

Who should you target in each UK sector?

Turn “we sell to UK SMEs” into a usable account brief. Includes research prompts for accountants, trades, retailers and hospitality.

DATA & RESEARCH

01

Customer job

02

Segment

03

Evidence

04

Question

A practical worksheet for the next account, campaign or conversation.

The problem

Everyone searches a different version of the same broad sector and the resulting lists are difficult to compare.

What it costs the team

A good offer is sent to businesses with different needs, and the team cannot learn which segment is worth continuing.

What you will have at the end

One campaign brief with a sector boundary, evidence checks and a relevant discovery question.

01 / THE METHOD

How do you turn a sector into a prospecting brief?

Define a customer problem your offer can solve, then select businesses where that problem could be relevant. Separate public facts from questions to ask. Choose a role and a contact route, and give the seller a clear exclusion rule as well as a reason to research.

1. Start with a job you help customers do

Name the operational problem in the customer's words. "Reduce repeated client document chasing" is a testable starting point for an accountancy supplier. "Improve efficiency" is too broad to guide a list.

2. Set boundaries

Write the geography, trading activity, size and business model. Distinguish a single-site operator from a group. Add exclusions where your offer or delivery model does not fit.

3. Research accountants

Check the practice website for services, offices and the named team. Questions might cover client onboarding or document chasing. Do not infer team size or software problems from an industry code alone.

4. Research trades

Check service type, operating area and whether the firm works on domestic or commercial jobs. A useful conversation might cover quoting or missed enquiries. A registered office may be the accountant's address.

5. Research retail

Distinguish an independent shop, ecommerce operator and chain. Check locations and how it sells. Ask about stock, enquiries or repeat-customer work only when your offer addresses that process.

6. Research hospitality

Distinguish venue type and ownership before approaching a restaurant, pub or hotel. Check the operating website and named group. Questions about bookings or multi-site administration are hypotheses to test, not facts about the business.

02 / PUT IT TO WORK

Worked example: stop mixing buyers

An agency provides photography for independent restaurants. Its first list mixes hotels, franchise branches and event caterers. It narrows the brief to independent dine-in venues within its travel area, checks the operator's website and asks who plans seasonal menu updates. The new brief tells the researcher what to include and what to leave out.

Questions to work through

Situation	Which service, venue or operating model does this business actually have?
Problem	Where might a customer of this type struggle with the job we support?
Implication	If that process is difficult, who feels the cost or delay?
Need-payoff	What would a useful improvement look like to that person?

Before you use it

- The brief has observable selection criteria.
- The problem is written as a hypothesis until confirmed.
- The team can explain why an excluded company does not fit.
- Results will be compared within the same segment.

These examples are illustrative. They are not customer results or recommended performance benchmarks.

03 / YOUR WORKSHEET

Apply it to your next piece of work

Use the editable worksheet in this download, or write your answers here. Keep facts, decisions and unresolved questions visible.

Offer and customer problem

Sector boundary and trading model

Area, size and exclusions

Facts available from original sources

Questions still to ask

Likely decision role and contact route

Example opening question

What we will measure for this segment

Sources and further reading

[Companies House company search](#). Check company identity, status, officers and filings against the original record.

[Huthwaite: SPIN questions](#). The original methodology explains Situation, Problem, Implication and Need-payoff questions. The examples here are Adapt Leads exercises.

Use the same work in Adapt

Keep the company context and the next step together as the team moves from research into a conversation.

[Build a focused UK business search](#)