

retailtimes

Q1 2016

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Welcome to the **QUARTER 1 2016** edition of Retail Times

Firstly let me say that it is an honour to have been selected as the Chairman of Retail Excellence Ireland for 2016 and 2017. I intend working closely with the REI Executive Team and the REI Board to ensure we deliver benefits to all our members, both large and small and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues for all their support and guidance. I particularly would like to thank Oonagh O'Hagan for guiding our wonderful organisation over the past two years. It is a privilege to work with such a wonderful business woman.

As we face into the New Year, it is a real positive that the economy continues to improve. That said I am aware of many members who continue to struggle with legacy cost issues. Indeed according to the National Competitiveness Council rankings, our competitiveness continues to slip which is a real concern for us all. In 2016 we face into increasing employment costs, rising commercial rents, rates revaluations and volatile foreign exchange rate movement. It is important as the Election fast approaches that all candidates are made cognizant of the importance of a competitive, diverse and vibrant retail environment which in turn will help the national economy to thrive. Employing almost 270,000 people, retail is Ireland's largest private sector employer and REI will highlight our importance to Government, the media and all decision makers to ensure our issues are heard.

I am pleased that REI and our partner organisation in Northern Ireland, NIIRTA, are planning the establishment of a North - South Retail Forum. By looking at the needs and strengths of our industry across the entire island of Ireland we can achieve a lot more than by working in isolation. One central theme of the new Forum will be to explore how we can better promote Ireland as a shopping and tourism destination to the world. A very current visitor trend is the growth particularly of Europeans wanting to enjoy cosmopolitan weekends away. City breaks offer a huge opportunity for Ireland and a core part of these short-stay visits is shopping. In Ireland we have a retail offer which is second to none and it is time to start promoting this fact.

REI is the largest retail industry body in Ireland representing over 13,000 stores and is owned by and works for its members and I look forward to the challenges and opportunities of year ahead with anticipation. We have scheduled many exciting and beneficial events including the keynote REI Retail Retreat scheduled for May 10th and 11th in Mount Wolseley, Carlow and also a retail case Study to Berlin later in the year. I urge all members to make time to attend, enjoy some of the wonderful presentations we have planned and network with your industry peers.

I look forward to serving all members in the coming years and thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Colm Carroll

COLM CARROLL
Chairman Carrolls Irish Gifts
Chairman Retail Excellence Ireland

COLM CARROLL
CHAIRMAN, RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND



RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND BOARD MEMBERS

BOARD: Colm Carroll, Carrolls Irish Gifts • Oonagh O'Hagan, Meaghers Pharmacy Group • Paul Kealy, Tony Kealys • JP Kennedy, TileStyle • Paul Cahill, Carphone
Dixons • David Myers, Heatons • Patrick McCormack, Sam McCauleys •
Roisin Woods, McElhinneys • David Fitzsimons, Retail Excellence Ireland • Lynn Drumgoole, Retail Excellence Ireland

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

Bites

So who do you think is the biggest toy distributor in the world? Hasbro? Mattel? It's **McDonald's**! They distribute 1.4 billion toys worldwide with their meals which come with a toy!

A recent change in the law means firms operating in the **UK** (with a turnover of £36m and above) must report annually on the steps they have taken to ensure slavery and human trafficking are not taking place in their business or supply chain.

I'LL JUST GO IN FOR SOME SOCKS

PRIMARK



5 MINUTES LATER



£1 out of every £10 spent on clothing in the UK is spent in **Primark** with only M&S selling more.

In **Australia**, retailers have started employing older workers to adapt to the trend as the over 50's now represent the greater proportion of the population who have the most purchasing power while baby boomers represent 25% of the population.

The value of malls, shopping centers and other retail real estate purchased in **Europe** in 2015 hit €64 billion according to data firm Real Capital Analytics.

PIONEERING HEALTHCARE WITH THE REFURBISHMENT OF JOHN BELL & CROYDEN



The stunningly refurbished John Bell & Croyden pharmacy in the heart of London

“FOR TOO LONG, LONDONERS HAVE SEEN GPs OR A&E AS THE ONLY MEANS OF ACCESSING HEALTH ADVICE AND TREATMENT

ONE of London's oldest pharmacies has been recently re-launched and the end result is pretty amazing. John Bell & Croyden, pharmacists to HM The Queen, located on Wigmore Street in the City of London has undergone a €5m refit and launched a number of new services to coincide with the reopening. The healthcare initiative will open up a new channel for patients who live in and commute into London, many of whom face problems seeing their own GP, whether unable to take time off work to see their doctor or having to travel further afield. Cormac Tobin, Managing Director of John Bell and Croyden's parent company Celesio, said: “For too long, Londoners have seen GPs or A&E as the only means of accessing health advice and treatment, with the day-to-day health support that pharmacy can provide often overlooked or misunderstood. At a time when the NHS faces increasing pressures, we felt the timing was right for pharmacy to step-in and provide much needed care. Our hope is for John Bell & Croyden to spearhead a new era in the role that pharmacists can play in modern healthcare”.

MORRISONS DITCHES PRICE MATCHING

Morrisons, the large UK grocery retailer, has recently announced that they will move away from price matching and concentrate on service instead. David Potts the company's new CEO has scrapped price matching and instead has launched a new loyalty programme. Commenting on the development Potts said: “To be a price matcher is not really the right approach for Morrisons”. It is thought that the retailer will focus its energies on friendly staff and service, fresh food and good value instead.



David Potts announced new loyalty programme at Morrisons

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REGATTA GREAT OUTDOORS OPENS IN THE SQUARE, TALLAGHT

Regatta Great Outdoors, the family owned outdoor and leisure clothing company founded in the UK in 1981 has recently opened the group's fifth standalone store. Regatta was introduced to Ireland in 2000, when Brian Fox, Ireland Country Manager, started wholesaling Regatta products from his garage in Cork. He now operates a €10 million-a-year wholesaling business, with eighteen concession stores nationwide in Shaws, Elverys and Paco, and currently five standalone stores in Limerick, Athlone, Swords and Tralee, with Tallaght being the most recent. The company plans a further two new stores in Arthur's Quay, Limerick and McDonagh Junction, Kilkenny. The Irish arm of Regatta currently employs 45 people, with an additional 30 jobs generated by store openings in Tallaght, Limerick and Kilkenny, and an additional 50 jobs planned for the coming year.



Vogue Williams and Sarah Whelan Retail Area Manager Regatta at the launch of the new Tallaght store

AQUASCUTUM OPENS A NEW OUTLET STORE AT KILDARE VILLAGE



Aquascutum opens in the extended Kildare Village

Aquascutum, the iconic British luxury fashion brand, has opened a new outlet store in Kildare Village, part of the Value Retail group. The new store is one of around thirty five new stores to open up in the new development. The 1,600 sq. ft. Aquascutum store is located in the new section of the Village and will stock menswear, womenswear and junior product. Commenting on the opening Mark Taylor, COO said: "We are delighted to announce our partnership with Value Retail with the opening of our new store at Kildare Village in Ireland. The new opening is the fourth new store under the YGM ownership, following the opening of our retail stores in London - Great Marlborough Street, Jermyn Street and Brompton Road. The new store concept launched in Kildare Village takes inspiration from our Jermyn Street store in London".

totalhealth PHARMACIES PAINT IT PINK AND RAISE €30,000 FOR IRISH CANCER SOCIETY!



Pictured at the cheque presentation are Oliver McGuinness, Chairman, totalhealth Pharmacy, Susie Cunningham, Irish Cancer Society and John Arnold, Commercial Director, totalhealth Pharmacy.

Over 60 totalhealth Pharmacies nationwide participated in the Paint it Pink charity campaign to raise awareness of Breast Cancer during October and together they raised €30,000 for the Irish Cancer Society. Across the group, there was terrific fundraising going on including lots of pink buns and cakes for sale, nail painting, hamper raffles, book sales and much more. It was a very impressive achievement from all the staff who went out of their way to fundraise as much as possible for this worthy charity. Well done to the team at totalhealth!



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The Irish Dairy Board recently opened a new packaging facility in Nigeria. The move will strengthen the company's presence in Africa will allow a new route for powered milk products to enter the continent which will be marketed under the **Kerrygold** brand.

Loss making fashion retailer, **French Connection** is to leave it's Regent Street store in January and will also close three other UK stores and four in the US.



The **2015 Retail Excellence Irelands Awards** generated fantastic social media coverage. On the night the event was trending 2nd in Ireland ahead of Strictly Come Dancing and just behind The X-factor.

HARVEY NORMAN OPENS ON BOUCHER ROAD, BELFAST

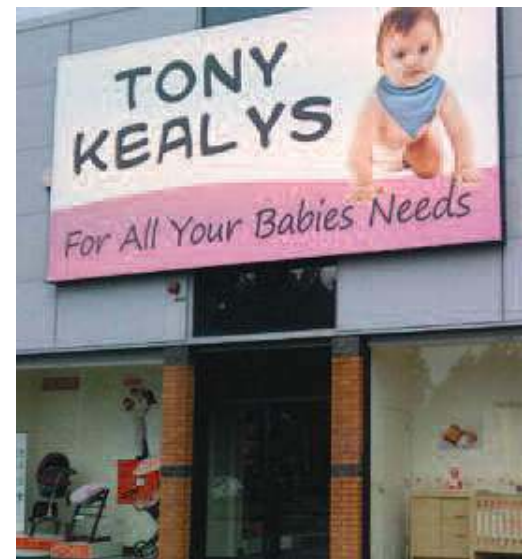


The stunning new Harvey Norman store on Boucher Road, Belfast

Harvey Norman has taken its place on Boucher Road opening a flagship store located in the former Fultons building. Boasting an impressive 61,000 sq. ft. of split level retail space, the Boucher Road store is the largest store in the Harvey Norman store portfolio in Ireland. The store also features a high-end 140 seated restaurant from Belfast favourite Synge & Byrne. Harvey Norman Boucher Road is a new concept Home Centre for the group. Harvey Norman Home Centre also houses concession retailers Colortrend, Matt Britton Flooring, Signature Curtains and Blinds and the Synge & Byrne restaurant. By adding these concession stores Harvey Norman has created a one-stop Home Centre for all home furnishing needs. The store has created 65 new jobs in the Belfast area. In total, Harvey Norman now employs almost 900 staff in Ireland across 14 locations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Speaking at the launch, Blaine Callard, CEO Harvey Norman Ireland said: "We are extremely excited to be opening this new store, in such an iconic location on the Boucher Road in Belfast. Harvey Norman's brand is strong in Belfast, but we have not put our best foot forward with our older Newtownabbey store, the building and the location has been a challenge. This relocation will finally allow us to fully represent the best of our offering to our customers".

TONY KEALYS ARRIVES IN GALWAY

Tony Kealys, the award winning mother and baby retailer, have recently opened a new store in The Briar Hill Business Park, Galway. Commenting on the news Paul Kealy, Managing Director said: "This will be our fifth store with two in Dublin, one in Cork and one in Belfast. A significant proportion of our online business comes to us from Galway so it was a natural progression for us to look to open a store there. We are thrilled to have a presence in the west of Ireland and we look forward to serving the people of Galway in the coming years".



Tony Kealys opens first store out west



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IRELAND'S LARGEST CHAIN OF TOURIST STORES OPENS IN THE MARBLE CITY

Retailer Carroll's Irish Gifts have recently opened their 14th store in the historic City of Kilkenny. The 3,000 sq.ft. store is located on Kilkenny's High Street and was formally occupied by Sam McCauley's Chemist, which has moved to the old Sherwood's site on High Street. The store will create 20 new jobs in the area. The 100% Irish owned company, whose main business is the sale of Irish-themed and related gifts, has been in business for 33 years and boasts 120 Irish suppliers including Butlers Chocolates, Carraig Donn and Solvar Jewellery. Commenting on the news Company Director Lorcan O'Connor said: "We are delighted to have secured such a prime store in one of Ireland's leading tourist destinations. We chose Kilkenny because it is a strong tourist market. We are in expansion mode and this is one of three stores we intend opening. We are actively looking for new locations in Ireland".



Carroll's Irish Gifts planning new stores following Kilkenny opening

GOOD'S LINGERIE WINS PRESTIGIOUS LINGERIE AWARD

Lingerie at Good's of Kilkenny recently won the prestigious Stars 'Underlines best Shop Awards' Editors Choice 2015. The awards celebrate the very best in the Lingerie industry in the UK and Ireland, and Goods have been nominated for an award four years running in the Best Independent Department Store category. The Editors Choice award was set up to recognise outstanding retail achievement. Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London was the spectacular venue for the 7th edition of Stars Best Shop Awards. Hosted by ex-Strictly star, James Jordan, nearly 300 guests from the intimate apparel, swimwear and legwear industries met for a star-studded evening. The award was received on behalf of Goods by lingerie buyer Mary Massey and store manager Kitty O'Halloran. Speaking at the awards Mary Massey commented: 'We are delighted with the recognition winning this award brings and we would like to thank all our customers, staff and suppliers for their loyal and continued support over the years'.



Good's of Kilkenny win major lingerie award



Black Friday and Cyber Monday combine to lift sales by 7.9% in the Irish market

BLACK FRIDAY AND CYBER MONDAY DRIVE 7.9% GROWTH IN IRISH CONSUMER SPENDING

According to the Visa Europe Irish Consumer Index, sales over Black Friday weekend increased by 7.9% last November in Ireland. According to the report face to face spending was up 6.6% while online increased by 11.2%. Several broad sectors posted double-digit rises in spending over the year to November. Household goods led the way during the month, with spending up +16.8%, the highest sectoral increase in the series so far. This was also the case with clothing & footwear with a +16.0% rise in spending, as both categories benefited from the Black Friday weekend with Christmas shopping beginning in earnest. High profile music concerts and Ireland's international sporting success during the month helped to drive spending at hotels, restaurants & bars up by +13.2%, another record increase since the Visa Europe Irish Consumer Spending Index began.

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SuperValu recently announced the closure of two stores with the loss of 98 jobs. The company stated that the retail environment in both Carlow and Clonmel has been challenging for the past number of years.

Lily O'Brien's Chocolates are planning on doubling their business in the coming year following Carlyle Cardinal Ireland taking a majority stake in the company.

The first digital clothes rail has been installed into UK department store **Tyler's** in St. Helens. The rail has lights above each garment revealing how it is being rated online.



Proctor & Gamble has been listed as the world's largest advertiser. With an annual spend of \$4.4 billion.

Italian fashion label **Versace** has returned to Japan after departing the market in 2009 by reopening three new storefronts capturing different facets of the brand. Versus Versace will open in April, Versace Home in July and a mainline flagship has just opened.

Sainsbury's reported pre-tax profits of £308m for the first half of 2015.

In a recent trial involving fitting of LEDs **Energia** reduced energy costs in **Carrolls Irish Gifts** by 76%.

Tesco recently reduced their group debt by £4.23billion as a result of the sale of their **Homeplus** business in South Korea.



JOHN LEWIS GOES DUTCH WITH NEW PARTNERSHIP

John Lewis, the leading UK department store retailer, has recently announced a new partnership with Dutch department store chain de Bijenkorf for its entry into continental Europe. John Lewis plans to open "shop in shops" in three of de Bijenkorf locations, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague this spring. The retailer is thought to be planning four more locations in 2017. Most market commentators believe it to be a very prudent strategy as the UK retailer dips its toe into new markets while minimising risk.



FromMe2You ENJOYS SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OVER CHRISTMAS 2015



The beautiful Anna Daly was on hand to launch the new gift card FromMe2You

FromMe2You, the newly launched REI promoted gift card, enjoyed a very robust sales period over Christmas. The card was launched to drive down retailer commissions and in turn allow retailers who do not accept any other gift card to welcome FromMe2You into their stores. Retailers such as Smyths Toys, Homestore&More, Avoca, Compu b and Tiger all welcome FromMe2You in store, along with thousands of other stores. The gift card is available for purchase through selected Topaz stores, online at www.me2you.ie and through a dedicated corporate sales team. Commenting on the launch John Wall, FromMe2You MD said: "We were blown away with the support for the gift card. Channels which took us by surprise were corporate sales, which was much helped by a doubling of the benefit in kind (BIK) to €500 and online which worked really well for us over Christmas. Our online sales were helped by the fact that we sold the card through our website without a postage, packaging or load fee. The outlook for 2016 is very positive and we have exciting plans which we will announce in the coming months".



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CBE LAUNCH DEDICATED E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

CBE, a leading Irish POS company, has recently launched its first dedicated e-commerce site (www.ShopCBE.com). The website will offer a wide selection of consumable products including; till rolls, deli scales labels, ink ribbons, entry level cash registers, cash drawers and printers making ordering very convenient and efficient. The website is maximised for mobile application, offers a guarantee of fast delivery and in keeping with e-commerce best practice the site provides a secure payment platform using leading edge online encryption procedures. REI members can avail of free delivery on all orders by using the discount code **REI2016**. Visit www.ShopCBE.com for further details.



The new website will afford retail clients greater convenience

SINGLES DAY GROWS GLOBALLY



Singles Day surpasses Black Friday to be the busiest retail day around the globe

Black Friday is no longer the world's busiest retail day. It has been surpassed by a phenomenon Singles Day. Falling on 11th November each year (all the ones), Singles Day has really caught on globally and especially in China where last November over €10billion was spent on the day. The day is positioned as an anti-valentine's day event when single people can shop in the company of other singles and enjoy in store events and treats. Commenting on the development David Fitzsimons, CEO Retail Excellence Ireland said "There is a lot to like about singles day. It is everything that Black Friday is not. Consumers are encouraged into store through added value events which really engage customers. Clever retailers will use the day this November to lavish single customers with fun and luxury in store without the need to deep discount".

COUCHE-TARD ACQUIRES TOPAZ

Couche-Tard, one of the world's leading convenience and fuel retail businesses recently announced the acquisition of Topaz. The Canadian company has approximately 15,000 sites across its network in North America (U.S. and Canada), Europe (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, the Baltics and Russia), Asia and the Middle East. Approximately 100,000 people are employed in the company across the world. Welcoming the announcement Topaz CEO Emmet O'Neill described the transaction as a "game changer" for the retail industry in Ireland. He said: "Couche-Tard is one of the strongest names in retail in the world and their presence in Ireland will transform the retail industry here. I am thrilled that they have chosen Topaz as the foundation for their entry to the Irish market. They will bring enormous skill, energy and resources to this business and this market." O'Neill went on to say "In the last two years Topaz has moved from being a challenged business to one which has been transformed at every level and which now leads the market here. We have refinanced the company, upgraded the infrastructure, acquired and built new sites and convenience stores and ultimately acquired the business of Esso in Ireland. This transaction is a reflection of the immense effort made by everyone on the team and across the company over that time".



Pictured at the announcement of the acquisition were Brian Hannasch, President and Chief Executive Officer of Alimentation, Couche-Tard and Emmet O'Neill, Chief Executive, Topaz



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the NUMBERS

- 1 The millions of workers McDonald's hire annually in the US alone
- 19 The thousands of new start-up companies which were expected to be registered in 2015 in Ireland
- 12 The number of new tenants who opened in The Swan Centre in Rathmines, Dublin in 2015 following a €2m refurbishment
- 25 The percentage of the Irish population who now suffer from some form of allergy or food intolerance
- 2.2 The billions of US dollars which L'Oréal spend on global advertising annually
- 31 The percentage proportion of New Look eCommerce customers who use click and collect
- 10 The billions of euro spent in China on 11th November - singles day!
- 900 The number of new food products launched by M&S over the first six months of 2015
- 130 The billions of US dollars turn-over which Walgreens Boots are estimated to reach following the acquisition of Rite Aid

GREENE'S SHOES PICK UP DIGITAL AWARD



Orla McFadden and Alfie Greene pick up digital award

Greene's Shoes recently scooped the JCI national award in the Digital Experience category at the Junior Chambers national awards held in Donegal. Greene's Shoes an independent Irish retailer in leading footwear brands, has seven stores in the west of Ireland and an online store at greenesshoes.com. In addition to their online store their social media and interaction with their customers online, delivering the ultimate customer experience is what won them this national award. In business for over seventy five years the family run business has embraced the world of eCommerce while still retaining the social engagement and interaction with their customers and the communities in which they live.

DAIRYGOLD'S "WRAP IT PINK" CAPTURES THE IMAGINATION OF THE NATION



Dairygold leads the innovative "Wrap it Pink" campaign for the Irish Cancer Society

Farmers across Ireland embraced "Wrap it Pink" which was launched by Dairygold Co-Op in May 2015. The initiative which aimed to raise awareness of breast cancer across rural Ireland as well as raising much needed funds for the Irish Cancer Society encouraged farmers to opt for pink silage wrap instead of the traditional black. Social media became awash with photos as the pink bales started to appear in every county. John O'Carroll, Head of Retail at Dairygold said: "We were overwhelmed by the response to Wrap It Pink during the summer. The campaign really struck a chord with farming families who have been affected by cancer and farmers were proud to wrap their silage in pink for a great cause. We are now planning Wrap it Pink for 2016 and look forward to continuing our partnership with The Irish Cancer Society". For every roll of pink wrap sold both the farmer and Dairygold made a contribution to the Irish Cancer Society raising over €10,000.

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AÉROPOSTALE OPENS IN DUBLIN'S LIFFEY VALLEY

Iconic New York brand Aéropostale officially opened its first store in Western Europe in Dublin's Liffey Valley Shopping Centre recently creating 30 new jobs. The 4,000 sq.ft. flagship store stocks the complete ranges for young girls and guys clothing under the Aero, Aero City and Live Love Dream leisure collections. It is the first of up to ten stores planned for Ireland over the next five years, creating a total of 300 jobs. The company behind Aéropostale in Ireland is Shuz 4 U International Ltd, which is part of the Shuz Group, the company behind Skechers Retail Stores Ireland. Commenting on the opening Paul Gallagher, Director Shuz 4 U International Ltd, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to bring the fashion forward New York brand Aéropostale to Ireland. We are particularly proud that the opening is in Liffey Valley in Dublin, one of Ireland's largest shopping and leisure destinations, which is the first Aéropostale store in Western Europe". Sunil Shah, Director Shuz 4 U International Ltd added: "We are very excited to be launching this young, well known American fashion brand with a unique New York heritage and Brooklyn inspired theme which is right on trend at present".



Paul Gallagher and Sunil Shah bring Aéropostale to Irish shores

“WE ARE ABSOLUTELY THRILLED TO BRING THE FASHION FORWARD NEW YORK BRAND AÉROPOSTALE TO IRELAND”

POWERSCOURT DISTILLERY LODGES PLANS FOR €10M WHISKEY INVESTMENT



Ashley Gardiner and Gerry Ginty launch new distillery

Powerscourt Distillery recently lodged a planning application for the construction of a craft distillery and visitor centre at Powerscourt Estate, Enniskerry, County Wicklow. Local entrepreneurs Gerry Ginty and Ashley

Gardiner are co-founders of the new venture and are planning a €10m investment that will create 30 jobs in the construction phase and 18 full-time jobs once the business is fully operational. The project will refurbish the

Estate's old mill house into a world-class distillery set against the stunning backdrop of the Sugar Loaf mountain and Powerscourt's award-winning gardens. At full production the distillery will have the potential to produce over 1 million bottles of whiskey per year. Bord Bia forecast demand for Irish whiskey to quadruple in size to over 24m cases worldwide by 2030 and Powerscourt Distillery plans to capitalise on the rapidly growing international demand. Powerscourt Distillery Co-Founder Ashley Gardiner said: "At Powerscourt Distillery we are passionate about fostering an appreciation of this traditional Irish spirit, reclaiming and celebrating Ireland's distilling heritage. With over 500,000 unique visitors a year to this wonderful location, we couldn't ask for a better foundation for our ambitions and the potential and scale of this project."

€10M WHISKEY INVESTMENT



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The Best in IRISH RETAIL

November 7th last marked the biggest day in the retail diary - The Retail Excellence Ireland Awards in association with Barclaycard. The event was hosted by Hector Ó hEochagáin and Eavanne Ní Chuilinn in the Radisson Blu Galway and was attended by over five hundred retail industry leaders.

TileStyle was announced as the National Store of the Year 2016. The store has been a well known Irish brand for over 30 years, less than 10 years ago they expanded and relocated to an inspiring showroom based in Ballymount, Dublin.

Commenting on the win David Fitzsimons, CEO, Retail Excellence Ireland said "TileStyle is an incredibly innovative company that has created a shopping experience where customers can enjoy quality products and customer service in an environment that inspires them to create something wonderful. I want to commend all of the retailers who entered this year's Awards. The highest standard of service, customer engagement, display and levels of investment amongst Irish retailers made choosing this year's winners particularly difficult."

Some of the other notable winners include Arboretum, Carlow who won Company of the Year, Brendan Lydon of Nestor's SuperValu, Galway won Rising Star of the Year Award, Fran Lawlor, The Orchard, Celbridge won Store Manager of the Year 2016, Harvey Norman won Website of the Year and DPD won Supplier of the Year.



GAYLE WOODS OF MAXIZOO CELEBRATING HER AWARD HAVING WON BEST PET STORE 2016



TILESTYLE WINNERS OF THE COVETED NATIONAL STORE OF THE YEAR 2016 AWARD IN ASSOCIATION WITH BARCLAYCARD



BEST NATIONAL GARDEN CENTRE: HORKAN'S GARDEN CENTRE CASTLEBAR WON THE COVETED TITLE OF BEST GARDEN CENTRE 2016



THE HOMELAND TEAM READY FOR A PHOTO-CALL TO CELEBRATE THEIR BEST DIY AND AGRI STORE 2016 AWARD



GOSH IN THE EYRE SQUARE SHOPPING CENTRE IN GALWAY WON BEST FOOTWEAR STORE 2016



THE KAYS KITCHEN TEAM CELEBRATED BEING SELECTED AS THE BEST MEDIUM SIZED COMPANY OF THE YEAR AND THEIR BLANCHARDSTOWN STORE ALSO WON THE BEST RESTAURANT & COFFEE HOUSE



FRAN LAWLOR, THE ORCHARD, CELBRIDGE, JOINS HECTOR, EVANNE AND PEARCE DOORLEY OF CPL TO COLLECT HIS PRESTIGIOUS MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2016



THE HARVEY NORMAN TEAM CELEBRATE THEIR BEST WEBSITE OF THE YEAR 2016 AWARD THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF RICHARD MOYLES AND HIS TEAM



THE STORE @ GUINNESS STOREHOUSE PICKED UP A WELL DESERVED TOP5 STORE AWARD



THE TEAM AT MULLINGAR OPTICIANS DESERVINGLY WON THE BEST OPTICIANS STORE IN IRELAND 2016



BRENDAN LYDON OF NESTOR'S SUPERVALU PICKS UP HIS RISING STAR OF THE YEAR AWARD FROM HIS FRIEND HECTOR



COMPU b LIMERICK WON THE BEST ELECTRONICS & TECH STORE



DPD PICK UP THEIR MUCH DESERVED SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR 2016 AWARD



L'OCCITANE EN PROVENCE WON THE BEST HEALTH & BEAUTY STORE AWARD FOR THEIR CORK STORE AND A COVETED TOP5 STORE AWARD



VT OF FERGAL DOYLE FROM COMPANY OF THE YEAR 2016 ARBORETUM



TADHG KEARNEY JEWELLERY REPRESENTED ON STAGE BY TADHG KEARNEY AND SINEAD TEEFY WON THE ACCOLADE OF BEST JEWELLERY STORE 2016



TONY KEALY OF TONY KEALYS ENJOYING THEIR HARD EARNED TOP5 STORE AWARD



THE HICKEYS PHARMACY TEAM LED BY PADDY HICKEY PICKED UP THE BEST PHARMACY STORE 2016 AWARD FOR THEIR STORE IN BALLINCOLLIG CORK

RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND ROLL OF HONOUR

NATIONAL STORE OF THE YEAR

National Store of the Year & Best Furniture & Flooring Store 2016 - TileStyle, Ballymount, Dublin 24

TOP5 STORES

- Top5 Store of the Year 2016 - The Store @ Guinness Storehouse
- Top5 Store of the Year & Best Butcher Store 2016 - James Whelan Butchers, Monkstown, Co Dublin
- Top5 Store of the Year & Best Health & Beauty Store 2016 - L'Occitane en Provence, Oliver Plunkett St, Cork
- Top5 Store of the Year 2016 - Tony Kealys, Belfast

SECTORAL AWARDS

- Best Forecourt Store 2016 - Topaz, Cashel, Tipperary
- Best Artisan Food Store 2016 - Hook & Ladder, Sarsfield Street, Limerick
- Best Menswear Store 2016 - Galvin Tullamore, Tullamore
- Best Grocery Store 2016 - Joyces Supermarket, Headford, Galway
- Best Restaurant & Coffee House 2016 - Kay's Kitchen, Blanchardstown
- Best Pharmacy Store 2016 - Hickey's Pharmacy, Ballincollig, Cork
- Best Pet Store 2016 - Maxi Zoo, Liffey Valley, Dublin
- Best Home, Gift & Interiors Store 2016 - The Kilkenny Shop, Newbridge, Kildare
- Best Ladies Fashion Store 2016 - O'Donnell Boutique, Limerick
- Best Garden Centre 2016 - Horkans Garden & Lifestyle Centre, Castlebar
- Best Electronics & Tech Store 2016 - Compu b, Limerick
- Best Footwear Store 2016 - Gosh Shoes, Galway
- Best DIY & Agri Store 2016 - Homeland, Swinford, Mayo
- Best Opticians Store 2016 - Mullingar Opticians, Mullingar, Westmeath
- Best Jewellery Store 2016 - Tadhg Kearney Jewellers, Limerick

PEOPLE AWARDS

- Rising Star of the Year 2016 - Brendan Lydon, Nestor's SuperValu, Galway
- Store Manager of the Year 2016 - Fran Lawlor, The Orchard, Celbridge, Kildare

COMPANY AWARDS

- Best Small Company of the Year 2016 & Overall National Company of the Year 2016 - Arboretum, Carlow
- Best Medium Company of the Year 2016 - Kay's Kitchen, Dublin
- Best Large Company of the Year 2016 - ARI The Loop, Dublin Airport

WEBSITE AWARD

- Website of the Year 2016 - Harveynorman.ie

SUPPLIER AWARD

- Supplier of the Year 2016 - DPD, Athlone, County Westmeath



REI CHAIR OONAGH O'HAGAN GOT THE BALL ROLLING WITH A SPELLBINDING ADDRESS



Social SHOTS



THE KILKENNY STORE TEAM RELAX BEFORE THE EVENT UNFOLDS



TONY MCVERRY OF ESQUIRES ENJOYING THE PRE-DINNER DRINKS RECEPTION



RUTH MCCARTHY OF TILESTYLE ENJOYING THE PRE-AWARDS CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION



THE MCELHINNEYS TEAM ENJOY THE AWARDS EVENING



DIANA HRIVNAKOVA AND ANNA KOCIK FROM THE NATURAL BAKERY ENJOY SO WELL DESERVED CHAMPAGNE



GREG SPARKS OF GRANT THORNTON CAN RELAX AFTER ALL HIS VALUED JUDGING OF THE AWARDS



PAULA FOGARTY OF FROMME2YOU GIFT CARD FIXATED ON THE SCREEN



DAVID CAMPBELL, SANDRA DORAN, LYNN DRUMGOOLE AND KEELAN BOURKE, ALL OF REI, ENJOYING THE CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION



GUESTS START TO ARRIVE AT THE RADISSON BLU GALWAY



SHAY DORAN OF BARCLAYCARD ENJOYING THE AWARDS



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Alison Browne, President of Retail Jewellers Ireland

The REI Jewellery Group was launched in conjunction with the Retail Jewellers of Ireland (RJI) towards the end of last year. REI are delighted that over 120 independent Jewellery stores have joined existing REI Jewellery members and exciting plans for the Group are already underway for the year ahead.

In addition to universal economic difficulties, the Jewellery sector has been presented with unique challenges over the last number of years, most notably with the market shifting from the traditional elements of the trade, to fashion trends and cheaper purchases, devaluing the sectors' expertise in fine jewellery.

The Jewellery sector has always excelled in the consultative selling of products which require in-depth knowledge, such as diamonds and other precious gem stones and this needs to be somewhat reversed to preserve the traditional jeweller and to return to what they do best.

Alison Browne, Chairperson of the RJI Council says "We are delighted to have partnered with REI and are looking forward to what our partnership will bring in 2016. It is important that the value of the Irish Jewellery retailer is promoted to the consumer and we're confident that together with REI, this can be achieved. We are also looking forward to attending REI events, such as the upcoming trip to London and learning opportunities for our staff".

Marketing Campaign

Together with the RJI, the Group will begin work on a National marketing campaign which will focus on jewellery being a 'Gift for Life' and will encourage customers to return to investing in traditional, high-quality, fine jewellery.

The Group will work with partners with a view to showcasing local, high-quality craft-maker's products in Jewellery stores nationwide, as part of the marketing campaign.

Addressing the issue of couples travelling abroad for diamonds (who are largely unaware that they may not be properly certified), the campaign will encourage couples to "buy Irish" for a guaranteed, certified product.

Sandra Doran, Manager of the REI Jewellery Group says "There are lots of interesting facts about the jewellery trade, such as Hallmarking being the oldest form of customer guarantee or that most diamonds are between one and three million years old and these fun facts should be brought to the attention of the consumer. We are looking forward to assisting the RJI with marketing traditional Irish Jewellers to give the sector the boost that it needs"

REI Jewellery Group to Visit London

The Group will travel to London soon to visit some of the most innovative retailers the city has to offer. This will be a great opportunity for members to be inspired and to gather new ideas from the best in



Jewellery Stores and other retailers across the pond. The visit will be led by REI and Matthew Brown, EchoChamber.

Insuring Jewellery against Theft

It is common that jewellery items are rarely insured correctly and often result in a non-payment. Many people believe that their jewellery items will be covered through general household content insurance however, insurance companies - especially when it comes to high-value

items such as jewellery - will require photographic evidence and proof of purchase. REI will work on an awareness campaign with the RJI and insurance companies throughout the year, to ensure that this is corrected.

If you would like to make an enquiry in relation to the REI Jewellery Group, please contact Sandra at sandra@retailexcellence.ie



FEATURE E-COMMERCE



David Campbell, REI eCommerce Executive

REI ECOMMERCE NEWS

JOHN HORKAN - Retail is changing at a faster pace than ever before



**JOHN HORKAN -
HORKANS GARDEN CENTRE**

There is no doubt that retail is changing at a faster pace than ever before. Our customers are mobile and busy so the question we need to keep to the fore is "are we keeping up with their needs and wants?"

I have seen a tremendous change in shopping habits over the past 18 months in my role as chair of the Retail Excellence eCommerce Group. The change was brought home to me in analysing our own sales. 55% of the artificial Christmas trees in our garden centres this year were reviewed online before the customers visited our stores to purchase them. Our online presence is driving the customers into our stores, eCommerce is here to stay and there is no going back. It is just retail. It can't be looked at as something separate to your stores, as a separate sales channel. It is just another way of talking to your customers and of helping them to find the right solution for their needs today and in the future.

We, as retailers, have never before had the range of tools and opportunities we have today to serve our current customers, to attract new ones and to retain their custom over the long term. There is a steep learning curve in understanding how we use

eCommerce tools to embrace this digitally enabled customer and figure out the opportunity for our business. Over the last 18 months the REI eCommerce committee have been working away on developing a way that we can work together. 16 retailers have completed the 2015 Google Incubation Programme. This is the second year of the programme and we can see the positive changes which can be made when businesses get this support and take part in a shared learning environment. In 2016 the programme is going to double in size to accommodate the ongoing need from retailers with in REI.

Aside from this programme a new eCommerce training programme is being developed to cater for business at different levels of online development. The program will have 3 different levels. A) Businesses looking to go online for the first time. B) Businesses already up and running online. C) Advanced online retailers. A unique feature of these programs will be the on hand experience of retailers who have gone through these different stages of development.

We are very privileged in REI because of the tremendous culture of shared learning within the organisation. At the recent Retail Excellence Symposium we heard from some of Ireland's top retailers who are leading the way online; Richard Moyles from Harvey Norman, Gordon Newman from Lifestyle Sports, Róisín Woods from McElhinneys to name a few. Richards' article on making the most of Black Friday helped a lot of members to have a successful weekend. This is the culture which makes REI special.

The eCommerce Dashboard has been a valuable analysis report for

those businesses who have submitted their figures. I would encourage every business to join the monthly eCommerce Dashboard so that you can benchmark your business against others in the organisation. Learning where your business is below the average is helpful as it will be a guide to where your business can improve.

I see a great future for Irish retailers as we embrace the Digital Consumer. Customers want to shop with local businesses who deliver value and convenience. By

choice they prefer to deal with a retailer who has a business that they can visit but they also want to have the convenience of shopping 24/7, 365 days a year. As we see the growth of competitors from

UK and across Europe it is also a two way bridge and Irish retailers can take advantage of a massive €350 billion market place. Lynn Drumgoole, who has recently joined REI, is heading up a closer working relationship with our friends in eCommerce Europe of which REI has been a member for some years. Lynn will be ensuring that we are right up to date with all the regulatory and legal issues coming out of Europe and will be making sure that Irish retailers are being represented across Europe.

Fraud is on the rise and REI will be working closely with the authorities to develop best practice and initiatives in tackling professional fraudsters across Ireland. By far the greatest challenge for us all is developing in our people the skills and knowledge to help our businesses change and grow. Again REI is playing a strong leadership role in this area. Championing shared learning with the government, tech companies like Google, Amazon, and

Facebook etc. REI is leading Irish retailers in their growth by building learning programs with the best in the business.

In conclusion I would most sincerely like to thank all the members of the REI eCommerce committee for their support and hard work over the last eighteen months. Róisín Woods, Liam Dilleen, Lorcan O'Connor, Ger Keohane, James Byrne and Paul Kealy are all voluntary members who spent many days away from their own business to support ecommerce development within REI. David Campbell joined the group during this year as the eCommerce Executive and he has been a tremendous support to the committee. Many thanks to David for taking up the challenge so successfully. As already said, Lynn Drumgoole has just joined the committee and will be heading up a role keeping REI in touch with developments in Europe, especially new regulations and compliance rules coming out of Europe. Róisín Woods is taking over the chair of the eCommerce Committee for 2016 and a more passionate and committed person I have yet to meet. Róisín has built up the eCommerce business for McElhinneys making it one of the leaders in the Irish market with an amazing retail presence throughout the world. I wish her the very best in her new role.

The future is exciting and full of challenge for all retailers. There is a buoyant and growing market place online, one which if embraced will provide a huge window of opportunity for us all. With the expertise of our team in REI and the support of each other in business we are ready to accept that challenge. Let's hope that 2016 is a time of growth and profit for us all.

**are we
keeping up
with their
needs
and
wants?"**



RICHARD MOYLES -
HARVEY NORMAN
(HEAD OF ECOMMERCE)

My current position as Head of eCommerce for Harvey Norman Ireland is part of an International PLC with operations in Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore

RICHARD MOYLES - Harvey Norman on Winning Website of the Year for 2016

and Slovenia. I report directly to the Irish CEO and I am part of the executive team that meets weekly to review performance and set direction for our 750 employees and 14 retail locations in Ireland.

I currently manage a team of fourteen people operating from the new online office which was opened in June 2013 above our Blanchardstown store. I work extensively with our head office teams and also with the network of stores and stores managers, all online orders are processed in store for pickup or direct shipment to the customer (Ship from Store).

As Head of eCommerce for Harvey Norman I was brought in to

transform the Irish online operation which commenced trading online in November 2012, numerous problems were occurring at that time from website crashing or offline for long periods, to high levels of fraud activity and no systems or processes in place.

I believe in the potential of a strong brand to perform well in a developing and ultimately crowded online market, this leads me to recognise the opportunity to do well within Harvey Norman, one of the strongest retail brands in the Irish Market. The Irish online team for Harvey Norman are now a dedicated experienced eCommerce team, the skills and capabilities have expanded

significantly in line with the significant online growth and current business performance we are seeing. The recognition from Retail Excellence Ireland in awarding our website and my team the website of the year is testament to the effort everyone in Harvey Norman has put in transforming the Irish division of Harvey Norman. We did not win the award in 2014, though we thought we could not do any better then, we did make significant changes in the twelve months and I do believe that this was major factor in the recognition we received. It is only looking back you will ever know how much you can actually push yourself to achieve anything.

REI WELCOMES RÓISIN WOODS AS THE NEW ECOMMERCE CHAIRPERSON FOR 2016

It is a great pleasure for me to accept the role as eCommerce Chairperson for the incoming year. First I need to acknowledge the great contribution John Horkan has made to Retail Excellence Ireland and the eCommerce committee as Chairman over the last eighteen months. John's passion for eCommerce has been both motivating and inspiring for all. Over the last few years we have all witnessed how the world of retail has changed, the Irish consumer has become increasingly digitally connected and there is a basic expectation that retailers should have an online presence. With this constantly evolving digital space the challenge for members is to examine how they currently engage with their customers both instore and online and align their strategies. It is the aim of the eCommerce committee to serve the needs of all members regardless if they are early adopters, launched within the last three years or considering making the move. I believe the success of businesses in the future will not be measured by how many stores they have but by how fast they are willing to move to stay connected to their digital based customers. This is the challenged

faced by all retailers regardless of industry.

Back in 2010, at McElhinneys Ballybofey we knew we needed to future proof our business and we viewed online as the way forward. Getting the websites live, certainly wasn't without challenges but in February 2012 we launched www.mcelhinneysbridalrooms.com which is dedicated to showcasing the wedding offering instore with the main call to action of driving footfall instore. The second website, www.mcelhinneys.com was launched in November 2012 offering women's, men's, kids, home, gift, beauty and much more. The impact online has had on McElhinneys business over the last three years is enormous. We are no longer a single store based in Donegal but have a presence in all 32 counties and in 65 countries since launching. We have created a new revenue stream, sales have increased instore and more importantly we have created a new customers base. In Ireland we know that eCommerce is in its infancy in comparison to other European countries, with an annual turnover of €5.3 billion in 2014 which is forecasted to grow to €5.9 billion by the end of 2015. In

Europe since 2010 to 2015, turnover online has doubled from €223 billion to €477 billion and it set to grow to €617 billion by 2017. There is great opportunity for our members, the challenge is deciding the best way forward for your business as building an eCommerce website isn't necessarily the right option for all. The eCommerce committee have outlined key objectives for 2016 which we know will support our members regardless of where they are on their digital journey. In the last eighteen months, we have worked hard to deliver great initiatives such as:

- eCommerce Dashboard Report - Furnished on a monthly basis supporting participating member's benchmark their online performance. This is the first report of its kind in Ireland.
- Google Incubation - Fifteen businesses have just completed this year's course with very positive feedback. We will be hosting another course alongside Google in 2016.
- eCommerce Programme - We are passionate about training and understand that there are different learning requirements based on



RÓISIN WOODS -
McELHINNEYS

where you are on your digital journey. We will address this further next year with the eCommerce training programmes.

- Digital Speakers - We had a strong digital presence at the Retreat in May and again at the Symposium in October.
- MicksGarage - On site visit to Dublin HQ.

Over the next twelve months I will be working closely with the committee and the team in Retail Excellence Ireland to ensure we deliver tangible, relevant and significant results so members feel supported in this ever changing digital, mobile and social purchasing landscape.

For more information regarding REI eCommerce supports please contact david.campbell@retailexcellence.ie

Contactless: the new normal

Last year there were over a billion contactless payment purchases in Europe. Across the continent there are now 131 million contactless cards that can be used at over 2.6 million terminals. By 2020 all European payment terminals will accept tap-and-pay payments.

With supermarkets and restaurants currently making up nearly half of all contactless payments, there's a clear opportunity for other sectors to catch up. This, combined with the recent increase of the contactless transaction limit from €15 to €30, will help drive growth even further.

The uptake of contactless spending is a win-win for consumers and businesses alike.

Tami Hargreaves
Head of Contactless,
Barclaycard

To find out more about contactless payments, contact Peter.Sweeney@barclaycard.co.uk

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RETAIL PLANNING & CONTROL



YOU don't need to be told that customers are hard to read, it has always been thus. And the challenge is getting bigger. We are coming out of a recession but the customer has changed since we went in. They are more savvy, most are comfortable buying online and all do research online. They are more inclined to walk out of a shop if they don't find what they are looking for, and some will never come back. If your shop is not engaging, they won't even come in.

The good news is that there are going to be some very big winners in Retail in the next 10 years, and it is not necessarily going to be the big boys, some of their business models have already been found to be wanting. However, we can learn from their approach to planning and control and if you couple this with innovation, then you will be one of these winners.

Planning and Control is the key.

THE MOST DIFFICULT THING IS THE DECISION TO ACT, THE REST IS MERELY TENACITY

Amelia Earhart

Start by setting some targets, say, the objective is to grow sales by 6% within 12 months compared to the same month 12 months ago, improve margin by 1.2% points in this time frame, tighten costs to give an extra contribution of 1% to bottom line whilst reducing stock by 1% for 3 consecutive quarters. If markdowns are a feature of your business you should aim at reducing them by say, 1% within 1 year. Do the Math, this is a dramatic improvement of your business that will set you up for more growth.

The 5 steps to this are:

- 1) Organising yourself and your team
- 2) Category Planning
- 3) Buying
- 4) Cost Control
- 5) Customer Service.

Let's go through them now in more detail:

THE CHALLENGE OF THE RETAIL BUSINESS IS THE HUMAN CONDITION

Howard Schultz, Chairman and CEO Starbucks

1) ORGANISING YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM

The first thing is to give yourself thinking time and have a team (no matter how small it is) who are good at what they do and can be relied upon. The main areas of the business that need to be covered are trading, buying, marketing, administration/finance. Make sure that someone has clear responsibility for each of these areas (even if they already have a day job). The most important thing about a team is having square pegs in square holes, i.e. make sure that they are doing what they are good at, otherwise this will cost you dearly. Don't be afraid to delegate, people like to be given responsibility. Lead by example, it's amazing how much your team are learning from you (consciously & subconsciously). Lead well and they will follow you anywhere.

Next have an agreed meeting schedule to plan & review business. This is not a talking

shop, Fergal Quinn used to have these meetings standing up. You will need to have weekly, monthly and six-monthly meetings rather than ad-hoc discussions that may be in place now. A suggested agenda for each is in Figure 1. The most important thing is that each member of the team reports on their own area in a forthright way explaining what went well and what needs to be improved. Factual information is critical here (see Figure 2), without this, they will be frustrating & speculative. Without these meetings, a lot of expensive decisions will be left behind compounding problems in an already difficult sector. Doing this well will be highly motivational all round.

If we have the data, let's look at data. If all we have are opinions, let's go with mine. Jim Barksdale, CEO Netscape

2) CATEGORY PLANNING

There are many excellent articles in various magazines including Retail Times on category management & buying so we won't go into this again. In summary, measure your space, compare to sales & margins, open up on what is working, cut back or eliminate what's not working. Review your customer base to see if you are properly catering for their needs. Bring in newness and a good perception of value. It is not that hard to do, and by spending an hour reading up on it, you will drive €000s to your bottom line in 2016. The sense of achievement is also great as an area that once seemed to be beyond control comes into your control. It also allows you to be creative, try new layouts and promotions and then measure whether they are working and keep what is good and move on quickly from what doesn't work. Good timely measurement makes this easy.

3) BUYING

Buying more effectively is the main area where you will improve your margins and sales, yet too often we hand over control to the wholesaler or Sale Rep. Even if you have good buyers, they will perform below

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDAS

WEEKLY MEETING

1. Sales & Margin Last week versus Last year or Budget.
2. Top Sellers / New Products / Promotions
3. Stockholding- Availability / Slow Movers
4. Loyalty Campaigns / Promotions / Upselling % / Marketing

MONTHLY MEETING

1. Overview of Trade focusing on Trends
2. Space Productivity
3. Upselling & Average Basket Size
4. Cost Control - Wages etc. / Next Month's Rosters
5. Security Report
6. Strategic Initiatives

SIX MONTHLY MEETINGS

1. Range Reviews



par if they do not have the right information at their fingertips. Experience and gut feel are important, but buying decisions are greatly improved with good information. Good buyers get control of the meetings they have with their suppliers' sales representatives. If the sales rep comes to the meeting with their sales reports and you do not have your information to hand, then you are immediately on the back foot. Without the right information system it can take quite a bit of time to compile your reports in advance of these meetings but it is worth it. Armed with the right information you can look for help on slow movers and failed promotions before the reps launch into their pitch on their latest offers. Identifying the 20% of the products that drive 80% of the sales will also help keep focus.

For Retail Groups or chains, central ordering works very well. The fewer people ordering the better. With a good system, you will be able to set stock targets, use replenishment to reorder much more accurately than a store/ Supplier Rep combination and use an Open to Buy tool which will work really effectively on long lead-time stocks where overall budget control is very important to keep stock levels in order. Systems like Real World Retail's decision support system will be invaluable for making light work of these tasks with just the click of a mouse.

4) COST CONTROL

Perhaps the least exciting part of managing a retail business is in the area of cost control but it is just as important as it ever was. Staffing is one of your biggest costs



so this is the first one on the agenda. The days of providing a 9-5 day for your retail staff are over, the crisis of the recession should have helped you here. After all, that is generally not how your customers shop and you should align your staffing to their needs not your staff needs. Monitoring this weekly will establish how to do your roster so that you don't have the cost when your customers are not shopping, and they are available to ensure good customer service when they are. Analyse your sales trade counter activity by hour or half hour by day so that you can roster your team effectively.

Do you recognise a busy evening & weekend store in Figure 3?

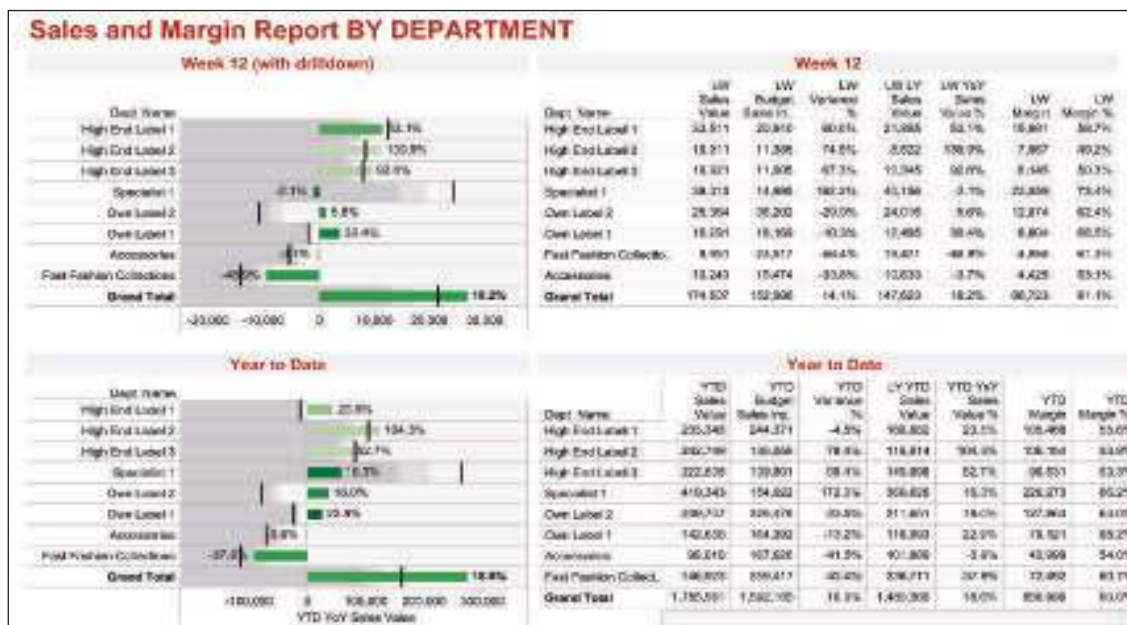
A tough line should be taken also on other costs including rent, each year landlords are becoming more realistic about the world we find ourselves in.

If there are Bank Debt issues, the sooner these are resolved the better, this will allow you get focused back on real business. Keep a close eye on refunds and discounts, do you have issues, do you need to adapt your refund policy? A few bad eggs can cost you dearly.

5) CUSTOMER SERVICE

Footfall is a challenge, but what are you doing to get them to spend more in the shop? McDonald's Restaurants train new cashiers in 30 minutes and in this time they not only learn how to operate the till and place orders with the kitchen, they also learn how to upsell. Lots of jokes are made of "Would you like fries with that?" but it is estimated this adds as much as 10% to McDonald's bottom line. We are not saying it is as easy as this, but it is not that difficult either. Customers really value the advice that they get from an informed assistant. You can build a trusted relationship with them if you already have not done so. We would recommend that you track individual cashier upselling performance to identify further training needs. Again, this is a standard view with rwr but you may be available to derive it from your EPOS and then review regularly.

To sum up, business growth will not happen by default. Put plans in place for the next year to make your business better and more efficient. Plans count for nothing without proper execution, this will require leadership, drive, discipline and determination. Do this right and you will have a different business next year with a motivated and satisfied team.





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FEATURE RETAILER UNCOVERED



Name: EAMONN WALL
Company: Arboretum Home & Garden Home
Position: Outdoor Manager

A brief description of your business? Arboretum originally started off as a small family run garden centre, which has literally metamorphosed into a retail destination store. The Arboretum quickly realised that a stand-alone garden centre would not be a viable business model in rural Ireland. Soon it developed to be Ireland's first garden centre to have a food offering which is now the key driving force in bringing footfall to the centre. Diversification has also played major strategy in the product offering; fashion, food, home, garden, leisure and relaxation all at Arboretum Home and Garden Heaven.

How did you get started in the retail industry? I started off my career in selling shoes at age 16. Well it was to stand to me for rest of my life. The best education I ever got in customer care. And to this day I never forgot the skill-sets which I have learned in selling shoes. I still get asked, "Eamonn what's a size 37 or a size 44" like riding a bike - you never forget!"

What is your favourite retail store and why? Vodafone, Carlow. A few words which the sales staff don't have in their vocabulary 'No. Can't. Not able!' You have to see these guys in action. Every time a problem pops up, they simply solve it. Great customer service!

Who has taught you the most in your career

as a retailer? Working in a small family business like Quality Shoes, this was an education that no school or college could have ever taught me. I learned the real meaning of customer service.

Where is your favourite holiday destination? New York. I love Broadway and I cram in as many shows as I can. The smaller theatres are magical.

What do you love most about your job? This is one small question with a very big answer, so here goes. I love my job because it entails all the things I love in life - people, learning and plants. From a very young age I have always had a passion for gardening and at age 25 I gave up full-time employment to study Commercial Horticulture, unthinkable at the time, but the best decision I have ever made. I love meeting people and now I am in a job where I can combine both.

If you were not in retail what job would you have pursued? My love of plants and gardening will literally always take me down the garden path of horticulture. Retail plays an intricate part of horticulture; hence I will never be too far from retail.

Congratulations on being one of the Retail Excellence Ireland Top5 Retail Managers in the 2015 Awards - what does this mean to you and your store?

Well it's great that a small family business like the Arboretum can be recognised outside of their industry of horticulture and be able to walk among the giants of retail. This accolade is shared with all the Arboretum team who make the impossible happen. I am personally delighted to have been acknowledged by REI and a big thank you to the team at Arboretum who made this possible!



Name: FRANCIS LAWLOR
Company: The Orchard
Position: Food & Beverage Manager

A brief description of your business? The Orchard comprises of 5 departments (Garden Centre, Home and Interiors, Outdoor living, Café and Pet/Aquatics). It's housed on a stunning 5 acre site on the Dublin Road in Celbridge. We proudly employ just over 100 of the hardest working staff in Ireland.

How did you get started in the retail industry? Honestly... purely by chance. My background is originally hospitality and it's that role that brought me to The Orchard. Over the course the last few years Gerry Dooley has had a much appreciated faith in my abilities and helped me transition into the retail environment.

What is your favourite retail store and why? Arnotts on Henry Street, just a fabulous example of excellent shop keeping!

Who has taught you the most in your career as a retailer? It's not as much as who - it is a group of people, my fellow managers at The Orchard. Everyday I can honestly say I learn something new from them. Between them they have a wealth of knowledge & experience that are only too happy to share with me and I love picking their brains to

get their opinions. The older I get the more I appreciate when people share their knowledge with me.

Where is your favourite holiday destination? Anywhere that combines good company with good food & wine. But if I had to pick one area I would have say anywhere along the south of France.

What do you love most about your job? People, people & people, I enjoy the unpredictability of people. No two are the same & that's what makes every day a challenge. Exceeding people expectations is something that I strive to achieve in The Orchard & the sense of achievement when a customer walks out of the store smiling makes my day.

If you were not in retail what career would you have pursued? Hotel management, hospitality is where I started my career off; I think like retail I was attracted to it by the people aspect of the industry. And just like retail you have got to be 100% committed to the job & put the needs of your customer first in order to maintain a successful business.

Congratulations - you are the REI Retail Manager of the Year 2016! What does this mean to you and your store? The fact that it's an REI award is what really makes it extra special for The Orchard and myself. REI is an organisation that we all admire and respect so much. Being in the Top5 with such great retailers is an amazing achievement and great way to close out the year.



Name: RUTH McKENNY
Company: Fuschia Make Up
Position: Manager

A brief description of your business? Fuschia Make Up is an Irish make-up company set up in 2005. Our first store opened in Scotch Hall Shopping Centre in Drogheda, from here we launched in various Salons, Spas and Pharmacies throughout the country. We opened the doors of our second retail store in 2013 in Pavilions Shopping Centre in Swords. We continue to grow!

How did you get started in the retail industry? My first retail job was at the age of 16 working through the summer in my local Centra store, from here I moved to the UK retailer Monsoon where I held a weekend manager position whilst still at college. This is where I really discovered my love for retail and knew I had found the career for me.

What is your favourite retail store and why? Meadows & Byrne. I would happily shop homewares all day and Meadows & Byrne would be top of my list, great range of products, great style, attentive staff, great loyalty card and beautiful stores. I always

have a lovely shopping experience and feel valued as a customer.

Who has taught you the most in your career as a retailer?

Fuschia's Managing Director Gillian Moore-Brady, by working so closely with Gillian I get to see the business through her eyes.

Where is your favourite holiday destination? Morocco.

What do you love most about your job? I enjoy the challenge and the responsibility but ultimately I enjoy giving direct support to the MD, I know that the contribution I make is vital to the overall success of the business.

If you were not in retail what career would you have pursued? I always thought I would study Art History and work as a Gallery Curator!

Congratulations on being one of the Retail Excellence Ireland Top5 Retail Managers in the 2015 Awards - what does this mean to you and your store?

It's fantastic to be in the Top5, it's wonderful to be recognised for all your hard work and effort and not just for me but for the whole team at Fuschia. It's great for our store to see the high standard being delivered by other brands - this will help us as we strive for greater success in the coming year!

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The Head Office System for retailers with multiple stores without changing your EPOS



FEATURE RETAILER UNCOVERED



Name: CRÓNÁN BEARE
Company: Topaz Cranley Centre
Position: Store Manager

A brief description of your business? Topaz is one of Ireland's largest forecourt retailers. Topaz Re.store has set the bar and keeps it moving higher and higher. Re.store sites cater to the consumers changing attitudes in what they eat and how they like to shop.

How did you get started in the retail industry? When I was 7, my dad was a flooring contractor and used to have books of carpet samples for his customers to choose their patterns.

I broke these books down and went door to door selling them as car mats - I never stopped since then! I worked my way through college whilst in McDonald's and stayed on to become a store manager. During the boom years I then turned to the hospitality side of retailing as assistant nightclub manager. I wanted to work for a really powerful brand so I joined Topaz literally the day they were putting up the first Topaz canopy as a manager in training.

What is your favourite retail store and why? I love pop-up stores - they give us just a little taste of their business while showcasing their best. They usually have ample space to walk around, in many cases they usually include stories about their products and the windows are never cluttered with junk posters/stickers etc.

Who has taught you the most in your career as a retailer? Too many to mention but for anyone thinking about going on the REI Management Development Programme (or attending an REI event) I strongly recommend them to do so. It has changed me in more ways than I could have imagined. Just hearing people's stories, seeing the trends even before they happen - when you spend a day at one of these you won't doubt that Ireland

are world leaders in excellence retailing.

Where is your favourite holiday destination? Ireland - around every corner there's beautiful scenery, nice people and an amazing story! Just hop in the car loaded with every type of clothing because you never know what you'll be doing or what the weather will be like!

What do you love most about your job? Bragging to customers about our products and services! I can often be found hanging around my deli area telling the customers stories about our products and services or just having a bit of general banter with everyone.

If you were not in retail what career would you have pursued? Advertising - I studied it in Business College. I appreciate a good advert and think I'd be good at it.

Congratulations on being one of the Retail Excellence Ireland Top5 Retail Managers in the 2015 Awards - what does this mean to you and your store? This is the biggest achievement of my life so far, when I got the news I was a bag of emotions it was the first time in my life I cried with happiness. I didn't know it was possible! I genuinely thought the Oscar winners were just putting on an act. Friends and family have been congratulating me non-stop. Looking at the other nominees and indeed the winner Fran, I'm very proud to be considered in their ranks. The team onsite keep boasting to customers that they have one of the best managers in Ireland, but in all honesty above all I'm proud of them. We've achieved so much together. I would not have been considered to be put forward by Topaz if it were not for their great efforts. Topaz Cranley is a world class store because the team working here do it because they want to, we are full of energy, and enthusiasm and each one of us can't wait till the next person comes in through our doors to pay us a visit.



Name: CLAIRE MANNING
Company: McCabes Pharmacy, Dundrum Town Centre
Position: Manager

A brief description of your business? McCabes Pharmacy is a family run pharmacy group. It has been in operation for over 30 years with 21 stores covering Dublin, Limerick, Wexford and Louth. We provide great care to our customers and patients and offer many extra services including home deliveries.

How did you get started in the retail industry? Having left school at the age of 16, I went into the retail industry

working in fashion with Next where I gained a lot of experience in customer service and working in a team. I joined McCabes Pharmacy 12 years ago and this is where my career started to grow from strength to strength. I have been a manager in 4 of the company's stores and am now managing one of the biggest stores in the company in Dundrum Town Centre.

What is your favourite retail store and why? Of course it has to be McCabes Pharmacy Dundrum! Being in one of the largest shopping centres we get a true mix of customers, yet we still have a community feel to the store with our regular daily and weekly customers. The product offerings that we have and the services we offer add to why it is my favourite retail store.

Who has taught you the most in your career as a retailer? It has to be the teams and managers that I have worked with within McCabes Pharmacy over the years. Having

been with the company for 12 years I have worked with some excellent managers who have guided me to where I am today. And hopefully I will guide some of my team members into management in the future.

Where is your favourite holiday destination? My favourite holiday destination has to be South Africa. I attended a wedding in South Africa and took the opportunity to spend 3 weeks there and visited some of the most amazing places, in particular Table Mountain where the views are amazing.

What do you love most about your job? I love customer satisfaction. It is important to me that my team offer the best customer service to our customers. I love to see customers smiling when they leave the store and that they have the medication/product that they came in to purchase.

If you were not in retail what career would you have pursued? I don't really know! Retail is all I know and I really couldn't see myself doing anything else. Even as a child I always wanted to "play shop" and be the manager bossing my little sister around. Retail has been engrained in me since I was a child.

Congratulations on being one of the Retail Excellence Ireland Top5 Retail Managers in the 2015 Awards - what does this mean to you and your store? This high level of recognition means the world to me! I strive to be the best at what I do and I work hard to achieve it. This encourages me greatly to continue to aim for and achieve the high standards that McCabes Pharmacy and I have. It is wonderful for the store as this is a reflection on the entire team not just myself. We work as a united team, bringing the best service and product offering to our customers.

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RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND ANNOUNCES LEARNING CALENDAR



RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND RECENTLY UNFOLDED THEIR UPCOMING
LEARNING CALENDAR FOR Q1/Q2 2016. SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

Buying & Merchandise Planning

The calendar opens with a unique Buying & Merchandising event delivered in association with Real World Retail. This free event, which will be held in the Merrion Hotel, Dublin is specifically designed for CEOs, CFOs, Merchandising Managers and Heads of Operations/Sales/Buying/Marketing. Delegates will gain a clear understanding of the planning process including range planning, category management, store space optimisation and replenishment and operation of an open to buy.

Retail Management Development Programme

Speaking recently to Retail Times, Helen O'Dowd Head of Learning & Events with REI said 'We are delighted to announce that the Retail Management Development Programme, which is now in its fourth year, will run again commencing in February. This outstanding programme is a series of four, one day workshops which will be delivered over an eleven week period. It was developed by REI for owner/managers who wish to enhance and refresh their skills'. The programme will be led by James Burke, James Burke & Associates and will consist of highly innovative and valuable presentations by accomplished leaders in the Irish retail industry. Delegates will also be invited to attend Day2 of the Retail Retreat where they will have the opportunity to hear presentations by both Irish and global retail experts. The programme will be delivered at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Blanchardstown. To reserve your place or if you would like further information log onto www.retailexcellence.ie or contact Helen@retailexcellence.ie

Essential eCommerce sessions rolled out for all levels

David Campbell, REI eCommerce Executive, has recognised the importance of dividing REI's

eCommerce sessions into three levels – Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced. Retail Times caught up with David recently in Dublin where he explained 'The Beginner session is designed for retailers who don't currently operate online and who intend to explore this path. The Intermediate session is tailored towards those who want to gain insights into the most effective applications of targeting their consumers and obtaining high-quality page-rank scores with the advanced course focussed on retailers seeking to implement new strategies to gain competitive advantage'. David continued by explaining that 'Advertising is crucial to online success and speakers will also cover the guidelines to follow in order to maximise the marketing budget in order to generate maximum conversions'. Online

trading will be addressed also in the advanced session covering the most efficient methods of targeting foreign markets to increase profitability. REI will incorporate a practical element to all sessions in order to maximise the learning capabilities of all participants. David commented 'We are thrilled to offer Irish eCommerce case study presentations where attendees will get first hand information and improve their online strategies to gain a competitive advantage through capitalising on these invaluable insights provided'. For more information on the sessions, visit www.retailexcellence.ie or contact David Campbell on 065 6846927 | david.campbell@retailexcellence.ie.

REI Retreat Carlow

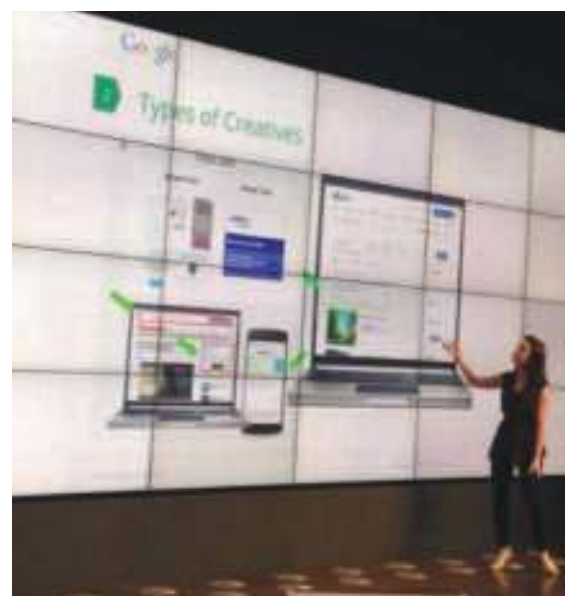
The annual REI Retail Retreat is just that – a retreat away from our daily retail life! The Retreat affords all REI Members irrespective of size or sector, the opportunity to listen, learn, network and even relax in the company of fellow retailers.

The 2016 Retail Retreat will take place on Mount Wolsley Estate in Carlow where 700 Irish retailers will congregate to hear the very best retail visionaries share their knowledge and experience. The Retreat will include dinner in the Arboretum Home & Garden Heaven – REI National Company of the Year 2016 and REI National Store of the Year 2015. Further details of the Retail Retreat are available on www.retailexcellence.ie.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LEARNING EVENT	DATE
Buying & Merchandise Planning	Thursday 4th February
Retail Management Development Programme Day 1	Tuesday 16th February
Retail Management Development Programme Day 2	Wednesday 9th March
Retail Management Development Programme Day 3	Tuesday 5th April
Retail Management Development Programme Day 4	Wednesday 27th April
eCommerce Management Programme - Beginners Level	Wednesday 17th February
eCommerce Management Programme - Intermediate Level	Tuesday 8th March
eCommerce Management Programme - Advanced Level	Wednesday 6th April
REI Retail Retreat / Dinner in Arboretum Home & Garden Heaven	Tuesday 10th May
REI Retail Retreat Day 2	Wednesday 11th May



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- Patrick Carroll, **Evergreen**



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At StudioForty9 we identify real opportunities for Irish Retailers to dramatically improve their Ecommerce Performance.

We concentrate on data driven analysis and use techniques such as Conversion Rate Optimisation, SEO, PPC, retention and content marketing to improve results – and we call this **Ecommerce Performance**. Contact us to find out more.

We worked with Ger and the team in StudioForty9 reviewing UX for two digital projects that benefitted greatly from the team's involvement They inspire confidence in their ability to deliver.

- James Byrne, **Glanbia**

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FEATURE ONLINE CRIME

Cyber Attacks Against Retailers



MIKE HARRIS
Partner -
Head of Cyber Security Services
Grant Thornton
mike.harris@ie.gt.com

One in eight retailers faced a cyber-attack over the past 12 months according to data from Grant Thornton's International Business Report. Despite this, fewer than half of retail businesses have a cyber strategy in place (46%) which is below the global average (52%) for all businesses. But with fierce competition and online customers less loyal to any particular retailer than those who visit in person, retailers need to make sure their digital presence is up to scratch. A slick interface and ease of payment are important but so too is security. Cyber crime is on the rise: Grant Thornton research suggests the cost of cyber crime to the Irish economy is €630 million per year.

These estimates of direct financial impact do not include the long-term reputational damage and loss of trust that companies suffer when their systems are breached. If an online customer worries that their credit card details are not securely stored, they will almost certainly choose to shop somewhere else. Very few retailers are lucky enough to offer a product so unique that customers cannot find a substitute.

At the time of writing, JD Wetherspoon pub chain was warning customers of a 'hack', now believed to have exposed approximately 657,000 customer details. Details relating to the hack revealed that the data accessed was held by a third party company but had remained undetected for some time. Wetherspoon became aware of a possible breach on 1st December and it was confirmed the following day. According to letters that the company issued to their customers, information would have been added to the database in one of the following ways; either when customers signed up to receive Wetherspoon's newsletter, registered with The Cloud to use wi-fi in their pubs or submitted a 'contact us' form on the website, or bought vouchers online before August 2014.

But attacks are not focused just on the online retailer, there have also been significant Point of Sale targeted attacks involving customised malicious software specifically written to ex-filtrate customer credit card data from the retailers' networks back to the cyber criminals both in the U.S. and Europe.

Tone at the top is also a key issue for many retailers and is increasingly unacceptable for retail organisations to ignore the issue of cyber security, these issues need to be addressed by senior management and at board level in order to mitigate sufficiently against potential breaches.



All retailers should focus on the following areas:

- Develop a cyber security strategy focusing on what needs to be protected
- Identify priorities for protection starting with a cyber security risk assessment and gap analysis
- Everyone be aware of the role that they have to play in making their company cyber-secure
- Effective policies embed cyber security within the business

Cyber security and the prevention of cyber crime is a key focus area for retailers in Ireland. Protecting customers' personal and financial data is now part of the cost of doing business. If retailers are not trusted to protect their customers' information they will go elsewhere.



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IRELAND BECOMES A VALUABLE DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL SHOPPERS



Tourism Ireland sets its’ sights on another record year for Irish tourism, aiming to surpass the record performance of 2015 in overseas tourism and to welcome 8.2 million visitors to Ireland this year. This is good news for retailers in Ireland who are set to capitalise on the growing international shopper spend.

International financial service provider, Premier Tax Free, one of the world's biggest providers of VAT refunds, recently reported (October 2015) an impressive 53% year-on-year growth in Tax Free sales in Ireland, with sales growth of 29% from USA and 37% from China.

Top five visitor nations to Ireland			
October 2015			
	Market %	YOY Variation in sales	€ ATV
1. USA	36%	29%	94
2. China	34%	37%	424
3. Canada	6%	-2%	86
4. Australia	4%	2%	111
5. Switzerland	2%	0%	359

Country Manager, David Daly, commented: “2015 has been a very positive year for Tax Free sales in Ireland. Ireland is now ranked the 7th most valuable country for retailers in terms of international shoppers (after France, UK, Italy, Spain, Germany, Singapore). This is largely due to the growth in spend by the top two visitor markets, USA & China, who account for 36 and 34 percent of market share respectively. The growth in Chinese spend is particularly exciting for brands in Ireland who can benefit from their love of European shopping & high average purchase price rates.”

David continued, “In addition, we’re pleased to see our partner merchants, such as Gucci, Folli Follie and Hugo Boss, open new flagship stores in Ireland, which highlights the appetite for retail growth in Ireland”.

No End in Sight to Chinese Outbound Tourism Boom

Chinese shopping spend is now worth more in value to the Irish Retail community than that of USD spend. Visitors from North America far outweigh those from the rest of the world (not including Europe) however, in 2015 the Chinese have very nearly overtaken them to become the highest



spenders on Tax Free shopping worldwide.

And there is no end in sight to Chinese outbound tourism boom. Chinese outbound tourist spending has quadrupled over the past six years, with shopping being their number one reason for travelling. In fact, in 2014, Chinese travellers spent a

staggering average of 88% of their trip budget on shopping, with over 40% spending more than 2,100 Euros per trip.

The growing availability of Union Pay at retailers has encouraged spending abroad as it has become the top choice of payment for outbound Chinese travellers.

The exciting news is that there’s much more room for growth in the coming years. Overseas travel has not yet become a national trend and according to the China Tourism Academy, only 5% of the Chinese population actually own a passport. With Ireland now on the agenda of Chinese travellers, the future looks very bright.

About Premier Tax Free

With over 30 years’ experience, Premier Tax Free is one of the world’s leading Tax Free shopping companies, providing international shoppers with easy, fast and reliable VAT refund and dynamic currency conversion services. Spanning across more than 30 countries, we work with over 150,000 stores worldwide.

Premier Tax Free has the knowledge and expertise to provide an enhanced international shopping experience to both merchants and shoppers. This includes an extensive media portfolio enabling merchants to engage with millions of international shoppers via multiple touch points, business intelligence and cutting edge solutions that cater to all point of sale systems, with features such as credit card recognition, instant refunding and customised instructions. Also provided is Tax Free, DCC and cultural training which helps to improve the speed of processing and the number of successfully completed transactions, resulting in satisfied international Shoppers.

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Areas of the Retail Industry**



The word out there amongst the worldly-wise is Mindfulness. Not Meditation, Zen, TM or Awareness. Those terms may seem very like the same thing but they are all now obsolete. For those who would be mindful without the expense and inconvenience of tutorials, practice sessions or journeys to Tibet the answer is to join the huge numbers of people taking up adult colouring books. Yes, that's right. By taking a coloured pencil, pen or crayon and oh-so-carefully applying lovely hues of your own choosing to exquisitely detailed drawings collected in a book relaxes the mind, de-stresses the imagination and calms the troubled spirit. In the past two years adult colouring books have gone viral, turning a few talented but previously little-known commercial illustrators and graphic designers like Johanna Basford and Millie Marotta into international best-sellers. CREST Mystery Shopping sent our **MYSTERY SHOPPER** out to see how far this publishing phenomenon has pushed its way into the independent bookstores of Ireland's small to medium-sized towns. All of the bookshops were visited during the third week of November 2015.

BOOKS ETC.

THE SQUARE, CLAREMORRIS, CO. MAYO

FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

The Etcetera element appears to have taken over this store's display windows. Framed art on easels to the left of the entrance, sample corner mouldings to the right. Lots of fascia glass but it's all set in industrial-style aluminium frames ill-suited to the lovely old Victorian mouldings of the original shopfront.

STOCK AND SELECTION:

The bookshelves looked a bit under-filled but worth a browse. Sadly for the purposes of this visit, there was just one single adult colouring book in stock.

SERVICE AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE:

The one staff member on duty (who looked like the owner) was polite and helpful. Commented that he was getting growing demand for the colouring books and was considering getting some more in.



SELECTED ITEM:

"Secret Garden" by Johanna Basford
Price: €15
Not the most difficult of decisions –

AMBIENCE:

Once through the plain, bordering-on-unattractive, aluminium-framed glass door this shop felt pleasantly warm and welcoming in a quiet down-home way.

MYSTERY SHOPPER RATING:

Unimpressive frontage, and behind the curve on colouring books.



THE READING ROOM

BRIDGE STREET, CARRICK-ON-SHANNON, CO. LEITRIM

FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

Not another plain-as-rice-pudding country town storefront! Window, doorway, window. Each much the same width and height, except that the doorway goes all the way to the ground. Black sills and jambs, long black painted panel across the top with the store name in white "handwriting" letters. At least the window displays featured books.

STOCK AND SELECTION:

Well filled shelves with what looked like an excellent range of up-to-date publications. The adult colouring section was impressively arranged and offered a fine choice including most of the new big names in this genre.

SERVICE AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE:

The Mystery Shopper was greeted after a suitable browsing period by a somewhat subdued but politely helpful staff member. She did not seem particularly well up on the technicalities of colouring, e.g. best paper types, pencil versus ink, but knew her authors and their distinctive styles.

SELECTED ITEM:

Millie Marotta's "Animal Kingdom"
Price: €15.10

AMBIENCE:

An interior without much visual pizzazz, rather like a small local public library. This store needed something to lift visitors out of the wet Wednesday mood outdoors. Memorably cheery, enthusiastic and energised assistance would have been the best and cheapest option. Sadly, not available on this occasion.

MYSTERY SHOPPER RATING:

Very good selection, not very well displayed or promoted.



CRANNOG BOOKSHOP

CHURCH STREET, CAVAN

FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

Aha. At last, a bookstore that looks genuinely interesting from the outside! Dark blue wooden frontage picked out in gold; big three-panel display window in frames that curve gently at the top. And what's this? A whole window of books on Mindfulness – Mindful Walking, Mindfulness and Creativity and, yes, Colouring for Calm.



STOCK AND SELECTION:

Crammed full of tempting tomes in every imaginable category. Today we're after adult colouring books and, OMG, they have a huge variety. Artfully spread out, propped up and lovingly layered. Line drawings from Paris, Japan, the world of fantasy flowers and animals. Geometric patterns. There's even an ironic take on the topic called "Crap Colouring In".

SERVICE AND STAFF KNOWLEDGE:

There were two staff members available. The Mystery Shopper picked the one who looked least knowledgeable, if only to apply some level of handicap to a store that looked like winning hands down. The service was attentive, the knowledge (paper types, colouring media, one-sided illustrations versus two-sided) was fine.

SELECTED ITEM:

Zoe de Las Cases, "Secret Paris".

AMBIENCE:

Wood flooring, quirky old library steps, bog oak and Japanese porcelain lending low-key visual appeal to the book displays. Warm lighting, shelves in different sizes with stock stacked at varied angles. An air of hushed enthusiasm.

MYSTERY SHOPPER RATING:

This is exactly what a small bookshop should be like.





LOOKING BACK LOOK FORWARD

Karl McKeever, Managing Director, Visual Thinking

It's a fairly safe assumption that the first few weeks of 2016 will once again be filled with the thoughts of countless industry commentators as they hurriedly pen their rundowns of the trends to watch out for over the next twelve months.

Whether in our stores or our personal lives, most of us want to think that we're in touch with what's new and exciting. For retailers, appearing on-trend and relevant in the eyes of shoppers can be a vitally important part of realising internal predictions of the commercial variety.

The trouble with trends, however, is that when one retailer strikes on an idea that works, it seems the rest of the sector (and often the world) is keen to latch on to it, too.



DURING the course of the past year, Visual Thinking's work for some of the world's leading retail brands, has taken me and my team to Sydney, Denmark, Germany, Dubai and San Francisco to name but a few locations, covering hundreds of thousands of miles to unearth the most vivid examples of retail best practice – from the left field, to those who excel in solid basics. As last year drew to a close, we compiled our stores of 2015 – showcasing twelve stores that we believed deserve recognition. As we did, the issue of 'originality' proved a recurring theme.

As the saying goes: "there's no such thing as a new idea". Nowhere is this more appropriate, than instore at SuperGlue – the super sized, gone large, maxed up brand experience of the original Glue fashion store. Brands work hard to create successful formulas of their own, and this store serves to highlight the perils of adopting copycat inspiration, or to be brutal, taking ideas from another brand. There are elements instore that clearly seem to have been 'Borrowed with Pride' from brands such as Urban Outfitters, amongst others. Of course, the temptation to incorporate other ideas is easy, and irresistible. But at the same time, the store also demonstrates the success of its own ideas. Overall, the attractive store is interesting, easy to shop and certainly appealing to consumers. So the question is, did the brand need to copy anyone in the execution of this concept at all?

Whilst in Australia, we also visited the flagship store of national telecoms provider, Telstra. The store is not in itself category defining. If you are going to do, what they do and sell what they sell, being in this brand genre will dictate that you go about presenting your store proposition in certain ways. In other words, customers have baseline expectations that a retailer must fulfill.

Like the Apple Store that sits across the street, the window displays stylish, imaginative and



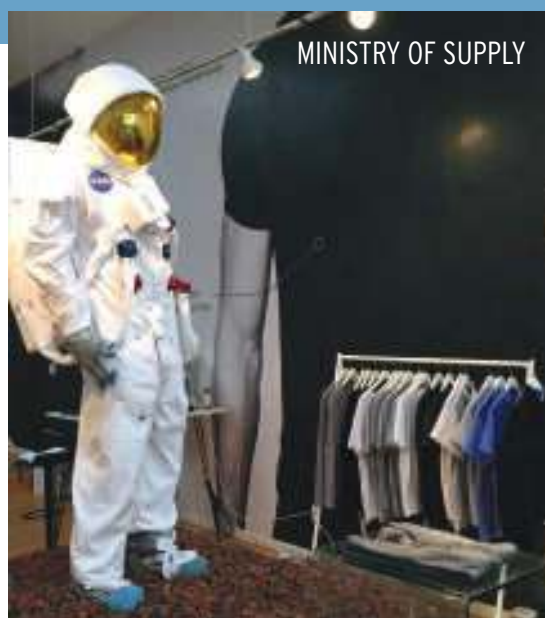
iconic – selling ideas, not things. But the store design has some distinctive elements too. Instore, there are plenty of examples of a customer-centric approach which, by its very nature, creates some 'original thinking'. I particularly liked how products are presented, with imaginative, thought provoking 'customer lead' solutions in ways designed to prompt exploration and enquiry about products, features and services. Some marketers use glib terms such as 'bringing products and brands to



BACK TO WARD



“ THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A NEW IDEA ”



form, merchandised in clear horizontal lines, and with clearly defined focal points that make use of dark leather, wood and ball props. The thought that has gone into designing a practical, attractive, efficient display is evident throughout the retail experience. This is not just a store full of good ideas, but good ideas that are delivered exceptionally well.

Speaking of good ideas, in San Francisco I stopped by Ministry of Supply, a thoroughly forward thinking, NASA inspired brand that's making big strides (one giant leap) within American fashion retail. Here, the owners appear to have taken advice on how to set out the store and have done their homework when it comes to understanding the key elements that go into 'getting it right' instore. For a start up business this is a very competent store. It shows how small and independent businesses need to compete on 'at least' equal terms with more established apparel brands for them to succeed. A good idea alone, no matter how revolutionary' is no guarantee of long term success in retail – you have to deliver this with expertise if shoppers are going to engage with the concept and feel confident to buy.

For those established retailers who have 'bigger things' in their sights for 2016, Scandinavian fashion retailer, Moss Copenhagen, provided evidence that there is an alternative to becoming just another cookie cutter retail chain. Unlike other hugely successful chain apparel brands, Moss is not a repetitive or faux formula. In fact, part of the appeal of the store is that it has some raw edges and authenticity – it is not the product of a marketers brief or that of a corporate giant trying to differentiate its own retail offer and brand portfolio.

As shoppers become weary of too much consistency, they will seek brands that continue to inspire them with something new. Moss avoids the trap of each store becoming simply another shop on the map and instead offers a different reflection of its brand experience wherever the customer shops. In so doing, it gains a sense of exclusivity, avoids repetitiveness and does not lose its edge – a hard balance to get right.

The current retail design trend of 'vintage

hipster' has been widely adopted across many sectors and retail formats and has more than likely peaked with brands and shoppers seeking to inform taste and wider opinion. As ever, the next 'big thing' will not be far from making its entrance and the best ideas will soon become the new mainstream.

As our VM travels in 2015 showed, whilst imitation may indeed be the sincerest form of flattery, serving a deluge of replica 'me too' retail experiences will ultimately deprive today's shoppers of the choice and variety that they now demand from their retail experiences. And that is far from a passing fad.





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- A listing on the Preferred Supplier Directory in Retail Times magazine with your contact details and business card ad over a 12 month period in all 4 editions of Retail Times magazine
- An opportunity to exhibit your products and services to retailers at the REI Team Development Conference in September 2016

AWARDS

- An opportunity to enter your company into the "Supplier of the Year" category at the Retail Excellence Awards 2016

ON-LINE ADVERTISING

- A listing on the Preferred Supplier Directory of the REI website: www.retailexcellence.ie
- We will also include a link to your website from the REI Preferred Supplier online Directory Listing. The Preferred Supplier Directory is accessed directly from our homepage with over 4,000 hits monthly

RECOMMENDATION

- Recommendation by REI staff in response to any enquiry made by REI members to our office (where there are two or more suppliers in a category, all will be recommended in response to a member query)

1ST CHOICE SUPPLIER LOGO

- Use of the exclusive 1st Choice Supplier logo, a recognised mark of quality, which will enhance your profile on company literature and promotional material

RESEARCH

- Complimentary receipt of the REI quarterly retail industry review

INVESTMENT REQUIRED

€1,450 [+VAT]

It's easy to become an REI Preferred Supplier:

Visit The Preferred Supplier tab on www.retailexcellence.ie and complete the Preferred Supplier online application form.

- A completed online application form will be required by Friday 27th of November 2015

We have been involved with REI since the very first year of the Preferred Supplier program and believe that the Preferred Supplier Directory is the definitive supplier listing to the retail industry in Ireland. We have built valuable relationships with retailers through our involvement with REI.



Barry Whelan, Managing Director,
Excel Recruitment



An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, REI Chairperson, Donagh O'Hagan and CEO, David Fitzsimons, launch "Small Business Saturday"



REI e-Commerce event at MicksGarage.com



Wexford County Chief Executive, Tom Enright, David Fitzsimons and Patrick McCormack, Sam McCauley Chemists at the Wexford Town Revival launch

WHY BECOME AN REI PREFERRED SUPPLIER? HEAR WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY!

Our REI Preferred Supplier status gives us a unique opportunity to interact with our customers outside of the normal pharmacy channels. Our involvement with the REI Preferred Supplier programme has given us another route to our customer base and helps keep us up-to-date with all the retail challenges faced by our clients.



Robin Hanna, Sales Director, McLernon Computers

I became a Preferred Supplier to REI members in 2013 and have found the help and support brilliant. I have engaged directly with REI members, resulting in signing new clients and delivering great results and peace of mind – I would highly recommend becoming an REI Preferred Supplier.



Declan Quinn, Managing Director, Auditel Ireland

We have always found our Preferred Supplier status with REI to be a mutually beneficial partnership. Our presence in Retail Times and online has been a successful form of advertising to retail clients. REI are a highly professional organisation and strongly promote to retail members to support their Preferred Suppliers. For increased exposure to retail businesses, I would highly recommend becoming a Preferred Supplier with REI.



Carmel Kikkers,
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