab.ac

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