



# Supporting Ambitious Women Entrepreneurs

who are serious about growing their businesses



---

AWARDED GOOD PRACTICE BY THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF GENDER EQUALITY (EIGE)  
HIGHLIGHTED BY THE OECD AND EU AS AN "INSPIRING PRACTICE"  
WINNER OF THE EUROPEAN ENTERPRISE PROMOTION AWARDS 2015 - INVESTING IN ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

# WHAT IS GOING FOR GROWTH?

## ABOUT GOING FOR GROWTH

Going for Growth is an initiative to support female entrepreneurs who have been trading for at least two years and are strongly focussed on growth. Most owner managers agree that it can be a very isolating experience and it can be difficult to find someone on your wavelength who understands the issues involved in successfully growing a business. The Going for Growth round table initiative is designed to address these challenges. At Going for Growth, we believe that entrepreneurs learn best from each other. Accordingly, the initiative is based on interactive round table sessions that are facilitated not by consultants, academics or professional trainers, but by successful entrepreneurs.

Participants are offered a unique learning environment with a peer led approach based on the shared experiences of both the Lead Entrepreneur and the other participants facing common challenges. Participation is free of charge.

The Going for Growth initiative is supported by Enterprise Ireland and KPMG.

## WHO IS IT FOR?

Going for Growth is for ambitious female entrepreneurs across all sectors who are located in the Republic of Ireland. The entrepreneur should already be the owner manager of a business of which she is a major shareholder and key influencer. Suitable applicants need to demonstrate significant aspiration for growth and should be working full time in the business. It is expected that the business will have been trading for at least two years.

Applications will also be considered on an exceptional basis from candidates who have more recently set up businesses that are highly innovative and demonstrate significant ambition and expect to be selling in export markets. They must already have generated some sales.

Find out more at [www.goingforgrowth.com](http://www.goingforgrowth.com)

## GOING FOR GROWTH COMES STRONGLY RECOMMENDED

Over 800 women entrepreneurs have already participated in a cycle of Going for Growth. In almost every case the round table sessions translated into practical changes within their businesses; they got great benefit from the National Forum and they felt nearer to achieving their growth goals as a result of their participation in Going for Growth.

Some of the many testimonials from previous participants may be read in this brochure or on the website - [www.goingforgrowth.com/testimonials](http://www.goingforgrowth.com/testimonials)



Áine Kerr, Kinzen



Aimee Connolly, Sculpted by Aimee



Lead Entrepreneurs Oonagh O'Hagan, Meagher's Pharmacy; Monica Flood, formerly Olas; and Gillian O'Dowd, Azon Recruitment Group

"Increasing support for ambitious female entrepreneurship is a key national priority and Enterprise Ireland is proud to support Going for Growth. Strong peer groups, wonderful Lead Entrepreneurs, excellent formal learning opportunities and frameworks for business growth make this a "must consider" for anyone seeking to accelerate her business".

**Leo Clancy, CEO, Enterprise Ireland**



"The results of this year's programme speak to the remarkable resilience of these women in the most challenging of market circumstances. Women in Ireland continue to be underrepresented amongst our entrepreneurship community, but with the right support, have the potential to contribute significantly more to our economy. The many programme participants who have adapted their businesses to become first time exporters and create new jobs are proof of this potential. We look forward to continuing our strong support of the Going for Growth programme, and sharing our expertise with the next group of ambitious women looking to take their businesses to the next level".

**Olivia Lynch, Partner, KPMG**





# WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A CYCLE?

A cycle of Going for Growth involves a time commitment of about three hours a month over a period of six months. Those selected to participate in Going for Growth are expected to attend all monthly meetings, and must be available to attend a full day National Launch Forum at the beginning of the cycle.

## SUPPORTING GROWTH IN A UNIQUE MANNER

- **Peer support:** Going for Growth is based on peer support. The monthly meetings are led by experienced Lead Entrepreneurs, who give of their time on a voluntary basis. Each Lead Entrepreneur selects up to nine participants to join her at a round table to look at common issues, share experiences and explore ideas and strategies for growing their businesses.
- **Lead Entrepreneur:** The most important attributes of the Lead Entrepreneurs are that they have experience of growing a business and have personal experience of the growth journey on which the participants are embarking.
- **Collaboration:** In a spirit of collaboration, the Lead Entrepreneurs act as role models to the selected participants and share their knowledge and experience with them. Each participant will find a group of like-minded women around the table. The businesses will be different but many of the issues will be similar. A circle of trust develops around the table and all matters discussed remain confidential.

The initiative has been endorsed by successful business women. Those who were involved in the most recent cycle as Lead Entrepreneurs were Anne Cusack, Chupi Sweetman-Durney, Fidelma McGuirk, Gillian O'Dowd, Jeananne O'Brien, Leonora O'Brien, Monica Flood and Oonagh O'Hagan. These busy and successful business women agreed to give their time on a voluntary basis to support women entrepreneurs to achieve their growth ambitions.

Going for Growth is action and results oriented and goes beyond class room style learning and the usual inputs of professional trainers, consultants and academics. The roundtables are designed not to be theoretical or academic, but to be based on real experience of what has worked and what hasn't worked in real life situations.

### THE NATIONAL LAUNCH FORUM

Each cycle of Going for Growth starts with a National Launch Forum designed to allow participants and Lead Entrepreneurs to explore a number of relevant topics and to have their first round table meeting. All participants must attend this full day event.

As well as providing more in-depth coverage of key topics, the National Launch Forum provides an opportunity for attendees to network with participants and Lead Entrepreneurs from other roundtable groups.

Previous participants derived great benefit from attending the National Forum.



Sponsors Leo Clancy, Enterprise Ireland (left) and Olivia Lynch, KPMG (right) pictured with Lead Entrepreneurs Anne Cusack and Jeananne O'Brien.

## THE ROUND TABLE SESSIONS

Participants are expected to attend all meetings. They take place once a month over a period of six months at a location convenient to the Lead Entrepreneur. As successful applicants will be placed with an appropriate Lead Entrepreneur, it may be necessary for participants to travel to attend the round table sessions. Unnecessary travel will be minimised, however. The arrangements for the monthly meetings (time and place) are agreed by the Lead Entrepreneur with participants at their first meeting. On successful completion of a cycle, participants will be given the opportunity to join the Going for Growth Community.

## A COMMON AGENDA FOCUSED ON GROWTH

The focus of this initiative is on the growth challenge.

The questions to be explored over six monthly sessions will include –

- Why go for growth?
- Is your business model fit for purpose?
- What are your KPIs?
- How to increase profitability through increased sales?
- What resources/capabilities do you need to underpin growth?
- What is the best growth path for your business?
- How can you make sure that profitable growth is the result of all your effort?

Going for Growth roundtables will explore this series of relevant questions with the Lead Entrepreneur sharing her experiences and thoughts on the question under discussion. The other participants will similarly share their experiences and learn from each other. For each session an agenda will be provided to reflect these broad areas. On successful completion of a cycle, participants will be given the opportunity to join the Going for Growth Community.

ALL PROGRAMME ARRANGEMENTS WILL TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS AND WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE TO DELIVER A QUALITY PROGRAMME APPROPRIATE TO PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES.



Coronavirus  
**COVID-19**  
Public Health  
Advice

# THE LEAD ENTREPRENEURS

The Lead Entrepreneurs are not, and cannot be, experts in every area of business but they have first-hand experience of facing the challenges of growing a business. They all agree that if such support were to have been available to them when they were growing their business, they would have found it most beneficial. The following are facilitating the round tables for the 14th cycle.



## ANNE CUSACK

In 1999 Anne co-founded Critical Healthcare, a leader in the Emergency Services market providing healthcare solutions at the front line. As CEO, Anne brought Critical Healthcare through many milestones, the winning and retaining of multiple public and private contracts including the NHS, and Falck Europe, the largest provider of Emergency Services globally, the design and patenting of innovative new products, the creation of an own brand portfolio of medical consumables & medical devices and the design & development of their own software procurement platform adopted by multiple Irish & European emergency service providers. A qualified Non-Executive Director from the Institute of Directors, Anne has served on a number of boards. Anne is a member of the HealthTech Ireland Digital Health forum. In 2019, Anne was invited by the then Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, to serve as Chair of the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee, 2019-2020 and again recently, 2020-2024. In 2021 Critical Healthcare was acquired in a management buy-in and Anne is now pursuing her many other interests.



## CHUPI SWEETMAN-DURNEY

Chupi started her eponymous jewellery brand as a hobby in her spare room and scaled her company to a multi-million euro business based in Ireland. At 21, Chupi was scouted by Topshop from her first year in college and was the youngest designer to ever work for the company. After a six year career in fast-fashion, Chupi wanted to create something that lasted forever and which celebrated Ireland's design heritage, and so in April 2013 Chupi the brand was born. It has been a rapid journey from Irish startup to an internationally acclaimed multi award winning brand. Now a growing team of 60+ talented individuals create and ship Chupi's beautiful jewellery to 67 countries around the world from London to New York to Tokyo. The business has evolved through a strong digital strategy, taking the Irish strengths of storytelling to the modern platforms of social media and ecommerce. [www.chupi.com](http://www.chupi.com)



## FIDELMA MCGUIRK

Fidelma McGuirk is founder and CEO of Payslip, a Global Payroll platform that automates the management of international payroll. Payslip enables HR Directors to consolidate global payrolls, achieve centralised reporting compliance and data protection, and deliver useful insights and real control to the business. Payslip clients are multinational employers, growing aggressively in more than five countries. Prior to Payslip, Fidelma had over 18 years' experience in international business. Having worked in Irish telco Eir in HR, she later led Taxback.com as Director of International Operations and as CEO. Fidelma has a Bachelors in Business & German from Trinity College Dublin and the University of Regensburg, Germany, as well as a Masters in Business from TCD. Fidelma has also trained as a certified Data Protection Officer. [www.payslip.com](http://www.payslip.com)



## GILLIAN O'DOWD

Gillian O'Dowd is co-founder and director of Azon Recruitment Group, a recruitment agency specialising in multiple industry sectors, including accounting and finance, financial services, taxation, legal and construction and technology. Since establishment in 2014, the award-winning recruitment agency has grown year on year. With offices in Dublin, Limerick and London, they now employ over 40 and service many national and international clients. With over 20 years' experience working on the financing and investment portfolios of Irish and International businesses, Gillian O' Dowd has extensive experience from start-up to exit, from growth to M&A across investments, property and recruitment sectors. Gillian holds a Bachelor of Commerce from UCC and a Masters in Financial Services from the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, UCD. [www.azon.ie](http://www.azon.ie)



## JEANANNE O'BRIEN

Jeananne O'Brien is Founder and Director of Artizan Food Co and Eatto. Artizan Food Co, a leading boutique corporate catering company, was founded in Dublin in 2005. Artizan has led the way in 'Cloud Kitchen' solutions having established their first cloud kitchen in 2008 and currently operate from their state of the art 26,000 square foot kitchen offering innovative digitally driven in-house and flexible workplace catering solutions. Jeananne also founded Eatto.ie, a sustainable frozen food ready meal brand, which launched in April 2020. A direct-to-consumer e-commerce model, Eatto.ie delivers handmade meals nationwide, using locally sourced Irish produce, with no additives or preservatives. Jeananne is hugely passionate about sustainability and holds it at the core of both Artizan and Eatto who are proud members of Bord Bia's Origin Green. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce from UCD and MSc in Marketing from Smurfit Business School, UCD. [www.artizancatering.ie](http://www.artizancatering.ie)

# THE LEAD ENTREPRENEURS CONTINUED...



## LEONORA O'BRIEN

Leonora is a qualified pharmacist and the Founder of Pharmapod, a company that developed a global software platform to reduce medication errors and deliver safe effective clinical services for patients worldwide. With Leonora as CEO, Pharmapod was widely adopted across 10,000 pharmacies and Long Term Care facilities by corporate clients such as Pillpack by Amazon in the US, CareRx in Canada as well as independent pharmacies and Pharmacy regulators. Pharmapod launched in multiple international markets including US, Australia, UK and Ireland securing over 65% of the Canadian market. Leonora has served on a number of boards including the Tech Ireland Board and was a member of Council for the Dublin Chamber of Commerce. In 2021 Pharmapod was acquired by Think Research in Canada and Leonora is now pursuing other business, creative and charity interests. Leonora is an ambassador for women in business and STEM and has won numerous awards for business, pharmacy practice and innovation including Laureate for the Cartier Women's Initiative Awards, Business Woman of the Year (Irish Women's awards) and the Tatler Women of the Year Awards for Entrepreneurship.



## MONICA FLOOD

Monica Flood established an IT training and consultancy business in 1981. Olas has developed as one of the premier IT training companies in Ireland and is the sole appointed education partner for SAP. Monica completed the sale of Olas to a French public company, Assima plc. and has retired from the position of CEO to pursue other business and investment interests. Monica's experience of building a service business and a loyal customer base in a very competitive market provides an important perspective for growth and success. A great supporter of the arts in Ireland, Monica is a Patron of The Model in Sligo, home of the Niland Collection and one of Ireland's leading contemporary arts centres. Monica has recently been appointed as a non-executive Director to the Projects Arts Centre, which began in 1966 as a small, artist led collective and is now evolving into Ireland's national centre for the contemporary arts.



## OONAGH O'HAGAN

Oonagh O'Hagan is the owner and Managing Director of Meagher's Pharmacy Group. A qualified pharmacist, she was in her late 20s when she bought the landmark Meagher's Pharmacy on Dublin's Baggot Street from Pierce Meagher in 2001. She has since gone on to grow the business to nine pharmacies and a thriving online store [www.meaghers.ie](http://www.meaghers.ie). She now employs 150 people with further growth planned this year. Meagher's has been named as a Deloitte Best Managed Irish Company for the past seven years and has been awarded Platinum Status these past two years. The Meaghers Pharmacy Group have represented Ireland in the European Business Awards and collected the two top business awards at the Irish Pharmacy News awards ceremony, taking away the Business Development of the Year award and the OTC retailer in the same year. Meaghers have also been named as a "Great Place to Work" in Ireland for the past two years, being named as one of Ireland's Top 30 Small Places to work for 2021 and also collected the award for Customer experience in the Healthcare sector at the Cx awards last year. Oonagh herself has picked up many business awards and was named as Image Magazine's Entrepreneur of the Year in 2016 and is shortlisted for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards this year. [www.meagherspharmacy.ie](http://www.meagherspharmacy.ie)

The following Lead Entrepreneurs will facilitate Continuing the Momentum round tables.



## ÁINE DENN

A technology entrepreneur and advisor, Áine is adept at the art and science of B2B selling. In 2005 Áine co-founded Altify (now Upland Altify), the leading Customer Revenue Optimization (CRO) cloud solution for sales and extended revenue teams. Áine has exited the company to pursue other interests. Áine's insight is informed by many years' experience in enterprise software, business development, operations and customer engagement. Prior to Altify, Áine served in senior executive and board director positions in public and private companies, including The SCO Group, NewworldIQ, Prudential UK and Accenture. Áine believes in adding value to growing companies, while investing in people and being kind.



## BREEGE O'DONOGHUE

Breege O'Donoghue is a former Board Member at Primark. Her most recent role, until mid-Sep 2016, was Group Director, Business Development & New Markets. She managed, with others, a business through significant growth and expansion from 17 stores to over 320 in 11 markets. Breege's executive career included experience in European and US markets and significant experience of leadership, diverse teams and complex cross-functional business projects. She has extensive experience as a Non-Executive Director. Breege is also on the advisory board of UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School. Her many awards include UCD Business - Smurfit Patrons of Excellence 2017; Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur 2016; Iconic Businesswoman of the Decade Women Economic Forum, New Delhi, India 2016; Fashion Retailing Personality of the Year, Draper UK, 2016; Irish Tatler Hall of Fame Award, 2016. More recently, Breege O'Donoghue was named Irish Times Top 1,000 Distinguished Leader in Business and was awarded the RDS 2019 Gold Medal for Enterprise. Breege has received a Doctorate of Philosophy (honoris causa), from DIT.



# THE ADVISORY PANEL

The Going for Growth Team is delighted that former Lead Entrepreneurs continue to be associated with the initiative by serving on the advisory panel to further develop and strengthen the initiative.



**ADRIENNE GORMLEY**  
N26



**ANNE HERATY**



**CAROLINE KEELING**  
Keelings



**CLARE DUIGNAN**



**ELAINE COUGHLAN**  
Atlantic Bridge Ventures



**FIONA O'CARROLL**



**HEATHER REYNOLDS**



**LOUISE PHELAN**  
Phelan Energy



**LULU O'SULLIVAN**  
GiftsDirect.com



**MAEVE DORMAN**  
PayPal



**MARGOT SLATTERY**  
Sodexo



**MARIAN O'GORMAN**  
Kilkenny Group



**MARISSA CARTER**  
Cocoa Brown



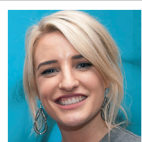
**MARY MCKENNA**  
Tour America



**NIKKI EVANS**  
PerfectCard



**SUSAN SPENCE**  
SoftCo



"Beginning the cycle I expected I would gain a lot of expertise, but I had no idea as to the extent of that expertise, or the friendships I would make along the way".

**Vanessa Creaven, *Spotlight Oral Care***



"This programme inspires me, motivates me, grounds and focuses me. I've developed business friends and allies for life. It has been one of the most significant aspects in my business to date".

**Jennifer Rock, *Skingredients***

# EXTERNAL RECOGNITION OF GOING FOR GROWTH

Going for Growth is the brainchild of Paula Fitzsimons who put it forward in response to an initiative on women and entrepreneurship proposed by the NDP Gender Equality Unit in the then Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. *'My mission in Going for Growth is to support women entrepreneurs to achieve their growth ambitions and to get more women entrepreneurs into a growth frame of mind'.*

Since 2009 the merits and excellence of *Going for Growth* have been recognised repeatedly by the EU, OECD, and European Institute of Gender Equality. In 2015, *Going for Growth* was awarded the European Enterprise Promotion Award, Investing in Entrepreneurial Skills. In 2016, the initiative was included by the EU and OECD in a compendium of examples of innovative initiatives. The entrepreneurship tool for policy makers, recently released by the EU and OECD, includes Going for Growth as a case study.



## COMPLIMENTARY INITIATIVES

### STARTING STRONG

Starting Strong is designed for ambitious female entrepreneurs who are at an earlier stage in the development of their business than traditional participants on the Going for Growth programme. However, the application process is the same with those interested registering on [www.goingforgrowth.com](http://www.goingforgrowth.com) in the first instance. To be considered the businesses will have moved well beyond the concept and prototype stages and will have made some initial sales. Starting Strong is aimed at exceptional female entrepreneurs whose length of pre-revenue development, degree of innovation and growth potential are all significantly greater than the norm. They should also expect to be exporters. Starting Strong participants have a specially tailored programme including round table sessions with Lead Entrepreneurs and relevant topic based workshops. This is made possible by the contribution of the following Starting Strong Supporters – Beauchamps, Boots, Glandore, KPMG, PayPal and SoftCo.



### CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM

On successful completion of a cycle, participants can stay connected by joining the Going for Growth Community. Members can apply to participate in Continuing the Momentum round tables, take part in topic based workshops, attend a Meet the Leads event, and are invited to attend the annual Community Forum. Continuing the Momentum was developed following a clear demand by many participants for continued participation on Lead facilitated round tables in order to continue their growth journey through a focus on goals and milestones and the benefit of an advisory panel of peers. Supported by Enterprise Ireland and KPMG, the activities of the Community are tailored to deliver focused developmental support to the individual member and her business, together with enhanced networking opportunities.



### ACORNS INITIATIVE

Several members of the Going for Growth community, who have started and grown businesses in rural Ireland, are now acting as voluntary Lead Entrepreneurs on ACORNS, an initiative to support early stage female entrepreneurs in rural Ireland. As past participants of the Going for Growth programme all have first-hand experience of the round table peer learning approach and of its benefits. Going for Growth Lead Entrepreneurs also give of their time in a voluntary capacity to facilitate ACORNS Plus, a growth-focussed round table initiative. Over 300 female entrepreneurs have taken part in ACORNS to date. ACORNS was designed and developed by Fitzsimons Consulting and is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. [www.acorns.ie](http://www.acorns.ie)



## OUR SPONSORS

**Enterprise Ireland** (EI) is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. EI works in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales on global markets. In this way, EI supports sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment. You can find detailed information on Enterprise Ireland's activities, strategy and performance on [www.enterprise-ireland.com](http://www.enterprise-ireland.com).

**KPMG** is Ireland's leading professional advisory services firm with over 3,000 professionals based in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Galway. KPMG provides a broad range of audit, tax and advisory services to clients ranging from dynamic privately owned businesses to individuals, partnerships and publicly quoted companies. KPMG works with entrepreneurs and start-ups to support the early achievement of business objectives and has a reputation for continuing these strong relationships as organisations evolve and grow. KPMG's reputation for excellence is based on passion for business and an unrivalled understanding of key industry issues in all sectors of the economy. [www.kpmg.ie](http://www.kpmg.ie)



# GOING FOR GROWTH WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

---

6 James's Terrace, Malahide, Co. Dublin • +353 1 8450770 • [info@goingforgrowth.com](mailto:info@goingforgrowth.com) • [www.goingforgrowth.com](http://www.goingforgrowth.com) • [@goingforgrowth](https://twitter.com/goingforgrowth)

