

# How to spot a business rates cowboy agent

As with most things in life there are always a few rogues out to con the unsuspecting. You should always ensure that like RatesRecovery your agent is a member of the RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors). This means they will work in a professional manner, to a code of conduct and face sanctions if they are found to be in breach.

If you receive an approach from someone offering to reduce your business rates then here are a number of tell-tale signs to spot whether they are to be trusted or not:

## 1. They don't display the RICS logo on their website.

Membership of the RICS is the gold standard when it comes to engaging an agent to reduce your business rates. If a company is not a member or does not display the logo on their website then run a mile. Even if they still call themselves "surveyors" or "valuers" or "rates experts" this is not the same as being a chartered surveyor and a member of the RICS.

## 2. They want to charge you an upfront fee

There is never any reason to pay an agent an upfront fee to lodge an appeal. Upfront fees are always charged by rogue agents so they can bank your money and then either not lodge an appeal or never bother pursuing it once it is lodged. Many companies fall for this con trick every year, don't be one of them.

## 3. They want to charge you a fee once the Valuation Office Agency acknowledges that you have an appeal in place

As long as a business rates appeal is made in the correct manner then the Valuation Office Agency will acknowledge it as a valid appeal irrespective of whether they agree that a reduction is warranted. Never pay a fee at this stage as it doesn't guarantee that you will receive a rates reduction. Only cowboy agents try to charge fees for an appeal being acknowledged as valid.

## 4. They can guarantee you a reduction in your business rates

Any company that “guarantees” you a reduction in your business rates is to be avoided as at this stage they will not have inspected the property, carried out a valuation or discussed matters with the Valuation Office Agency. A guaranteed reduction will usually be a false promise.

## 5. Aggressive sales tactics

Cowboy agents are always very aggressive in their pursuit of your signature on their contract for good reason. Even before the ink is dry you will be committed to paying them hundreds of pounds for nothing in return.

## 6. A salesperson visits you

Beware of any company that sends a salesperson to persuade you that you should challenge your business rates. These salespeople will be paid to get your signature on the contract and will tell you anything to get you to sign. We have come across countless cases where ratepayers were lied to by salespeople just to get them to sign up. It's perfectly acceptable for an agent to come and meet with you to discuss a possible appeal but make sure you are actually meeting a chartered surveyor. If not then don't meet.

If you want the best chance of reducing your business rates then call RatesRecovery on 01865 594070 or email us at [enquires@ratesrecovery.com](mailto:enquires@ratesrecovery.com). RatesRecovery are Chartered Surveyors and members of the RICS.

[www.RatesRecovery.com](http://www.RatesRecovery.com)

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