

# ***Promoting RPL to Industry***

**Presented By Oran Doherty**



## ***WBL at LYIT***

- Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) has developed a number of Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes in partnership with local and national and international employers.
- The WBL programmes developed by LYIT cover the full spectrum of HE qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications from Level 6 (Higher Certificate), through Levels 7 and 8 (Ordinary and Honours Degrees) to Level 9 (Masters Degree).

## ***WBL at LYIT***

- WBL in LYIT became more formalised in 2006 through involvement with a government project entitled **Education in the Workplace**.
- The major objective of this project was to recognise and accredit learning in the workplace with a third level qualification.

# ***First Steps***

- Created a **database** containing all the contact details of companies throughout Donegal.
- All companies sent a **personalised email** explaining RPL /WBL.

# ***First Steps***

- Presentations were made to the following:
  - Chambers of Commerce
  - FÁS service to business
  - Údarás Na Gaeltachta
  - Westbic
  - Donegal women in Business
  - Donegal County Enterprise
  - Skillnets

# ***First Steps***

- Attended the **LYIT Employer's fair** and spoke to the various employers and distributed RPL fliers.
- Attended **Donegal Adult Education Fair** and distributed **RPL fliers**.
- Appeared on the 2 local **radio** stations in Donegal and promoted RPL.
- Numerous **press releases**
- Visited the larger organisations and all the smaller companies were invited to an **information session** on RPL held in LYIT.

# ***Benefits of RPL to employers***

- Easier to **attract new staff** if employees are given an opportunity to receive a third level qualification for skills acquired in the workplace.
- Strong Link between training and performance
- Keep existing staff **motivated**.
- Good **PR** (photo in newspaper with staff receiving single subject certificates in Customer care)

# ***Employer Concerns***

- **Time**
- Who will take **responsibility** for RPL within the organisation
- Getting a **room** for delivering presentations
- If employees receive a qualification, will they want a **pay rise** or seek a move?



# ***Promoting RPL to employers***

- For the first year, LYIT promoted RPL as a means for employees to gain a single subject certificate in a certain area e.g. IT, Customer Care, Communications, HRM, Business Management, Managing People, Office Administration.....

# ***RPL in Practice for single subject certificates***

Week 1: Deliver information and training session. Handout **RPL Assessment.**

Week 3-4: Progress session

Week 5-6 Collect **Portfolios**

Week 7-8 Interview and **Assessment**

*If successful, learners receive single subject certificates in October.*



***Sample  
WBL programmes***

# ***1. Higher Cert in IT Support - Pramerica (2010-12)***

- Level 6 Programme (120 Credits)
- 18 months full time
  - 6 Months - LYIT (Semester 1)
  - 6 Months - Workplace (Semester 2)
  - 6 Months – LYIT (Semester 3)
- Pramerica staff can complete the programme in 18 months part time (1 day a week) due to a combination of RPL, WBL, Web CT and Mentoring.

<b>Computer Applications</b>	Oct - Dec 2010 (RPL)
<b>Interpersonal Communications</b>	Oct - Dec 2010 (RPL)
<b>Legacy Mainframe Programming 1</b>	Jan - March 2011
<b>Legacy Mainframe Business Models 1</b>	Jan - March 2011
<b>Software Development 1</b>	April - June 2011
<b>Mathematics</b>	April - June 2011
<b>Insurance and Financial Services (Loma)</b>	July / August / September (Self Study)
<b>Industrial Placement</b>	Aug 2011 - Jan 2012
<b>Training and Support</b>	October (2011)
<b>Legacy Mainframe Programming 2</b>	November - January 2012
<b>Legacy Mainframe Business Models 2</b>	November - January 2012
<b>Software Development 2</b>	Feb - April 2012
<b>Database Technology</b>	Feb - April 2012

## **2. *Higher Cert in Financial Services – Prudential (2009-2010)***

- 18 Month Higher Certificate programme
- Completed 3 mornings per fortnight in LYIT
- Programme combines RPL, WBL, Mentoring and work placement.

## LYIT Higher Cert In Business (Financial Services)

### Semester 1 (September - December 2009)

**No. of Credits**

Learner Development and Study Skills

5

Information Technology

5

Customer Care / Training and Support

5

***The above modules will be completed by RPL with ongoing support from RPL Facilitator***

***Workshops will be organised in the LYIT commencing Friday 23rd October***

### Semester 2 (February - May 2010)

Accountancy 1

5

Law of Contract

5

Introduction to Computerised Accounts

5

Business Organisation & Management 1

5

***The above module will be delivered over 3 mornings per fortnight in the LYIT***

### Semester 3 (June - August 2010)

Industrial Placement

50

Introduction to Financial Securities

10

Insurance and Financial Services (Loma)

5

***The above modules will be completed in Pramerica***

### Semester 4 (September - December 2010)

Accountancy 2

5

Financial Securities Risk & Regulation

10

Advanced Computerised Accounts

5

***The above module will be delivered over 3 mornings per fortnight in the LYIT***

**Total**

**120**

### **3. *BBS IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE***

- 2009, Irish Business and Employer Confederation (IBEC) Retail Skillnet approached Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) about the possibility of jointly developing and delivering a Retail Degree Programme.
- LYIT - good track record working in partnership with employers.
- Dedicated Work Based Learning Facilitator



### ***3. BBS IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE***

- 2009-10 LYIT and IBEC collaborated and programme proposal for 2010.
- Internal Review (LYIT)
- External Review (HE Providers from Ireland and Retail representatives).
- The programme is currently been delivered in LYIT and will commence in Dublin September 2012.

	<b>Semester 1 (September –January)</b>	<b>Semester 2 (February-June)</b>
<b>YEAR 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner Development</li> <li>• IT for Retail</li> <li>• Marketing Principles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Legal issues in Retail</li> <li>• Retail Marketing</li> </ul>
<b>YEAR 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRM in Retail</li> <li>• Economics</li> <li>• Business Organisation Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology and Work</li> <li>• Business Information Systems.</li> <li>• Retail Management.</li> <li>• Retail Store Design &amp; Atmospherics</li> </ul>
<b><i>Work placement for 360 hours (30 credits)</i></b>		
<b>YEAR 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounting for Retail</li> <li>• Consumer Behaviour in Retail</li> <li>• Market Research</li> <li>• Operations Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Marketing in Retail.</li> <li>• Strategic Retail Management.</li> <li>• E-Commerce in Retail.</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship &amp; Innovation</li> </ul>

### ***3. BBS IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE***

- Learners will be expected to attend class / training for 2 days per month between September and May (with complimentary on-line support).
- Learners also receive 30 credits for learning achieved in their own workplace. In order to gain these 30 credits, learners are expected to prepare a **Work Based Learning** portfolio that provides evidence on how the programme has improved the learner's performance in the workplace.

# ***Semester 1 Dates (September 2012- January 2013)***

<b>Module</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Learner Development</b>	<b>Tuesday September 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday September 5<sup>th</sup> 2012</b>
<b>IT</b>	<b>Group 1: October 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Group 2: October 9<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Principles of Marketing</b>	<b>Tuesday November 6<sup>th</sup> Wednesday November 7<sup>th</sup> Wednesday November 14<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>EXAM</b>	<b>Tuesday January 22<sup>nd</sup> – 3 Hour exam</b>

# ***Semester 2 Dates (Feb-May 2012)***

<b>Module</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Communications</b>	<b>Tuesday February 5<sup>th</sup> Work Based Assignment</b>
<b>Retail Marketing</b>	<b>Wednesday February 6<sup>th</sup> Tuesday March 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday March 6<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Legal Issues in Retail</b>	<b>Tuesday April 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday April 3<sup>rd</sup></b>
<b><i>Legal Issues in Retail Exam</i></b>	<b><i>Wednesday May 1<sup>st</sup></i></b>
<b><i>Retail Marketing Exam</i></b>	<b><i>Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup></i></b>

# ***3. BBS IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE***

- Possibility of Year 4 (Honours Degree)
- Open to suggestion for modules
  - Research Project
  - Sales
  - Change Management

### ***3. BBS IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE***

- The total cost of the programme is €2000 per year.
- However Skillnets pay €1000 of this so the cost to the learner/employer is only €1000 per year.

# ***3. BBS IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE***

## ***Key Features of Programme***

- ***Accelerated*** Learning – 2 days per month for 3 years (September –June).
- ***Recognition*** of Work Based Learning (30 credits for retail placement).
- ***Designed*** by Retail practitioners for Retail practitioners .
- ***Assessment*** linked to workplace.
- Highly Respected ***Guest lecturers***



# ***3. BBS IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE***

## **Employer Benefits**

- Clear correlation between employee development and business performance.
- Unlike traditional degrees, this is a work based degree. Significant emphasis on linking assessments to improvements in the workplace.
- 50% funded by Skillnets.
- Minimal disturbance to employment. Dates are “Retail Friendly”.

# ***3. BBS IN RETAIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE***

## ***Employer Benefits***

- Graduate programme – “locking” managers into your company for the duration of the programme...
- Increased motivation and morale among participants.
- Help in the attraction of high calibre employees in the future.
- Effectively in the future, the graduates from this programme will become your trainers, promoting learning in your workplace.

# ***Retail Degree Brochure***

- <https://www.proofhq.com/proof/5NsKOxhh3cR3B7X6zJ>

## **4. *Managing and Mentoring People***

- Level of Programme: Level 7 Minor Award
- Target Audience: Managerial level employees
- Duration: 4 Days (10am-4pm)
- Assessment: 2 work based portfolios

# **4. *Managing and Mentoring People***

**Day 1:**

## **Recruitment and Selection**

- The recruitment process
- Preparing job descriptions
- Preparing for and conducting interviewing
- The selection process
- Induction

## **Groups and Teams**

- Traits of successful teams
- Team Development
- When to use teams
- How to use teams

# 4. *Managing and Mentoring People*

## Day 2

### **Managing Conflict**

- Identifying, Preventing and Dealing with conflict
- Research on conflict in the workplace
- Prepare Disciplinary / Grievance policy or assess current policy
- External bodies to deal with conflicts

### **Leadership and Motivation**

- Employee motivation using financial and non-financial methods
- Recent research into employee motivation
- What employees want from their leader
- Assessing and developing your leadership skills

# **4. *Managing and Mentoring People***

## **Day 3**

### **Introduction to Mentoring**

- Describe the key principles and practices of mentoring
- Demonstrate the roles and responsibilities of the Mentor
- Communications between Mentor and Mentee
- Introduction to sample Mentoring plans

# **4. *Managing and Mentoring People***

## **Day 4**

### **Mentoring Programmes**

- Providing Feedback to mentee
- Dealing with problems in the mentoring relationship
- The mentoring contract
- Characteristics of an effective Mentoring programme
- Develop a mentoring programme for an organisation



## **4. *Managing and Mentoring People***

- Look at assessment document

# ***Challenges for the Provider in delivering WBL programmes***

- Fear – familiar with dealing with full time students
- Getting lecturers to agree (time constraints, fear of employers)
- Time to develop programme (typically could take 6-12 months to develop...)
- Getting room booked
- Because training is usually intensive, extremely important learners attend.

# ***Research into WBL Programme***

- In 2010, WBL Facilitator conducted research into the prerequisites for a successful WBL partnership.
- Depth interviews conducted with lecturers, heads of department, learners and employers.
- Research paper presented at conference in Greece 2010 (Space conference).
- Findings as follows:

# ***1. Trust and Commitment***

- All the respondents mentioned the importance of trust and commitment if the WBL partnership is to succeed.
- A number of industry respondents believed that the HE provider should ensure that lecturers responsible for delivering modules on the programme have a good insight into the culture, functions and workings of the employer.
  - Company visits
  - Know what the employer will be expected to do upon completion.

# ***1. Trust and Commitment***

- Feedback from a number of respondents from industry suggests that the level of trust between the partners in the WBL programme is affected by the **motives** each partner has for engaging in the partnership.
- If the employer believes that the main reason the HE provider is engaging in the WBL partnership is for financial gains, then the employer will tend to have less trust and respect for that HE provider.

## ***2. Communication***

- **Regular feedback sessions** between all the stakeholders
- There needs to be a learner representative appointed whose responsibility is to voice the opinions and concerns of the learners on the programme.



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## ***2. Communication***

- If communications are to be properly managed, a **steering group** composed of the relevant stakeholders (HOD/ leading lecturer, WBL Facilitator, Employer and Learner Representative) needs to be formed.
- Interestingly, a number of academic respondents suggested that working in partnership with the larger organisations that have a **dedicated person** responsible for training and education is less challenging compared to working with the smaller organisations without such a person.

## ***3. Planning and Direction***

- ‘A roadmap should be created, outlining the key roles and responsibilities for all parties. This plan should also include the objectives the programme seeks to achieve. If possible deadlines should be built into the plan, for example, the programme must be developed by February 15th, delivery of the programme must commence on April 1st and be completed by June 18’

(Respondent A – industry).



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## 4. Programme Design and Delivery

- ‘From an employer’s perspective, it’s very important that the programme offered by the college is **sector specific**.
- Employers are not interested in a ‘one hat fit all’ approach. They need to feel that the programme developed is tailored to their individual needs in terms of programme development, delivery and assessment’ (Respondent C – industry).



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## ***4. Programme Design and Delivery***

- Interestingly, a number of respondents (particularly academic respondents) believed that initially the partners should collaborate on **smaller programmes** as opposed to programmes comprising many modules.
- This ensures a planned evolution of the partnership allowing both partners to get to know each other before engaging in a major WBL programme.

# 5. Flexibility

- The need for flexibility in terms of programme delivery was mentioned by the majority of respondents. For example industry respondents suggested that the **times and dates of lecturers and assessments may require amendments** from time to time, especially at times when the organisation is particularly busy.
- On other occasions the employer may require the HE provider to **change the content** of certain parts of a programme due to market changes or legislation.



## ***5. Flexibility***

- Several industry respondents stated that they prefer WBL programmes that cause **minimum disruption** to the employee's working day and that the use of e-learning tools can help ensure that the learner is not required to attend a substantial amount of hours in class when learning can take place using a blended learning approach.
- Industry respondents also recommended the use of tools such as **virtual learning** environments to facilitate learning – WebCT

## ***6. Mentor Support***

‘Employees should be able to avail of **mentoring support within the organisation**. The nature of these WBL programmes is that the lecturer is expected to deliver a lot of information in a fairly short space of time. Additional mentor support from a properly qualified and capable mentor within the organisation could contribute towards a successful programme’ (Respondent F – academic).



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# 7. Assessment

- The assessment component of the WBL programme was cited by the majority of respondents and the importance of the timing and nature of the assessment were highlighted as key factors affecting the success of the WBL partnership.
- A number of industry respondents suggested that assessments should be linked to organisational objectives.



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## ***7. Assessment***

- WBL partnerships work best when HE providers **consult with the employer when deciding assessment dates.**
- There will be certain dates in the year when employees will be particularly busy and will be unable to commit fully to the WBL programme. Assessment and exams should not be set for these times.

## ***7. Assessment***

- A number of academic respondents suggested that employees participating on the WBL programme should be given adequate support in areas such as **study skills, assignment completion, presentations, referencing and completing exams.**
- These typically are areas where learners on WBL programmes are weak.



## 8. *Bridging Cultural Differences*

- ‘Overcoming the cultural differences between private industry and third level institutions is a major challenge. Both partners need to be understanding and realise that for the partnership to work, each partner is going to have to be patient. There will have to be compromises on both sides. The ability to overcome the cultural differences will depend a lot on the personalities of the partner representatives’  
(Respondent E – academic).



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## ***8. Bridging Cultural Differences***

- According to a number of respondents, when academics have recent relevant working experience and when employer representatives are familiar with higher education, then there is an increased likelihood that cultural differences can be overcome.

## ***9. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)***

- LYIT sees RPL as an extremely important component of all its WBL programmes.
- LYIT recognises that many of the learners on WBL programmes have already acquired relevant knowledge, skills and competencies prior to the commencement of the programme and these learners should be given an opportunity to seek exemptions from relevant modules.

# 9. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- ‘The RPL component of the programme was vital to the success of the programme. It allowed learners to get skills and knowledge they already acquired recognised by the college and entitled the learner to a number of exemptions. This reduced the time and effort required to complete the programme. Learners were still required to complete a RPL assessment for each of the modules they sought exemptions in’.  
(Respondent A – industry).



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# ***10. Selecting Suitable Learners for the Programme***

- A number of academic respondents believed that the employer should ensure that all employees on the WBL programme are suitable.
- Suitability should be determined by an academic and employer representative **interviewing all prospective learners** thereby significantly increasing the likelihood of success.
- Attendance and performance records given to employer regularly.



# ***11. Lecturers***

- Lecturers with previous industry experience seem to do better.
- Get the lecturers to visit the organisation and become familiar with its operations and cultures.

## ***12. Proper Induction***

- Introduction to HE Institute
- Introduction to programme
- Rules and regulations and policies e.g. assessment, exams and attendance policies...

# *Conclusion*

- All respondents agreed that if the partnership between the HE provider and the employer is to be successful, **both partners must gain from the partnership**. The employer should gain by having better trained staff leading to improved productivity and performance.
- The HE provider should also gain, not just financially, but also perhaps more importantly in terms of industry engagement and staff development.



# *Conclusion*

- Building relationships with employers can also help HE providers secure work placements for their full time students. This realisation that both partners can benefit from the partnership should help ensure partners are fully committed.
- This collaborative approach needs to permeate programme **design, delivery and support**. This can be challenging due to cultural differences between the partners.

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