

**DRAFT ONLY NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

PA../07

May 25, 2007

Marketing advice is in  
demand, survey finds

Expert advice on marketing is top of the wish-list for the majority of businesspeople, according to a monthly internet survey run by The University of Nottingham Institute for Enterprise and Innovation (UNIEI).

Respondents to the latest UK Business Barometer (UKBB) were asked what they would opt for if they could receive free expert consultancy advice in a single area, to benefit their entire business.

One choice outnumbered all the other options put together: marketing. A total of 54 per cent UKBB panellists said that marketing advice would be the most beneficial, with management skills next on 15 per cent and finance on 14 per cent. Almost as many said they would seek advice on regulation, while just five per cent said they get expert consultancy advice on recruitment.

The parallel UK Business Adviser Barometer (UKBAB) survey asked business advisers what they were most often asked about when clients were introducing new products, services and processes. The most common area was business plans, with just over 18 per cent being asked for help in this area, while just under 18 per cent needed guidance on marketing. A further 14 per cent said the most common questions were about protection of patents, copyrights and trademarks, while 12 per cent said costing was the most common area of concern.

Inevitably, there are often obstacles to developing new products, services and processes. According to the UKBB, by far the number one obstacle in this area is a simple lack of time, singled out by 62 per cent of businesspeople, while 'regulations' are regarded as the second biggest deterrent. Tied for third were 'lack of in-house skills' and 'lack of customer response to new products or services'.

In terms of profits and the bottom line, the results of the latest pair of surveys suggest some good news. Over the last six months, 36 per cent have seen pre-tax profit margins rise, while 24 per cent have seen a decrease. At the same time last year this position was reversed, with 26 per cent seeing rises and 37 per cent experiencing decreased profit margins.

Responses to the April 2007 surveys were also more optimistic than those for April 2006. In the next six months, 31 per cent expect pre-tax profits to grow, while only 13 per cent expect reductions. The remainder expected profits to remain stable.

That increased optimism was also reflected in a question about staffing levels. Of the businesses managers questioned, 28 per cent expected to increase staff numbers in the next six months, compared to 20 per cent at the same time last year. Although 17 per cent said the number of their employees had fallen in the past six months, only three per cent expect falls in the next six months.

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](http://www.ukbb.ac) and [www.ukbab.ac](http://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.

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