

KEYNOTES FROM MARCH

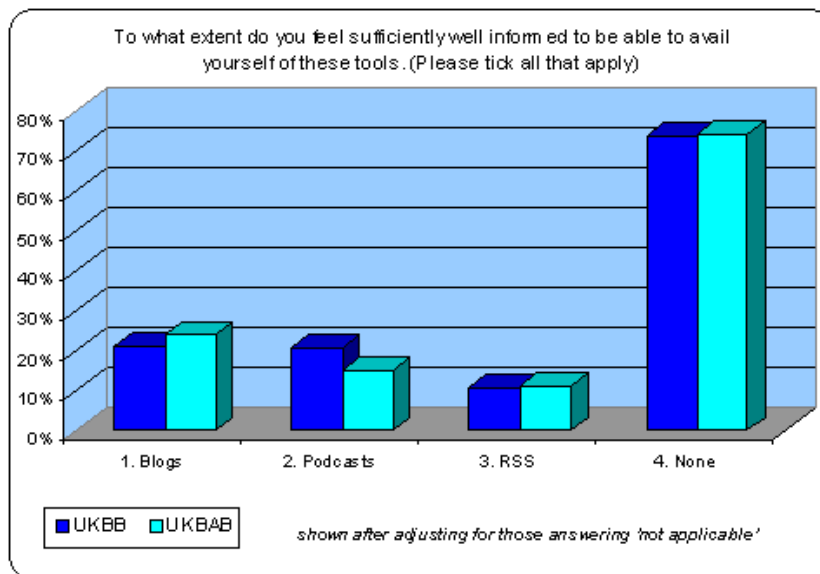
Blogs and Podcasts – your views on the latest marketing ‘must dos’?

Businesses slow in joining the Blog and Podcast revolution

Blogs and Podcasts are familiar territory for the i-pod generation, but how well do businesses fare when it comes to taking advantage of the latest internet technology?

The Panellists’ view:

Of the 142 business people responding, almost three-quarters said they did not feel sufficiently informed to be able to benefit from the new tools.



About the respondents:

In the March 2006 survey, 142 respondents were drawn with the following characteristics:

Sector			
Production & Manufacturing	Distribution	Services	Total
25.4%	9.2%	65.5%	100.0%

Turnover (£)			
< 1 M	1M-3M	>3M	Total
69.0%	18.3%	12.7%	100.0%

Number of Full-time Employees					
1-10	11-20	21-50	51-100	100+	Total
59.2%	25.4%	7.7%	3.5%	4.2%	100.0%

> THE QUESTIONS MARCH 2006

Marketing “must do’s” and monitoring competitors’ prices 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 avail yourself of these tools?

Q2. Government is offering incentives to those who fill in tax returns online. Which of the following returns has your business completed online?

Q3. In which ways do you monitor competitors’ prices?

Telephone enquiries
Request for quotations
Request for brochures
Via visits to websites
Through trade journals
Via visits to competitor’s premises
Don’t monitor competitors’ prices

Q4. When dealing with suppliers, what is the most important factor for your business?

Q5. Do you feel able to negotiate with your main suppliers on key factors of their service to your business?

Q6. 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

Q7. To what extent do you feel that increased business representation and advice to RDA’s is the best way to improve business support?

Quarterly Trends Questions

The following set of questions has been asked of the panel each quarter for the last six years:

Q8. To what extent is your business constrained by skill shortages?

Q9. To what extent is your business constrained by a lack of finance?

Q10. To what extent is your business constrained by low market demand?

Q11. Over the last 3 months, has your business:-

Expanded significantly (more than 10%)
Expanded somewhat (between 5% to 10%)
Remained static
Declined somewhat (between 5% to 10%)
Declined significantly (more than 10%)

Q12. Over the next 3 months, do you expect your business to:

Expand significantly (more than 10%)
Expand somewhat (between 5% to 10%)
Remain static
Declined somewhat (between 5% to 10%)
Decline significantly (more than 10%)

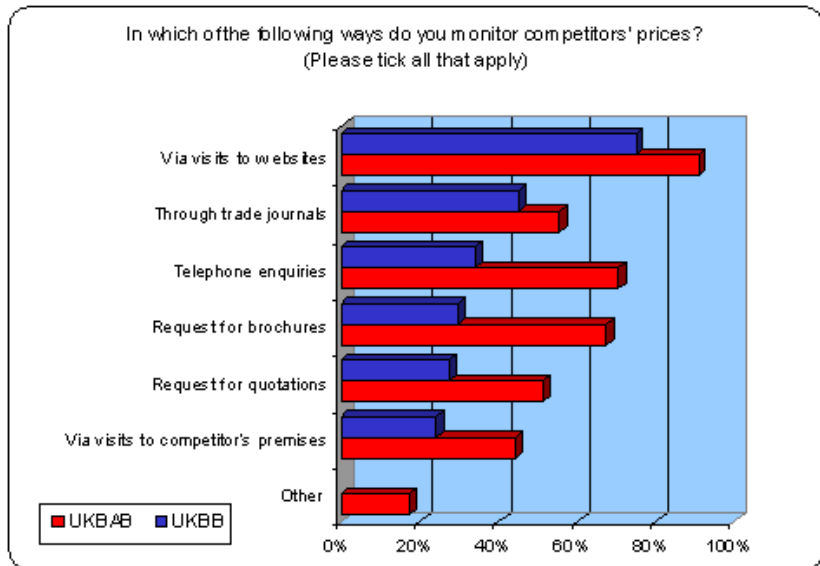
Monitoring Competitor's Prices

19% of respondents do not monitor competitor's prices— What are your preferred ways?

The Panellist's view:

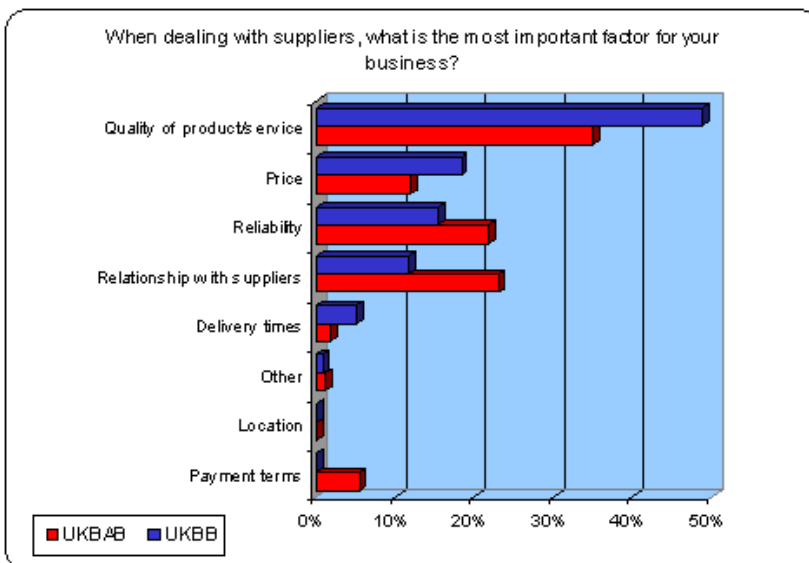
“We monitor prices by asking customers. “

“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.”



Dealing with Suppliers

What are the most important factors for you as the customer?



Do you feel that you can bargain with suppliers?

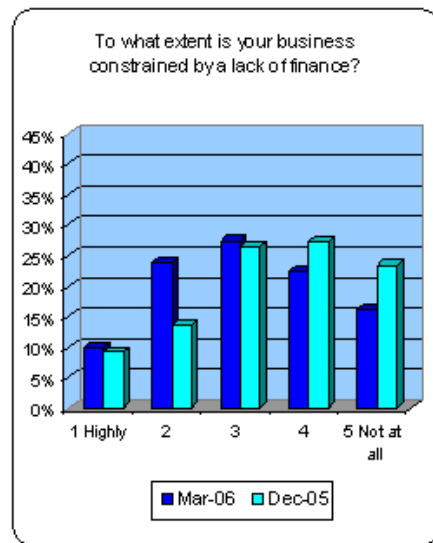
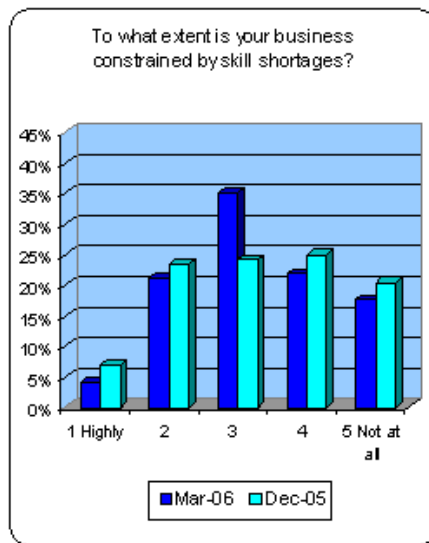
This supplementary question produced some interesting results—11% of respondents do not feel that they can bargain at all with suppliers, whilst 64% are confident that they can negotiate on at least some aspects. 25% say that they are able to discuss all factors in the transaction.

> ANALYSIS FOR MARCH 2006

FIRST QUARTER TRENDS 2006

Constraints due to skill shortages and lack of finance show increase from last quarter.

Businesses with turnovers of £1M - £3M experienced the highest increases in constraints due to skill shortages, although businesses in the services sectors experienced decreases. Constraints due to lack of finance increased most among firms with turnover of under £1M, and also in the services sectors.



MORE FINDINGS FOR MARCH

A round up of further issues explored on the Barometer Project.



Benchmarking key issues for smaller businesses

The March survey also sought panellists' views on other issues,

including online tax returns and increased representation and advice to RDA's on business support strategies.

To access the full version of the March analysis visit www.ukbb.ac

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