

Where has business support gone? If businesses are to start and grow, they need to be able to find the support available



By Adrian Davies, CEO, Winning Moves Ltd | T: +44(0)1785 827600 | E: adriand@winningmoves.com

Following the withdrawal of Business Link branches and the BusinessLink.gov website, many individuals looking to start a business, or owner managers looking to grow a business don't know where to turn.

In fact, the withdrawal of Business Link is seen by many as a withdrawal of business support completely; with the resultant – and misplaced – perception that there isn't anything available. **This disconnect between the supply side and demand side has the potential to kill enterprise.**

On the supply side, there is a rich seam of support: provided by government in the form of national programmes; made available locally by Councils, Enterprise Agencies, Chambers and Universities; or freely available from other business support organisations, such as Banks and Accountants. There is no shortage on the demand side either: there is intense appetite and need for this information, but there is a lack of transparency, with those that most need it not able to find it.



Connecting supply and demand with an 'honest broker'

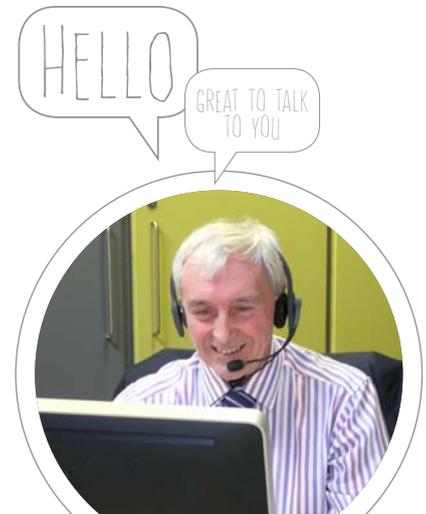
The need to provide information about the support that is available to help businesses start and grow is obvious. It is as clear as the nose on your face. Without access to this information, businesses are handicapped. It is left to chance as to whether a business will know what is available or not. This creates an unhealthy and unnecessary divide between those with the right information and those without; with only those businesses 'with information' benefiting from the support; while those 'without' losing out.

This imperative to provide information creates the need for an 'honest broker'; an individual that businesses can trust to signpost them to information and support that is relevant to them. **This can't be done in the private sector. It is proven time and again that businesses don't trust the advice of the private sector; they see it as biased and self-serving.** This market failure, a need for a service that cannot be provided by the private sector, is at the very heart of publicly-funded business support and is the reason why organisations like Business Link existed.

The importance of a helpline and the Web in connecting supply and demand

Information has to be provided with minimum barriers to access. It has to be provided in real-time and has to be relevant to the needs of a business. In some cases, businesses don't know what they need and there is a requirement for 'intelligent signposting'; a service that understands their problems, their constraints and properly deduces the best information and support to solve their difficulties.

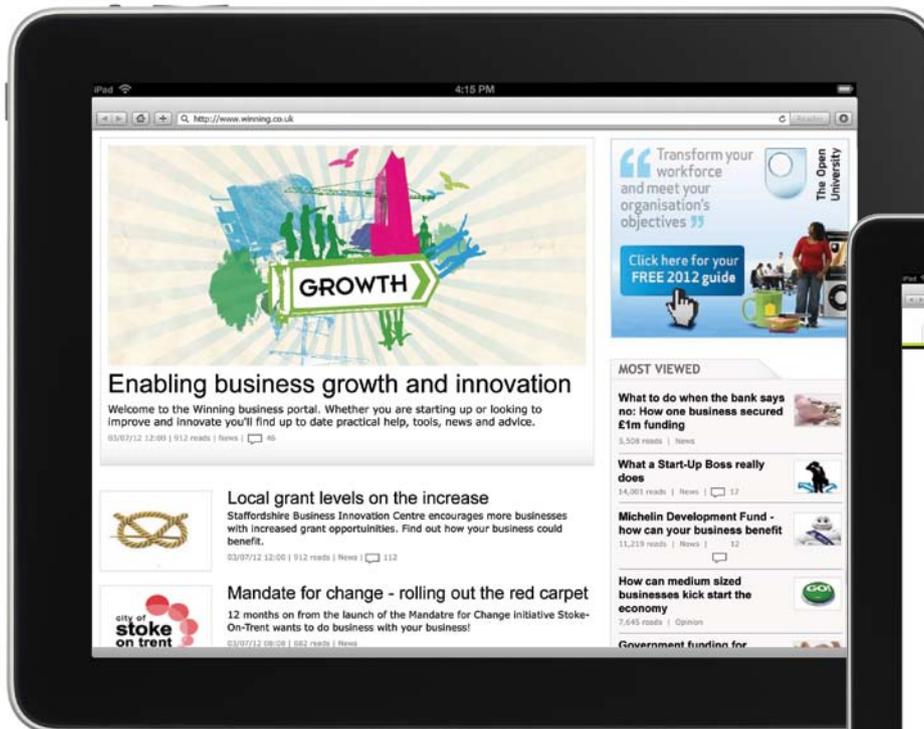
This requirement to remove barriers means that information availability has to be time and place neutral. As such, the 'front line' in the provision of an 'honest brokerage' service is the telephone. Accessible to all, it provides the intelligence, the empathy, the warmth, the understanding and the rapport that only a person can give, with a level of convenience and cost-effectiveness that balances the needs of the 'users' and 'providers' of the service.



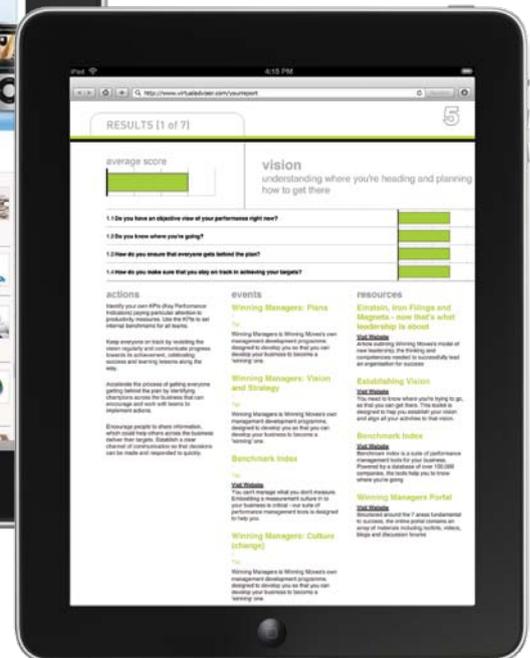
"This 'honest broker' service is best undertaken by telephone. It provides the intelligence, the empathy, the warmth, the understanding and the rapport that only a person can give"

Underpinning the 'honest broker' service has to be a *knowledge bank*. A resource used by the helpline staff that is complete and up-to-date. This requires that the helpline has to actively engage with partners and create an environment that benefits them as much as callers to the service. This requires an understanding of partner needs – to achieve programme outputs, for example – and creates a very healthy symbiotic relationship. This *knowledge bank* allows information to be made available online and using diagnostic tools (to intelligently signpost to relevant information) to create a seamless online and offline service that supports businesses 24-7. This online service becomes a powerful backup to the telephone; providing support out of office hours and to those people that don't need the assistance of an experienced adviser.

Winning Moves diagnostic tool -
Virtual Adviser provides tailored
support and signposting

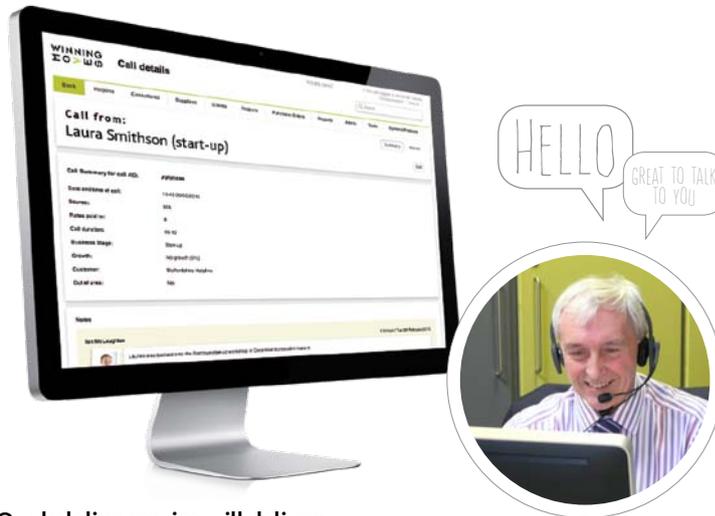


Winning Moves information portal. Visit <http://winning.co.uk> to see how we support business online



Winning Moves Support Helpline

By using business professionals to answer our calls, we can provide a service that instils confidence in callers and has significant impact for both business and partners.



Our helpline service will deliver:

- **Increased partner referrals and client satisfaction**
- **Real-time access to statistics and MI via our CRM**
- **Tracking of the quality and impact of referrals**
- **Development of a knowledge bank**
The information can be used to feed online systems
- **Greater connectivity with national activity**
(such as MAS, UKTI, Growth Accelerator), given our role in delivering BIS funded activity
- **Access to economic data on SMEs**
Connecting their performance with their barriers to growth, helping shape policy and strategy at a local level

Work with us...

YOU'LL BE IN GOOD COMPANY



For further information on how we can make a measurable difference to you

CONTACT US

3 St Mary's Mews, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST16 2AP. UK

T +44(0)1785 827600

F +44(0)1785 249304

E info@winningmoves.com

W winningmoves.com