

BUDGET

RETAIL LOOKS TO BUDGET 2016



ENDA KENNY - FINE GAEL



JOAN BURTON - LABOUR



MICHEÁL MARTIN - FIANNA FÁIL



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RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND AND THE IRISH RETAIL INDUSTRY



Welcome to the **QUARTER 3 2015** edition of Retail Times

It was great to see so many of you at the Retreat in Carton House. I don't know about you all but I am still trying to implement all the ideas I went home with! On behalf of the REI Board and Executive team can I sincerely thank all of you who attended the event. It was great to feel the positivity and catch up with so many great friends in retail.



While retail sales are gradually picking up it is clear that there is a growing divide between Dublin and the rest of the Country. A significant concern of REI is that Budget 2016 could potentially be framed in the context of the Dublin market. This would do fundamental damage to many progressive retail businesses across the country which require time to breath. For that reason REI has recently met with the heads of policy of each of the political parties to drive home the need for all fiscal interventions to be set in the context of provincial Ireland.

As ever things are busy at Retail Excellence Ireland. I am particularly pleased to witness the launch of our new gift card product in the Irish market. Over the past decade the vast majority of REI members have expressed concern about the perceived lack of competition in the Irish gift card market. They have been very clear that the current commission rates which prevail in the market are simply unsustainable. This has led to "grudge acceptance" of some gift card products. Our new From Me2You gift card has the retailer and consumer at its centre. By bringing sustainable commissions to the market the retailer will embrace acceptance of the gift card which in turn is a real positive for the Irish consumer. I would urge all retailers to sign up to accept the card in advance of its launch in September. Thank you to Pierce Healy of Healy's Pharmacy for coming up with the name. The first gift card will soon be in the post to you!

The awards judging process is on-going with our qualified store assessors travelling the length and breadth of the country visiting each of the hundreds of stores which have entered this year's awards competition. We will soon announce the Top100 stores in Ireland which will then undergo a round of mystery shop visits. I am particularly pleased that the awards competition now includes sectoral awards. This allows REI to celebrate and applaud the most progressive stores in each sector as well as the overall National Store of the Year. I wish you well with the competition and look forward to seeing many of you at the Awards event in Galway on 7th November next.

I am looking forward with anticipation to the 2015 Retail Symposium being held on 15th October. The Symposium theme is "Bringing a store experience to life". More and more customers are demanding a personal and engaging in-store experience. While online is about a product at a price, the in-store experience has to be much much more. Thus it is incumbent on all of us to enhance that in-store experience through customer engagement and real difference in our delivery. The Symposium will be packed full of ideas to do just that.

As ever if you require help and support, please do not hesitate to contact the REI team. They are there to support you and your business.

Yours sincerely,
Oonagh O'Hagan
 OONAGH O'HAGAN
 Managing Director, Meagher's Pharmacy Group
 Chairperson Retail Excellence Ireland

OONAGH O'HAGAN
 CHAIRPERSON, RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND



RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND BOARD MEMBERS

BOARD: Oonagh O'Hagan, Meaghers Pharmacy Group • Keith Rogers, Ecco Footwear • Paul Kealy, Tony Kealys • Jacquie Marsh, The Butler's Pantry • JP Kennedy, TileStyle • Colm Carroll, Carrolls Irish Gifts • Paul Cahill, Carphone Dixons • David Myers, Heatons • Patrick McCormack, Sam McCauleys • Roisin Woods, McElhinneys • David Fitzsimons, Retail Excellence Ireland • Seán Murphy, Retail Excellence Ireland

TRUSTEE: Sharen McCabe, McCabes Pharmacy Group • Kevin Jephson, Ardkeen Quality Food Store • Paul Candon, Topaz Energy

Retail Excellence Ireland (REI) has recently published its 2015 Shopping Centre Review and Retail Park Review. The Reviews underlined significant tenant issues with retail parks and shopping centres. Most schemes were deemed unhealthy. Both Reviews are available at www.retailexcellence.ie.

Littlewoods are planning to shelve their catalogue after eighty years. With 90% of sales now deriving from online the demand in recent years for the catalogue has been in steady decline. At one time the catalogue had a print run of 25million.

According to property agents **CBRE** high street occupancy is improving across nine urban locations in Ireland. Limerick City was determined to have enjoyed the greatest reduction in vacancy in the past year. **REI** has been assisting Limerick with an occupancy growth strategy.

REI is delighted to have commenced our **Google** incubation programme with sixteen progressive retail companies. The companies were selected from an applicant list of over forty.

The Danish Government is reported to be scrapping the law requiring retailers to accept cash as payment. The policy change is aimed at reducing costs and increasing business productivity. Almost a third of the Danish population pay using a **Danske Bank** app called MobilePay.

Tesco have recently recorded the worst financial results in the company's 96 year history. The grocery retailer recorded a €8.65billion loss for the twelve months to February 2015.

Renowned bicycle retailer **Cycle Superstore** are planning a move to a new store. The Tallaght based retailer has acquired a premises up the road from their current store. The retailer is planning something very unique in bicycle retailing.

Next have reported some strong sales growth in recent weeks. The fashion retailer recorded like for like sales gains of 4.1% over the first thirteen months of 2015. It has been reported that their directory business enjoyed a 9.2% sales lift.

FROM ME2YOU GIFT CARD LAUNCHES IN IRELAND

An initiative to bring greater competition to the Irish gift card market has led to the launch of a new gift card brand, From Me2You. The card will be sold through over 400 Topaz stores nationwide and through a dedicated corporate sales team. The gift card is the brainchild of the REI Member Council, involving eighty member companies, who expressed concern about high commission levels pertaining to other gift cards in the market.

REI formed a gift card launch team to bring the card to market including OMD, Topaz, PaymentPlus and a number of national and international retailers. Commenting on the gift card launch Oonagh O'Hagan, REI Chairperson said: "The new From Me2You gift card will disrupt the Irish gift card market and bring necessary competition. The From Me2You gift card, which we in REI have created, will have the retailer and the consumer at its heart. We will substantially reduce retailer commissions for accepting this card and thus the retailer will willingly accept the card as opposed to the current situation where acceptance of a gift card can be a begrudging transaction as the rates of commission are so high for many of our members. This in turn will only make for a positive experience for consumers who will easily identify where the gift card can be spent". The gift card will launch in September with a €2million advertising campaign.



From Me2You Gift Card to launch in September

THE NEW FROM ME2YOU GIFT CARD WILL DISRUPT THE IRISH GIFT CARD MARKET AND BRING NECESSARY COMPETITION

ALLCARE RAISE OVER €20,000 FOR THE IRISH CANCER SOCIETY

Through two separate fundraising initiatives, Allcare Pharmacy, a network of 72 community pharmacies across the country, raised over €20,000 for the Irish Cancer Society. Allcare Pharmacy raised the funds as part of their 'Pink it Pink' community fundraising in aid of Breast Cancer month. Staff in the pharmacies organised a variety of fun pink-themed activities ranging from pink manicures to pink cake sales and their customers proved incredibly generous with their support. Also, staff members participated in Run a Muck event which took place over a wet and mucky course with various man-made and natural obstacles to navigate ranging from ditches and tyres to Tarzan swings.



The Allcare team "Run a Muck" for charity

DAIRYGOLD WRAPS IT UP FOR IRISH CANCER SOCIETY



It's a wrap as Dairygold raise awareness and funds for the Irish Cancer Society

Dairygold Co-Op has joined forces with the Irish Cancer Society in a highly innovative new initiative called "Wrap it Pink" designed to raise cancer awareness in rural Ireland as well as raising much needed funds for the Irish Cancer Society. Farmers all over Ireland are being encouraged to wrap their silage bales in pink this summer. "Many farming families throughout Ireland have been affected by cancer and the Irish Cancer Society provides terrific support for sufferers and their families", said John O'Carroll, Head of Retail at Dairygold. "We'd love to see pink plastic bales in every parish this summer, knowing that in doing this we are not just raising cancer awareness but also helping to raise funds for the Irish Cancer Society. The sight of black silage bales is already a familiar sight around rural Ireland and the pink bales will certainly brighten up the fields and hopefully make people think. We believe it's going to look fantastic." To order your pink silage wrap and support this great initiative visit your local Dairygold Co-Op SuperStore or go online to www.coopsuperstores.ie for delivery nationwide.

WILLOW TO OPEN IN GALWAY

Multiple award winning Ennis ladies fashion store, Willow, has recently announced plans to open a second store in Galway. The company has taken a lease on Mainguard Street in Galway. Commenting on the news Willow founder Jean McCabe said: "We have always had the ambition to open a second store and we felt now was the right time. Galway is a great vibrant city and we felt there was a gap in the market for what we do. I see Galway as a natural progression for our business and brand". The store will open this August.



Willow to arrive in Galway



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Waterford artisan food retailer **Ardkeen Quality Food Store** has recently launched a new website. The retailer intends to extend their reach beyond the local Waterford market. Check it out at www.ardkeen.com.

Arboretum, the Carlow based garden & lifestyle retailer and National Store of the Year, has just opened a second store. Arboretum Kilquade opened in May at the National Garden Exhibition Centre.

Topaz is working hard to complete the rollout of the **Re.Store** brand to 150 locations by the end of 2015. The forecourt retailer is also in the process of refining its retail offer with specific investment in food and coffee.

Cork City Council, working with some very progressive local retailers, are planning a new district in the city. The Oliver Plunkett Quarter will enjoy an enhanced public realm and will market the area as a distinct zone in the city.



It is unlike **Supermac's** to miss an opportunity. When in Galway recently Prince Charles was reputed to have succumbed to the local delicacies which the Irish food retailer serves up.



Abercrombie & Fitch staff to wear full attire

ABERCROMBIE SHELVES "SEXY STAFF" POLICY

It is reported that Abercrombie & Fitch is to cease hiring staff based on body type and attractiveness and instead hire people based on talent. The move means that consumers will no longer see topless male models outside of the company's stores. Instead the company has confirmed that it will hire team members who are "nice, smart and optimistic". The prior recruitment policy had been criticised by some accusing the company of sexualised marketing. The company will now introduce a new dress code where staff will wear full attire. Team members will also no longer be referred to as models.

VERO MODA AND LILY ALLEN TEAM UP

VERO MODA has recently announced a new partnership with style icon Lily Allen. The first shoot of a year-long partnership with Lily Allen took place recently in the United Kingdom. VERO MODA is part of the Danish fashion house Bestseller and has a long tradition of collaborating with iconic personalities who notably represent and identify with the style, feel and personality. The association with Lily Allen will be visible in VERO MODA stores and on all the brand's platforms from August. "Working with Lily Allen was a very obvious choice for us," says Thomas Bay, head of marketing at VERO MODA.



Lily Allen and VERO MODA announce exciting collaboration

MULLIGAN'S PHARMACY GROUP OPENS IRELAND'S FIRST 'DRIVE-THRU' PHARMACY

A fifty-eight year old Irish family run Pharmacy group, Mulligans recently opened the country's first 'drive-thru' Pharmacy and lifestyle store which is located at Ardkeen in Waterford City. The brand new 3,000 square foot store offers customers a revolutionary shopping experience with state of the art technology both indoors and outdoors. In advance of a customer's arrival at the 'drive-thru' kiosk customers can call or text their prescription to Mulligan's for pick up within a time frame convenient to them, therefore offering a reduced waiting time and an easy collection option. Within the pharmacy a new 'lifestyle' experience is being offered with high tech facilities on offer including skin analysis being carried out by the professionally trained staff. Commenting at the Pharmacy opening Director Ronan Mulligan said, "We are delighted to open the country's first drive-thru pharmacy here in Waterford today. This is a family run business operating since 1957 and we have over the years strived to innovate and be ahead of the trends offering our loyal customers more than just a typical pharmacy proposition. This new store is the direction we will be taking for the future not just from a drive-thru and convenience point of view but also from a lifestyle shopping experience point of view. The store inside is state of the art with the nations favourite premium brands. This 360 degree offering is the future direction for Mulligan's as we seek to improve the service for the time-pressed customer."



Mulligans open the first pharmacy drive-thru in Ireland

IN ADVANCE OF A CUSTOMER'S ARRIVAL AT THE 'DRIVE-THRU' KIOSK CUSTOMERS CAN CALL OR TEXT THEIR PRESCRIPTION TO MULLIGAN'S

NEW SPONSOR UNVEILED FOR 2015 'BEST DRESSED LADY' COMPETITION @ GALWAY RACES



Kilkenny Group invest in the Galway Races with keynote sponsorship

The Kilkenny Group was recently unveiled as the Best Dressed Lady sponsor at one of the country's most prestigious racing events. Taking place on Thursday July 30th, Kilkenny's Best Dressed Lady Competition @ Galway Races promises to be a spectacular display and celebration of style, with prizes on the day for the Best Dressed Lady, Best Irish Design and Best Hat. The sponsorship decision is a step to further solidify the Kilkenny Group's reputation as one of the country's leading retailers. Speaking about the sponsorship announcement, Kilkenny Group Marketing Director Greg O'Gorman said "As one of the biggest events in the country's racing calendar, the Kilkenny Group is delighted to be sponsoring this year's Best Dressed Lady Competition. We are constantly looking for new and exciting ways to grow our presence nationwide, showcase the best of Irish design and to promote the 'buy Irish' message; the Best Dressed Lady Competition sponsorship is an ideal avenue to do this. We hope to build on the success of previous Ladies' Day events and we would encourage ladies to make a conscious effort to wear and support Irish brands this year."

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Following the successful Foodology event at the recent REI Retail Retreat, **Echochamber** are organising a food case study visit to Holland. The food safari will entail visits to the very best food retailers the country has to offer. Details will be with members soon.

Waterford City and County Council have recently announced a circa €3million investment in Tramore. €1million will specifically be spent on Tramore town centre including public realm improvement works.

CVC Capital have recently bought Europe's largest perfume retailer **Douglas**. Douglas operates over 1,700 stores in nineteen countries and posted sales of €2.5billion in 2014.

We are very impressed with the new farmers market at **Jones Garden Centre** in Donabate, County Dublin. The market involves collaboration between the progressive garden centre and **Country Crest**. Well worth a visit.

Halfords, the British cycle and car parts retailer, has reported an increase in pre-tax profits to £81.1million for 12months to March 2015. This is the company's first financial update since the appointment of Jill McDonald as Chief Executive.

REI has nominated **MicksGarage.com** to represent Ireland in the eCommerce Europe awards in Barcelona. We will update members with news in the coming weeks. We wish Mick and Ciaran all the best in the competition!

Artisan food and lifestyle retailer **Hook & Ladder** have recently opened a third store in Corbally, Limerick City. The progressive retailer has added to two other stores in Limerick City and Waterford City.

Well done to **REI** nominated **MicksGarage** who won the eCommerce Europe award recently in Barcelona. The company was selected ahead of many international online retailers. A proud day for Ireland. Well done to Michael, Ciaran and the team!

McDONALD'S RESTAURANT DONAGHMEDE MANAGER SCOOPS MAJOR EUROPEAN AWARD

Jennifer Grant, Business Manager of the McDonald's Restaurant in Donaghmede, County Dublin, has won a Ray Kroc Award, an accolade that recognises the top performing McDonald's managers in Europe. Jennifer was one of 67 McDonald's Restaurant Managers to receive the honour, which includes a trophy and a cash prize. The awards were presented at a gala event in Prague hosted by Doug Goare, President of McDonald's Europe. Jennifer has been working for McDonald's for over 11 years. She began her career at city centre restaurants including O'Connell Street and Grafton Street before becoming involved in the opening of the Dundrum restaurant in 2005. Jennifer has been employed at the Donaghmede restaurant for the past 5 years, where she was promoted to Business Manager over 3 years ago. Accepting her award, Jennifer said, "Being acknowledged in this way is a real honour and I would like to thank all of the McDonald's team in Donaghmede who always work together to ensure we provide the highest level of service possible to our customers. It is very rewarding to be a part of the professional development of team members as they progress through their careers at McDonald's."



Jennifer Grant celebrating her success in Prague

GROMÓR AT BLOOM

REI recently brought the campaign to get the country growing to Bloom. GroMór involves sixty five garden centres nationwide who have come together to promote the benefits of growing. The five days at Bloom were used to promote growing and to reacquaint customers to the vast knowledge and advice which is available in garden centres across the country. At Bloom over fifty



Over fifty volunteers promoted the REI led GroMór campaign at Bloom

GroMór volunteers met with the public to explain the campaign and hand out a special GroMór booklet offering lots of useful growing hints and tips. GroMór also hosted twenty growing demonstrations at the GroMór marquee. Speaking at the event Sandra Doran, REI Garden Centre executive said: "It was a pleasure to spend five days at Bloom with many of our wonderful garden centre members. The public were really interested in the GroMór campaign and I think the GroMór garden centres will benefit from enhanced footfall back at their stores".



GROMÓR GARDEN CENTRES WILL BENEFIT FROM ENHANCED FOOTFALL BACK AT THEIR STORES

DONNYBROOK FAIR TO EXPAND NORTHSIDE

Progressive Irish retailer and multiple award winner Donnybrook Fair are planning to open a sixth store in Malahide County Dublin. The new store will involve an investment of up to €1million. Company founder, Joe Doyle said; "We are hoping that the store will open in the second half of 2015. We will bed down the store in Malahide before we consider further expansion." Donnybrook Fair currently operates five stores, four Dublin stores and one in Greystones, County Wicklow.



Joe Doyle, Founder of Donnybrook Fair announces a store in Malahide



Applegreen flotation an Irish retail success story

APPLEGREEN ANNOUNCES EXCITING IPO

Applegreen founders Joe Barrett and Bob Etchingham have recently announced a stock market floatation of the company. The award winning retailer plans to raise €70m through the floatation in London and Dublin. It is believed that the funds will be used to further grow the company. The floatation will value the company at about €280million. The Applegreen Board has been expanded in preparation for the floatation with former Ryanair CFO Howard Millar and Green Property FD Daniel Kitchen being appointed Directors. Applegreen operates 152 stores, including 96 in Ireland, 54 in the United Kingdom and two in the United States. Commenting on the news Joe Barrett said "Having reviewed a number of funding options, we believe an IPO is the best fit. It will allow the company to raise funds to grow the company and continue our success at Applegreen."

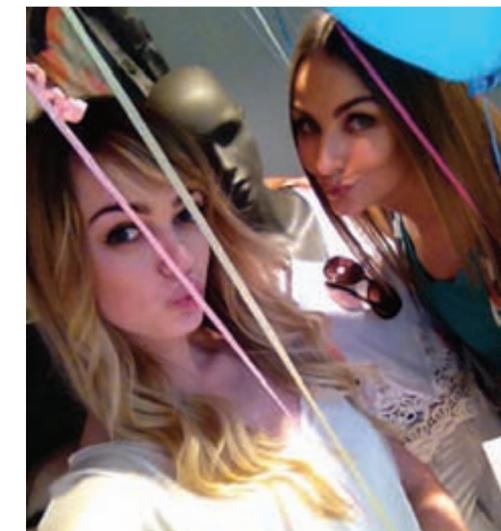
ANOTHER WIN FOR TILESTYLE

Dublin based family-run business, TileStyle, recently won the award for "Excellence in Independent Retailing" UK and Ireland at the 2015 Crystal Anniversary of the Tile Association Awards. TileStyle's Managing Director, JP Kennedy, delightedly accepted the award at the prestigious event held this year in St John's Hotel and Conference Centre in Solihull in the UK. Commenting on the success JP Kennedy said: "A TTA Award is an outstanding symbol of excellence celebrating the best in the wall and floor tiling industry and the annual awards ceremony is a fantastic networking opportunity for all involved in tiles and tiling." The award for "Excellence in Independent Retailing" recognises superior retail management and customer care levels, as well as excellent staff training and product display standards in the tile industry.



TileStyle Managing Director JP Kennedy (R) accepts the award from Bob Sewell

VILA TURNS TWO AT SWORDS PAVILIONS



Live mannequins celebrated the 2nd birthday of VILA

VILA's flagship store at Swords Pavilions shopping centre turned two recently. To celebrate the Danish high street brand turning two they hosted a fashion filled VIP event. Customers enjoyed an evening of feminine fashion, drinks from Disaronno, amazing birthday offers, live mannequins involving Laura Scanlon and Jo Archbold from Assets, styling tips from fashion blogger Love By Debs plus complimentary skin analysis from The Brow Boutique plus so much more was on offer at the VIP birthday celebration. Guests also got an exclusive preview of the new VILA Summer Collections. VILA has grown to nine retail stores in Ireland.

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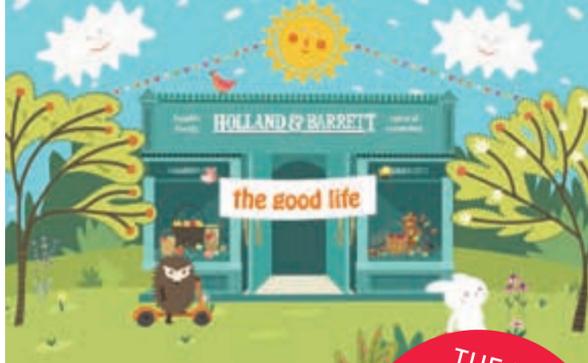
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the NUMBERS

- 12** The recent percentage dip in the Michael Kors share price as global sales growth begins to slow
- 1** The billion of euro of additional annual costs being foisted on the retail industry through Government policy according to REI commissioned DKM Economists report
- 52** The millions of pounds sterling paid by Brooker to buy the Musgrave owned UK Budgens and Londis operations
- 280** The million of euro valuation of Applegreen prior to its IPO
- 812,000** The euro bonus paid to M&S CEO Marc Bolland having returned the retailer to profitability
- 25** The number of stores operated by Zip Yard which recently won the Franchise of the Year Award
- 150** The number of years traded by Cork based travel industry legends J. Barter Travel
- 22.4** The millions of euro fine paid by PayPal after the US Consumer Financial Watchdog found the company had illegally steered consumers to buy its online credit product

HOLLAND & BARRETT PLANS US LAUNCH

Health retailer Holland and Barrett is preparing to open its first stores in the USA. The retailer is reported to have agreed terms on two new stores in New York. Holland & Barrett is owned by a US parent NBTY, but this is the first foray of the Holland & Barrett format into the US market. The company's Head of Europe Peter Aldis said: "The US is not an easy market to operate in, but NBTY thinks Holland & Barrett is a very successful model and could do well in the States".



Holland & Barrett grows Stateside

THE US IS NOT AN EASY MARKET TO OPERATE IN



Significant expansion plans at Superdrug

SUPERDRUG PLANS 100 UK STORES

It has been reported that health and beauty retailer Superdrug is planning to open one hundred new stores across the United Kingdom. The company currently operates close to eight hundred stores including two in the Republic of Ireland in Wexford and The Square, Dublin. It is believed that the company will concentrate the openings in London and the South East.

RWR ANNOUNCES THE KILKENNY GROUP SIGN UP



John Hogan and Conall Lavery of rwr announce major contract with the Kilkenny Group

Real World Retail (rwr) has recently confirmed the signing of a contract to provide its Decision Support Solution to the Kilkenny Group. Retail groups require accurate and up to date information to help them make excellent buying and merchandise management decisions to maximise sales and margin opportunities. Kilkenny's data will be connected into rwr's Cloud Server and views with action modules and consulting services will be delivered which will enable Kilkenny to implement category planning, range planning and an open to buy module which will improve sales and reduce markdowns. Marian O'Gorman of Kilkenny said: "Real World Retail has already exceeded our expectations in terms of their ability to quickly being able to provide us with intelligent analysis of data that existed locally but was proving difficult to access centrally in a meaningful and interpreted fashion". Speaking on behalf of Real World Retail Conall Lavery Director said, "Kilkenny is one of the most respected retail brands in Ireland, for a young company such as ours, this is a great endorsement to be selected by them. We are delighted to see our vision of how Decision Support Software can drive retail profit has been recognised by Kilkenny."

EXHIBITION CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF J. BARTER TRAVEL

The city of Cork recently enjoyed the opening of an exhibition of a selection of J. Barter Travel's remarkable collection of memorabilia and documents from many travel companies no longer in existence. The unique collection outlines memorable dates in the history of the travel in Cork and worldwide. This collection was mounted to mark this well-known family business's 150th anniversary in business. In 1865, Joseph Barter, George's great-grandfather, operated a business in Castle Street Cork where he sold bicycles, sewing machines, bound books and as a side business sold passages on ships. This led him over time to becoming an appointed agent for many of the world shipping companies such as the White Star, Cunard, and the Pacific & Orient Lines. Of course at that time sea and rail were the only modes of worldwide transport. The Barter family have witnessed many global historical events over four generations but happily J. Barter Travel is still thriving 150 years later. To mark this event George and his team decided to share such significant information with its many clients, the people of Cork, as well as partners, suppliers and customers around the world.



J. Barter Travel proudly continues serving after 150 years

THE BARTER FAMILY HAVE WITNESSED MANY GLOBAL HISTORICAL EVENTS OVER FOUR GENERATIONS BUT HAPPILY J. BARTER TRAVEL IS STILL THRIVING 150 YEARS LATER

MAXI ZOO OPEN SEVENTEENTH STORE IN NEWBRIDGE WITH 15 NEW JOBS

Ireland's pet retailer Maxi Zoo has opened its seventeenth store in Newbridge with the creation of 15 new jobs. Maxi Zoo has experienced significant growth in Ireland since opening its first store in Ballincollig in 2006 and plans to open 30 new stores across the country over the next five years. "We love animals and we provide the best advice and products that pet parents can find. We know that happier pets make happier people," said Alice Cross Executive Director of Maxi Zoo Ireland. All staff working at the store have been trained as pet experts and are available to share their knowledge with pet parents. "Our in-store pet experts are always on hand to provide customers with exactly what they are looking for and that is why we are such a successful brand," said Alice. Maxi Zoo invites pet parents to bring their pet with them while shopping. Each store also provides a free pet weighing service and regular free demo and information events about how to provide the best care and nutrition for pets. All 17 Maxi Zoo stores support local pet charities.



Number 17 for Maxi Zoo

SAM McCAULEY CHEMISTS ANNOUNCED AS ONE OF IRELAND'S PLATINUM BEST MANAGED COMPANIES



Sam McCauleys pick up a Best Managed Award

Sam McCauley Chemists has been named as one of Ireland's 'Best Managed' companies in the Deloitte Best Managed Companies Awards Programme and this year they have received Platinum status. The company, which demonstrated superior business performance for the sixth year running, was recognised at an awards gala dinner in Dublin. The awards, held in association with Barclays Bank Ireland, were attended by over 800 people from the Irish business community. Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, TD, gave a keynote address at the awards. Commenting on the award, Patrick McCormack, MD of Sam McCauley Chemists said: "Achieving the Best Managed Company status is recognition of the enormous work done by all of our team to ensure that we are quite simply the best at what we do. As an organisation we have consistently strived to be the best at what we do not by national standards but by international standards. The Deloitte Platinum award is recognition of this."

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LUCINDA CREIGHTON - RENUA IRELAND

THE BUDGET MUST BE SET IN THE CONTEXT OF PROVINCIAL IRELAND



Ireland has been through a torrid time since the late noughties. After a depression spanning almost a decade we are finally on the cusp of a broad based recovery. While employment is rising and unemployment is falling, talk of a major improvement in the economy is still premature. Too many households and businesses are mired in debt. In a 'balance sheet' recession recovery is always more tentative and slower.

FOR these reasons REI has been counselling caution on all things economic. We can never return to the craziness of the noughties, when the Government lost control of spending and sought to buy off all interest groups with windfall gains derived from the building bubble. As we cast our eyes towards Budget 2016 in October and, even more importantly, the next general election, one consideration will be foremost in our mind - getting all political parties and policy makers to be mindful of the needs of the Retail Industry.

In recent months, REI has engaged successfully with all political parties, including Renua, to sensitise them to the needs of Retail. We have also been activating member budgetary concerns in the policy system via both the Advisory Group on Small Business and the Retail Consultation Forum. We have consistently called on all

policy makers in framing policy and budgetary interventions to keep provincial Ireland in mind.

We have focussed as much on retaining past wins as on securing more progress for our members and the wider economy. Foremost among these matters is the need to retain the 9% VAT rate for the hospitality sector. We were gratified that the effective Minister for Retail, Ged Nash noted the importance of securing this rate when he spoke at the REI Retail Retreat in May. We will ensure that the entire Cabinet is mindful of its importance in its deliberations for Budget 2016.

We will also continue to profile the need for focus on the Cost of Living, rather than the Living Wage. A major issue here must be the 23pc VAT Rate. We have continually underlined the deeply

regressive nature of this tax on the poor and will be focussing on it in the run up to Budget 2016 with a view to seeing a reduction.

We will also work to ensure that the deliberations of the Low Pay Commission, (LPC) are as de-politicised as possible. In the context of Rural and Town Revival we look forward to working with all parties across the political spectrum on developing techniques to allow our towns and cities to thrive.

Another major priority will be securing the retention of the Home Renovation Grant. Furniture, home, flooring and consumer electronics sectors were particularly hit in the great depression. It is far too premature to be reviewing this programme as we slowly recuperate.

In the context of Budget 2016 our priorities include:

Cost of Living

To ensure that the Government focuses on cost of living and costs of employment over the minimum wage - low Pay commission outputs. Both the domestic economy and the retail industry have been grappling with a collapse in sales that among OECD countries was only exceeded by Iceland in the noughties. Its legacy has been a changed Irish consumer constantly in search of bargains. This has forced retailers to discount with abandon. We have seen this reality in successive REI Quarterly Sales updates and also in CSO monthly Retail Sales Data. For the vast majority of retailers securing any type of a price increase has been really challenging. Attendees at the REI Retail Retreat will have heard one member operating in the coffee house business offered the same price for a coffee and a sandwich for six plus years. Yet at the same time, consumers have also had to deal with major cost increases mandated by Government. From water charges, the USC through to property



taxes, consumers have had to take a major hit to their living standards. Disposable income has been eroded significantly. For these reasons REI and our members want Government to focus on reducing the cost of living rather than looking for private sector businesses to pay for the hit to living standards that the Government major tax increases have driven.

Costs of Employment

Successive Governments have foisted major costs on to employers over the course of the depression. The combined cost impact of these changes exceeds EUR1Billion for SMEs in Ireland. These changes include the abolished redundancy rebate, changes to

illness benefit, employers PRSI reverted to 8.5pc for some class A workers, abolition of employer PRSI relief on employer pension contributions for employees and maintenance of discriminatory tax treatment of the self-employed versus the employed. For these reasons, we continue to seek a reduction in employers PRSI rates for class A employees.

Retain the Home Renovation Grant & support White Goods Scrappage

Hardware, Consumer Electronics and DIY were the hardest hit in the depression. These were sectors that had major consumer credit operations. They had to write off vast amounts as much of it proved uncollectable as the recession progressed to a depression. The Home Renovation Grant has played a really vital role in encouraging more consumers to upgrade their homes while also stimulating construction activity. Even more importantly it has helped greatly in speeding up the velocity of money in circulation. It is from a higher velocity of money, that retailers and Government gain in terms of enhanced revenue and tax receipts being generated. We mess with this success at our peril. For these reasons, REI will focus strongly on retaining this vital grant. Similarly we believe that much benefit will flow from encouraging consumers to swap old water wasting white goods for new less water intensive whites. We have been profiling the case for this over the past two years and will work to push Government to help households reduce their water bills by swapping 'clunkers' for new machines.'

Secure more Support for the Town Centre Revival

REI has reflected member concerns for the future of our town centres by putting a huge effort into building a coalition of support for our town centres. In 2014 we launched our Reviving Rural Retailing document at the National Ploughing Championships with Minister Anne Phelan. Over the course of 2015, we have travelled

the highways of Ireland to work with local Government and interested members and other businesses to strive for a better focus on our town centres. All political parties are now sensitised to the needs of our town centres. Now we need more active support for them. We will work to ensure that this happens.

Upwards Only Rents

This issue has not gone away. They still cause pain, and REI will continue to profile this issue. We addressed this matter in meetings with all political parties over 2015. It was a major disappointment that the current Government reneged on its commitments to abolish these leases in their Programme for Government. REI also engaged with senior members of Sinn Féin on this matter when we attended their Ard Fheis in Derry earlier this year. We will continue to profile the case for the complete abolition of these unjust leases.

VAT

The standard rate of VAT (23%) is one of the highest in the world. Ireland, Greece, Finland, Portugal and Poland are at 23% while only Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Netherlands have a higher rate. VAT is the largest source of indirect tax with the average household paying €3,360 in 2010 (6.3% of the average gross income). It is also highly regressive with the lower income cohort contributing 98% of their taxes in indirect taxes, while the top cohort pays less than 23% of their total tax in consumption taxes. If Government really wants to put money back in to the hands of the least well off in this society then it should cut the standard VAT rate.

Tourism

In tourism we will fight to ensure that the opportunity we now have as a result of the decline in the value of the Euro to profile Ireland as a retail destination is exploited. Recent currency movements have also greatly improved the competitiveness of Ireland as a destination for UK and North American tourists. We want retail to be profiled as a key element of all international tourism campaigns promoting Ireland in the future. Irish retail is very well priced, thus it is time to profile Ireland as a shopping and leisure destination.

Demanding an appropriate focus on strategies that will support the Retail Industry from all political parties in Ireland is a priority for REI as we turn towards the next General Election. If Government are serious about jobs they must implement policies and budgetary strategies to protect 272,000 retail jobs and work with Ireland's finest industry to grow this number.



Government must supports our town centres across the nation

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RETAIL RETREAT

RETAIL RETREAT



Donaigh O'Hagan, Chairperson REI having a chat with Sonya Lennon, Frock Advisor at the Retail Retreat



Conference Chairman Bobby Kerr with Minister Ged Nash, Oonagh O'Hagan and David Fitzsimons



Bart Glover, Kay's Kitchen shares the story of a very successful Irish family business



Ken Hughes, Glacier Consulting opened Day2 discussing experiential retail and revealing what tomorrows shopper wants



A Golden Age for Retail - Matthew Brown, EchoChamber discussing global trends



The Big Debate - 5 of Ireland's most successful Retail Leaders take the hot seat to discuss the reality of retail - (L to R) Blaine Callard, CEO Ireland, Harvey Norman, Goretti Brady, MD, LloydsPharmacy, Niall Lawlor, VP and MD Northern Europe GameStop, David Snedon, Director of Large Customer Sales, Google, Kevin Jephson, Director Arkeen Quality Food Store and David Fitzsimons, CEO, Retail Excellence Ireland



Always business to be done!



This is Retail!



Well done to Fran and the team at The Orchard for an amazing night!



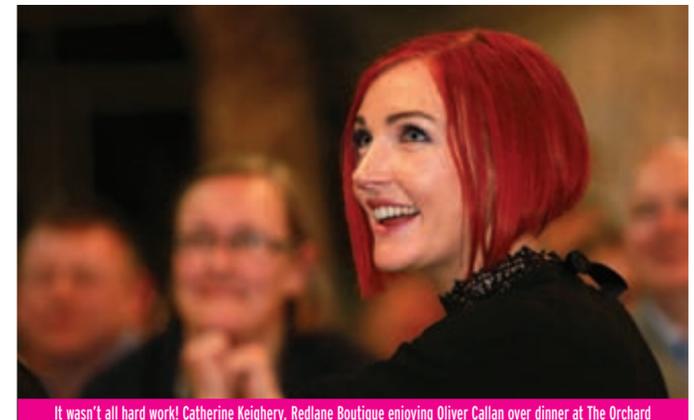
Signing up for the Gift Card - Lamber de Bie and Pat Hennessy, Lamber de Bie Florists, Kilkenny



Margaret Nelson, Chief Executive FM104 enjoying a catch up at The Orchard



It's called networking!!



It wasn't all hard work! Catherine Keighery, Redlane Boutique enjoying Oliver Callan over dinner at The Orchard



A little bit of after dinner fun with Oliver Callan



Peter Sweeney and Richard Varrier Barclaycard enjoying Irish hospitality with Niall Feely, GSLS at the drinks reception at The Orchard, Dublin Road, Celbridge



Ger Keohane StudioForty9 discusses the importance of the eCommerce Dashboard



Ray O'Connell, Carroll's Irish Gifts retiring from a varied and successful life in retail

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RETAILERS RETAIL, STOCKTAKERS -COUNT

The Retail Excellence Ireland Supplier of the Year was re-established in 2014 with the view of recognising suppliers to the retail industry who deserve particular recognition as they excel in their niches and who deliver an excellent service to the retail industry.

You can contact Patrick on 087 1389813 or his Team on 091 762001



At the REI Awards ceremony in Galway in November 2014, the 2015 Retail Excellence Ireland Supplier of the Year 2015 was announced as Stocktaking.ie.

Stocktaking.ie provide an outsourced stock counting service where they place teams of highly trained staff into a premises to count their stock accurately and efficiently. The various sectors they currently service include

- Clothing and footwear
- Pharmacy
- FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods ie: convenience stores and supermarkets)
- Hardware
- Hospitality

David Fitzsimons, CEO of REI explains that "the reason we chose Stocktaking.ie is due to their passion and commitment of creating what is considered a mundane, but necessary service, into a brand that delivers quality and confidence to retailers"

Established in 2004 with a goal of undertaking a better quality accurate stocktaking service for the Retail, Pharmacy and Hospitality sectors across Ireland. In 2015, over 1,600 stocktakes will be undertaken across all sectors.

Based in Claregalway, with a staff of 22 full time and 120 part time based regionally between Dublin, Cork and Galway allows Stocktaking.ie to provide a service that is more local to the customer where they become familiar with the stocktaking Team members.

What makes Stocktaking.ie different from others who provide a similar service?

Patrick McDermott, Managing Director and founder of Stocktaking.ie explains "we are not a commodity service whereby it is simply a matter of counting stock. People who require detailed stock figures and data, realise



this through past unsuccessful and sometimes painful and frustrating experiences of a stocktake not being undertaken successfully. This is why all of our counts are undertaken in a clear and systemised manner whereby accuracy and efficiency is achieved through the use of effective communication and technology making counts transparent and easy to audit. This provides our customers with confidence in their stock levels and therefore allowing them to operate their business more effectively".

It is clear from conversations with Mr McDermott that there is a clear benefit to retailers outsourcing this labour intensive task to a professional company. "Retailers should be retailing, stocktakers should be counting. For us to deliver our promise of a hassle-free service we have developed our "Holy Trinity" - a combination of three things we use to deliver service excellence to our customers

HASSLE FREE,
ACCURATE AND EFFICIENT
STOCKTAKES ARE ACHIEVED
THROUGH EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION BETWEEN
OUR CUSTOMERS AND
STOCKTAKING.IE

1. Highly trained staff – recruited and trained in-house and appraised after each stocktake
2. Bespoke technology - which is developed and maintained by our own IT Team. This makes accuracy easy to verify and efficiencies improved
3. ISO 9001:2008 – The only stocktaking business in Ireland with a Quality Management System to this International standard which certifies our systems of work ensuring we are constantly using best practice

"Hassle free, accurate and efficient stocktakes are achieved through effective communication between our customers and Stocktaking.ie. This combination of customer requirements balanced with industry best practice ensures that customers are receiving a consistent professional service".

There is no doubt that stocktaking is a labour intensive, time consuming task that is often underestimated by retailers and results in an increase in labour costs and is a drain of staff and management's time. It is comforting to know that Stocktaking.ie, the Retail Excellence Ireland 2015 Supplier of the Year, can deliver a nationwide service to our members and reduce the headache of this ever more important element of accurate stock control.

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*Barclaycard data 2015



FEATURE RETAIL EDUCATION



Clare Dowling,
Head of REI HR Advisory Services

REI LAUNCHES UNIQUE RETAIL CERTIFICATE



Retail Excellence Ireland, in collaboration with National College of Ireland, has developed a new learning programme for existing and aspiring managers in the retail industry. The retail Certificate will offer REI members an accessible route to increase the productivity, efficiency and profitability of their retail stores and organisation. It will also offer an attractive way in which to reward and motivate employees who demonstrate potential to progress in their organisation which is a key concern for a lot of employers at present. Ray O'Connell, Managing Director, Carroll's Irish Gifts and member of the REI Education Group said: "To survive and prosper in an extremely competitive marketplace it is essential that your business is a learning organisation. People are our greatest asset and we must ensure that we provide them with the necessary tools to reach their full potential. As leaders, I believe we should lead our best talent onto the path of learning and take the journey with them as far as they can go. I believe the Certificate in Retail Management will provide this first important step so I would encourage you start this journey with them."

Speaking at the launch of the Certificate, Clare Dowling, Head of HR Advisory Services in Retail Excellence Ireland, said "We have developed this course in response to REI members' needs. The Education Group in REI has worked hard with the team in NCI to ensure the content of the course is relevant, practical and 100% up-to-date with a focus on retail at all times".

The Certificate will commence in September 2015 and is available to REI members at a negotiated fee of €1,550 per participant. There are two academic semesters of 13 weeks each. The first semester commences

on 23rd September 2015 and lasts until December 2015. There will be a minimum number of classes in December so as not to impact on the Christmas trading period. The second semester commences in February 2016 until May 2016.

The course will be delivered by way of 'blended learning' i.e. a mixture of an online and onsite lectures. Online lectures will take place one evening per week (Wednesday from 7pm to 9pm) via a web based programme called Moodle. Onsite lectures will take place in class in NCI, IFSC, Dublin 1 on one Tuesday per month during the semester time. If there is enough demand, it may be possible to deliver the course in-house in one particular company or in one geographical location outside of Dublin.

There are five modules in total which include:

1. Fundamentals of Retail Management
2. People Management and Development in Retail
3. Finance for Retail
4. Customer Relations in Retail
5. Retail Operations

Successful completion of the course will grant participants a qualification at Level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Successful completion of the course will allow participants to progress to other programmes on the National Framework, for example, a BA in Management Practice.

Coupled with this depending upon demand, further degree level programmes will be developed specific to the Retail environment.

Alison Hodgson, HR Director with McDonald's Restaurants of Ireland who was involved in developing the content said "A major advantage of this Certificate programme is that it offers graduates a clear pathway to onwards progression to a Diploma or Degree, if they wish. It is important that our employees are provided with this opportunity to grow and develop. We see this course as providing the participants with the competence and confidence they need in order to successfully manage their retail teams."

To reserve your place or if you would like a copy of the prospectus sent to you, please contact Clare Dowling, Head of HR Advisory Services in Retail Excellence Ireland on 065 684 6927 or email: clare@retailexcellence.ie.

PEOPLE ARE OUR GREATEST ASSET AND WE MUST ENSURE THAT WE PROVIDE THEM WITH THE NECESSARY TOOLS



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FRS 102 IT'S HERE, SO WHAT NOW FOR THE RETAIL SECTOR?

FRS 102 has arrived. You need to start acting now as it could impact upon your profits, decision making and potentially affect your tax liability.

Reporting under the new accounting framework has implications beyond the financial reporting function. The impact on earnings and your balance sheet could affect management decisions, relationships with banks and shareholders not to mention the timing of any exit planning.

What do I need to do and when?

When you adopt FRS 102, you will need comparative accounts for the year prior to conversion, so your next set of accounts (drawn up for periods ended 31 December 2014 onwards) will need to be restated in accordance with FRS 102.

We recommend that you prepare accounts in accordance with FRS 102 alongside your next set of current Irish GAAP accounts. You will need an opening balance sheet for the restatement of the comparative period (the transition balance sheet) and we recommend that this should be prepared as soon as possible.

Areas to consider

- > What effect will FRS102 have on earnings?
- > What effect will it have on my tax cash flows?
- > Will it have an effect on my ability to pay dividends?
- > Will there be an impact on lending covenants and relationships with lenders?
- > What do I need to communicate to stakeholders?
- > Will my accounting systems be able to cope?
- > What other issues should I be considering?

Key changes affecting the Retail sector include:

Lease incentives

Under FRS102, a lessee will recognise the aggregate benefit of lease incentives as a reduction to the lease expense over the lease term. Under current Irish GAAP, a lessee recognises the benefit as a reduction to the lease expense over the shorter of the lease term and a period ending on the date from which a market rental will apply. From an accounting point of view, this change normally means that the incentive is going to be spread out over a longer period. This is another area where tax follows the accounts, to the extent that the incentive is of a revenue rather than capital nature from a tax perspective. A tax cash flow advantage may, therefore, arise in transitioning to a longer period over which the benefit is recognised in the accounts.

Operating leases verses finance leases

FRS 102 has introduced new criteria to determine when a lease is to be accounted for as a finance lease. The criteria are broader than under Irish GAAP so we expect that most operating leases will meet the finance lease criteria and will have to be capitalised and accounted for as finance leases. For a company with a December year end, this will apply to any relevant operating leases at the transition date of 1 January 2014.

Management decisions

All members of staff who either prepare or use the financial statements will need to have an understanding of how the changes will impact on financial reporting for your business. Members of staff who use the figures to help with their decisions must appreciate the changes so as to reach the correct

conclusions. You will need to identify how people use the figures and the most appropriate training required.

Property plant and equipment

When transitioning to FRS 102, you might be able to add considerable value to your balance sheet by revaluing property, plant and equipment on a one off basis to give a new 'deemed cost', without the cost of regular valuations thereafter. Under the new accounting standards there will be a need to recognise the related deferred tax liability. FRS 102 requires deferred tax to be recognised on all valuation uplifts, including those on investment properties. Unfortunately this applies to all assets recognised at a valuation in excess of depreciated cost on the date of transition. The deferred tax expense follows the gain to which it relates, so it would be set against retained reserves, with a corresponding liability for the additional deferred tax provision on the balance sheet. However, the pain may be worth the gain, as it will give you a higher net asset value. Please bear in mind that the changes to the balance sheet could impact on your covenants and possibly the security for your borrowing.

Holiday Pay accruals

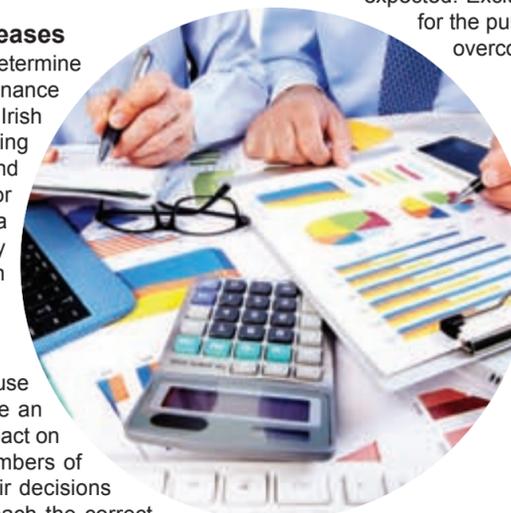
FRS 102 specifically states that a holiday pay accrual should be accounted for to cover the cost of unused holidays that were earned in one period but will be taken in the following period.

Bonus payments

FRS 102 may affect the obligations arising from contracts where payments are based on profit or other elements of the financial statements, such as a bonus pool based on a percentage of net profits. You will need to review these contracts to avoid the business having to make unexpected payments or staff receiving less than they expected. Excluding fair value adjustments from profits used for the purposes of calculating bonuses can be a way of overcoming many of the potential difficulties.



JOHN DUFFY, HEAD OF RETAIL
AT RSM FARRELL GRANT SPARKS



If you would like to discuss any aspect of FRS 102 and the implications for your business please contact John Duffy, Head of Retail at RSM Farrell Grant Sparks on +353 (1)408 6922 or John.Duffy@rsmfsgs.ie.

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- Tax planning for both the business and the owner
- Raising finance and positioning the business for growth
- Reviewing procedures and management information systems to ensure they are efficient and effective
- Reviewing the potential for outsourcing of the accounts and finance function
- Developing a 3 to 5 year plan and working with the owner to achieve it
- Structuring the business for succession and owner exit / retirement planning

John Duffy 01 408 6922 or email John.Duffy@rsmfmg.ie

www.rsmfarrellgrantsparks.ie

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UNIONISATION THROUGH THE SIDE DOOR

The government recently approved amendments to Industrial Relations legislation which gives Trade Unions the ability to take a case to the Labour Court, on behalf of members, where an employer will not formally recognise the Trade Union for collective bargaining purposes.

This means if an employer chooses, as is their right, not to engage with a Trade Union, the Union can still bring claims for enhanced terms and conditions to the Labour Court and get a binding decision, enforceable in the Circuit Court, against the employer.

This option was available previously for Trade Unions until Ryanair took a case to the Supreme Court in 2007 which centred upon the definition of Collective Bargaining and challenged the convention that it could only really occur when a Trade Union represented the employees.

Since then the Unions have been pressing successive Governments to produce legislation to clarify the matter which has now occurred.

It appears from the details of, and commentary on, the new legislation that Collective Bargaining will either have to be through a Trade Union or another 'Excepted Body'. Exactly what this 'Excepted Body' can be remains to be seen but employers will hope that an internal staff council would be accepted as evidence it collectively negotiates. In reality it is likely that the bar will be set very high and the 'Excepted Body' will have to be suitably independent and prove it is free of any



coercion or pressure from the employer in its ability to bargain on behalf of employees.

If an employer rejects a Unions advances and a case is taken to the Labour Court, the terms and conditions generally reviewed include pay rates (scale), sick pay, Christmas bonus, Sunday rate, overtime rate and maternity pay. The logic is that the Labour Court look at fair comparators to the employer in question and benchmark the terms and conditions accordingly. The Unions natural tendency would be to offer larger, possibly Unionised, organisations as 'fair comparators' at a Labour Court hearing in the hope that it would achieve similar terms for its members.

In order to protect employees from possible victimisation, a Union would not have to inform an employer who, or how many, members they have in the business.

Retail is a sector with a tradition of Unionisation in Ireland. Mandate, currently involved in an industrial relations dispute with Dunnes Stores, have a strong retail presence and have recognition agreements with many long standing players in the sector. There are many retail groups, with or without an internal HR function, who have grown over the past 10-15 years into strong operators with significant employee numbers but who have no experience of dealing with a Trade Union. Such operators may have, or may develop, Union members, especially if the rate of pay and other terms and conditions are at the legal minimums as set out in relevant legislation.

Ireland prides itself on having a voluntarist approach to Industrial Relations whereby an employer can choose not to engage with a Trade Union. This is a major positive for the country in attracting foreign investment. It is interesting to note that virtually none of the foreign multinationals who locate in Ireland are ever courted by a Trade Union and I would speculate very few, if any, will be engaged under this new legislation for fear they would threaten to leave the country. This legislation will act as a side door through which a Union can gain a foothold in an organisation through the Labour Court and in reality removes any 'voluntary' option on the part of the employer.

I believe that Retail Excellence Ireland members need to track carefully the 'test' cases under this legislation to see what the Labour Court's interpretation of fair terms and conditions of employment are and what standard of independence constitute an 'Excepted Body' as allowed for under the legislation.

For now it is a case of watch this space, but watch carefully.

You can contact Tommy Smyth at
Tom Smyth and Associates on Ph: 021-4543506.
or email info@tsaconsultants.ie

Tom Smyth & Associates offer a complimentary advice service to REI members. For details contact REI Head of HR Advisory Services, Clare Dowling at 065 6846927





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FEATURE RETAILER UNCOVERED



NAME: GERRY FALLON
COMPANY: EXPERT HARDWARE GROUP
POSITION: BRAND DEVELOPMENT
MANAGER

A brief description of your business

Expert Hardware is a marketing / buying group for nearly fifty independently owned hardware stores throughout the country. It was set up just ten years ago by hardware store owners David Baker, Brian Beegan, Gearóid Boland, Peter Doyle and Alan Grant who continue to oversee the continued growth and success of the group which is run by its members, for its members.

How did you get started in the retail industry? I grew up in retail in my family's hardware business in Glenamaddy, Co. Galway and in early 2012 I joined Expert Hardware as Brand Development Manager. Having a strong product knowledge really

made the transition from a hardware retail environment to brand development in this dynamic group relatively seamless.

Which retailer (national or international) do you admire the most and why? I am always amazed at how Apple always stay ahead in the extremely competitive technology market. From innovation to product launch and right through to the customer experience in an Apple store, they are always setting standards. I think Fergal Quinn also left a lasting impression on many retailers in Ireland today and he was very astute in his approach to retail.

What is your favourite retail store and why? I am pretty sure that Avoca has been selected before but I really enjoy visiting their store in Rathcoole. They are masters of great product selection but what really sets them apart is their attention to detail and customer service.

Who has taught you the most in your career as a retailer? My father is a great role model. His work ethic, honesty and values are something I continue to aspire to today and he is always there for advice and support. The board of directors of Expert Hardware are also always very supportive and in particular David Baker whose guidance is invaluable in my current role.

What is your favourite restaurant? The Old Arch in Claremorris Co. Mayo never disappoints and is always a treat. Extensive menu, good food and

inexpensive. For somewhere in Dublin to visit for a quick bite on the run is the Full Stop Café in Ballyfermot and highly recommend the quick steak dinner.

Where is your favourite holiday destination? I love going to France and have been to the same camp site in St Jean De Monts four times with my wife Caroline and four kids. I enjoyed the whole experience, driving through the beautiful countryside and found the French people to be very amicable. The area itself has so much to offer a family - my two older kids Lorna and Colum had plenty of activities while there were also great kids clubs onsite for my smaller kids Ava and Mark.

What was your last purchase? A set of tyres for the car.

What is your favourite quotation? It's a quotation from Larry Page one of the founders of Google I saw few years back "Always deliver more than expected" which I thought was very relevant in all areas of life.

What do you love most about your job? I think the diversity of my role makes it so interesting. When you enjoy going to work every day I think speaks for itself

If you were not in retail what job would you have pursued? God only knows. I enjoy construction and would probably be involved in some aspect of that industry.

How do you achieve a work life balance? I work away in Dublin a few days a week and work from home one day a week and this

required time to get accustomed to initially. Both my family and I make the most of our time at home. I also try where possible to get a walk in either early morning or in the evening.

What is the one thing that you have done that has had a profound and positive effect on your business? I feel that having been closely involved in Expert Hardware's recent three year agreement with RTE to have an Expert Hardware store feature in Fair City is going to prove very positive indeed. Fair City is watched by over half a million people every week and in terms of brand recognition it will attain in three years what would normally take over ten years to achieve.

What is the greatest challenge currently facing your business? Growth in consumer spending is still relatively small which is proving very difficult in hardware retail as it is an industry that has suffered greatly this past 6 or 7 years.

What advice would you give one starting out in retail? All Expert Hardware stores pride themselves being experts in customer service and product knowledge and unless you excel in these areas from the very beginning, you will struggle to compete.

What's on your 'bucket list'? I would love to visit Australia, start playing a bit of golf and getting a bit of shape and order into my garden at home.



NAME: CATHERINE KEIGHERY
COMPANY: REDLANE
POSITION: OWNER

A brief description of your business? Redlane Boutique is a ladies and children's store located in the picturesque Tramore, Co. Waterford. We've six crazy staff and have just entered our eleventh year in business.

How did you get started in the retail industry? I was born into retail so you could say it's in my blood. My grandparents had their fingers in a lot of pies, one of

which was Co. Waterford's first 'self-service' supermarket. We were thrown into customer-facing roles from an early age within the family businesses. As well as working in the supermarket, I had to stand on a box to pull my first pints in a smoky bar, I've always been comfortable dealing with customers as a result.

Which retailer (national or international) do you admire the most and why? I'm a big Harrods fan, they run a good ship.

What is your favourite retail store and why? Is that a trick question? Redlane of course!

Who has taught you the most in your career as a retailer? My grandparents, Paddy and Theresa. They had an unbelievable work ethic and my grandmother was a firm but excellent teacher. I didn't appreciate it at the time as it wasn't far off child labour but it's definitely stood to me over the years. I'm sorry I didn't take more notice of the ins and outs of their business lives at the time but such is the folly of youth!

What is your favourite restaurant? The House Restaurant at The Cliff House in Ardmore, Co. Waterford is pretty awesome

Where is your favourite holiday destination? It's impossible to pick one... The West of Ireland is splendid when the sun shines and for craic. Ireland is definitely the best in the world. The Willy Clancy or the Matchmaking festivals are not to be missed, purely for the characters you meet along the way. Long-haul, I'm a big East Africa fan. Tanzania... Mozambique...Zanzibar, they're all amazing. I really want to go to Somalia and Ethiopia, they're on the 'to-do' list. So many places to see, so little time!

What was your last purchase? I just made the final payment on a Transiberian railway trip about 5 minutes ago, does that count? If not, a Capri-Sun!

What is your favourite quotation? "If you want to be happy, be!" I'm a big Leo Tolstoy fan, he was a clever guy.

What do you love most about your job? The customers! I love them all, the mad ones, the sad ones, the difficult ones and the happy ones. I absolutely love working on the shop floor.

If you were not in retail what job would you have pursued? I'd love to own a café. I love to bake, strange but true!

How do you achieve a work life balance? With great difficulty, when you have kids you just have to tough. You can't have it all, something has to suffer if the scales are tipped too far in one direction. It's something I'm acutely aware of. I think I've done ok, I hope my daughter thinks so too!

What is the one thing that you have done that has had a profound and positive effect on your business? Taking more time off!

What is the greatest challenge currently facing your business? Waterford City, which is only 10 miles away, is about to undergo massive economic regeneration in the city centre. As a native, I'm delighted to see it happening but it's an opportunity for us to up our game before it starts. Exciting times ahead!

What advice would you give one starting out in retail? Spend as much time as possible on the shop floor and enjoy all the crazy customers you meet along the way

Whats on your 'bucket list'? I don't have one, I reckon I'd be dangerous with one of those. It would be like a list of dares and I'd probably die doing one of them so I think I'll steer clear!

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FEATURE RETAILER UNCOVERED



NAME: WENDY SLATTERY
COMPANY: PARTY MAD
POSITION: MANAGING DIRECTOR

A brief description of your business? Our business has 3 main departments: Corporate which is where we create the wow factor for our customers using our bespoke balloon designs for events, instore promotions, product launches and staff celebrations. We also personalise balloons with company logos and offer seasonal corporate décor and decorating. Partymad.ie is our online

business it has over 5,000 items, including birthday party supplies, seasonal decorations, costumes, wigs, accessories, hens and stag products. Party Mad's retail store in Celbridge is over 2,500sqft. Customers can book their party package with the Party Mad team and arrange for us to decorate the venue for them. We even have a sweet bar so you can get custom filled sweet jars and party bags.

How did you get started in the retail industry? My first taste of retail was with Roches Stores part time while in school.

Which retailer (national or international) do you admire the most and why? Party City in the USA they are innovators in the industry designing and producing their own party products and receiving over 8million hits a month on their website. This is a process that we at Party Mad have started.

What is your favourite retail store and why? My Favourite store is Hodges Figgis, I love bookstores especially old bookstore. What I love is the atmosphere and the fact that the staff are so pleasant, attentive when required and knowledgeable.

What is your favourite restaurant? At the moment it is Bistro 53 in Maynooth. However

I am looking forward to trying the Vintage Kitchen.

Where is your favourite holiday destination? So far I would have to say Cyprus where I got married.

What was your last purchase? Beach Towels in House of Fraser

What is your favourite quotation? You will never plough a field by turning the sods over in your mind.

What do you love most about your job? I love the people I am working with, their love, passion, enthusiasm and determination to grow our business to the next level is infectious. We have great working relationships with our corporate customers and real customer loyalty from our retail customers.

If you were not in retail what job would you have pursued? I wanted to be a car mechanic.

How do you achieve a work life balance? Whilst there are certain hours I need to be on site, I do tend to work my hours around my family commitments. There is no 9-5 in the party business it's 24-7!

What is the one thing that you have done that

has had a profound and positive effect on your business? I recently attended a course run by Blaise Brosnan. The course was full of nuggets of practical business advice which were easily implemented into our business. This has brought further growth and direction to our business. We also are active networkers and we are proud members of REI, North Kildare Chamber, BNI and Going for Growth we have found that they have a really positive effect on our business.

What is the greatest challenge currently facing your business? We are planning to launch our online business into Europe, the research and project management of all the aspects of this is a challenge but one we are more than happy to overcome.

What advice would you give one starting out in retail? Be the expert in your field. Ensure the customer experience online, in store or on the phone is of the highest quality and your team are bought into your mission and vision and they receive the training they need to excel.

Whats on your 'bucket list'? To name just a few, see the northern lights, learn to play guitar, live in a different country, own a beach house and write a book.



NAME: REBECCA HARRISON BIRCHALL
COMPANY: FISHERS OF NEWTOWNMOUNTKENNEDY
POSITION: MANAGING DIRECTOR

A brief description of your business? Fishers of Newtownmountkenedy is a retail hub nestled in a quiet village in Co. Wicklow. A menswear store and ladies boutique with gourmet café form the backbone along with 4 other businesses. With origins in country clothing for men and ladies, this family business has grown and expanded over the last 35 years to now stock a wide range of lifestyle clothing, accessories & gifts for all occasions. On site we also are thrilled to work beside Anne Gregory Designs, The Creation Room, The Schoolhouse Studio - a workshop space for a variety of artists and Food at Fishers Café - a daytime restaurant serving up the best in local produce and the most tempting treats!

How did you get started in the retail industry? Family Business!! I was trained in young, playing hide and seek amongst the clothing rails and stuffing envelopes for our mailing list

from about the age of 10! I learned so much from observation and seeing the wonderful staff in action! All I ever wanted to do was run my own business so I did a degree in International Business and Marketing at Trinity College Dublin and variety of roles ranging from waitressing to Event Management to Marketing Manager were essential to gain experience.

Which retailer (national or international) do you admire the most and why? 2 spring to mind - Avoca for their ability to change and follow their customers wants and Supervalu - again I admire how they've really focused their offering on the individual local producers and the importance of the local retailers too.

What is your favourite retail store and why? Kilkenny Design - it's a shop I love pottering through with the great selection of products, gifts and clothing and accessories. I love their Love Irish philosophy and the fact that they offer a platform for upcoming talents.

Who has taught you the most in your career as a retailer? My parents, their experience is invaluable and watching them in action I've learned so much. I'm very lucky to still have their support and wisdom to call on. Also my advisors Jim Deeney (from a general business point of view) and Bryan Maher of The Garden House, Malahide. Both full of nuggets of wisdom from an external perspective and brutally honest!!!

What is your favourite restaurant? I like food too much for there to be just one! I have millions!!! For Breakfast: Food at Fishers Café, so I might be biased but their full Irish is to die for and as for the stuffed brioche French toast with strawberries and Nutella and a side of bacon - mmmmm! For Lunch: Gino's Pizza (Cork & Waterford) Very casual but gorgeous and fresh toppings and the best hazelnut ice-

cream in the world!! For Dinner: L'Ecrivain in Dublin and Les Gourmandes in Cork - both divine!

Where is your favourite holiday destination? Kerry, the countryside around Waterville and Derrynane! The wilder the better and wow what a wonderful coastline. You couldn't beat it.

What was your last purchase? A few items from The Creation Room located here at Fishers. Some Tealight holders by Sandrine Lemonier and a Memo Board by Eabha B. Both gorgeous and superb quality - made by 2 amazing Irish (Wicklow!) artists.

What is your favourite quotation? I've a few! Shoot for the moon. Even if your miss, you'll land among the stars - Les Brown. 20 Years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbour, and catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover! Mark Twain

What do you love most about your job? Variety - love that it involves a bit of everything and that no day is the same. Customers leaving with a smile and a bag!

If you were not in retail what job would you have pursued? Event Management. I get to do more and more of it here and I get a great buzz pulling it all together and the collaboration with others. Fantastic satisfaction when it's all over and a success.

How do you achieve a work life balance? A nearly 3 year old daughter who (quite rightly) insists on getting my full attention is an excellent way to force you to turn off from work! She also has a routine which means I have to leave the shop promptly in the evening! I leave the laptop at work and paying for golf and gym membership is a great way to

guilt you into using those facilities!! And finally a partner who has a very good work life balance and insists I follow his lead!

What is the one thing that you have done that has had a profound and positive effect on your business? 2 things have really made a difference - Bringing on board the other businesses to the site. It was an essential decision during the recession but the benefits for all have been fantastic. It's attracted more customers to the location, given us a rental revenue stream and most importantly the pooling resources for marketing, promotions and events has been so worthwhile. Also the professional camaraderie of other business owners is a great motivator, sounding board and reassurance. In store Events - We've run these in store for some time now but the impact has been huge. It's giving something extra to our customers who appreciate them time and effort.

What is the greatest challenge currently facing your business? Misconceptions about what Fishers is. With our history in country clothing and more exclusive labels it's difficult converting the local mind-set that our shop is now for everyone and accessible to everyone with really good quality products at prices that offer real value. To get people spending again after the recession. All fingers crossed that the buzz in the cities will filter to the more rural locations soon.

What advice would you give one starting out in retail? Get to know your customer properly and not just with stats! Negotiate hard with all your suppliers and find the right staff who are "singing off the same hymn sheet" as you.

What's on your 'bucket list'? A whole heap of travelling - Iceland, Antarctica, South America, The Galapagos Islands.....Diving in the Red Sea....

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FEATURE E-COMMERCE



Guy Chiswick, Managing Director, Webloyalty Northern Europe

The **THREE TRIUMPHS** of the Irish High Street

3 Today's retail market is more cut-throat than ever and retailers have to adapt in order to survive on the Irish high street. Guy Chiswick, Managing Director of Webloyalty Northern Europe, shares three core areas to which brick and mortar retailers should pay particular attention to in order to survive and prosper.

LOCATION SERVICES

There are two factors influencing a customer's decision to visit a physical bricks and mortar store: experience and convenience. Those seeking a luxury shopping experience, for example, are willing to pay for their privileges but expect an above-and-beyond approach which online-only can often fail to deliver. Those seeking convenience may look more at accessibility, cost and speed.

Hair salons in Dublin city have been particularly good at recognising the need to provide consumers with convenience and a luxury experience. Davey Davey, based in Dublin 2, offers a full food menu for customers in need of a colour, cut and detox salad bowl. Popular salon chain Brown Sugar has recently announced plans for expansion including the creation of Sugar Daddy, a grooming space for 'modern men', and Sugar Rush, an express hair, make up and nail bar for on-the-go beautification.

WINDOW SHOPPING

Although websites can showcase much of what a retailer has to offer, the shop window is an attribute unique to the brick and mortar store. Taking full advantage of physical space can



reassert a company's added value over its online counterparts.

Paddy Power, a successful Irish bookmaker, operates largely online but still recognises the pulling power of the physical store. A recent clever stunt saw a store located near Aviva Stadium, where the Ireland vs England match was to be played, entirely covered with bubble wrap making it 'hooligan-proof', a tongue-in-cheek move by the bookmaker whose brand personality is notoriously wry.

ONLINE OFFERING

Despite ongoing growth online, internet retailing is not easy. In order

to maximise sales potential, retailers must offer an ecommerce function but this will only reap rewards with the proper know-how and websites must offer products and services in a coherent easy-to-use way whilst continuing to provide excellent customer service.

Vintage fashion retailer Style Jump offers a concierge service for pre-loved garments. With both a store in Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, and an ecommerce site, the service includes professionally photographing, marketing and selling luxury pieces, for which the garment owner receives 52% of the sale, a unique offering in Irish retail.

Guy Chiswick is Managing Director of Webloyalty Northern Europe.

Webloyalty is a leading savings programme provider that works with major online retailers to help them build stronger, more profitable customer relationships. Find out more at www.webloyalty.ie or follow Webloyalty on Twitter - @WebloyaltyIE

TIME TO GET STRATEGIC ABOUT COST MANAGEMENT



Retailers that are positive and take a strategic approach to cost management and see it more than simply making savings are the ones that will be at the front of the queue to take

advantage of economic recovery, says Declan Quinn, Managing Consultant of Auditel.

Back in the dark days of the recession many retail organisations carried out short-term cost cutting, which often left them in a worse state than they had been in before. According to research by KPMG, more than 95% of cost reductions achieved during the recession are expected to return in the short term. This stark message should ring alarm bells.

Management teams across the retail sector don't need a crystal ball to tell them that revenues will be tougher to earn and margins tougher to protect. That's why Quinn believes that strategic cost management will be a game changer over the next five years.

How does strategic cost management differ from the traditional cost reduction exercises? The answer perhaps lies in the term strategy, which implies a longer-term approach and method for tackling a problem. Strategic cost management has longevity and is

sustainable, whilst cost reduction is knee jerk and short-term. It's also holistic in nature and consultative in style, which negates the adversarial, price driven nature of cost reduction that squeezes suppliers.

A recent Auditel survey revealed that 70% of organisations do not have a cost management strategy in place, and of those that do, most (73%) undertake cost management measures in-house.

The appointment of an outsourced provider of cost management services is becoming an increasingly popular option and one adopted by many members of Retail Excellence Ireland. Outsourcing to specialist consultants can bring many benefits such as a thorough understanding of the true cost of products and services backed up by detailed analysis and monthly reporting. Specialist consultants also have a wide ranging and up to date knowledge of the supplier market and understand changes in technology. In short, Quinn evangelises that a good strategic cost management consultant should become a trusted advisor to management and an irreplaceable asset.

Auditel is able to assist retail organisations of all sizes to streamline working practices and achieve sustainable cost savings through the implementation of strategic cost management. We recently worked with Rocket Restaurants and helped them achieve a range of savings which have dropped to their bottom line. To name a

few examples, strategic energy procurement has yielded savings over 14% annually. While telecoms and waste management have delivered over 40% this year. The benefits to Rocket Restaurants are that a benchmark has been established which all franchisees in the Group can compare and contrast what best practice strategic cost management can deliver.

It is clear that all businesses including retailers continually need to examine costs on all fronts. However, a forward thinking business can go a long way to countering the potential problems that can occur by embracing and adopting a robust and professional approach to the fast growing discipline of strategic cost management consultancy.

Over the past 20 years Auditel has worked with more than 5,000 businesses of all sizes and we can say with some certainty that strategic cost management driven by the right people, with the right tools and knowledge can deliver improved efficiencies, accelerated performance and help companies gain a competitive advantage.

Declan Quinn would be delighted to discuss how strategic cost management could benefit your organisation.

Email:- Declan.quinn@auditel.ie, or call 087 2900497.

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REFRAMING THE IRISH RETAIL INDUSTRY IN THE MINDS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

'THIS IS RETAIL' is a new industry campaign created and supported by Retail Excellence Ireland to celebrate the significant contribution made by the Irish retail industry.

The campaign celebrates retail using four main themes:

1. CAREERS
2. DIVERSITY OF OPPORTUNITIES
3. SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES
4. SUPPORTING IRISH PRODUCERS

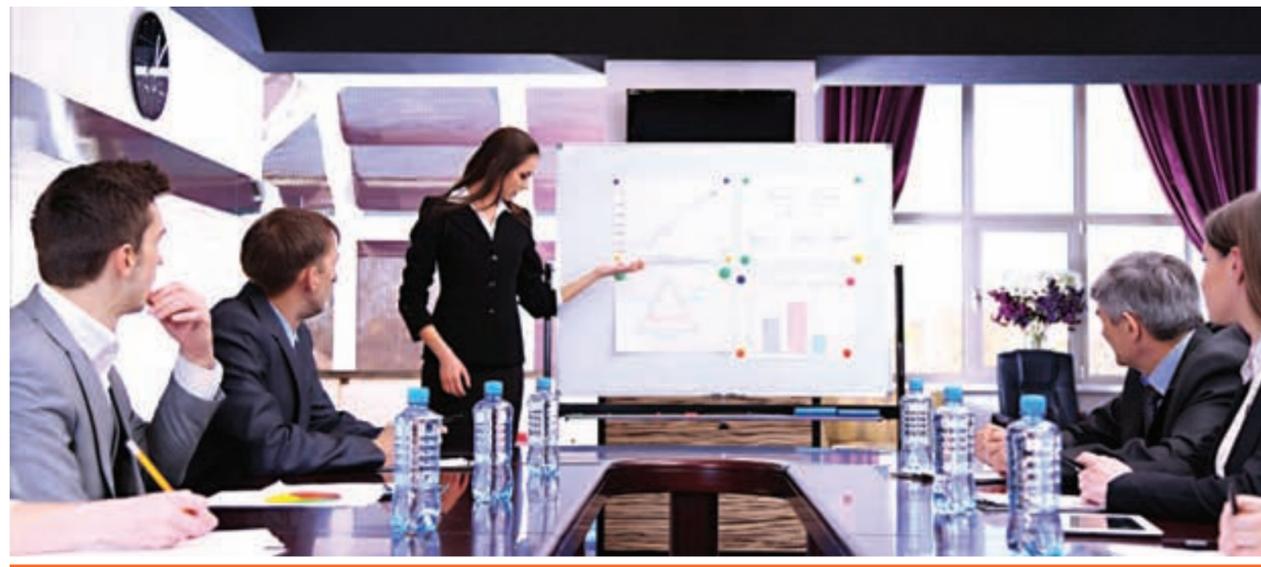
Commenting at the launch of the campaign, David Fitzsimons, CEO of Retail Excellence Ireland said: "What we have sought to do with our 'This is Retail' campaign is to reframe the Irish retail industry in the minds of the general public and other industry stakeholders. We want to highlight the valuable contribution made by the Irish retail industry to the economy in terms of jobs and economic activity and to celebrate the great people we have working in the industry."

Oonagh O'Hagan, REI Chairperson and Managing Director at Meagher's Pharmacy who launched the campaign at this year's REI Retail Retreat in Carton House believes "This campaign comes at a critical time for the retail industry. As employers we should be seeking to keep the talent we have within the industry and not lose our people to other industries. There are lots of different opportunities available within the retail industry and plenty of opportunities to progress to higher levels. Hard work in this industry is definitely rewarded."

Clare Dowling, Head of HR Advisory Services in REI, who is overseeing the campaign outlined how REI members can show their support. "We are asking members to support this campaign by connecting with us via our social media and show your support for the messages we are trying to circulate. This campaign together with the future availability of accredited learning by way of the REI NCI Certificate in Retail Management will elevate the status of the retail industry as being an attractive and positive place to work."



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Situated in the heart of Cork City, the English Market is a roofed food market and has been trading since 1788. The Market is one of the oldest municipal markets of its kind in the world and for this issue **CREST'S MYSTERY SHOPPER**, armed with their secret recipe for fig biscuits, decided to pay in visit in search of the perfect fig! To enter the English Market one passes beneath an archway from a busy high street and is immediately transported to a different environment. The English Market with its beautiful ornate tiled floors and marble fountain, which would have not looked out of place in a Moroccan Riad, provides a superb culinary shopping experience.

The Mystery Shopper visited three different fruit and vegetable stores on Saturday June 6th, 2015.

THE ORGANIC GARDEN & PARADISE GARDEN

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: The Organic Garden does pretty much what it says on the tin with its eye catching colourful displays of organic vegetables and dried fruits. Space is limited and therefore they do not have the largest selection of fruits, but what is on display looks mouth-wateringly fresh and ready to eat. The handwritten signage on blackboards hanging from the canopy over the space really fits the bill and one's initial reaction is that everything here is of a very high quality and great care goes into keeping it like that.



SELECTION: There is a relatively small but diverse and well sourced selection of fruit and vegetables on display. Space is at a premium and thus they have limited the amount of produce on display but have used the available space to stock some very unusual organic products and hopefully, into the bargain, encourage people to be a little more daring in their choices. If you find, annoyingly, that there are always one or two ingredients you can't source to complete that Rachel or Jamie culinary masterpiece then this is definitely the spot for you.

GREETING: The staff member smiled and greeted the Mystery Shopper in a friendly manner. The staff member was friendly and eager to engage.

STAFF KNOWLEDGE: The staff member seemed totally within his comfort zone discussing any of the produce including the more unusual offerings and how to use them. He explained clearly to chop the figs into small pieces and to ensure to remove the stalk. He automatically included the country of origin, Turkey, as part of the discussion. On the downside the store did not process cards as payment, only cash. The staff member offered a small bag for the purchase.

RECOMMENDED: 250g Dried Figs €2.67



SUPERFRUIT

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: The Superfruit franchise is situated directly inside the Grand Parade entrance to the English Market. The stall name (in large black type on a yellow background) dominates the vista and the right angle shaped stall resembles a regular supermarket type store with two staff members operating the tills at one end of the floor. While the white pallet like storage units added a touch of market trader authenticity, it felt very much like being in the fruit and veg section of one of the major grocery retailers. Nearly all of the pillars, walls and shelving were painted a bright white which did give a significant lift to the space. However, the Mystery Shopper found the florescent lighting a little strong again distancing it from its market stall origins.

SELECTION: The selection of produce available here is quite impressive and runs from the basic to the exotic and all points in between. While there is no problem with the quantity and freshness of stock on offer, none of the produce glistens in a truly inviting manner. The motto here is more pile 'em high and sell in bulk. At times it has the feel of one of the large discounters. There is a lot of space to work with and the Mystery Shopper felt that with a little more thought and imagination it could be a really special spot.

GREETING: There was no interaction on the shop floor and the Mystery Shopper was signalled to the till where they stood in line with 3 other customers. The staff member responded to the Mystery Shopper's request for figs by pointing towards the stock location on the shop floor. There was only a dried version of the product available.



STAFF KNOWLEDGE: The staff member had limited English and was unable to impart any further information on how to use the product. The store did accept cards, however, it appeared to be the exception rather than the rule as the card had to be processed at a separate hatch where the Mystery Shopper was handed a card machine which dangled through the hatch window. Overall, the staff member was friendly and efficient.

Despite the lack of conversational English, the staff member was friendly and efficient.

RECOMMENDED: Only dried available 250g €2.99



THE FARMER

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: If it's good enough for the Queen then we will take our chances. The Farmer certainly caught her Majesty's interest with two large photographs of the aforementioned Royal dominating proceedings and the space around this very small outlet in the centre of the bustling English Market. It's a corner unit with a simple but effective wooden frame housing the shop name written in rustic bold print. The produce is only accessible from the aisle and it is very difficult to browse in amongst the fruit and veg on display. Everything is displayed simply yet wholesomely and without any great pretension and with "The Farmer" they may have hit upon the perfect name.



SELECTION: There is a wide variety of fruit and vegetables displayed in a very functional manner. They use old product boxes as support to place the produce on. It is simple and effective and you get the feeling that everything has just been delivered fresh. It would be nice to be able to browse a little more around the stall but the compact design and size makes this quite difficult. They do, however, have some shelving to the rear of the space that is accessible. The range of fresh fruit and veg is pretty extensive and they also stock some jams and other food related items. The overriding impression one is left with is that you have just experienced what a real market stall can offer, and in a world of generic design, that is still something to write home about.

GREETING: As the Mystery Shopper approached the store, the staff member, who up until this has been engaged with customers, greeted them with a broad smile.

STAFF KNOWLEDGE: Initially on hearing the enquiry, the staff member admitted that he did not bake a lot but quickly added that his wife baked all the time. His second hand expertise was passed over with aplomb as he enthused about the merits of using fresh figs over dried every time. 'You get the best flavour with fresh figs in anything you cook', advising the Mystery Shopper to cut off the stalks and use a blender to mulch the outer skin along with soft core, giving a paste that could be used in any recipe.

RECOMMENDED: 250g Dried Figs €2.67



WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY?



Karl McKeever, Managing Director, Visual Thinking

Visit the US and it's hard not to be wowed by Tiffany & Co in New York – their window displays are truly captivating. I've been to NY almost 200 times and it's a city I feel very comfortable in and totally familiar with. I visit the West Coast of the US less frequently but, when I do, the trendsetting metropolis that is San Francisco also never fails to inspire. While New York is all about flagships and cash, in San Francisco it's all about innovation. So I was pleased to notice some interesting trends in window displays during time out from client meetings when visiting the city a few weeks ago.

Window displays are rarely discussed outside of Christmas and major sporting events, such as the Olympics. But they remain a vital way for retailers to communicate with shoppers and capture their interest outside of the store. Tour San Francisco's streets and you will find the likes of Bloomingdales, Ella Moss, and Lululemon all delivering bold visual statements. But in San Francisco right now there are other retailers demonstrating what could become the 'new thing'.

Visit Banana Republic and you will see a retailer using its windows in a bold new way – not to promote its products, but to showcase its environmental credentials and to increase public awareness of these important issues. The message here is designed



to urge us all to help 'save the planet'.

While it seems UK retailers are beginning to lessen the focus on environmental messages instore – it's now eight years since M&S's high profile Plan A initiative first appeared in its stores – San Francisco is a city where 'green' is the new normal. It's no coincidence that environmentally-minded awards take place in this part of the US.

Banana Republic's windows reinforce the city's 'climate action champion' status. In one store, its windows were awash with recycled water bottles, reminding us to recycle and not discard plastics. In another store, some of the windows had actually been blanked out and the lights turned off, with the strap line "Lights Out", followed with an explanation as to why the brand is doing this.

The cynic in me would argue that Banana Republic's environmental message is simply about attracting shoppers, as opposed to a wholesale change in its thinking about the environment. I say this, as there was little to suggest a drive

TOUR SAN FRANCISCO'S STREETS AND YOU WILL FIND THE LIKES OF BLOOMINGDALES, ELLA MOSS, AND LULULEMON ALL DELIVERING BOLD VISUAL STATEMENTS

towards sustainability or reducing its environmental footprint instore. Whether it will also resonate with Banana Republic's core shoppers, I'm not sure. But certainly in California with a more receptive audience, there is every chance that this may work.

H&M's flagship store was also taking a fresh approach to its windows, this time as part of a major US recruitment drive for store management, visual and sales associates. Small scale, apologetic window displays these aren't – they're full-on recruitment campaigns created in a way truly appropriate for the brand.

The particular window that I saw, struck you as you walked by using highly impactful black and white photography with stylish images of the store team, alongside emotive graphics and wrapped up with the strapline "Power of Possible".



It delivers a strong graphic campaign and it's only when you stop and read the message that you understand what is being communicated. However, once in store, H&M carries on the drive, with a recruitment desk within the entrance lobby, where people can apply for a role there and then.

Using the power of windows to attract the right and likeminded people to join the business, should be a success in theory – a self-fulfilling prophecy that gives retailers a better chance of delivering great retail standards going forwards. As anyone who has been in the industry long enough should recognise, the most successful retailers, like Apple, win out because of their ability to recruit not just people, but genuine brand advocates with a passion and commitment to the cause. As a result, harnessing the power of store windows as a medium for recruiting tomorrow's in store champions surely makes sense?



In a way these two examples are a kind of conservative guerrilla marketing campaign. People expect to see clothes and goods or POS for SALE campaigns in a shop window – not a CSR or recruitment message from a retailer. But this is exactly why it should work, as there is interest in the curiosity factor.

Neither H&M or Banana Republic's approach to windows that I witnessed in San Francisco are revolutionary in themselves. It's always been fairly common



for big brand retailers to utilise their windows for campaigning stances. Many of you will remember The Body Shop in the 1990s, which was renowned for this kind of 'conscience raising' marketing.

The difference here for me is the fact that, unlike some British brands which have done this from time to time with a very selective or secondary message, these international brands' windows are 100 per cent given to promoting the internal needs or causes that are aligned with their brands, at the expense of promoting any goods or services.

I like this. It's an interesting experiment, especially within such corporate and normally 'on message' brands. If the purpose of window displays is to stop you in the street and attract your attention, then both H&M and Banana Republic are achieving their primary objectives in San Francisco. But like everything else in retail, the ultimate success of window campaigns' will be judged on their sales performance – be that through the ringing of tills today, or acting as catalysts that enable retailers to keep the message fresh and 'ring the changes' in their brand promotion in future.





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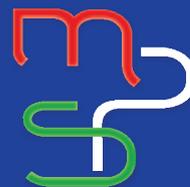
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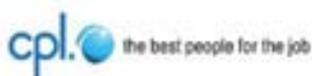
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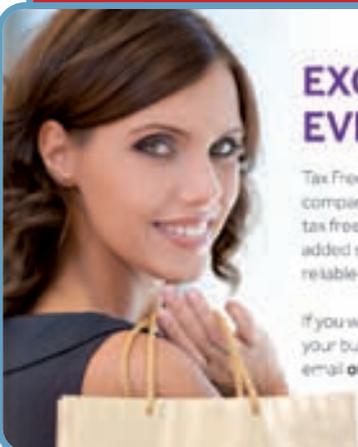
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