



Struggling small businesses turn to mentoring website for free expert advice

by Business Reporter

ONE troubled business a day is seeking expert mentoring help from smallbusinessadvice.ie, a month after the volunteer service set up shop.

Launched by Minister of State Billy Kelleher, the website is the brainchild of Fine Gael TD Simon Coveney and is sponsored by Bord Gáis Éireann and Plato Cork.

It is also supported by the Cork Chamber and the Cork Business Association.

Project manager Donal Kissane said the response had been encouraging.

He said: "100% of the small businesses which applied for assistance have been contacted by the programme. And all of those who wished to proceed to work with the initiative have already been teamed up with advisers who will give free advice on their problem area."

He said: "The confidential nature of the programme and the fact that you can apply quickly and easily online at smallbusinessadvice.ie has encouraged businesses to look for help."

"On average, once we have ascertained the exact nature of the requirement, we are able to match the right adviser with a business within three to five days."

Mr Kissane said that the categories of businesses looking for expert help were wide-ranging.

"The confidential nature of the



Billy Kelleher: Launched the scheme's website. programme means I cannot go into detail but we have had applica-



Simon Coveney: Initiative is all about businesses community helping itself. tions from the building sector, retail sector, the services sector and the

hospitality sector to name but a few.

"The key problems small businesses are facing are raising finance and managing working capital, bad debt and managing creditors, coping with downsizing a business during recession, and generating new customer revenue."

Mr Coveney said: "I am pleased to see the positive uptake one month into the programme."

"smallbusinessadvice.ie is all about the Irish business community helping themselves get through the current economic downturn."

The programme is initially being provided in Cork city and county but there are plans to expand the service to other regions throughout 2010.

Project manager Donal Kissane outlined how businesses can apply.

"We are keen to keep the process as simple and streamlined as possible for small business."

"To apply, all the small business needs to do is log on to the website www.smallbusinessadvice.ie, where they will get full contact details, including a phone hotline 021-4534163."

"Small business may also apply online via the website, by email or by fax — full contact details are on the website."

Businesses which want to apply to the scheme should log on to www.smallbusinessadvice.ie for further information.