

Bankers and accountants who used to put their faith in spreadsheets and complex formulas are now turning to clairvoyants for guidance. Many have even started taking in job offers and contracts to be analysed. The British Astrological and Psychic Society (BAPS) said it had witnessed a dramatic increase in the demand for readings in the last year – particularly in the last three months. Websites such as thepsychicsociety.co.uk and psychics.co.uk, which also offer psychic readings over the phone, have also reported a significant increase in enquiries. "I've definitely noticed a new trend," said Jayne Wallace, a clairvoyant who works in the Selfridges department store, in central London. "We're getting lots of city workers – particularly men coming in for readings. "A surprising amount of my clients are very high-up, wealthy, important people from within the financial industry.

"They might be worried about losing their job or a lot of the time they're asking about whether it's right to get out of the finance industry altogether.

"Often if they've had a job offer from another company they'll even bring the contract in with them to ask me about it. I've seen four today alone."

One of her clients, a director at ICAP, the London-based brokers firm, said he had been offered a job in Hong Kong but had been unsure about whether to accept it.

"I've gone to Jayne in the past and she's given me really good advice," said the man, who did not want to be named as he had not yet told his employers about the offer.

"She advised me on my last job offer and that worked out well. I showed her the new contract and she said I should move to Hong Kong as I would be happier, so I'm going to take the job."

William Hooper, 39, a former City trader, said he gave up his job on the advice of his psychic, Robin Lown, to become a property developer in Cyprus at the end of last year.

"He was always very concerned about the way the economy was heading and warned me to get out of banking. He said I needed to be out of the industry by September 2008.

"So that's what I did – just before the collapse of Lehman Brothers in the US. The property market has crashed so I'm hoovering up cheap properties while things would have become pretty difficult for me if I had stayed in the UK."

"He was always one of the first people I would consult about my career. If I had a job offer I would ask him whether or not I should take it."

Other psychics have also reported a surge in demand for their services. They said they had also seen a change in the type of questions that were being asked during readings.

Katie Winterbourne, an "intuitive therapist" based in Harrods department store, in London, charges £120 for an hour-long reading and has a three-month-long waiting list.

"Most of the questions I used to get asked were by women seeking advice about their personal

lives, in particular their love lives.

"But there's been a noticeable shift. Now I'm getting lots of questions about people's work lives, or financial security. Questions like "will I lose my job?" and "should the credit crunch stop me from starting a family?"

Despite the sceptical way in which the industry is often perceived, many psychics believe they have an important role in a time of economic turmoil.

Jackie Towers, a clairvoyant and president of BAPS, said questions had become less about spiritual issues and more about practical, everyday issues.

"It makes sense really," she said. "People are more concerned about keeping their houses, or keeping their family fed, than whether or not they can be put in contact with their dead relatives."

She added that most of the society's members had reported an increase in demand for their services – particularly in the last six months.

"People are scared. I have one client whose husband is on suicide watch. She doesn't know who to turn to for help. It's a difficult time for a lot of people and it's our job to put them at ease – to give them that bit of guidance or clarity that they are looking for."