




Local Enterprise Office
Making It Happen

Grow: CARLOW TOOLMAKING

COLLABORATION OVER DECADES: SINCE CARLOW TOOLMAKING FIRST STARTED UP, LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE CARLOW HAS BEEN A CONSTANT SUPPORT

Making It Happen: John Whelan, Design Engineer and Pat Amond, founder of Carlow Toolmaking.

Experienced specialists who branch out on their own to start a business can quickly find the demands of the entrepreneurial life more varied and challenging than they could ever have imagined.

“When I was down at the shop buying teabags and milk for the office, I realised I was on my own,” says Pat Amond, who set up Carlow Toolmaking in 1994.

Support from the get-go

Pat was an expert toolmaker, but had no wider business experience.

“I had worked for Braun where there were departments for finance, human resources, facilities and so on. When it came to running a business, I quickly found I was sinking because I had to do all these things myself,” he says.

“I knew nothing about the rules and regulations around tax. That was when the Local Enterprise Office – then known as the County Enterprise Board – came on board. They advised me to get an accountant and guided me through how to do it.”

An ongoing relationship

Carlow Toolmaking quickly received further supports and has continued to do so, explains Kieran Comerford, Head of Enterprise at Local Enterprise Office Carlow.

“Since 1994, with the growth of the company and many challenges and opportunities, Local Enterprise Office Carlow has provided a variety of supports from mentoring, trade shows, training and development support as well as Business Expansion Funding.”



Making It Happen: Kieran Comerford of Local Enterprise Office Carlow.

TOP TIPS FROM CARLOW TOOLMAKING

- Go in and talk to your Local Enterprise Office at the time you're trying to start a new business. You are dealing with so much at that point and they can really help you build the foundation of your business.
- Even if you are really pressed for time, take an hour to sit back and look at the bigger picture with the help of your Local Enterprise Office. That time will come back to you tenfold in value.
- Make use of Local Enterprise Office events and training. You'll learn so much, even in the tea breaks when you get talking to other businesses in the same boat as you.

While Pat has always appreciated the formal supports provided by Local Enterprise Office Carlow, he also values the relationship he has with the team there. "Apart from things like training, it is the ability to pick up the phone and ask them for advice that is so helpful.

"They understand the different stages of business and they won't throw you in at the deep end. They suggest supports that are appropriate for the stage you're at," he says.

Building a full-service business

From the design and production of prototype parts through to the design of entire production systems, Carlow Toolmaking is now a one-stop precision components shop for clients in a wide range of industries, including the medical devices, pharmaceutical, oral care, and automotive sectors.

Pat, who took over the business fully in 2015, has evolved it to be a full-service firm, which takes briefs from clients, then designs, manufactures and delivers the equipment needed.

About 70% of its work comes from the medical devices industry and it counts six of the world's top 10 medical devices firms among its clients.

Carlow Toolmaking has won numerous awards including the National Enterprise Award Carlow County Final in 2019. It now employs 10 and also always has apprentices training on site.

Evolving support over time

Local Enterprise Office Carlow understands business is a journey, not a destination, says Kieran.

"Both financially and in terms of giving us support and advice, the Local Enterprise Office was crucial."

Pat Amond, Carlow Toolmaking Services

"We understand that for business development to be effective, owner-managers need to work on their business and maybe take a moment away from the day-to-day operations of their business. When they take this time, it pays in the long term.

"We encourage companies to come initially and have a confidential chat about their business. They can use this time to discuss their opportunities and their challenges so that our specialist team can work with them to make it happen for their business."

Pat agrees that anyone contemplating setting up a business should certainly engage with their Local Enterprise Office.

"Both financially and in terms of giving us support and advice, they were crucial. Looking back on it, if I were to start now, would I do it without them? Absolutely not."

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN. TALK TO YOUR LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE TODAY.

Pre-Start

Start

Grow

LocalEnterprise.ie
Making It Happen