

# Retail

TIMES

Q4 2021



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# WELCOME

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## Isn't it great to have some hope and optimism back?

The roll out of the vaccination programme has been phenomenal and leaves us in a very different place from a few short months ago. We are gradually emerging into the light again—pubs and restaurants are open, we are beginning to meet face to face rather than over Zoom and customers are spending more time in shops. We will be wearing masks in retail settings for a while longer it seems, but we can handle that if it means we won't have to lockdown again. We can confidently look forward to more normalised trading this Christmas – let's hope!

There are challenges of course. It's not every retailer that's seen a bounce back since the easing of restrictions in May, our city centres are missing footfall from office workers and tourists. For many of us the makeup of our staffing is barely recognisable from 18 months ago. Fewer people and newer, less experienced people mean that providing a superb customer experience is a real challenge. The numbers from retail receiving the PUP are still too high and are falling only very slowly. Too many landlords are demanding full rent for periods of closure and many are refusing to engage and reach agreement.

Sourcing products that will arrive on time and at the right price is proving to be a real headache in this post pandemic, post Brexit world. Although it will be some time before we can ditch the government supports, the RE team are committed to drawing government attention to these issues at every opportunity.

If some retail 'pundits' are to be believed, the days of traditional bricks and mortar retailing are on the wane. We have a very different view and

in this edition we are delighted to showcase Three Ireland who are fighting back with an investment of €27m to rebrand their stores across the country and bring in new, exciting products. Duncan spent a day with them in the summer discovering that experiential retailing alongside a strong E-commerce offering is at the forefront of their plans to help us develop a connected lifestyle.

And finally, the latest announcement by the Taoiseach gave the 'green light' to events and networking. We have changed our plans for a 'virtual' awards process and will be running an 'in person' AIBMS Retail Excellence awards evening in November at a venue in Dublin. We are looking at various other networking opportunities between now and the end of the year around the country and a return to the retail summit for next year. Celebrating the best that Irish retail has to offer is long overdue! I looking forward to seeing you all in person at our November event.



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# THE NEWS



Two other unnamed fashion brands have also negotiated discounts on the rates they pay to John Lewis.

Next charges a 38% commission for sales on its website, while M&S charges a similar rate.

## TESCO FACES £2.5BN BILL AFTER STAFF WIN EQUAL PAY DISPUTE

Grocery giant Tesco is facing the prospect of a £2.5bn bill after the European Court of Justice backed thousands of current and former shopfloor workers in a mammoth equal pay lawsuit.

The Court of Justice for the European Union (CJEU) ruled yesterday in favour of thousands of Tesco staff, mainly women, that EU law could be relied on in making equal pay claims against their employer. Staff had argued that they failed to receive equal pay for work of equal value compared with their predominantly male warehouse counterparts.

The UK's biggest retailer and law firm Leigh Day have sought clarification from the CJEU on whether the so-called 'single source' test applies to businesses in the UK. Under European law, a worker can be compared with another worker in a different function if a single source can correct the difference in pay.

The ruling follows the Supreme Court's decision earlier this year that Asda shopfloor workers could expect the same pay as staff in the retailer's distribution centres.

## MARKS & SPENCER TO KEEP ALL STORES CLOSED ON BOXING DAY

Marks & Spencer will keep all 1,000 of its UK and Ireland stores closed on Boxing Day this year to give staff more time to spend with their loved ones.

## JOHN LEWIS FACES FEES BACKLASH FROM BRAND PARTNERS

John Lewis has been blasted by third-party brands for the 'ridiculous' fees it charges to stock their products.

John Lewis has enlisted Alix Partners to renegotiate supplier contracts, under which brands pay up to 50% of every sale in commissions and fees.

The chief executive of one fashion retailer told The Times that he was "flabbergasted"

that John Lewis recently tried to increase its already "ridiculous" fees, which he said were already the most expensive in the market.

"To do that after the year we've had was very disappointing. We are seriously looking at pulling out," he said.

Fashion brand Seasalt recently ended its brand partnership with John Lewis for "strategic reasons" and said it would instead focus on its existing partnerships with Marks & Spencer and Next, as well as sales through its own website.



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This will mark the second consecutive year that M&S has shut its stores on Boxing Day, giving its 70,000-strong UK and Ireland workforce an additional day off over the festive period.

Chief executive Steve Rowe wrote to staff last week informing them of the decision, which was made earlier this year compared with 2020 to allow staff more time to arrange their Christmas plans.

“Up and down the country, our colleagues have been there for our customers in the most challenging of circumstances,” Rowe wrote.

“As a small thank you for their incredible hard work, we’ve taken the decision to close our operations on Boxing Day once again this year, to enable our colleagues to spend more time with their family and loved ones.”

M&S’ decision to close its stores on Boxing Day, typically one of retail’s most lucrative days of trading, follows Morrisons making the same move earlier this month.

#### **H&M SALES RISE DESPITE EUROPEAN CLOSURES**

H&M recorded strong sales in the second quarter despite the impact of the pandemic on various markets.

In the second quarter to May 31, H&M reported that sales were up 75% in local currencies across all its markets year on year. The fashion retailer said that sales were nonetheless consistently affected by the pandemic.

At the beginning of the quarter, 1,300 stores were still temporarily closed due to government restrictions, while others had limits on customer numbers and opening hours.

H&M added that two of the group’s biggest

markets – France and Germany – were closed during the majority of the period. By the end of the quarter, just 140 stores remained closed to the public. The number of closed stores is currently at 180 after all 50 stores in Malaysia were forced to close in June.

#### **RETAILERS WARN OF CHRISTMAS STOCK CRISIS AS CHINESE PORT CLOSURES**

The closure of a Chinese port has exacerbated the shipping crisis, meaning stock may be in short supply this festive season.

Retailers are scrambling to secure shipping containers after the third-largest port in China was closed due to a Covid outbreak – cutting capacity by a quarter at its busiest time of the year.

The port closure, which handled the equivalent of 29 million containers last year, has intensified pressure on global supply chains, sending prices per container sky high.

Congestion at the remaining ports has further exacerbated issues, pushing prices up higher in time for peak season.

#### **TESCO AND ALDI HIKE DRIVER PAY AS SHORTAGES HAMMER GROCERS**

Tesco and Aldi have hiked the wages they pay to lorry drivers in a bid to overcome the HGV driver shortage and keep shelves stocked.

Britain’s biggest grocer is offering drivers a £1,000 signing-on bonus if they can start working before the end of September. Tesco’s Booker wholesale arm has given drivers at its Hemel Hempstead depot a temporary £5-an-hour pay rise, according to the Unite union.

The Sunday Times reported that Aldi has

also increased wages for its lorry drivers, pushing through an increase in order to maintain its position as the highest payer in the grocery sector.

Supermarket operators are battling to get food on shelves amid the falling number of lorry drivers in the UK. Brexit had already caused a drop in the number of EU drivers working in Britain before the coronavirus pandemic hit, which caused further problems as a result of staff absences and an exodus of European citizens back to their home countries.

#### **BOOHOO PARTNERS WITH ALSHAYA TO GROW DEBENHAMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Boohoo has made a move into bricks-and-mortar stores after signing an exclusive deal with Middle Eastern operator Alshaya group.

The fast-fashion giant will work with Alshaya to accelerate Debenhams’ presence in the region featuring Boohoo’s various brands.

Alshaya, which already operates Debenhams stores in shopping malls, will have exclusive rights to operate the brand both in store and online in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Oman and Qatar.

The partnership will see Boohoo’s brands – which include Boohoo, BoohooMan, PrettyLittleThing and NastyGal – in Debenhams stores from the final quarter of 2021 and also on a new local online platform across the Middle East from early 2022.

Boohoo chief executive John Lyttle said: “I am delighted to be working with Alshaya to operate Debenhams in the Middle East.

“The Debenhams brand has been popular in the region for a number of years, so this is a great opportunity to build on the existing

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H&M sales rise  
despite European  
closures.





brand awareness, while expanding the product ranges and brands available to customers.

“It also offers a new route to market for brands within the Boohoo group, raising their profile in a growing new market.

#### **DECATHLON ADDS ADIDAS AND SPEEDO TO ITS ARSENAL IN SHIFT TO MARKETPLACE MODEL**

Decathlon UK will expand its website to include products from new brands in a fresh bid to help make sport more accessible to its customers.

Sportswear giants Adidas and Speedo will be sold on Decathlon’s marketplace as it shifts its model beyond own-brand to bolster its appeal to a wider range of customers.

Decathlon’s website will include thousands of new products from these partners alongside Decathlon’s own-brand offerings, with a keen focus on health and sport.

Partners on the new marketplace will also include London start-up Donda Cycling and Pendle Bike Racks, a Lancashire-based company offering cycle carriers and bike storage solutions.

An additional partner that will be featured on the new marketplace will be eco-friendly yoga brand, Corkspace.

#### **BOOTS LAUNCHES NEW ONLINE DOCTOR SERVICE**

Boots has launched an online consultation

service for customers that will address 45 non-urgent health conditions.

The Online Doctor service will provide advice and services related to skin conditions, sexual health, family support, weight loss support and diabetes testing, among other issues.

The service will also offer patients access to prescription-only medicine without having to visit a GP. Consultations online can take between five and ten minutes on average.

Customers will then learn the outcome of the consultation between two and 24 hours later, and clinicians will send a follow-up video with advice concerning the patient’s treatment.

Users of the service can then collect prescriptions issued by the online doctor on the same day from pharmacists in Boots’ UK retail stores.

Payment for the service will work on a pay-as-you-go basis, with prices starting from £15 inclusive of prescription costs.

#### **AMAZON DESTROYING MILLIONS OF UNSOLD ITEMS EVERY YEAR AT UK WAREHOUSE**

Amazon is destroying unsold items such as electronics and facemasks at its Dunfermline fulfilment centre, according to a new report.

An investigation by ITV News has indicated that new and unused stock was being destroyed in one of the tech giant’s 24

UK fulfilment centres in Scotland.

The discovery was made during the filming of an undercover report into working conditions at the company’s Dunfermline warehouse. Electronics, books and facemasks were among the items placed into boxes that were marked ‘destroy’.

ITV News also tracked the movement of these containers following their departure from the fulfilment centre. The goods were left at recycling centres or landfill sites.

The footage illustrated that these items were unopened or were returns that had not yet been used, leading to questions around the sheer volume of waste the tech giant is responsible for.

#### **ONLINE SALES BOOST CURRYS PC WORLD DESPITE COVID CLOSURES**

Electrical retailer Dixons Carphone reported a strong performance in Ireland, despite ongoing coronavirus restrictions that closed stores for several weeks.

The group, which trades as Currys PC World in Ireland, said electricals like-for-like growth was 39 per cent for the year to May 1st.

During the period, the group launched its ShopLive service, while its order and collect, and online sales showed fast growth. Sales on its online channel, currys.ie, rose 137 per cent on a like-for-like basis.

The retailer also repaid the Government’s €3.75 million wage subsidy scheme.

“The performance of Currys PC World in Ireland is a testament to the hard work of all our colleagues who’ve pivoted, innovated fast and delivered for customers, however they’ve chosen to shop.

“Customers responded to our strong omnichannel offering in Ireland both in store and online at currys.ie,” said Jim O’Hagan, managing director for Ireland. “We have an exciting year ahead, including moving to one brand as part of the rebrand of the UK & Ireland businesses to Currys, a new technology platform and further developing ShopLive, all of which will drive our growth even further.”

### **UK RETAIL SALES JUMP UNEXPECTEDLY AS CONSUMERS GO ON SPENDING SPREE**

UK retail sales surged unexpectedly in June as consumers prepared for an end to most coronavirus lockdown rules, adding to momentum in the economic recovery.

The volume of goods sold in shops and online rose 0.5 per cent from the month before, the Office for National Statistics said Friday. Economists had expected a 0.1 per cent drop. The figures followed an unprecedented jump in April when most stores were allowed to fully reopen for the first time since January.

The figures feed the debate about the strength of Britain’s recovery from 17 months of restrictions to control the virus. Pent-up consumer spending has driven up prices across the economy, lifting inflation above the Bank of England’s target for the first time in almost two years in each of the past two months. Policymakers led by governor Andrew Bailey are considering whether to pare back their stimulus as soon as next month.

Prime minister Boris Johnson dropped many of the last remaining rules on social distancing this week even though a surge in infections is stirring concerns about whether a further clampdown will be needed in the weeks ahead.

### **HANDBAG SALES AND LOCKDOWN EASING SEES LVMH REVENUES SOAR**

Like-for-like sales rose 84% last quarter, outstripping analysts’ expectations

Sales of Louis Vuitton handbags and the easing of lockdowns across the world helped

revenue soar at fashion houses owned by LVMH. In a bumper quarter for the owner of some of the world’s best-known luxury brands, like-for-like sales rose 84 per cent last quarter, outstripping analysts’ expectations. Demand for fashion and leather goods, particularly at Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Fendi and Celine, fueled the gain and showed consumers’ appetite for luxury goods as they emerge from pandemic restrictions and vaccination campaigns accelerate.

LVMH benefited from an easy comparison with 2020, when many stores were shut due to early pandemic lockdowns. Even so, the report will probably prompt earnings upgrades for others in the industry because LVMH is seen as a bellwether, according to Luca Solca, an analyst at Sanford C. Bernstein.

Solca called the report, published late Monday, the “strongest first-half update ever” for the Paris-based company. “Whatever a post pandemic world may look like, LVMH are already a significant winner,” Flavio Cereda, an analyst at Jefferies, wrote in a note to clients.

The shares rose as much as 1.6 per cent in Paris trading even as stock indexes fell across Europe. Rival Richemont, the owner of Cartier and Van Cleef and Arpels, earlier this month reported a 129 per cent sales gain for the quarter.

### **SCREWFIX TO CREATE 140 JOBS AS IT OPENS 11 NEW IRISH STORES**

Screwfix, the trade supplier of electrical, plumbing and building products, will create 140 jobs in the Republic as it opens 11 new stores, its owner said on Wednesday.

The company, which is owned by British DIY giant Kingfisher, has opened five outlets this year in Carlow, Athlone, Portlaoise and Letterkenny and on the Kylemore Road in Dublin, and a further six locations are planned.

This will bring its total stores in the Republic to 29. The multichannel retailer has more than 300,000 active customers in the Irish market shopping across categories such as power tools and workwear.

### **THREE IRELAND TO INVEST €27M IN REVAMP OF RETAIL OUTLETS**

Three Ireland is investing €27 million in

revamping its stores around the country as the company shifts its retail focus to lifestyle products.

The telco will continue to sell handsets and mobile broadband in its 60 stores, but will also offer a curated selection of connected home, audio and lifestyle products to customers.

The funding will be used to transform Three stores to showcase the new products, which include everything from mesh networks to boost wifi and headphones to speaker tables, smart gardens and robot vacuums.

A new in-store information system will allow customers to find out more about products, shop online or request help from staff, who will undergo a four-week training programme to boost their knowledge of products to assist consumers.

### **UK’S MORRISONS AGREES TO €7.9BN TAKEOVER OFFER FROM FORTRESS-LED GROUP**

British supermarket group Morrisons has agreed to an improved takeover offer worth £6.7 billion (€7.9 billion) in cash from a consortium led by Fortress Investment Group, though its shares were trading above the level of the new bid.

That indicated investors were still hoping for a counter bid from US private equity group Clayton, Dubilier & Rice (CD&R). Softbank-owned Fortress said its raised offer comprises 270 pence per Morrisons share plus a 2 pence a share special dividend and was aimed at warding off its rival suitor. Fortress “remains committed to becoming the new owner of Morrisons and to being a responsible long-term steward of this great British company through the next stage of its evolution,” it said.

### **RETAILER JYSK CONFIRMS SIX IRISH STORE OPENINGS IN 2021 AND MORE NEXT YEAR**

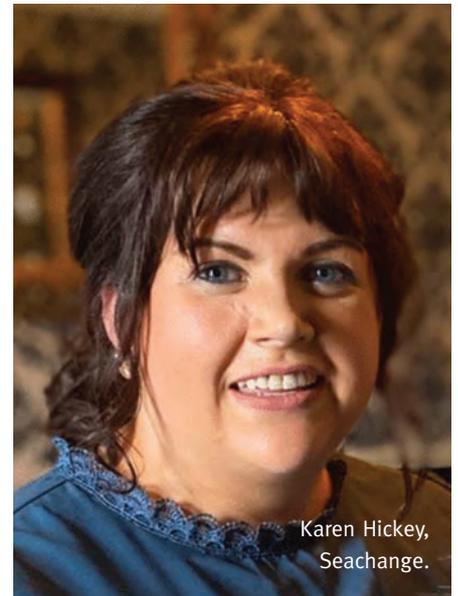
Danish homewares retailer Jysk will open six new Irish stores before the end of the year, with up to a further 10 planned for 2022.

The group says it believes the market in the Republic could eventually bear “between 40 and 50” of its outlets.

The company, which entered the market



Roni Tuominen,  
Country Manager for  
JYSK UK and Ireland.



Karen Hickey,  
Seachange.

two years ago and has nine stores here, will open an outlet in Ashbourne in Co Meath this month, followed by Carlow in September, Tralee in Kerry and Eastgate in Cork in October, and Limerick and Dundalk in November.

“We also need to look at Northern Ireland at some point in time as a separate market,” said Roni Tuominen, Jysk’s country manager for Ireland and the UK.

Currently it only has one store in Dublin, and Mr Tuominen believes the capital could support between eight and 12 outlets. It is also targeting other urban areas such as Galway, while Eastgate will be its first store in the vicinity of Cork city.

### AMAZON PLANS TO OPEN LARGE PHYSICAL RETAIL STORES IN US

Amazon is planning to open several large physical retail stores in the United States that will operate like department stores, the Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday, citing people familiar with the matter.

Some of the company’s first department stores are expected to open in Ohio and California, the Journal reported, adding that the stores will be about 30,000 square feet in size and offer products from well-known consumer brands.

The e-commerce giant has been benefiting from a surge in online purchases from homebound shoppers. However, vaccinations are now encouraging more US shoppers to return to brick-and-mortar stores to buy clothes, footwear and electronics.

### STAYCATION BOOM SEES CONSUMERS STOCK UP ON SOFT DRINKS AND SNACKS

Irish consumers spent €7.7 million on soft drinks, €664,000 on snacks and €579,000 on chilled burgers and meats in August as they stocked up for staycations.

The latest figures from retail group Kantar show that supermarket sales overall declined by 3.9 per cent over the 12 weeks to August 8th as life continued to edge back to normal and indoor dining resumed.

The reopening of hospitality, however, coincided with boom in staycations, Emer Healy, retail analyst at Kantar, said.

“Instead of jetting overseas, many families have been packing up the car and heading to holiday rentals closer home,” she said.

As a result sales of soft drinks, snacks and grilled meats rose.

“Grocery market growth dipped slightly this month, but it’s important to put that in perspective and remember that we are comparing sales against the peak of Covid-19 restrictions last year,” Ms Healy said.

Irish shoppers still spent €333.2 million more on take-home groceries than during the same period in 2019, an increase of 13.4 per cent on two years ago, she said.

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SeaChange Ltd. are delighted to introduce a new member of their team! Karen Hickey is an expert in H&S and HR within multiple sectors including retail, and she will be supporting Business Development for SeaChange Ltd.

“Karen is a very valuable addition to the SeaChange Team given her experience and knowledge when it comes to Safety Compliance, Safety Culture, Risk Management and Client Support. We think she will be a big support to REI members going forward”

Dr. Paul Cummins (Managing Director, SeaChange Ltd.)

To discuss how SeaChange can give your business a real return on your H&S investment, contact Karen on:

E: karen.hickey@seachange-intl.com  
M: 085-861-9499



WORKING WITH



Three Ireland is investing €27 million into transforming its 60 stores across the country to new Connected Lifestyle Experience stores. Having worked with Johnston Shopfitters in the past, Three partnered with Johnston's to develop a fully functional prototype store, innovating and refining bespoke shopfittings to showcase a curated range of over 100 connected lifestyle products.



Launched in August 2021 with three stores, Johnston Shopfitters will complete an additional ten by the end of the year.



"Johnston's team have brought a wealth of expertise, knowledge and efficiency to our program, and partnered with us to deliver a solution driven approach. They deliver a high quality and cost effective finished product. We look forward to continuing our long-term work with Johnston Shopfitters, as all Three Ireland's 60 stores are expected to complete their transformation by 2023."

## WELCOME TO JOHNSTON SHOPFITTERS THIS IS WHAT WE DO

Featured project Three Ireland Connected Lifestyle Experience stores in collaboration with Checkland Kindleysides



Ronan Gibney - Head of Sales Three Ireland



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“We believe passionately in the power of bricks and mortar retailing.”

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# CONNECTING WITH THE CUSTOMER AT

# THREE IRELAND

**It's always great when you get a sneak preview of something new and so I was delighted when Ronan Gibney, Three Ireland's Head of Sales, and Patrick O'Reilly, National Sales Manager, invited us to have a look at the new Three Ireland store before it was launched last month. It's a weird feeling arriving at the 'high tech' Three office in Sir John Rogerson's Quay with very few people in the building, but that feeling was soon replaced by the joy of being like a 'kid in the sweetshop' as we were shown into the fabulous new mock store. To say I could have stayed all day to have a play with all that was on offer would be an understatement.**

Three Ireland is investing €27m in the Irish market to upgrade all of their stores over the next 2 years. The whole concept is based around the idea of a connected lifestyle.

Ronan explained that in speaking to customers and through their own extensive research they realised they needed to take a bold move to continue to thrive in an increasingly competitive market. A survey conducted by Foresight Factory in March this year showed that despite the move to online shopping in light of the pandemic, over 60% of customers still prefer to shop in store. Younger customers in particular like to interact with products and discover different features before they finally purchase. The survey found that customers trust Three Ireland on technology and on mobile coverage, but they were looking for something more.

The first stores to be transformed were on Henry Street in Dublin, Patrick Street in Cork and Parkway Shopping Centre in Limerick, with Crescent Shopping Centre in Limerick and Blanchardstown Shopping

Centre also recently opened. He said the team have had a few weeks now to gauge the customer reaction and so far, it's been very positive.

As Ronan says customers are browsing for longer despite COVID, they are impressed with the wide and diverse product offering which they don't expect to find in a phone store. They are very inquisitive, asking questions and immersing themselves in the product offering. There has been great feedback on layout and the technology available and the biggest learning has been convincing customers this is more than just a phone store! It's 'wonderment' and curiosity that is driving customers in.

Each store takes around 4 weeks to be transformed and Three Ireland decided to use this time to upskill their people. Three's retail experts are encouraged to understand their customers' needs and really listen out for information about their lifestyle and the 'nuggets' where they can make recommendations.



“The new store format has given a real boost to my team, who are now part of a 1st class retail environment and I’m looking forward to seeing the impact on the key Christmas trading period ahead”

Tom McGrath, Three Franchisee

Ronan explained that the success of this project will come to life through Three’s retail team, they are the key and they provide the experience for the customer. They spend time working with and getting excited by the products. Once a retail expert has a passion for a product it’s easy to sell and everyone wins.

The stores are clearly defined into 4 distinct themes; music, play, work and home. Like with any new process the themes were decided on months in advance and the buying team were then tasked with finding and curating a product range to sit under

each of them. The first challenge was to find something different that would appeal to the Irish customer and their connected lifestyle. The result was a range consisting of 120 new products to the market.

It’s all been about learning since then. Do products work, and if they don’t work what can be done to improve them? The challenge now is to get new products into store as quickly as possible.

I asked Ronan what products were appealing to Irish customers at this early stage?

‘It’s changing constantly but early indications are that outdoor speakers, earphones and projectors are very strong. We have also been delighted with the reaction to sales of smart vacuum cleaners and Veritable Smart Gardens which have been promoted on our tv ads and which are selling very well online.’

In keeping with the move towards sustainability and supporting local, Three Ireland is also collaborating with Irish suppliers. At the moment around 10% of the products sourced are from Ireland and they are deliberately focusing on products that so far have only been available online. Products include Vinehall Laptop stands, Ecoset water bottles, Onesonic headphones and Flying Elephant desks are all examples of how Three Ireland is helping to showcase and develop great Irish designers. In sticking with the sustainable theme it’s apparent how much wood there is in the store, from its wooden fixtures and fittings in the fit-out of course, but also a real focus on wood in the product offering. It feels like plastic has had its day!

For the tech savvy among us this store is a ‘feast of firsts’.

Customer interaction takes place around a ‘Discovery Table’ which uses object recognition technology, touch screen and gesturing to interact with product details. It

is a first for Ireland in being able to complete a purchase through this type of device.

Then there is context-specific inventory browsing. This means that fixed position browsing screens will both allow customers to navigate products they don't see in store but also products attached to the "area" of the shop the customer finds themselves in. This is a unique innovation designed to 'connect' customers to the brand and improve conversions and average order value.

The innovative customer management systems Three Ireland is using allows different content to be delivered dependent on the shop location. This means they can offer unique content for different counties within Ireland. For example, they could look at doing something specifically for Cork Jazz Festival or other events in locations around Ireland.

The last 'first' which will be rolled out in the coming months is an instore virtual queuing system allowing customers to "check in" to the stores, know their place in the queue and give them the option to be notified when it's their turn to be served. Another interesting element of the

transformation is that all Three stores will be cashless as they reopen. I asked them what had prompted this and what the customer reaction has been so far.

'All of our stores are currently operating cashless due to Covid-19 health and safety guidelines. Card payment is the preferred option for the majority of our customers and we are receiving very few requests for cash payments' said Ronan.

'Of course, as restrictions ease, we will watch things closely and ensure we do not alienate customers, but for now they all seem content to 'tap and go'.

Taking the decision to spend €27m on physical retail in the middle of the worst health crisis in living memory will have resulted in 'raised eyebrows' from some of the more conservative of us. I asked Ronan what they have learned during 18 months of trading through COVID?

'We believe passionately in the power of bricks and mortar retailing. We know how important staying connected is to our customers; we already provide a fantastic network experience, but we also want to wow our customers with fabulous products and an unrivalled experience both in-store and online. We knew we had to be ready to

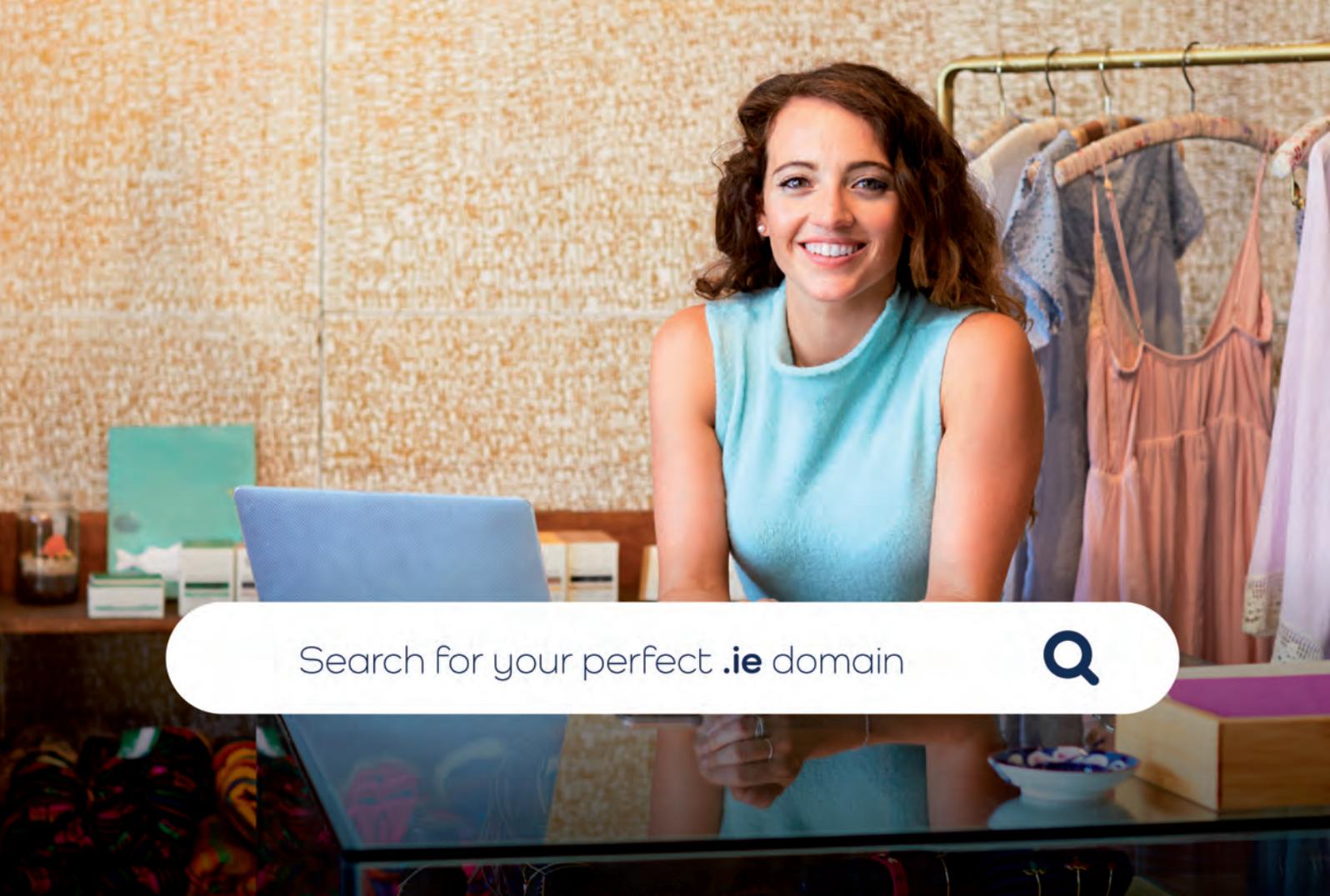
take the opportunity when it came and we believe we have got the timing right'.

If you haven't already seen the rebranded Three shops I'd recommend you take a look. The design and shopfit are impeccable. Johnston Shopfitters have been contracted to work with Three on this and Conor Cahill, Managing Director of Johnstons was telling me they have been quietly working on this with Three Ireland for the last 2 years.

'It has been our absolute privilege to work with Three Ireland on such a challenging and rewarding project over the past 2 years. We were delighted to finally reveal Three's Lifestyle Store, showcasing a new look, a new feel and an incredible new lifestyle range' said Conor.

After all the talk about online trading and the decline of our shopping districts its really great to see brands like Three Ireland embracing physical retailing and making this investment. The future is a connected lifestyle and whilst our love affair with online shopping will undoubtedly continue you can't beat the experience of shopping in a shop!





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# THE ART OF ADAPTING

*how coffeangel started thinking outside the box  
for customer service and retention*

## coffeangel

**has been at the forefront of specialty coffee in Ireland for over 17 years, with the Irish Times naming Karl Purdy, Coffeangel's founder, as 'The Father of the Irish Specialty Coffee Scene'.**

From humble beginning of serving coffee-to-go from the back of a 3-wheeled Piaggio van, along with the help of architect Chris Boyle, "coffee-preneurs", Karl Purdy and Caroline Sleiman have created a sleek collection of specialty coffee houses which typify the Coffeangel brand without conforming to identikit cafe culture. Each of the five outposts across Dublin City Centre - whilst similar in architectural language - have been designed with its specific location in mind. And their gorgeous website has been carefully created to bring that same level of detail and authenticity online.

Today we speak to Caroline and Karl to get an understanding of how they navigated Covid restrictions and what - if anything - they did differently.

"It's not just about the coffee" says Caroline Sleiman. "Brewing and serving great coffee has simply and always been our baseline. We've always believed that our long term survival and success has been firmly rooted in the sincere and genuine customer service that our amazing team of baristas provide each and every day. Added with thoughtfully designed spaces that combine to create an inclusive, intuitive environment where our customers feel comfortable and welcome.

So with the onset of the first lockdown, we immediately realised that our entire customer base was working from home - far from our City Centre bricks and mortar locations - resulting in nearly a 100% collapse in sales. With this painful realisation, we had to do some very quick

thinking. How do we continue to generate enough revenue to see us through the weeks ahead (little did we know...).

With very few options available, on the first day of Lockdown we blithely posted on social media that we'd be happy to deliver bags of coffee and home brewing tools to any of those loyal Coffeangel customers now working from home. Customers simply had to visit coffeangel.com and we'd take care of the rest. It was a bit of a "Hail Mary" throw and we weren't expecting much. But overnight, the volume of online orders placed was staggering.

At this point we had a very simple web shop in place. Creaking at the seams, it was built years previously and generated an almost inconsequential amount in revenue each month. Looking back now it was not fit for purpose at all. But with orders continuing to come in, we immediately realised the lifeline that this online business could provide. The challenges were many. But most challenging was adapting and evolving from a bricks and mortar business model and mentality. And ensuring our loyal customers received the same level of service online as they were used to in-store. So we looked at what made the conventional Coffeangel model successful and worked at adapting this to the online experience. We focussed our efforts on warmth, efficiency and personal service.

We offered - and continue to offer - same day delivery to Dublin addresses with every effort made to get orders placed before 0930, Monday to Friday, delivered on the same day. And crucially all online orders are sent with a unique, personal handwritten





thank you note, which we quickly discovered our customers really appreciate - especially when social connectivity was all but banished.

Initially Karl was printing, packing and delivering all orders himself. But with the incredible and growing support of our customers, this became too much for him to handle alone. So we called in Stephen, who previously managed our warehouse, to assist with Dublin deliveries. And who at this stage, knows almost every road in Dublin!

On the corporate side, we also decided to offer something slightly different. Rather than simply delivering care boxes to teams at home, we offered to host personalised Zoom Tutorials, explaining how to use the equipment, or cupping (tasting various coffees) which ended up feeling like a virtual coffee break, with loads of informal banter and laughs. Again, we believe this helped add a little much needed and missed social connectivity to people's lives.

As the lockdowns continued, with our normal lives still on hold, online sales continued to grow and remained core to survival. But we realised that our existing website was well past its "best by" date and would need to be completely rebuilt. Taking a sizable financial risk, we invested in creating a completely new webshop, trying to apply many of the lessons learnt over the previous months in creating something that both our team and customers would value.

We paid close attention to customer behaviour, noticing that many people are very loyal to their favourite coffee. So we introduced a coffee subscription service,

allowing customers complete control over how often they get delivery, the ability to pause or cancel. It's become a really popular gift, for both individuals and corporate customers - after all, who wouldn't love to receive fresh coffee delivered directly to their door on a regular basis! We also introduced live customer support, international shipping, personalised eGift cards and many others features.

The other huge change to our business was providing outdoor seating.

With the ban on indoor seating, we knew that without this facility our business would be at great risk. Failure was not an option. Championing the pedestrianisation of South Anne Street, Karl played a pivotal role in getting all the businesses on the street on board. And then liaising with Dublin City Council to ensure that what started off as a weekend trial over the space of a month last summer has now become permanent.

Taking a look at our business from a completely different point of view, we also worked hard to lock down a number of all-Ireland exclusive distributorships for specialty coffee related equipment. With everyone's staffing numbers reduced, we focused on products designed to aid workflow, quality, efficiency and volume - such as Übermilk, Markibar Grinders, Chinoart Automatic Tampers.

We imported Chemex brewing equipment directly from the US along with several other consumer brands. And we are just about to launch a dedicated trade website for this side of the business which thankfully also continues to grow.

Championing Irish design and craftsmanship and supporting other local businesses has always been important to what we do. Whether it is commissioning bespoke Irish Pottery or Irish Linen products, or working with like minded suppliers, we are always looking at new products that are not only unique but functional and beautiful.

Dublin City Centre is definitely getting busier. But it is still some distance from what it would have been like pre-Covid. We remain hopeful that September will bring a return to more normal trading patterns. But we expect a blended home / office workplace is more than likely going to be the norm.

Whatever the outcome we will continue to adapt to ensure that our customers get the best service and coffee whether online or in store.

Both agree that this has been the most challenging year and a half since the Coffeangel's founding 17 years ago. But the hardship and stresses aside, it has also been the most innovative and creative they have ever been. "We have been forced to improve, adapt and question everything we do. Whilst the road ahead is still fraught with dangers, we feel much better equipped and more confident in our own ability to navigate whatever lies ahead" says Karl.

We have been totally blown away by the incredible support and loyalty of our customers, and the absolute commitment of our incredible team. Without them, this would not have been possible.  
www.coffeeangel.com

# LOCKDOWN PROJECT TURNED FULL TIME BUSINESS

*How did Faerly come about? Was it purely a COVID project or something in the running before then?*

I had an idea in my head for a long time but lockdown certainly gave me the time and space to really explore it and from that bring Faerly to life. I started thinking about it seriously in March of 2020 at the start of the first lockdown and by May I had decided to go for it and started setting up the business in earnest. I did a 'Start Your Own Business Course' online with my

budget for branding so we came up with the name and brand ourselves. I had been playing around with different names and none of them felt quite right.

In the end it actually just came up unexpectedly one day and a little bit like the Goldilocks and the three bears, it felt 'just right'. Faerly doesn't mean anything as such which is an advantage in terms of availability. It is a play on 'Fair' as ethical sourcing is core to our ethos. The letter combination of 'ae' is common in Irish and Scandinavian languages and we're

retailing and business growth. I think we're seeing a shift now and unsustainable consumption and trends like fast fashion are no longer being automatically seen as a good thing.

I wanted to share some of the products that we'd found in our lives that had worked well for us. I felt there was a gap in the market for a retail offering that is sustainable by design but where the products can stand on their own in terms of function and aesthetic too. We believe that the products we sell will enhance our customers' lives with the added bonus of being kind to our environment.

I admire initiatives like Kilkenny' Group's leadership of Champion Green in creating an initiative that benefits not only themselves but a whole ecosystem of producers, smaller retailers and consumers.

*When creating Faerly, how much time and energy went into the branding and identity? How important was this in order to succeed?*

We put more time and energy into creating our brand values and principles first and making sure we knew what we were about before we started work on the brand. Before we launched the majority of the effort went into product sourcing, setting up the practicalities of the business and preparing the website for launch. Most of the branding we kept very simple and with a very modest investment. For now, I'm more focused on getting our customer touchpoints right. Things like photography, product descriptions, SEO and positive customer reviews are more of a focus for us right now in terms of brand development than developing the visual identity.

*Who are your target audience?*

Our customer base is primarily female and across all ages. We try to speak to customers who are interested in making sustainable changes in their own lives. We find all our customers are at a different point in this journey and we try to meet them wherever they are at.



Local Enterprise Office and that helped with a framework for planning the business.

Growing up in a family retail business I always had a love of retail and entrepreneurship from an early age. I've spent the last ten years working in a large multinational and that was a fantastic experience too but setting up my own business was an itch that needed to be scratched.

*Can you tell us a bit about the name Faerly and where the name came from?*

Like most startups there wasn't really any

influenced a lot by Scandinavian lifestyles and design. Overall we hope it feels warm and familiar, while being unique enough to give us scope to develop the brand over time.

*Why did you decide to create Faerly as a sustainable brand?*

Sustainability has become more and more important to us personally over the years. I had felt a draw for a few years to align my career more closely to my own values. For the last few years I had been feeling increasingly at odds with some of the established wisdom about digital marketing,



*How do you pick your 'makers'? Is there a vetting process to ensure their values align with Faerly's?*

We're lucky that we're small enough that we don't need a huge amount of formalities in this process yet. We can usually get a feel for a potential supplier very quickly, and know if their products and values align to ours. We have a set of principles that we share with our suppliers to make sure we're a fit for each other. We avoid products with unnecessary plastic packaging and chemicals and generally if we can source something in Ireland, we will do that, rather than shipping it in from abroad.

*What are your main platforms for keeping in touch with your customers and reaching new ones?*

As an online only business, our website is our shopfront and we rely on Google, both paid and organic to find new customers and drive traffic to the site. Our email marketing is key to customer retention, both newsletters and automated emails. Social media is a growing area for us but this area can be time consuming so we do have to limit the time we invest in it at the moment. It's not where we want it to be yet but Rome wasn't built in a day.

*What marketing strategy have you found works best?*

Currently I'm focused in particular on

Google Ads and Search Engine Optimization to achieve both short term and longer term goals. Investment in Google ads gives immediate results which is very helpful for a young business like ours. SEO is a longer term strategy and we're starting to see some very positive results from this.

*Was or is there any part of the entire Faerly process you outsource or is it all done in house? E.g., imagery, packaging, finance etc.*

As an online business we're able to conduct most of our business online. Setting up during lockdown meant we met with and listed all of our suppliers without ever meeting them face to face. Around 70% of our stock and packaging is sourced in Ireland.

We keep all our fulfillment in house and our delivery partner is DPD, we really like how progressive they are in terms of sustainability. As much as possible we try to take out manual activities and we automate as much as we can as we're such a small team.

*Do you plan to expand or keep it a small, family run venture?*

For now our ambition is to stay small, but with an ambition to grow the business over time. We don't want to grow for the sake of it. If we can grow in a sustainable way, and grow our positive impact at the same time,

that's the goal for us. Our aim is to create a sustainable and profitable business that supports a network of other small Irish makers and ethical brands.

*Will you continue to add new products or stick to a few core bestsellers?*

We're adding new products all the time. We've doubled our product range since we launched last October and we'll probably double it again over the coming months. Watch this space!

*Is there anything you would have done differently? Any key learnings at this early stage in your online retail brand?*

I'm sure there's lots we could have done differently but at the end of the day, you can get caught up in planning for every eventuality and never get going.

I would say keep things simple and consistent. That's been our mantra from the beginning and I've found it helpful because by nature I would be after the next 'shiny thing', it helps keep me focused. Don't look backwards!

*Any last thoughts or future plans for Faerly?*

Some good advice I got once was not to be afraid to ask for the sale. With that in mind, we'd love to show you what we're about. Check us out at faerly.ie!

# adsmart

from **sky**

**AdSmart from Sky helped Cycle Superstore speak directly to the audience that mattered to their business.**



*The entire process, from commercial production through to first airing, was flawless. Sky ensured our key objectives were achieved by identifying the geographical area that would best suit and serve our ad. The campaign delivered more impressions than we originally aimed for and I would recommend AdSmart from Sky to any business looking to advertise on television."*

Robbie Woodcock, Marketing Manager, Cycle Superstore

Did you know that with AdSmart from Sky you can drop an Eircode pin anywhere in Ireland and target an area surrounding your business, from a minimum of 4km by 4km, up to a maximum size of 100km x 100km?

Cycle Superstore targeted a 30km x 30km area surrounding their location in Tallaght, serving their ad to homes within that area. The campaign reached 86% of their target audience with each Sky household seeing the ad an average of 5.7 times.

To find out more about how Sky can help get your business on TV, contact us at [adsmartfromsky@sky.ie](mailto:adsmartfromsky@sky.ie) or visit [adsmartfromsky.ie](http://adsmartfromsky.ie)

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# GOING ONLINE

*when you are a traditional face 2 face business.*

All types of businesses are looking to make the move online, the impact of the pandemic has shown Ireland's capacity to shop online and also the success that can be achieved by all types of business when they do.

E-commerce is far broader than it once was defined and our customers are learning to shop in many different ways, what may have been traditionally "not suitable for your business" may not be the only choice when beginning to trade online. I think it's worth exploring some of the ways ecommerce can be achieved today and help you work out what's right for your Business.

## BEING ONLINE: FIRST STEPS

The concept of being online is mostly about potential customers being able to find you, find out about you and crucially speaking to you. A simple website covering the basics "where is my business?" and "what do we do" is a foundation for any business. Where you do this can be crucial and embracing social media platforms here can be a key enabler to becoming visible online as it's where a huge amount of customers spend their online time and is very well picked up by search engines.

Social media sites like Facebook or Instagram provide business pages with super communication tools in-built and lots of room to present what your business does to your potential customers. So if you couple this with a 'call to action' like encouraging comments & messenger interaction you can drive people to ask you questions. Those conversations, when successful, can turn into sales.

Encourage them to contact you by phone or call into your premises to talk about what to buy or what services you can offer.

Lastly you can turn this into trading online by using a "pay by link" service to send the bill for the goods or services to the customer in advance using these social media platforms doesn't require professional expertise, you can do a good job with your own computer and a little bit of knowledge

around setting up profiles. There are also plenty of online tutorials that can assist you here.

Link to Facebook Business page setup tutorial: <https://www.facebook.com/business/pages/set-up>

## PRE-ARRANGE ONLINE

Getting the sale completed before you even speak to your customer is the dream of ecommerce, your site doing the selling for you 24/7. This dream can seem daunting and expensive solutions can seem out of reach for the average business but this is really just an extension of your simple business page we spoke about earlier coupled with a spotlight post or two about a few simple products and services.

The tailoring here is where you, as the content creator and product expert, provide more info on the products you sell or the services you provide, so that the customer can make a buying decision before they even speak to you. This can be very 'low-tech' if you wish but you have to put all the relevant info out there so they can decide to buy before they have reach out. A great example is how many small business have driven online sales through Adverts.ie for individual products. It's a small step from there to more image rich posts and interactions.

You can then work to add features like chat bots on social messaging platforms so you can receive an order query about your product or make your customer comfortable about making a booking with you. For Bookings you can even use booking systems free like those inbuilt in Facebook.

The key here is that the buying decision is made and the commitment to buy has been recorded. Now you can proceed to send out links for Pre-payment if you want to secure commitment and discourage tyre kicking.

These simple accessible steps allow you to trade online, without having to invest in expensive systems, and you have succeeded in automatically explaining your service /

product, triggered a purchasing decision and moved the customer to the point of committing to pay.

## TRADITIONAL TRANSACTIONAL WEBSITE

What was once the only form of ecommerce was the traditional transactional website, one designed to help build up a list of products in a basket, selecting of a delivery or collection method.

These can be simple or complex depending on your needs but it can be done by yourself using online web builders that are widely available today.

What you are doing in these systems is laying out a catalogue of all your products and making them available to buy in quantities and configurations that a customer can set themselves. Also you are committing to have those products available for collection or arranged delivery for the client. If some or all of your products can be purchased like this than this might well be the way to go. For a relatively small set of products some DIY systems are perfect for the job and can be run for less than €50 a month and can start you off on the right track. Bigger systems with more automation usually require a bit of outsourcing to achieve and that's where the value comes from an agency who help structure a project and get you from 'idea to live website'. Pricing here can start @ €5,000 and easily stretch to €50,000.



## **GOING FROM “BRICKS TO CLICKS” ISN’T SIMPLE**

Going online isn’t just about digital work it’s also going to need physical changes too. Being online and ‘Bricks & mortar’ has its advantages and disadvantages too. While everyone might think it’s easy to do both it can create its own challenges here are a few to watch out for:

### **STOCK KEEPING**

In ‘Bricks & Mortar’ businesses, if the product isn’t on the shelf it isn’t brought up to the till but this isn’t the case online. If you are displaying a product in your online store, you need to make sure it will be in stock. That means that you only put items online you can easily stock and track or else you will have to email waiting customers to tell them stocks are gone and they will have to wait until stock comes in. This can have a bearing on what you decide to sell online and how much stock you hold.

Equally it also means when you know about an order you should remove the stock from the shelves promptly and put it aside for your online customer so that no walk in customer can take the last item before the end of the day, your online customer has paid for it already and they expect its arrival.

### **DELIVERY / COLLECTION SPACE**

Following on from the point above your premises may have been focussed on providing trading face to face up until now but if you need to collect products from your own shelves and gather them for delivery or collection you will need to dedicate some space for this too.

Collection space, when offering click & collect, is important as well, if you placed your order in advance and paid before arrival you should be able to skip the queue to gain benefit from all this. Having dedicated times and space for collections is the other part of the commitment made by a merchant when taking orders and payment in advance.

### **MERCHANDISING IN STORE AS WELL AS ONLINE.**

Those of you running your businesses from

your own premises would have worked at great lengths to make sure your walk in customers see the latest and greatest products and services you offer in store. You have good signage and place the items in the eye line of your prospective customers and this should not be different online.

You need to choose what you want to highlight to your customers, get good photos/videos as well as written descriptions to help secure a buying decision from your customer and also highlight whatever specials you are running at any one time.

When going online you need to be mindful this is a doubling of merchandising work and needs the same time as designing a wonderful window display. It’s a good idea to ask yourself is everything there that I would need to know if I wanted to buy online?

### **THINGS THAT SELL WELL IN STORE MAY NOT WORK ONLINE AND VICE VERSA**

Not everything can be easily sold online and that can mean that you will need to think about how you want to support your customers in this aspect. Clothing retailers have made great strides in gaining confidence to buy items online with free and easy returns processes.

This makes up part of your decision as to what you want to start selling online and what is best to try out first. You can see from competitors’ sites what they are able to sell and how they sell it.

So research what makes you better able to sell above another retailer.

Use locality to your advantage, if you can drop an item back in store hassle free this means you may get the sale a UK based provider would not, and an exchange service may work even better if you only need to go up or down a size. Brexit has built some barriers between traditional big box ecommerce sites and their customers which a local provider could well take advantage of.

Tailor your product set accordingly and you could carve out a niche that gets your ecommerce channel the start it needs.

## **DIFFERENT SYSTEMS, DIFFERENT SERVICE PROVIDERS**

The best online systems are not close to being the best in-store systems and vice versa the most common and easy to use online systems don’t always have affordable online connections.

Don’t try to strive for perfection straight off the bat. Back office systems can be evolved over time but getting an online environment that encourages customers to buy is more important than a seamless inventory or Orders being input into the Till. That level of integration can be too much to expect in the early days of online selling.

If you can make the channels work on their own initially and prove the concept to yourselves as well as your customers a deeper integration can be developed over time.

### **ROME WASN’T BUILT IN A DAY**

Getting started can be daunting and your first steps need not be the biggest or require big investment. Starting small allows you to grow into this new channel. There is no need to begin with a site that sells everything, cherry pick some products or lines that suit can be a great way to start and keep the project small enough to be run “in house”.

Being online and growing into trading online is available to all sizes of merchants. We have seen before and during the recent pandemic every shape and size of business embrace it and thrive in this environment.

Whether it’s a boot strapped social media based site & moving to taking both order and payments using WhatsApp or messenger communications to growing into the large “add to basket” retail ecommerce stores there is an online channel for your company.

Retail excellence has a wealth of information on Social media and ecommerce and also it has members who are experts and would be able to help guide you to achieve any of these forms of trade.

# ADDRESS VERIFICATION

## Why address verification is essential for your eCommerce business and what you should look for when installing an API

When we think of selling online, we think of all the things we need to make the perfect eCommerce site. There's ensuring its user friendly with easy navigation, its mobile responsive, contains high quality video and photos, has great reviews and social proofing, offers an accessible FAQ's section and has prominent security features along with advanced payment options. We want it to provide clarity around privacy and have detailed shipping information with clear return policy instructions.

Taking all that into consideration, did you know that **1 in every 20 orders is not delivered on the first attempt and that the cost of a failed delivery is €14.37?** Added

up, that's some hit for a retail business on an annual basis. So what's missing from the must have list for a perfect eCommerce site above?

It might not seem like a big deal, but having an address verification feature as part of your website can save you a world of pain and a whole lot of money too. In fact, it was found that **3 in 5 customers abandon their cart when shopping online once they experience difficulty at the checkout.** You see, inaccurate address data most often results in shipment delivery to the wrong address. Besides the obvious cost of this to your business, it causes huge customer frustration, impacting loyalty and repeat

purchases, and can negatively affect your brand reputation.

### WHAT IS ADDRESS VERIFICATION?

Address verification is the process of ensuring you capture the correct address by suggesting accurate addresses for customers the moment they start typing their address. The beauty of this process is that it ensures your address data is accurate and up to date. It also saves a lot of time and energy.

Not only can you have address validation Application Programming Interface (API) on your website, but it can be integrated with your CRM system too. This means



that a customer calling your customer service centre can be precisely verified in seconds. And having access to this information also allows for better data-driven decisions which cuts down on unnecessary costs. The knock on effect is improved customer care and brand satisfaction.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ADDRESS VERIFICATION?

At GeoDirectory we've identified 3 main benefits from address verification:

**1 Increase conversion rates**  
According to research, 60% of online shoppers claim they would stop shopping with a retailer if they experienced difficulties in completing their address at checkout. Time poor people go online to shop to save time but a complicated payment process is just a source of frustration. The less time a shopper has to spend on the checkout page of a site, the more likely they are to complete the purchase. An address verification tool, such as GeoDirectory's GeoAddress Checked is one proven way to speed up and simplify the online purchasing process. In addition, helping the customer with auto completion forms quickly identifies them to you and ensures you have the correct information on file.

**2 Reduces the need for pop ups**  
Customers hate submitting a lengthy form only to be told that there is a problem with it after being submitted. But according to four in every five retailers, when things go wrong with deliveries it is because the customer has entered incorrect address information.

With address verification, you allow correction in real time so there is no need to send the customer back to the form. As shoppers move through each field, the API will let them know if there's a problem which is a much more pleasant buying experience.

**3 The API correctly formats addresses**  
In order to ensure fast, efficient delivery, customer addresses must be

formatted in a specific way. By installing an address verification API on your eCommerce website, your shipping addresses are always formatted in the correct way for any given destination. This is even more crucial for safeguarding timely international deliveries.

## WHAT FACTORS SHOULD YOU CONSIDER IF INSTALLING ADDRESS VERIFICATION?

Whether you are interested in GeoAddress Checked or another address verification plugin, here are some things you should consider when installing an API:

**1 Accurate text processing**  
Not everybody is precise and aware when it comes to typing. Many people don't use the correct fields to enter addresses; they misspell, they use incorrect numbers and letters and quite often the Eircode is in the wrong place or absent altogether. An address verification API will validate for misspelling, capital letters and spaces. It will suggest a list of close to possible address suggestions for the user to choose.

**2. International address verification**  
If the user is from outside your country of origin they will look upon the assistance of an address verification automation in their region very favourably. The API gives your store credibility and positive branding to a wider audience.

**3. Don't rely only on Eircodes**  
Unless you are only operating in Ireland, don't use your API to ask for Eircodes alone. Outside of Ireland your customers can have all sorts of zip and location codes so ensure you allow for international recognition in your form fields.

**4 Address fields with auto completion**  
The checkout process is greatly simplified by using address verification with autocomplete fields. Your customer doesn't have to type the complete address, they can just start

typing and choose the correct address from the dropdown list of suggestions. By using GeoAddress Checked you get access to Ireland's most complete and comprehensive list of addresses. This may not be the case with other APIs.

**5 Address type**  
The address verification API you use should be able to detect whether you are inputting a commercial or residential address.

**6 Manual validation**  
No matter what API you use for address verification, your business should allow users to verify the address manually should they wish.

**7 Edit address**  
In very isolated incidents the API may not offer the complete customer address. For this reason, it is always best to provide the option of editing of the autocomplete address for the customer. In rare cases, an apartment or building number or some other element of an address may be missed by the address verification API.

## SUMMARY

Having an address verification API that will collect accurate address data at the checkout of your eCommerce site is vital to your business. It ensures higher conversion rates, timely shipping, a smooth and seamless shopping experience and greater customer satisfaction and loyalty.

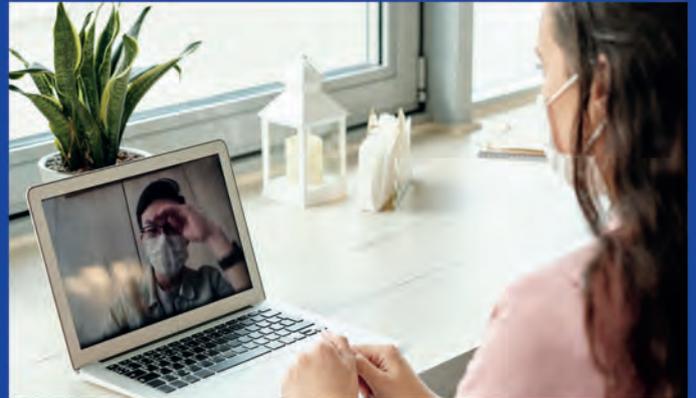


*Dara Keogh,  
Geo Directory*



**GLORY**

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# ELVERYS SPORTS

## A LESSON IN LONGEVITY



**If longevity is key to success, then Elverys Sports has mastered it. As Ireland's oldest sports store founded in 1847, the company is thriving. Few businesses reach the ripe age of 174 without successfully navigating consumer change, global economic disruption and industry-wide shake ups. Elverys has a unique perspective as it has been successfully grasping the nettle of change for almost two centuries.**

With the retail landscape more competitive than ever due to the global pandemic, changing consumer preferences and demand for highly personalized experiences, it's no surprise that Elverys' digital transformation reflects its uncanny ability to remain one step ahead. With its mixture of bricks-and-mortar stores and successful online business, Elverys had already migrated its website to SAP Commerce Cloud, fostering agile innovation and increasing growth and customer loyalty. But the company wanted to go further.

As part of an internal audit, Elverys identified a weakness in its marketing automation tool, MailChimp. Specifically, they wanted to deliver greater consumer personalization and segmentation, matching customers with specific sporting equipment

offers, as well as integrating consumer loyalty cards between online and POS systems.

"We knew we needed advanced and sophisticated enterprise technology," said Liam Lennon, Head of eCommerce at Elverys Sports. "We also have the added complexity that most of our key suppliers – the major sporting brands – are also our biggest competitors as they also sell direct to consumers with their own websites, apps, personalized content and loyalty modules. Remaining digitally savvy is not only important for serving our consumers, but also for securing our supplier discounts and premium products as a top tier retailer. We were also keenly aware of the opportunities post-Brexit and wanted to take advantage of our online reach."

After evaluating various leading platforms, including Annex Cloud, Salesforce and Exponea, Elverys selected SAP Emarsys Customer Engagement, implementing both the Marketing Automation and Loyalty modules. SAP Emarsys provides hyper personalized email marketing, as well as personalized shopping experiences on the website and social media channels, providing a seamless experience on all devices. It also integrates with all POS systems, can easily transmit loyalty points online and dovetails into Elverys' strategic technology plan.

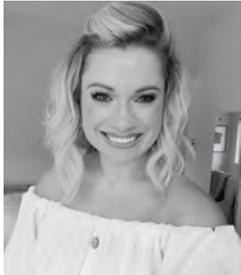
"SAP has deep sector expertise in retail with other customers such as Primark, Smyths Toys and Glanbia's Retail Division," continued Lennon. "There's a huge number of ready-made templates in the system, great dashboards and their new pricing is extremely competitive. We also liked the rapid speed of implementation of just four to six weeks. This was particularly important for us as we had a short window to integrate and deploy ahead of our peak summer season. SAP really took the time to understand our business and even sent a mystery shopper during the sales cycle, providing us with a forty-page assessment detailing every step of the digital journey."

Ranked number one for retail by all major analysts, SAP operates at every level of the retail sector. The retail mid-market is a speciality area, particularly in Ireland where SAP works closely with its mid-market partner, Philos IT, and is seeing strong demand for its SAP Upscale Commerce solution, a rival to Shopify.

Elverys Sports' unique ability to master change spanning the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries lies in its enduring culture of embracing change. Just like its own business, Elverys understands that digital transformation is an ongoing journey, rather than a destination. By adapting to and surpassing expectations and personalizing customer experiences, a strong digital foundation is keeping Elverys one step ahead.



# turn on TWO FACTOR AUTHENTICATION NOW NOW **NOW** NOW NOW



Nima Brush is an Irish award winning makeup brush and accessories company. Established in 2012 and run by makeup artist, Niamh Martin and her husband, Brian.

On Bank holiday Monday, 3rd May, the Nima Brush platform on Instagram was hacked, ransomed and eventually deleted. Owner Niamh Martin received a 'verification' email which looked completely authentic, clicked through and within no time had received a change of email, username, phone number...everything. A sinister email followed with threats of holding the page for two hours until the ransom was paid 'or else' the page and contents would be erased and sold.

The @NimaBrush handle across social media platforms was completely erased. In a moment of panic, Niamh took to her personal social to immediately report and let people know. Zero support or help from Instagram to Facebook was to be found so she felt it was the only resource she had. A new page was set up and shared with a warning of what had happened and

advising people to be extremely vigilant in what they were clicking into.

What happened in the next 24 hours was breathtaking. The response and the support from the beauty industry was just spectacular. People from all sides of the country from 250k followers to small personal accounts shared the story. Within 24 hours the page was restored to 26k followers and up to a whopping 36k by the Friday evening. The cry for help from one business and one very distraught business owner was answered by the vast online Irish community.

In Niamh's words 'The only way to describe it, I felt like someone had come in, torched my business to the ground one day and the next day the community came together and built it back up even better than before. It has been the most humbling experience in my near twenty years in the beauty industry'

A beautifully positive result from an extremely scary experiment. However, it still does not discredit the fact that a page of over 30k followers built

gradually over 8 years was completely erased in a couple of minutes completely taking Nima Brush's identity and most superior platform with it. The whole situation has had adverse effects on the business. 'It's been like building an entirely new business from scratch' says Niamh. So much new content has needed to be created, product launches and new lines have been delayed by months and really it's been like starting at the very beginning. The support and understanding has been incredible but it has been quite damaging for the most part.

We're encouraging a mass share of this information to alert people to be so careful. To do your 'two step authentication', download security and authenticator apps onto your phones, tablets, laptops for extra security. Regularly change passwords and think before you click. How a small business can be essentially shut down within minutes is terrifying. In Niamh's words 'I would like to think after years in e-retail I would be pretty tech savvy and spot a snake a mile away, but I was duped so easily'.



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CAN  
HAPPEN  
WHEN  
YOU FEEL  
SUPPORTED.**



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# FIRESIDE CHAT WITH STUDIOFORTY9

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## Preparing For The Golden Quarter

***So Ger, you have had a busy year in 2020 and 2021. Tell us how has it been for you and the team?***

We were flat out in the run up to March 2020, and then we heard the news that the country was being locked down. After that, the first two months were really rough. The government were changing their minds regularly and often the announcements were coming out on Friday evening, which would lead to panicked phone calls and messages. It was very difficult but we put a lot of internal communication plans in place to try and keep morale up and keep people connected when they were working from home.

We're still working remotely and trying to keep connected with people. We did the usual Zoom quizzes and all that kind of thing but we also had a lot of check ins and one on ones. We've also tried to improve the communications for clients because we don't see them face to face any more and that's difficult enough as well. I'm always fascinated by what happens in retail in general so we've missed that networking side of it. But overall we've risen to the challenge really well. We've grown in size, and I don't think we've ever put out as many e-commerce sites as we did in the last two years.

***Your team have greatly assisted many retailers move online and upgrade their eCommerce presence over the last 12 months. What key eCommerce trends have you seen and recommended?***

The number one overriding trend as part of Covid has been customer retention. So, all work related to keeping customers on board after they made their original sale with you. It's an area that Irish e-commerce doesn't focus on enough. Merchants are very focused on traffic: getting a customer on-site in the first place using SEO and PPC and so on; but there's a surprising lack of focus in general on ensuring that customers come back again.

We've spent a lot of time this year trying to understand customer churn, customer lifetime value and then the strategies around how to retain customers. The number one area that we focused on was email marketing and we have had some phenomenal results. We've had people go from not even 1% of revenue generated to 15% within three months – that's not cannibalized revenue, that's new revenue.

We have been looking at statistics in other countries where a 25-30% customer retention rate is considered low or normal, such as in the US and Australia. When you look at some businesses, many are just sending out emails, throwing a lot of spaghetti at the wall, and seeing if any of it will stick. But done right it does work! If you look into it, one of the highest converting ecommerce channels is email marketing.

We spend a lot of time on “hooking up” channels – for example, using Facebook for lead prospecting for email marketing. We do a lot of work on brand awareness, but also on driving leads into the marketing funnel. The reality is, Facebook is probably one of the greatest ways of targeting your customer segments and the audience that you want to put yourself in front of, but conversion is poor. If you can hook that into email marketing, you get the benefits of Facebook's power for targeting high volumes of prospective customers, generating brand awareness, as well as the benefits of email marketing, from a conversion rate perspective.

Any time you focus on retention rate, you're increasing the value of your original marketing investments and you're reducing your customer acquisition cost because you're making more money per customer. So, it's a win on many levels. Anyhow, that's one area that we've spent an awful lot of time on in the last year.

Part of the reason we've looked so closely at it is because we have had clients who had

more customers into their online store in the first two months of Covid than they had for all of 2019. So, suddenly you had an enormous peak in traffic and customers, and people were coming with real intent, they were there to buy. Suddenly you now know a hell of a lot more about your customers than you ever did before and you have a great opportunity to leverage that.

Loyalty is another area that we focus on, and I suppose another one for customer retention would be Subscriptions. It's not really big yet, but in retail but there's a lot of people trying to figure out what they can offer that customers would subscribe to. I think sometimes we need to be just a little bit brave because as a retailer you might look at it and say, "Well, nobody would subscribe to our products, because they don't need that kind of a product for the rest of their lives". But you don't need them to subscribe for the rest of their lives, even a short six month subscription will greatly increase revenue generated from that original customer contact.

***You were recently announced as Shopify Plus partner, the only Irish Shopify Plus Partner I believe, congratulations! What does that mean and how can it benefit retailers?***

Shopify is probably the strongest growing ecommerce platform in Ireland at the moment. It allows retailers to get online pretty fast and reliably with a robust e-commerce store. It's had a lot of success over the last number of years and even recently it's added a lot of additional functionality where more sophisticated retailers can customise aspects of it and offer more sophisticated customer journeys and a superior overall customer experience. Given Shopify's increased traction in Irish ecommerce, it was important for StudioForty9 to become a Shopify Plus partner. We want to lead the charge for ecommerce in Ireland, so partnering at the highest level with the fastest growing platform was critical for us. For retailers in Ireland, the key selling point is there is now

an option to work with a certified, official Shopify Plus partner that understands what Irish retail is like. We have a lot of experience with retail e-commerce in Ireland and we bring that to an in-depth knowledge and capacity to work with Shopify Plus, that's where the benefit to Irish retailers lies.

***Many retailers might not realise that you have recently expanded out into a wider range of services. What are they and how can you assist retailers?***

Most of our clients know us as being a tech company that flourishes in integrating systems and automating business processes. But in the last two years, we've also focused an awful lot on growing our Marketing & Growth Services. So, this would be like the area of customer retention, revenue growth, anything that targets significant year-on-year revenue growth for our clients.

We're a company that bases our model around partnerships, and one of the areas that we know that retailers will always want help with is increasing revenue. So, within the business, we have two main departments, which are Delivery (technical work and support) and Growth (growing revenues). Pre-Covid our growth mission was a decent 30% year-on-year growth across the board for our clients. But that target had to be thrown out! During Covid we've been seeing 400% driven by the lockdowns and customers embracing online faster than ever. Now we are working on sustaining high returns and customer engagement through a mix of growth services, marketing, conversion rate optimization, average order value maximization, improving traffic, improving customer retention, and reducing costs, integrating with couriers, for example, to speed up or to reduce the touch points for any of the order processes and so on.

***Looking forward into the golden quarter, what recommendations would you offer retailers?***

The number one thing in our business is

preparation: fully understanding what promotions you're going to put in place. Ensuring that your site will be able to stand up to traffic, ensuring that your team will be able to stand up to the level of orders that you're going to get.

Take Black Friday, for example. Every year for Black Friday we've seen records broken. Last year it was enormous, performing four times better, on average, than the highest peak that we had had before.

I think that the real value of Black Friday is getting people in the door. They're in the mood to shop. Show them the nice things, have some good value offers and promotions to keep deal hunters happy but then upsell and cross-sell as hard as possible and make sure that you've maximised the spend that you're going to get out of every customer on the day. I always recommend that people think about it and be sensible with deals - you have to offer something, but you

don't have to discount everything. I would try and think about promotions or unique offers that will make the person come back again.

I've seen some really clever offers, like "coupons for anybody who orders during Black Friday, if they come in store and spend more than €200 between December 1st and December 22nd, they'll get a discount".

They are the kind of initiatives that will see customers coming back time and again.



# A MINDFUL

The crucial run up to Christmas is historically referred to as the ‘Golden Quarter’ in retail. And this year, following such a prolonged period of disruption, retailers everywhere will be counting on the upcoming twelve weeks of peak trading to deliver some much-needed festive cheer.

This time last year, considerably more Christmas sales were made online than in-store. But with the resumption ‘normal trading’, albeit with some essential safety measures still in place, there are many reasons for optimism that the high street can regain its Christmas crown.

So, what are the key themes and considerations for retailers to deliver a successful Christmas in-store?

Undoubtedly, Christmas 2021 will be a time of mixed emotions. The pandemic has given us all time to reflect on our lives, which for many have seen significant changes in personal and family circumstances. This will require retailers to take note of the underlying shopper mood: one of lingering concerns about Covid, anxiety and uncertainty.

But this year people will have a real sense of wanting to return to the ‘normality’ we all crave. This is likely to result in

complementary themes of reminiscence and nostalgia— comparing differences between life then and now. These deeper thoughts will be counterbalanced by the underlying instincts that exist within us all to look optimistically forwards and towards a better future. Above all, Christmas 2021 will be a time all about family and recognising importance of close personal relationships, reinforcing the bond of family and the value of true friendship – a time for social gatherings, celebration, sentiment, kindness, and love. Christmas: a time of hope.

With families again allowed to gather, don't be surprised if Christmas is celebrated with even more gusto than normal, with people keen to catch up on ‘the one we missed’ and keen to party (nostalgically) like its 1999!

Understanding the

emotional and psychological backdrop will matter, as this will likely influence how people shop and what they buy. Expect an increased sense of ‘heart and humanity’, in stark contrast to how we have previously celebrated Christmas—with indulgence, drama, and excess.

Shoppers will also be keen to see how retailers represent their wider concerns on other issues: the environment, waste and recycling and poverty etc. This comes back to our deeper concerns about living ‘simpler – but still better lives’, conscious of the fragility of our planet and shared human existence.

At a subconscious level, the act of gift giving still makes us feel good. Where we share gifts ‘made by me’ and not in a factory... the positive effect is further enhanced. This is one of the reasons why crafting, baking, and making will be such a big Christmas theme this year, as we demonstrate (and seek) greater comfort, empathy, and connection with others through the ‘personal, greener and kinder’ acts of giving we make.



# CHRISTMAS

Many now don't just want to buy a Christmas wreath, but to learn how to make their own, not simply to ask for the items to be gift wrapped by an assistant in-store, but to learn how to do this themselves using recycled and natural wrapping materials – this to have as much thought and care as the gifts inside.

It's the reason why big brands and retailers are increasingly exploring how to harness the powerful effects of the human mind to influence shoppers to buy. By understanding how to tap into our psychology and the science of cognitive bias, there is the possibility to 'manipulate', or influence shopper perceptions, thoughts, and feelings to stimulate different behaviour and decision making in-store.

This means considering how key social, environmental – and commercial – factors will be built into your Christmas plan, in a cohesive way that represents your brand proposition and market position and what your customers want from you. Ultimately, success will be down to how retailers can reflect shoppers wants, needs, and concerns, in-store. And do so distinctively.

All this means reconsidering tried and tested retail strategies for stocking and presenting Christmas goods. Just because something has worked before don't assume it will continue to work for Christmas 2021.

Starved of inspiration during the pandemic, many shoppers will be ready for new things to see, do and buy, making Christmas 2021 the ideal time for retailers to do new things, create wonder, and surprise. From bold and impactful window displays to innovative and seasonally relevant VM features in-store, the physical retail space offers many opportunities to delight shoppers with great product presentation and seasonal displays to motivate them to spend.

Another of the key themes to emerge from the pandemic is shoppers' eagerness to shop 'local'. There is now greater appreciation of local retailers: the products and services they offer, as

well as the role they played in helping local families and communities in difficult times during the pandemic. As a result, there has never been a better time for local retailers to engage with the local community in pre-Christmas events.

Planning will be key to success, with VM, marketing and operations coming together to build the momentum and keep shoppers interested, engaged and active. Think of the entire Christmas period as a series of focused three to four week campaigns, instead of one endless twelve-week period which will become tired and lose momentum. Find points in the seasonal calendar with maximum opportunities to build momentum and increase shopper engagement by drawing crowds and people together. Consider each of the three key end of month salary dates when shoppers minds will be tuned to buying different items in advance be that for stocking up on edible treats or practical homewares items as advance preparation for family gatherings, personal gift shopping, or last minute gifts and preparations for making the most of the big day.

Many retail environments still have shopper safety restrictions in place and people being encouraged to shop differently. Take note of these differences, make proactive operational changes, and develop pertinent in-store communications to counteract any negative behavioural changes that shoppers have adopted.

It will also be important for retailers to plan operational needs that reflect footfall and service requirements, which could be very different this year to what we have become accustomed to witnessing. Where possible, also link up your own ecommerce operations with seamless store based service using dedicated service, pick-up and return points to keep online and in-store sales separate. Train staff to understand which items they are to promote and make easy buying solutions in-store. Essentially, don't just expect to operate the store as normal... recognise the different ways that people are interacting with the store and products.



Karl McKeever  
Strategic Retail Advisor  
[karlmckeever.com](http://karlmckeever.com)

It will also be important to refresh the retail space and VM delivery for Christmas products – whether in dedicated spaces in-store, whole departments or just sections within a smaller space – and to focus on simple but powerful selling statements, keeping individual messaging clear, simple, and inspiring. Where possible, try to stay 'one step ahead' by counteracting any practical issues that might dissuade people from buying. Really think about your customers: what they'll want, and how they'll shop?

In short, do everything well that ecommerce does (range, service, and convenience), and excel in everything that it can't—experience. Get hyper seasonal, hyper focused, and hyper sensory.

With pent up demand 'for a great Christmas', the last few months of 2021 promise a chance for retailers to make merry, as well as make money, so that we can all look forward to a new year with renewed hope in our hearts.

# take control of your ..... **energy**

## **& free** with an energy audit voucher e-learning for the retail sector.

### SEAI ENERGY ACADEMY: ENERGY EFFICIENCY E-LEARNING FOR THE RETAIL SECTOR

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has launched a free online course on the **SEAI Energy Academy** to help businesses in the retail sector reduce their energy related costs. The SEAI Energy Academy can help to lower energy bills by as much as 10% by educating businesses and their employees on changing energy use behaviours.

The course “**Energy Efficiency for Retail Sector**” is now available on the SEAI Energy Academy and you will learn about a variety of energy efficiency topics including behavioural change, lighting, refrigeration, heating, and electricity bill analysis. On completion of this course learners receive a Certificate of Completion. Learners also have the option of enrolling in additional modules such as Decarbonisation for Businesses, Energy Audits, and Electric Vehicles.

Join the SEAI Energy Academy today on <https://www.seai.ie/energyacademy/>

### SUPPORT SCHEME FOR ENERGY AUDITS: €2,000 VOUCHER FOR BUSINESSES

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland has just launched a brand-new Support Scheme for small and medium enterprises who want to save money and energy. The Support Scheme for Energy Audits (SSEA) offers eligible businesses a voucher for €2,000 towards the cost of an energy audit for their facility. **For most retailers, this will cover the full cost of a high-quality energy audit with one of SEAI's Registered Energy Auditors.**

If you want to save money on your energy bills then an energy audit is an important step to take, as it will:

- help you to understand how much energy your business is using
- determine what areas of your business use the most energy, and
- identify energy-saving opportunities for you

After the audit you will receive an **Energy Action Plan** that will list the actions you should prioritise to save money. You will also get an in-depth, jargon-free **Energy Audit Report** that will rate your current energy use and explain how much money you can save and the impact it will have on your greenhouse gas emissions.

#### ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the scheme, your business must:

- Be an SME (fewer than 250 staff; turnover of less than €50M/balance sheet of less than €43M)
- Be registered and located in the Republic of Ireland, have a valid CRO number, and be tax compliant

- Spend at least €10,000 per annum on energy at the facility that is to receive the audit

#### COSTS

The value of the voucher is €2,000, which in most cases will cover the total cost of a high-quality energy audit for an SME.

If your audit costs most than that, your Auditor will invoice you for the difference, so it is important to confirm the costs with your Auditor before the site visit.

#### INTERESTED?

You can check your eligibility, choose an Auditor and apply to the SSEA by visiting our website: <https://www.seai.ie/business-and-public-sector/small-and-medium-business/energy-audits/>



# GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING.....

With the focus being on all things Covid, it may have slipped past business owners and senior managers that in July the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 was signed into law.

Most employers will have heard something about this but, understandably, may not have dug into the finer points thus far.

When reporting begins (date tbc) it will initially apply to organisations with a workforce of greater than 250. This figure will reduce over time and the intention is that it will ultimately apply to employers with 50 or more employees.

Explanatory regulations will be prepared later in 2021 to give precise detail to employers on what, when and how information will need to be published. We know, however, in broad term relevant employers will be asked to publish:

- Mean/Median comparable rates of male & female employees in full and separately part time positions (it may be broken into pay bands to work levels in a business)

Mean/Median bonus & benefit in kind payments of male & female

- The percentage of men and women who received bonus pay and/or benefits in kind

When these regulations are published will give follow up with clear guidance as to how to calculate and present the above information to ensure the figures are not misrepresented and are comparable across employers. It is likely to be an annual requirement for affected employers.

At present, it is difficult to give employers exact homework to prepare for this. Employers will clearly have to sort overall employee listings by gender and, from these lists, calculate an average/median/mean figure. Try to identify areas where, even with a cursory trial run, a significant gap appears to exist.

Ensure that HR, Finance and Senior Management teams are aware of what is coming and communicate clearly with each other on all forms of remuneration available to all levels of employees. Also, factor the requirements for Gender Pay Gap reporting into current and future recruitment and remuneration decisions. Start this now!

This is a public publishing of data. It can be accessed by the general public at large. It will likely be posted on a dedicated website and employers may have to publish it on their own websites also. Employers who fail to meet their obligations can have a case taken against them

to the WRC, who can instruct the employer to comply. In certain circumstances the employer can also be taken to the High Court, who can issue an enforcement order against the employer.



Gender Pay Gap reporting is coming next year. It is part of a long list of current, topical, areas of HR & Employment Law areas where change is coming but to varying degrees we are awaiting further information. These include the living wage, mandatory pensions, remote and flexible working rights, increased leave for parents, statutory sick pay and enhanced collective bargaining rights for Trade Unions.

Please feel free to contact TSA under the REI support scheme to discuss any of these topics further.





# Physical Retail - Definitely Different but Not Dead!

tap

As retailers, either fully immersed in online, dipping your toe in, or simply not sure what to do next, it's hard to get away from terms like omnichannel and omnipresence. Does this mean losing sight of physical retail and shifting focus and budgets completely to the advancement of other channels? Despite the fact that most customer journeys start online for product discovery or through social channels seeking inspiration, there will always be a huge desire for people to experience brands in real life.

Amazon and other online retailers are in essence, logistics companies that have become today's consumer interface to deliver goods to your door within hours. Convenient? Yes. Memorable? Not exactly. Meaningful? That's debatable. Does online build deep emotional connection? Nothing like a physical experience or interaction can. So, what comes next for retail in this era where omnipresence is the expectation?

Humans have an inherent desire to come together and connect in social settings. The emergent consumer, marred by pandemic burn-out actively searches for emotional connection, balance, and deeper meaning in their lives. Yes, the rules of retail are changing, but the human needs and desires of consumers that we strive to fulfil are not entirely. Digitally led consumers or not, we are ready to get out there, experience, and make memories.

Interestingly, Amazon continues to pledge significant investments in trying to get closer to the customer and narrow that last mile delivery window. With recent whispers alluding to investment in a department

store experience. Should this be true, on the back of Amazon Go stores and their Whole Food Markets acquisition - is the future of Amazon more physical.

Not confined to the behemoth that Amazon is, other digitally native e-tailers are capitalising in a bricks and mortar footprint to connect with their tribes. Take Swedish footwear brand, Axel Arigato's latest store in Paris. Forgoing a sales counter to give customers an experience more akin to a gallery visit than a bustling retail environment. Using their physical stores to host events for their social community, they see their stores as 'social connectors'. Disrupting the typical retail model, the spaces are designed to forge real connections through unique experiences.

From the 'museumification' of retail to a new wave of convenience store innovators - Foxtrot in the US. A chain of delivery focused convenience stores and cafés. First introduced to customers as online only, they soon realised the pivotal role the physical store plays within neighbourhoods. As much a local neighbourhood living space as it is a food store, each aspect of the in-store retail experience is powered by the retailer's digital app. Enabling a truly omnichannel relationship with its customers.

With expectations higher than ever, experiential shopping remains a strong trend heading into the future. Clearly, what separates the innovators and the remarkable from others is evolving. And that the role of physical stores is becoming much more hybrid in nature and linked intrinsically to digital efforts. Experience stores that offer

spaces where customers can browse, learn, be inspired, and even have fun.

Three Ireland has reinvigorated their physical space launching their new cashless, connected lifestyle experience stores. In June, Lego unveiled it's first of a kind combined digital and physical shopper experience in New York. A 'retainment' store concept. Using technology to bring walls, floors, and ceilings to life with sensory elements for a truly interactive build and play experience.

If online originals are realising that a physical presence is key to building deeper connection and in turn loyalty, surely the retail apocalypse narrative is nonsense. Physical retail is not dead; however, it will definitely be different. Retailers who go beyond thinking about the products or services they sell, adding in layers of discovery, surprise and delight will ensure that they will get ahead of, if not remain in the game.

*Niamh Higgins, Managing Director*

*Tap Creations – a brand innovation agency and retail design specialists.*



# GETTING IT RIGHT AT YOUR DOOR

## FOOTFALL

**The safety of customers and staff at your store entrance is essential. To make a positive first impression, set the standard high at your door and set the scene for a positive shopping experience throughout.**

The safety of customers and staff at your store entrance is essential. To make a positive first impression, set the standard high at your door and set the scene for a positive shopping experience throughout.

- Distracted walking is a cause of accidents. To avoid incidents, ensure your walkways are clear of dangers; rippling mats, loose tiles and broken trims often cause trip hazards. Ongoing maintenance is imperative to creating a safe, well-maintained entrance giving your customers the confidence that they are in the right place.
- A suitable entrance matting system is vital for removing and retaining moisture while stopping dirt and silica being tracked through your store, protecting your internal floors and preventing slip, trip and fall accidents.
- Wet footprints on your floor are often an indication that your matting meterage is insufficient. To ensure your flooring remains safe, you may need to extend your existing mats or choose more absorbent products. To be effective, a minimum of 4 sqm is required to achieve adequate foot capture. Larger stores will need more matting to accommodate greater footfall. When designing your entrance matting system, size of store, location and traffic type (pedestrian/wheeled)

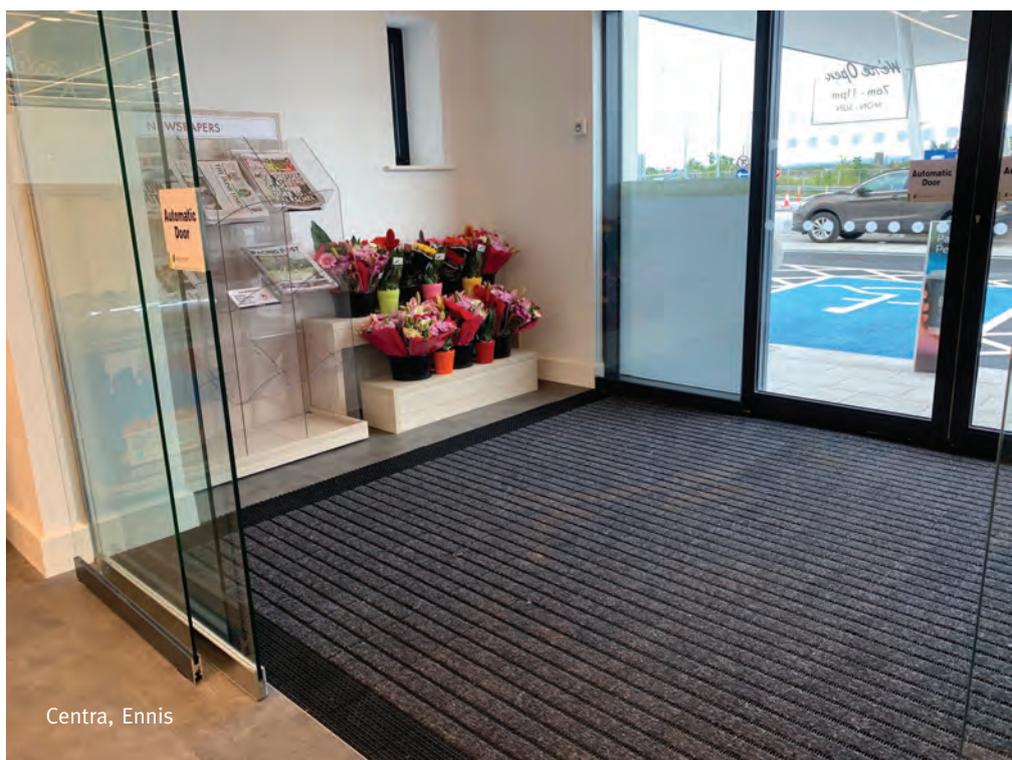
must be considered.

- A frequent cleaning schedule is required to maintain a fresh image throughout the day; vacuum daily and schedule regular deep cleans.
- Heavy-duty dust mats with nitrile rubber backing will serve you well compared with lighter PVC backed mats in the absence of fixed matting.

Absorbent mottled fabric is more effective at disguising stains compared with monochrome fabric.

- Sustainability is a key factor when making design choices. Products that support the environment, such as those with a high recycled content are recommended over those that are not as environmentally friendly.

Creating a positive customer experience starts at your door. Your entrance is the face of your business, let your customers know what you are about from the minute they approach the entrance to your retail space. Be sure to put your best foot forward as first impressions last.



Centra, Ennis

# What Is Unified Commerce and How Can It Help Your Sales?

**A primary daily concern for all retailers is trying to improve customer experience, because a better store experience means more sales. Retailers should try to create a seamless shopping experience for their customers to achieve this. The most important step in creating this experience is called unified commerce.**

A primary daily concern for all retailers is trying to improve customer experience, because a better store experience means more sales. Retailers should try to create a seamless shopping experience for their customers to achieve this. The most important step in creating this experience is called unified commerce.

Unified commerce is the practice of connecting all the systems in your business via a single platform, from backend systems to customer-facing channels like your website. By having a unified or omnichannel strategy, you can sync customer interactions with your store or products across multiple channels. It also gives you a single view of your inventory so product information and sales data is consistent throughout your business.

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A UNIFIED COMMERCE STRATEGY?**

### **Unified Sales Channels**

There's nothing worse for a customer than getting a vastly different shopping experience when shopping via the same retailer across different channels. It's your business's job to present a cohesive whole across all channels so the customer can have a smooth and seamless experience.

### **Full Inventory Visibility**

One of the main reasons you need fully connected systems is to have full visibility over your entire inventory. With real-time communication between your store and website, you'll never sell an item online that you don't have in stock.

### **Better Communication**

With a unified system, communication with your customers becomes much easier. When orders and shipping occur within one system, it is much easier to keep customers

informed about the status of their order.

Order confirmations emails are also a great way to upsell to customers and you can even follow-up with product review or feedback request emails.

### **Tracking Customer Interactions**

Today's customer journey looks more like a spider web than a straight line now. Your customers likely interact with your business in a number of different ways and on many sales channels. Whether it's through your ecommerce site, in-store, or via social media, it's crucial that you're tracking all their behaviour.

Recording these interactions lets your business make informed decisions about how to speak to that customer. You could hit them with a timely offer based on past purchases for instance.

### **Better Order Fulfilment**

With unified commerce, it opens up every possibility. Customers can now check for stock in their local store and choose to collect from there or save on shipping costs by having it shipped from a more local location.

### **Eliminate Errors**

Duplication is very hard to get right as having multiple disparate systems is hard to manage. Entering the same information manually is time consuming and typically generates loads of flaws.

### **Make Better Decisions**

Make business decisions based on your centralised data. Pull real-time data from localised reports in the Back Office or build custom dashboards with integrations to applications like Zoined or Power BI.

## **INTEGRATIONS**

Don't worry we cater for customers that have either Woo Commerce or Shopify.

## **HOW DO I GET A UNIFIED COMMERCE SOLUTION?**

To get unified ecommerce, request a free demo from NitroSell today or give us a call on 01 629 6058.

You can also visit our website [www.pss.ie](http://www.pss.ie) to find out more about our combined solution.



Damien O'Driscoll  
Positive Systems  
Solutions

# THINK GLOBAL

# ACT LOCAL

NCBI Retail, with its chain of over 130 shops across the country are on a mission to challenge people's perceptions of charity retailing. Many of our stores have undergone a transformation from the usual 'look and feel' of a charity shop. These refreshed stores have improved marketing messages and have sleek and fresh modern shop fitouts made from reusable and recyclable raw materials. It is putting our sustainability agenda front and centre reminding customers that buying pre-loved clothes and furniture is supporting the circular economy and good for the environment. #ThinkGlobalActLocal.

All our stores are stocked with high-quality pre-loved clothes, accessories, homeware or furniture. These generous donations come from public or from end-of-line stock from high street clothing stores. Our stores are staffed with a shop manager and volunteers.

Like all retailers, the closure of our stores due to Covid19 led to a significant loss of revenue. The 19-week closure from Dec-May 2021 led to a €4.6m loss in sales but we still had to pay rent on leases during that period. Some landlords generously paused

or reduced our rent for the duration. However, unlike other retailers, 100% of our profits are spent on delivering life-changing services to people who are blind or vision impaired across the country. We provide practical and emotional support, rehabilitation services and other training designed to help people with sight loss to live independently and confidently.

On the plus side, Covid19 lockdowns gave people an opportunity to declutter so when we reopened our volume of donations received increased substantially. The donations are largely filtered through our warehouse where our staff siphon off stock according to gender and season although some stores are self-sufficient in having plenty of stock donated directly. Any donations received that are not fit for resale are recycled. None of our stock goes to landfill.

2020 also saw the continued expansion of the NCBI retail chain with the acquisition of the six former Age Action stores and our first sustainable pop-up shop that opened for December 2020 on Grafton Street, Dublin, courtesy of Irish Life. The pop-up

shop called Re:Newed for NCBI was inspired by the annual collaboration between Harrods, Stella McCartney and NSPCC. The high-quality clothes and accessories were donated by high-profile designers including Lainey Keogh and Chupi. Our latest pop-up shop was on Henry Street, Dublin for May-July 2021.

When thinking of our customer base, we recently conducted some market research and the results were quite illuminating as it enables us to reach new audiences and debunk some myths about charity shopping.

- Why shop in charity shops? 76% want to support the charity, 68% want to find bargains, 36% want to buy in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.
- 56% said they would be concerned about hygiene and germs because of Covid19. All our clothes are steam cleaned, and due to Covid19, we now quarantine all donations, and we also have a contactless donations area in all shops.
- 23% prefer to buy new clothes but thinking about sustainability and protecting the environment. Did you know that one new t-shirt requires approximately 2,700 litres of water to be manufactured, and one new pair of denim jeans requires approximately 7,000 – 10,000 litres?
- 8% said charity shops don't stock high-end brands. Well, gladly, 92% know where the hidden gems are, and that's in our 130+ shops throughout the country.

We invite you into your local NCBI store and be impressed and inspired knowing that not only are you supporting people who are blind or vision impaired but you're also helping to save the planet.



# Petmania Sligo opens as expansion announced across the Northwest.

IRISH owned pet-retailer, Petmania is to create 30 new jobs this year with an expansion spanning three locations in the North West.

Petmania Sligo, the new pet super-store and grooming studio in Sligo town, officially opened its doors today. The Sligo store is part of a major three-year expansion program that saw the pet retailer launch an online store and upgrade three of its retail outlets in 2020. Later this year Petmania will open two more branches with grooming studios in the Northwest.

The expansion of Ireland's largest pet retail stores means at least 30 new positions created across the North West, bring the total number employed by the company to more than 200 jobs.

Petmania is currently recruiting for a number of positions at their stores across the country and head office in Kilkenny. Full details for these roles as well as positions in Petmania's new Northwest

stores and how to apply for them will be available on [www.petmania.ie](http://www.petmania.ie)

Emily Miller, Marketing Manager of Petmania said,

"We share our customers' passion for pets and are here to help all pet-parents keep their animals safe and well with excellent advice, the best of nutritional supplies and pet-care accessories. Throughout our stores, we are committed to maintaining our status as market leaders and setting the highest standard in the pet retail sector.

With this new foothold in the northwest, we are delighted to expand our Petmania family across Ireland. We look forward to being part of an active pet lover's community in Sligo and across the north west."

The new Petmania stores will be open seven days a week and features state-of-the-art dog-grooming studios, weight check facilities, specialist pet food and nutritional

supplies plus accessories, bedding, safety equipment and much more.

Petmania is proud of its community outreach programs and actively get involved with local events including school visits, meet and greets, its pet-health campaign "Operation TransPAWmation", Puppy of the Year competition and partnering with local animal shelters.

A progressive, pet-centred retailer, Petmania is setting the standards in pet care throughout Ireland, with intensive training for all its pet care advisors and an internal Grooming Training Programme for their Professional Dog Groomers.

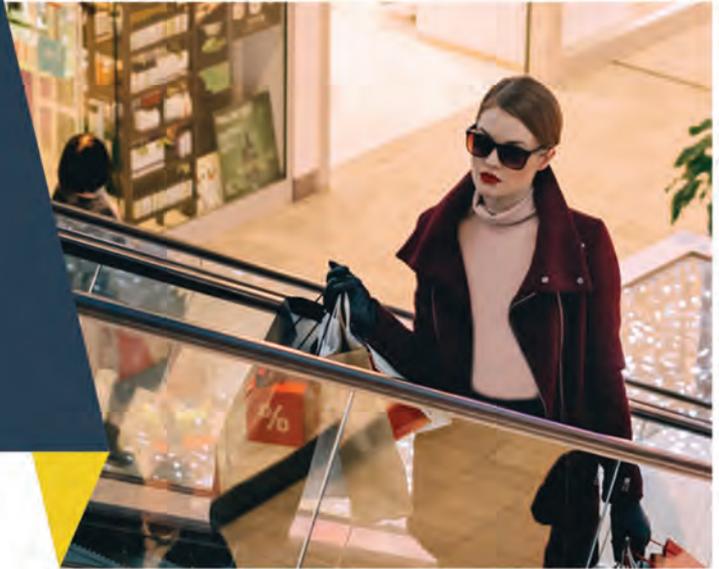
It's new online store offers nationwide home delivery, grooming appointments and lots of pet care advice.

For more information, or to view the current vacancies at Petmania Ireland visit: [www.petmania.ie](http://www.petmania.ie)



John Timmins,  
Operations Manager,  
Petmania

# Time Point Retail Workforce Management & HR



Connecting managers, payroll, finance,  
HR and employees



Smart Scheduling



Onboarding Made Easy



Real-Time Rosters



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Leave Management

## Some of our amazing customers



## SMART Clocking Solutions



Thermal Facial  
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Facial Clock  
Terminals



Biometric  
Fingerprint



Proxy  
Card Clocks



Desktop  
Clocking



Tablet  
Clocking App



Self-Service  
Clocking App



# Reward your front line staff

The Recognition & Reward Manager is a straight forward system designed to manage, record and analyse recognition and reward programmes for busy HR professionals.



## Tax Effective Rewards

The Recognition & Reward Manager allows for multiple rewards to be issued to an employee while still availing of the Revenue's €500 Small Benefit Exemption, issued as a single gift card. Our Recognition and Reward Manager provides a report for Revenue, to ensure compliance and oversight.

## Features of the Recognition and Reward Platform

- Manager to employee recognition.
- Peer to peer nominations.
- Manage employees by department or team.
- Full budget control.
- Communicate reason for reward and associate it with a core value.
- Unique staff login for each employee.
- Consistent support in highlighting your company's core values.
- Christmas Club.
- Hosted in the cloud for maximum security and high performance.

