

# PLATO™ Helps Transport Business Deliver

Hampshire-based transport boss Graham Ellis drove his business to new heights after he joined, PLATO™, the peer group learning programme then run by Business Link, to help small and medium-sized businesses that want to grow.

Graham, managing director of Ellis International Transport Consulting Ltd, quite literally found a whole new world opening up as, for the first time, he began winning global contracts for his Eastleigh company.

As one of the first UK members of PLATO™, Graham is among its greatest supporters and keen to throw his weight behind a re-launch that aims to build on the success of the original programme.

He first came across PLATO™ while working in Ireland and was very impressed to learn how members draw on their own experiences to help one another grow their businesses, enhance management skills, increase new opportunities and develop confidence, decision-making and risk analysis.

Back in the UK, Graham attended a PLATO™ presentation where he met the local manager of the programme, and accepted an invitation to join the inaugural PLATO™ group in 2003.

‘Getting involved with PLATO™ has been a phenomenal experience and I would thoroughly recommend it to any business,’ said Graham. ‘It’s the ultimate forum for the exchange of ideas and offers a unique opportunity to build valuable business relationships as well as being a superb aid to developing business skills.’

Each group has around 12 participants plus two senior executives from blue chip companies who are facilitators for the group. They meet once a month – although more often if required – for two years to discuss a wide range of management issues, problem-solving in



Graham Ellis, Managing Director, Ellis International Transport Consulting Ltd

groups or working in one-to-one coaching relationships.

Graham confirms just how valuable this peer support can be.

‘Our group had two businesses that were in terminal decline, on the verge of going bankrupt,’ he said. ‘The group helped to bring them back to life, which was a really rewarding experience.’

Graham believes that increased confidence is one of the significant benefits to be gained from PLATO™.

‘It gives you the courage to say “I can go out and try” and have no fear of failure,’ he said. ‘Its unique structure creates a confidential, safe environment within which everyone can benefit by sharing skills, knowledge, experiences and resources.’

‘PLATO™ gives you access into other areas and widens your business network,’ he added. ‘And the benefits don’t stop once the two years are up. In my experience, the participants tend to stay in touch and often do business with each other.’

‘Through the relationships I made in the group I have been able to expand the reach of my business considerably, winning contracts Europe-wide and begun bidding in the Middle East, where before our business was confined to the UK.’

‘As an initiative designed to be a personal and business development programme for entrepreneurs and owner-managers, I believe PLATO™ has no equal.’