



Press Statement For immediate release

30 August 2018

Local pharmacies to embrace e-commerce and digital transformation as IE Domain Registry partners with Retail Excellence

- **IE Domain Registry OPTIMISE Programme will assist ten Irish pharmacies in developing and improving their online presence and e-commerce capabilities**
- **E-commerce is worth €12.3 billion to the economy, but IE Domain Registry's Digital Health Index research shows only 14 percent of Irish SMEs have web sales ability**
- **IE Domain Registry says a strong online presence will help pharmacies communicate with and sell to new and existing customers, and grow their revenue**
- **IE Domain Registry has invested almost three-quarters of a million euro in the OPTIMISE Programme to date**

IE Domain Registry, the company that manages and maintains Ireland's country domain name, .ie, has partnered with Retail Excellence, the largest retail industry representative body in the country, to assist pharmacies across the country to develop their digital skills and improve their web presence and e-commerce capabilities.

Through the partnership, ten Retail Excellence pharmacy members will participate in the 2018 IE Domain Registry OPTIMISE Programme. Each participant of the programme will receive an extensive sector-specific, digital health check from expert digital consultants along with a list of tailored recommendations, which will help each pharmacy improve their online presence, hone their digital skills, and develop their e-commerce capabilities.

A follow up review will also assist in monitoring improvements made and future progress. Participants in the OPTIMISE Programme will be given fast-track access to the LEO Trading Online Voucher Scheme which provides much needed financial assistance to implement potential improvements.

The value of e-commerce

E-commerce is worth €12.3 billion to the Irish economy, but according to figures from the latest IE Domain Registry Digital Health Index (Q4 2017), only 14 percent of Irish SMEs have web sales ability. Almost 20 percent of Irish SMEs have no online presence whatsoever.

The pharmacy sector in particular has a lot to gain from e-commerce. According to Retail Excellence research, the sector has enjoyed continuous growth over the past 24 months, and has been the highest performing sector online. During Cyber Week 2017, some pharmacies reported YOY sales growth of up to 60%, indicating increased demand for products and services bought online.

A modern, e-commerce-enabled web presence will help pharmacies communicate with and sell to their existing customers, reach out to new ones and create new revenue streams.

A new approach to OPTIMISE

Now in its eighth year, the IE Domain Registry OPTIMISE Programme has helped over 130 small and micro-business owners to build and improve their website, connect with new and existing customers, and sell products and services in Ireland and across the world.

Last year, IE Domain Registry relaunched the OPTIMISE Programme with a focus on closer partnerships with industry sector and representative organisations, who are already trusted and highly valued by their members. In changing the approach, the OPTIMISE Programme has been able to scale up to help more SMEs become digitally enabled more quickly. The company has invested €742,000 in the programme to date.

Comment

Commenting on the partnership, David Curtin, Chief Executive of IE Domain Registry, said:

“IE Domain Registry is delighted to partner with Retail Excellence to assist them in helping their pharmacy members grow their online presence and improve their e-commerce capabilities.

“A modern web presence helps businesses drive revenue growth, connect with and learn from customers, and stay competitive. It also helps to defend against external challenges. While larger retail chains may be able to absorb some of the costs, smaller, independent retailers will need to use every method available to keep their customers loyal and informed, keep revenue streams open, and expand in new markets.

“Our OPTIMISE Programme has a proven track record of helping micro-businesses and SMEs to re-set their digital priorities and address their individual challenges and barriers. We take a hands-on approach, working closely with business owners to develop personalised digitisation plans that get them online, engaging with customers online, and selling their products and services via the web.

“Considering the huge value of e-commerce to the Irish economy, we believe it is in the interest not just of SMEs but industry sector bodies and representative organisations to promote the benefits of an online presence. We look forward to working towards this goal with Retail Excellence and our other industry partners.”

Lorraine Higgins, CEO of Retail Excellence, said: “We are delighted to partner with IE Domain Registry which will enable us to empower and assist our member retailers in embracing the opportunities that online presents.

“It is important for retailers to have a digital and omnichannel offering as it makes it easier to grow their sales and reach out to existing and potential customers. With the increasingly boundaryless nature of the industry and consumer shopping habits evolving, it is important that retailers are on the curve. Through our partnership with IE Domain Registry we will assist the pharmacy sector in increasing its online presence which will enable it to take advantage of some of the €21 million being spent by Irish consumers online every day.”

ENDS

Notes for editors

The first five pharmacy participants in the 2018 IE Domain Registry OPTIMISE Programme are: **D Pharmacy**, Ardee, Co Louth; **Mellerick's Pharmacy**, Fermoy, Co Cork; **Phelans Pharmacy**, Cork, Co Cork; **The Family Pharmacy**, Tullow, Co Carlow; and **McFadden's Pharmacy**, Stoneybatter, Dublin 7.

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About IE Domain Registry

IE Domain Registry is the national registry for .ie domain names and is responsible for the management and administration of Ireland's official internet domain, .ie, in the interest of the Irish and global internet communities. It operates the domain name system (DNS) for the .ie namespace, facilitates an independent [dispute resolution service](#) with WIPO, and operates a public WHOIS lookup service for .ie domains.

IE Domain Registry's mission is to provide unique, identifiably Irish domain names, along with registry and related services to the local and international internet community. Currently, there are over 250,000 registered .ie domain names.

The company is committed to being a digital advocate for the SME community. Through the OPTIMISE Programme and stakeholder engagement initiatives, the company works with and supports SMEs to improve their online presence and e-commerce capabilities. IE Domain Registry produces fact-based research for the business community and policymakers, such as the biannual Digital Health Index, which provides key insights into the digital health of SMEs.

The company is focused on providing excellence in customer service through its ongoing customer experience (CX) innovation and improvement programmes. Since March 2018, it is now easier and faster to register a .ie domain name.

Based in Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin, IE Domain Registry employs 22 people.

About Retail Excellence

Established in 1995, Retail Excellence is owned by the members, for the members. Retail Excellence is an organisation which invests in innovative and exciting learning, market intelligence, human resources services, Government representation and member networking initiatives. Retail Excellence has over 1,850 leading retail companies in Ireland. Its members are the most progressive and innovative retailers. Retail Excellence is by far the largest retail industry body in Ireland.