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How 'green' is your business?

Many businesspeople are still unclear on the issue of environmental responsibility or do not factor it into decision-making, according to monthly internet surveys by The University of Nottingham Institute for Enterprise and Innovation (UNIEI).

Almost half the responders to a pair of business surveys thought that the concept of a carbon footprint was 'of little or no help' in clarifying the nature of environmental impact.

The findings, which come on the back of public acknowledgement of green issues among major corporations such as Marks & Spencer, suggest many small and medium-sized businesses are not keeping pace with larger organisations in terms of awareness of green issues.

Among those responding to the latest UK Business Barometer (UKBB) and its sister survey the UK Business Adviser Barometer (UKBAB), only 21 per cent deemed the impact of their business on the environment to be a significant factor in their strategic decision-making. By contrast, 48 per cent said the environment is slightly or 'not at all' significant in their strategic decision-making.

The surveys also found that a significant proportion of businesses are not prepared for all that the UK environment can throw at them. Of the businesspeople questioned, 59 per cent said they had no clear plans for how they would continue trading in the face of 'Acts of God' such as the storms which battered Britain in January 2007. And 61 per cent of responders to the survey said they had no specific insurance to cover loss of earnings through such events.

Other findings of the latest survey point to increase use of electronic communication in place of face-to-face meetings. Some 42 per cent of UKBB respondents thought the importance of such meetings had diminished in the face of email and the internet, while only 17 per cent thought their importance had increased.

Face to face meetings are still reckoned to be important by 43% of UKBAB respondents, and 23% think their importance has increased. Businesses contributing to the parallel UKBB survey returned a similar response.

Participants were also asked if they could see any scope for substituting alternatives for face-to-face meetings, such as teleconferencing, videoconferencing and extended email interaction. 73 per cent of businesses and 84 per cent of advisers said that they could.

The growth of email and the internet has also meant that businesspeople are spending less time on the road, the survey suggests. Some 44 per cent said they were travelling less than five years ago, compared to just 14 per cent travelling more.

The UKBB and UKBAB are run by The University of Nottingham and operate over the web to generate very rapid results. The surveys have unique software that enables results to be processed and posted on their respective websites immediately they arrive.

The survey results are published monthly and more information, including a press pack, can be found on the web at www.ukbb.ac and www.ukbab.ac Businesses and advisers wishing to contribute as panellists on the project should visit the appropriate Business Barometer website to register.

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Notes to editors: The University of Nottingham is Britain's University of the Year (The Times Higher Awards 2006). It undertakes world-changing research, provides innovative teaching and a student experience of the highest quality. Ranked by Newsweek in the world's Top 75 universities, its academics have won two Nobel Prizes since 2003. The University is an international institution with campuses in the United Kingdom, Malaysia and China.

More information is available from **Rick Eagles** on +44 (0)115 846 6860, richard.eagles@nottingham.ac.uk; or Media Relations Manager Tim Utton in the University's Media and Public Relations Office on +44 (0)115 846 8092, tim.utton@nottingham.ac.uk