

BUSINESS RATES - GETTING PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Make a CHOICE, not a mistake

WHAT IS THE BUSINESS RATES REVALUATION, WHY IS IT DONE AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

- The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) carries out a revaluation of the rateable values of all non-domestic and business property every five years
- The rateable value for your non-domestic or business property will be reviewed as part of the revaluation
- Revaluation maintains fairness in the rating system, by ensuring that the rates that each business pays reflect changes in the relative rental value of property over time
- Revaluation does not raise extra revenue from business rates - it merely redistributes the overall national rates bill

WHAT IS RATEABLE VALUE AND HOW IS IT CALCULATED?

- Rateable value, broadly speaking, is the annual rental value that a property could be let for on a common valuation date - 1 April 2008
- Rateable value is used by local councils as the basis for calculating business rate bills
- The VOA gathers details of actual rents paid and other available evidence from around the valuation date, and uses this to assess the rental value of all property
- In some cases, pubs and leisure premises for example, rental value is assessed with reference to levels of trade
- For some particular types of property, such as schools, rental value is calculated by analysing the cost of rebuilding the property

DO I HAVE TO USE A PROFESSIONAL RATING AGENT, OR CAN I DEAL WITH THE VOA MYSELF?

- It's your choice whether or not you employ a rating agent, and the VOA has tried to present rating information clearly, in all its communications materials, so that you can be self-sufficient
- You can deal directly with the VOA if you have any queries about your valuation and this service is free of charge

HOW CAN A PROFESSIONAL AGENT HELP ME?

- Helping you understand your rateable value
- Checking the details of your new valuation
- Making sure it is consistent with others
- Looking at evidence that supports the valuation
- Managing any query or challenge to your new valuation
- Checking the accuracy of your rates bill

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO IF I WANT TO EMPLOY A PROFESSIONAL?

- Ensure he/she is a member of one of the three main representative bodies - the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation, or the Rating Surveyors' Association
- Speak to other local businesses to see if they have used the services of an agent and whether they have recommendations
- When choosing an agent, you may find it helpful to ask for details of previous work carried out on businesses similar to yours
- Ask for a clear breakdown of the fees you will be expected to pay
- Check the details of any contract or agreement you are asked to sign

BE WARY OF...

- Anyone who comes 'cold-calling'
 - Anyone who wants payment for their services up front
 - Anyone who requests payment for lodging an appeal - this is free
 - Anyone who makes promises to reduce your rateable value or your business rates bill without knowing the details of your valuation
 - Anyone who claims to be working on behalf of the VOA. All VOA staff carry official proof of identity and no one else is ever authorised to work on the VOA's behalf
 - Being asked to sign any document before you fully understand the terms you will be committed to
- ! Bear in mind that a reduction in rateable value does not necessarily mean a reduction in your rates bill

CONTACT DETAILS

- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
www.rics.org - 020 7222 7000
- Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV)
www.irrv.org.uk - 020 7831 3505
- The Rating Surveyors' Association (RSA)
www.ratingsurveyorsassociation.org
- Valuation Office Agency
www.voa.gov.uk/2010 - 0845 602 2010

Further information on the entire business rates system is available at www.businesslink.gov.uk, where you can also get an estimate of your rates bill based on your rateable value.

