

Communications Consumer Panel – Micro businesses research

FINAL Face to face guide

1 hour depth interviews

Primary Objectives:

- To understand which communications technologies and services micro-businesses use and to what extent; and their importance to the business
- What are the experiences of micro-business of the communications sectors and services? To include: fixed line, mobile phones, fixed broadband, mobile broadband (including superfast broadband where relevant)
- What are the barriers/challenges and what are the opportunities?
- What – if anything – should/could be done to improve communications experiences to contribute to greater growth/efficiency/value to business?

Please note: Primary purpose of the first 10 interviews is to uncover the language and pre codes, and build hypotheses for testing, to include in the semi structured telephone interviews and to inform discussion guide development for the remaining face to face interviews

All respondents will have completed a pre task which is a quantitative questionnaire about their communications usage.

This pre task questionnaire will be reviewed prior to each interview and used throughout the interview as a prompt for further exploration and probing.

In terms of specifically exploring communications, overall responses will be sought first and then broken down by different types of:

- A) Communication technology and services i.e. fixed line telephony, mobile, broadband, mobile broadband
- B) Different business purposes and tasks which the communications technology/service is being used for
- C) Where relevant different providers

Again lists of these are featured in the pre task for reference during interview

Throughout the interviews respondents will be asked to give examples of their views and experiences to bring the discussion to life as much as possible

The guide is intended to be used as a framework to structure and prompt discussions but will be used flexibly and adjust according to the flow of the interview and the responses from the respondent

Moderator Introduction

- Explain purpose of research
- Explain MRS code of conduct, recording, confidentiality
- As appropriate confirm permission to film/photograph
- No right or wrong answers just want to explore their communication experiences within the context of their business

10 mins	<p>Micro business context</p> <p><i>Here we want to build a portrait of the business and the business person, understanding what their business does, key challenges and issues and get a sense of the person behind the business. This will help contextualise our understanding of usage and attitudes regarding communications. (It will also allow us to see whether communications spontaneously features as part of discussions)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you do, what does your business do and how long for • How does your business run – what would a typical day look like (and a terrible/great day) • How do you and your employees work e.g. office based, away from the office, home working, on other sites, on the road etc. • Briefly tell me your business story – how did it begin, how did you get to this point • What have been the highs and lows of the journey • Is there anything or anyone you really rely upon when running your business, who, what and why • What are the things you could not do without in running your business • What are the things you would want to do without in running your business • What are your plans for the future, how do you see things developing • What are your main business priorities e.g. marketing more, getting more customers, reducing costs, innovating, being more productive or efficient etc. (refer to Q5 pre task list) <p>The person behind the business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What got you into business in the first place, what motivated you • How do you like to run your business, how would you describe your ‘management style’ • How confident do you feel about managing your business, are there areas where you feel you are struggling at all, if so what • How would you describe your attitude to technology – at home and in your business confident/expert vs wary/struggling • How would you describe your attitude to communications services and technology – confident/expert vs wary/struggling • If hesitant or negative/neutral attitude as how would you like to feel about communications and technology <p>Business issues and challenges (note this may not be relevant to very small businesses/sole traders but can still explore their challenges and difficulties)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about where you are now what are your key challenges and issues you are facing – (E.g. survival, growth, modernising, competition, work rate/efficiency, operational/practical etc.) • Does anything ‘keep you awake at night’, what is your biggest fear regarding your business • What is your greatest hope/aspiration regarding the business • What are the main obstacles/barriers you see ahead and how will you overcome them (include exploring the ‘time to reward ratio’ i.e. to undertake something new and amend daily working practices) • What would help you the most in dealing with these issues and challenges • Are there any issues/challenges about where your business is located (e.g. rural), if so what
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How easy or difficult do you find running your business day to day • What is easy/goes smoothly/well versus • Are there any pain points or frustrations in running the business day to day, if so what, how do you cope with them
<p>10 mins</p>	<p>Usage of communications in the business</p> <p><i>Here we want to explore how they use their communications technology and services, discuss what they have, how it is set up and what purpose they use each technology/service for in their business. This will include getting the respondent to take us on a ‘guided tour’ of their business communications and talk to us about the ‘business purpose’ for each technology/service.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get respondent to give a ‘guided tour’ around their communication technology/services set up • Ask them to describe what communications technology/services they have, why, and how they use it in their business i.e. business purpose <p>Let them highlight what they want to spontaneously first then ensure coverage of fixed line telephony, mobiles, BB (by type), mobile internet</p> <p>Refer back to pre-task to prompt if required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask respondent to talk through each area of communications technologies/services i.e. fixed line, mobile, internet, mobile internet • Talk about what each one is used for in the business, what purpose/tasks • How frequently is it used – all the time, occasionally • Who uses it amongst staff, which staff are using which communications service/technology • How do you communicate with other people, who and why - explore across communicating with staff, customers, suppliers, inbound and outbound (explore across fixed line, mobile, online) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. standard calls, VoIP, Video conferencing, email, teleconferencing, web conferencing/collaboration, instant messenger, web chat with customers, social networking etc. – explore across staff/suppliers and customers (refer back to pre-task) • Why do you do it this way, what are the benefits for you as a business • What do you use the internet for (explore across both BB and mobile BB) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. emailing/conferencing, transacting e.g. online banking/BACs/payments/ordering goods/services/work related applications, online cloud data storage, media sharing etc. (refer back to pre-task and internet applications that company uses for business purposes (see definition of Internet Application Provider at end) • Why do you do it this way, what are the benefits for you as a business • Do you have a web presence, how is this used, what role does it play – advertising and/or transacting • Do you use communications to market and advertise, if so how • Do you use any social media in your business, why/why not and if so how do you use it for your business • How is communications used in your ‘back office’ i.e. non customer facing and operational aspects of your business – communicating/transacting with other staff • In using their communications technology/services in this way, what is the most important to your business and why

<p>5 mins</p>	<p>Set up, management and operation of communications in the business</p> <p><i>Here we want to explore how organised they are with their communications and the extent to which they deliberately plan and manage their communications versus have improvised and evolved over time, and what they do/rely on to keep their communications going</i></p> <p>Again refer to pre task and ensure coverage of fixed line, mobiles, BB (by type), mobile internet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How/why did you set up your communications in this way – explore deliberate choice versus evolved/improvised over time • How would you describe your approach to ‘managing your communications’ what words would you use • Does the way you approach communications in your business differ from how you approach it personally or in your household, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If so how e.g. probe whether they have business versus residential grade services/different approach to purchasing etc. • To what extent do you review or plan your communications, if so how do you go about this • Do you monitor any of the services you get in terms of cost/performance/reliability • What do you do if and when things don’t work or go wrong, who/what do you use/rely on • Do you have any business support or back up, how does this work, how do they influence any communication choices/decisions you make • How do you manage the financial aspect of communications services, do you have a communications budget – do you see it as an investment or just another operational cost • Do you have any future plans or vision for how you will use communications in the future, if so what and how far ahead
<p>10 mins</p>	<p>Role and importance of communications technology/services in their business:</p> <p><i>Having explored the previous sections on usage and management of communications products/services within the context of their business we now want to get a high level view of the significance/salience of communications in their business. To what extent communications are a critical and integral role in the success of the business versus playing a necessary but basic and functional role</i></p> <p>Again refer to pre task and ensure coverage of fixed line, mobiles, BB (by type), mobile internet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about communications in your business how would you describe the role communications technology/services play • What do communications do in your business, what do you get out of them from a business point of view – what impact do they have/difference do they make to the success of the business • How important are communications, why and in what way – how do communications relate to how the business develops or potentially prospers in the future • Describe in what ways does the business depend upon communications to operate or be successful – what would/has happened to the business if there has been any loss of service • If you had to prioritise the different communication technology/services we have talked about - what was most important to what was least important how would you do this and why • Have your communications ever gone wrong, if so how, and what were the consequences/impact from a business point of view

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a change in your communications set up or services ever changed the way you conduct your business, if so how • How do you regard the introduction of new technologies – e.g. are recent upgrades like 4G or superfast (if applicable) something they would proactively consider, if so why • Have you experienced any specific business benefits from improving your communications, if so please describe what impact these improvements have made <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g. has increasing your broadband speed have you experienced any productivity gains • Do communications play any role with respect to meeting your business priorities you talked about before, if so how <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. marketing more, getting more customers, reducing costs, innovating, being more productive or efficient etc. (refer to Q5 pre task list)
10 mins	<p>Choices and decisions about communications technology/services</p> <p><i>Here we want to explore how they go about choosing and purchasing communications services, what criteria they use, whether and how they research and source, who/what they rely on and how confident they feel they have made the right decisions</i></p> <p>Again refer to pre task and ensure coverage of fixed line, mobiles, BB (by type), mobile internet and providers they use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you go about choosing the communications technology/ services, what criteria do you use e.g. purpose, function, capability • How did you go about choosing the providers you are with, what criteria do you use e.g. cost, reliability, length of contract, bundled offers/deals, reputation of provider • Have you ever switched (or thought of switching) providers, if so why, what was the issue, how, and how easy/difficult did you find the process; if not, why and what would tempt you to look into switching • How do you find out about the benefits of a communications technology/service/provider – where do you go, what/who do you use/rely on for information and guidance • How easy/difficult is it to get the information/understand the information • Are there examples where their suppliers or their own use of technology or an application has had an effect on them and their choices? • How knowledgeable/informed do you feel about communications, what would help you feel more knowledgeable, what would you like to know more about • How confident do you feel about making decisions and choices about your communications technology/services and why, what would help you feel more confident • Do you use third party adviser/providers for information on communications technology, how useful is it, to what extent do you rely on such sources • Do you have any plans for changing your communications in the future, if so what, how will you go about making future choices/decisions • Is there any particular technology or service that you are thinking of/would like to use in the future • What are the triggers and barriers to using more communications technology/services more in your business (refer to pre task and technology/services they do not currently have/use) • What would help you overcome the barriers you describe

<p>10 mins</p>	<p>Service and provider experiences and satisfaction</p> <p><i>Here we want to explore what good and bad experiences they have had with services and providers, and satisfied they are with the services they use and what impact these experiences have had on their business</i></p> <p>Again, refer to pre task and ensure coverage of fixed line, mobiles, BB (by type), mobile internet. Also include any provider past and present that have been recorded in the pre task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How satisfied are you with your communications services – what issues if any do you experience e.g. speed, reliability, coverage (quality of service: e.g. network, dropped calls, speeds etc.) • How satisfied are you with your providers – what issues if any do you experience e.g. quality of service, support, cost • How satisfied are you with the terms of your contract e.g. length, any review points, tie-ins etc. • How do you find dealing with your providers, how would you describe the service that they deliver • What sort of customer service (service levels) are you receiving from providers, how would you describe them, how do feel about the level and quality of service you get from them (quality of customer service – speed and style when dealing with queries, ease of contact etc.) • How would you describe the way they see you – do they see you as a business or more like a residential customer – e.g. does your landline operate on a residential contract - how do you feel about how they regard you • If anything ever really gone wrong how did they respond, what did you think of their response • Have you ever made a complaint, if so what wasit about and how was it dealt with. Have you ever referred a complaint to Alternative Dispute Resolution ADR, do you know about this • Do you think the needs/issues of small businesses are recognised by organisations like the regulator Ofcom, why/why not • How could your experience/satisfaction with communication service providers increase or be improved – what could they do more of or better that would help you/your business • Revisit – do you ever ‘review’ your providers, if so how - have you ever switched/thought of switching as a result of any communication experiences, if so what happened • Have you ever negotiated with your existing service providers as a result of any experiences • Have any communications service providers really excelled or provide exceptional service, if so what/how • What would your ideal communications provider look like, what would the service be like and why would this be your ideal
<p>5 mins</p>	<p>Future opportunities regarding communications technology/services in their business</p> <p><i>Here we want to explore what future opportunities or ideas respondents may have for using or adopting more communications technology/services in their business</i></p> <p>Again, refer to pre task and ensure coverage of fixed line, mobiles, BB (by type), mobile internet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking forward, do they have any future plans or ideas for how communications technology or services will develop in their business • If they do have any future plans or ideas, explain the thinking behind these (if not, why not) • Is there anything they would like to change the way they use communications technology/services they use in their business what would it be and why

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do they foresee any specific issues or challenges regarding using communications technology/services more in their business going forward, if so what and how could they be addressed• Revisit their business priorities – what future opportunities do they foresee in using communications technology/services in meeting their business priorities<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ e.g. marketing more, getting more customers, reducing costs, innovating, being more productive or efficient, cash flow etc. (refer to Q5 pre task list and establish order of priority)• What things would help them realise these opportunities for using communications technology/services to support their priorities going forward• Do they feel they have the skills and knowledge to exploit communications technology and services for their business, if not – what are the gaps
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Thank and close