



10 Questions for your Business

1. Do you want to grow your business?
2. Would you like help from others who have 'been there – done that'?
3. Do you feel a sense of isolation as an Owner Manager?
4. Do you want to develop new links locally, nationally and internationally?
5. Do you need to upgrade your own management skills?
6. Could you use direct contact with multinational companies?
7. Could you use expert help in tackling new business challenges?
8. Have you limited time and resources?
9. Do you want to do business cross-border?
10. Heard about PLATO, but not sure how it can help ? read on

Contact us to find out more:

If you are interested in finding out more about how PLATO can assist you and your business contact our office or send a request to be contacted via our website www.platodublin.ie. The website also gives updates of PLATO news, events, opportunities and programmes.



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" PLATO completely transformed the business. I couldn't recommend PLATO highly enough to any small business wishing to develop."

Ian Jackson, Go2Web

Web Design and Web Marketing.
In business for 18 years. Staff of 7.

" PLATO showed us how improved management skills have a direct relationship with better company performance and also helped us gain those improved management skills."

Bill Griffin, Artisan Image Solutions

Corporate and Architectural Signage.
In business for 18 years. Staff of 8

" Participation in PLATO gave me a whole new outlook on how to develop the business. The association with other like minded Owner Managers was a great source of ideas and support."

Keith Johnson, Sam's Cookies

Manufacture of handmade cookies and cakes.
In business for 26 years. Staff of 13.

New Plato Business Development Programme

Where Owner Managers
do the Business



Plato Dublin is supported by the Local Enterprise Offices in the Dublin Region



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What is PLATO?

PLATO is an all-island business support network dedicated to the successful development of owner managed small to medium sized businesses in every area of commercial activity.

Funded by the Local Enterprises Offices in the Dublin Region and supported by many of the most prestigious companies operating in Ireland, PLATO offers a unique business support Forum aimed at developing the business awareness and skills of Owner Managers in order that they can more successfully pursue their ambitions.

There are PLATO networks situated throughout Ireland and Europe with PLATO Dublin being one of the largest and most successful. Over the past 20 years more than 3000 **Owner Managers** have participated in and hugely benefited from the PLATO Dublin programme.

Why do so many Owner Managers join PLATO?

Owner Managers wishing to develop their business invariably face many challenges and uncertainties and in all cases can benefit greatly from the right type of assistance and support. This is what PLATO offers. Those who successfully participate in the PLATO programme invariably show:

- **Greatly improved management awareness and effectiveness**
- **Greater business productivity**
- **Increased turnover and profits**
- **Increased employment**

Participant businesses can vary from those in operation for as little as 2 years to as many as 20 years. Only businesses that have moved beyond the start-up stage are eligible to join and for those businesses the only criteria that PLATO has is that participants genuinely wish to improve themselves as managers, to develop their business and to commit to full participation in the programme for its duration.

How does PLATO work ?

Every year PLATO runs a development programme which lasts 18 months. There are many strands to the assistance and support which the programme provides, including training and networking, but at its core are the monthly Owner Manager **Group Meetings**.

Participants are formed into a number of groups based in various locations and each group meets for 3 hours every month to discuss their business issues. The meetings are held in the premises of PLATO Parent Companies at a time and day chosen by the participants themselves and are chaired and facilitated by Group Leaders.

Each group typically contains 12 – 15 like-minded and ambitious Owner Managers who want to develop both their own skills and the success of their business. The make-up of each group is carefully considered by PLATO to incorporate the best mix of expertise and range of business experience. Every effort is made to place participants in a group location close to their business. Each programme typically contains 80 – 90 participants.

What are Parent Companies and Group Leaders ?

This is one of the most unique aspects of PLATO. A wide range of large national and international companies work with PLATO to assist in the development of small to medium sized businesses. Such PLATO Dublin 'Parent Companies' include:

Bank of Ireland, CRS Pharma Solutions, DCU, Diageo, Ericsson, ESB, IBM, Microsoft, Paypal, Pfizer, Ulster Bank and many others.

These Parent Companies provide some of their best and experienced managers to act as co-ordinators and facilitators in each group. These are termed 'Group Leaders' and are fully conversant with all aspects of small business and the needs of SME Owner Managers. Each group has two such Group Leaders.

What happens at Group Meetings ?

At the heart of the PLATO programme is the sharing of information, expertise and experiences that are generated at the group meetings which also act as a sounding board for ideas and suggestions raised by group members. Group members raise issues relevant to their business and the group as a whole then acts as an advisory forum to discuss these issues with the aim of providing as many options, ideas and solutions as possible.

This interactive learning is greatly enhanced by the input of a wide range of business experts who are brought into the group meetings to advise on specific topics raised by the members. Although the Group Leaders co-ordinate and facilitate the meetings it is the group members who decide what topics are discussed. A very supportive environment very quickly develops within the group in which no competing businesses are placed so that an open and free discussion forum thrives.

Training and Networking

In addition to the group meetings there is a comprehensive range of training modules/seminars and networking events, details of which are regularly posted on the PLATO Dublin website. While only the Owner Managers can attend the monthly group meetings their staff can attend the training and networking events.

An added dimension to PLATO is the 'progression groups'. Once an Owner Manager completes the core PLATO programme he/she can opt to join past participants of other groups in an Advanced PLATO Group. This can be done immediately after their core programme finishes or at a later date.

With over 4,000 businesses in Ireland and tens of thousands across Europe having participated in PLATO there are great networking opportunities available through the various PLATO regions.