



**Interview with Mr Andy Berrow
Regional Manager For
Business Link in London**



Q. Please tell us briefly about yourself.

I spent 25 years with Barclays Bank after leaving school doing a number of different jobs in the bank including facilities management as well as being a corporate manager. I am married with two grown up children one of whom is married and the other gets married this summer. I have appeared on the BBC doing both television and radio as a spokesperson for Business Link

Q. Can you tell us about Business Link in London?

Business Link in London (BLIL) is a free, impartial business advisory service available to anyone starting or running a small or medium sized business (SMEs). It is also the gateway to all business support available across the capital, both public and private.

It is part of a network of regional Business Links across England with separate system for the rest of the UK and are funded by Regional Development Agencies, and supported by government departments, agencies and local authorities. The work of regional Business Links like BLIL is also supported by **Businesslink.gov.uk**, which offers a range of services online, from filing your VAT returns to about 600 guides offering practical advice for businesses in all aspects of business.

Q. Please tell us about the assistance Business Link in London can provide for current and prospective businesses in London.

BLIL works with hundreds of partners to deliver our service for London's SMEs and to provide tailored solutions, particularly when we are experiencing difficult economic conditions, and to reach out to the capital's diverse businesses. BLIL is funded by the London Development Agency (LDA) and provides the following services to support businesses through the recession:

- round the clock, 24 hour telephone and online advice service;
- helping business owners identify potential shortcomings or growth opportunities through business health checks;
- delivering intensive one-to-one support and consulting business owners on developing clear plans of action; and
- free master-classes, networking events and local business surgeries or at your own premises.

In the current financial year, over 155,000 businesses have benefited from our help and we have so far provided intensive one-to-one consultation to over 7,000 businesses.

Q. What are the current challenges faced by small and medium enterprises SMEs? However, 58% of those surveyed are not only optimistic about weathering the storm – they're actively planning to grow their business during 2009. Most businesses that planned to grow want to do so through aggressively by seeking out new business opportunities, offering new products and services (20%) and targeting new geographical markets (9%).

Q. How does Business Link in London address the key issues involved in running business in the UK and in London in particular in the context of the current economic climate.

To help businesses survive the current recession, BLIL offers Health Checks. Our Business Advisers will create clear action plans, including advice on dealing with late payments from debtors to cutting energy costs. The Health Checks can be performed over the phone, in workshops, or one-to-one with advisers.

We also organise a number of free events on issues including Get set for London 2012 - Producing a Quality Statement, Winning new contracts and Surviving a recession.

We also host joint events and workshops with partners in each London region where you can speak to our Business Advisers. Some of the partners that we have recently worked with include [Westminster Small and Minority Business Council](#) and the [Turkish British Chamber of Commerce](#).

More and more businesses are turning BLIL. For example, calls to the Contact Centre were up by over 70% on the previous year in December as the recession begins to affect most businesses. Recently, BLIL carried out a poll of 2,000 established SMEs on how they are coping with the recession and plan to manage their business during 2009. What they are telling us is that they are finding it harder to battle through with 63% of those surveyed reporting that the recession had affected their business (up from 48% in October 2008). The most commonly cited difficulties were falling sales (52%), decreasing turnover (29%) and having less access to finance (9%).



Q. What Kind of opportunities do you provide for different communities?

We also have knowledge, experience and personal understanding with business that are owned and managed by Deaf and disabled people, women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME). Of the businesses that we intensively helped last year, 52% were BAME, 35% majority women-owned and 4.9% Deaf and disabled-owned businesses.

Q. Do you have a message for the Turkish-British business community here?

Our message to the Turkish-British business community in London is that we are here to help, particularly through these difficult times. For example, we can work with businesses to help them be more profitable which will mean, where they are selling imported Turkish goods, an increase in trade between the two countries. There will also be times when British-based Turkish owned operations look to export goods and services back to Turkey and BLIL can help identify those opportunities and through our partners help with this.

You contact us on 0845 6000 787 for further details or visit www.businesslink.gov.uk/london.

	<p>Marketing Your Business Workshop-Seminar</p> <p>Marketing in Recession, Importance of Branding, Design organised by Business Link in London and the TBCCI</p> <p>Tuesday, 5 May 2009, 2.00 pm – 7.00 pm at the TBCCI premises</p> <p>To register to this Free event or for more information, click here</p>	
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