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Hints on finding a good immigration consultant

Firstly you should ask about the person dealing with your application - in most companies the first person you will talk to is a 'Sales Consultant'. These people are often employed and paid on a commission basis, hence it is not uncommon to be subject to a hard sell approach. The actual person who will prepare your application and submit it to the Home Office on your behalf is your 'Caseworker' or 'Immigration Consultant'. Caseworkers should be registered with the OISC, plus if you can find one who has 'hands on' knowledge of the Home Office's working procedures then this will undoubtedly help your case.

You can always ask to speak to your Caseworker and ask them the same questions as above and gauge their responses.

How long have you been OISC registered? – Immigration Consultants have to be OISC registered in order to give immigration advice. If they are not registered themselves, ask to talk to someone who is. Ask for their OISC registration number, along with their name and the company's name. When you have this information go to www.oisc.gov.uk and check them out online. If their name is not listed on the OISC adviser list then you should ask to talk to someone else who is. Alternatively, you can contact the OISC to find out if they are registered..

What OISC level are you registered to?

- Level 1 is the basic online test – this is the minimum requirement for someone to give immigration advice.

- Level 2 means they have a very good working knowledge of UK immigration. Achievement of this level follows a successful pass in a written exam.

-Level 3 means they are registered to the highest level and can advise on a full range of UK immigration matters, including asylum and UK visa appeals. A successful pass in a written exam is also required to reach this level. To reach this level you have to have worked in the industry for a long time and be able to demonstrate a very solid understanding of all aspects of UK immigration law.

How long has your company been giving immigration advice? – In essence, the longer the better. New companies will spring up all the time, however only the 'real ones' will survive. This doesn't have to be a negative though, as some new companies are made up of very qualified staff. As a general rule at least 12 months of solid UK immigration advice and casework practice is a good start.

Have you worked for the UK Home Office or for any government immigration agencies? - These individuals are worth their weight in gold - they know the UK immigration system and therefore there is no 'guess work' or tom foolery when dealing with these people.

Things to ask yourself;

Does the email address listed look like a real company email address? - Gmail/Yahoo/Hotmail and so on are not the type of email address a 'real' consultant should use. Check that the email address is to that of a registered company.

Is the phone number they are using a mobile or a landline? – Use your common sense here - if it is a mobile then do they really have an office or are they simply operating out of their own home, in which case how can you be sure that they are a real immigration advisor?

Do they have an office?

Ask them where their office is and ask if you can come in to meet them and discuss your UK immigration circumstances? If they don't have an office, then once again how can you be sure that they are a real company?

Do they sound like they know what they are talking about?-



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It definitely pays to call more than one *consultant*. *When talking with the consultant you should make notes on what they say and then compare notes, to determine any discrepancies that should be addressed.*

Remember: Everyone who gives you advice or deals with your case MUST BE OISC registered.

If the consultant/company you choose to use isn't registered with the OISC and your application goes wrong, then lets just say that you really have no-one to complain to...except yourself.

And one last thing. As always in life, if the deal you are being offered seems to be too good to be true.... it most probably is!

Goodluck,

The tier I team

www.tier1-workpermit.com

help@tier1-workpermit.com