

Voka – Chamber of Commerce and Industry Antwerp-Waasland

PLATO XI 2008-2010

Region Antwerp-Waasland

Info - session for S M E's



Programme

- Explanation Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Explanation PLATO project
- Practice Testimonies
- Q&A Time
- Reception

Chamber of Commerce !

- Politically neutral, independent, interprofessional private **organisation of companies** (<-> government institution)
- **3,000** member-companies Antwerp-St.Niklaas
- Mission : **Stimulate business, trade and industry**
- **Active in** : Services – Lobbying - Networking Activities
- **PLATO**: subsidized by the Flemish Community

PLATO project !

- Concept?
- Goal/ Purpose/ Aim?
- How does it work?
- How to participate?

Genesis !

- 1987 : **Kempen** : Janssen Pharmaceuticals
- 1995 : **Antwerp** : PLATO I
- 1997 : Financial Support by the **Flemish Community**
- 2006 :
 - . Antwerp-Waasland : PLATO X
 - . Flanders : ±7000 SME's
 - . Walloon provinces and elsewhere in Europe, South-Africa

What is PLATO ?

- **Two-yearly support programme** for managers of SME's with growth potential
- **Keywords**

Knowledge

Exchange of Experience


Creation of Networks...

We noticed:

 SME-manager = Jack-of-all-trades

 Growth Phase = vulnerable phase

 Professional isolation

 Need for :

- **Sounding board**
- **Vision extension**
- **Better analysis of the company**
- **Gathering of information**
- **Networking activities**

I.o.w. what does PLATO want to accomplish ?



implementing a more professional SME management policy

- ✓ Promoting the transfer of management know-how
- ✓ Making Exchange of Experience possible
- ✓ Creation of a Company Network of companies

Concrete working-method

→ 60-80 SME's are divided in 4-5 groups
“homogeneous groups” // “diversity”

- Needs and Expectations of the manager
- Education and Experience Level of the manager
- Number of Employees
- No competitors or suppliers together

Parent company principle

→ 2 or 3 executives of large(r) enterprises as

parent /mentor

of a fixed group of +/-15 SME's

What does the PLATO package conclude ?

- **Start-up day** SME's (incl. mentors)
- **Monthly** evening meetings
- Individual **counselling/coaching** opportunity
- **General** gatherings (3 to 4 / year)

Start-up day

- ▶ **When ?**
 - ✓ 25, 26th of February + 3th of March
- ▶ **Where ?**
 - ✓ ACTA, Kaltmhout
- ▶ **Principle ?**
 - ✓ group of +/-15 SME-colleagues and parents
 - ✓ building of group dynamics
 - ✓ determining short-term and middle-long-term goals

Monthly Evening Meetings

- ▶ **What / how ?**

discussion evenings about a specific management issue

(knowledge transfer AND exchange of experience)

**gathering in small groups
max 20**

Monthly Evening Meetings

- ▶ **Where ?**

At the parent companies

- ▶ **When ?**

Group chooses fixed day or dates

- ▶ **Principle ?**

- ✓ Group chooses issue i.f.o. pre-determined priorities
- ✓ Expert/Professional introduces
- ✓ Discussion – Exchange of Experience

Individual counselling/coaching

- ▶ **How ?**
 - ✓ by E-mail
- ▶ **When ?**
 - ✓ In dialogue with the parent
- ▶ **Principle ?**
 - ✓ Specific problems are individually presented to/discussed with the parents/ co-ordinator

General Gatherings

- ▶ **When ?**
 - ✓ 3-monthly
- ▶ **Where ?**
 - ✓ At a central location
- ▶ **Principle ?**
 - ✓ All groups gather around a specific theme
 - ✓ Socialize with participants from other groups

Criteria for participation ?

- **manager/owner** himself subscribes, second participant possible
- **2 to 50** employees
- start-up phase all over and done with
- wanting to **grow**, wanting to make **progress**
- being able to determine an **autonomous** company policy
- subscription : one-time **contribution**
 - . 1450/1950 € for the full 2 years
 - . 750 € for the second subscription

What is being expected from the SME manager ?

- **Open** mind
- **Active** participation to the sessions
- **Commitment** of **2 years** to his group and the whole project
- **Willingness** to share experience(s)

The parents ?

- **Executives** of large(r) enterprises
- **Approach-point** for the SME's
- **Close** contact with the co-ordinator
- **Preliminary** training (start-up day 15/02 plus +/- x evenings)

Criteria for participation ?

- **High potential** executives
- **Experienced** executives who want to **expand their horizon**
- Profile :

Motivator of the group

Wanting to free spare time

Who is the PLATO co-ordinator ?

- **Approach point** for the SME's and coaches
- **Following and Observing** the sessions
- **Monthly Consultation** with co-ordinators other PLATO regions
- **Reporting** to the Flemish Community

PLATO XI

→ Recruitment

- . Oct-jan. information sessions and company visits
- . Expectations / motivation manager-participant

→ Kick-off

- . Wednesday 12th March '08 Bank Van Breda Aula, Antwerp
- . All participants + parents present

PLATO = SUCCESS STORY!

Testimonies !

→ Gerben Van den Bosch

De Draaiboom Gereedschappen

→ Erik Veldeman

Cobra Design

Questions !

Reception !

Close Encounters ! (networking)



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