

Guide to the UK's Small Business Organisations

Expert knowledge means success

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

Introduction

There are a number of business organisations available that for a membership fee can provide benefits and services to your business. These include legal helplines, insurance and networking events. Many groups also lobby government on behalf of businesses and entrepreneurs. This publication looks at the main small business organisations available.

Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)

Founded in 1974, the FSB is the largest group representing small and medium sized businesses in the UK. It has a strong voice and is often vocal in its criticism of government policy.

Fees

Membership fees for the FSB start at £120 a year for sole traders. The charges rise depending on the number of employees. Associate members pay £80 a year.

Member's benefits

The FSB's 200,000 members have access to a 24-hour legal helpline for advice on issues including employment law, taxation, health and safety and criminal prosecution. The helpline receives around 100,000 calls a year. Members also receive free business banking, independent financial advice, travel and medical insurance and telecoms services.

Lobbying

The FSB lobbies government on behalf of the small business sector through offices in Westminster, Cardiff, Glasgow, Belfast and Brussels.

Publications

The FSB publishes its First Voice magazine every two months and runs a series of networking events and conferences.

Offices

The FSB's headquarters is in Blackpool and the group has 33 regional offices and 194 branches.

For more information, visit www.fsb.org.uk or call them on +44 (0) 808 20 20 888.

Forum of Private Business (FPB)

Founded in 1977, the FPB's stated aim is to fight "for fair treatment of private businesses by decision-makers and [support] the profitable growth of members".

It represents small and medium sized businesses and provides advisory, support and lobbying services.

Fees

Membership fees for the FSB start low for sole traders. The charges rise depending on the number of employees.

Member's benefits

On joining the body, the FPB's 25,000 member businesses have access to a helpline for general business issues (open Monday to Friday 8am-6pm) and savings on credit card processing, utility bills and invoice finance. The organisation also gives members access to free legal expenses insurance and a 24-hour legal helpline.

Lobbying

The FPB also lobbies government on behalf of its members and is the only UK business group which is a member of the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME), the organisation representing SMEs throughout Europe.

It has stepped up its campaigning in recent years and reorganised its efforts into three key areas: Think Smallest First, Promote Business Growth and Support for Local Business. The group is particularly vocal on the issue of late payment and its impact on small businesses.

Publications

The FPB publishes practical business guides, downloadable HR templates and a weekly e-mail newsletter.

Offices

The FPB is based in Knutsford, Cheshire.

For more information, contact the FPB on +44 (0) 845 612 6266 or visit www.fpb.org

Is this the Ultimate Business Network?

Business Network Online connects you to valuable leads, contacts and opportunities through a trusted network of Chamber members across the UK to:

- Generate business more effectively locally, regionally & nationally
- Win new business with instant tender alerts
- Reach new markets & increase revenue generation
- Raise your company profile on a local, regional & national level
- Access competitive pricing & purchase with confidence

Business Network Online is an exclusive online networking and trading portal from your local Chamber Network - connecting you to member businesses across the UK on a local, regional and national level. The networking and trading portal provides a bespoke and cost effective solution to your business' buying and selling needs enabling you to:

- Maximise your business opportunities
- Receive instant tender alerts via e-mail and text
- Reach new markets & win new customers
- Increase your revenue generation

To register, simply locate your nearest Chamber of Commerce using the post code search or map available at: www.thebusinessnetworkonline.com/

British Chambers of Commerce (BCC)

The BCC is the parent organisation for the UK's network of over 100 chambers of commerce. Its members range from start-ups to multinational companies.

Fees

Membership fees for the BCC vary between chambers although most chambers base the fee on a business' size.

Members' benefits

The BCC's 100,000 members have access to pension and healthcare provision as well as specific support for start-ups including free business banking, telecoms and software discounts, half price membership and free legal advice.

A major focus of the organisation is skills training. It is one of the largest providers of government and commercially funded skills development services to UK businesses. Every year it trains over 200,000 individuals through 6,000 courses.

The BCC also assists with exporting. It provides international trade support including market research, translation services, trade missions, export planning and networking. Being part of a global network of chambers of commerce, the BCC claims it can provide UK exporters with a "unique added dimension".

The services offered vary from one chamber to another.

Lobbying

The BCC lobbies government on issues relevant to its members and also produces several regular reports and surveys analysing the state of UK business.

Publications

The BCC provides a wide range of publications including market reports (for exporters), surveys and other reports.

Offices

Chambers of commerce are available in all regions of the UK. Each region is split up into separate areas mainly on a county basis. The East Midlands, for example, has chambers in Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

The London-based BCC serves as a central point for coordinating policy and support. Although every chamber is accredited by the BCC, each one generally works independent of the London HQ.

For more information, call BCC on or +44 (0) 207 654 5800 or visit www.britishchambers.org.uk/

Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

Founded in 1961, the CBI is perhaps the UK's best-known business organisation and claims to have the largest number of members of any British employers group.

It also claims that it represents companies of all sizes but it is generally seen as the voice of big business. Some 80 of the FTSE 100 listed firms are members with many believed to pay five figures sums in order for the CBI to fight their cause.

Fees

Membership fees to join the CBI are not made public. Costs are often "negotiated on an individual basis".

Members' benefits

Being a lobby group only, the CBI provides its 240,000 members with limited business support services although it does send out a variety of publications and organises networking events, forums, award schemes and conferences.

Lobbying

The CBI is solely a lobbying organisation. It has strong links with ministers and has been credited with influencing government business policy on a number of occasions.

Publications

The CBI sends the CEO of each member company weekly e-mail updates on issues including finance, HR, e-business, manufacturing and health and safety. It also provides a monthly magazine and business guides.

Offices

The CBI has offices in 13 UK regions as well as in Brussels, Washington DC, Delhi and Beijing.

For more information, call +44 (0)207 379 7400 or visit www.cbi.org.uk

Institute of Directors (IoD)

Founded in 1903 and granted a Royal Charter in 1906, the IoD is aimed at individual directors. 70% of its members are directors of small and medium sized businesses who agree the constitution.

Fees

There are two levels of IoD membership – full and associate.

To become a full member you must have been the director of a solvent business for at least three years which has a minimum annual turnover or budget of £250,000. It is also open to individuals who have held the post of director for a minimum of one year, been in business for a minimum of five years and has attended the IoD's course "The Role of the Company Director and the Board".

To become an associate member (where turnover, budget or length of service does not meet Member criteria) you must be a director of an "Entity" or a proprietor of an enterprise which has active operations; or a partner in a professional practice or a senior executive or officer of another Entity who reports directly to a member of the body that is responsible for the strategic direction of that Entity and the implementation of its corporate governance. You must satisfy the Institute that you are interested in the promotion of the best interest of Directors.

The annual charge for full membership or associate membership includes an election fee of £205 and membership charge of £295. The election fee is reduced by 50% and 100% if you join for three and five years respectively. Life membership costs £5,310.

Members' benefits

On joining the body, the IOD's 55,000 members, have access to information and advisory services on issues including tax and law as well as skills courses ranging from one-day events to the opportunity to train for professional qualifications. Private consultations with business advisors and access to executive airport lounges are also available.

Lobbying

The IoD operates as a lobbyist in the corridors of power speaking out on behalf of its members.

Publications

Through its wholly owned subsidiary, Director Publications Ltd. the IoD publishes top quality magazines, guides and books for senior decision-makers.

Offices

The IoD has offices in London, Belfast, Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester and Reading. It also has partnerships which allow members to use premises in Brussels and Paris. Each office gives members access to meeting facilities for meetings and networking.

For more information, call +44 (0) 207 766 8866 or visit www.iod.com

Trade Associations

Many individual trades and sectors are also represented by organisations offering various benefits and services. For more information, visit the Trade Association Forum website at <http://www.taforum.org/>

Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues. We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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