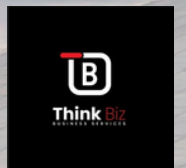


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UAE BUSINESS SETUP Consultant Full GUIDE

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Business Setup Consultants — Step-by-Step Service Guide

Purpose: A practical, end-to-end guide for business setup consultants to run a smooth client engagement

— from lead to handover — and for clients to understand the full process. Includes checklists, timelines, sample deliverables and UAE-specific notes where relevant.

1. Quick Snapshot (1-page checklist)

- Initial enquiry received ✓
 - Intro call/discovery meeting ✓
 - Engagement letter signed & retainer received ✓
 - KYC documents collected ✓
 - Company structure recommended ✓
 - Trade name reserved & approvals requested ✓
 - License application submitted ✓
 - Lease and tenancy contract obtained ✓
 - Bank account opened ✓
 - Visas & immigration processed ✓
 - Accounting & payroll set up ✓
 - Handover & client training ✓
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2. — Pre-engagement (Lead → Proposal)

Goal: Understand client needs quickly and qualify the lead.

- Steps: 1. Receive enquiry (email, web form, call, referral). ✓
 - 2. Send short pre-qualification form (industry, activity, anticipated turnover, preferred location, timeline). ✓
 - 3. Schedule a 20–30-minute discovery call. ✓
 - 4. Identify red flags (restricted activities, compliance issues, sanctions, unusual beneficial ownership). ✓
 - 5. Provide high-level options and ballpark fees; present ✓
 - Next steps. ✓
 - Deliverables: Pre-qualification form, Discovery notes, Ballpark fee estimate. **UAE note:** Ask whether the client prefers Mainland vs Freezone vs Offshore — this hugely affects cost and
 - timeline.
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3. Engagement & Onboarding

Goal: Formalize scope, secure retainer, collect KYC and begin paperwork.

- 1. Draft & send Engagement Letter/Proposal detailing scope, fees (retainer + fixed fees), timelines, exclusions, cancellation, and refund policy. ✓
 - 2. Receive signed engagement and retainer payment. ✓
 - 3. Send onboarding pack: KYC checklist, required documents list, company info template, engagement timeline. ✓
 - 4. Assign a project manager and open the project in your CRM/project tool. ✓
 - Typical KYC / Documents required: - Passport copies of shareholders, directors, managers - Proof of address (utility bill / bank statement) – not older than 3 months - CV / business plan (for certain activities) - Board resolution/power of attorney (if acting via representative) - Trade references or bank reference (sometimes requested)
 - Deliverables: Signed engagement agreement, payment receipt, onboarding package, and project timeline. ✓
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4. — Business Structure, Name & Activity Planning

- 1. Assess liability, foreign ownership needs, tax preferences, and visa requirements. ✓
 - 2. Recommend entity type (sole proprietorship, LLC, branch, freezone company, offshore, professional license). ✓
 - 3. Propose 3–5 trade names and check name availability. ✓
 - 4. Draft list of business activities; map each activity to required approvals/special licenses (e.g., healthcare, food, trading, financial services). ✓
 - UAE-specific considerations: - Mainland LLC often requires a UAE national shareholder (percentage and sponsorship rules depend on jurisdiction and recent legal changes). - Freezones allow 100% foreign ownership but restrict local UAE mainland operations. Deliverables: Structure recommendation memo, selected trade name confirmation, and list of activities with regulator mapping. ✓
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5. — Location, Lease & Local Approvals

Goal: Secure physical premises (if required) and necessary local approvals.

- 1. Help the client identify options (virtual office, flex desk, serviced office, warehouse, retail). ✓
 - 2. Negotiate a lease/tenancy contract and obtain Ejari/tenancy attestation (where applicable). ✓
 - 3. Obtain landlord NOC if needed. ✓
 - 4. Apply for municipality or local authority approvals (e.g., Municipality, Civil Defence, Department of Economic Development, or Freezone Authority approvals). ✓
 - Deliverables: Lease agreement copy, landlord NOC, and approved tenancy registration. ✓
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6. — License Application & Registration

Goal: Submit and obtain trade/business license.

- 1. Prepare incorporation documents (MOA/AOA, shareholder/director resolutions, passport copies, specimen signatures). ✓
 - 2. Complete online applications with the relevant authority (mainland licensing authority, freezone portal, offshore registry).
 - 3. Pay license and registration fees. ✓
 - 4. Respond to any queries from authorities; provide any additional documents. ✓
 - 5. Receive the license certificate and company registration number.
 - Deliverables: License copy, trade license number, certificate of incorporation. Notes: Timelines vary from same-day (some free zones) to several weeks (complex activities or government approvals). ✓
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7. — Bank Account & Financial Setup

Goal: Open a corporate bank account and set up accounting foundations.

- 1. Prepare bank KYC pack (board resolution to open account, passport copies, license copy, proof of address, business plan, expected turnover analysis). ✓
 - 2. Assist client with bank selection and meetings; Schedule account sign-ups (in-person where required). ✓
 - 3. Set up accounting system: chart of accounts,
 - accounting software, VAT registration (if applicable), and opening balances. ✓
 - 4. Advise on merchant accounts, payment gateways, and a payroll provider. ✓
 - Deliverables: Bank account details, accounting system ready, VAT registration number (if required). ✓
 - UAE notes: Many banks require physical presence and detailed business background checks, and their requirements differ significantly across banks and between local & international banks. ✓
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8. — Immigration, Work Permits & Visas (If hiring/owner relocation)

Goal: Obtain employment visas, residence permits, and labor approvals.

- 1. Sponsor selection – company as sponsor (or third-party PRO service where allowed). ✓
 - 2. Apply for work permits/entry permits. ✓
 - 3. Medical testing, Emirates ID application, and residence stamping. ✓
 - 4. Family visas: prepare financial proof and tenancy proofs. ✓
 - Deliverables: Entry permits, stamped residence visas, and Emirates IDs. Notes: Visa quotas and visa-linked rules differ by jurisdiction; factor in timelines of 2–6 weeks per visa in your project plan. ✓
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9. — Post-Incorporation Compliance & Set-up

Goal: Ensure the business is operationally ready and compliant.

- 1. Set up payroll (banking mandates, pay cycles), HR policies, and employment contracts. ✓
 - 2. Register for VAT if taxable turnover exceeds thresholds or voluntary registration is required. ✓
 - 3. Obtain additional operating permits (food safety, professional accreditations, environmental permits). ✓
 - 4. Establish bookkeeping, monthly reporting cadence, and statutory filings. ✓
 - 5. Set reminders for license renewals and visa expiries. ✓
 - Deliverables: Employee handbook, payroll system, VAT compliance plan, compliance calendar. ✓
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10. — Handover & Training

Goal: Transfer knowledge to client and deliver final pack.

- 1. Conduct a handover meeting covering bank, accounting, HR, tax obligations, and regulatory reporting. ✓
 - 2. Deliver final files: incorporation set (signed MOA, license copy), bank documents, SOPs, access credentials (passwords via secure channel), and an operations checklist. ✓
 - 3. Provide optional training sessions for accounts staff and management. ✓
 - Deliverables: Handover pack (digital), training slides/recordings, recommended next steps (e.g., periodic consultancy retainer). ✓
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11. Timelines & Typical Durations (example)

- Discovery to engagement: 1–3 days ✓
- KYC & document collection: 2–7 days ✓
- Name reservation & initial approvals: 1–5 days ✓
- License issuance: same day – 4 weeks (depends on activity & authority) ✓
- Bank onboarding: 1–6 weeks (can be longer for international banks)
- Visas/residence permits: 2–6 weeks ✓

Always add buffer time for regulator queries, external approvals, and client delays.

12. Pricing & Fee Models (common approaches)

- 1. Fixed-fee package: Good for standard, repeatable setups. Define scope carefully. ✓
 - 2. Time & materials: Hourly rate for bespoke or complex cases. ✓
 - 3. Retainer + transaction fees: Monthly retainer for long engagements or ongoing compliance per-task fees. ✓
 - 4. Success fee: For complex approvals where the consultant guarantees the result (use with caution). ✓
 - Sample inclusions in fee: Document preparation, application filing, one round of regulator follow-up, standard POA, one bank introduction (not guaranteed bank approval). ✓
 - Add-ons charged separately: Translations, notarizations, legal opinions, complex license approvals, court/Legal disputes matter. ✓
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13. Deliverables & Templates (suggested)

- Engagement letter template ✓
 - Client onboarding checklist ✓
 - KYC form template ✓
 - Company incorporation checklist ✓
 - POA template ✓
 - Board resolution template ✓
 - Handover checklist ✓
 - Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for license renewals and visa tracking ✓
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14. Client Responsibilities vs Consultant Responsibilities

- Client: Provide accurate KYC, sign documents promptly, pay fees on time, and provide tenancy/landlord cooperation. ✓
 - Consultant: Accurate advice, timely filings, transparent fees, secure handling of client documents, and maintaining communication logs. ✓
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15. Risk & Compliance Checklist

- Verify beneficial ownership and source of funds ✓
 - Check for sanctions or restricted party status ✓
 - Confirm suitability of chosen business activities (some need extra approvals) ✓
 - Maintain anti-money-laundering (AML) records ✓
 - Set reminders for statutory filings and renewals ✓
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16. Ready-to-use Checklists (printable)

- Onboarding checklist: Signed engagement, retainer received, KYC collected, signed POA, selected trade name, lease copy (if applicable). ✓
 - Incorporation checklist: Name approval, MOA/AOA signed, license paid, shareholder IDs notarised, license issued, bank account initiated, VAT registration started. ✓
 - Post-setup checklist (first 90 days): Payroll running, accounting entries started, VAT (if applicable) implemented, staff hired and onboarded, and insurance in place. ✓
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17. Optional: UAE-Specific Appendix (customize by Emirate)

- Mainland: DED / Economic Department rules; Emirate-specific freezones (e.g., DIFC, ADGM) have their own regulations. ✓
 - Freezones: Activity lists, permitted office types, visa quotas, and incentives differ widely.
 - Offshore: Good for holding companies, IP, asset protection – but cannot trade within the UAE. ✓
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18. Final Notes & Next Steps

- 1. Save this document as your internal SOP and adapt country/emirate specifics. ✓
 - 2. During each client engagement, maintain a single source of truth (CRM + document repository). ✓
 - 3. Offer optional ongoing compliance retainers to help clients avoid missed renewals. ✓
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Prepared by: Your Business Setup Consultant

UAE BUSINESS SETUP Consultant

Full GUIDE

Let's Connect 

Office No.107. Al Rostamani Building (Near Burjuman Metro Station). Khalid Bin Waleed Street. Bur Dubai, Dubai 

services@thinkbizme.com 

+971 55 211 2292 

+971 54 464 6363 

+97143211123 

THINKBIZME