
Collaboration could hold key to success post-Covid-19

Given the current situation, starting a business has never been more risky. Stephen Lawless looks at how collaboration could hold the key to success for start-ups post-Covid-19.

At the end of 2001 unemployment in Argentina skyrocketed to 22.1 per cent (pc). By 2002 those living below the poverty line reached almost 60pc. Many skilled and experienced individuals found themselves without a job. Those finishing university faced little employment opportunities tried to start their own businesses. But with little business experience it was a struggle.

Then a website was launched in Argentina which matched young companies with experienced professionals. These professionals who joined were able to claim their social welfare and take a share of the company. They brought with them years of experience in business as well as their contacts.

Something similar could work here in Ireland which promotes greater collaboration among entrepreneurs, experienced professionals, graduates and businesses looking to either start or grow.

Co-founders

Greater collaboration can help people fill in the gaps in their skillset. There is a vast array of skills needed to run a business such as product, web development, graphic design, accounting, funding, legal and recruitment to name just a few. As new technologies emerge, changing how businesses interact with their customers and the list of skills needed to start or expand will continue to grow.

It would be very difficult to expect one person to possess every skill needed to start a business on their own. Each business will have core chain activities. If one element in the chain is not working, the business can't operate. By bringing people together to work on a start-up, their combined skills and experience can help the business take off and be successful.

Sales - referral groups

Those entrepreneurs and businesses that collaborate can generate greater sales than those that don't. By working together with businesses who exist in different industries and have the same target client, businesses can increase their sales and reduce their marketing costs. For example, an accountant can partner with a web developer and refer clients to each other. The cost of referring clients to another business is zero.

If you are trying to export to another country, you could partner with a local entrepreneur who can

sell your product to his contacts. The person who can help you sell your product could be someone who has just lost their job. The economic impact with COVID-19 will increase unemployment. There will be a lot of people out there with unique skills and experience who will be available to work and would be more than willing to support.

Skill sharing

At the early stages of a business journey, there will be some small tasks which won't justify having a co-founder, however, these tasks are essential to getting your business started. For example, setting up a limited company, getting a website created or designing a logo. Collaboration will only help the business.

If entrepreneurs at the early stages of building a company can be matched together who have skills which complement each other, it will only enhance the business' chance of being successful. Going back to the example of the accountant and the web developer; the accountant could offer advice on setting up as a [sole trader versus a limited company](#), [grants](#) or keeping proper records. In return, the web developer could offer advice on setting up a website or a simple WordPress website for the accountant.

Volunteering and internships

Finally, collaboration can give opportunities to those who want to make a contribution. There are retired or unemployed people with a lot of experience and would be willing to work on a project on a part-time basis. For people who may be retired, working on a start-up gives people a new challenge and also offers a social benefit.

For graduates and people starting out in their career, it can give them an opportunity to get experience and apply their knowledge from university. Hopefully, when the company starts generating revenue, it can result in a full-time job for the graduate. At the very least, it can provide valuable experience on their CV which will be a steppingstone to finding employment in the future.

Conclusion

While in theory there are many benefits to collaborating when starting a business in Ireland, in reality, it's hard to know if there is a demand for it among entrepreneurs and skilled professionals. If you feel you would benefit from greater collaboration you can register your interest [here](#).

References:

<https://economics.rabobank.com/publications/2013/august/the-argentine-crisis-20012002-/>

<http://www.davidmcwilliams.ie/salvation-in-bright-ideas/>

By Stephen Lawless

Published 11 May, 2020