



Call for entries from Westmeath entrepreneurs in either Business, the Arts or Social Community

Helping emerging businesses is not just a nice thing to do - at this stage in Ireland's economic development, actively supporting more start ups is now a survival issue, according to businessman, Alfie Kane, "and it starts on a county and micro level with each county ensuring it supports its emerging entrepreneurs."

Mr Kane was speaking at the launch of the 2008 David Manley Emerging Entrepreneur Awards last week. Mr Kane is chairman of the panel of judges for the award and is chief executive of Baker Capital Corporation, New York. The aim of the David Manley Emerging Entrepreneur Awards is to nurture Ireland's entrepreneurial spirit.

The winner of the 2008 David Manley Emerging Entrepreneur Award will receive 'the gift of time' in mentoring and consultancy worth over €80,000 from a selection of top Irish companies as their prize as well as a cash prize of €10,000. The awards will be presented in November. Further details and a copy of the entry form can be obtained on www.davidmanleyawards.ie

"Given the global and local economic slow down - if not recession - that we

are facing into over the next few years and our continuing loss of competitive edge in the world market and, dare I say it, the 'mis-match' between our cost base and GDP growth rates - I believe we are going to be even more dependent on internally generated business activity," Mr Kane said.

"And the majority of that additional activity will, in the main, come from the SME sector. The seeds from which these SME firms emerge are the very same start up or emerging businesses which we in the David Manley Awards Committee are seeking to support. So I say that encouraging and supporting entrepreneurs' start up new businesses is no longer just a good thing to do - for Westmeath and every other county in Ireland now it is virtually an economical survival issue".

Mr Kane continued, "For a small country such as Ireland, without the critical mass of market demand, VC firms and emerging businesses, we cannot just sit back and like the religious manager just pray it will all come out ok in the end. Because it will not 'just happen' - we need to help make it happen. Both the Government and we in business must redouble our

efforts to improve significantly the success rate of our own emerging businesses. And as we hear repeatedly from our own winners the gift of time is even more important that the cash component of an award."

The David Manley Emerging Entrepreneur Award is in its sixth year and rewards the enterprising spirit in business, the arts, and in the social community. Business to Arts, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, selected Business Innovation Centres, and Incubation Centres work with the David Manley Award Committee in implementing the Award scheme.

Clodagh O'Brien, chairperson, David Manley Awards Committee, speaking at the launch, said, "The David Manley Emerging Entrepreneur Award is unique in that it is about identifying and supporting new Emerging Entrepreneurs across all areas of Irish Society - Arts, Social and Business. The measurement of success may be different in each of those three areas - but the underlying talents are the same across all Entrepreneurs- a sense of Mission, a focus on the customer and a

commitment to innovation."

Stuart McLaughlin, chief executive, Business to Arts, commented, "The David Manley Awards stand alone in recognising that the development of our entrepreneurs is essential in ensuring growth of the cultural, social and economic fabric of our country. Experience shows us that there are many organizations in the arts which thrive as a result of their entrepreneurial spirit and, as such, Business to Arts is proud to support this programme into its sixth year."

Also speaking at the launch, Sean Coughlan of Social Entrepreneurs Ireland said, "Entrepreneurs, with their passion, motivation and innovation, are transforming Ireland. Through business, arts and not-for-profit organisations throughout Ireland they are creating new and exciting solutions to the challenges we face. Social Entrepreneurs Ireland is delighted to partner with the David Manley Awards in supporting these exceptional individuals and providing them with the 'gift of time' they need to develop their ideas and create significant and lasting change."