

Grow

Growing your business out of recession



Don't let your past define your future

THE Centre for Employment, Competitiveness and Growth (ECG) is looking for owner-managers who are committed to achieving their future growth aspirations.

Following a comprehensive research and assessment exercise with more than 500 SMEs across the region and working in partnership with a renowned leadership and change management consultancy, ECG has launched an executive development programme for ambitious owner-managers – the Business Improvement and Growth (BIG) Journey.

The BIG Journey provides ambitious owner-managers with a supportive environment to change their modus operandi to develop and implement a credible and robust growth plan. So what is a credible and robust growth plan?

Well let's start with what it isn't. It isn't a plan that you provide to your bank manager or accountant on last year's performance.

It also isn't a plan that you sit in your office and write for the performance you intend to achieve next year.

It is neither of these things because our research reveals that this form of planning will have little impact.

A credible and robust plan is grounded in an ability to manage change and anticipate where your business is going, not where it has been.

These are examples of those who based their future on their present:

■ "One day there will be a telephone in every major city in the USA."

Alexander Graham Bell (c.1880).

Are you looking for personal and business improvement and growth? **Simon Raby** of the University of Kent's Centre for Employment, Competitiveness and Growth explains how it can help.

■ "The horse is here to stay, but the automobile is only a novelty."

President of Michigan Savings Bank, 1903, advising Henry Ford's lawyer not to invest in the Ford Motor Company.

■ "Television won't be able to hold onto any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night."

Darryl F Zanuck, 1946.

■ "I think there is a world market for as many as five computers."

Thomas Watson, head of IBM, 1943.

Developing a credible and robust growth plan relies on an ability to envisage where your market will be in the future, not where it has been or currently is. What this requires is a deep understanding of your customers/consumers.

One of the most recounted examples of an individual who was in tune with his marketplace is that of the late Steve Jobs of Apple.

The success of Apple was not prefaced on Steve's technical ability – indeed Steve Wozniak, one of the co-founders of Apple, is keen to point out that his colleague never wrote a line of code or even designed an electronic circuit.

It is tempting to just close your eyes, bury your head into your workload and wait for things to get better. Ask yourself... will this lead to long term sustainable growth?

Apple's success is embedded in Jobs understanding of the consumer.

Jobs knew what we wanted before we did and championed the consumer in the design of every Apple product – products that were so intuitive to the human mind that Apple has untapped the potential of its marketplace.

How might we recreate similar levels of success for ourselves?

By better understanding what it is that the consumer of tomorrow values. What this requires is owner-managers spending time working 'on' their business not just 'in' their business.

However, our research reveals that owner-managers across Kent are more likely to adopt an operational role which



Simon Raby, programme manager, the Business, Improvement and Growth (BIG) Journey, University of Kent

pulls them into the day-to-day operations of their firm and away from a more strategic one.

It is human nature – we revert to working on what we feel comfortable doing, which tends to result in us fulfilling the needs of today's customers/consumers. As a consequence

we dedicate little time to considering the future.

Whilst the majority of owner-managers across Kent were found to report a lack of time as a constraint to effective planning, what the research reveals is that the real constraint is not time but the mind-set of the owner-

Factfile

The Centre for Employment, Competitiveness and Growth (ECG) is an applied research centre based at the University of Kent. ECG advances an ongoing performance measurement and monitoring exercise with SMEs across the region, the findings of which are used by ambitious owner-managers to improve their improvement & growth prospects.

managers which restrains performance. It is tempting to just close your eyes, bury your head into your workload and wait for things to get better. Ask yourself... will this lead to long term sustainable growth? When the members of the BIG Journey class of 2030 look back at our future, what's likely to surprise them most?

Will they marvel at the fact that we all used to sit in traffic commuting to our workplace? That we waited while the Euro failed, or acted to save it? That we did nothing whilst the world warmed and the ice caps melted? That we ever used CDs or picked up a paperback book?

Those who started their BIG Journey now will likely look back with a smirk and remark 'I'm glad I took my step towards a better future'. Don't let your past define your future. Find out how you can become the part of the class for BIG 2012 and build a better future for you and your business.

■ Call 01227 824740 and quote BIG for a free two-hour coaching consultation

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DEVELOPING CAPABILITIES

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Centre for Employment, Competitiveness & Growth (ECG)

The BIG Journey

Business Improvement and Growth for Ambitious Owner Managers

Don't let the past define your future. Build a better future for you and your business

The BIG Journey is an executive development programme for ambitious owner-managers who really want to grow and improve their business.

Call 01227 824740 and quote 'BIG' for a free 2 hour coaching session