

## The Ulster-Babson Initiative Local Entrepreneurs Benefit from M&L Development



Babson College, ranked among the top ten business schools globally by the Financial Times, has a strategic relationship with the University of Ulster which is now yielding benefits for Northern Irish firms.

Fergus Wallace, Managing Director of local company inphoActive and programme participant, tells us about his company and shares his thoughts on the Business Development Programme:

*“Our company, inphoActive, provides innovative digital pen and digital paper technology to capture handwritten information on forms and paperwork and transfers this to back-end office systems within seconds and without the need of re-keying. Following a successful two years, the Business Development Programme was timely for the business and for me personally as we address the future challenges of growth.*

*Some of us can often be skeptical about the personal value we receive from a university course, particularly when you try to relate it to your own business. The trip to Babson certainly over-delivered on my expectations it was business driven, not academic driven.*

*For our first session at Babson each of the group had to present an executive summary on their business. It's not often you have the opportunity to share and discuss the challenges of your own business with twenty other entrepreneurial people and a couple of global industry gurus. There was no criticism...only positive advice, suggestions and feedback. It was like an intense personal business mentoring session for each of us, it got us fired up and it really set the tone for the week ahead.*

*The key objective of the week at Babson was to gain insight into the challenges and opportunities of growing a business. The highlight for me during the week was the case study sessions we did. We were given cases studies of real people, running real business, facing real challenges...just like ourselves.*

*We also had visits from American business owners who quite openly shared their own stories around the challenges and decision they had in growing their own business. For those businesses who may want to target the large North American market there was no shortage of research material, personal contacts and advice.*

*To cap the week off the group had the opportunity to visit a local N.Ireland company TextHelp Systems, who had set up its North American operation near Boston. The team gave us an insightful presentation on how their company addressed the practical challenges of expanding into such a large market and the success it has achieved. What was also apparent was their enthusiasm to support and encourage other local businesses to think globally.*

*Sometimes I feel there is a lack of confidence or perhaps a mindset in N Ireland that we can't compete with the best in the world. Our group unanimously came away from this week at Babson inspired and confident in addressing the challenges of growth and that we can compete locally, nationally or globally if we so desire.*

*As a business owner I would have no hesitation in recommending that local companies explore the opportunity to take part in this Ulster Business School/Babson programme ... it certainly over-delivered on my expectations. I'm back feeling inspired, better prepared, having met twenty new business colleagues and a number of contacts into one of the largest marketplaces in the world".*

Course Director of the Business Development Programme, Dr Adele Dunn highlighted the importance of business growth and innovation for the Northern Ireland economy and commented:

*"Fergus has captured the essence of the Business Development Programme – our focus is on business growth and giving business managers the tools and techniques to exploit new opportunities- there is also a crucial need to cultivate local innovators and introduce them to international networks."*

The study visit to Babson College is part of the MSc in Business Development & Innovation and the Business Development Programme. Both programmes will have new intakes in January 2009 for more information contact Dr Adele Dunn, [aa.dunn@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:aa.dunn@ulster.ac.uk), Tel. 028 9036 8095.  
<http://www.business.ulster.ac.uk/courses/msc-bdi/bdi.html>

inphoActive contact details: [www.inphoActive.com](http://www.inphoActive.com) or [fergus@inphoactive.com](mailto:fergus@inphoactive.com)