



Gillian O'Dowd

Azon Recruitment Group

GOING FOR GROWTH PROFILE

NAME:

Gillian O'Dowd

BUSINESS

Azon Recruitment Group

POSITION

Director

WHAT WE DO

Recruitment agency specialising in multiple industry sectors including accounting and finance, financial services, taxation, legal and construction, with offices in Dublin, Limerick and London.

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Gillian O'Dowd spent the early years of her career immersed in the worlds of corporate finance and financial management. This may not seem an obvious starting point for her subsequent success as an entrepreneur setting up a recruitment business. However, it was this very experience, and in particular, exposure to working with clients in analysing their businesses and assisting in their growth planning, that ensured she knew how to go about setting up a business and, most importantly, how to grow it successfully. Her subsequent success as an entrepreneur confirms this.

Gillian established Azon Recruitment in 2014, along with her husband Ronan Colleran, with just two employees and three clients. Since then, the award-winning recruitment agency has grown year on year. With offices in Dublin, Limerick and London, they now employ 32 staff specialising in multiple industry sectors including accounting and finance, financial services, taxation, legal and construction, and service over 60 national and international clients.

With a family background in business, Gillian always had a desire to go into business for herself and in 2014, the timing was right for her to take the step. Ronan's background is in recruitment, and they both knew the sector well. While it tends to be a very cyclical business, with the recovery in the economy they could see that by 2014 things were definitely starting to improve in terms of demand for professional recruitment services. Against this background, they saw the opening for a strong, lean Irish company and so Azon Recruitment was born.

Gillian was always confident that they could successfully scale the business, by offering a unique range of services and partnering directly with clients in understanding their business recruitment needs and developing the right solutions for them. Their focus has been on gaining a reputation in the market place that sets them apart. "Our priority has always been on knowing and understanding the landscape our clients are working in", says Gillian, "and in this way being able to identify and source the best and most appropriate staff to match their requirements and help them grow their businesses". This has proved to be a winning formula.

Having the right staff in their own company is critical to the growth they have experienced. Gillian cites this as a hugely important aspect to how they have successfully developed the business. They have always looked for highly experienced staff that have themselves worked in specific sectors, be it financial planning, taxation, legal affairs, construction, etc. They bring huge knowledge of the business environment and specific requirements of a wide range of specialist functions, and are uniquely placed to advise clients on their recruitment needs. Along with the deep sectoral expertise of their professional team, Azon has also brought on board Irish staff who have spent time in international markets, which again brings particular insights and experience to the support the company can offer clients.

Gillian participated on the 9th cycle of the Going for Growth programme, in 2017. According to Gillian, this came at just the right time in helping Azon further its own growth ambitions. "Going for Growth was really important in giving me the opportunity to both share with and learn from people who have been through a similar experience. My team on the programme were really helpful in challenging thinking and supporting decision making".

Today, Azon provides a complete recruitment service covering all the resourcing needs of clients, including executive search, contingent recruitment, project sourcing and contract sourcing. For the future, they are broadening the range of services they offer, and plans are well developed to expand overseas. The company is developing a proprietary fee management and business intelligence software platform which will be launched later this year and will be licensed to recruitment companies, both Irish and international. It will easily transfer to other sales related industries such as real estate agencies and car sales companies.

Again, Gillian cites the important part played by the Going for Growth programme in supporting Azon in this growth phase. "In particular our Lead Entrepreneur, Mary McKenna of Tour America, was very open in sharing her experience with us, and in building our confidence in how best to approach growth", she says. "Being an entrepreneur is hugely rewarding, but it also brings major responsibility with it. Going for Growth has been a very important ally for us in meeting this responsibility".

