



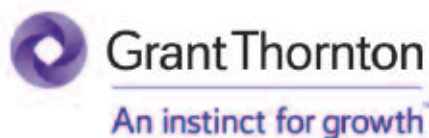
Customer Loyalty

How to hold what you have





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Welcome to the **QUARTER 4 2016** edition of Retail Times

After a somewhat challenging summer season REI members are now starting to prepare and are cautiously optimistic of a busy Christmas trading period ahead. With Budget 2017 fast approaching we are very much hoping that the Government focuses on the needs of the indigenous economy and delivers fiscal interventions to support retail businesses. Retail Excellence has been very vocal and has presented a pre-budget submission to Government covering a number of important matters including the necessity of reducing the Employers PRSI rate for low paid workers from 8.50% back to the 4.25% rate. Also, due to a weakening sterling decreasing our competitiveness and in order to help increase Irish internet sales, to reduce the VAT rate from 23% (amongst the highest in the world) to 21%. We have also requested the retention of the 9% VAT Rate and the reduction of excise duty on alcohol and no further increases on tobacco prices.

We urge all members to contact their local politicians and request action on these key issues. In this regard I would like to thank all members who have agreed to join our local constituency lobbying committees. By communicating directly with local politicians and explaining to them firsthand how they can assist with job retention and creation in local communities, we can better educate our elected officials about the crucial role retail plays in Ireland.

With the small benefits exemption level now at €500 per employee (creating a tax saving of €655) and the rate likely to increase to €650 in the next Budget, employers now have a very tax efficient method to reward employees. I urge all members to support the Retail Excellence FromMe2You gift card this Christmas. The gift card offers highly competitive commissions to all retail acceptors and brings long overdue competition to the market. The FromMe2You card is welcomed by over 3,500 leading stores including Tesco, Applegreen and Smyths Toys. Both Employers and employees will benefit from the tax relief by using the From Me2You Gift Card and this opportunity should not be missed.

The Retail Excellence team is busy planning the 2017 calendar of activity. The teams' focus is on delivering exceptional educational opportunities for your employees, helping support staff retention and growing your talent pool. We are also planning our biggest Retail Retreat yet. The Retreat is moving to Croke Park in Dublin on May 9th and 10th and the event will include leading retail industry experts from around the world. There will be presentations on the very best International retailer's case studies exploring how they operate their businesses. We will also have a large expo of leading suppliers to our industry. Please note the dates in your diary as I am sure you will not want to miss out on what will be an exceptional and informative conference.

Best regards,

Colm Carroll

COLM CARROLL
Chairman Carrolls Irish Gifts
Chairman Retail Excellence Ireland

COLM CARROLL CHAIRMAN, RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND



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TRUSTEE: Sharen McCabe, McCabes Pharmacy Group • Kevin Jephson, Ardkeen Quality Food Store • Keith Rogers, Ecco Footwear

Well done to **Ennis, Gorey and Navan** which have been announced as finalists for the REI Friendliest Place award. All will be revealed on November 5th.

Arnotts have recently opened a new Christmas Shop. It is the biggest Christmas Shop to ever launch in Arnotts and will stock over 63,000 unique items.

Sainsburys UK are planning to open two hundred click and collect points throughout their network of stores. The sites will also allow customer to collect eBay and DPD orders.

REI has recently launched twenty constituency committees across the country. The purpose of the committees is to better communicate the needs of retail with local politicians. A further twenty will launch in October and November.

Waitrose, the UK based grocery retailer, has recently announced that it intends to pay all small suppliers within seven days!

Maxol have recently opened a very impressive new service station on the M3 at Mulhuddart.

Cycle Superstore will kindly host an REI case study visit on 28th February 2017. We would urge all members to note the date in your diary. It is a phenomenal store!

Hobbycraft UK have recently announced a 63% increase in EBITDA. The retailer stated that the rise was as a result of adding more value products to their range, new stores and website improvement.

We are off to the Big Apple in mid-January to attend the **NRF Big Retail Show**. REI invite all members to join the travelling delegation and enjoy what will be a great conference and expo. We are also organising a tour of New York's finest stores following the conference. For more detail contact Antoinette@retailexcellence.ie.

H&M UK and Ireland boss Carlos Duarte recently confirmed that it is his belief that the UK fashion market is the toughest in the world. The fashion giant has over 260 stores in the UK and Ireland.

Well done to **Garvey Group** who have unveiled two very impressive **SuperValu** refits in Dingle and Tralee. Both stores are well worth a visit.

Tesco is rolling out scan as you shop technology across 350 UK stores. The scanners will let customers track their spending as they shop and also manage their own payment and checkout.

SHAWS DEPARTMENT STORES **ARRIVE IN** MULLINGAR



Shaws expand to close to 300,000 square feet of retail space.

Shaws Department Stores has opened their latest store in Mullingar. The 14,000 sq. ft. premises, which underwent extensive refurbishment, is located on Austin Friars Street and has boosted local employment with over 30 new jobs created. According to the company's website, Shaws offers leading brands with a strong focus on customer service. The company operates close to 300,000 square feet of retail space in prominent high street and shopping centre locations throughout the country, with almost 1,000 people employed in its stores. "This is a really exciting opportunity for our company," said Jonathan Shaw who is Managing Director of Shaws. "Mullingar has been on our company's radar for some time and we're delighted to have acquired a high-profile premises in the town." Mr. Shaw said that his firm believes it's a good time to open, despite the difficulties experienced by the retail industry in recent years: "There are signs for optimism as we head into the latter part of the second half of 2016," he said, adding: "We are confident that the people of Mullingar and further afield will respond to our unique offering of quality and service."

UNIQLO LAUNCHES UMOOD IN BID FOR ULTIMATE PERSONALISATION



Uniqlo UMood technology records shopper's brainwaves.

Leading Japanese fashion retailer Uniqlo has recently turned to neuroscience in a bid to get inside the mind of customers. Umood is an in-store brain scanning technology which records brainwaves and records responses to images shown to customers. This in turn then determines the mood of the shopper and the most likely products they will buy. UMood has been developed by digital agency Isobar and the technology is being trialled in Uniqlo's Australian stores.

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SHANNON GROUP INVEST BIG IN BUNRATTY

Shannon Group, the leading visitor destination and retailing company, has recently unveiled a new retail and food offer in

The very impressive retail offer at Bunratty Folk Park, County Clare. Shannon Group came into existence in 2014 and is responsible for managing and growing the retail operations at many iconic visitor locations nationwide including Malahide Castle, the GPO "Witness History" Visitor Experience, The Cliffs of Moher, King John's Castle and of course Bunratty Folk Park. Shannon Group has recently completed an extensive investment in the retail and food offering at Bunratty Folk Park and the results are very impressive. Commenting on the news, Darren Smyth, Group Head of Retail said: "We are delighted with the initial results we are achieving following our investment in Bunratty Folk Park. Shannon Group has exciting plans for all of our visitor sites and the positive results being achieved in Bunratty is a great first step in our investment journey". Shannon Group is hosting an REI case study visit to Bunratty Folk Park on October 12th at 09.30am. For more details contact Antoinette@retailexcellence.ie.



NEW HEAD OF HR ADVISORY AT REI

Retail Excellence Ireland is delighted to welcome Sarah-Louise O'Byrne as our new Head of HR Member Advisory Services. Sarah-Louise graduated from University of Ulster with a 1st class honours degree in Human Resource Management and Diploma in Industrial Studies. She is also a qualified member of the CIPD.

Sarah-Louise has experience across both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in both an in-house HR and advisory capacity. Her most recent employment was with Mazars as part of their



HR and Consulting Division and before that, Peninsula Business Services as part of their HR Advisory Team. Sarah-Louise commented, "I am very excited to be part of the Retail Excellence Ireland team and I am looking forward to all of the opportunities this role offers. I have had a wonderful experience so far in meeting many of our members and working with several already on HR issues and projects. I hope to meet more members over the coming months to assist them with their HR needs."

McCABES PHARMACY GROUP ANNOUNCE NEW CEO

McCabes Pharmacy has appointed Mr. Paul Candon to take over as Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Candon has taken over the role from Ms. Sharen McCabe who has assumed the position of Chairperson at McCabes Pharmacy. Mr. Candon was previously Group Corporate Services Director for Topaz Energy Group and has held a number of Senior Executive roles with Topaz. Mr. Candon has worked in retail for over 30 years in Operations, Marketing, Trading and HR. He is a former Chairman of Retail Excellence Ireland. Furthermore, McCabes Pharmacy has

announced the appointment of Mr. Mark Beddis MPSI as Superintendent Pharmacist. Mr. Beddis takes over the role from Ms. Ciara McCabe MPSI who will focus on Pharmacy Development roles within the Group. Mr. Beddis was previously Superintendent Pharmacist at Tesco Ireland and has served on committee at The Irish Pharmaceutical Union. Commenting on the news Sharen McCabe said: "These new appointments are part of our ongoing desire to continue innovating and growing our community pharmacy base as well as developing our professional services further."



Paul Candon appointed to CEO role at McCabes Pharmacy Group.

Bites

Macys, the iconic US department store retailer, has recently announced it plans to close 100 stores. The closures are being blamed on the rise of value specialists such as **TK Maxx** and the rise of eCommerce.

Unilever has paid US\$1million to acquire **Dollar Shave Club**, the subscription based retailer of shaving razors.

It has been reported that **Monsoon Accessorize** are planning to close over 140 UK stores as part of a store estate restructure.

Asda recently reported its worst ever fall in quarterly like for like sales. Sales fell by 7.5% and the company's parent **Walmart** stated they would deal with the matter with urgency.

Dobbies, the UK garden centre chain, have recently appointed John Cleland as CEO. Cleland was chief executive of **Maplin** from 2012 until 2015. Dobbies were recently sold by **Tesco** to a group of private investors.

Zara recently announced an increase in full year sales and profit for its UK division. Sales jumped 8.2% to STG£535m while profits grew by 18% to STG£58m.

US pet retailer **PetSmart** has recently launched specialist in store music specifically designed to appeal to pet owners.

Evans Cycles Chief Executive Nick Wilkinson has left the bicycle retailer after profits slumped. The retailers recently reported a 69% decrease in profits to STG£1.4m.

Sainsburys is trialling a new app which promises customers one hour delivery! The app is being trialled in London with deliveries by bicycle and a STG£4.99 delivery charge being applied.

Applegreen's Lisburn Motorway store has recently been awarded the NACS International Retailer of the Year Award. Congratulations to the Applegreen team on winning such a prestigious award.

The sale of **Blanchardstown Shopping Centre** for €945m to US investment company **Blackstone** is the most expensive property deal ever recorded in the Irish State.

Topaz has raised €100,000 in aid of the Jack & Jill Children's foundation. The funds were raised through Topaz's "Small Change for Big Change" campaign.

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Galvin win big again!

GALVIN FOR MEN TULLAMORE WIN BIG at DRAPERS AWARDS

The Drapers Independents Awards 2016 winners were recently announced at a sparkling ceremony in The Brewery, London. The Drapers fashion awards recognise the best independent fashion retailers in the UK and Ireland. It was thus no surprise that leading Tullamore based menswear retailer Galvin For Men was announced as the Best Customer Experience across all fashion stores. Commenting on the news company owner Paul Galvin said: "We are absolutely delighted with our award. Last year we won the accolade of best Independent Menswear store and this year we have gone a step further by winning the overall customer experience award. We truly appreciate the loyalty, support and encouragement from all our customers and would like to say a huge thank you to our staff and suppliers."

SISTER ENTREPRENEURS LIFT SALES OF FREDDY JEANS TO NEW LEVEL

Two young Irish entrepreneur sisters, Malindi Demery (25) and Elena Demery (21), exclusive distributors of the popular Freddy Jeans brand in Ireland, have recently claimed the 'Best Performance Internationally' award, at the annual Freddy Clothing GTM event held in Lake Maggiore, Stresa, Italy. The award recognises the best growth rate among businesses across over 50 countries that now have Freddy Clothing Agents operating in. Having only established their business with the introduction of the Freddy Jeans brand into Ireland 18 months ago, the young entrepreneurs have now seen their clothing distribution business grow substantially, with turnover for this year exceeding the €1 million mark as female consumers in particular add to the 'Freddy Craze'. Freddy Clothing now has over 50 stockists across Ireland, including eight in Northern Ireland and over 15,000 people, typically in the 16-30 year age bracket wearing their bum lifting jeans based on patented technology. Commenting on the company's success, Malindi Demery, co-founder of Freddy in Ireland, said: "We have been absolutely overwhelmed by the interest and demand that we are experiencing for the Freddy Clothing range in



Freddy Clothing award for sisters Elena and Malindi Demery.



Musgrave MarketPlace's Brian Staunton and Noel Keeley announce exciting new developments

Musgrave MarketPlace announce €2.2m upgrade of Ballymun Store

Musgrave MarketPlace, the leading wholesale supplier to retail, foodservice and SME businesses recently announced a €2.2 million upgrade of its Ballymun store, located off St. Margaret's Road. The upgrade will result in a 20% increase in the size of the cash and carry area as well as a range of new speciality areas and state-of-the art technology to offer retail and foodservice customers a best in class visitor experience. The revamped 75,000 square foot store which employs 65 staff will officially open in October. As part of the upgrade, three new roles will be created at the branch to ensure customers receive expert information and advice from trusted advisors. Noel Keeley, Managing Director of Musgrave Wholesale Partners said; "We are delighted to unveil the design concepts for our new Ballymun store. The business of food and drink is constantly evolving and it's important that we continue to innovate and respond to our customers' needs. This significant investment will allow us to deliver the cash and carry of the future. As well as providing our customers with the products they want, we will also be able to add value through our experts on hand in-store."

NEW CHOICE Store Opens in Trim

Minister Damien English was on hand recently to cut the ribbon on the newest Choice store. The store is located on Market Street, Trim, County Meath. The opening was marked with queues of eager shoppers waiting to avail of the company's Half Price Opening offers. Choice recently rebranded to Choice – A Home For all Seasons. The company now operate seven stores in the Leinster region with 4 of the stores located in County Meath.

Choice up to 7th store with Trim launch.



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A woman with dark hair and bangs, wearing a black long-sleeved top, is smiling and leaning on a white counter in a jewelry workshop. In the background, another person is working at a similar station. The workshop has white counters, various tools, and jewelry on display.

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BWG Foods Launches Greens & Co Salad Bar Franchise

Leading retail and wholesale group BWG Foods has recently announced the launch of Greens & Co, a brand new salad bar franchise. In response to a growing demand for healthy fresh food-to-go, BWG Foods has come up with a new food model that can be incorporated into a convenience store or exist as a standalone outlet. The first outlet launched at SPAR, Gandon House, IFSC last August. Greens & Co has one promise – Just Good Food. Salads are prepared freshly each day, to a customer's choice and preference. You can decide between diced or tossed salad and choose from the Greens & Co house salads or build your own. The menu also includes wraps and a range of health food products. The reaction to the opening of the first Greens & Co has been very well received by local shoppers. According to John Clohisey, Group Property Director, BWG Foods: "We are working with up and coming Irish suppliers to bring locally produced, good clean foods that people can enjoy anytime. Greens & Co will fulfil the need for increased choice in the Irish convenience and food-to-go market. We at BWG Foods believe that we have created a great solution that can be incorporated into an established store or exist as a standalone outlet."



totalhealth Pharmacy

OPENS 50th STORE



Mahers totalhealth cuts the ribbon for the 50th store.

The totalhealth Pharmacy group recently cut the ribbon on its 50th branded pharmacy, Mahers totalhealth Chemist in Drogheda. Totalhealth Pharmacy has been busy branding independent pharmacies nationwide since its first opening in Westport in October 2013. The totalhealth Pharmacy group has grown to 64 members with more members joining before the end of 2016 making it the largest group of independent pharmacies in the country. totalhealth Pharmacy is a co-operative pharmacy group owned fully and equally by its members. The group works together to benefit everyone's business with support in all areas of the business from the dispensary right through to supporting members to become first class retailers.



Best in class refit at Eason O'Connell Street.

EASON REFIT ICONIC O'Connell Street Store

Johnston Shopfitters recently announced the completion of the refurbishment of the ground floor refit of Eason, the iconic flagship bookstore in O'Connell Street, Dublin 1. Having previously completed works to both the first floor & Irish Interest Area 'Eason Rising' Johnston Shopfitters were appointed main contractor on this particularly complex refurbishment of this historic landmark building. As main contractor to Eason, Johnston Shopfitters manufactured, installed & project managed the full interior fit-out, while Eason continued to trade throughout the refit. The project was delivered on time, within budget and with Johnston Shopfitters renowned service and attention to detail.

RWR ANNOUNCE SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING

John Hogan and Conall Lavery founders of Real World Retail.



Real World Retail (rwr), the Irish retail analytics start-up, recently announced it has closed a €920,000 fundraising round from angel investors and Enterprise Ireland. Real World Retail (rwr) helps retailers drive more profit and cash flow into their business by using their data to aid decision making. Real World Retail (rwr) has developed an always on Cloud based analytics solution which is already helping retail and pharmacy customers, over 600 stores in Ireland and the UK, deliver better business results. Retail generates huge amounts of data from a number of different sources. Electronic Point of Sales Systems (EPOS) and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) head office reporting falls far short of retailers' needs. To implement effective Merchandise Planning, Buying, Inventory Control and Promotions, the information needs to be collated and presented back in an easy and actionable way.

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Public Liability Claims
Retail Leases
Business Sales and Acquisitions

the NUMBERS

20

The millions of STG£ which Asos is reputed to have paid out following trade mark discussions with Asos and Ansons

24

The % rise in online orders at Waitrose after personalisation was introduced to recommend products

10

The date in May 2017 when the REI Retreat will be hosted at Croke Park, Dublin

2,200

The number of Irish Suppliers SuperValu currently source from

1

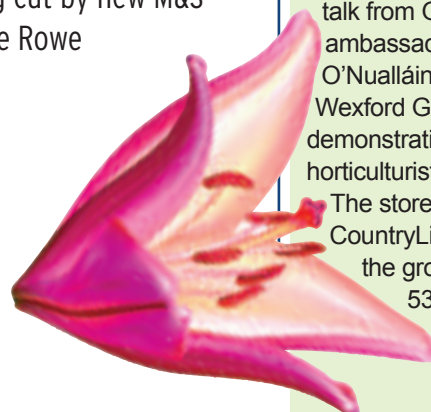
The number of million of Samsung Galaxy Note 7 Smartphone's which have been recalled in the US market

38

The % increase in 2016 half yearly pre-tax profits at forecourt retailer Applegreen

525

The number of UK head office jobs being cut by new M&S boss Steve Rowe



GameStop+ Proves a Real Success



GameStop Ireland is currently in the process of converting all stores to GameStop's new format store, GameStop+. Commenting on the roll-out, Michael van den Berg, Managing Director, Northern Europe said: "We have by now nearly completed our GameStop+ conversions with seventy five of our stores now showing our customers the full range of Loot on specialized fixtures, a growing range of Recycled games on display in our Recycled browsing baskets and digital screens streaming game trailers, in-game footage and GameStop advertisements and promotional messages. The shops are drawing in new customers as well as encouraging regular customers to spend more time with us. We are looking forward to improving even more stores next year."

ARNOTTS ANNOUNCES WHISTLES STORE LAUNCH



Arnotts ups the fashion stakes in Dublin.

Arnotts, the iconic Dublin Department Store, has recently announced the arrival of Whistles in store. The department store will carry key lines from the brand's latest AW16 collection. The collection includes all the classics with simple yet sophisticated tailoring, luxurious, fluid fabrics, feminine fit and flare dresses as well as suede, cashmere and corduroy pieces that channel the sepia-tinted Seventies. Accessories are eye-catching too thanks to a monochromatic zebra print used to emphasise flat loafers and Cuban heeled ankle boots, diminutive camera bags and capacious totes. Outerwear is also key for the season.

GLANBIA Agribusiness opens new CountryLife Garden Centre in Buncloody

Glanbia recently celebrated the opening of their newest Country-Life garden centre in Glanbia Agribusiness Buncloody. Activities on the day included an expert gardening talk from GroMor ambassador Fiann O'Nualláin, visits from Wexford GAA stars and demonstrations from in-house horticulturist David Wallace. The store is the 13th CountryLife garden centre in the group who operate 53 stores in total primarily in Leinster.



Fiann O'Nualláin was on hand at the opening of a 13th CountryLife garden centre.

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2016 ON TRACK TO BE BUSIEST FOR VISITORS

According to Premier Taxfree, the leading VAT back specialist, the first seven months of 2016 saw the busiest period ever for overseas visitors to Ireland with over 5.4 million arrivals. This figure represents a 13% increase or 612,400 additional overseas visitors when compared with the same period in 2015. Results have also shown that between January and July, visitors from North America have increased by 15.5% versus the same period in 2015. With the key summer months drawing to a close, it is evident that it has been a turbulent period for retailers across Europe and the Eurozone. Since the initial worry that came with the British EU Referendum in June and, tourism spend increased in the UK and Ireland dramatically going into July and August. Notably, Ireland saw an increase in Tax Free sales of 12%, a huge improvement on the decrease that was seen in June. The timing of the end of Ramadan also contributed to the total gains in transactions in Ireland, with transactions to tourists from Gulf nations seeing gains of 39%, respectively.



RETAIL SOLUTIONS ACQUIRE JUSTSCAN



Seamus Quinn, Director and Jarlath Hennelly General Manager of Retail Solutions.

Retail Solutions, one of the leading Point of Sale (POS) providers in Ireland, has recently announced that it has completed their acquisition of JustScan, another leading provider of POS systems to the Grocery, Pharmacy and Fashion sectors. Speaking about the acquisition Retail Solutions Managing Director, Jarlath Hennelly, stated: "This acquisition opens an exciting period of opportunity for both businesses. It is a strong fit for RS and reinforces our strategic focus to be the leading POS provider in Ireland. JustScan represents another step in our goal to expand our market share into the sectors where JustScan operates through the proven abilities of their experienced team. Through JustScan, we are gaining immediate market share within what are strategic target sectors for us that we will build upon into the future. This growth would have cost much more in terms of time and financial resources to achieve organically. We're delighted to count on the expertise of JustScan's management and staff and we welcome them to the Retail Solutions team."



Fifth Tipperary store for Sam McCauley Chemists.

NEW SAM McCAULEY CHEMIST OPENS IN TIPPERARY TOWN



A new Sam McCauley Chemist opened in Tipperary town last month bringing to five the number of Sam McCauley Chemists in County Tipperary. More than €300,000 has been invested in the new facility by the Sam McCauley Chemist Group, which is Ireland's largest independently-owned pharmacy group. The new, state-of-the-art chemist in is one of a number of new stores planned by the Group nationwide this year. The chemist is located in the new 25,000 sq ft HSE Primary Care Centre on Rosanna Road in Tipperary. The Sam McCauley Chemists Group was established 25 years ago this year, and the McCauley family involvement in pharmacy dates back more than 60 years when Sam's father established the first store in Enniscorthy. Having establishing its first branch in Redmond Square in Wexford in 1991, it has now grown to 29 stores today, employing more than 550 people. With an annual turnover of more than €90 million, it is listed amongst the top 500 companies in Ireland and is one of a small group of pharmacies which holds the title of 'Deloitte Best Managed Companies'. Commenting on the opening, Sam McCauley said: "We are delighted to be expanding in County Tipperary and in particular to be locating alongside the new Primary Care centre. We strive to offer the best choice, value for money and convenience for our customers and we look forward to serving the people of Tipperary Town and its environs in the years to come."



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Customer Loyalty

How to hold what you have



Emma Wilson, Marketing Executive at Azpiral takes a look at customer loyalty trends while REI's Keelan Bourke speaks to many leading retailers in Ireland about how they bring loyalty to life.

Customer loyalty isn't what it used to be. Before businesses knew their customers personally, people shopped locally and remained loyal. Today, the marketplace is crowded and loud. The digital era has given additional power to the consumer, including more choice and access to more information. Customers are dictating what they want, when and where they want it. Consumers are savvy and are willing to shop around to get the best price and they expect a personalised service. In fact, research company Access Development reported that 79% of customers would take their business to a competitor within a week of experiencing poor customer service. As the competition for customer's attention has escalated, businesses are finding it more difficult than ever to engage.

So how can businesses stand out from the crowd and offer something that customers can truly connect with? It's a combination of various elements such as integrated technology, customer data, omni-channel and personalisation. A combination of all, ultimately, leads to improved customer experience and increased customer loyalty. Businesses don't have to engage in price wars. After all, a 2% increase in customer retention has the same effect as decreasing costs by 10% (Social annex, 2016).

Data is King

Firstly, understand your customers' needs, desires, expectations and behaviours. How? By using technology. Invest in a system that can harness your customer data and relay it to you in a usable fashion. Customer data is invaluable to brands these days. Using data to identify patterns will enable brands to understand their customers and in turn, help to understand what customers expect from them. Surveys show 73% of shoppers think loyalty programmes should demonstrate how loyal a company is to its customers. Offer your loyalty customers something they will appreciate because meeting your customers' expectations is a clear demonstration of your loyalty to your customers. So whether it's a savings club, % discounts on their favourite products or an additional service, for example, loyalty members get free delivery, understand what it is that your customers expect from you and deliver.

Irish brands tend to lag behind in customer experience compared to other EU brands and global entities. This is mostly due to businesses ignoring customers' expectations and opting for a 'one size fits all' approach or having an inconsistent service offering, in-store, online and across their entire business. Which brings me on to my second point. Omni-channel loyalty.

Omni-Channel is Key

"Omni-channel is defined as a multichannel sales approach that provides the customer with an integrated shopping experience. The customer can be shopping online from a desktop or mobile device, or by telephone, or in a bricks and mortar store and the experience would be seamless". (Hubspot, 2015). How can you ensure your loyalty programme is Omni-channel? By using technology.

An integrated loyalty software will facilitate an Omni-channel approach to your loyalty programme. Integrated software ensures that sign-up, points promotions, rewards, redemption and communications are facilitated across all channels i.e. epos, website and in-app. Integrated systems work well for multi-store businesses that have various epos types throughout their stores, as the system can integrate with the different epos companies and deliver a seamless loyalty experience to customers at each till throughout the business. This consistency in service provides a smooth experience for customers across all channels while providing businesses with a single view of their customers, leading to rich customer insights. Businesses that apply Omni-channel strategies see, on average, a 13% annual improvement in customer retention (Social annex, 2016). However, it is not enough to apply a consistent service without personalisation. Personalisation is one of the greatest things businesses can achieve with technology to engage their customers.

Let's Get Personal

Personalisation has taken marketplaces by storm with marketers claiming personalised marketing is the future of customer engagement. Personalisation is fuelled by customer data, "22% of consumers are happy to share data in return for a more personalised customer service or product" (Deloitte, 2015). Integrated technology, with both analytics and customisation capabilities, can equip businesses with the tools to deliver a personalised experience to their customers. Customers are more accessible than ever with smartphones, tablets and social media. However, consumer's attention span is declining rapidly, while the information they are exposed to is multiplying. Businesses need to get personal, use their customer data and integrated technology to identify customer trends and behaviours and target personalised communications, rewards and information to customers in the most relevant way. Well executed personalisation will deliver a better return on investment for your marketing efforts. As well as boost sales and amplify customer engagement. Personalisation in social media has reached new levels with the rise of YouTube and Snapchat, some businesses are even creating personalised videos for their customers.

On-Trend in 2017

Social media has become a viable sales platform, customer data resource and customer service tool for businesses. It's no doubt its popularity will continue to grow. New trends have emerged that point towards video as one of the most important channels of the future. According to Nielsen's Australian Online Landscape Review the average adult spends over seven



Global Leaders of LOYALTY

Starbucks

Starbucks, which is one of the largest coffeehouse chains in the world, also happens to have the most successful loyalty program in the US. This is a huge achievement considering the level of competition in their market. Starbucks recently introduced a rewards programme based on spend which has proven extremely effective for them. The more people go to Starbucks to drink coffee, the more they are rewarded, thanks to "My Starbucks Rewards," their new loyalty programme.

So how does it all work? Customers sign up to "My Starbucks rewards" for free and can have a gift card or loyalty card. With the gift card, they can load spend onto the card and start collecting Starbucks 'stars'. Giving customers the option to load spend onto their card makes them feel like their drinks are free when they redeem using their gift card. Every time a customer purchases a beverage they earn one star, the more they buy the more stars they collect, the bigger rewards they receive. When customers register for the Starbucks loyalty card they are at the welcome level, which includes a free birthday drink. Once a customer earns five stars on their loyalty card, they reach the green level which entitles them to get free refills of tea or coffee. Customers with 30 stars are considered Gold-level customers. These customers receive a free drink for every 15 stars, a personalised Gold Card that recognises them as preferred customers, and customised offers and coupons based on past purchases. Starbucks also added another channel to their loyalty programme by introducing a mobile rewards app. The app allows customers to order and pay through the app, check their loyalty account details and avail of promotions. Over 1 million Starbucks customers are registered on the "My Starbucks" app. This has been a great attribute to Starbucks loyalty programme success. Starbucks have seen an increase in customer engagement and customer retention since they added a rewards-based loyalty programme and app.

Sephora

Sephora, a French cosmetic retail store, known worldwide, has a broad range of product categories including skincare, fragrance, body and haircare, in addition to Sephora's own private label. In 2007, Sephora launched their customer loyalty program, 'Beauty insider' which is a points-based programme that categorises their customers based on their point balance and offers them gifts and exclusive experiences in return. In 2009, Sephora launched V.I.B. [Very Important Beauty Insider], the third tier and most elite level of Beauty insiders. Sephora has experienced continued success with their 'Beauty insiders' loyalty programme and has over 10 million users to date.

How does it work? The Sephora 'Beauty insiders' loyalty programme is divided into three tiers. Every dollar spent equates to a point. Tier one is the Beauty insiders, these customers are loyal but have a lower spend. Beauty insiders are rewarded with free products, personal recommendations and birthday gifts. Tier two are the VIB loyalty customers, these customers have a higher spend and more frequent spend. They are rewarded with access to a seasonal savings club, where they can save money on their loyalty card and spend at a later date, handpicked gifts and free makeovers. While the third tier, Sephora's most valuable customers are rewarded with 2-day shipping, a private hotline and invites to exclusive events. Sephora is constantly thinking of ways to reward loyal customers and offer them a little extra. Sephora has recently embraced Snapchat as a means to communicate with their customers by sharing videos of their new Birthday gifts and free products.

hours per month watching online videos. Some businesses have already embraced video to personalise advertising to their customers and have seen ROI, for customers that viewed their videos, increased dramatically. However, it is crucial that personalised videos must never feel like they're addressing a random audience. At a higher level, virtual reality technology is fast becoming a popular new resource for businesses. Virtual reality technology can bring both product and service experiences to life for customers. Experts predict retailers are going to be the greatest contributors to the VR economy as these types of technologies will play a major role in customer experiences. Video has also been embraced by businesses to assist customer service. Tech brands are using the popular app, Snapchat, to help users solve queries with their software, in an interactive and personalised way.

Another social media platform facilitating personalised customer service is Facebook. Facebook has recently introduced the launch of an e-commerce and retail customer service through their Facebook messenger app, Business on messenger. At the launch, Facebook showed how they could order a shirt with a retailer, receive confirmation of their order and modify their order, all within the Facebook messenger app. The communication process was easy and personal both which are vital in today's customer service.



What's Happening With Loyalty in Ireland? We asked some of Ireland's leading retailers:



Applegreen Rewards

Having recognised the need to thank and reward loyal customers, Applegreen launched Applegreen Rewards in January 2012. It was the first loyalty program of its kind in the Irish Forecourt Industry. This allowed us to not only reward loyal customers, it also helped safeguard sales and better understand customers shopping habits and needs.

Customers receive 1 point for every 1 litre of fuel and 4 points per euro shop spend. Customers are rewarded 150 free points for registration, which they can redeem for experiential rewards (Beauty, Golf, Family Days out etc) Gift Cards (Applegreen, One4all and Arnotts), Cinema tickets, Flights, Holiday vouchers etc and for (at different times) glassware, luggage etc.

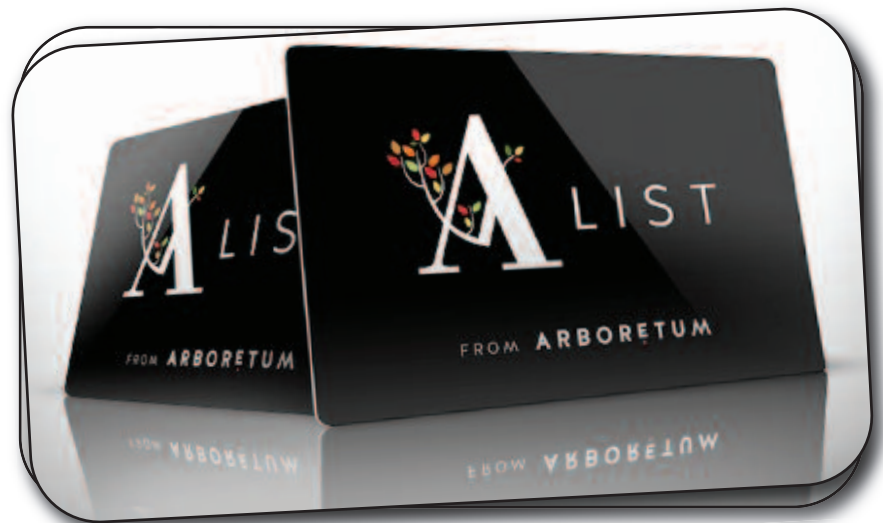
As an innovative and dynamic company Applegreen has changed and adapted to customer needs by introducing layers to the programme:

- Points conversion to cash vouchers to help the customer with their festive fuel cost, with additional treats for the whole family to enjoy. This is posted out to our most loyal

customers which has a great surprise and delight element to it.

- Giving back is embedded in company culture and the commitment to our charity partners is translated to the rewards programme where the customer can help their preferred cause by donating their points.
- Competitions are run on a regular basis which customers can enter by swiping their Rewards card. Prizes range from free fuel for a year, iPads, tickets to concerts and weekends away.
- For the past number of years Applegreen has sponsored the Christmas Panto at the Olympia Theatre, offering Rewards customers exclusive half price panto tickets with their points.

Applegreen Rewards is a diverse loyalty programme that aims to provide both value and choice to all types of drivers.



Arboretum A List Loyalty Programme

The Arboretum A List is a unique loyalty programme as it's not a point based system but works to drive ATV, frequency of visit and

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drive cross selling effectively. The success of A list to date has been phenomenal. In its first year, A List attracted 30,000 members compared to the previous points based club which attracted 9,000 in the same time period. A List has 77% of member email addresses which gives the company instant access at virtually no cost. Email open rates are consistently double industry average. A List members achieve double the average spend to non-members. During some of the company's larger promotional campaigns, it can extend to over five times ATV. The aim of A List is to allow members to be part of an elite community with benefits, exclusive rewards and pricing, personalised treats and top tips. The more they visit, the more we know about what they love so we'll be able to treat them.

75% of our takings come from A List members and we know when and what they are buying. We continuously measure the success of the A List programme, ensuring incomparable customer service and consistently monitoring spend between A List & non A List members. Last January we gave our A List a treat of a free hot chocolate. This campaign had a 41% redemption rate. Those who redeemed spent five times more in Arboretum Carlow and ten times more in Arboretum Wicklow than non member spend during this campaign. We have appointed an A List ambassador's from our staff who join in the A List planning and strategy sessions, driving A List in-store. In recent research over 92% of our A List members would recommend us to a friend, which they do. A List achieves business objectives but more importantly it keeps the customer at the core of everything we do.



Boots Advantage Card

With over 1 million active Boots Advantage Card users in Ireland, there is no doubt that this is one of the most generous loyalty schemes available to consumers.

So how does it work? The Boots Advantage Card rewards you for shopping with us. Collect four points for every €1 you spend online or in store. With one point equal to one cent you'll have enough points to spend on treats in no time. Once you've started collecting points, you can use them on almost any Boots product, including home spa indulgences, a new signature scent and more!

The Boots App

Shopping in store with Boots has never been better with

all the handy features in the Boots app, including access to all the latest, fantastic offers that are tailored just for you. Select the offers you love and they will be loaded instantly onto your Boots Advantage Card. It's that simple!

The Boots Parenting Club

Throughout pregnancy to when your child turns 3, get amazing benefits as a member of Boots Parenting Club. Collect 10 points per €1 spent on baby products in the baby area. You also receive free gifts for you and your little one, regular emails with expert advice, plus fantastic money saving offers through the Boots app, giving you better value on what you need most.



Fields Jewellers Privilege Club Card

Fields has operated a company loyalty card scheme since the early 80's. Originally the system was as basic as you could get. We simply handed our Privilege Club Card to any customer making a significant purchase. We would invite them to return to our store offering a discount. The card was linked to the sales person and our thoughts were to encourage not only a return visit to the store but also to the individual sales person. At that time Fields had only 2 stores and with significantly shorter trading hours, including no Sunday trading, it was very easy for customers and staff to build a lasting and consistent rapport.

As the business expanded and POS systems developed we progressed to a proper Privilege Club Card. At point of sale we would capture the customer's details and subsequently write to them thanking them for their business and while including the Privilege Club card we would advise them of the many benefits that being a card holder would bring. These benefits included Jewellery cleaning, valuations and advice, all free of charge, along with notification on offers and of course selective discounts.

The system was very effective although labour intensive. There was also the challenge around the accuracy with the collection addresses, particularly at busy times. At present we have changed the system to that of a Privilege Club with no actual card. We capture email addresses and customers are advised through emails of their benefits. The system has improved in terms of the accuracy in collecting customer data. There are few bounce backs.

However we are now considering a return to sending out a

“loyalty members get free delivery, understand what it is that your customers expect from you and deliver.”

- Welcomed by thousands of Ireland's favourite stores
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- Avail of the Revenue's €500 BIK Exemption
- Lowest admin and retailer's fees nationwide! No expiry date!
- Online bookings with 340,000 hotels worldwide
- Reward staff instantly with pre-stocked cards
- Support the Irish retail industry's favourite gift card!

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SMS LOYALTY MARKETING SUCCESS (PART 1 OF 3): THE ZIP YARD



The Zip Yard is an award winning garment alterations franchise with its distinctive yellow stores located throughout the Island of Ireland. Caroline Wallace, Director at The Zip Yard, tells us about the growth of their loyalty system and how it has played a huge part in increasing retention, driving footfall and ultimately increasing turnover.

"It's commonly known in retail that it's 6 to 7 times more expensive to gain a new customer than to retain an existing one."

With this in mind they created a paper based loyalty programme to encourage repeat business amongst their customer base. Though they quickly found that this paper based system, apart from being expensive, provided little in the way of actionable analytics and crucially didn't create a touchpoint with customers to give them a "wake up" to come back in store.

THE SOLUTION

In 2014 they decided to concentrate on mobility and partnered with InteractSMS Ireland's largest Integrated SMS/Loyalty service which is part of the Phonovation Group. Phonovation have been helping businesses to find a touchpoint with their customers through their phones both cellular and static for the last 28 years and so have proved to be the perfect partner.

The Zip Yard were able to benefit from Phonovation's wealth of industry experience within the mobility sector and the merging of the existing Zip Yard data and analytics. The result of this was to redefine loyalty for their particular business and customer base. Instead of looking at spend per customer the emphasis was shifted to the frequency of visits per customer. They were divided into 3 categories:

- 1) One time shoppers
- 2) Occasional shoppers
- 3) Frequent shoppers



Moving customers from category 1 to category 2 or 3 became the main drive. The average frequency per customer was worked out as 1.7 and a target was set to increase this to 2+ visits per customer per year. This would result in a 20% increase in turnover per year.

To achieve this InteractSMS was integrated with The Zip Yards EPOS systems, which created a live CRM database of all their customers and their shopping trends. The InteractSMS digital mobile loyalty programme could now change quickly based on insights into real-time data in a way that wasn't possible with a paper based or even a loyalty card system while also reducing costs significantly.

The Zip Yard began by sending 2 types of automated messages directly to their customers' mobiles:

- 1) Notifications when customers' garments are ready for collection. This handy service provides real value for the customer to help improve loyalty but also helped The Zip Yard by reducing non-collected garments taking up room within each of their outlets.

- 2) Voucher promotions based on each individual customer's shopping history.

THE RESULT

The Zip Yard have surpassed their 2 visits per customer per year target since they implemented the InteractSMS paperless loyalty programme in 2014. The promotions have become continuously more intricate and effective as more data is added daily. Customer feedback has told them that people far prefer having all of their loyalty vouchers saved on their mobiles, instead of lost somewhere in their bags. Franchisees prefer how much "slicker and quicker" it is which allows them to serve customers more effectively. But the greatest advantage has been that specifically targeted vouchers are now sent directly to the right people's phones at the right times. This touchpoint with customers has driven loyalty and therefore The Zip Yard's success.

Asked if she has any advice for other retail businesses thinking of using an SMS based loyalty system, Caroline says:

"If you haven't already started, do it today"

In the next issue of Retail Excellence we'll look at another SMS based loyalty programme success story, Halpenny Golf.

To discuss further our mobility loyalty system for your retail business, contact us today:

Email: retail@interactsms.com

For more information about The Zip Yard, visit www.thezipyard.ie.

physical card. Recent feedback would indicate that while most customers will not retain the actual card over a long period of time. Having received a card they are more likely to remember the connection to the brand and will highlight their membership to us while revisiting the stores. Due to the nature of the Jewellery business we do not operate a points system but we do track the frequency of store visits and reward accordingly. In offering any loyalty rewards scheme, retailers have to be very proactive in maintaining contact with the customer. There must be a genuine benefit to being involved. We have found that while discount is important, often it is the added value around services and benefits that makes the point of difference.



Holland & Barrett Rewards For Life

Launched in 2011, Holland & Barrett International's Rewards for Life programme celebrates its fifth birthday this year. With over ten million active members, the programme is free for customers to sign up to and offers four points for every £/€1 spent in store, online and via direct mail.

Rewards for Life customers are spread far across the globe. Premiering on the UK high street, members now shop with Rewards for Life cards online from Russia to Gibraltar, from Lithuania to Kazakhstan.

2014 saw the launch of the Rewards for Life mobile app, helping to cater for a younger Holland & Barrett audience looking to rack up points on the go. The reward scheme has been particularly well-received in the Republic of Ireland, with over 600,000 cards currently activated across the 50 stores being used on a daily basis. To put this into context, that's 13 per cent of the entire population of the Republic of Ireland shopping with a Holland & Barrett Rewards for Life card! The scheme is so popular across the country that now over 70% of transactions in Ireland are completed with a Rewards for Life card. Tim Lawrence, Director of Customer Marketing for Holland & Barrett said "Our Rewards for Life programme is invaluable for us as a way to provide our customers with the best possible shopping experience, both on the high street and online. Not only

does it help us to reward Holland & Barrett regulars for their loyalty, but it also helps us inform which new product trends our customers are looking for, and pick the best possible offers to achieve our goal of make healthy living affordable for all types of shoppers on the high street."



IKEA FAMILY!

Making the everyday a little more wonderful is the aim at IKEA and our loyalty programme, IKEA FAMILY, helps us do just that with great offers, exclusive events, free treats and lots of fun surprises. IKEA FAMILY members enjoy great offers and discounts on selected products throughout the store including the restaurant and Swedish Food Market. From 1 October, members can purchase our SLADDA bicycle for just €449. With a regular retail price of €550, that's a massive saving of €101.

And that's just one of the great benefits available to IKEA Family members. We offer a full range of IKEA FAMILY products which are always available at special member prices. Members also receive an extra 10% off sales prices as well as free tea and coffee in our restaurant from Monday to Friday. All IKEA FAMILY members benefit from free product insurance on their IKEA purchases which protects their brand new IKEA goods against accidental damage on the way home or during assembly.

Swipe a Surprise is a fun promotion which runs in store from time to time. During the promotion, IKEA FAMILY members have the chance to win great prizes when they make a purchase with us.

Prizes include delicious IKEA treats, cash and a family trip to IKEA's homeland of Sweden.



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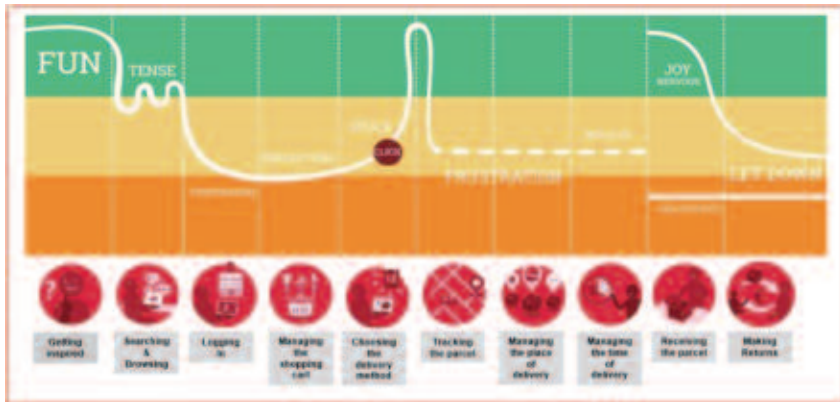
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THE “EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER” OF SHOPPING ONLINE

IT'S OCTOBER AGAIN – where has the year gone? The Christmas season is fast approaching and with consumer sentiment improving again following a dip after the Brexit vote, there's a strong expectation that retail and eetail will experience an exceptionally good festive period. For parcel delivery companies like DPD, just like retailers, Christmas seems to come earlier each year. We've seen stock deliveries to stores increasing from August onwards as retailers start to prepare their stock for the Christmas demand. Thanksgiving is on 24th November this year. Who would have thought that an American holiday dating back to 1621 could have had such an influence on consumer trends? Black Friday, an American invention which was created to make a commercial opportunity out of the Thanksgiving holiday, has really taken a foothold on this side of the Atlantic too. Of course the timing is perfect – just four weeks ahead of the 25th December – the consumer is already tuned into purchasing mode. In Europe, so far, countries that are more in the US sphere of influence seem to have taken to the Black Friday idea more, Ireland and the UK among them.



The 2015 Black Friday weekend truly made its mark here with Irish consumers spending up to €100m in the period. The Black Friday spending spree will be longer this year we think, with more retailers and eetailers staggering their sales so that they run over an extended period, making it easier to manage demand and control stock and delivery. Of course the effect of Brexit on exchange rates could have a significant influence on our online shopping, particularly for those looking for value from UK based websites.

DPD Group's 2015 European Young Generation eCommerce study, a survey of young European online shoppers, defined the online customer's journey as a "roller coaster of emotions". The survey was conducted across five countries – UK, Spain, Germany, France and Poland – with in-depth interviews held with online shoppers ranging in age from eighteen to twenty five. Those questioned saw online shopping as a way of life, part of their normal daily routine. This is an agile shopping generation though, who frequently go back and forth between online and offline – often making their purchase online but going to the physical retail location to check out the product or checking out prices online and going to the retail outlet to try out and to purchase. The multi-channel approach is a regularly used. These consumers feel empowered by getting a good deal and they'll search to find it – looking at comparison websites, looking for peer feedback online and via feedback sites like Trustpilot etc. Peer reviews and independent feedback sites are viewed as more trustworthy than information received from a salesperson. They engage with peers primarily via social media – not Facebook which is viewed as being more for the "older" generation – using applications like Snapchat and WhatsApp.

In terms of pricing, hidden fees frustrate – they want the final price up front, with no hidden extras that only become apparent at checkout. The survey results showed really positive feedback around personalisation. Consumers really appreciated when eetailers made the shopping experience fit the individual. Features like suggestions around what others who bought the product also purchased, or information about previous purchase were viewed very positively. Consumers also liked features such as filters that made it easier to find products and narrow down choice. Good quality product images and even video were also deemed as important.

The young online shopper still uses multiple devices and usage can vary depending on the stage of the purchasing journey. PC often plays a part particularly when making the purchase, but smartphones and mobile devices are most likely to be used for tracking and communication updates. Payment is still considered somewhat of a risk area – but provided that trusted methods are available (PayPal and credit card) then there is little concern.

Returns are a real pain point. A clear returns policy is important with many

opting not to purchase from an eetailer who doesn't provide clarity regarding returns. Delivery is also a concern. The online shopper wants a delivery process that is adapted to them rather than the other way around. Lack of tracking and ability to define the day and location of delivery are real areas of contention.

What was defined by the DPD Group report as the online shopper's "rollercoaster of emotions" through their shopping journey is presented below. The high points and low points are clear, as are the range of emotions experienced.

But this rollercoaster presents many opportunities for those of us involved in the online shopping journey as we try to eliminate the low points.

There were four key areas of opportunity identified:

- **MAKE ME FEEL LIKE A SMART SHOPPER**
 - o Make the process easy for the consumer – clear steps and navigation paths.
 - o Show the consumer the best offers.
 - o Ensure information defined clearly and simply.
- **CREATE TRUST THROUGHOUT THE JOURNEY**
 - o Demonstrate to the consumer that transactions and engagements are secure.
 - o Have a clear path for query resolution – don't hide your customer services contacts.
- **ME CENTRIC RELATIONSHIP**
 - o Customise experiences to suit the consumer.
 - o Personal profile.
 - o Engagement options available across multiple devices – pc, mobile, tablet – and channels – webchat, social media, email etc.
- **FLEXIBILITY OF PROCESSES, THAT CAN MOVE WITH THE CONSUMER AND RESPOND TO CHANGES**
 - o Options around delivery that are defined by me and not by the carrier.
 - o Simple, flexible returns options.
 - o Ability to engage across multiple device-types.



The consumers' needs are constantly evolving. By continuous engagement, we can monitor this evolution and provide solutions to meet these needs.

DPD Ireland has just launched its Pickup parcel shop network with almost 600 parcel pick up and drop off points throughout Ireland.
For more information contact us at T: 090 64 20500 or E: pickup@dpd.ie W: dpd.ie/pickup



FEATURE E-COMMERCE



David Campbell, REI eCommerce Executive

Irish eCommerce Trustmark

Retail Excellence Ireland in conjunction with Ecommerce Europe launched the Irish Trustmark. There has been an excellent response from members applying for the logo to increase consumer confidence when purchasing online. With the Irish online market valued at over €6 billion and the UK market estimated to be worth €127 billion this emphasises the huge opportunity for Irish retailers to avail of. For more information and how to apply please contact david.campbell@retailexcellence.ie



How the Germans like to eCommerce

The German eCommerce market is rapidly increasing. 516 million people use the Internet in Europe, 296 million of them are e-shoppers. About 50 million of Germans have bought goods or services online in 2015. Compared to 2010, the amount of online shoppers has increased by around 20 percent. In the category of B2C eCommerce sales, with almost 60 billion euros spent shopping online, Germany is in the Top 10 in Europe. Two thirds of the German Internet shoppers purchased exclusively at domestic online stores. Why not conquer that market, too?

Barriers to growth for companies selling goods internationally

Growth of cross-border eCommerce is one of the European Union's greatest missions. Apart from logistics/distribution, taxation questions and legal issues are among the top barriers to cross-border eCommerce in Europe. Therefore, a harmonization of the legal framework on consumer rules for the sale of goods, services and digital content is in effect within the European Union. To ensure smooth cross-border entry, Irish online traders should follow the same principles that they apply in their domestic markets. However, to ensure success in foreign markets, Irish e-merchants have to pay attention to

the preferences of the target group. Almost 50 percent of German consumers cancel their order due to the lack of their preferred payment method. Knowing that fact can help to attract German clients. Irish online retailers that wish to attract German customers must know how to attract them and must consider preferred payment methods:

TOP 5 preferred payment methods of German consumers (online-shops):

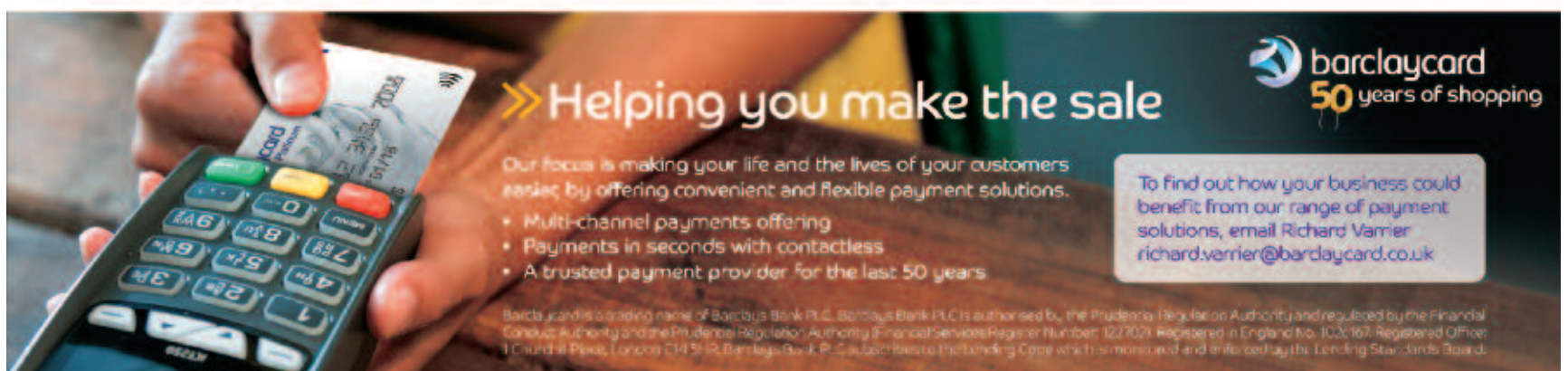
1. PayPal
2. Pay per invoice (after delivery)
3. Direct debit
4. Credit card
5. Prepayment by bank transfer

Your big (German) brother is watching you

Before the consumer is bound by a distance contract, or any corresponding offer, the trader shall provide the consumer with a large number of information in a clear and comprehensible manner, e.g. the information about the main characteristics of the goods or services. This is, on the basis of many harmonized European Regulations and Directives, not surprising for both German and Irish traders. What makes it special is Germany's exceptional competition law system.

If these applicable German & European rules and regulations are disregarded or incorrectly interpreted, legal action from competitors, consumer protection agencies or fair trade organizations may occur. Last year, nearly a third of online traders in Germany faced legal action. The most common reasons for a legal action in Germany are inadmissible legal texts and incorrect or misleading product descriptions. Therefore, a sound knowledge of German and European law is necessary to avoid any legal mistakes.

The Irish trader shall provide the German consumer the information of their identity, such as trading

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FEATURE E-COMMERCE



law designating the law of the Member State in which the seller or supplier is established is unfair only in so far as it displays certain specific characteristics inherent in its wording or context which cause a significant imbalance in the rights and obligations of the parties.

Even the language used for the shop and the legal texts should not be a barrier. Irish traders need legal texts in German only in the case of expanding their customer base towards German customers only, e.g. using an entirely German shop with a German domain such as "example-shop.de".

Irish retailers are continuously progressing and have successfully capitalised on trading online internationally. With the UK eCommerce market expected to be valued at €127 billion for 2016 and the EU market worth over €500 billion this emphasises the huge opportunity for Irish retailers to promote the growth of cross-border eCommerce for SME's.

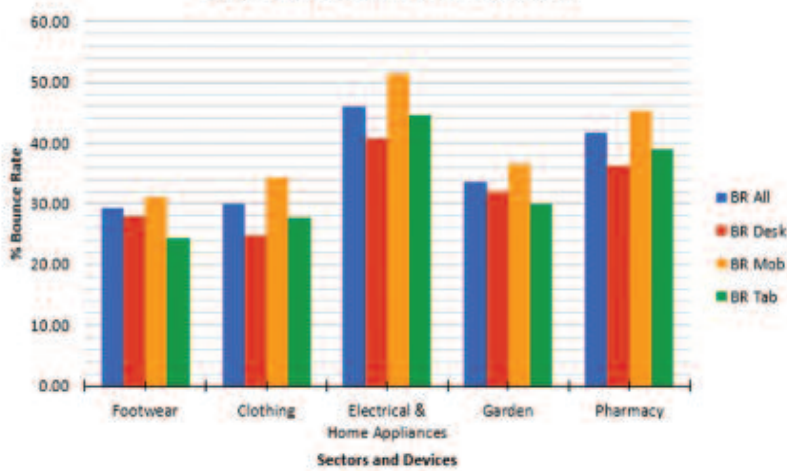


Händlerbund

Händlerbund was founded in Leipzig in 2008 and is one of the largest online trade association in Europe. The association promotes exchange between traders and service providers to support digital and stationary trade in a sustainable manner as well as broadening the horizons for the future. Händlerbund actively engages with its members and partners thanks to the representation and bringing together of various services throughout Europe.



July 2016: Bounce Rate by Sector



REI / StudioForty9 eCommerce Dashboard Report

The monthly eCommerce Dashboard report is a fantastic resource available to our members trading online. The report highlights the key online metrics including Conversion Rates, Bounce Rates and Average Quantity Purchased. This has been an excellent tool over the past two years for eCommerce managers looking to benchmark performance and gain a competitive advantage in their online strategies.

This year sector reports were added such as footwear, clothing and pharmacy. This new addition makes for more accurate analysis of the data and an invaluable resource for all retailers trading online. Each month the data is compiled by REI eCommerce executive David Campbell and the key trends and analysed by REI eCommerce committee member Ger Keohane of StudioForty9. Over seventy retailers contribute to the reports and this emphasises the growing strength of our members online. With the EU eCommerce market valued at over €500 billion for 2016 we would encourage all members to utilise this report. If you would like to participate please contact david.campbell@retailexcellence.ie

name, the address, telephone number and email address. European consumers have the right to withdrawal from a distance contract. The trader shall therefore provide information about this right of withdrawal, such as length, procedure, costs and effects of the withdrawal. Due to the Directive on consumer rights (Directive 2011/83/EU), traders are allowed to split the costs for returning products. In case of a cross-border return of products such a clause in the Information on the Right of Withdrawal can save multiple expenses for the trader.

Furthermore, the arrangements for payment, delivery, performance and the time by which the trader undertakes to deliver the goods or to perform the services shall be provided. Moreover, data protection plays a very important role in online retail. On the basis of German data protection law, traders are obliged to inform visitors of their online presence about data collection, processing and use of personal data.

Internationalization

As mentioned above, legal issues are among the top barriers to cross-border eCommerce in Europe. E-merchants should not necessarily be afraid of foreign law. EU legislation in principle allows choice-of-law terms. EU Regulations provide that the parties may choose the law applicable to a consumer contract, provided that the protection is ensured which the consumer is afforded by provisions of the law of their country that cannot be derogated from by agreement. In those circumstances a pre-formulated term on the choice of the applicable

For all queries eCommerce related, please contact REI eCommerce Executive, David Campbell – david.campbell@retailexcellence.ie



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10 Ways to Boost Sales this CHRISTMAS



KEELAN BOURKE

Christmas 2016 is set to be another bumper shopping period with many consumers getting into the festive mood earlier and for longer than before. Due to the mixed summer trading period, it's critical that the Christmas period is maximised by every retailer. Keelan Bourke, REI Member Relationship Manager investigates some practical ways to help boost sales and build growth in the most important period in retail.

1

Starts on the outside

The first image the customer receives of your business is from the outside and with many customers traveling to the nearby towns and cities to do their shopping, it's important that your shop front makes a lasting impression. Think about placing a festive bow on the shop front or some eye catching window decals. Who doesn't remember the lovely red bow on the front of Clerys?

2

Get your website in order

81% of consumer now research online before buying. This glaringly important stat highlights the importance of your website. Make sure you have all your key products on show on your website with any special offers and festive opening hours clearly displayed. It's important that your business is visible during this key time, so please make sure it's easily located on Google Maps with your contact details and opening hours clearly presented.

3

Attractive POS in store

It's important that all products with special offers are displayed clearly. Consumers are time poor and want to be in and out of the shop in the least amount of time. Common present ideas should be front and centre in store with the appropriate prices visible. Tell the consumer a bit about the product, where it comes from, why it's great, as consumers like to shop by themselves without the help of your team so tell them using attractive point of sale material. Bring the product to life with really strong POS narrating the product story.

4

Refresh your Customer Service

As Alf Dunbar states 'customer service is an attitude, not a department'. It is so important that all your staff are giving the very best customer service possible. Make sure all part-time staff can deliver the same level of service and also know the company's returns policy inside out. A great tip an REI member shared with me a while back was to actually mystery shop your own staff. Help them with constructive feedback from it and make sure that they can upsell, cross sell and tell you a bit more about the product. This will help to grow sales immediately.

5

Prepare for Black Friday & Cyber Monday

Whether you like it or not, Black Friday and Cyber Monday are here to stay for the foreseeable future. Plan now what your level of participation will be. Any members that participated online last year saw significant growth. It's important to plan early, get the word out about your offers and maximise sales over this period. Just like your website, make sure you can handle the footfall if you participate.

6

Promote your Christmas Club

Make sure that you are actively promoting your Christmas Club. This will allow customers to pick out products and pay for them on a weekly and monthly basis in the lead up to Christmas. Many families are still feeling the pinch and a Christmas Club is a great way to attract customers. There are a number of online businesses who thrive on credit sales, so there is no reason they can't have this option with their local store. Some customers start putting away items in July so the earlier you promote it the better.

7

Have enough Till Points

Queuing is the most frustrating activity for any Christmas shopper especially with more and more leaving it to the last minute. It's important that you have enough till points which are clearly identifiable. One of our 1st choice suppliers eirpoint now have handheld connected iPhones that can take card payment anywhere in store.

8

Upgrade your Merchandising

If you want to sell a premium product with a premium price tag, make sure that it is displayed in a first class manner. Invest in your props and mannequins in order to help make products more attractive and improve the experience. It can be easy to get lost in the Christmas spirit and go over the top with the merchandising displays and decoration in store, but remember that less is more.

9

Additional Festive Services

Can you offer your valued customers any additional services that will ease their journey? Offering to wrap your customer's product is a major advantage and will be a big hit with the male consumer. What about also offering free tea/coffee or festive mince pies to your shoppers on one busy day. You will be surprised how appreciative they will be. The power of word of mouth here can really help grow sales.

10

Appeal to Those Presents Going Abroad

As you're aware, over the last number of years, many of the younger demographic have had to emigrate to find work, but rest assured the Irish mammy won't forget to send them something lovely this Christmas. Offer any presents being sent abroad to include an Irish Care Package of Tayto crisps and Barrys tea etc. Ask them to send back a photo when they receive it to post on your social media and create a bit of buzz about it. This is a great tactic to increase sales and generate a talking point.



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FEATURE

RETAILER UNCOVERED



Name: MICK GILBRIDE
Company: Hamleys Toys Ireland
Position: Store Manager

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE BUSINESS YOU WORK WITH? Hamleys is the finest toy shop in the world! We try to create an amazing experience for all of our customers.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY? I started working in Spar when I was 14 as a part time job when I was in school. I've always

loved the feeling of working closely with a team in store every day. Worked my way up to manager so hopefully I'm doing something right!

WHICH RETAILER (NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL) DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST AND WHY? Slightly biased as I used to work in Tesco, but their systems are amazing. The operational efficiencies they get out of their stores are impressive.

Amazingly passionate about being a store manager –something I have kept to this day.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE RETAIL STORE AND WHY? So hard to choose but possibly Donnybrook Fair – the original one on Morehampton road. Such a unique food offering and service experience. The look and feel is excellent.

WHO HAS TAUGHT YOU THE MOST IN YOUR CAREER AS A RETAILER? Colin Fergusson – old HMV manager. Tough taskmaster, but brilliant. We used to read bestseller reports together on way home from work! Amazingly passionate about being a store manager –something I have kept to this day.

WHERE IS YOUR FAVOURITE HOLIDAY DESTINATION? Favourite place I've visited was Japan. A one off experience but incredible place.

WHAT WAS YOUR LAST PURCHASE? My lunch at Tesco. It was very good ☺

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB? Leading a team to over achieve Vs expected results and developing my team – making a positive difference in their lives.

IF YOU WERE NOT IN RETAIL WHAT CAREER WOULD YOU HAVE PURSUED? No idea!

MICK GILBRIDE



Name: DEREK WOGAN
Company: Wogan Build Centre
Position: Managing Director

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE BUSINESS YOU WORK WITH? Wogan Build Centre - Home Improvement and Builders Providers

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY? Being immersed in the family business from a young age, I gained an understanding of the retail environment

WHICH RETAILER (NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL) DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST AND WHY? I probably admire Avoca, because they created an experience for customers and people are happy to

The responsibility and challenge to become a better business.

pay a higher price for that experience.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE RETAIL STORE AND WHY? I like 53 Degrees North, because I like to spend time at outdoor activities, and it has all the "toys" you need.

WHO HAS TAUGHT YOU THE MOST IN YOUR CAREER AS A RETAILER? Gerard Wogan

WHERE IS YOUR FAVOURITE HOLIDAY DESTINATION? Anywhere I can surf!

WHAT WAS YOUR LAST PURCHASE? Microsoft surface book laptop.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB? The responsibility and challenge to become a better business.

IF YOU WERE NOT IN RETAIL WHAT CAREER WOULD YOU HAVE PURSUED? Continued in marketing, having finished my masters.

DEREK WOGAN

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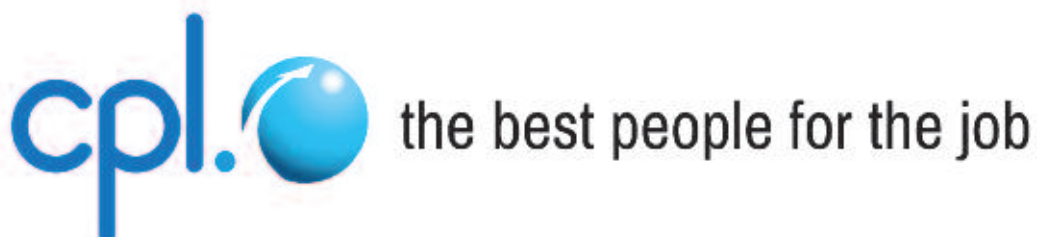
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Name: JOHN SLATTERY
Company: Shannon Airport Authority
Position: Shop Manager

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE BUSINESS YOU WORK WITH? Duty Free Shop in Shannon Airport selling top brands in perfume, cosmetics, handbags, sunglasses, Aran knitwear, chocolates and alcohol.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY? I started as an Inventory Controller before moving into Purchasing

WHICH RETAILER (NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL) DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST AND WHY? Amazon. You can find anything there. It allows me to keep track of trends, changes in technology or new products to the market.

I started as an Inventory Controller before moving into Purchasing.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE RETAIL STORE AND WHY? Brown Thomas in Limerick. They stock all my favourite brands. The products are always displayed really well and the staff are very helpful.

WHO HAS TAUGHT YOU THE MOST IN YOUR CAREER AS A RETAILER? Darren Smyth

WHERE IS YOUR FAVOURITE HOLIDAY DESTINATION? Las Vegas

WHAT WAS YOUR LAST PURCHASE? Asics Running Shoes

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB? Every day is different

IF YOU WERE NOT IN RETAIL WHAT CAREER WOULD YOU HAVE PURSUED? Computer Programming

JOHN SLATTERY



Name: AOIFE BRENNAN
Company: Colourtrend
Position: Retail Manager, Colourtrend Swords

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE BUSINESS YOU WORK WITH? Colourtrend is a paint manufacturer based in Celbridge, Co. Kildare. We have 6 of our own retail stores and I work in the store on 84 Main Street, Swords. We offer customers expert colour advice for their homes and businesses

offering a huge range of colours in all finishes. We also offer a large range of wallpaper - over 200 books to choose from. We aim to be a one stop shop for all paint and wallpaper needs.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY? I started with Colourtrend in 2010, having come from the hotel business. I was taken on for 6 months to project manage the build and opening of a premises in the UK. When this was completed, I was asked to cover for maternity leave for the then Manager of their Head Office store in Celbridge. After this time a new store was opening in Swords and I was offered the position here. Colourtrend Swords opened in 2012 and I've been here since!

WHICH RETAILER (NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL) DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST AND WHY? I think Brown Thomas. There's such a range of items, everything is displayed so well and it feels like you've come somewhere special when you go through the doors.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE RETAIL STORE AND WHY? I have 2 - The Orchard in Celbridge is great. Being a gardener I love their selection

After the consultation it is great to see them leave with a smile on their face!

of plants and outdoor accessories. The range they have for indoor is very varied and well displayed. I also enjoy Ardkeen Food Store in Waterford. They have such a variety of food and are great supporters of Irish food producers. There seem to be new products every time I go in!

WHO HAS TAUGHT YOU THE MOST IN YOUR CAREER AS A RETAILER? Many people! The hotel business gives a real in-depth lesson in dealing with the public and customer service. I was 20 years here before changing career to the retail sector. I learned a lot while based in Colourtrend Celbridge both from my Manager, Kevin Haughey, and my colleagues in the store there.

WHERE IS YOUR FAVOURITE HOLIDAY DESTINATION? For beaches you couldn't ask for better than the Kerry beaches, when the weather disappoints here I love Sardinia for a sun holiday. Toronto too is a favourite of mine, such a variety of activities to do here

WHAT WAS YOUR LAST PURCHASE? Samsung Tablet

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB? A few things, the challenge mainly! Achieving things in a sector that is so varied. Also, the satisfaction of assisting customers with their colour choices. Sometimes, they come in feeling at a loss as to where to begin making their colour choices, it can be very overwhelming for a lot of people. After the consultation it is great to see them leave with a smile on their face!

IF YOU WERE NOT IN RETAIL WHAT CAREER WOULD YOU HAVE PURSUED? I enjoy gardening so maybe something related to plants.

AOIFE BRENNAN

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- Assistance with investigations, recruitment etc.

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- Prepare bespoke letter and documentation e.g. employee handbook, contracts (outside the standard templates provided).
- Assist with investigation into theft, bullying accusations etc.
- Recruitment assistance - job specification development, interview techniques and questions.

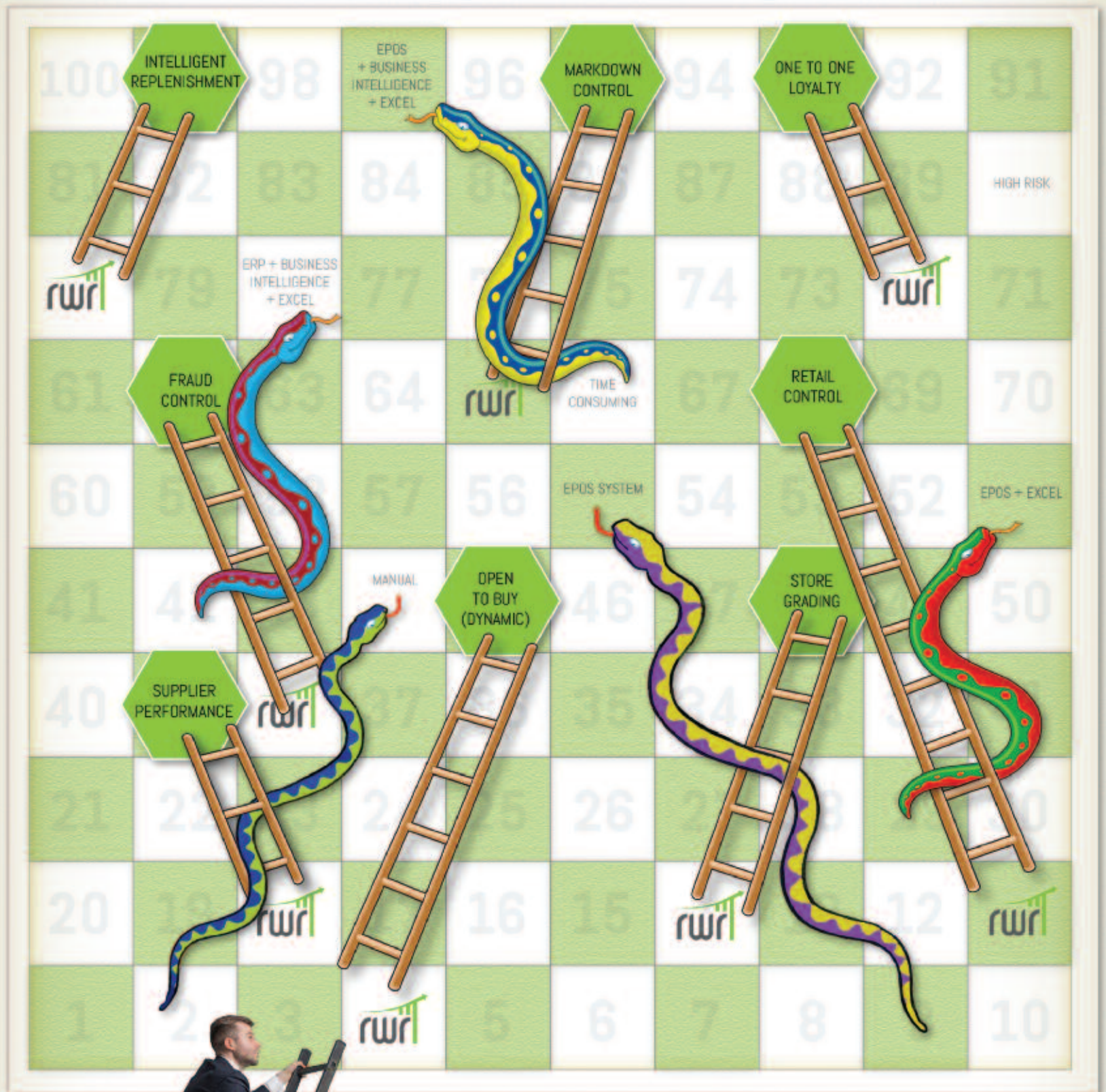
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BREXIT

The impact for fashion retail



AIDAN SCOLLARD

As a result of the UK referendum decision to leave the EU, many questions now arise for retail businesses and in particular the retail fashion industry. The initial impact of Brexit has seen a slide in the sterling currency which will likely benefit ROI shoppers both on a cross-border basis to Northern Ireland and on purchasing clothing and other retail fashion goods in the UK. Indeed, recent reports have indicated that overseas buyers are continuing to acquire luxury goods out of London based retailers due to the relevant weakness of the sterling currency.

As a result of the UK referendum decision to leave the EU, many questions now arise for retail businesses and in particular the retail fashion industry. The initial impact of Brexit has seen a slide in the sterling currency which will likely benefit ROI shoppers both on a cross-border basis to Northern Ireland and on purchasing clothing and other retail fashion goods in the UK. Indeed, recent reports have indicated that overseas buyers are continuing to acquire luxury goods out of London based retailers due to the relevant weakness of the sterling currency.

Cross-border shoppers from the Republic of Ireland travelling to Northern Ireland & UK are therefore likely to see better value for the Euro spend. It should be remembered that all consumer rights continue to apply as before and therefore Irish people buying online from UK traders are still entitled to all of the same rights under the EU consumer protection legislation.

For example, under EU rules, Irish consumers who shop online from UK based traders have the right to a 14 day cooling off period which allows them to change their minds and return the goods for a refund. This basis still applies as it is "business as usual" until further notice in dealing with UK retailers.

Likewise, UK retailers currently operating in Ireland are likely to see a benefit to their results from their Irish activities with the relative strength of the Euro and indeed prices are unlikely to change from the large UK fashion chains operating in the Republic as they will continue to sell stock at the previously quoted sterling/euro exchange rate thereby likely generating additional margin in the interim.

Although there is a small movement in the minimum wage here in Ireland from €9.15 to €9.25 as a result of the low pay commission recommendation, it is unlikely to have any major impact on results for such UK retailers here in Ireland.

With only certain brands of goods being manufactured in the UK it is not likely there will be any major impact to retail fashion prices as most of these goods are effectively sourced from dollar based economies.

Whilst UK fashion retailers may experience some boost to their results from their Irish operations, this is likely to be compensated by any imminent recession which may occur locally in the UK. For many of the larger entities, loss of confidence in the UK stock market has resulted in big share price falls for many of those larger entities. Those that will struggle are likely to be the British focussed fashion retailers with already tight margins whilst some of the larger retailers such as luxury brands, online fashion retailers such as ASOS and discount chains such as Primark/Pennys are likely to see benefits to their results.

Typically those larger retailers will have protected themselves from volatility in foreign exchange rates through hedging and therefore the hit to confidence is the more immediate threat as consumers in the UK are likely to curtail their clothes shopping in hard times.

Many of the larger companies are now looking at their foreign exchange policy but this can be difficult for companies to predict and adjust. It would be usual for most clothing companies to hedge for the second half of 2017/2018. With foreign currency markets volatile, treasury departments of many of those firms are likely to be reviewing their hedging policies.

Obviously faced with higher sourcing costs, one solution may be for those retailers to pass on those costs to consumers through higher prices. However, in an already weakened market in the UK, there will be little appetite from consumers in the UK to bear any

inflation costs. The average price of clothing has fallen by 15% in the last 10 years according to official UK data.

Therefore the key for many of those UK headquartered retail fashion companies will be their ability to mitigate the cost increases they face.

Other options could include changing the mix of sourcing countries and further increasing the proportion of direct sourcing from factories, cutting out middle-men. This is likely to have an

impact on those retailers and their pricing in the future in the Irish market as they are

obviously a significant presence on the Irish fashion scene.

Those clothing retailers with the biggest margins are best placed to be able to weather the storm. Major UK names such as Next, Britain's most successful clothing retailer of the last decade, has achieved an operating margin for 2015/2016 of 20.8% according to recent Reuters data whereas Marks & Spencer on 7.4% is diluted by half of its business being in the lower margin food sector, with Debenhams on 5.8% for 2014/2015, Sports Direct on 9.4% and Primark on 11.9% (for its most recent quarter).

It is therefore likely to be a difficult trading period over the next while for many of those retailers and indeed Irish indigenous fashion retailers coping with such volatility on the currency market. The potential for an impact in the Irish market from any recession, even if temporary, in the UK, will likely have an impact on the spending habits of Irish consumers and if there is an impact from Brexit for many normal Irish indigenous trading companies, this may also have an impact on the spending capacity of employees and general consumers going forward.

In summary, it looks like an unsettled trading period until there is some certainty in the market around the timeline and future trading relationship which the UK will have with the rest of the EU.

AIDAN SCOLLARD, PARTNER - AUDIT AND ASSURANCE



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THE PENSION PROBLEM



TOMMY SMYTH

On 18th July 2016 the Pensions Authority issued a consultation document which sets out a package of proposals to reform and simplify supplementary private pension provision in Ireland. The Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar, T.D welcomed the reform proposals and related consultation at a meeting of the Pensions Authority stating:

"The current situation where a majority of our citizens will rely solely on the State pension in retirement is unsustainable and we have a duty to ensure that a better system is now put in place. As a result I regard the development and introduction of a new, universal, workplace retirement saving system for those workers without supplementary pensions as an essential objective of mine as Minister for Social Protection."

The proposals, if implemented, are intended to achieve significant improvements in how supplementary pensions are managed and overseen. This is nothing new. Approximately 10 years ago, the late Minister Seamus Brennan was flying similar kites to Leo Varadkar. Then we had the recession. Now we are coming out of it!



Has the time come for Compulsory Workplace pensions in Ireland?

Ireland is one of the only two OECD countries not to enforce any form of mandatory pension schemes in the workplace. There is a need for tighter pension provisions to increase the number of workers with workplace pensions and to simplify the pensions landscape in Ireland. The necessity for a sustainable Irish pension system, particularly in the private sector, is evident through statistics released on the over 65 population:-

- Approximately 17,000 additional pensioners are in receipt of the state pension every year and, as the general population is living longer, the average time drawing the state pension is increasing.
- There is an estimated 15% increase in the total population within the next 5 years.
- Reportedly less than 50% of private sector have any form of pension provisions.

Socially, the advantages of mandatory pensions are clear as it would lead to an automatic and immediate increase in private pension saving and a reduction in the proportion of those

currently of working age who will have inadequate resources in retirement. Many people will say that they intend on having a pension but are consistently procrastinating when it comes to setting it up. If such individuals are auto-enrolled into a pension fund it is likely that they will not opt-out – and further, given that they have made (but not enacted) the decision to increase their saving, it is likely that they will be content to have been given that push to save.

So what could Compulsory Workplace pensions mean for employers?

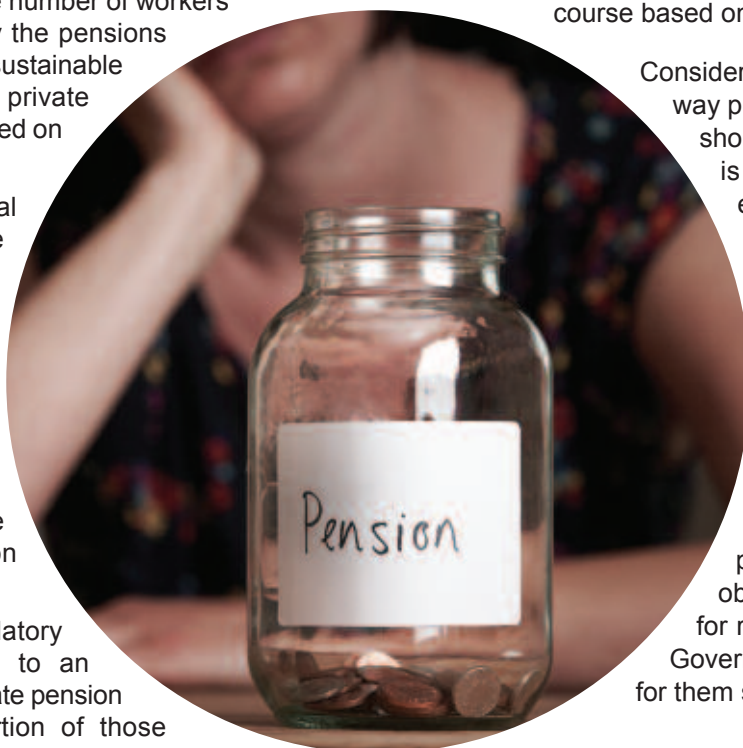
According to Richard Fowler, Director at Buckley Kiely Wealth Management, Cork, we might adopt something similar to our neighbours in the UK who recently introduced compulsory workplace pensions. Employers in the UK have to provide a workplace pension by 2018 for all employees between the ages of 16 and 74. This is called 'automatic enrolment'. The employer must make a contribution to the employee pension fund.

2016 – Increases in terms and conditions

The overall picture in 2016 thus far has been of employees, through their Trade Union or not, seeking wage restorations and/or increases from their employer. Between 2% and 3% seems to be the average annualized increase employers are willing to consider and this is of course based on the employers ability to credibly afford it.

Considering the main thrust of this article and the way private pensions are likely to develop in the short to medium term in Ireland, if an employer is considering a form of wage increase for employees it may be worth considering proactively establishing an employer pension scheme. By channelling any voluntary increase in wages into such a scheme now, it may well avoid a double payment of also having to pay a minimum employer contribution under any future mandatory pension scheme.

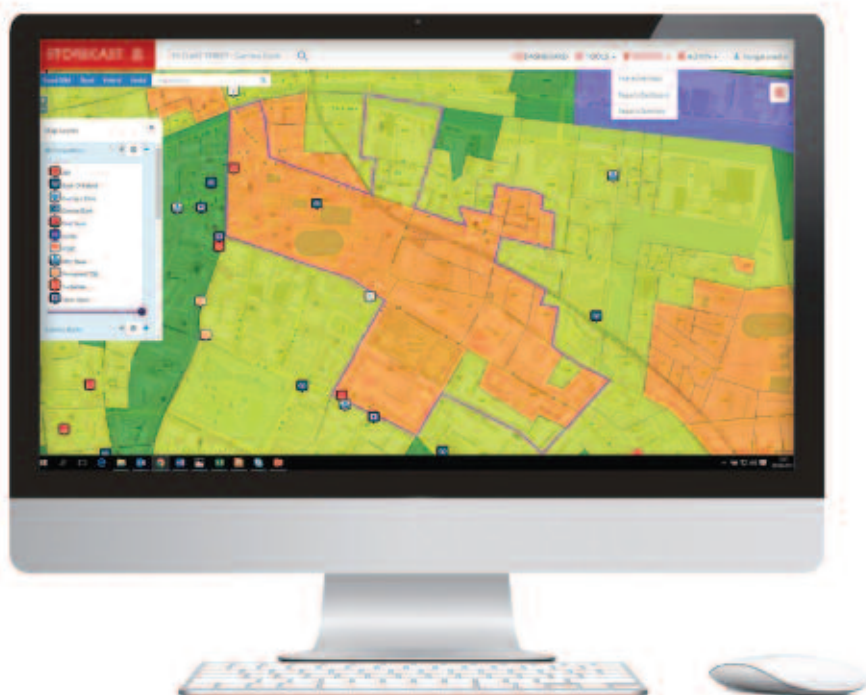
Employers will also reflect on their moral position, especially for more modestly paid colleagues, and whether they have an obligation to financially assist them prepare for retirement although it would appear some Government is going to answer that conundrum for them sooner rather than later!



If you have any HR queries please contact REI Head of HR Advisory Sarah-Louise O'Byrne. Tel: 065 6846927 | Email: Sarahlouise@retailexcellence.ie

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Are you breathless for all the wrong reasons? Spending more than you can really afford on tobacco? Maybe you're a non-smoker wishing someone you know would stop dropping ash on the carpet, burning holes in the sofa and stinking up the house.

For this edition **CREST Mystery Shopping** sent our secret shopper, who's currently on 20-a-day, out onto the streets of Dublin 1 to smell the roses, egg-nog, caramel and all the other flavours now available in e-liquids. Which is what you put into the little vaporising chamber of an e-cigarette before pushing the button that tells the battery to heat it up and produce a somewhat satisfying nicotine cloud.

What does vaping cost to try? What are the savings to be made by taking your poison ash-free but still retaining that retro-elegant wispy cloud around your head?

All three stores were visited mid-morning on Thursday, 1 September 2016.

KIX

KIX 3A TALBOT STREET, DUBLIN 1



FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

The Mystery Shopper began life as a proud Northsider Dub, since granted refugee status in rural Connacht. So, local junkies, mumbling and stumbling around the pavement, enterprising pop-up fruit n veg stall covering the frontage of closed-down premises across the street, pry-bar marks around the lock on the KIX door - No wowwies, Bud.

STOCK AND SELECTION:

Like walking into an early-days mobile phone store. Modest, tidy product displays, stripped-down, no-nonsense sales floor with ditto counter at the not-so-far end.

SERVICE AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE:

Friendly, courteous, well-informed young staff member, neatly dressed and name-badged. Offered crisp, clear information plus a puff of the product. The Mystery Shopper requested a cigar flavoured e-liquid. The staff member warned that it might not taste as good as a genuine Romeo y Julieta. He was so right!

SELECTED ITEM:

Nicofresh eGo CE4 Electronic Cigarette Starter Kit €26.

AMBIENCE:

Early-days mobile phone retail. Or, even earlier, pre-DVD tape cassette store. In those days the product sold itself, on grounds of sheer novelty/must-haveness. Maybe that applies in this market too.

MYSTERY SHOPPER RATING:

Fair Ciggy. Only place to offer a free test smoke. Liked it - the store, that is. The vapour was, like, Ugh!



VIP E

ILAC CENTRE, MARY STREET DUBLIN 1



FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

Pretty damn slick as a matter of fact. The Ilac may be showing its age a bit but this shiny glass and good lighting open-style shopping mall kiosk stood out like, if not quite a diamond, then a zircon in a basin of glass beads.

STOCK AND SELECTION:

This outlet was clearly aiming for the top end of the market - e-ciggies designed to look like the real thing. Some displayed in silver cigarette cases. Others in white and gold presentation boxes. Visually impressive.

SERVICE AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE:

Delightful young woman dressed in stylish black abandoned her mobile phone to greet the new customer. She did a pretty good job of explaining why one might choose to spend rather more than necessary on a very stylishly merchandised product line. Probably the place to buy the smoker-in-your-life that birthday present with a broad hint attached.

SELECTED ITEM:

VIP E Starter Kit Silver
34.95 ((reduced to €30 on their website)

AMBIENCE:

A little bit Paris/ Berlin/Milano deposited in the good ol' Ilac. Needed a certain *je ne sais quois* to carry it off. Unfortunately, the *je ne sais* salesperson was on the phone when first approached. Not the perfect starting point for an upmarket interchange.

MYSTERY SHOPPER RATING:

Venetian Vaporetto.. If James Bond didn't insist on filter-free Senior Service he'd stock up here.



THE VAPE CAFÉ

85 CAPEL STREET, DUBLIN 1



FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

Funky. Interesting. Indie-grunge. Definitely got a lotta character. Possibly hugely on-message with students from nearby Bolton Street College. Probably an age thing but the Mystery Shopper wasn't greatly impressed.

STOCK AND SELECTION:

A good range of products from basic starter kits to bigger, badder items costing three times as much. Not well arranged in display terms - the e-cig department was upstairs from the coffee shop and needed serious intent, plus reliable knee joints, to access and inspect.

SERVICE AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE:

This was the only store that came with a killer sales pitch. The staff member schmoozed the Mystery Shopper up a flight of seriously daunting 18th-Century winding stairs, then did some cute-hoor qualifying stuff. "How many a day you smoke? 20? Ah, then this starter package maybe not strong enough. If you like you probably want this - more power, more smoke, better flavour".

SELECTED ITEM:

ce4 Blister Pack Starter Kit €15
plus Liquid €5

AMBIENCE:

What can the Mystery Shopper say? Without seeming old-hat, old school, curmudgeonly or causing offence?

You like your shopping grungy/funky/ street-real? Then OK...The Mystery Shopper couldn't wait to get out. Sorry.

MYSTERY SHOPPER RATING:

Casablanca Coffee Shop. Felt more Blue Parrot than Rick's Café Américain.





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	BUSINESS TRAINING, COACHING, MENTORING	Business Coaching Ireland	Paul Fagan 01 891 6220	info@businesscoachingireland.com www.businesscoachingireland.com	Gerry Browne Jewellers, The Italian Tile & Stone Studio	39
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	DOMAIN NAME REGISTRATION	IE Domain Registry	Registration Services 01 236 5400	registrations@iedr.ie www.iedr.ie	Software Design Ltd, Matrix Internet	40
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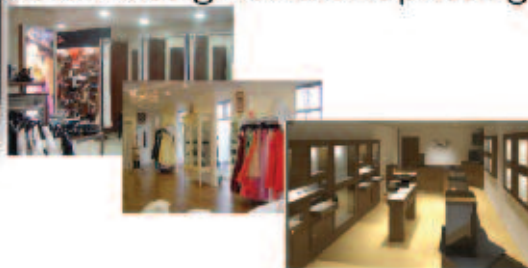
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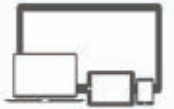
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