

Boosting Skills and Productivity

Skillnets News



from the Chief Executive's desk

2009 has brought even more challenges than I think any of us could have anticipated. By common consent, this is possibly the biggest challenge for Ireland as an economy since the foundation of the state. Every sector of the economy has been affected and Skillnets too has had to take a substantial reduction in budget for 2009.

As I write this, our funding position for 2009 has finally been resolved and despite the significant reduction, I fervently believe that the remaining networks can build on their past successes. This has been a particularly painful period for all involved, both the networks that are winding down and those whose future was unsure. It has been deeply regretful that circumstances have changed so rapidly in recent times. In spite of, and in these difficult circumstances, I want to assure networks that Skillnets and its staff are committed to providing on-going support and assistance in this changing environment.

Substantial operational cost savings have also been made to Skillnets Ltd. support services budgets and this has unfortunately included a reduction in the number of Skillnets support staff employed. As part of this process, *Skillnets News* will only be provided in a digital format and we would still encourage you to distribute the digital edition to your member companies.

The earlier part of 2009 commenced with the launch of the Finuas Networks Programme for professional skills training in international financial services. We were also delighted to receive the Excellence Through People Standard and see twenty two people receive their CPD Diploma in December. Articles on essential skills and certification demonstrate the positive work that is forging ahead and I look to the future with hope and determination to succeed.


Alan Nuzum
Skillnets Chief Executive

Five Skillnet Networks awarded at the IITD National Training Awards 2009



Pictured at the IITD National Training Awards, *Sinéad Heneghan*, IITD Director, *Imelda Duffy*, Network Manager, LHP Skillnet (sector winner in networks and groups category), *Seamus Crawley*, Director and Network Promoter **LHP Skillnet**, *Annette Jolly*, Chairperson, LHP Skillnet and *John Gorman*, IITD President.

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IITD National Training Awards 2009

Now in its eleventh year, the Irish Institute of Training and Development (IITD) National Training Awards took place in March. The awards aim to recognise organisations which demonstrate best practice and an ongoing commitment to training and developing their people. For participants, the awards are an opportunity to benchmark their training and development programmes in real terms. Behind every successful National Training Award entry is a compelling business story, both about the benefits to be derived from investing in people and the recognition of the T&D function as a key driver of organisation performance in modern Irish businesses.

Entries are judged on criteria including the level of resource and investment in training & development activity relative to the size of the organisation; innovative developments in the delivery of T&D; evidence of the sustainability of T&D initiatives and the evaluation of tangible business and organisational benefits achieved through Training and Development (T&D).

The Award Winners

Leading Healthcare Providers (LHP) Skillnet was the **sector winner** in the **Network and Groups Award** for 2009. The IITD judging panel commented that LHP Skillnet's submission was *'of a very high standard in that the organisation had a very clear reason stated in supporting client organisations in the health sector. They had a very clear focus on providing a centre of excellence for training and accreditation while delivering quality accredited course for their member organisations. The organisation had very clear objectives linked to business needs and implemented a training and development plan to meet these needs. The key areas that impressed the judges were the focus on the needs of the industry and their capacity to drive a programme that meet these needs.'*

Four other Skillnets also received **Outstanding Achievement** awards in this category. Comments from the IITD judging panel were as follows.

Hospitality Management Skillnet

'This submission was of a very high standard. The organisation sets out to support the hospitality industry in dealing with the challenges and changes imposed by the downturn in the economy. They have a stated goal of promoting and supporting best operational and HR practices for their industry.'

Irish Hardware Skillnet

'It has delivered an impressive volume of development, certified on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) through a range of distance and face-to-face programmes. It's commitment to RPL and collaborating with other industry



Pictured at the IITD National Training Awards, *John O'Gorman*, President of the Irish Institute of Training & Development, *Elizabeth Kennedy Burke*, Evaluator for The Hospitality Management Skillnet, *Tracey Donnery*, Programme Support Manager, Skillnets, *Natasha Kinsella*, CEO of Irish Hospitality Institute and promoter of the **Hospitality Management Skillnet**, *Ian Menzies*, Head of Finance & Services, Skillnets, *Yvonne Hutchinson*, HR Manager, Portlaoise Heritage Hotel and *Anna Corrie*, Network Manager, Hospitality Management Skillnet.

Pictured at the IITD National Training Awards, *Tony McNally*, Steering Committee, Irish Hardware Skillnet and *Jim Copeland*, Chief Executive, Irish Hardware & Building Materials Association.



stakeholders demonstrates a holistic approach and ensures a qualitative solution to its members.'

Retail Excellence Ireland Skillnet

'This was an excellent submission which provided the panel with an insight into the degree to which an industry support organisation has developed to provide a very comprehensive organisation to supply excellence in all aspects of supply and delivery of support services to this sector.'

Taste 4 Success Skillnet

'The programmes for development focus on developing those in the industry with essential skills and, critically, liaising with Institutes of Technology and accrediting bodies to ensure all programmes are certified appropriately. The extent to which targets have been exceeded and the clear manner in which the development has been enterprise led is a very good example to be followed by others.'

Exploring new initiatives and awareness of essential skills

Skillnets has recently engaged with some of the key stakeholders in the essential skills (LBS) domain, including the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) which represents Ireland's thirty-three Vocational Education Committees (VECs). VECs are statutory bodies established to provide educational services to communities in the cities and counties in which they are located, and all VECs are FETAC registered training providers.

In these discussions with the IVEA, we have been exploring some new initiatives to promote both increased awareness of and uptake in essential skills training, particularly at the lower NFQ Levels. To this end, jointly organised briefing sessions for networks which provide LBS training took place in three regional cluster locations in February and March. The objectives were to:

- 1 Provide a forum for VECs to showcase their approach to delivering established essential skills training and developing bespoke programmes based on the needs of client companies/networks.
- 2 Inform Skillnet networks of other services provided by VECs, such as the use of training facilities or through their status as FETAC QA Centres.
- 3 Give Skillnets networks the opportunity to make informed decisions as to whether or not VECs can support their LBS training provision through any of the services listed.

Work-based trainers take steps to literacy proof the classroom

A group of eleven experienced work-based learning trainers came together in January, under a joint initiative of Skillnets and the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) to participate in a focus group on "**Integrating Literacy into the planning and delivery of training**". The focus group participants were from diverse backgrounds, including those who delivered soft skills training, practical training and technical training programmes across a range of industries from engineering to equestrianism.

The focus group provided Skillnets and NALA with an insight into trainers' perceptions and experiences of literacy and numeracy needs of their work-based learners. The trainers' experience of literacy and numeracy difficulties in the learning environment was varied, but there was one strong link - all

the trainers were eager to share their ideas on how they, as trainers, could be more literacy aware and how they could make their training style more literacy inclusive. A number of the participants' suggestions referred to how improvements could be made by modifying the training material. The group learned that by using less text on slides, implementing practical methods such as using three dimensional visual aids when teaching statistics or simply relying more on diagrams and visuals than words, trainers can make a concerted effort to make their delivery more "learner friendly".

Ann-Marie McScorley who delivers soft skills training found that the focus group "*really helped us as an eclectic group of trainers to see how universal literacy and numeracy problems are. They also gave us a set of tools to tackle these problems and I personally am very interested in developing these skills further to assist my candidates in the future.*"

Enda Brennan of Oyster Coaching talked about how participating in the focus group recently assisted her in helping one of her learners; "*With my new understanding of the concept of "spikiness" i.e. persons different literacy comfort zones and practices, I was better equipped to discuss and arrange alternative assessment techniques with a learner who was considering dropping out of a programme because of a fear of having to complete a written exam. The learner was delighted to have an opportunity to demonstrate his true capabilities and I was delighted to have him continue (very successfully) on the programme. It was a win/win situation and a very enriching experience for me. Thank you Skillnets and NALA for this great initiative, I sincerely hope it continues and I look forward to making my programmes more and more accessible.*"

Blathnaid Ni Chinneide, Integration Co-ordinator at NALA felt that "*the trainers showed that they are already tackling this issue in their own practice, and are keen to continually develop ways to be literacy aware and inclusive in how they design and deliver programmes. Opportunities for further training in this area would be beneficial - either through accredited programmes such as NUI Maynooth's Certificate Course in Integrating Literacy, or shorter non-accredited programmes provided by NALA.*"

Skillnets would like to thank Helen Ryan, Policy Officer, NALA and Blathnaid Ni Chinneide, Integrating Literacy Co-ordinator, NALA for facilitating the session. Finally, sincere thanks to all the participants who made this shared learning experience such a success.

For further information contact:
www.nala.ie or n.desmond@skillnets.com.

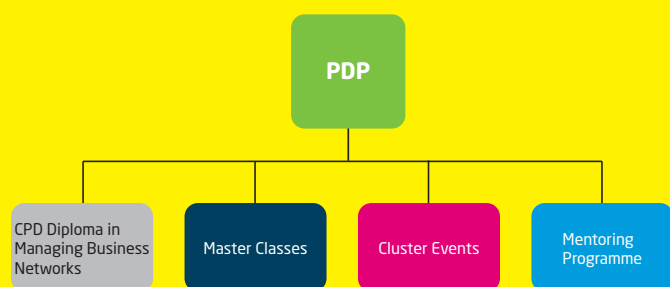


Professional Development Programme (PDP)

The Professional Development Programme (PDP) has been an important part of the support structure provided by the Skillnets team to network managers.

Skillnets provides professional training and support to Skillnet network managers to ensure that effective learning networks are developed that meet the needs of the member companies and their employees. This support also ensures that stakeholders are equipped with the skills to manage a professional and effective learning network and supports the career progression of PDP participants. The PDP programme also fosters collaboration and facilitates the sharing of best practice and learning within a network of networks.

Elements of the PDP



- The CPD Diploma in Managing Business Networks is accredited by DIT at Level 6 on the national framework with 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits. ECTS makes teaching and learning more transparent and facilitates the recognition of studies (formal, non-formal and informal). Workshops for students are held throughout the year. Master classes for all network managers are held on a range of subjects ranging from technology usage, marketing your network, finance and evaluation to name a few.
- Cluster events are a composite part of being a network manager and are held regionally for all network managers with business updates and a focus on specialised subjects.
- A mentoring programme has been in operation, designed to provide new network managers with support and mentoring from an experienced network manager in how to effectively develop/sustain their network.



CPD Diploma 2008

2008 was the second successful year when network managers completed the CPD Diploma in Managing Business Networks. The profile of the 20 students in 2008 was a great mixture of age, life and professional experience and length of time in the role of network manager. This added to the quality of discussions, innovativeness of ideas and the general robustness of the class. Every student committed time, effort and lots of brain power throughout the year.

Speaking about the Diploma, Carl Blake, Senior Programme Manager said *"Against the backdrop of an increasingly challenging environment, participating in this CPD Diploma provides the students with a real opportunity to think strategically and ensure they're in a position to optimise all of their available resources"*.



Dick Whelan, Renewable Energy Skills Skillnet and Catherine Collins, First Polymer Training Skillnet, student award winners CPD Diploma 2008.

Two students won special awards:

STUDENT OF THE YEAR

Dick Whelan, Renewable Energy Skills Skillnet

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

Catherine Collins, First Polymer Training Skillnet

Dick Whelan, Renewable Energy Skills Skillnet

"In addition to achieving a recognised formal qualification for one's time and effort, this CPD Diploma in Managing Business Networks, awards the participant on a multiple of levels. It affords you an insight to best practice in this professional area, enables you to strategically review your network and it also facilitates you in devising a development plan to underpin the sustainability of your network."

*The structure of the CPD Diploma is practical, in that it does contribute to your day job as a network manager. Module 1 focused on the **Introduction to Networks**. This background knowledge set the context for me, within which I was in a better position to "sell the benefits" of the network to existing and potential members and also to industry stakeholders, with whom it is beneficial to collaborate.*

*The second module on **Training for Networks** was a huge addition to effectively conducting, analysing and interpreting a*



*Training Needs Analysis (TNA). Another advantage to the CPD Diploma is that it encourages you to stand back and take stock and think about future possibilities. Indeed the third module assignment which focuses on **Managing and Sustaining Networks** has resulted in my investment of time in drafting what is in effect the essence of an application for a future round of funding. The outcome of the fourth module on **Business Finance** certainly enabled the development of better processes which mean there is better financial control within the network. The module on **Marketing my Network** encouraged me to think more creatively about how the network adds value to our member companies and then how we can effectively get that message out there. One specific output of my learning in this area was a complete review and overhaul of our website.*

*The final element of this CPD Diploma was a **Strategic Review**. This was truly valuable in designing a business plan for the network, which included all variables. In summary, because of the elements addressed throughout the CPD Diploma, it certainly leaves me feeling more confident about my ability to plan for and react to a potentially even more challenging environment”.*

Catherine Collins, First Polymer Training Skillnet
“My decision to complete the CPD Diploma in Managing Business Networks was prompted by the positive learning experience of some of the 2007 graduates. As I had been out of the education system for some time, it was slightly nerve wracking. Initially, it took me time to get used to being in an educational environment again and to also find time to dedicate to attending the workshops, completing individual assignments and group work. Interestingly, the discipline enforced by participating in the CPD Diploma means that I am now more structured with my approach to work and life, meaning that I now have more free time than before!

Also as my background is in Engineering, I found the content of the course particularly useful in providing me with a

theoretical business background. I now have a better grounding and approach to different areas of my job, for example, conducting a TNA effectively. Furthermore, doing the CPD Diploma made me question and analyse my network in more detail. A more structured and strategic approach to my work emanated from this process.

Without a doubt, one of the best benefits of the CPD Diploma is the relationships I've built with other network managers. It certainly has given me a confidence boost, made me more effective at time management and it has also opened up the possibilities of pursuing further education. It is an excellent resource for sharing ideas and challenges, pooling mental resources and identifying further opportunities for my network members”.

CPD Diploma Group 2009

The demanding nature of the network manager's role and the ever demanding environment within which we all operate is widely acknowledged. Against this context, it is a positive reflection to see another 22 people commit themselves to enhancing their current skill set and qualifications, through completing the CPD Diploma on Managing Business Networks again in 2009. We wish all of the 2009 students the best with their studies and hope the Diploma continues to reward the investment of time and energy.

Skillnets CPD team: Niamh Desmond, Mick McHugh, Mat Kujawa and Noreen Fitzpatrick will provide tutor support to all students throughout their completion of the Diploma.



2008 CPD Diploma Graduates

Training Providers Competency Skillnet - Action Learning Workshops

The Training Providers Competency Skillnet commenced a series of Action Learning Workshops. The first workshop, held on 6th February this year provided a safe forum for members to discuss their role as training providers / consultants in the current economic climate, share information and experiences and plan for the development of strategic resources. Five more Action Learning Workshops will be held with this group. A cluster of Action Learning Workshop CELLS is now planned to commence over the next few months around the country.

These forums will enable training professionals to develop resilience through change-management in their own practices, develop their innovative skills by being more creative in the design and delivery of training and add value by developing coping and motivational skills. For further information log on: www.tpcskillnet.ie



Demystifying Certification – Opportunities and Challenges

Certification of training is a very important element of the Skillnets mandate. While it is understood that it is simply not practical to insist that all of the enterprise-led training delivered via the Skillnets model is certified, Skillnets encourage networks to source relevant, quality and, where possible, certified training. The aspiration would be that the majority of training delivered is, or will be, plotted on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The indications amongst the various industry stakeholders would suggest that certification of training is on an upward scale in terms of priorities.

The certification of training is a multi-faceted concept. It is an implied standard which assists both participants and companies in ascertaining a level of ability, skill, competence or knowledge. It provides the training participant with a formal qualification which would be transferable in terms of acquiring credits towards future training. It also sets certain prerequisites on the quality of trainer who delivers the training programme. It is evident that certification of training may even be an influencer of future funding criteria.

These push and pull factors mean that certification of training merits attention and resources. The certification environment is being transformed at the moment with a strategic intention to create a structure, within which all certified training can be logically and transparently plotted onto the NFQ – regardless of the awarding body. The benefit of which is to develop an effective and relevant Common Awards System (CAS) for all qualifications and to minimise the duplication of awards.

Historically, and particularly within the further education sector, there were a variety of Former Awarding Bodies (FAB) (a group with the authority and competence) who could provide certification of training programmes, for example FÁS, Teagasc and Failte Ireland. This means that there are a range of programmes certified by a range of FAB's, translating in practice to a range of implied standards. One of the current challenges is to review these existing programmes and determine the most effective method of plotting them onto the NFQ.

NEW:

One major difference between past and present is the way in which a programme/module is written. Previously, a programme was devised, within which the standards of knowledge, skill and competence (KSC) would be implied. However, now a programme is devised in response to specific standards of KSC. These standards are written in the format of learning outcomes by FETAC authorised standards

development groups. The benefit of this revolutionised method of developing programmes to meet pre-set standards means that the participant's expectations are clear, assessment is more specific and the relevance, accessibility and duration of the programmes are expanded.

EXISTING:

While all awarding bodies now follow the same process, this article will focus on the role of FETAC. For programmes potentially reflective of an NFQ standard of between Levels 1-6, FETAC are working in partnership with the FAB's and other stakeholders, including the Skillnets' Certification Focus Group (CFG). The focus of these partnerships is to determine the best method of transferring or "migrating" existing programmes onto the NFQ.

There are 3 ways to migrate a programme

- conversion (only one existing award),
- harmonisation (duplication of existing awards) and
- review (new awards or existing awards that require a lot of change).

This on-going transformation can cause some confusion around:

- 1 identifying programmes that have already been migrated onto the NFQ,
- 2 establishing which programmes are undergoing which method of migration and
- 3 the process of developing standards where they don't exist so that new programmes can be developed to meet the new standards.

In summary, for **existing programmes** contact the relevant FAB and FETAC to determine the current migration status.

This will indicate timelines and other factors involved. For **new programmes**, it is important to first consult with FETAC to determine the need for the programme and also the type (Major, Minor or Special Purpose Award) and the level (NFQ L1-L6) of the potential award. Only when this has been done can you begin to identify the subject matter experts and to contact the Skillnets CFG. Both of these may be authorised to act as the Standards Development Group (SDG) for the particular standards you have in mind. Once the standards are written, this SDG will then submit the proposal to FETAC who may then approve the standards for the award. Only then can a programme be developed through existing quality assured FETAC centre processes and delivered to the learners. This CFG assisted process may only be used in exceptional circumstances and will take 3 to 6 months.

In essence, whilst there is on-going change amongst the stakeholders of certification, it is still possible to progress existing plans for delivering more certified training to your member companies. Before deciding to develop a new programme do research with the FAB's and existing awarding bodies to determine what programmes already exist in your subject area. This could save you a lot of time and money and is the only real option open to you in the short term.

FETAC recently provided dedicated training for seven network managers on the operation of FETAC standards development groups.

If you have any questions on the certification of training please contact your Programme Support Manager (PSM), a member of the CFG or Mick Mc Hugh, Dave Flynn or Deirdre Keane in Skillnets.
Email: certification@skillnets.com
for all certification queries.



EXCELLENCE THROUGH PEOPLE

Skillnets is delighted to announce that we have achieved the *Excellence Through People Standard*, Ireland's national standard for human resource management awarded by FÁS for a two year period. Since the standard's development it has grown in popularity with industry, both services and manufacturing sectors and also public sector organisations.

Excellence Through People provides a recognised framework for organisations to enhance performance and realise strategies through the management and development of their people. The focus of the standard is to get organisations to look at their people as a key source of competitive advantage.

Excellence Through People is the only quality standard dedicated to the role of people and their impact on business.
www.excellencethroughpeople.ie



Tánaiste Launches Finuas Networks Programme

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment launched the Finuas Network Programme 2009-10 in the IFSC on Wednesday February 18th. Finuas is a new programme, jointly funded by the government and companies within the sector, for professional skills training within international financial services.

Finuas is envisaged to run for up to 5 years with funding from the National Training Fund (NTF). Managed by Skillnets Ltd. on behalf of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the programme aims to support the sector in maintaining Ireland's position as a top international financial services centre through investment in the specialist skills and expertise of its workforce. Finuas will facilitate a diverse range of specialised training across the international financial services sector which includes banking and capital markets, investment management, insurance and professional services in 2009.



Domhnall MacDomhnaill, Chairman Skillnets, Mary Coughlan T.D., Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Alan Nuzum, CEO Skillnets and Tracey Donnery, Finuas Programme Manager at the launch of the Finuas Networks Programme.

Speaking at the launch Skillnets Chairman, Domhnall MacDomhnaill stated "The international financial services industry in Ireland has become one of our most important economic sectors and has done so by building on a talent pool that ranks with the best in the world. The Finuas Networks Programme is the right initiative at the right time for the sector. It will form part of a new foundation for a better, more accountable and wiser industry that has, let us not forget, contributed so much to our prosperity in the last decade and will do so again".

The closing date for applications was April 24th. Applications are currently being evaluated against agreed assessment criteria. Approved Finuas networks shall be operational from 1st June 2009.

www.finuas.ie



Client Satisfaction Survey Research

Over 6,000 member companies responded to the 2008 survey, an increase of 3,500 from the previous year. We would like to thank all member companies who took part in the survey and all network managers for all their assistance in completing this survey. Some of the high level outputs of the survey.

- **53%** of all respondents were from member companies employing less than 11 people.
- Approximately **77%** of all respondents indicated that there has been an increase (or significant increase) in the number of people trained as a 'direct' result of being involved in a Training Network/Skillnet.
- The majority of respondents agreed that their participation in training has made a positive impact on their organisation. Approximately **93%** of all respondents would recommend other businesses to become part of a Training Network/Skillnet.
- Respondents were asked whether there were any blocks/barriers to their company participating in training. Three main reasons emerged (with specific examples overleaf):
 - General availability of staff and lack of time
 - Cost and budgetary constraints
 - Inconvenient location and long distance to travel
- Training organised through the Training Network/Skillnet compares favourably with other training available from outside the Training Network/Skillnet with at least **75%** of all respondents agreeing (or strongly agreeing) across all attributes.

- Approximately **74%** of all respondents engaged in at least one networking event per year provided by their Skillnet.
- Attendance at networking events had many benefits for respondents, especially keeping up to date with the latest trends and learning from other companies. A relatively low level of agreement was received from respondents for using networking events to develop partnerships.
- There was a **positive impact on business** as a direct result of being part of a training network/Skillnet. The biggest impact on business was **enhancing quality within your company, enhanced teamwork and better employee satisfaction.**
- Certified training or training that leads to formal qualifications was available to approximately **71%** of all respondents. Of those respondents who had training that led to formal qualifications, the majority felt that it was important for their business and/or their employees.
- The availability of certified training/qualifications has had a positive impact on the take-up of training.
- All formal qualifications are perceived as relevant but a qualification from an industry recognised professional body/institute is the most relevant qualification for the industry/sector. This is followed by a FETAC qualification and then by HETAC in terms of relevance.

A more detailed version of the Client Satisfaction survey results is available on the home page of www.skillnets.ie.

Skillnets Ltd. Scoops Award for their contribution to the ICT Sector in the West of Ireland

The annual Information Technology Association of Galway (ITAG) Awards was held at the end of 2008. These awards represent ITAG's annual celebration of vitality and innovation in the West of Ireland's fast-growing technology community. The Awards night is the largest gathering of technology executives outside Dublin, and this year's ceremony was completely sold out with more than 300 technologists attending. MC for the night was Galway Bay FM's Gareth O'Callaghan with a guest appearance from Oliver Callan, of Nob Nation fame, on the night.

Skillnets received an award from the ITAG Governing Board for their contribution to the ICT Sector in Galway. The ITAG Skillnet has been funded by Skillnets since 2003. During this time, over 3000 employees from member companies have been trained across technical and professional development streams. The technical programmes being delivered are

Caroline O'Neill, Network Promoter, ITAG, Adele O'Meallaigh, Galway Executive Skillnet, Carl Blake, Skillnets, Nuala Keher, Skillnets Board and Dee Timoney, Network Manager, ITAG Skillnet



highly specialised and before the existence of the network, employees needed to travel to Dublin or further afield to avail of this training. On presenting the award Caroline O'Neill, CEO of ITAG, stated "the ITAG Board is delighted to have the opportunity to honour Skillnets Ltd for the contribution they have made to the local IT sector over the past 5 years. The funding received has enabled us to strengthen and develop the sector by improving the skill-set of the member employees to maintain global competitiveness and enhance employability".

www.itag.ie

CPD Focus Skillnet

At the launch of the **CPD FOCUS Skillnet** guest speaker *Dr. Bill Cullen* gave a motivational presentation *Lifelong learning in challenging times - a necessity not a luxury*. Pictured are *James O'Sullivan* (Chairman, Skillnet Steering Committee), *Deirdre Keane* (Programme Support Manager, Skillnets), *Conor MacGuill* (Skillnet Steering Committee), *Michelle Nolan* (Skillnet Steering Committee), *Ken Murphy* (Director General, Law Society), *Gerry Doherty* (Senior Vice President, Law Society), *Dr Bill Cullen* and *Attracta O'Regan* (Network Manager).



ICT IRELAND SKILLNET

Trainees from Ericsson participating in the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) programme as part of the **ICT Ireland Skillnet**. *Pat Broderick, Darrin Adams, Jose Manuel Marin Cano, John O'Mara, Kenneth Clavin, Mark Dillon.*



BIZNETCORK SKILLNET

The Steering Group of **BiznetCork Skillnet** pictured at Cork Chamber's 2009 Annual Dinner event held in February.



Southern Tipperary Skillnet

Michael Herlihy, Environmental Manager at Bulmers speaking about 'On the road to sustainability' at a seminar on Manufacturing Excellence, hosted by Bulmers and coordinated by **Southern Tipperary Skillnet** in association with Clonmel Chamber of Commerce. The seminar was an opportunity for manufacturing companies to compare method improvements that they are making.

Irish Coaching Skillnet

Members of the **Irish Coaching Skillnet's** FETAC Standards Development Group. This group has been recently established to develop standards for a NFQ Level 6 coaching module for FETAC. Pictured are *Joe Barrett, Carmel Wynne, Ann McKeon, Liz Harper and Penny Gundry.*



Retail Excellence Ireland Skillnet



James Nolan and Emma McHenry of *Nolans Butchers* are presented with their Best Store Award at the **FBD Retail Excellence Awards** by *Michael Berkery*, Chairman FBD Holdings plc. Also pictured are *Alan Nuzum* (CEO, Skillnets) and *Paul Candon* (Chairman, Retail Excellence Ireland Skillnet).

Recent Events



Irish Hardware Skillnet

The **Irish Hardware Skillnet** hosted a Training Village at the Hardware/DIY Home and Garden Show in February. Attending were Bridie Corrigan Matthews (Network Manager, Irish Hardware Skillnet), Jim Copeland (CEO, Irish Hardware & Building Materials Association), Sean Haughey T.D., Minister of Lifelong Learning and John Murphy (President, Irish Hardware & Building Materials Association).

Private Healthcare Skillnet

Barbara Bourke, (Network Manager), Helena Moore, Valerie Ryan, Pat Mongey, Tracey Donnery and Ellis Carroll at the Gerontology course at Stewart's Hospital Conference Centre.



RURAL FOOD SKILLNET

The **Rural Food Skillnet** got to grips with the principles and practical knowledge of producing traditional hand-made cheese at a recent course in Cork. The three day FETAC Level 5 accredited course brought together producers from all over Ireland.



Carlow Kilkenny Skillnet / South East Micro Skillnet

Pictured at the launch of the new DVD 'Preparing and Managing Effective Meetings' produced jointly by **Carlow Kilkenny Skillnet** and **South East Micro Skillnet** were *Conor Sweeney, (Omni Pro), Ashling Ward (Network Manager) and Niall McDonnell (CEO, County Carlow Chamber).*

South West Healthcare Skillnet

Over 200 people attended the Nursing Homes Ireland Conference in the Crowne Plaza Hotel Dublin in November, 2008. Pictured here are *David O'Hanlon (Project Co-Ordinator), Diarmuid O'Dalaigh (Network Manager) from South West Healthcare Skillnet, Mary Harney T.D. Minister for Health, Tadhg Daly (CEO, Nursing Homes Ireland) and Catriona O'Connor (Steering Group Member).*



Recent Events

Financial Services Skillnet

Students from the **Financial Services Skillnet** received a post graduate diploma in Finance (Securitisation) at Level 9 on NFQ from DIT. The ceremony took place on the 15th November at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The graduates are from a number of companies within the financial services sector.



Fingal Skillnet

Pictured at the Blanchardstown Chamber President's Lunch were *John Connolly* (President, Blanchardstown Chamber), *Colm Ó Maolmhuire* (Fingal Skillnet), *Michael O'Donovan* (Mayor of Fingal), *Brian Lenihan* (Minister for Finance), *Annette Dempsey* (Chairperson, Fingal Skillnet) and *John Holohan* (Head of Communications, Skillnets).



Hospitality Management Skillnet

The official launch of the 2009 Training Plan for the **Hospitality Management Skillnet** took place in the Guinness Storehouse in Dublin. Pictured at the event were *Ewan Plenderleith*, (President, Irish Hospitality Institute) *Natasha Kinsella*, (Network Promoter) Minister for Lifelong Learning *Sean Haughey T.D.*, *Anna Corrie* (Network Manager) and *Niamh Desmond* (Programme Support Manager, Skillnets).



Gaeltachtaí na Mumhan Skillnet

Gaeltachtaí na Mumhan Skillnet held a business networking event for SME's in the Dingle Business Park, Corca Dhuibhne on the 5th of December 2008. Pictured are *John B. Sheehy* (Cumann Lucht Tráchtála an Daingin), *Dónal Mac an tSíthigh* (Bainisteoir Gréasáin), *Dómhnaill Mac Dómhnaill* (Cathaoirleach Skillnets Teo.), *Éamonn Ó Neachtain* (Údarás na Gaeltachta) & *Gearóid Ó Brosnacháin* (Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne).



International Trade Skillnet

Committee members of the Irish International Freight Association with *Mary Meehan* (Network Manager) and *Paul Stack* (Chairperson) of **International Trade Skillnet** at the launch of FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding.



An Tánaiste Mary Coughlan T.D. presents FETAC Level 5 certificates

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment presented FETAC Level 5 certificates to Donnybrook Fair employees who recently undertook training with the IBEC Retail Skillnet. Donnybrook Fair employs 150 people from all over the world, embracing Ireland's new cultural diversity.

IBEC Retail Skillnet is one of the largest networks within the Skillnets Programme and has been in existence since 1999 encouraging the development of a learning culture within retail companies; promoting, managing and facilitating FETAC Retail Occupational Qualifications.

Marivin Alcantara a recipient of the FETAC Level 5 certificate said *"Coming to Ireland as a migrant presented me with some challenges and hurdles; the language barrier, the different culture. However, I was able to overcome these by joining IBEC Retail Skillnet training programme. My assessor Patrice Ryan, invested her time, meeting myself and others once a week for the past 3 years just to finish this training which was never an easy task. Patrice believed in our potential, that we have the capacity to learn given proper training and that we would succeed in doing a very good job. The training has empowered me! Now I am more confident, knowing I have the qualifications and skills to excel in my field. I have the competitive edge, the chance to climb the corporate ladder and maybe someday reach the top of the corporate ladder!"*

The IBEC Retail Skillnet, in association with FETAC, develop national standards for use in the retail environment providing qualifications for retail assistants, line managers and supervisors interested in developing a career path in retailing.

They have developed an enterprise-led approach to training within the retail sector, ensuring that network development activities are aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

www.ibecretailskillnet.com



Pictured (back row): Jolita Dabradziejunaite, Michael Iaris, Zita Csiba (candidates) and (front row): Joe Doyle (owner) and An Tánaiste Mary Coughlan T.D.

Marivin Alcantara



WORKPLACE COMMUNITY & EDUCATION

EQUAL Ireland Skillnet are running the Essential Skills Certificate (*Workplace Community & Education*) which provides new knowledge and skills in such areas as learning to learn, communications, IT skills; enterprise development, humanities and everyday numbers. It is an ideal solution for both enterprise and participant as there is no requirement for time off and it is being delivered locally in the following areas; Longford, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway City, Connemara, Tuam, Ballinasloe, Waterford, Wexford, Monaghan, Cork City, Mallow, Limerick, Donegal/Letterkenny, Sligo and Nenagh.

In the current climate many participants have been enticed back into education with the potential for job losses even greater now. Upskilling can help to reduce the period of unemployment.

For further information on the certificate log on to www.equalireland.com



David McWilliams

overseas can significantly enhance prospects for a company's international development. It allows access to different working practices and new technologies and enables those involved to develop vocational skills and competencies in their field of expertise," she said. Budding entrepreneurs also have support at hand from both HPSU Skillnet and Galway Executive Skillnet.

A seminar on Manufacturing Excellence was hosted by Bulmers at their Clonmel headquarters in February. Coordinated by **Southern Tipperary Skillnet** in association with Clonmel Chamber of Commerce, this was designed as an opportunity for manufacturing companies to compare method improvements that they are making.

Representatives attended from companies such as Abbott Vascular, Boston Scientific, Corman Miloko, Medite, Merck Sharp & Dohme and Pall Ireland. Michael Herlihy, Environmental Manager at Bulmers, dealt with the topic of sustainability while his engineering colleague spoke on best practice as regards deployment of assets. Dr. Abdelhakeem Hammad, Global Director of Business Excellence at Boston Scientific gave a presentation on lean leadership and made the point that 95% of all lead time is non value added. He stressed the importance of standardising processes and having a flow with zero ambiguity. He said that leaders must also be coaches.

This was the second seminar of this type in Clonmel in recent months and the success of these consultative events has been such that it has been decided to organise a regular series with different manufacturing companies hosting.



Collaboration in Action

More and more networks are developing collaborations which bring together a mix of skills and expertise and a stronger force to face the challenging times that we currently find ourselves in.

Shannon Marine and Leisure Skillnet, ROLE Skillnet and BMW Executive Skillnet, in conjunction with Carrick-on-Shannon Chamber, held their first business forum for local businesses to encourage people to shop locally, in order to ensure the survival and continued development of the local community. David McWilliams attracted a crowd of almost 200 people as he offered solutions and hope in the current climate. He stressed the importance of training and upskilling both for those in employment and those who are unemployed because, "this is nothing new, these things pass, economies do recover". Amongst some of other solutions proposed was the creation of a new clean bank or of one bad bank within the Irish system and the importance of green energy and with this, the creation of a "Silicon Valley" for green technology.

Galway Executive Skillnet, HPSU (High Potential Start Up) Skillnet and Léargas, (National Agency in Ireland for the management of national and international exchange and cooperation programmes in education, youth and community work and vocational education and training) are helping local companies grow in Europe via a specially designed work placement programme. The training workshop allows companies interested in funded overseas development a minimum of two weeks grant aided placement in Europe. Funded under the Leonardo da Vinci European project, the experience provides participants with the opportunity to enhance cultural awareness and linguistic capabilities. Fiona Croke of Léargas explained how embarking on a work placement abroad in 2009 to observe work practices in Europe may be beneficial to companies: "Research indicates that in an increasing global marketplace, experience of working

Adele O'Meallaigh, Network Manager, Galway Executive Skillnet, Fiona Croke, Léargas and Gert O'Rourke, Network Manager HPSU Skillnet at the recent training workshop.





'TO BE THE BEST' and the 'SHOES PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN'

There is a Chinese saying, 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step'. The **Dublin Business Women's Skillnet** has been running two innovative courses 'TO BE THE BEST' and the 'SHOES PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN LEADERS'.

The 'TO BE THE BEST' programme consists of modules once a week over a 12 week period. These include business plan/health check, finance, sales, online marketing, negotiation as well as other key business disciplines. The course gives participants the opportunity to network, in a supportive environment, with other business owners over the duration of the course.

Mairead Cirillo, an environmental consultant, described the course as "Providing a 'tool-box' of skills and techniques to better understand business management and a new insight into how to develop my business". Margaret Gaynor, MD of CF Gaynor Ltd said her participation "gave her time to re-think all areas of her business."

The 'SHOES PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN LEADERS' was conducted one day a week over a four week period with exercises to be completed in between. The focus of this course was to encourage participants to formulate a vision and focused strategy for their career or business.

www.partas.ie

ENVIRON '09: 19th Irish Environmental Researcher's Colloquium

The **Enviro Skillnet**, the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) and the Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland (ESAI) came together at ENVIRON '09 to allow discussion and highlight the growing and important area of Invasive Alien Species which was chaired by Dr Cathy Maguire of Comhar. The workshop had a total of 7 speakers from government and industry in both aquatic and terrestrial areas of expertise with an opportunity to discuss the steps forward for a national strategy on invasive alien species and covered areas as diverse as the *NRA Approach to Invasive*. **Enviro '09** is Ireland's largest annual environmental conference. Its principal objective is to emphasise environmental research and associated innovative technologies. This colloquium attracts researchers and academics from both the industrial and third level sectors and aims to link primary research with the important applied problems that Ireland's environment currently faces.

www.enviroskillnet.com



Leading Healthcare Providers (LHP) Skillnet awarded FETAC registration status

Leading Healthcare Providers Skillnet has submitted their first group of 72 Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) from 45 member companies for the January 2009 FETAC certification period through the new verification process. This is the first group of HCAs from LHP Skillnet member companies to be awarded the FETAC Level 5 Healthcare Support Certificate, major award (DHSXX). The feedback from both the participants and the member companies has been extremely positive which has given encouragement to other HCAs who may have been reluctant to commit to study. As a result demand for places on the Healthcare Support Certificate courses for LHP members has increased enormously. Graduation for the successful first groups was held in March



22 Healthcare Assistants in Cork receive FETAC Level 5 Certificates in Healthcare Support.

when the FETAC certificates were issued. A further group of 57 HCAs will have completed the major award in time for the May 2009 certification period.

Leading Healthcare Providers Skillnet has agreed its quality assurance procedures with FETAC and is now registered with FETAC to offer programmes leading to FETAC awards in the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) and to enter candidates for certification.

Imelda Duffy, LHP network manager has been approved as an External Authenticator on the FETAC panel with the expertise and capacity to externally authenticate assessment results in Major, Special Purpose and Supplemental awards in Healthcare.

www.lhpskillnet.ie

Travel Professionals Skillnet announce new accredited Higher Certificate

The Travel Professionals Skillnet in conjunction with Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) recently announced a new third level accredited qualification for members of the Irish Travel Agents Association (ITAA), 'The Travel Professionals Higher Certificate', a first in the sector (NFQ Level 6) which will be recognised internationally.

Speaking at the Annual General Meeting at the Holiday World Show 2009, Dervla O'Neill, network manager Travel Professional Skillnet said "I am delighted to announce today that our network will be in a position to give a huge boost to our commitment to continuous professional development for our members, with the launch of our new accredited Higher Certificate which is ready to roll out this year. A key element of our training is that we can now independently certify the expertise and professionalism that our participants secure, enabling a real system of continuous



Simon Nugent, CEO ITAA, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Eibhlin Byrne, Sarah Jane Casey, ITAA, Jim Vaughan, President ITAA, Dervla O'Neill, Network Manager Travel Professionals Skillnet and Fiona Clarke, Coordinator.

professional development and further enhancing the sector's competitiveness especially in these challenging times."
www.itaa.ie

Moving the SCRUM from Rugby to Software



Attending the first open ScrumMaster programme in Ireland run by the Software Skillnet are *Namgyal Babdul, DKIT, David O'Brien, Fexco, Roger Fitzpatrick, R&D Ericsson, Terry Mc Sweeney, Fexco and Ryan O'Sullivan, Qumas.*

all software companies in Ireland. The SCRUM approach has now attained a worldwide reputation for its ability to increase the productivity of software teams significantly through empowering individuals, fostering a team-oriented environment, and focusing on project transparency and results.

Companies such as Ericsson, Qumas, WeDo, Fexco and Allianz took part in January, to train 20 team leaders and senior developers to become ScrumMasters - joining a worldwide alliance of 2000 ScrumMasters.

"Access to a top international expert in Agile methodologies such as Martine Devos, through the Software Skillnet truly helps the Irish software sector to gain a competitive advantage as Scrum ensures that the features that are developed first are of the highest value to the customer" said Niall O Cleigheri, MD of Macalla, Chairman of the Software Skillnet.
www.isa-skillnet.com

The most advanced principles for improving productivity in Irish Software companies were taught by the internationally renowned 'SCRUM' expert, Martine Devos, recently in Dublin. Starting the **2009 Software Skillnet programme** with a bang, the course was booked out and the Software Skillnet has established a waiting list for the next programme.

This Software Skillnet programme was the first internationally recognised, certified ScrumMaster training course open to

First ever Women in the Irish Farm Machinery Industry Seminar

The first ever *Women in the Irish Farm Machinery Industry* training seminar was hosted in November by **FTMTA Skillnet**. The aim of the seminar was to provide women who are working in the farm machinery industry with a unique training and networking opportunity. The one-day course covered a range of topics to help prepare women, working in the diverse and often considered 'men only' industry, for the challenges that they meet in their everyday work. It provided a forum to assess the vital roles that they have and make them aware of new opportunities to develop their skills and enhance their role within the farm machinery industry.

The 2009 Farm Machinery Show provided the venue for the latest round of FTMTA Skillnet seminars. FTMTA Skillnet had three seminars, one for each day of the Farm Machinery Show. Each seminar covered a different topic with the aim of appealing to a large audience from among the almost 15,000 people who attended the three-day event. The first day looked at *Bio-Fuel opportunities for Irish farmers* and *The implication for farm machinery use* as a result. This was followed by *Career paths in the farm machinery industry* on day two and *Tractor legislation* and *Safety on the road* was the topic for the third seminar .

Bridget Comerford, Comerford's Garage, Clare Johnson, Lely Ireland, Ann Braithwaite, Inquire Industries, Bernadette Murphy, Murphy's Motors and Veronica Canning, course provider at the FTMTA Skillnet Women in the Farm Machinery Industry Seminar.



Trevor Sargent, TD and Sean McGloin, Network Manager, NOTS Skillnet.

"SPEED DATING" FOR FARMERS AT ORGANIC CONFERENCE

A form of 'speed dating' for existing and potential organic farmers and growers was one of the more unusual aspects of a one day conference that was organised by the **National Organic Training Skillnet (NOTS)**. Looking for love was not the theme but rather looking at the expertise in a variety of business development sectors. The conference was officially opened by Minister for Food & Horticulture, Trevor Sargent, T.D., and chaired by Paul McCarthy, Rural Business Specialist with Teagasc.

Delegates attending the conference in Offaly were able to avail of short, one-on-one clinics with a variety of experts in areas such as finance, organic conversion, marketing, public relations and more.

'Marketing in the Organic Sector: Opportunities and Challenges' was aimed at stallholders, existing organic and traditional farmers and growers, processors and restaurateurs as well as service providers and related advisors.

"The idea is to bring everyone involved in organic farming and growing across Ireland together under one roof to explore the opportunities and challenges to marketing organic produce in today's economic climate", explains Sean McGloin, Network Manager, NOTS.

Through a combination of brief presentations and break-out panel discussions the conference addressed marketing and adding value at farm level as well as direct sales. Topics covered included innovative niche marketing ideas, internet sales, packaging and distribution. There was practical examples from across Ireland, the UK and Europe of a variety of business models, some traditional, some more lateral in approach, that have yielded success. There was also a 'Meet the Buyer' event where registered organic producers had an opportunity to showcase their product range. www.ots.ie

Lean Implementation and Sustainment in a Challenging Economic Climate

The **Innovation & Lean Sigma Skillnet** held a highly interactive day and a half workshop to assist manufacturing and service organisations implement and sustain Lean initiatives in the current global economic environment. The conference delivered very interesting and practical knowledge -sharing with plenty of opportunities for collaborative learning and networking. This year participative parallel sessions were held which allowed people to actively engage in Lean principles.

Topics included *Standardisation, The Toyota Way, Lean: Yesterday's Challenge Tomorrow's Imperative*, and *Achieving Excellence at Boston Scientific*.



Participants at the de Bono Six Thinking Hats workshop

Spreading the word of Lean

Five regional Lean forums were set up so that local companies can come together, share information and build a regional community of Lean thinkers. -

- Midlands Lean Forum
- North East Lean Forum
- North West Lean Forum
- South East Lean Forum
- South West Lean Forum

The fora have been a great success with 29 different events taking place around the country since January last year. To give a flavour of the diversity of these activities the North West Lean Forum held a two-day Operational Development Excellence programme ran in Mayo. The first day was a de Bono Six Thinking Hats workshop, a technique of parallel thinking that maximises team performance and dramatically increases effectiveness through focused thinking. This workshop was so well received that many participants suggested that it should be run in every region. The second day was a workshop where six practitioners from different member companies told their "stories" and "journeys" on specific aspects of Lean: Employee Engagement, Standardisation, 5S, Value Stream Mapping, Rapid Improvement Events, and Lean Culture Sustainment. As one participant commented "*Perfection! Learning from those who are doing it - warts and all!*" 'Lean Thinking for the Farm' was run in collaboration with the BMW Smallholder Skillnet in Donegal for suckler farmers.

Lean thinking has traditionally been associated with the manufacturing community, but this pilot programme shows that Lean can be applied to any area. The concepts of understanding customer requirements, waste identification and elimination, and value stream mapping are universal.

www.icbe.ie



Refrigeration Skillnet Opens Training Centre in Dublin

Refrigeration Skillnet has taken another big step in its development with the opening of a new training centre in Dublin. The network identified lack of access to suitable workshop facilities as an ongoing barrier to delivery of its training programmes and has been working over the last twelve months to address the problem. "*It has been a big project*", said Enda Hogan, Network Manager, "*but the network board rowed in fully behind it and put in a massive effort to develop the facility. The wider membership has also been very supportive, with many members donating equipment to help kit out the workshop area*".

Refrigeration Skillnet has a strong focus on technical training so the development of the workshop area was seen as critical. The centre also has a fully equipped conference room which is already being put to good use for both training courses and networking events.

www.refrigerationskillnet.ie

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

IBEC Retail Skillnet are one of a number of training providers in Ireland to be approved by FETAC to offer specific awards to learners through the process of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This is a process through which the knowledge, competencies and skills which an individual already has are formally recognised. FETAC state that RPL is “a relatively new concept in education and training in Ireland” and that it is recognised as “essential in the promotion of life-long learning”.

IBEC Retail Skillnet currently offer four FETAC Level 5 Awards through RPL. These are:

- Retail Customer Service
- Retail Selling
- Communications
- Work Experience

To find out more about the RPL process, and how staff can achieve qualifications using this method contact Theresa or Cathy on: 074 91 76853 or log on to www.ibecretailskillnet.com.

Staff at Brown Thomas, Cork, recently took part in a pilot programme offered by IBEC Retail Skillnet to introduce Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) into the retail sector. 10 experienced staff in the Cork store were chosen to participate in this new and innovative scheme. They completed a programme of work including developing a portfolio which highlighted their knowledge, skills and experience gained in the sector over the years, focusing on the area of Retail Customer Service.

All 10 candidates were successful in achieving their FETAC Level 5 Retail Customer Service Award through RPL.

“Over the last few weeks I have been trying to think of a word that would best describe the Skillnet’s Retail Customer Service and the RPL programme and after much deliberation it’s brilliant! One simple word describes the whole programme, the programme is built around the awareness that one must offer excellent customer service. What this programme has done for us is rekindle the passion that we have for offering 5 service and establishing our customer’s needs, it is driven by the desire to sell and create an environment where the customer feels special. There is roughly 250 years of retail experience on the floor and what your RPL programme has done for us is made us aware that we know the business”.*

Barry O’Sullivan, Brown Thomas, Cork.



Clare Campus Skillnet is helping its member companies in Clare recognise prior learning. Working with third level institutes and member companies Clare Campus Skillnet is running a Diploma in Management (NFQ Level 7) through Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick. Bob Pattinson, Director of the Management Development Unit at the Kemmy Business School explained that *“this course provides managers the opportunity to add value to their existing experience by developing new skills and techniques and reflecting upon different approaches to tackling common management issues”*.

The programme is designed to help managers carry out an audit of their own skills, put a tailor made personal development plan into action, and to fine tune their own personal skills and techniques. The programme is assessed via a series of tutor marked assignments and a work based project, the latter often producing real benefits for the participant’s organisation, such as waste and cost reductions of new products, development of new workforce initiatives, or improved human resource management practices.

Three unique features of the programme are:

- Two audits of management skills conducted at the start and finish of the programme via Development Centres
- Use of outdoor management activities to reinforce the principles of planning, communication, teamwork and performance
- Use of management competencies to assess entry to the programme.

For further information log on www.clarecampus.org

Women at Work Skillnet Host Award Ceremony

Alacoque McMenamin, Network Manager, Women At Work Skillnet presents Mary O'Rourke, T.D. with flowers at the award ceremony.

The **Women at Work Skillnet Award Ceremony** saw five women whose careers have been empowered from training take centre stage along with Mary O'Rourke, T.D. to highlight how training has helped transform their working lives.

The atmosphere proved electric as Mandate members Margaret White and Yun Wu from China were first to speak of their positive experiences. Margaret told the gathered audience how her computer training had given her career new vitality, while Yun Wu, who completed the English language course, spoke about how the course helped open up a wide range of potential opportunities for her.

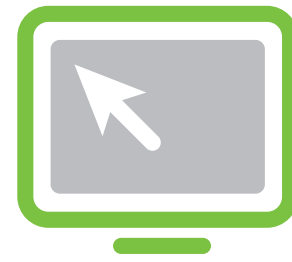
The next star of the night to speak was Marian Mooney of the Communications Workers Union. Marian completed the personal development course and the computer course, and spoke with enthusiasm about her time training with the Skillnet. She encouraged others to take advantage of the wide range of training available.

Catherine Hopkins from the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) also spoke about her journey of discovery through taking the personal development and image matters courses. This has not only helped build her confidence in the workplace but also helped her understand her personal skills and how best to use them to her advantage. Impact member Svetlana Snytkova, from Poland completed the English language course and is confident this will empower her to take advantage of career opportunities in Ireland.

Mary O'Rourke, T.D. congratulated all the participants and the management team on a job well done. She commented on the enthusiasm from the audience and commended the women for committing to the training. This was followed by a presentation of certificates by Minister O'Rourke to the attendees.

www.womenatworkskillnets.ie

Yun Wu, Mandate



NETWORKS GO ON-LINE



Retail Excellence Skillnet developed on-line resources to support its FETAC Level 5 Retail studies programme (which they delivered as essential skills (LBS)). They are also developing a DVD for students. Trainers are videoed on the premises of stores speaking about areas such as customer care, listening, stock control etc. There are about 40 separate podcasts on different subject matters.

For further information contact www.retailexcellence.ie



1000 solicitors participated in a complimentary eSeminar run by **CPD Focus Skillnet** on client care and practice management. The eShot could be accessed at any time - day or night until 31 December - this was to coincide with the end of the annual CPD Scheme. Members of the profession received the eShot directly to their personal email addresses and by simply opening a link they were brought directly into the eSeminar. Members gained invaluable information in the area of management & professional development skills. In addition to viewing the seminar on-line they could also download the powerpoint presentations and save them for future reference. The response to this initiative was extremely positive and members phoned and emailed the CPD FOCUS team to thank them for allowing them access to such cutting edge technology at no financial cost whatsoever to them. The fact that members could view the eSeminar at a time and in a place that suited them was welcomed.

WWW.

Skillnets

Calendar of Events

CPD Diploma in Managing Business Networks 2009

May 21 Workshop 5 - Finance

June 25 Workshop 6 - Measurement and Return on investment (ROI)

Further Information on forthcoming events will be forwarded to networks in the coming weeks. Details are subject to change.

editorial matters

We are delighted to bring you the first issue of 'Skillnets News' for 2009. The newsletter is a communications tool for Skillnets staff, networks and stakeholders across the country. Thank you to all those networks who contributed to this issue and we look forward to another issue in the second quarter of 2009.

The editor welcomes contributions but reserves the right to edit or omit submitted material. No responsibility can be accepted for the loss of submitted material. Material from the Skillnets magazine, unless copyright is indicated, may only be reproduced with written permission from the publishers.

All contributions are welcome. Please send your news and photographs to the editor at the following address.



S/F/A

**CHAMBERS
IRELAND**
IN BUSINESS FOR BUSINESS



An Roinn Fiontar, Trádála agus Fostaíochta
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment



Transforming Ireland

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