



BUSINESS ADVISER BAROMETER

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> KEYNOTES FROM MARCH 2007 - BAB55

Specialised advice for specific groups — is it out there? Are they really that different?

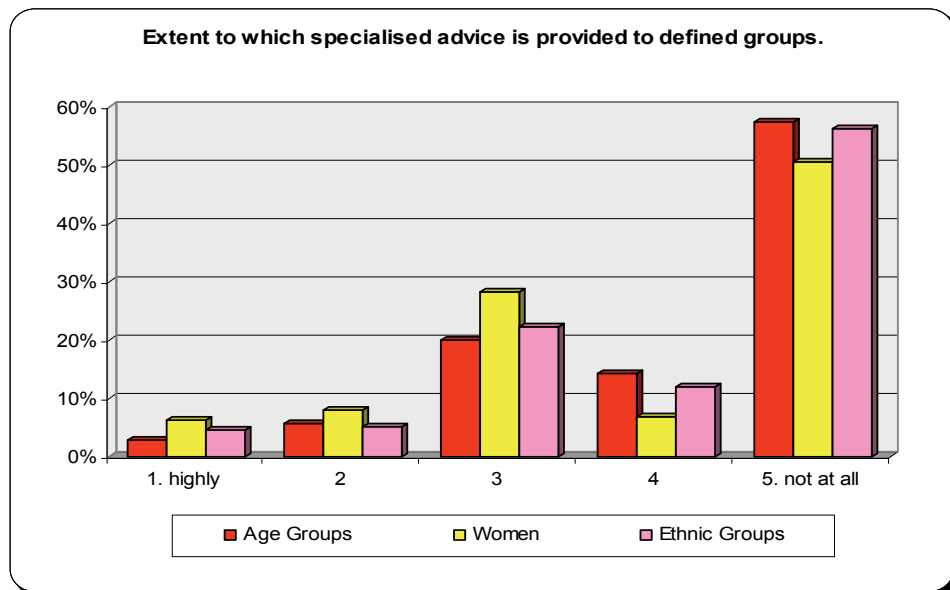
It is sometimes claimed that different groups, as defined through characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity, are looking for support agencies with specialised capabilities targeted at their group to help them start and build their businesses.

Members of the panel were asked to what extent they provide advice to defined age groups, women and ethnic groups. The responses showed that although a small proportion provide specialised advice, the large majority do not. The percentages providing specialised advice to defined age groups to a high or reasonably high extent were:

Age Groups 9% Women 14% Ethnic Groups 10%

The same problems are faced by anyone.

The question attracted a number of individual contributions from respondents mostly themed around the thought that all these groups face similar problems which are also the same as the problems faced by anyone starting in business, especially with regard to obtaining funding. These all also said or implied that business advisers should be competent to advise in all aspects and circumstances.



Panellists' view

'I, with all of my colleagues both male and female, object to being asked to give priority to any group of persons. I/we give all our clients the best advice within our capabilities without regard to ethnicity, sex sexual orientation or any other irrelevant segmentation.'

'No matter who seeks assistance in business advice the adviser should be competent enough to deal with all aspects.'

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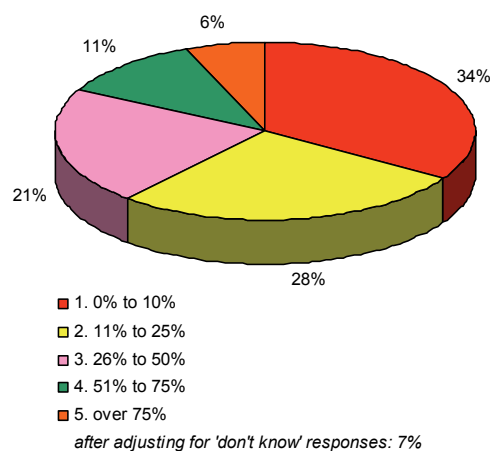
Unpaid labour—how much do your clients rely upon it?

The National Statistical Office Labour Force Survey reported that in the Nov – Jan 2007 quarter there were 100,000 unpaid family workers in the UK.

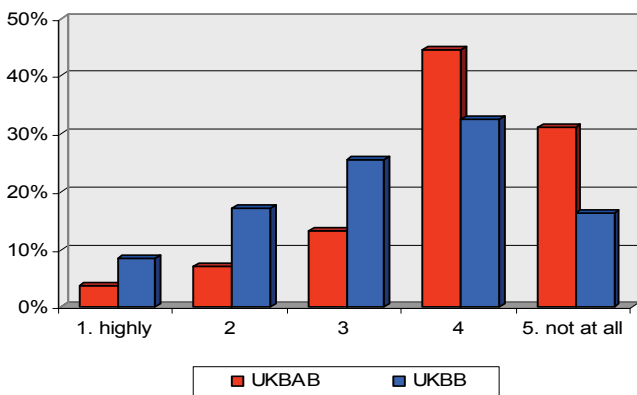
In the March 2007 UKBAB survey, advisers were asked what proportion of the firms they advise has some reliance on the unpaid labour of family or friends. 34% said less than 10% and 49% said between 10% and 50%, after adjusting for 'don't know' responses.

The parallel monthly survey of smaller businesses, the UKBB, found that 38% of respondents never rely on unpaid family or friends' labour and 26% very rarely do so. Smaller responding businesses, in terms of turnover, rely more on unpaid labour than larger businesses, with 23% of businesses with turnover less than £1M needing family or friends to help out as 'volunteers' on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

What proportion of the firms that you advise has some reliance on the unpaid labour of family or friends?



In your experience, to what extent is corporate identity theft a serious concern for your clients?



after adjusting for 'don't know' responses: UKBAB 11%

Businesses 'relaxed' about Corporate Identity theft

The majority of respondents to the UKBAB March 2007 survey think that their clients are fairly relaxed about this risk, with 76% saying that clients are not at all, or not much concerned. This was reinforced by a comment sent in by a respondents, who said that clients are frequently warned about the types of theft and fraud that are prevalent threats to small businesses, and that clients are often not persuaded until current examples are quoted.

In the UKBB parallel survey, businesses were asked directly how much they were concerned about corporate identity theft. Respondents to this survey ranged from being fairly relaxed about this risk, with 49% not at all, or not much concerned, to being very apprehensive, with 26% being highly or reasonably highly concerned.

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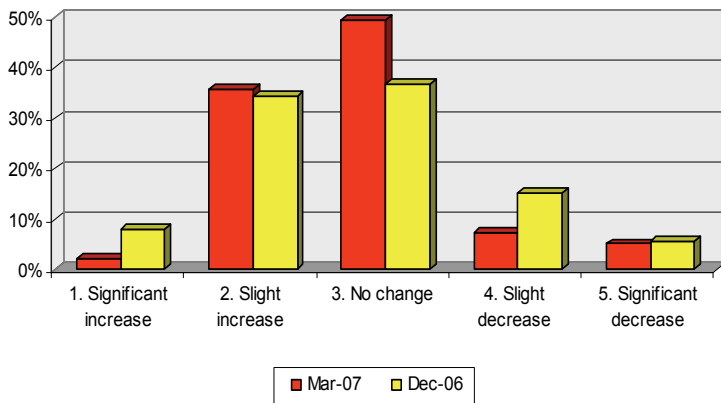
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Trends-First Quarter 2007

Advice sought and start up numbers see increase in first quarter

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



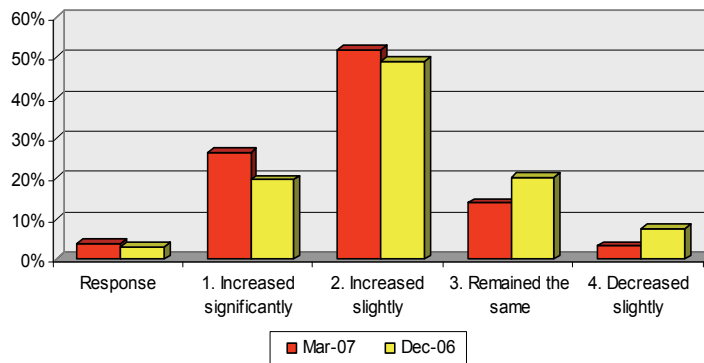
Clients seeking business advice

The average number of clients seeking business advice continued to increase in the first quarter although at a slower rate, and 49% reported no change. The number of advisers experiencing increases in enquiries continued to outpace the number experiencing decreases in enquiries.

People wanting to start a business

The first quarter results for the number of people wanting to start a business showed an increase from the December position. This indicator is seasonal and usually shows increases in the March quarter.

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



after adjusting for 'not applicable' responses: Mar-07 15%; Dec-06 11%

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> QUESTIONS FROM MARCH 2007 - BAB55

- Q1.** To what extent do you specialise in providing advice to particular age groups?
- To what extent do you specialise in providing advice to women?
- Q2.** To what extent do you specialise in providing advice to ethnic groups?
- Q3.** What proportion of the firms that you advise has some reliance on the unpaid labour of family or friends?
- Q4.** What proportion of people approaching you for advice on starting up a business are graduates?
- Blogs and Podcasts are being referred to more regularly in national media, how often, in practice, do you access blogs and podcasts for business purposes?
- Q5.**
- Q6.** In your experience, to what extent is corporate identity theft a serious concern for your clients? (Corporate Identity theft occurs when somebody uses the name of your business and other information for fraudulent purposes).

Q7. Quarterly Trends Questions

The following set of questions has been asked of the panel each quarter since 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:
- 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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Greater transparency of business needs as observed by the adviser community