

## **Press release**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2020**

Dundalk Chamber Skillnet has recently launched their Autumn training schedule with a range of courses focused on supporting local SMEs as they attempt to recover from the economic impact of Covid-19.

Commencing in September and running through to November, the courses cover a range of topics including Digital Marketing, Sales, and Leadership. The programmes are heavily subsidised by up to 70% and open to all persons in employment.

The Autumn schedule follows on from a successful Spring / Summer period. Aidan Callan, network manager stated we have worked hard to support local SME's over Lockdown, we implemented several training initiatives focused on business survival and business recovery. We trained close to 1,000 trainees over 3 months but we are particularly proud of our role in helping 200 businesses reopen post lockdown, our C19 Lead Person training initiative was a vital support to businesses ensuring they could open in a safe and compliant manner.

Our autumn training schedule is a continuation of our commitment to support local SMEs through this difficult period. We have placed an emphasis on Digital Marketing, an area we have identified as critical to business recovery. A recent VISA Ireland survey identified that 28% of respondent purchased online for the first-time during lockdown, for businesses to survive they must have a strong presence online and embrace digitisation.

We aim to support this through a series of focused programmes, first up we have "Sales Funnel Strategies for Facebook and Instagram", followed by a great 3-day programme "Building an Online Store with Shopify". This programme is perfect for any retailer with limited time and technical knowledge. The course outlines how to set up a Shopify site and guides strategies to drive traffic and sales, great value at just €49 for chamber members.

Other highlights include a QQI Level 6 People Management programme and a session on "Procurement – How to Win Tenders" an opportunity worth €13 billion annually. We'll also focus on "email marketing", "Time Management and we'll finish up with an intro to coaching and mentoring.

Thomas McDonagh of UHY Farrelly Dawe White and network promoter confirmed Dundalk Chamber Skillnets commitment to supporting local SMEs. Thomas stated a recent survey we conducted confirmed that 92% of trainees who attended our courses felt the training was supportive in preparing them to return to business post lockdown. This is a validation of our links to the local business community and our understanding of where the demand is. Our strategy is determined by representatives from the local business community including Servisource, PayPal, Bellurgan Precision, Matthews Coaches, National Pen, DKIT, Prometric, the Chamber of Commerce and the Local Enterprise Office. It is very much a case of training for the region by the region. With the support of Skillnet Ireland, our programmes are subsidised by 70% and I would encourage all businesses to look at our schedule and consider attending.

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