ALSO INSIDE

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THE SOFT SELL
Software developer Equiendo on sales strategy

THE NORDICS FOR NEWBIES
Scandinavia offers opportunities for early reference sales in Europe

IS EBAY A VALID CHANNEL FOR BUSINESS?
Using the 'world's biggest flea market' to enter untapped markets

INDIA MARCHES ON
Contents

COVER FOCUS: INDIA
015 Banking on the third in the world
Fergus Murphy on India’s prospects in and beyond banking

018 Indian construction continues to roar
Are there opportunities for Irish companies?

SECTORS AND REGIONS
022 Australia bounces back
Australia is benefiting from the strength of its Asian neighbours

034 The Nordics for newbies
The Nordics are good destinations for early reference sales in Europe

PEOPLE
012 Antennas everywhere
Taoglas MD Dermot O’Shea on targeting the growth of wireless applications

028 The soft sell
Equiendo COO Barry Cullen talks about the company’s sales strategy

045 Meet the middle-men of the new software economy
The CEOs of Research & Markets and CarTrawler talk about business models

BUSINESS
026 Better buying
Tips for smarter procurement

030 Perfect partners
Partnering advice for young software companies

038 Is eBay a valid channel for business?
How eBay can offer consumer-oriented businesses a route into untapped markets

041 Thrift tips for exporters
Savings on management, travel and fleet costs

REGULARS
002 Noticeboard
News for and from the export community

010 Diary
Guide to upcoming events

048 Book reviews
Plain selling

050 Marketing intelligence
Market research plus trade regulation update

054 Travel news
Flight and travel update

056 The Backpage
The Cuba-ism movement
Prepared for Export: UK Guide 2009

Preparing for Export: UK Guide 2009 has been published by Enterprise Ireland in association with the First Flight Programme as a resource for exporters looking to the UK.

The UK economy is currently in recession and economic conditions are not as favourable for conducting business. Regardless, the UK remains Ireland’s largest trading partner and is increasingly important as other key markets for Irish goods decline.

According to Enterprise Ireland’s UK team, there are a significant number of opportunities for Irish companies to expand their sales by entering the UK market. Many sectors are still showing signs of growth, and some UK firms are using this opportunity of the ‘perfect storm’ to rationalise and cut out under-performing parts of their organisation. This will, in turn, create new business opportunities.

The guide is available to download at www.enterprise-ireland.com/firstflight

Having crashed 13 per cent since last autumn, recent estimates suggest that world trade may have stabilised or even started to grow over the summer.

OECD pinpoints where green shoots are emerging

International business confidence got a boost in September, with the OECD’s interim economic assessment of Europe, the US and Japan indicating a bottoming out of the downturn.

At a press briefing, acting chief economist Jørgen Elmeskov told journalists: “A recovery appears to be in hand for the OECD at large, but it’s important not to get carried away. The green shoots look likely to grow further in the near term, but they will still need nurturing by policy if they are to become strong, self-sustaining plants.”

Promising no further botanic references, he noted that world trade had collapsed as a result of the crisis “It is currently 13 per cent lower than autumn last year,” he said. “But most recent estimates suggest that it may have stabilised or even started to grow over the summer. This will add some dynamism to the economies. We are already seeing firmer export orders in many countries.”

This stabilisation is largely due to the fact that non-OECD countries have recovered faster, Elmeskov said. “That holds true in China, in particular, where growth in the second quarter may have exceeded 14 per cent. But other regions in South East Asia grew rapidly also, and their imports grew faster than their exports, adding demand pull to the OECD economies”.

Of the G7, the OECD is predicting a return to growth for the US, Germany and France in the third quarter of 2009. Canada and Italy are expected to follow them into positive territory in the fourth quarter, while Britain will stabilise at zero per cent growth in Q4.

The prognosis was less positive for Ireland, with further contraction expected, before activity recovers at a slow pace in 2010. The OECD noted that substantial spending cuts and increases in taxation are required in the coming years. Problems in the banking sector must be resolved at a reasonable cost, it said, and competitiveness could be restored by lower wages and stronger competition.

One of the few countries to get close to what could be described as a ‘thumbs up’ was Poland, where the recession is expected to be relatively shallow, due to relatively modest trade dependence, historically low interest rates, moderate indebtedness of the private sector, income tax cuts and the implementation of many infrastructure projects as a result of EU funding and the 2012 football championships.

Further indicating the ability of major sporting events to lift a country’s fortunes, outside the OECD, the interim assessment predicted that while growth would be likely to remain negative in South Africa in 2009, there would be an uplift in 2010, with policy stimulus, global recovery and the soccer World Cup. Likewise, although Russia is currently in severe recession, the rebound in commodity prices and the expected effects of policy stimulus point to some recovery through 2009 and into 2010.

Among the positive signals the OECD has noted in recent months include a fall in the cost of money market funding, a narrowing of corporate bond spreads, a rebound in equity markets and a moderation in the tightening of bank lending standards. Nonetheless, Elmeskov noted that bank lending continues to decline and concerns about the health of the banking system remain.

Another positive signal is the fact that the housing markets in the United Kingdom and the United States have shown some signs of stabilisation, both in terms of prices and turnover. Nevertheless, Elmeskov warned “numerous headwinds imply that the pace of the recovery is likely to be modest for some time to come”. Ample spare capacity, low levels of profitability, high and rising unemployment, anaemic growth in labour income and ongoing housing market corrections would moderate any upturn in private demand.

“At the same time,” he warned, “the need remains for households, businesses, financial institutions and governments to repair the damage to their balance sheets.”
Venture capital availability holding up says IVCA

While bank lending remains gripped by the credit crisis, the Irish Venture Capital Association (IVCA) says that the situation for venture capital is somewhat brighter.

According to the IVCA’s VenturePulse survey, Irish technology firms raised €110.7 million in the first half of 2009, up 7 per cent on the previous year.

“The number of companies raising funds increased by 35 per cent to 66 compared to 49 in the same period in 2008 and to 29 in 2007,” commented Regina Breheny, director general, IVCA. She added that amounts raised ranged from €50,000 to €18 million. First round funding represented 22 per cent of funds raised.

Some 17 Irish-based venture capital funds and private investors were involved in 111 investments, representing 67 per cent of funds raised. In addition, 17 international funds and private investors participated in 19 investments and 33 per cent of funds raised. “Irish tech firms continue to attract interest from overseas investors,” Breheny said.

She added that an analysis of the investment revealed a healthy diversity across a wide range of technologies. In the pharma/biotechnology sector, six companies raised €28.6m. Fourteen drug delivery and medical device companies raised €22.8m. In the telecoms sector, four companies raised €5m. In the environmental technology sector, five companies raised €17.4m, while 12 companies raised €17.8m. In the telecoms sector, four companies raised €5m.

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JFC buys into South African joint venture

Galway company JFC Manufacturing Ltd. is opening a new factory in South Africa in a joint-venture with local plastics design company Accelerate Design Ltd.

A family-owned business, JFC Manufacturing was set up in 1987 in Tuam, Co. Galway, to supply specialised plastic products to the agricultural, civil, construction, recycling, marine and materials handling industries. JFC is a global organisation, exporting to over 40 countries and employing 200 people worldwide through its production facilities in Ireland, UK and Poland.

The announcement was made during the Enterprise Ireland trade mission to South Africa this September.

Under the joint venture, JFC purchased 52 per cent or controlling interest in Accelerate Design and the new company will be known as JFC Accelerate Design. When completed, JFC’s total investment will have been in the region of €2 million. Sales of €2.5 million or 27 million Rand are expected to be generated under the new venture over the next two years.

Internet Growth Alliance to support Irish internet business

The Internet Growth Alliance is a new business-led initiative that aims to support the international growth ambitions of Irish internet businesses.

The alliance will bring together some of the key stakeholders in the Irish internet industry - industry associations, public bodies, role models and experts to form a common vision for internet growth and agree ways in which these businesses can be supported.

One of the group’s ambitions is to work with Enterprise Ireland to create and run an Internet Growth Acceleration Programme. This would centre on a multi-module development programme, running over several weeks and covering everything from strategy to monetising your web application, SEO, how to seek funding etc. For further details, see www.alliance.ie.

International Markets Week attracts record numbers

Underscoring the need for Irish companies to internationalise in the face of tough domestic conditions, a record number of 620 Irish companies took part in this year’s International Markets Week. This represented a 50 per cent increase in demand compared with last year when 409 client companies took part in the event.

Over 1,400 individual client meetings, focused on potential opportunities and export strategies, were scheduled with Enterprise Ireland’s market advisors from its 31 overseas offices.
Switzerland tops in global competitiveness

Switzerland has topped the overall ranking of 130 countries in the Global Competitiveness Report 2009-2010. The United States has fallen one place to second position, with a weakening in its financial markets and macroeconomic stability, while Singapore, Sweden and Denmark round out the top five.

European economies continued to prevail in the top-10, with Finland, Germany and the Netherlands following suit. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom has continued its fall from last year, moving down one more place this year to 13th, mainly attributable to continuing weakening of its financial markets.

According to the report, Ireland’s competitive performance has also deteriorated, dropping three places to 25th of 130 countries. Dr Eleanor Doyle of the Institute for Competitiveness, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at UCC, who leads the Irish contribution to the Executive Opinion Survey for the GCR explains that a deterioration in “efficiency enhancers” such as financial market sophistication and efficiency of both goods and labour markets accounted for most of the decline in Ireland’s ranking.

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Mobile Travel Technologies secures Hilton contract

Hilton Hotels, one of the world’s largest hotel companies, has launched UK and Germany specific mobile services in conjunction with Dublin-based specialist Mobile Travel Technologies Ltd (MTT). The new solution, which includes a Web App version for UK iPhone users, has full booking capability, offering travellers the convenience to select and book a hotel, access and change bookings and view hotel images and information, whilst away from their PC. The solution has full integration with the hotel company’s HHonors for the benefit of Hilton loyalty club members and includes a dedicated version for iPhone users (Web App). A Hilton Downloadable App has been submitted to the iTunes/iPhone App Store, and will be available to UK users soon for download following approval by Apple.

Global online population to hit 2.2 billion by 2013

The number of people online around the world will grow more than 45 per cent to 2.2 billion users over the next five years, according to a new report by Forrester Research, Inc. Asia remains the biggest global internet growth engine: 43 per cent of the world’s online population will reside in Asia by 2013, with 17 per cent of the global online population in China. Meanwhile, growth rates in the US, Western Europe, and the major industrialised nations in Asia Pacific such as Australia, Japan and South Korea will slow to between 1 per cent and 3 per cent.

“While per capita online spending is likely to remain highest in North America, Western Europe, and the developed markets of Asia throughout the next five years, the shifting online population and growing spending power among Asian consumers means that Asian markets will represent a far greater percentage of the total in 2013 than they do today,” said Forrester Research Senior Analyst Zia Danielle Wigder.

“Multinational organisations must understand the dynamics of the shifting global online population to ensure that they are positioned to take advantage of emerging international opportunities.”

Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales to speak in Dublin

Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia, will deliver a public lecture in Dublin on Friday November 27.

In 2006, Time magazine named Wales as one of the world’s most influential people, and as the most influential in the category of ‘Scientists and Thinkers’. He has been honoured by The World Economic Forum, spoken at TED Talks and is the founder of the Wikimedia Foundation.

Wales will be in Dublin to become an Honorary Patron of the University Philosophical Society of Trinity College Dublin. Wales follows in the footsteps of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Senator John McCain and Al Pacino, who have all been honoured at the university in recent years. For details about purchasing tickets, visit www.lecturesireland.com

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A series of seminars took place this September with the assistance of industry bodies in Cork, Galway and Dublin.

Seminars highlight opportunities in the new software economy

The software world is evolving, as the internet changes the game plan for software companies. As highlighted in the last issue of *The Market*, Enterprise Ireland has prepared a new strategy for the software sector to take account of transformative developments such as software now being delivered as a service rather than only as a licensed product. Moreover, value chains are now distributed and networked rather than linear. Technologies based on Web 2.0 platforms predominate, and progressive software companies now use the development communities available through Open Source.

The ‘New Software Economy’ is how industry analysts IDC describe this rapidly evolving environment. And analysts estimate that the NSE-based software market is growing at over 20 per cent per annum worldwide, compared to the single digit growth of the conventional software market.

Highlighting the message, a series of seminars took place this September with the assistance of the industry bodies in Cork, Galway and Dublin – IT@Cork, ITAG and ISA. The keynote address was by Chris Hofmann, one of the founders of Mozilla Corp., who explained the company’s Open Source approach to software development. Hofmann described a community of software developers that have a passion for Mozilla software. He highlighted the huge competitive advantage associated with unlocking the goodwill of concentric circles of enthusiasts worldwide whose passion for software and for Mozilla’s business model results in their contributing developments, patches, testing, etc. all with a view towards creating a better product. When Mozilla sought to place an advert in the *New York Times* for its new software release, the $250k per page price-tag was beyond the then struggling company. The team put the message out on the network, and someone suggested putting a PayPal facility on the site and inviting $50 contributions. They raised $500k and took two pages! Then the ripple effect took over, and media throughout the US reported on this amazing community of enthusiasts who wanted Mozilla and its search engine to succeed. What price publicity?

The big paradigm shift in this NSE business is the move to delivering software as a service (SaaS), and Fergus Gloster explained the intricacies of moving your licensing model to the SaaS model. Gloster was one of the founders of the European arm of Salesforce. com and was in at the very start of the SaaS revolution. Now the MD of Thomond Technology, Fergus showed how his company applies the Salesforce.com methodologies to SMEs and larger companies in Ireland and abroad.

“You have to understand that you are now running a services company and customer satisfaction and retention is key,” he said. “A customer may be delighted to pay for your software as they use it rather than a large up-front licence fee – it shows a great RoI. But unless they use it and value it, they won’t renew, and you’ve lost them.”

Salesforce.com put a huge effort into staying really close to the customer and ensuring that all the staff knew that the customer is king – s/he pays the salaries. Everyone is accountable to the customer.

None of this NSE revolution would have been possible without the hot-bed of internet technologies of the past 10 years – Open Source, Web 2.0, SOA, and Cloud computing. Joe Drumgoole, entrepreneur, technology pundit and CEO of PutPlace and CloudSplit charted the dramatic emergence and growth of these internet technologies. From the social networks of Web 2.0, he introduced Web 3.0 based on infrastructure and mobility with vast storage and computing capacity of the Cloud and data centres, yielding “unbounded cheap computing and storage”. SaaS is now accompanied by Platform as a Service (PaaS) and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS). Software economics dictate that a successful consumer play needs one million users, and capital is still required to build a global business. He advocated a “mix of weapons” in a company’s business strategy for market reach, technology and funding.

The call to arms was issued by Jim Cuddy of Enterprise Ireland with the challenge to double the size of the sector by 2013. That’s a revenue target of €3 billion annually from indigenous companies. The sector at that stage would be characterised by a steady flow of innovative start-ups, clusters of companies collaborating in the different vertical markets and double the number of companies in the >€10 million sales/50 employees category. “We will achieve this by driving the transition of companies to SaaS, by stimulating the growth of internet companies and by connecting the players of the software ecosystem so that the ‘Best Connected’ whole is much greater than the sum of its parts,” he said.

The seminar presentations, along with the software strategy and company listings, are available on www.enterprise-ireland.com/nse while a blog and ‘Best Connected’ content are available on www.americas.enterprise-ireland.com
China to allow foreign enterprises to list on stock markets

China is to allow qualified foreign enterprises to list on China’s stock markets, according to Minister of Commerce Chen Deming. However, details have yet to be confirmed of the requirements that would have to be met by the qualified foreign enterprises. The Minister has also stated that China will gradually reduce the limits on foreign investors’ equity holdings, and will continue to open up the nation’s service industry.

In advance, China’s main stock exchange – Shanghai Stock Exchange – plans to launch an international board next year that would allow foreign companies to sell shares denominated in Chinese currency for the first time, according to the Shanghai Daily newspaper.

A listing on a Chinese stock exchange could help foreign companies by allowing them to tap China’s huge pool of savings and by raising their public profile. Shanghai is the world’s best-performing stock market this year, with its benchmark index up nearly 90 per cent.

Asia poised to lead recovery from global slowdown: China and India to see increased growth

Developing Asia is proving to be more resilient to the global downturn than was initially thought, according to latest reports from the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2009, released at the end of September.

The ADO forecasts economic expansion in developing Asia to come in at 3.9 per cent in 2009, up from the 3.4 per cent expected in March. In 2010, the growth projection is likewise upgraded to 6.4 per cent from 6.0 per cent.

However, the improved regional outlook should not make developing Asian economies complacent, according to the Asian Development Bank’s Chief Economist Jong Wha Lee. A protracted global slowdown or the hasty withdrawal of stimulus packages could degrade the region’s ongoing recovery, he warned.

Stronger growth in East Asia and South Asia underpin the region’s improved prospects, as a result of firm action by many governments and central banks, the relatively healthy state of financial systems prior to the global crisis and the rapid turnaround in the region’s larger, less export-dependent economies. However, there are notable divergences in the outlook across subregions and across economies, the report noted.

In the People’s Republic of China, aggressive monetary easing and the massive fiscal stimulus package rolled out by the Government bolstered the region’s largest economy, which is now expected to grow by 8.2 per cent in 2009 and 8.9 per cent in 2010, up from the March forecast of 7 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively. Also, in East Asia, a shallower contraction in the Republic of Korea is expected on the back of effective fiscal stimulus measures. However, the economies of Hong Kong, China, and Taipei, China, are likely to shrink more sharply on account of the severe drop in the demand for their exports.

Prospects for South Asia are on the up, as the region’s limited reliance on trade partly shielded it from the adverse effects of the global slump. An increase in public spending, a quicker than expected return of capital inflows, stronger industrial production, and signs of improved business confidence will lift economic growth to 6 per cent in India this year, up from an earlier estimate of 5 per cent. However, bleaker prospects are projected for the Maldives, on account of weak tourism receipts, and for Pakistan and Sri Lanka due to tight domestic demand and the weak global economy.

Less positively, aggregate growth in Southeast Asia is projected to slow to 0.1 per cent this year, with the more upbeat outlook for Indonesia and Viet Nam failing to offset the deteriorating prospects for the more open (Malaysia and Thailand) and smaller (Brunei, Darussalam and Cambodia) economies in the subregion.

In addition, projections for Central Asia are much bleaker due to lower commodity prices, a deeper downturn in the Russian Federation (the subregion’s main trade and financial partner), and weaker capital inflows, investments and remittances. Growth is forecast to slow to 0.5 per cent this year, compared to the March forecast of 3.9 per cent. Kazakhstan’s economy is expected to shrink to -1.0 per cent in 2009, as it grapples with a fallout from a banking crisis and lower oil prices.

To develop more resilient economies, developing Asia should broaden the scope and structure of its openness, according to the ADO. Reducing its vulnerability to external shocks requires policy makers to tackle the geographically unbalanced structure of its trade, capital flows and movement of workers.
OECD forecasts upturn for Brazil and Mexico

According to latest forecasts from the OECD, Brazil appears to be on the path to recovery. Following further deceleration in the first quarter of 2009, activity now appears to be rebounding. Industrial production is expanding, in part due to previous destocking, especially in the sectors that have benefitted from government support, including the motor industry. In addition, retail sales have been particularly resilient. Domestic demand is poised to gather strength in the second half of 2009 on the heels of ongoing policy easing, stimulating real GDP growth of 4 per cent in 2010, up from -0.8 per cent in 2009.

Likewise, the outlook is somewhat positive for Mexico. The country entered recession in late 2008, and growth had turned highly negative by the first quarter of 2009, as both exports and domestic demand contracted in the wake of the crisis. The outbreak of swine flu and continued troubles for auto manufacturers are likely to have contributed further to the downturn. Growth is set to pick up during the second half of 2009 and accelerate further through 2010, reaching quarterly growth rates of above 4 per cent in annualised terms. However, inflation has remained relatively high, despite the sharp drop in demand, and this has limited the scope for monetary easing.

Overall, Latin America’s total exports fell by 30.9 per cent in the first half of 2009, while imports declined by 29.1 per cent, according to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It estimates that trade will pick up in the second half, resulting in an overall decline of 13 per cent this year.

US$12 billion Gulf rail project mooted

Following the launch of the Dubai Metro, attention is turning to various rail projects across the Gulf with a possible pan-Gulf network to connect the major cities of the region, according to reports from Gulf News. Last year, GCC transport ministers approved a feasibility study for the US$12 billion GCC railway. Projects are already on-track in Dubai, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain, with even more ambitious plans being hatched in Saudi Arabia. When individual projects are completed, the governments will work towards connecting the numerous rail systems to complete the network throughout the region, according to Gulf News. This network would include one rail line of 1,970 km, connecting all GCC countries and Qatar via a bridge. The second line, of 1,984 km, would stretch between Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and end in Oman.
Zenith Technologies wins automation contract for Singapore pharma plant

Cork company Zenith Technologies has won a significant contract to supply turnkey automation solutions for Alcon’s new manufacturing plant in Tuas, Singapore.

Established in 1998, Zenith is headquartered in Cork and employs over 300 people through its offices in Ireland, UK, USA, Europe, Singapore and India.

Alcon Inc. is the world’s leading eye care company, with sales of approximately $6.3 billion in 2008.

Under the new project for Alcon, Zenith will design, supply, test and commission a large real-time process control system using PLC/SCADA technology, allowing for supervisory monitoring and automated control of the manufacturing process.

When complete in 2012, the new plant will be Alcon’s first pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in Asia. It will produce pharmaceutical products that address serious eye diseases and will supply Alcon’s rapidly growing Asian markets.

Photo: Brendan O’Regan CEO, Zenith Technologies

East meets Wexford: ClearStream ups its profile in China

Enniscorthy-headquartered medical device developer ClearStream Technologies has received notification that three key products (ReeKross, Bantam & LitePAC) within its peripheral vascular range have received registration in China.

“We see China as a critical market for ClearStream – the demographics, disease profiling and medical device pricing all combine to make it central to our growth strategy. The ClearStream range of peripheral vascular devices – proven so useful in treating ‘critical limb ischaemia’ which is linked to diabetes – indicates a huge potential in a market that identifies up to 60 million diabetic patients” commented Andy Jones, CEO.

ClearStream has exported to China since 2005; however, one of the major barriers to the market is the length and complexity of the regulatory procedures – it can take up to two years (and more in some cases) to gain a full product registration with the SFDA (Chinese Regulatory Authority).

Having cleared this hurdle and with the three new peripheral vascular products registered after 23 months, ClearStream is now upping its profile.

“Talking with our distributor Shanghai Micro Medical, we decided that we needed to organise a suitably high-profile event in order to bring attention to the availability of these products – both to leading clinicians and senior procurement officials in the Ministry of Health” said Jonathan Akehurst, Commercial Manager, ClearStream.

Working with Enterprise Ireland in China, this August, ClearStream hosted an Ireland-China Interventional Radiology Workshop at the Irish embassy in Beijing, allowing the local distributor and EI team to invite Director Li, Central Purchasing, the Ministry of Health, and leading clinicians in the peripheral vascular field – to the meeting, which was also attended by H.E. Declan Kelleher, Ireland’s ambassador to China.

According to ClearStream, the launch meeting was the “first step in the long march” to building new export sales growth and positioning the company much higher on the Ministry of Health agenda. “It created a tremendous opportunity for ClearStream to introduce the newly registered products, demonstrate their efficacy and differentiate their product positioning compared to other major competitors established in the market. We brought along Dr Ian Kelly from Waterford [Regional Hospital] to talk to his Chinese peers about various patient case-studies using ReeKross and the rest of the products and have opened the door to explore further clinician links with China,” commented Karl Hoffman, Marketing Manager, ClearStream.

Skypaq signs €2.25m Finnair contract

Skypaq, a specialist consultancy and software group involved in designing and implementing process solutions for the aviation industry, has signed a contract worth over €2.25m with Finnair. Under the terms of the contract, Skypaq will provide a completely integrated maintenance and operational solution for the entire Finnair fleet of Airbus, Boeing and Embraer aircraft, bringing significant cost reduction and operational efficiencies to the Finnish carrier.

Skypaq, headquartered in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, has designed and developed all of the software solutions within Ireland and wholly owns all IP rights. Skypaq solutions enable clients to significantly reduce operational costs while at the same time providing management with timely and accurate data through an enhanced electronic and paperless work flow process.

According to the company’s Sales Director, John Corrigan, Skypaq is also involved in contract negotiations with a number of other large European and global airlines and is in the discussion stage with regard to partnering with a global solutions provider.
Daon wins deals in South Africa and Australia

Daon, the Irish headquartered biometric identity assurance specialist, has been selected as the identity platform provider for the ‘Who Am I Online (WAIO) (I am I said)’ programme in South Africa. Daon’s biometric identity management system provides a centralised platform for a variety of uses, including employee credentialing, government benefits, civil ID, border management, airport e-gate systems and immigration control programmes.

The new South African programme, pioneered by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), is focused around the population registration, administration and management of events within a citizen’s life, integrating into an Automated Fingerprint Identification System. Furthermore, it paves the way for future smart chip-based technologies such as the electronic passport, smart card ID, electronic health card, driver’s licence etc.

According to Daon, the ‘Who am I online (I am I said)’ project will ensure that the country is ready to host the hundreds of thousands of soccer fans during the FIFA World Cup 2010 and all visitors/tourists to the country. In addition, South African citizens will benefit from more efficient service delivery in the dealings with the Department of Home Affairs.

Daon has also been selected as the biometric partner for enabling ‘trusted enrolment services’ in Australia. Moreover, it has been awarded two further major contracts by a large southern Australian state to conduct criminal background checks on licensed childcare and adult care providers, as well as adoptive parents, foster parents and certain other recipients of state benefits.

The undisclosed state had a requirement for more than 20,000 background checks annually, with much of the work previously being done manually and taking more than two months to return background checks. Under the new contract, Daon will install necessary equipment, operate the electronic criminal history check system, and provide training and support. According to Daon, this will result in more efficient operation, faster background checks and a significant cost savings to the participating state.

Irish companies scoop international hosting deals

Digiw eb, the Irish-owned telecommunications and managed services provider, has successfully completed a hosting, telecommunications and managed hosting solution for Ask Jeeves/Ask.com.

Ask Jeeves is the 10th largest internet brand in the UK, reaching 39 per cent of the internet population [source: ComScore]. Ask Jeeves in the UK has 15 million unique users per month, while Ask.com in the US has 75 million unique users per month.

Digiw eb’s Dublin data centre will house the entire European IT infrastructure of Ask Jeeves/Ask.com. Digiw eb is also providing voice and data connectivity for the Ask.Jeeves/Ask.com team in Ireland.

Separately, Servecentric, the data centre managed services company, has won a three-year managed hosting deal with CDiscout, a European leader in online retail. This follows a recent announcement from the IDA that CDiscout has selected Dundalk as its regional headquarters for the UK and Ireland.

CDiscout was established in 1998 and is part of the Casino Group, which - with more than 10,000 stores and €28.7 billion in annual revenues - is one of the largest global retail and distribution organisations, comprising chains such as Géant, Casino Supermarkets, Monoprix and Franprix/Leaderprice.

Servecentric is hosting the www.Cdiscount.co.uk website and will also host the soon-to-be-launched www.Cdiscount.ie website. The sites carry a range of over 80,000 products from IT, household appliances to clothing and sports equipment and include some of the world’s biggest brands discounted at up to 65%. Servecentric is providing a managed hosting infrastructure, direct access to global networks and 24/7 technical support to ensure constant uptime.

Pictured (l-r): Are James Kenny, Corporate Sales Manager, Digiw eb and Caitriona O’Sullivan, European Operations Manager, Ask Jeeves/Ask.com
Winter Diary

What's on

**OCTOBER**

**Financial Services & eCommerce Mission to China**
*11 to 16 October*
Trade mission to China for financial services companies and software companies selling into the financial services space.
📍: Shanghai & Beijing
🔹: Michael Browne
📞: +353 1 7272795
📧: michael.browne@enterprise-ireland.com
🌐: www.enterprise-ireland.com/chinafinance09/Mission+

**Anuga FoodTec Study Visit: Germany**
*12 to 14 October*
Prepared consumer food study visit to Germany, centring on Anuga FoodTec, one of the world’s most important trade fairs for food and drink.
📍: Cologne
🔹: Garrett Dee
📞: +353 21 4800219
📧: garrett.dee@enterprise-ireland.com

**‘Big Ideas’ Showcase**
*13 October*
Showcase featuring over 20 third-level spin-out technologies available to buy or license in the life science and food, ICT and industrial products.
📍: Croke Park, Dublin
🔹: George Kiely
📞: +353 906 487142
📧: george.kiely@enterprise-ireland.com

**CPhl Worldwide 2009**
*13 to 15 October*
Event for pharmaceutical and chemicals manufacturers, run alongside ICSE (International Contract Services Expo) and P-Mec (Pharmaceutical Machinery and Equipment Convention).
📍: Madrid
🔹: David O’Sullivan
📞: +353 21 4800234
📧: david.osullivan@enterprise-ireland.com

**An Introduction to Technology Transfer & Licensing**
*15 October*
One-day course.
📍: Waterford
🔹: Jan Gerritsen
📞: +353 1 7272729
📧: jan.gerritsen@enterprise-ireland.com

**Seminar on Using the Internet to Compete in International Markets**
*15 October*
📍: Dublin/Mid-East TBC
🔹: Eoin O’Siochru
📞: +353 1 7272969
📧: eoin.osiochru@enterprise-ireland.com

**Trade Mission to Canada**
*19 to 23 October*
Ministerial-led trade mission to Canada, addressing key centres where EI clients are doing business.
📍: Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton
🔹: Nick Marmion
📞: +001 416 9345033
📧: nick.marmion@enterprise-ireland.com

**Logistics Ireland 2009**
*20 October*
The theme for this year’s NITL conference is ‘Supply Chain Management and Logistics in a Volatile Global Economy’.
📍: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dublin
🌐: www.nitl.ie/Logistics_Ireland_2009/

**Med in Ireland**
*20 October*
Showcase of indigenous medical devices sector to international buyers.
📍: Dublin
🔹: Sean McEllin
📞: +353 1 7272385
📧: sean.mcellin@enterprise-ireland.com
🌐: www.enterprise-ireland.com/medinireland2009
**Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards**
22 October
Awards ceremony at Citywest Hotel.
W: www.enterprise-ireland.com

**Swiss Biopharma Networking Dinner**
22 October
Networking dinner hosted by the Irish Ambassador to Switzerland, geared towards Swiss pharmaceuticals and biotechnology industries.
L: Basel
C: Philip Kavanagh
T: +49 211 47059
E: philip.kavanagh@enterprise-ireland.com

**Multi-sectoral Trade Dinner: Spain**
28 October
Forum to network and deepen existing relationships with potential customers and partners.
L: Madrid
C: John MacNamara
T: +34 91 4364087
E: john.macnamara@enterprise-ireland.com

**Jewellery Trend Forecast 2010**
21 to 23 October
Dublin
C: Lorraine Egan
T: +353 1 7272865
E: lorraine.egan@enterprise-ireland.com

**Cloud Computing World Europe 2009**
3 November
Conference for current and potential enterprise customers, highlighting opportunities offered to their businesses by the cloud.
L: Victoria Park Plaza, London, United Kingdom
C: karen.forster@terrapinn.com
T: +44 207 827 4165

**National Marketing Conference**
4 November
‘New Marketing Realities’ is the theme of the 30th National Marketing Conference, organised by the Marketing Institute of Ireland.
L: Four Seasons Hotel, Dublin

**Furniture Design and Market Trends Forecast 2010**
5 November
Dublin
C: Lorraine Egan
T: +353 1 7272865
E: lorraine.egan@enterprise-ireland.com

**ProcureCon**
2 to 5 November
Event geared towards procurement specialists.
L: Brussels
W: http://tinyurl.com/kvw6sq

**Investor Forum - UK**
12 November
Event offering investors the chance to evaluate over 30 investment opportunities in software and cleantech companies.
L: London
C: Garrett Murray
T: +353 1 7272815
E: garrett.murray@enterprise-ireland.com

**CEO Forum**
12 November
Invitation-only half-day event, targeting an audience of 350-400 senior Irish business people.
L: Dublin
C: Evelyn Smith
T: +353 1 7272717
E: evelyn.smith@enterprise-ireland.com

**Trade Mission to United Arab Emirates**
15 to 19 November
Dubai and Abu Dhabi
C: Anthony Cahill
T: +971 4 3293843
E: Anthony.cahill@enterprise-ireland.com

**Seminar on Financial Services in Russia & Ukraine**
16 November
Geared towards financial service and software companies selling into the financial services space.
L: Dublin
C: Michael Browne
T: +353 1 7272795
E: michael.browne@enterprise-ireland.com

**Smarter Selling - Building Better External and Internal Relationships**
11 November
L: Etc Venues, London
C: Richard Evans,
T: +353 017 5386 6633
E: info@illumine.co.uk
W: www.illumine.co.uk/communicate/smarter-selling.html

**Food Industry - Sustainable Practices**
18 November
Event presenting the results of a benchmarking exercise on the efficient use of energy and water, the introduction of renewable energy systems, greenhouse gas emissions and the minimisation/recycling of waste within the food processing industries.
L: Eastpoint Business Park, Dublin 3
C: Robert Geraghty
T: +353 1 7272818
E: robert.geraghty@enterprise-ireland.com

**Poleko 2009 - Environmental Fair**
24 to 27 November
Poznan, Poland
C: Karen Cohalan
T: +48 22 5831200
E: karen.cohalan@enterprise-ireland.com

**Golden Spiders Awards**
19 November
Awards recognising excellence in internet and digital media.
L: Burlington Hotel, Dublin
W: www.goldenspiders.ie

**The Irish Franchise Exhibition**
20 to 21 November
Dublin
W: www.lero.ie/events/UpcomingEvents

**World Credit Congress and Exhibition**
24 November
Global summit for credit and collection professionals. Speakers from the EU, Canada, and the US along with organisations such as the World Bank and the European Parliament.
L: Dublin

**Medica Networking Dinner**
19 November
Medica is the largest medical device trade fair in the world. Coinciding with this event, Enterprise Ireland is organising a networking dinner, providing an opportunity for clients exhibiting at or walking the show to meet international medical device executives.
L: Dusseldorf, Germany
C: Eddie Goodwin
T: +49 211 4705935
E: eddie.goodwin@enterprise-ireland.com

**Agile Software Development**
23 November
Challenges of agile development – roadmap for the next 10 years.
L: Enterprise Ireland, Dublin
Taoglas is targeting the growth of wireless applications and the demand for machine-to-machine (M2M) communications in a diverse range of applications from smart energy metering to GPS tracking for security purposes. Leslie Faughnan writes that the Wexford-headquartered antenna solutions provider is also an example of that growing phenomenon in Irish industry: the micro-multinational.

In our increasingly wireless world, the sheer range of devices is already mind-boggling, and new applications are coming on-stream almost daily. From tiny sensors to GSM mobile phones and GPS devices and laptop computers, the signals on which all of these devices totally depend are in turn dependent on one of the most neglected components – the antenna. This niche technology was identified as a potential market in 2003 by two Irishmen who met for the first time at a trade fair in Taiwan. They now head up an example of that growing phenomenon in Irish industry, the micro-multinational.

Taoglas describes itself as a worldwide antenna solutions provider.

In the gas and electricity market, its antennas are used to bring greater signal strength to smart meters, currently a hot topic internationally, given their potential role in promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
In Brazil and South Africa, security is the biggest single market driver because GPS vehicle tracking is required by the insurance companies.

Meanwhile, in the vehicle communication market, they have potential to improve the cellular connection to cars or trucks for navigation, fleet tracking and also for the new smart cars that can communicate diagnostic information such as low oil to owners. What’s more, in the telemedical field Taoglas’ antennas are used for remote monitoring of patients.

The company’s head office is in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford; its R&D is split between the Taiwan manufacturing base and the USA and it also has marketing bases in Mexico and South Africa. It is still a small company in employment terms, concedes founder and joint managing director Dermot O’Shea, and as an Enniscorthy-man, his choice of headquarters location was fairly obvious. His colleague, founder and joint MD is Ronan Quinlan, who is from Dublin and has been living and working in Taiwan for over a decade. They met when Dermot O’Shea made a personally funded trip to the Far East in search of business prospects in the areas of technology and licensing. After some years in the logistics sector, he was keen to start an international trading business.

“We met through the Taipei Celts GAA club and got talking about technology licensing,” O’Shea recalls. “One of the most interesting areas arose from something in which Ronan was involved, the use of ceramics technology in a UK brand of high performance loudspeakers. From there, we progressed to identifying the antenna as probably the most neglected yet critical component in wireless devices and then the suitability of ceramic material as the carrier substrate for the antenna in portable wireless devices such as GPS.”

That was the joint market insight that led to setting up Taoglas, which was formally established in late 2004 after a great deal of technology and market research by the two partners. Irish people will particularly appreciate the train of events that followed: Ronan knew an English engineer who had worked in the R&D operation in Kent of a Japanese Tier 1 supplier to the auto industry which had developed a GPS unit for Ford. “We hired the engineer to do a contract design job for us, sold the concept to a Japanese company, which sent a team to audit the Taiwan production facility – with which Ronan had worked on several products – and that became our first sale.” Taoglas had entered the market with a specialist antenna of its own design and manufacture.

The company concentrates on wireless antenna solutions that can be embedded in devices from vehicles to smart meters to medical equipment, often based on mobile technology such as GSM and GPS cell phones. Taoglas says that its antenna designs and technology can deliver up to 80 per cent efficiency as compared to the average of just about 30 per cent in a standard cell phone antenna.

Four trading years later, Taoglas expects revenue of €2.5 million this year, up from €1.3 million last year. “We have every hope that the growth will even accelerate,” O’Shea says, “because in the nature of our business, there is a typical lead time of two years after selling the technical solution for someone’s new product design. There is prototyping and testing and various technical approvals to go through before we ship the antennas in volume when that product reaches production. But right now, our order pipeline is looking good.”

Assisted in its first year by Enterprise Ireland under the CORD (Commercialisation of Research and Development) scheme, Taoglas has funded itself from cash flow other than a small private investment in 2005. “We have been in profit since January 2007,” O’Shea says happily. “Our biggest markets – or rather markets with the greatest prospects – are the USA, Brazil and South Africa. In the latter two, the biggest
We try to offer solutions, not just a catalogue of products which was actually all that was available, by and large, until we began to offer a better service.

The single market driver is security because GPS vehicle tracking is required by the insurance companies.” There is actually legislation in train in Brazil to make GPS trackability mandatory for all insurable mobile assets, O’Shea explains: “It is held up in the courts right now but, in practice, all of the auto manufacturers, in Brazil, as elsewhere, are building GPS into new models as the default specification.” That also serves to illustrate the lead times, he adds, because it is about four years between concept and market for a new car model.

Taoglas is in Mexico because of the significant number of Tier 1 suppliers to the US automotive industry and the presence of a single, very large and state-owned mobile carrier. “It is important in this as in other markets to build up local relationships. As for the current state of the US auto industry, even a very small share of the market would be good new business for us,” O’Shea laughs. “Something very similar applies in South Africa, where we have found a very keen distributor with whom we are setting up a sales office and a small assembly operation.”

“USA and the Americas are a huge market for us across all of our potential product range to the extent that I have decided to base myself in our California office from early next year. That is where a global reputation is there to be made and across literally all of the M2M applications that we could work with, especially in smart metering and telemedicine applications.”

Enniscorthy will remain the administrative head office, and, in fact, the company is recruiting a new general manager for Europe. Over in Taiwan, Ronan Quinlan is managing R&D (the company now has five staff design engineers) and the outsourced production, principally from the manufacturing partner with which they have had a relationship since 2003. One design engineer is based in California, providing a technical resource to support the US market, and there may be further expansion following Dermot O’Shea’s arrival.

“Our business model from the beginning has been to go to the device manufacturers and antenna suppliers at the earliest possible stage,” O’Shea points out. “We try to offer solutions, not just a catalogue of products, which was actually all that was available, by and large, until we began to offer a better service. Our antennas are innovative and have a technical performance advantage to offer. But we have always added value in working with potential clients from their product concepts through device testing and the rigorous certification and approval processes most of them have to go through. We have gone out to meet our potential customers, had a presence in every relevant trade show and become very familiar with the testing laboratories and device approval regimes in the major markets.”

“We can also be very speedy, especially compared to our competitors, and have on more than one occasion gone from initial design to fully tested final antenna in three to four weeks. Small is fast as well as smart,” O’Shea adds with confidence. But the company is also taking the longer view and is already working on LTE and Wimax products in anticipation of major growth in those wireless technologies.

Interestingly, the company name is derived from Tao, the Eastern philosophy usually translated as ‘the way’ or ‘the path’. As for ‘glas’, Irish scholars will know it means ‘green’.

“When I met Ronan he had a name Tao Gla (Taoyuan + Glasnevin) with an idea for licensing EU technology to Taiwan manufacturing,” O’Shea recalls. “We kicked it around when the value of ceramics in antenna technology was becoming central for us and liked the green connotation from making it -glas. So, ‘The Green Way’. That’s us!”
EBS CEO Fergus Murphy wears his hat as former head of the Asia Region for Rabobank International and talks to Mary Sweetman about how India is set to become the world’s third biggest economy, the cultural nuances of business there and its banks galore.

Banking on Third in the World

Fergus Murphy could be forgiven for feeling just the tiniest bit aggrieved, after all banking is hardly a popular professional to belong to right now.

But while the blame parcel gets passed, he has a water-tight alibi: he was out of the country during the worst excesses of the Irish property and credit boom.

Murphy returned to Ireland for a short stint heading up ACC in May 2007, followed by a brief flirtation with a job offer as international president with Shelbourne Developments, the group spearheading the Chicago Spire project, before eventually taking over the reins as CEO at EBS in early 2008.

For the previous three and a half years, he was based in Singapore, where he headed up the Asia Region for Rabobank International.

Asia still remains close to his heart, and in between running a bank amid speculation about Nama and the creation of a ‘third-force’ combining EBS, other Irish mutuals and, possibly, Bank of Scotland Irelan, he took time out recently to speak at a seminar highlighting opportunities for Irish software and financial services companies in India’s financial sector.

“Indian banks didn’t have any toxic assets; their local market wasn’t over-heated, so they are not sitting on very negative property portfolios like they are in Ireland,” he said afterwards, talking to The Market.

Not only that, but Indian banks are very much in investment mode. Although India is home to world class IT companies – like Infosys, Tata and Iflex, Murphy says that the banking system there has considerable catching up to do in terms of technology adoption, and there are good opportunities for Irish companies to provide niche IT solutions in areas such as collateral management, risk management, and, in retail banking, solutions around customer metrics. (See panel)

One to Watch

With Rabobank Asia, Murphy ran operations in 11 countries, and although he admits that he could wax equally lyrical about opportunities in China, the two countries he was particularly fond of were India and Indonesia. “We were growing business very strongly in both those countries – when you look at Indonesia, it’s rarely on our radar screen, yet there 250 million people there. It has the largest Muslim population in the world.

Coincidentally, India is the country with the world’s second biggest Muslim population, and although Irish people are aware of the country’s rise, Murphy suggests that opportunities there are sometimes obscured by China’s shadow.

“China is fantastic. It’s the story de jour every day for the last five years,” he says, “but I would genuinely take the Indian model over the Chinese model over a fifty year period. The spend on education is a lot higher in India, and the Indian management institutes are as good if not better than a good European university. Where a lot of Indians used to want to go abroad, and many still do, more and more now actually want to stay at home.”

He also makes the point that in contrast to China, where the consequences of the one-child policy are coming home to roost, India has a growing young population, so the productive capacity is going to be higher going forward. And compared to China’s manufacturing offering, India has developed a services proposition, which tends to be accompanied by a higher profit component and higher paying jobs.

Banking Opportunities:

The Indian banking sector is still very much dominated by public sector banks, owned by the government, as has been the case since India independence. Nevertheless, the number of commercial bank offices has grown from 66,000 in 2002 to over 76,000 in 2008, and the share of the market that is taken by the nationalised banks is reducing as foreign banks grow their activities, profitability and number of branches.

“There is a significant reform, restructuring modernising and efficiency drive taking place,” Murphy says, “and that’s a mixture of the public sector and nationalised banks modernising, and, from a top-down point of view, of foreign entrants coming in with best practice.”

“You can go into a modern bank branch in India – like YES Bank – which is 20 per cent owned by Rabobank, and that’s like walking into the branch of a bank in Holland or some of the better ones in Ireland. Then you go down the road to a branch of the State Bank of India, and you really feel you have gone back into the nineteenth century in Ireland, so there is a lot of modernisation required.”

The sector will also require consolidation, he believes. As well as the National Bank of India – the huge state owned national bank – and a further 20 nationalised banks, plus about 30 foreign banks and 27 Indian private banks and 31 state co-operative banks, there are something like 100,000 small rural co-operative banks in India.

“Under a certain level, transaction costs are very high – ATM technology and banking infrastructure in general are big requirements. Another big challenge is diversification of banks in rural India;” he adds. “They are very concentrated in the big cities, but it’s a huge country, and out in the hinterland, the saturation or the penetration of banks would not be what it needs to be.”

All of this will require investment, which opens up opportunities for western companies prepared to rise to the challenge.
Added to that, India is a democracy – albeit a messy one – and with the Congress party returned to power in the 2009 elections, without a socialist component, it can move more quickly with reforms.

“The positives of the English colonialism,” he adds, “is that they left a public sector structure in place, the Indian legal system can be very long-winded, you can be in court or five, six or seven years, but it does work better than the Chinese one, and you have an English-speaking population. For companies, there are far less country risks associated with India.”

Having said all that, Murphy’s bets are on India to be the world’s third biggest economy by 2050, rapidly encroaching on the US, but still some way behind China, driven by its massive export-oriented manufacturing power-base.

In the meantime, the projections for GDP growth in India this year are somewhere between a respectable 5 and 7 per cent. “But India is an economy that can perform a lot better than this,” he insists.

TACKLING THE MARKET Murphy can happily throw out less well known facts about India. For example, although known for its IT and BPO prowess, India also has potential as an agricultural superpower. Currently, it is a top-three producer of many commodities globally – a fact he became aware of when setting up an equity fund to invest in Indian food and agri-companies for Rabobank.

Also, the past Indian leader Dadabhai Naoroji was a friend of de Velara and India’s political elite intently followed Ireland’s struggle for independence. “There would be an affinity with this country much greater than our size and scale, because they know Ireland was also a colony of Britain, and they know we achieved our independence first. Overall, if you are Irish, and you sit down in front of Indian people, you are likely to get a positive response.”

That’s not to say all will be plain sailing. Murphy cites bureaucracy as one of the biggest frustrations. “It can be difficult to plot a way through; you can sit down and go through meetings ad nauseum, and they are all nodding at you, but then you get a letter three weeks later, and you realise that’s not what was agreed. Official India means that any investor or anyone looking to export there would need to have patience and determination.”

To make headway, he offers the classical advice of getting a good local partner. “There is a cultural gap that any western business person would need to broach – you would never want to underestimate the importance in India of religion or family.”

“A company would need to look at a regional model, as well as a national model,” he adds, “because with 1.1 billion people, 18 official languages, 325 other languages and 1,600 dialects, five union territories and 29 states – and a state could be the size of France – what works down in the south doesn’t necessarily work in the north-west or the north-east.”

CULTURAL GAPS During his time with Rabobank in Asia, the Tenure-born banker was based in Singapore. Travelling to India for three or four days every month and staying in the Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai, he says it often occurred to him that to live full-time in India would require stomach. It’s certainly not the only country in developing Asia with massive income disparity, but while elsewhere, rich and poor are ghettoised, in India extreme poverty sits side-by-side with vast wealth.

“It is possible to live well in India to have good accommodation and kids in good schools. But it’s probably easier to live in Shanghai,” he says. “You walk down the Bund area and you could almost be in a Europe city.” In contrast, Mumbai and Delhi are “very, very messy”.

There’s also the legacy of the caste system, which most westerners find uncomfortable, he says. “There is quite a stratification between the porter who opens the door and the CEO; they would almost be clicking their fingers at these people.” People don’t talk about it that much, but it’s there. It’s just like in Ireland, we accept the weather is horrible, and get on with it, he reckons.

That said, living in India developing a market for a couple of years would be a fantastic opportunity for anyone of sufficient broadmindedness, Murphy says. “I think if you visit the country a few times you get into the pace. You will see extreme poverty and then you will go into a meeting in a beautiful hotel and you will meet people with US MBAs who are extremely articulate and extremely on top of things, and that vast gulf that’s there in India. It just takes time to work through.”

For Murphy, the reward, and the force that will drive India, is the sheer optimism and self-belief of the young among its burgeoning middle class of 300 to 400 million. Returning from a wedding there recently, he was struck by the couple’s friends – all in their early twenties and all with perfect English and top-notch degrees. “There really is a buzz among young Indians, everything from Bollywood through to the sense that India’s emerged. The people really are of quality in terms of their work ethic. It’s a little bit like Ireland used to be, you can sense their desire to get on; there is only one way they are going, and that’s upward.”
The projections for GDP growth in India this year are somewhere between a respectable 5 and 7 per cent. But India is an economy that can perform a lot better than this.
As India’s construction sector grows at a rate of 9 per cent annually, Cian Molloy casts a cold eye on opportunities.
A move towards urbanisation, the arrival of foreign direct investment and a massive national development plan means that there is plenty of work for construction industry specialists in India, the world’s fifth largest country, which is home to the second largest national population in the world.

At the time of the 2001 census, only 28 per cent of India’s 1.1 billion people lived in urban areas, but that proportion is expected to increase to 40 per cent by 2021, all while the total population is increasing by 20 million every year. This has created a demand for town planners, architects, civil engineers and project managers that India cannot meet from its own human resources.

In addition to demographic pressures, the arrival of manufacturing plants owned by multinationals is also causing investment in infrastructure to become a major priority. The Indian government has allocated US$12 billion for investment in urban infrastructure in 63 cities over the next four years; US$50 billion for its National Highway Development Programme, which involves more than 200 projects with an average value of between US$150 million and US$200 million each, over the next five years, and US$65 billion for investment in rail over the next five years.

The government of India is also seeking to develop, modernise and expand its air and sea ports using public-private partnerships (PPPs), a major departure for a country that describes itself as ‘socialist’ in its constitution. An estimated US$20 billion worth of investment is required to modernise its 35 city airports. And already one Irish company is benefiting: when the new Terminal Three building is completed at Indira Gandhi Airport, the duty free concession will be run by Aer Rianta in partnership with Delhi International Airport Ltd.

Aer Rianta business development and marketing manager John Woodhouse says that one cannot fail but be impressed at the level of investment being made in Indian infrastructure at the moment. “The new terminal in Delhi will be bigger than the new terminal in Heathrow and that kind of investment is happening at airports across the country, as well as in other areas,” he says. “When I was there, you could see the engineers from Europe coming through the arrivals hall to look for work in India.”

**“THE NEW TERMINAL IN DELHI WILL BE BIGGER THAN THE NEW TERMINAL IN HEATHROW AND THAT KIND OF INVESTMENT IS HAPPENING AT AIRPORTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.”**

*John Woodhouse*
AER RIANTA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING MANAGER
Demand for sustainable energy technology

One sector offering major opportunities in the Indian construction industry is energy efficient technology. There is a growing demand for energy-efficient and renewable-energy technology in India, but the supply of such technologies is limited at present, according to Tarun Gupta of Inside India Trade.

Demand is being fuelled by increasing oil prices that are placing a growing burden on India’s trade balance, with 70 per cent of petroleum products being imported. The national government has introduced the Energy Conservation Building Code to ensure that buildings will be ‘greener’ and this is supplemented by state legislation, such as the Delhi government’s Energy Conservation Act that makes solar-powered water heating mandatory on all new buildings, requires CFL lighting in all government buildings and requires machinery to be Indian Standards Institute (ISI) certified. Currently, Gupta says, there isn’t sufficient supply to meet the demand for the following materials:

- Carbon-dioxide sensors, occupancy sensors, daylight sensors
- Eco-friendly chemical waterless urinals
- Wall and roof insulation
- Low-Volatile Organic Compounds (Low-VOC) adhesives and sealants
- Carpet & Rug Institute (CRI) certified carpets
- Forest Stewardship Council certified wood
- High-albedo roof paints
- Building-integrated photovoltaic cells
- Cooling Technology Institute (CTI) certified cooling towers

Additionally, there is a shortage of consultants who are skilled in ‘energy modelling’.

INDIA ENTERS THE TIGER ERA

Looking at India now today, it’s possible to see some parallels with Ireland at the start of the Celtic Tiger years, says Gabriel McCarrick, head of Enterprise Ireland’s office in India. “Just as we had a lot of investment in our economy to catch up on our European neighbours, India is now playing catch up.”

“Economically, the country was in the Doldrums for the last 50 years because it was romancing with socialism, it’s only lately that it has started to open up its markets, to allow greater private investment and greater foreign direct investment.”

One of the first Irish architectural firms to set up in India is HKR, which recently opened an office in New Delhi, headed by Kapil Handa and Nicholas Sutton, two directors at the firm with a strong personal knowledge of India. Sutton explained to The Market the rationale behind the move: “India’s real estate and infrastructure sector has been a catalyst in India’s accelerated economic growth in the recent past, creating a plethora of opportunities in its wake. Construction is now the second largest employment sector, next only to agriculture, and supports over 200 ancillary industries.

“The Indian real estate sector has been growing at 30 per cent annually. It is currently estimated at US$14 billion and is slated to touch US$102 billion by 2017. Many states within India are today encouraging private sector participation. However, with the private sector bringing in the capital and the much-needed technical and managerial expertise in formulating and delivering good quality realty and infrastructure projects, the role of the government is viewed only as a facilitator. In such a context, there is a demand for private sector consultants to assist the private sector real estate players.

He adds that fuelled by a massive shortage in residential, commercial and hospitality space in India, internal demand alone has resulted in a shortage of an estimated 12 million homes, growing additionally at 1.5 million homes per year. The absence of space in many urban areas has also led to the development of fringe areas and created opportunities not under consideration earlier. This has resulted in a steady and, at times, dramatic increase in property prices with 200-400 per cent short term increases being common in popular areas of major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore and Tier 2 & 3 cities such as Jaipur, Pune, Mohali, Vijayawada, Ahmedabad, Baroda and Nagpur.

The demand is so significant, he says, that the current global liquidity crisis has only managed to slow the rate of construction and drop prices by 10-25 per cent in existing structures. This drop has already stabilised and construction rates are forecast to begin climbing by the end of 2010.

“Based on our business analysis and experience, we also felt that in comparison to other similar sized markets like China, South America etc, India offers a much easier base to conduct business because of the common language of business, several cultural similarities and existing business ties between Irish and Indian businesses,” Sutton says.

To assist in setting up an office in New Delhi, HKR hired consultancy services from a chartered accountancy firm. “We also approached a number of clients on our own, based on the tender publications in the local newspapers,” he adds, “and associating ourselves with Enterprise Ireland brought considerable credibility to our efforts when we approached the clients out of blue.”

“NEW BUILDING REGULATIONS REQUIRE ENERGY EFFICIENT HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEMS, BUT THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF THE NECESSARY MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY, WHICH PRESENTS A REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR SUPPLIERS OF SOLAR HEATING, WIND POWER, INSULATION, ETC.”

TARUN GUPTA INSIDE INDIA TRADE
Another Irish company taking advantage of a totally different aspect of India’s boom is Underground Surveys and Analysis (USA Ltd), which is currently conducting a survey of Calcutta’s sewerage system. Company director Tom Coleman says the company won the business after a supplier of sewer lining supplies in Sweden let them know that the fifth largest city in the world was tendering for a company to locate and survey its existing sewers. “The contract accounts for about 15 per cent of our total revenue at present,” he says. “We formed a company in India and have a team of four on the ground, two Indians and two ex-pats. So far it has gone well, though initially it was a culture shock – you see extreme poverty and extreme wealth side-by-side. Our most difficult obstacle has been the fact that you can’t take things for granted – there is a shortage of equipment and supplies, which have to be imported from overseas and we have had a big learning curve in supply chain management. There is also a lack of records – where there are records, they are paper based, they are not available digitally, but more often than not there are no records at all. If we do get more work in India, well and good, the tendering process is very similar to what it is in Ireland and the UK, but if there is no more work for us, we will just look elsewhere!”

Risks McCarrick says his role in Enterprise Ireland is to inform Irish companies of the realities of doing business in India. “India describes itself as a socialist republic, and don’t you forget it!” he warns. “Even though it is opening its markets to global trade, there are a lot of vested interests who want to keep competition out. If you are a member of Engineers Ireland or the RIAI, joining the local engineering and architectural professional associations is not automatic, there are hoops you will have to jump through. Corruption is also a big issue and any interface you have with local government is fraught with Byzantine regulations.

He urges companies to exercise caution before entering into local collaborations. “There is also the question of pricing,” he adds. “The price point in India is generally 50 per cent to 60 per cent of what you get in Europe.”

Tarun Gupta of Inside India Trade, who is assisting a Northern Irish trade delegation to India later this year, agrees that price points are lower on the sub-continent, but adds: “Because of the size of the market, scalability is easier in India and that should be borne in mind when setting price points. It’s also a fact that while European equipment, products and services are seen as expensive, Indians will pay for them as long as they perceive that they are being offered a value proposition.”

In particular, Gupta highlights the fact that there is a shortage of construction equipment in India. “There are new building regulations that require energy efficient heating and cooling systems,” he adds, “but there is a shortage of the necessary materials, equipment and technology, which presents a real opportunity for suppliers of solar heating, wind power, insulation, etc.”

Dermot Reidy, one of Enterprise Ireland’s market advisors for the construction sector, believes that the Irish companies that can compete in India are those with capabilities geared towards the high-end of the market. When it comes to building shopping centres, for example, he says, “unless they are very high-end, Irish companies are not likely to be able to compete in that race”. But he adds: “There aren’t too many high-quality hospitals in India, so people with expertise in this area have a chance.” University lecture theatres, libraries and media centres are other areas he cites where Irish companies, in collaboration with, for example, America partners, might have a strong edge. “We are planning to take three or four specific industry groups, ranging from specialist construction to specialist architecture to specialist engineering to India for mini market visits in December,” he says. “We are looking at areas where someone might have capacity and skill.”

Indian construction study visit

Enterprise Ireland is leading a series of construction-sector study tours to India this December. For further information, email fred.klinkenberg@enterprise-ireland.com in Dublin, or gabriel.mccarrick@enterprise-ireland.com in Delhi.

Forthcoming construction industry exhibitions in India include:

Australia bounces back
Everybody needs good neighbours, and Australia’s close trade ties with Asia has left it in a stronger position than most developed economies, writes Mark Godfrey.

If connections count for anything, then the Irish have made it in Australia. They’ve already made it in sport – Dubliner Jim Stynes is a legend of Australian football. They’ve made it in literature – descendant of Irish immigrants, Thomas Kenneally is Australia’s best-known living writer. And they’ve made it in politics – former Prime Minister Paul Keating regularly referred to his Irish ancestry.

But most importantly, the Irish have made it in business in the world’s smallest continent: Tallaght native Alan Joyce runs the national carrier Qantas while Athlone man Paul O’Sullivan runs one of Australia’s top-two IT firms, Optus. Irish-born Martin Fahy made it to the top job at the Financial Services Institute of Australasia (Finsia).

GOOD NEIGHBOURS These connections matter now, as Irish firms scramble for alternatives to traditional markets laid low by the global downturn. There are opportunities surely in a land of 21 million people, the only developed economy not to go into recession. “We never had anything that felt like a recession,” says Paul Burfield, Sydney-based manager for Australia and New Zealand at Enterprise Ireland. The local services sector has thrived, partly off the back of demand for Australia’s mining sector, “the stuff in the dirt,” as Burfield terms it.

He’s referring to the iron ore, uranium and coal (gold too) that Australia ships to growing Asian economies like China and India. Such shipments are core to Australia’s US$1 trillion dollar economy. Two decades of healthy earnings from its Asian near-neighbours have insulated Australia from the worst of the world recession. Vindication, perhaps, of Australia’s efforts since the 1980s to integrate itself with geographically-close Asia more than culturally-close Europe. Equally important, explains Burfield, Australia’s banking system has remained “very regulated” and hence avoided

Software and financial services

Australian-bound Irish businesses find Australia a familiar place: regulations are similar to what they’ve become used to in the UK, explains Paul Burfield. “So there’s not much localisation involved for products such as software.” That’s good news for Dublin-based software specialist Fineos, which, after seven years there, takes 40 per cent of its global revenue from Australia. In half a decade of local operations, Fineos has gone from a one-man show to 90 staff spread over two Australian offices. The firm’s software products, which streamline business processes and claims management in the insurance business, have found eager customers in leading financial services firms Westpac and Macquarie. In 2007, the firm opened a centre of excellence in Melbourne.

Given they’re healthier than most global peers, it’s not surprising that Australian banks are spending on software. Banking software has become an Irish strength. Ireland, explains Burfield, benefits from Australia lagging international counterparts in adopting software to comply with international norms on fraud and money laundering. “Financial service institutions here look to the UK and EU for the way forward,” he says, pointing to Dublin-based Norkom, which has built up a local staff of 50 in three years of operations that have included nearly $20 million in sales to Australia’s five top banks with anti-money laundering.

The company’s head of overseas sales Dan Murphy sees Asia-Pacific as Norkom’s priority market in terms of future sales growth. Demand for anti-money-laundering software is heating up in Asia, says Murphy, who shuttles between company offices in Sydney and Melbourne. The Dublin-based firm prospered since landing a key deal with leading international bank Standard Chartered amid the post 9-11 crack-down on money laundering and finance for terrorism. Now Australia is the best-performing market for Norkom software, which monitors bank accounts and transactions against watchlists to trap money laundering and terrorist financing. Murphy says it’s exactly the technology needed by Australian banks to meet demands for increased collaboration and information-sharing between banking regulators worldwide.

Another success story in the financial field, Dublin-based accounting software provider Visor won a $6 million contract with Deloitte Digital. Ireland’s TradeFacilitate supplies online solutions for international, paper-free trade for importers and exporters while others, like Cork-based Documatics and Information Mosaic, have been aggressively pushing for high-spec software deals with Australia’s legal and financial services firms.
the toxic debts dragging down banking systems elsewhere.

That doesn’t mean all has been rosy. With Beijing’s manufacturing inventories sagging recently, a slow-down in iron ore shipments to China has put local miners out of work. But unemployment has remained below 6 per cent while GDP growth edged to 0.6 per cent for the second quarter of 2009. So Australia’s worries about a downturn have diminished. But to make extra sure, the Canberra government has primed the economy with a US$27 billion stimulus package, spent on infrastructure, schools and housing. Australia has the massive funds to invest in a stimulus thanks to China’s appetite for consuming everything. “They’ve had buckets of dollars in the coffers,” says Pat Scullion, Irish consul general in Sydney. The stimulus has in turn driven consumer spending, says Scullion. Housing prices and retail sales have both moved slightly upwards this year.

With local spending power in good health, Irish firms are moving in for opportunities. “Run off our feet,” is how Burfield describes Enterprise Ireland’s Sydney office. In the first half of 2009, the number of clients coming to Australia on fact-finding missions or buyer itineraries has exceeded the same number for the whole of 2008. While software has figured solidly in Ireland’s exports to Australia, there’s been a diversification in 2009 as Irish firms seek alternatives to dried-up conventional markets nearer to home: the Sydney team even hooked a west of Ireland exporter of structural steel with a local buyer. Unusual, says Burfield, because Australia is usually a world-beater in structural steel production.

Some 70 Irish-owned firms have already opened offices in the territory, and overall revenues have climbed an average 28 per cent a year in the past five years.

Aside from being a sizeable market in itself, Australia is also a bridge-head to Asia. Just as the UK integrated into the EU, Australia shifted itself into the focus of its Asian neighbours. It’s no surprise then that the country, ruled by a Mandarin-speaking prime minister, today counts its best customers as China, Korea and Japan. Information Mosaic and Intuition both steer their Australian operations alongside the Asia Pacific regional headquarters in Singapore while Finesos keeps its Asia Pacific headquarters in Australia, whose the closest large neighbour is the growing Asian economy, Indonesia.

Excluding the local operations of multinationals, in 2008 Irish firms saw continued export growth of 14.6 per cent to Australia-New Zealand. Yet it’s unlikely that a pan-Antipodean plan will work: Australia and New Zealand are very distinct markets: “Whereas Australia is services-led, New Zealand relies on its agricultural sector,” notes Burfield.

### Agribusiness

Ireland’s most successful innovators in Australia may be its agricultural machinery makers. As in Ireland, agribusiness is the top contributor to local GDP. Since exports of wool and meat remain strong earners for certain Australian state’s local farmers have been keen to try innovative Irish-made machines. Scullion finds it “amazing” how much farm machinery Ireland sells to Australia, considering the vast land is itself an agricultural power. He lists products ranging from manure spreaders to silage balers.

Agricultural machinery makers like Keenan’s and McHale’s have done well. Dairy Master has also been here. Keenan’s patented Mech-fiber machine prepares animal feed so that for every kilogram of dry feed farmers can get up to 30 per cent more milk or meat. Getting more from less feed matters much in northern Australia, which has been hurting from drought, explains Tony Byron, who heads up the firm’s Australia office, in Bendigo city, Victoria.

Firms like Keenan’s have had to surmount the challenge of geography: most have clustered in the southwest, servicing clients out of Melbourne. Similarly, the export of parts, flown vast distances to dealer networks across Australia, has been promising: Cashel-based slurry spreader makers Rossmore and hay baler specialists Tanco, in Carlow, both ship machines and parts to machinery dealers around Australia. An Irish success story driving Australia’s agribiz scene, Kerry Ingredients has facilities across the country. Business in Australia and across the Asia Pacific has proven “very, very strong,” says the company’s head of corporate affairs, Frank Hayes. He points to Australia, where the firm employs 500 to manufacture and market dairy and beverage ingredients, as the cornerstone and supply base of a fast-growing Asian market.
There’s clearly no room for complacency: food remains a greater winner of export dollars for Irish firms in the Australia market, but it’s early days for promising businesses like elearning, banking software and high-tech farm machinery.

Irish firms testing the Australia market will travel territory already made familiar by 100,000 Irish natives resident in Australia. Irish businesses, says Scullion, will find that costs of doing business and living are comparable to Ireland, “though fuel costs are lower.” It’s encouraging that as Ireland will come to need Australia more – and as the 25,000 Irish backpackers currently seeing Australia on a working holiday visa will increase – the Irish Australian community is being particularly helpful.

Says Scullion: “Every company I go to, every dinner I sit down at, nine times out of ten, the businessman I’m meeting will be fifth or sixth generation Irish and very proud of it.” Australian executives of Irish ancestry help open doors. Some 33 per cent of Australians trace their roots to Ireland. Newer arrivals have done well: statistics show Irish, largely well-qualified, are the highest paid Europeans in Australia.

Scullion is predicting a good year ahead for Australia, as exports of lucrative iron ore pick up again. “China is getting hungry again… but it will take time for Australia to get back to previous export levels.”

Long-term Irish residents are cautiously optimistic. “There’s been a slow down for sure early this year,” says a staff member at the Celtic Club in Melbourne, a local institution that opened its doors in 1887. “But things are picking up again.” A lower cost of living and wages comparable to those of Ireland are key advantages, notes the Club worker, herself an Irish immigrant. The hostel’s business has stayed constant – that might be due to the recent large influx of young Irish job seekers, mostly on working holiday visas.

There’s jobs and business to be had in Melbourne, but nothing is guaranteed: Australia’s growth depends on the continued advance of Asian economies like China. Any future stumble there could be fatal to the export-dependent Australian economy – and to expansion plans of Irish businesses in the country. A dependency on imports is also why, despite strong exports, Australias has run a disappointing current account deficit. The country has tried to diversify, adding manufacturing to an economy dependent on exports of natural resources. It could be that Australia starts to substitute imports with made-in-Australia alternatives. But, for now, the horizon looks good. From muck spreaders to multimedia learning devices, Irish firms have proven they’ve got something for Australia.

E-learning

The business of learning is another opportunity for Irish firms – e-learning products are particularly suited to Australia’s vast geography. Australian sales have doubled in the past year at Dublin-headquartered specialist in e-learning, Intuition. Australia, meanwhile, is the largest market outside of Ireland for Learnosity according to company managing director Gavin Cooney. Learnosity has garnered kudos in particular for its work with the New South Wales Board of Studies. After several years advising the board on electronic assessment of local high school students, in November 2006, nearly 60,000 students sat for an online test. Learnosity is now piloting exams for New South Wales students with learning disabilities while also tweaking an extension of the e-exams for the Board of Studies.

The Irish success is impressive given that the sector (specifically, educating fee-paying Asian students) counts as the third most important plank in the Australian economy.
The current economic reality has meant that, for Irish businesses, cost reduction has moved centre stage. Traditionally, buying has been focused on building supplier relationships and negotiating prices. While these approaches are certainly still integral to the purchasing process, current thinking leans towards a more innovative attitude to procurement, using new methodologies and ideas to get the most from the function. According to the Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management (IIPMM), cost savings of up to 20 per cent can be realised through a planned and sustained purchasing strategy, as opposed to a more casual one.

According to Jane O’Keeffe, IIPMM President, having a specialised procurement function has become more important than ever. “The role of procurement has changed from an operational short-term activity, to tactical and strategic long-term partnerships with suppliers,” she says. “Purchasing objectives now need to be balanced according to the overall corporate objectives and requirements at any particular time.” While most SMEs are all too aware of the significance of procurement strategies, the professionals who design and implement them are facing greater challenges than ever. Marc Magistali is senior vice-president for sourcing and procurement at lift manufacturer KONE Corporation, and will be a speaker at ProcureCon, an event for procurement executives taking place in Brussels this November.

“The shortage of credit has limited business growth and expansion plans for many organisations, increased the risk of supplier solvency and altogether created a generally risk averse, internally focused (cost-reduction only) climate,” he says. “Although many measures have been taken to mitigate and plan for these obstacles, fundamentally all processes – whether they be strategic or operational such as supplier qualification, segmentation or management – need to have the ‘risk factor’ built in.”

This ‘risk factor’ is something faced by SMEs on a daily basis. From their own perspective, credit restrictions are tightening, forcing them into shorter invoicing terms with suppliers and limiting their own access to funds. However, Jane O’Keeffe of IIPMM says that longer credit terms aren’t always the gift they appear to be. “If a company is prepared to give extended credit terms, which incidentally is rare in the current economic climate, then this appears to be to the buyer’s advantage,” she says. “But ultimately the buyer is paying for this extended credit one way or another. A keener price and a promise of payment say on 30 days on receipt of invoice, would in my opinion be better for all concerned.”

Risk avoidance is also something the buyer must factor when choosing a supplier. For Magistali, this means a regular assessment of suppliers’ business performance. “Measures that we have taken include increased interface with our strategic suppliers through formal and informal channels, expanding supplier quality..."
audit risk parameters as well as the creation of an improved Balanced Scorecard system to better assess supplier performance and diagnose risk levels,” he says. “Key financial and business parameters are analysed such as cash flow, gearing and R&D percentage of sales, in an effort to ensure our strategic suppliers maintain a healthy focus on sustainable innovation and growth.”

Although a good relationship with suppliers remains essential, for the average SME, this is not enough. It makes sense to always have at least one secondary source of supply, thereby not only reducing risk, but also giving the buyer more power and room to negotiate. O’Keeffe agrees: “If at all possible, it is prudent to have at least a second source of supply,” she says. “It encourages competition, eliminates complacency and in a constrained supply situation, a second source may be a lifeline and save your business.”

Regardless of whether you deal with one supplier, or several, key to a successful buying experience is your awareness of the process and the product. Understanding the full value of the product you are purchasing – including any benefits, add-ons or service inclusions – is vital. This will lead to a greater understanding of how the money is being spent, and consequently, where it might be saved. According to the IIPMM, on analysing spend, most companies will find that 80 per cent of spend is supported by 20 per cent of goods and services.

A recent guide published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Buying Innovation, sets out ten steps to smart procurement. It advises that buyers keep abreast of market developments and stay open to new ideas in order to get the best from the process. An example of how SMEs are doing just that is through the new approach to volume purchasing. As SMEs compete with larger organisations for reduced pricing structures, they are typically unable to do so through volume alone. The solution found by some SMEs in a particular sector or geographical location is to team up and buy in bulk together, pooling their purchasing needs and therefore increasing their buying power. This network-building approach is a new, and highly effective, tool.

Buying Innovation also advises using the procurement process to learn for the future. Getting feedback from suppliers or potential suppliers who had been involved in the tender process could help you to rationalise the process for the next time, and show you how best to communicate your company’s needs to potential partners. It can also allow future suppliers to refine their offering, making them more suitable for doing business with next time.

There is little doubt that the current economic environment has made savvy procurement a highly prized skill and essential to the effectiveness of any business. But strategic buying isn’t just important in tough times. According to Jane O’Keeffe, “The key is understanding and valuing the role that procurement plays in ensuring the viability of the company.”

### Tips for Smart Procurement

1. **Rationalise or reduce the number of suppliers, thereby providing greater economies of scale.**

2. **Go to the market and tender afresh for all goods and services in relation to price, value for money, terms and conditions as often as is practically feasible.**

3. **Negotiate with competitive suppliers in relation to contract and terms and conditions.**

4. **Target concessions other than price that are of value to your business such as inventory holding policies.**

5. **Ongoing management of supplier spend is key to initially achieving the cost saving and maintaining its advantage to the individual enterprise.**

6. **Supplier management performance measurement tools need to be developed and maintained on an ongoing basis.**

*Source: IIPMM*
For Irish software firm Equiendo, gaining traction is all about leveraging and targeting contacts within mobile operators across Europe and beyond. Niall Byrne talked to Equiendo’s Chief Operations Officer Barry Cullen about the company’s sales strategy.

Telecoms software firm Equiendo raised €1.5m earlier this year, a significant portion of which will be used to drive its export strategy. Although a high-tech specialist, the company, which develops software to help operators optimise their network usage, finds part of its marketing needs are met by something available to anybody with a computer: LinkedIn.

“It’s all about getting the initial contact,” explains Barry Cullen, COO and marketing director. “Once we know which operator is suitable for our product, how do we get the right contact to approach? LinkedIn is actually a fantastic resource. We’ve found it to be an effective way of getting in with operators. There are all levels of contacts available through LinkedIn.”

The company has won O2 Ireland as a customer and is hoping to use this as a stepping stone to supply the Telefonica Group internationally. Equiendo is also involved in trials with Denis O’Brien’s Digicel group in the Caribbean. “We met Denis O’Brien at an event hosted by DIT last year. We explained what our solutions do, and he put us in touch with their technical guys. They were excited and saw the value in our products straight away,” Cullen says.

With 14 markets in the Caribbean and a presence in the Pacific, Digicel faces challenges centralising its data. “That’s where our solution is very attractive to them. They’re evaluating our software, and we’ve been working with them for a few months. We’re making progress.”

As well as selling directly to operators, Equiendo is also partnering with companies like Alcatel Lucent, Ericsson and IBM.

PRIORITIES One of the big challenges for any company looking for new custom is knowing who to target. At the outset, Equiendo compiled a list of 760 operators around the world. It split the operators into lists, according to size and region. Europe, being closest, is the first priority.

“For a company our size, it’s all about being clever. We want to keep a handle on costs; Europe is on our doorstep, and we don’t want to be flying around the world randomly,” Cullen says.

He adds that everybody in the company, now numbering 15, utilises their own contacts. “We narrowed it down to about 50 operators who are close, who have the right equipment, and out of those operators, we used every resource we could to find out about them, looking at deals they’ve done lately on the internet and things like that. Some are outsourcing or changing their equipment type from Nokia to Ericsson, for example, or maybe they’ve had outages.”

BOTTOM UP “The strategy involves doing everything we can to understand their problems to see if we’re a good fit”, adds Cullen. “The top-20 operators operate at a global level, so if you want to get into Vodafone or O2, you can go to them at the top. It’s hard to break in at that level. What we found is that a smaller Vodafone subsidiary in a country like Albania will still encounter the same problems managing their network. We’re taking a bottom-up approach by targeting them, getting in at a lower level. That’s the best way we’ve found.”

After exhausting existing contacts, it’s time to get the phones ringing. “At some stage in the game, you have to knuckle down and do the whole cold-calling thing. We send out a targeted email and follow up with a call. The whole idea is to get in front of these companies, and, once we do, we’ve got some very sharp, focused presentations that really draw their interest, and we proceed to getting a trial with them... Once we get some data from them, it’s very easy for us to come back with a very compelling ROI projection and identify where we can make cost savings for them.”
Identifying Partnering Opportunities

Equiendo began trading in 2007. Cyril Murphy is the CEO and Cullen is the COO/Marketing Director. Both men studied together. Cyril was one of the first engineers to join ESAT Digifone, after which he worked his way around the world, gathering about 14 years of telecoms experience. Cullen was a product manager with Meteor prior to forming Equiendo. Oliver Coughlan, an ex-O2 chief technical officer, joined the team in early 2009.

“The company is split into two main areas. We’ve a large software development team, which is developing the software itself, and a design team, mainly comprised of Radio Frequency engineers who worked on 2G and 3G networks. They’re designing the tools, and the software guys are building them,” Cullen says.

IBM signed up as a partner last year. “IBM takes over the running of a lot of the networks around Europe. They face similar challenges [to Digicel] in centralising data. One of our products is an EOS platform that basically sucks in all the data and hosts it in a centralised location in the cloud or on a local server. It’s all about moving forward and developing together. If you look at the challenges an operator has, it’s all about having things balanced in the right places at the right time.”

This typifies the second part of Equiendo’s sales strategy, which involves identifying where operators are outsourcing the management of their networks.

Cullen points out that, traditionally, a company like Alcatel Lucent could take over an entire department being operated by 50 engineers, and they could repeat that for five or six sites. “Our solution can help them by centralising data, so they can run a number of operations for a centralised network. Also, instead of using 10 senior engineers, they can do it with two or three lower-level graduate engineers.”

At the moment, Equiendo’s products are being deployed by operators to optimise one part of the network. Ultimately, the company hopes to get to the stage where it is managing the whole network for operators. “Our goal is to provide an end-to-end solution for operators,” Cullen says. “It’s a long path but we have a great team behind us, and we’re well on our way.”

“At some stage in the game, you have to knuckle down and do the whole cold-calling thing.”
Young software companies have to grow up quickly and understand the importance of partnering if they want to succeed. Ian Campbell reports.

Perfect partners

The web and IP networks are blurring old boundaries in the new age of technology, persuading even the biggest software companies that they can no longer go it alone. It is a lesson that independent software vendors (ISVs) have always had to learn, and one that is becoming even more important in the converged world. The challenge in finding the right partner is compounded in a dire economy, where customers are more interested in cutting the bottom line than adding another name to their list of suppliers.
Forging special relationships is a necessity for indigenous Irish software firms because they need them to reach the bigger markets of North America, the rest of Europe and Asia. Start-ups are inevitably focused on funding and pursuing the first wave of revenue through direct customers and need help to create scale to enter new markets.

A recent Forrester report (Medium Size and Small ISVs Can Expand Via Partnerships; December, 2008) highlighted that relationships are typically established with four types of partner, companies in a bigger ISV ecosystem, resellers or influencers, leading ISVs in adjacent markets, and distributors.

For many, the distribution channel and resellers will hinge on system integrators (SI) as more customers are entrusting SIs to make a lot of their software choices on their behalf. The problem is that there are hundreds of global ISVs competing for their attention.

Peter O’Neil, principal analyst at Forrester and author of the report, says that successful partnering can only be achieved when the ISV understands the value of what it has to offer. This is not as easy as it sounds. “What you assume you are selling in the market place where you come from may be a totally different value proposition in a new market that you want to enter. You have to have some understanding of the new market and somebody has to help you put together the value proposition,” he says. “Anybody can talk about their technology but it’s not enough. You have to be able to talk about exactly how it will help a particular buyer in a market to become more successful.”

In a territory like South America, the principal role of the partner is to help break into a difficult market, while in other parts of the world it may be more direct and aggressive.

Dr Sean Baker, chair of the Irish Software Association and co-founder of Iona Technologies, also stresses the importance of knowing your own business. “Early on you have to get customer feedback, even before you understand exactly what it is you are going to deliver. And you use those customers to confirm that what you have is different.”

This is important because you are trying to stand out in a crowd when you go looking for partners. “It is extremely difficult to impress people. A global SI probably has dozens of small software companies coming to them every day telling them that they have the solution they are looking for. There is so much noise today that it’s hard to be heard, even if you are far ahead technically,” he says. “Everyone believes their approach is better and can save companies money, but everyone is saying the same thing.”

Being ahead of the curve is the best way to differentiate, according to Baker, who warns that if a software sector is already being talked about by the likes of Gartner, then it is too late. It needs to be a new idea, and, even more importantly, it needs to tackle problems that people will pay money to solve. “Get that confirmation from your user base and first customers early on, and innovate around it. Too often people are solving problems that companies won’t pay to be solved.”

He points out that Iona’s early success was based on delivering high-end middleware that focused on fixing integration challenges that a partner community soon identified this as being
significant. “We persuaded them that we were experts and that by working with us they would make more money and win more projects.”

Every company is different and must find its own path to market. Openet is a transaction software specialist with a long history in partnering that spans the last decade. Its biggest challenge, according to chief executive officer Niall Norton, was not its technology, but communicating what it was trying to achieve.

“The technology is table stakes. To really capture their attention, you have to know what you are about. For the first five or six years, we failed to understand this,” he says. “You might be a start-up struggling to stay alive, but you can’t underestimate how important it is to focus on the business value and the unique selling proposition.”

Slick presentation is essential, according to Norton, because you are likely to be competing with equally savvy companies from Germany, Israel and the US – to name but three. “To get the right partners and the right terms, you have to sell them and close them. You only get a small window to ‘wow’ these guys.”

**NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS** Finding potential partners is just the first phase. Next you have to nurture the relationship. Peter O’Neil argues that good working relationships are a two-way street with ISVs prepared to give as well as take. “If you are expecting commitment from the partner, then you should be prepared to give some commitment back. They may want you to do something differently with the product or add something. You need to be prepared to do it.”

He says there are many examples of European companies going for the US market only to decide it isn’t worth it when the partner comes back with a significant request from a potential customer. The partner loses the sale and the relationship goes sour.

Sean Baker adds that if you genuinely believe a partner is going to benefit your business, then you have to be prepared to give up something. “At Iona, we were always willing let someone else do the consultancy if it meant we could get a consultancy company involved. And we got on so well with SIs in Japan that we never once made a direct sale there even though we had the opportunity.”

Partnerships will also change as the company evolves and as the market requirement shifts. This has been the experience of Openet. Niall Norton recalls how tough it was in the beginning. “Initially we were looking for deployment partnerships into other markets, effectively setting people up as big brothers into foreign markets where we wouldn’t have had credibility.”

“As a start-up company, you are not in the position to aggressively dictate the commercial terms, but the strategy worked out well for us. In the early days, we were able to sell directly into Europe; whereas, in the US we partnered with the established system integrators and were able to win some Tier One credibility.”

He puts the early success down to a mature management team that knew enough about the US telco market to ensure that the right partnership deals were struck.

The company was also ahead of the game, offering a product roadmap that encompassed emerging wireless and IP networks. “Nobody knew quite what was going to happen so what made our proposition attractive was that we had most of the bases covered. Partners were not being sucked into an obsolescence pipe.”

Openet’s strong sense of focus gave partners the reassurances they needed to get involved, and they were able to successfully manage different kinds of relationship, from the highly technical to the more strategic. In a territory like South America, the principal role of the partner is to help break into a difficult market, while in other parts of the world, it may be more direct and aggressive.

“Sometimes, we are trying to penetrate relationships that other players in the field have had for a long period of time. For us, it was about making sure our technology was better and future proof,” says Norton. “And when you can point to lots of happy customers in different countries, then a lot of the anxieties that people might have are easier to allay.”

Openet has formed relationships that now run deeper, to the point that they can work together on longer term roadmaps which provide the company with invaluable insights as to where it should be steering its product development.

“The secret of partnering is to pick a few and work very closely with them,” Norton says. “That said, a common pitfall is being too dedicated to one partner to the extent that others won’t want to deal with you. That’s an ongoing tightrope you have to walk.”

“Everyone believes their approach is better and can save companies money, but everyone is saying the same thing.”

**DR SEAN BAKER**
CHAIR OF THE IRISH SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION
Willingness to be an early adopter of new technologies and a straight-dealing business manner make the Nordics good destinations for young companies looking for their early reference sales in Europe, writes Donal Nugent.

The Nordics for Newbies

Calm and collected, enlightened and humane, Scandinavia has always seemed a place apart in Europe. For some, it’s the role model region of the continent, for others, anodyne proof that the whole can be less than the sum of its parts. While it’s easy to generalise about four countries interlinked by culture and history, it’s easy to forget too that their perceived hegemony belies a stubbornly independent streak. Norway, for example, is unique in Western Europe in not being a member of the EU, while, of the three others, only Finland has adopted the euro.

The region’s economic profile is more intriguing yet. The four Nordic countries boast a population of just 20 million yet, collectively, they constitute the world’s eighth largest economy. Central to this huge economic footprint is a portfolio of global corporations of enormous diversity, reach and reputation. From Nokia to IKEA, Statoil to Volvo, Scandinavia has thrived where others could only throw in the towel; building a real economy on mass-produced goods the world can’t get enough of and delivering one of the highest standards of living in the world to its citizens into the bargain.
Naturally, the region has had its downtimes but, many, on reflection, seem more retooling breaks that genuine stumbling blocks. A series of banking failures in the early ‘90s set the region straight for the crisis that would come a decade and a half later, so that today, as the economic tectonics of Europe buckle and shift, Scandinavia is well positioned to move from northern curio to flagship region in the coming decade.

**REORIENTING** Whether it’s geographical distance or the Scandinavian talent for self-effacement, the market was, in the past, often overlooked by Irish companies planning their export bridgehead into continental Europe. Based in Stockholm, Fergus McMahon is Director of the Nordic Region with Enterprise Ireland and has seen first-hand the reorienting of attitudes that has taken place in recent years. Not only have the client companies of Enterprise Ireland more than doubled exports to the region since 2004 but, he says, “collectively, and on a per capita basis, the Nordic countries today represent the largest export market for Irish high potential start-up (HPSU) companies.”

McMahon argues that a number of striking market attributes have contributed to this. In 2007, Eurostat reported that only two countries in the EU spent more than three per cent of GDP on R&D, namely Sweden and Finland while, in 2008, Finland, Sweden and Denmark had the highest spend per capita on IT of any country in the world.

This enlightenment corresponds to an open and transparent business culture where, McMahon says, “by and large, business people will meet with anyone if there is a need there. They will approach negotiations in a very efficient and straightforward way, and will try to find a win-win rather than try to squeeze the maximum out of the vendor.”

There’s also the fact that English is virtually a second language, particularly in Sweden. “Even within their own offices, many corporations will conduct their daily business in English, making it easy for new companies to come into the market without needing a native speaker.”

Canny Irish companies will focus on finding gaps in the marketplace that aren’t serviced by local companies, McMahon says. Successes so far have ranged from IT-centred areas such as e-learning and management software, to engineering capabilities in renewable energy and medical device technology.

For example, right now, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark have some of the most ambitious targets for renewable energy incorporation in the world, with national targets exceeding those of international bodies such as the UN and the EU. A new law in Sweden, which came into effect this July, requires electricity meters to be read once a month. This has prompted utility companies to look for solutions that allow for easier and cheaper monitoring of energy, making smart metering solutions a hot topic. Sweden’s largest commercial property companies have said that they’re spending their money on products and services that monitor and reduce energy output.

There are also opportunities for collaboration between Irish and Nordic companies where technology gaps exist. An example of this is the collaboration between Irish company Wavebob and the Swedish utility giant Vattenfall on an ocean energy project aiming to bring prototype wave power devices to readiness for full-scale commercial wave power farms.

“As early adopters of technology, the Nordic countries offer Irish companies a good opportunity for their first international sales and act as a reputable reference point for future international business activities,” McMahon says.

**Knowing the Nordics**

- In total, the top 100 Nordic companies had global sales of €750bn in 2008.
- Sweden: largest of the four with nine million inhabitants. Land of IKEA, H&M, ABB, Ericssons and Volvo.
- Norway: population of five million and one of the richest countries in the world. Statoil Hydro and Komplett are some of its leading growth companies.
- Denmark: population similar to Ireland. Home of Mersk, Danfoss, Lundbeck Pharma and NovoNordisk.
- Finland: population five million and HQ to Nokia and Kone.
Limerick leader

Advanced Manufacturing Control Systems (AMCS) is a Limerick-based waste and recycling technology company. Established in 2003, it employs some 50 people in its Limerick headquarters (with plans to double this by 2010) and has wholly-owned subsidiaries in the UK, Norway, Sweden and the US.

In just a few years, AMCS has gained an international reputation as a leader in ‘pay by weight’ and ‘pay as you throw’ solutions, offering innovative end-to-end processes that are probably best illustrated by examples from the field. In 2006, the company signed a contract with Kerry County Council to help it replace its old paper tagging system in domestic waste collection with an integrated IT solution. The upshot was that consumers could top up their bins and the necessary training to make the process work.

“Our strength is the breadth of our solution. We offer both a hardware and software component, while our competitors tend to be focused on one or the other,” Frank Reen, product marketing manager with AMCS explains. Against stiff competition, the company has won five major contracts in Sweden and Norway and has four people employed in the region, as well as subcontractors and partners, generating a turnover of around €1m for the company.

Reen points to openness and a willingness to learn from others as Scandinavian attributes in business. “The Irish market has shown the way in terms of the pay-by-weight solution and the Scandinavians are very much of the same mindset around that. They are continuing to grow their initiatives on recycling with a view to reducing the dependence on landfill.”

Previous successes, for example in the UK, helped to flag AMCS’s capabilities to the broader industry but in terms of getting established, AMCS’s experience was that initiating a partner relationship was the most beneficial route to market.

“In terms of market entry strategy, that’s how we did it and it’s not a bad way in terms of risk and the level of investment,” he says. As to winning business, he says the Nordics tend to be objective and analytical in their decision-making process and will come to conclusions by consensus. “You’ll have a tendering process whereby everything is evaluated on its own merits and, on that basis, the best candidate will win out.”

Room with a view

As the former head of marketing for Citywest Hotel and, before that, a marketing executive with Tourism Ireland, Ciáran Delaney saw the task of organising a room for a business meeting from two perspectives, and found neither very satisfactory. “When I worked with Tourism Ireland, I used to plan a lot of meetings. I always found organising them slow and cumbersome,” he says.

In Citywest, meanwhile, he found that, in contrast to bedrooms, where the internet is awash with choices, there were very few websites delivering any meaningful business in meeting rooms.

Out of such.exasperation, meetingsbooker.com was born. The website allows people to plan and book their meeting space online, while the software it uses can also be syndicated to the websites of individual hotels, at a fraction of the price they would pay to develop it themselves.

The business model is a simple and transparent one. Hotels join for free and Limerick-based meetingsbooker charges hotels a fee of €300 once they receive business of more than €450 through it. Customers, meanwhile, access it for free, without even needing to register.

The company went live with 20 hotels last year and now boasts some 250 listed properties in seven countries and is adding new hotels at a rate of one a day.

Having worked in Norway for two years, Delaney had more than a passing knowledge of the markets when he targeted them and the Scandinavian familiarity with the internet is at least one of the reasons why he sees the market as a huge opportunity. “Their web usage is massive. They were early adopters of the internet and where broadband enabled years ahead of other countries,” he says, reflecting that, unlike the Irish market, where he still encounters the idea that “people prefer to call a hotel rather than book online” the Scandinavian familiarity with the internet is at least one of the reasons why he sees no such objection. It’s also a relatively open market where “you can meet and get access to the main hotel groups based on the fact that they are open to online solutions,” he adds.

While the arc of the decision-making process isn’t necessary any quicker than elsewhere, it’s less because of the creaking wheels of bureaucracy and more the rather Scandinavian passion for equaliTy. “Often, they are making decisions for more than one country, and there tends to be a flatter hierarchy, so it can take time for them to come back to sign off.”

All going well, and with the first chain of 20 hotels in the bag, Delaney sees the possibility of expanding with a sales presence on the ground. It helps, of course, not to be a new and completely unproven proposition when entering such a market but he’s in no doubt that, for anyone with a strong IT proposition, “they are good to deal with and have the budget to implement ideas in the online area.”

His experience of living in Norway means he’s attuned to some of the regional nuances, the Swedish and Norwegian ‘big brother/little brother’ rivalry, for example, but while there are things that are good to know in advance, it’s, generally speaking, only a lack of professionalism that is likely to see anything undone. “In terms of presentation, things have to be done very well. There is no point in trying to wing it on the day, as they’ll see that as weakness. But you will get a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ pretty quickly. This isn’t a market where people beat around the bush.”
A long-standing argument for taking a business online was to overcome traditional trade barriers and present a shopwindow to the world at relatively little expense. But is eBay the best way to do it?

While eBay is reluctant to reveal specific numbers, it will tell you that 123,000 sellers in the UK alone are making a living off it, and that the scale of the global site is such that an iPod shifts every minute and a TV every three. The biggest earning category is vehicles followed by clothes.

Patrick Munden, eBay’s head of seller communications for UK and Ireland, argues that since it launched in 1995 as a predominantly consumer-to-consumer auction site, it has evolved into a serious platform for businesses. Acknowledging the change, incentives have been put in place to encourage e-tailers to grow and develop an online operation within the eBay framework. These range from taking fewer cents of a sale – the way the site makes its money – to adding e-commerce tools that make selling easier.

“Fees to sellers have come down and they come down even further if you open a shop where you only pay when you sell,” he says, “and we’re adding new tools all the time. They let you to bulk upload an inventory, for example, or show multiple clothing items in different colours which was quite difficult to do before.”

When Irish sellers upload an item to the Irish site (www.eBay.ie), they must indicate how far they are prepared to ship, which will determine where the item is listed, be it UK, the rest of Europe, or America and the rest of the world via the .com site. Even the most niche of products are suddenly for sale in a global market, and if you sell enough of them and receive positive buyer feedback, you are entitled to open an eBay store, a sub-site dedicated to your products.

EBAY SUCCESS STORY Ken Doyle, managing director of Luzern Solutions, has long since completed this path. His company started out selling refurbished electronic goods such as mobile phones and MP3 players. The product range has grown enormously, and the business model has evolved, but it all started on eBay. “As an individual seller, it’s easy to set up but as a company producing invoices and VAT returns, collecting cash and listing products, there is a lot to consider,” he warns.

Once you hit a sales threshold in a territory, you have to pay VAT in that country. eBay makes it clear that it is the seller’s responsibility to ensure they are compliant with VAT and tax affairs. The proviso is that all items listed on the site must include VAT and be able to be bought through registered payment systems whether it is a credit card or PayPal. A returns policy must also be in place.

One of the benefits of the web is that it is easy to analyse markets. Tools provided by companies like Terapeak.com provide analytics of what sells on eBay for a modest cost, and at the site itself, you can click on ‘completed listings’ in advanced search for an instant snapshot of recent transactions.
Wholesalers may want to sell directly to consumers without upsetting their traditional distribution channels. They can use eBay with a different name and different stock. They can drop prices and still achieve a higher margin.
Shoes are one of the most popular eBay lines. In a 90-day period, €10m worth of shoes were sold in Ireland and the UK alone.

Doyle says you can quickly achieve traction and sales by discovering what works and what doesn’t. “It would have taken us much longer to grow the company without eBay,” he says.

The Luzern brand was established on eBay and now thrives with its own websites. It has also gone on to sell e-commerce solutions back to its suppliers, providing online shops for Palm and Jawbone, a manufacturer of Bluetooth headsets.

The biggest challenge for growing the business has been shipping. Luzern sells into territories where buyers are often inclined to go for local suppliers with cheaper shipping costs. The solution was to extend the physical footprint of the business by building a logistics network with distribution centres in the UK, Germany, Spain and the US.

The rest of the business is run out of the company’s Blanchardstown head office, where a multilingual support team maintains the different language websites that are targeted at German and Spanish customers.

ROUTE TO NEW MARKETS
Eoin O’Siochru, manager of Enterprise Ireland’s eBusiness team believes that eBay gives businesses a valuable opportunity to expand into overseas markets without affecting their traditional business, whether it is by selling end-of-line items or niche products that become viable in a global shop window.

“Or they might be wholesalers who want to sell directly to consumers without upsetting their traditional distribution channels,” he adds.

“They can use eBay with a different name and different stock. They can drop prices and still achieve a higher margin.”

Paula Thomas
FOUNDER, SIMPLY SHOES

“And it has the power to transform a sector like tourism. Selling souvenirs is traditionally a seasonal business, but it becomes a global business that you can run all year round on eBay.”

CONSUMER MARKETS
Indeed, where eBay really comes into its own is in consumer markets. Adam McKenna runs two barbershops in Monaghan and saw an opportunity for an online arm to his business. He was selling traditional male grooming products in his shops where hot towel shaves are his speciality, but stainless steel razors and quality brushes that have limited appeal in a small town can turn into a profitable business on the web. He started selling on eBay under the store banner of IrishBarber.

“I’m selling items every day to places as far afield as Australia and Qatar, and it has the potential to outgrow the barbershop business,” he says. “Emigration is having a bad effect around here so you can spend a lot of time sitting in the shop looking out the window. It’s good to have another side to the business that keeps me busy fulfilling orders.”

Shoes are one of the most popular eBay lines, so when Paula Thomas lost her marketing job and decided to set up her own business, selling footwear on the site seemed like a good place to start. Statistics convinced her further. She found that in a 90-day period, €10m worth of shoes were sold in Ireland and the UK alone.

A stint as the European e-commerce manager for Ebookers had given Thomas an insight into online trading and she had also set up a consultancy, Simply Digital, but Simply Shoes is her attempt at starting a scalable business. “I opened the Golden Pages and spoke to wholesalers, telling them I wasn’t prepared to buy the stock but I would put my expertise and time into selling them on eBay if they did the fulfilment,” she explains.

Logistics are a challenge for both IrishBarber and Simply Shoes. Both use Wiseloads, a Donegal delivery company that was specifically set up to meet the needs of online sellers looking to fulfil orders outside of Ireland. “Essentially, we are an online brokering service that people access through our website,” says Pauric Logue, managing director. “When a customer requests a pickup and delivery, the system automatically chooses the courier offering the best service and price.”

At the time of going to press, Paula Thomas had been on eBay for just three weeks and had sold sixteen pairs of shoes. At the moment, at best she is breaking even, but as start-up costs are low, she is learning a lot and concentrating on collecting the positive customer feedback that allows a seller to open a store. Then it’s about achieving sales volumes and attaining Power Seller status...one step at a time.
COST-SAVINGS

Lucille Redmond looks at three ways companies can save.

THRIFT TIPS
FOR EXPORTERS
If you’ve lost customers or your margin is being squeezed, you will need to go after new markets to stay afloat. Whether than means ramping up the sales and marketing drive or entering new sectors and territories, you may need new management talent to kick-start the project, which can be costly at the best of times, but prohibitive in the current recessionary climate.

Deirdre O’Shaughnessy is general manager of InterIM Executives, which sources executives who can take charge of a specific project for a specific time, saving companies the cost of employing a full-time, permanent, pensionable executive.

InterIM Executive, founded in 1998, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Merc Partners. “We supply interim managers to companies for a variety of reasons, but mainly to plug management gaps, manage a project or implement change,” says O’Shaughnessy.

This gives companies an opportunity to buy in senior skills as needed - often in human resources or financial services. “A permanent employee will cost a business a lot more than just the basic salary,” says O’Shaughnessy.

“If senior executives come in on €100,000 per year basic salary, they’re costing the company a lot more than that, because you’ve got to factor in your recruitment costs, quarterly or annual bonuses, the employer’s national insurance contributions, pension, health, possibly company car benefits.”

Hiring in an interim executive can be a better deal, she says. “A company can come to us and say: ‘This is the project that we have, these are the objectives, this is the timescale, this is the type of person and the skill set that we’re looking for’.

“We’ll then go away and look for someone with that specific skill set. This will be someone who’s over-qualified for the position, who’s done something like it before. They’re hitting the ground running.”

One of InterIM Executives’ recent clients, a leisure company, was looking for an interim CEO to come in, review the company’s position and devise a strategy to take it forward in the current troubled climate - and also to see where cost reductions could be found.

“I found them somebody who had a number of years’ experience in that sector, who had similar roles in other organisations. The person came in, was in place within a matter of weeks and was effective from day one, reviewing the organisation, the books, the people, devising a strategy and putting it forward in terms of reducing costs, resourcing, looking at the business elements in the overall business, and once that strategy was devised and agreed with the shareholders, staying to implement it.”

Interim executives have a long-term value, says O’Shaughnessy, because they mentor people within the organisation and leave improved skill sets behind them.

Deirdre O’Shaughnessy
GENERAL MANAGER, INTERIM EXECUTIVES

Interim executives have a long-term value because they mentor people within the organisation and leave improved skill sets behind them.
Travel can be a major expense for exporting companies. Video conferencing, email and telephone communication have their limitations, and sales executives will need all-important face-time with customers, but in recessionary times, smart companies are requiring a clear business case for travel and using savvy procurement strategies to ensure they are getting the best deals.

A recent survey in the UK, however, has indicated that SMEs are being left behind – either because companies don’t have a travel policy or employees are not following it. The Barclaycard Commercial Business Travel Survey found that up to 40 per cent of SME staff do not comply with company rules, while 23 per cent said their company did not have a travel policy. Barclaycard said that for companies with 150 employees, this could mean a travel overspend of over €35,000 per year.

“It has become very important, especially where there is a lot of travel, that a company should have a clear mandate on why travel should occur,” agrees Valerie Metcalfe, managing director of FCM Travel Solutions Ireland. “It’s important that trips and meetings are combined, and that the company focuses the spend with a smaller number of suppliers - travelling more with one or two airlines, staying in one or two hotels.”

Her wholly-owned Irish company started in the mid-1970s within Eugene Magee Travel and Abbey Travel. The business travel departments of the two companies merged in 1995 to form Corporate Travel Partners, and in 2005 this became the partner in Ireland for the Australian-based international group FCM Travel Solutions.

“We pride ourselves on the diversity of our client base,” says Metcalfe. Some clients might have just one or two travellers; others are corporates with many people travelling.”

The travel industry is fluid at the moment. “Fare structures have become broader, so there are much cheaper fares, but there are more restrictions, such as no change when you’re ticketed.”

All travel in a company should be authorised, and should be compliant with your company’s policy, says Metcalfe. A lot of companies now ban all flights but economy-class; others allow premium economy or business class for flights of over six hours. Business class has the advantage of legroom and desk space, so executives can work on the plane, and can include fast check-in and transport to and from the airport.

Planes are not always the choice - in the US, train travel is becoming more popular, because you go from city centre to city centre, avoid the check-in queue, and can work for the whole of the journey.

Using a business travel specialist gives you the advantage of bulk deals. If you’re an SME, you might think you can’t use the same muscle as a giant corporate with thousands of executives travelling all over the world. But by buying your fares from a specialist, your company effectively becomes part of a big buying group, and good deals are available to you on fares, hotel prices and car hire.

For instance, published business class return fares to Tokyo range from €2,360 to €13,000, but Valerie says FCM has special business classes starting at €2,000, and it can offer economy fares for €401 upwards.
If your company runs a transport fleet, just teaching drivers how to drive more efficiently can be a huge money-saver. Running a truck costs some €100,000 a year, between fuel, the driver’s wages, leasing and insurance. A typical haulier puts about 4,000 litres of fuel into each truck in the fleet.

“Fuel is the biggest cost for most transport fleets,” says Jason Byrne, director and co-founder of three-year-old fuel efficiency company eaglEdge. “It costs an average of 40 per cent of their total overheads.”

Using eaglEdge’s systems, says Byrne, an operator can save up to 18 per cent, “an absolutely savage saving”, he says. “That’s pretty much a fifth of their fuel. One truck in five will be running for free.”

eaglEdge works with the drivers - “the only real way to improve fuel efficiency”. The company started in the National University of Ireland, Galway, where Jason and Fanie Meiring were project managers with NUIG and Gerry Lyons was head of the IT department.

“We work with transport companies - hauliers, people with articulated trucks, fleets of vans, and bus and coach fleets - to help them reduce their fuel use,” says Byrne. Customers have included An Post and refrigerated transport company Elsatrans, winner of the Chamber of Commerce New Business Award.

“There are plenty of gizmos and dongles out there that really don’t work - magnet systems and additives and this kind of thing. The only thing that really works is to work with the brains behind the bucket - the driver,” says Byrne.

eaglEdge instals devices that meter how the vehicle is being driven, and to how this affects fuel efficiency. “This suggests small ways in which individual drivers can change their driving style to save fuel,” he says.

The system works because it’s individual - rather than just telling drivers how to drive more efficiently, it looks at one driver’s habits of driving. Some fleet managers offer their drivers prizes for the best reduction of fuel use, and fleet drivers can get competitive about improvements in their driving, says Byrne.

A driver may be good at driving smoothly and braking little, for instance, but have a heavy foot on the accelerator that revs up your truck, burning fuel. Another might neglect to use cruise control - the use of which can dramatically cut revs.

“We’re able to break down each driver’s use of these factors and highlight it to the fleet manager, who can sit down and say: ‘You’re good on the other five areas, but just work on your cruise control and harsh braking’.”

Drivers like the system, because they find the technique of low-rev driving relaxing. It cuts stress, which increases safety.

eaglEdge has also been asked for techniques to monitor fuel theft by the occasional unscrupulous drivers who fill their own cars or fiddle the receipts.

“We have a system where the company can enter all receipts, telling the system what’s going into the vehicle, and we know the mileage and the correct fuel use,” says Byrne. “So if there’s a huge discrepancy, the company will know there might be a pilferage problem with a vehicle.”

Working smarter as well as working harder can be the secret to saving money while the economy is downshifting. If we do it right, we will be poised for success when the upshift comes.
Gordon Smith talked to two business leaders that have seized new opportunities created by the maturing of the internet.

MEET THE MIDDLE MEN OF THE NEW SOFTWARE ECONOMY

In the internet’s early days, conventional wisdom was that middlemen would disappear as buyers and sellers would now be directly in touch with each other. While that has happened to a certain extent, the sheer diversity of products and services available on the web means there’s still a gap for distributors of a different kind.

Two Irish companies are filling such gaps in their respective sectors – CarTrawler in the online car rentals market and Eberts, trading as Research & Markets, providing market research material. Both are essentially aggregators, bringing together products and services that buyers would otherwise have to scour the web to find.

Whereas the traditional distribution business model was to make a profit margin on every product going through its doors, these companies take a slightly different approach. CarTrawler takes a cut of each transaction made over its systems but it does not charge its partners to use its technology on their websites. Research & Markets does not mark up the product it sells either; instead it sells reports for the same price as their original publishers, and takes a commission on the sale.

Distribution of any kind is a high-volume business, which helps to offset the low margins involved. Accordingly, Research and Markets holds more than 700,000 reports from 1,200 worldwide agencies, while CarTrawler’s booking engine technology sells car rentals from over 500 suppliers in 135 countries.

This reach has allowed both companies to overcome the single biggest business challenge of recent years: the recession. Last year, CarTrawler generated sales to the value of €58.2 million, reports CEO Greg Turley. “We currently employ 52 people and are currently recruiting because of our large growth,” he adds.
Research & Markets declines to reveal revenue figures but CEO Ross Glover says the company is still growing. “The global nature of our business and the diversity of our product range have left us less exposed than most to the current economic conditions,” he says.

PROFILE BUILDING Many challenges are common to both, the first being a lack of profile with customers and suppliers in the early days. “The first major milestone we had was building up a critical mass of publisher partners,” recalls Glover. “Initially we had a website with no content so convincing the initial publishers of our vision was a challenge.”

The company also invests a lot of time in finding customers for this content. “Principally we are a sales and marketing company. Put simply, our role is to inform existing and prospective clients about new research reports in their specific field with a view to generating sales,” Glover explains.

If finding customers is one challenge, finding staff is another critical obstacle to overcome, according to Turley. “The major challenge when managing for growth is recruiting people at the correct time into different departments, as this is costly business-wise and salary-wise,” he says. “You need to always employ the very best people in the market, and this is a very expensive strategy, but ultimately is the difference between success, mediocrity or failure.”

In-depth market knowledge can’t be underestimated, Turley adds. A 20-year veteran of the car rental sector, he was already familiar with the issues affecting global distribution systems (GDS). “The goal was to build the next-generation GDS with modern technology, tackling the issues that were apparent to me and working on a different business model to the GDS currently in the market place,” he says. Knowing the value of staying focused on its niche, CarTrawler has resisted the temptation to expand its GDS technology, specialising only in car rentals.

It’s a similar story for Glover. “We knew the industry very well, and I think this was apparent to the early adopters,” he says. Although Research & Markets wasn’t the first mover in its space, it was the first European-based aggregator. “This was a key advantage as we opened a new market to many of our US-based publisher partners,” he says.

EXTENDED REACH The role of a distributor in any environment is to give the seller an extended reach for its product. When that product is information rather than a physical item, aggregators distinguish themselves not by massive warehouses and supply chain operations but clever technology to ensure the commodity can be supplied easily.

CarTrawler has developed the technology running its business, called Accelerate, into a suite of customisable options that work with all web browsers and can be installed and live within minutes, according to Turley. Customers such as airlines, hotels, online travel agents or information sites can choose from CarTrawler’s database of car rental suppliers or they can sell their own specific content on their own website or on their customers’ websites. “As a result, they do not have to invest in booking engine technology as CarTrawler provides this at no cost to the customer,” says Turley.

The booking engine also has several features designed to appeal to clients who want to track the sales performance of their online services. These include real-time reporting and analytics, management tools, as well as predictive alerts.

R&D AND INNOVATION Current R&D efforts have seen the completion of a project to put CarTrawler’s technology onto a smartphone with additional mapping features. The company worked with Nokia and the result was showcased at the mobile giant’s exhibition in September. “This is very much the future that we are working on, which is now only becoming viable due to better handsets and 3G broadband,” says Turley.
Glover places similar importance on research in growing the business. “As a company, we have very strong R&D ethos, and this has been a key enabler across the company. The implementation of custom-built, web-based systems throughout the business has accelerated growth at a level that would otherwise not have been possible,” he says. “These systems enable us to serve our clients and publisher partners better and we constantly have new projects in development. We have placed added emphasis on R&D in recent years and we are expecting a real multiplier effect from this as the global economy picks up.”

The company has several R&D projects running at any one time, and Glover has high hopes for a new database the company has developed—essentially a “who’s who” of people working in the life sciences sector. “Traditionally, such a database would be compiled manually by data providers; limiting the scope and freshness of the data provided and increasing the costs of providing it,” Glover explains. “We are utilising the latest semantic web technologies to automatically collect this information from the open web, building comprehensive profiles of people and companies operating in life sciences from a multitude of online sources.”

The semantic life science database is still in beta-testing, but it already contains more than five million entries, and it is aimed at anyone looking to do sales and marketing, HR departments seeking candidates or organisations trying to build strategic alliances within the sector. Glover says the full launch of this service will be a significant milestone in the company’s development since it began eight years ago.

PARTNERS As middlemen relying on other links in the chain, working with partners is crucial to the success of any distribution effort. Research & Markets works with more than 1,200 report publishers and Glover attributes a high level of renewal of these deals to a sophisticated customer service system for communicating with those partners. “Internet businesses have a poor reputation for customer service and we have been determined not to fall into this stereotype,” he says.

In addition to capturing information from multiple car hire firms including Budget, Enterprise, Europcar, National and Thrifty, CarTrawler also works with technology partners such as Datalex and SITA which resell their technology to the airline industry. The company recently completed a partnership agreement with ezRez, which is a travel software company that allows clients to offer consumers a range of travel products, including flights, hotels, car rentals, activities, and travel insurance, whether standalone or in combination with others.

MANAGING GROWTH Strong leadership can be key to managing growth. Greg Turley recently undertook Enterprise Ireland’s Leadership4Growth programme, which is run in association with the Irish Software Association and Stanford University in the US. “When I went to Stanford, what was key for CarTrawler was me moving from micro-managing to delegating and implementing reporting and processes based on key performance indicators,” he says.

Glover was unable to attend the programme as planned due to family commitments but he echoes Turley’s thoughts on reporting as an aid to managing growth. “My role is to provide the leadership, management and vision necessary to ensure that the company has the correct operational controls, administrative and reporting procedures, and people systems in place to effectively scale the organisation and to ensure financial strength and operating efficiency,” he says.

Like Turley, Glover does not believe all the responsibilities of leadership lie on a CEO’s shoulders only. “The leadership role extends across our entire management team and it’s vital that the team is empowered to accomplish our strategic vision,” he adds.

CarTrawler and Research & Markets are supported by Enterprise Ireland’s Scaling division.
Richard Denny decided to buy a laptop a while ago. Denny is a motivational speaker, much in demand for his inspirational talks on selling techniques, and the author of five respected books on his subject. He himself has sold everything from cement and electronics to Yugoslavian lamb in the Middle East. So he was interested to see how the salespeople would approach him.

The first came into his office and proceeded to demonstrate the laptop he was offering. “It was a good demonstration,” writes Denny. “He explained the product well and he covered all the features and benefits.”

But when he tried to close the sale, Denny gave him that old “I’ll think about it” line - equivalent to the parental “We’ll see” in other words, “No thanks”.

The second salesman gave a great demonstration, and included the guarantees and a run through the manual. No sale.

It was the third who closed the deal. He didn’t produce any laptop at first. After sitting for a while and getting to know his client, he said: “In order to save a lot of time, Mr Denny, may I ask you a few questions?”

The first question was “Why are you interested in purchasing a laptop?” He spent about 20 minutes on polite in-depth questions about Denny’s business, the level of his computer knowledge and the use he intended to make of the computer. Then he went out to his car and got a laptop, and showed exactly how it would fill the bill for the specific uses Denny had outlined. He got the sale.

Asking the right questions, Denny writes, is supremely important in selling.

Michael Wilkinson would disagree with Denny on the question of questions. His specialist book takes the sensible view that customers have different buying styles, and by finding what style your customer prefers, you can target your sales.

There are four basic styles of buyer, according to Wilkinson: Drive, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance. DISC for short - business books love acronyms as much as self-help manuals.

High-D types, driven and dominant, don’t want questions or diversions or detail. “Don’t waste their time with idle chatter,” Wilkinson writes. “Don’t ramble. Don’t be too detailed unless they ask for it.”

With those feisty high-Ds, you should be prepared, tell them what you’re going to tell them; state your points clearly, briefly, specifically; give only as much detail as necessary - let them control. “When you think of high-Ds, think ‘time’. Don’t waste their time.”

High-I types motivate others to succeed. “Think of salespeople, teachers and facilitators.” You can sell to them by giving them the big picture before going into details; giving them a chance to share their ideas, and keeping conversation friendly and warm, he says. Wilkinson says you mustn’t dwell on details and facts with high-Is - provide them in writing instead. Don’t tell them
what to do without giving them a chance to respond; and don't let them ramble for long.

High-S customers are the stabilising force within an organisation, the ones who help and support others. Typically, they are civil servants, social workers, shop assistants. They love harmony; so don’t dive straight into business, or be demanding or abrasive, or assume that ‘silence means consent’. You will succeed in selling to them, Wilkinson writes, if you start with a personal comment, present ideas deliberately and clearly; provide assurances, and make sure the person is in agreement without moving on.

High-Cs - typically, researchers, accountants, engineers, analysts and others in detailed, quantitative professions - are rational and logical, and do things by the book. “While the high-Ds are bursting through the wall, the high-is are cheerleading and the high-Ss are helping people over the wall, the high-Cs are doing their homework.

“First, they measure the height of the wall and enter the information into their spreadsheet. Then they use the scaling equipment to determine that the wall is at an 84.5-degree angle.”

With the high-C, you shouldn’t be disorganised or make random comments, rely on emotional appeal to gain agreement, or try to force a rapid decision. Rather, present ideas logically, stay on topic and provide facts and figures that back up your claims.

“Escape the common trap of selling the way you like to be sold to,” he advises. “Tailor your approach to your customer’s buying style.”

Wilkinson, CEO of Leadership Strategies, a strategic consulting and training firm, is a popular speaker. This, his third book, is structured slightly oddly, as a fictional seminar with the ideas explained and discussed. It is a sensible selling psychology guide that deserves a place on the shelves of sales departments.

William ‘Skip’ Miller is president of M3 Learning, a sales and management development company, and gives American Management Association training programmes; this is his fifth book.

**ProActive Sales Management** is not for salespeople, but a book on how to manage a sales team. Sales managers are still doing the wrong thing, writes Miller - working like dogs, and ending up dog tired. ProActive Sales Management, he promises, provides a step-by-step method to change the way you manage. His method involves assessing your company’s culture, working out how it can be improved, setting short-term and long-term targets for change in the culture, and implementing the plan.

“Assess your current company culture from all points of view,” he advises, “from senior management on down. Look at the current company culture from the perspective of all the other functions in an organisation, including manufacturing, finance, engineering and customer service - not just sales.”

Miller’s advice follows the old charity saying that if you give a man fish, you’ll feed him for a day; if you teach him to fish, you’ll feed him for life. He offers measurements and charts that help a sales manager to stand back - not to be constantly getting in the salespeople’s knitting, but allowing them to do their work without overbearing supervision.

Reactiveness is the boss’s enemy, he repeats: spending all your time answering calls and emails and being on call for your sales team is not good management. He pleasantly recommends starting the day with a ‘Power Hour’, spent planning your future agenda. Go to a coffee shop, he writes: you’re trying to break an addiction. No email, no calls.

His three-part model for managing time and people is: Concentrate on the salespeople who make 80 per cent of the sales, urging them on to the next level. Concentrate on the future, spending 50 per cent of your time planning for the months ahead. Set measurable objectives.

This book’s real selling point, though, is its detailed chapters on how to run an interview and who to hire (including what questions you can and can’t legally ask an interviewee), and on how to teach people to sell, and coach people to sell better.

**World Class Selling: New Sales Competencies**

Brian W Lambert, Tim Ohai, Eric M Kerkhoff, ASTD Press
Market intelligence

Enterprise Ireland’s Information Centre hosts Ireland’s most comprehensive collection of business information and is staffed by specialists who can aid quick and effective searches. The team can help clients of Enterprise Ireland find information on markets, products, companies, technical standards and management.

The centre subscribes to a wide range of databases, including

- Datamonitor Profiles
- Espicom
- Frost & Sullivan
- Mintel

Here is just a sample of the types of research and reports to which the centre has access.

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**ICT/SOFTWARE**

**The Future of Enterprise Mashups: Demand, challenges and vendor opportunities**

*Business Insights*

*August 2009*

Mashups, or composite applications, first came to prominence on the social and consumer web as users looked to make the most of the Web 2.0 technology at their fingertips. Enterprises were quick to see the business benefits of turning various data sources into services and ‘mashing’ them together on an ad hoc basis into unique applications without the need for complex coding - essentially, the opportunity existed for non-technical business users to very quickly create their own situational applications to help speed up their decision-making processes. As the understanding of what could be possible grew, a large amount of hype was created over the potential of enterprise mashups. This report examines to what extent the real benefits and potential match the hype over what is one of the hottest, potentially disruptive emerging enterprise technologies, and it provides actionable insight into how to approach the challenges and opportunities afforded by it.

**The Video Gaming Market Outlook: Evolving business models, key players, new challenges and the future outlook**

*Business Insights*

*August 2009*

This report examines the global video gaming market, covering console gaming, online gaming, mobile gaming, PC gaming and in-game advertising. It covers the key developed and emerging markets, in terms of penetration of internet, broadband and mobile technologies and the uptake of different video gaming platforms. In addition, it analyses the changing demographic profile of gamers, evolving business models and evolutions in the value chain of the video gaming industry, with a focus on the emerging trends. Moreover, it discusses the key challenges that the market is currently faced with and provides an insight into the key players involved.

**Global Wireless Telecommunication Services**

*Datamonitor*

*September 2009*

This report includes data on market size and segmentation, plus textual and graphical analysis of the key trends and competitive landscape, leading companies and demographic information.

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Enterprise Ireland clients may obtain market research information from the Information Centre, free of charge, by a simple phone call or email. Alternatively, clients can visit the centre or regional offices, by appointment, to view publications such as those listed above.

To set up an appointment, contact the Information Desk on 01 727 2324. Please note that access to the material summarised on this page is covered by copyright restrictions. Reports may not be loaned or sent out to client companies. Further details about the Information Centre are available on www.enterpriseireland.com/information.
FOOD, RETAIL AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS

Using Sustainable Ingredients in Food and Drinks: Opportunities in local sourcing, fair trade and organic
Business Insights
September 2009
This report looks at the impact sustainability has had on ingredients used in the food and drinks industry and describes the current regulatory situation. It identifies sustainability strategies adopted by leading players in the industry and organisations involved in sustainability initiatives. Moreover, it provides an outlook for the future based on findings.

US and Europe Nutricosmetics Ingredients Markets
Frost & Sullivan
August 2009
This research product explores emerging US and European demand for personal-care nutricosmetics that have an effect on skin, nails and hair (such as lycopene, lutein, betacarotene, astaxanthin, vitamins A,C, and E, collagen, PUFA (polyunsaturated fatty acids, CoQ10 fruit extract, and green tea extracts). It includes an analysis of market drivers and market restraints.

Private Labels in Retailing 2009
Verdict
July 2009
This report provides insight into the development of private labels by retailers across different sectors, including food and grocery, electrical and DIY. It includes case studies covering different countries and retail sectors and examines the key strategies for retailers, including opportunities for private label development of eco-friendly and energy efficient products.

Toys and Games: Global industry guide
Datamonitor
April 2009
This report provides an analysis on a global, regional and country basis and includes data on market size and segmentation, analysis of the key trends and the competitive landscape plus profiles of the leading companies. It also includes a five-year forecast.

Cosmetics and Toiletries Australia
Euromonitor
July 2009
This report provides a guide to the size and shape of the Australian market, including the latest retail sales data and the sectors driving growth. It identifies the leading companies and brands and offers strategic analysis of key factors influencing the market such as new product developments, packaging innovations, economic/lifestyle influences, distribution and pricing issues. In addition, it forecasts how the market is set to change.

ENVIRONMENT, INDUSTRY AND LIFE SCIENCE SECTORS

Analysis of the Middle East (GCC) Water and Wastewater Treatment Equipment Market
Frost & Sullivan
May 2009
In recent years, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have seen massive investments in the real estate sector, creating unprecedented demand for water and wastewater treatment equipments. Against the backdrop of changed economic dynamics, this report aims to explore the impact of the current market situation.

Global Catheter Market
BCC Research
Aug 2009
This report estimates that the global catheter market will grow from $14.5 billion in 2008 to $32.1 billion by 2014. Latest technological developments and regulatory issues affecting the current market and their potential impact on future markets are discussed, and profiles of major manufacturers/suppliers of catheter technologies are supplied.

European Lab-on-chip and Microfluidics Markets
Frost & Sullivan
May 2009
This research service provides a detailed analysis of the lab-on-chip and microfluidics markets in Europe from 2005-2015.

Global Top 10 Pharmaceutical Companies
Datamonitor
June 2009
This report provides a comprehensive view of the pharmaceutical industry and its top 10 global companies under the following headings: market value, share, volume, forecast, etc. During 2008, the top 10 companies recorded revenues of $348.3 billion, up 4 per cent on 2007 levels. Their operating profit was $81.6 billion, up 11.6 per cent on 2007, while net profit up 12.1 per cent at $65.1 billion.

European Biological Wastewater Treatment Systems Market
Frost & Sullivan
May 2009
This research product explores the biological wastewater treatment market in Europe by region, analysing drivers and restraints, market size for the base year and corresponding annual growth rates for the forecast period as well as the revenue share trends by aerobic, anaerobic, membrane bioreactor systems and other technology segments.

Global Cardiovascular Devices Market Analysis & Forecasts to 2015
GlobalData
January 2009
This report provides an overview of key trends, drivers and restraints, future outlook, pipeline products, news, financial deals, the competitive landscape and key developments in the global cardiovascular devices market. It also offers global and country level, detailed and comprehensive coverage of market revenue, volume, distribution and company share information.
Trade regulations, information and negotiations

Enterprise Ireland’s trade regulation update service is now available at www.enterprise-ireland.com/export regulations.

**FDA and EMEA launch good clinical practices initiative**

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMEA) have announced an agreement to launch a bilateral Good Clinical Practices (GCP) initiative, designed to ensure that clinical trials submitted in drug marketing applications in the United States and Europe are conducted uniformly, appropriately and ethically. The initiative commenced with an 18-month pilot phase on September 1, 2009, and will focus on collaborative efforts to inspect clinical trial sites and studies. Products regulated by the FDA’s Centre for Drug Evaluation and Research in the United States, and by the EMEA for the European Union will be the focus of the initiative.

**EU requests WTO consultations with the Philippines over unfair taxation of spirits**

The European Union has requested consultations with the Philippines at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) regarding excise taxes on distilled spirits, which the EU considers to be discriminatory and therefore in breach of international trade rules. Imported spirits can face taxes 10 to 50 times higher than those on domestic products, and exports to the Philippines have fallen significantly as a result.

Consumption of spirits in the Philippines in 2007 was estimated by the International Wine & Spirits Record (IWSR) at about 47 million cases (of nine litres), making it one of the largest spirits markets in the Asia-Pacific region. From 2004 to 2007, EU exports of spirits to the Philippines fell from around €37 million to €18 million.

**UK consultation on reducing saturated fat and added sugar in key foods**

In Britain, the Food Standards Agency has launched a consultation on its proposals to introduce voluntary recommendations for food manufacturers for reductions in saturated fat and added sugar and increased availability of smaller single-portion sizes in a number of key foods – biscuits, cakes, pastries, buns, chocolate confectionery and soft drinks.

The proposals will also encourage industry to increase the proportion of marketing budgets allocated to healthier options.

Separately, the agency has launched a consultation on the issues that need to be resolved to produce an integrated approach to front-of-pack (FOP) labelling.

An independent study that evaluated front-of-pack labelling in the UK found that shoppers would benefit from a single FOP scheme and that the most effective label in terms of consumer comprehension and preference includes the words ‘high, medium and low’, traffic light colours and percentage of Guideline Daily Amount (GDA).

**Canada relieves duties on Winter Olympics imports**

The Canadian Government has issued a Remission Order covering the importation of goods intended for use during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter games.

The order allows for customs duties to be relieved on some goods imported temporarily, and in some cases permanently, so long as they are for exclusive use in connection with the games. It also provides for the full or partial relief of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) under certain circumstances, with the specific exception of all tobacco products and alcohol.
Governments warned against re-introducing trade barriers

G20 governments have refrained from extensive use of restrictive trade and investment measures in recent months but have continued, in a limited way, to apply tariffs and non-tariff instruments that have hindered trade flows, the heads of the OECD, UNCTAD and the WTO indicated in a joint report to G20 leaders meeting in Pittsburgh this September.

Secretary General Angel Gurría of OECD, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy and UNCTAD Secretary General Supachai Panitchpakdi welcomed the commitment by governments to continue open trade and investment policies while pointing out that world leaders, particularly those in the G-20, bear responsibility for ensuring that trade and international investment function as tools for economic recovery. The global crisis is not over, they said, and rising unemployment will undoubtedly spark further protectionist pressures in the years to come.

“International rules for trade and investment agreements are a source of opportunity in times of economic growth and a restraining influence in times of difficulty. It is in this latter role that the rules are serving us particularly well right now,” they said.

However, tariffs, non-tariff measures, subsidies and burdensome administrative procedures regarding imports have been applied in recent months and these actions have acted as “sand in the gears of international trade that may retard the global recovery,” they added. “It is urgent that governments start planning a coordinated exit strategy that will eliminate these elements as soon as possible,” the heads of the three organisations warned.

EU and Eastern and Southern Africa further trade partnership

The European Union has signed an interim Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with countries from the Eastern and Southern Africa regional grouping (ESA). These countries are Mauritius, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar. Zambia and Comoros have indicated they will sign at a later date.

The deal offers the ESA countries that signed the agreement immediate and full access to EU markets (with transition periods for rice and sugar), together with improved rules of origin. In turn, ESA countries will be required to liberalise their markets to EU imports over the next 15 years, gradually removing tariffs on between 80 per cent and 98 per cent of imports from the EU, depending on the country. Among the products excluded from liberalisation are sensitive agricultural and manufactured products such as milk, meat, vegetables, textiles, footwear and clothing.

EC proposes code to prevent double taxation linked to transfer pricing

The EU Commission has adopted a communication geared towards the elimination of double taxation linked to transfer pricing adjustments.

When associated companies trade across borders, it is not always easy for the companies or tax administrations to determine the prices to be used. Differences between Member States’ transfer pricing rules may lead to inconsistencies in the internal market and additional administrative burdens on taxpayers, where the taxpayer may be taxed twice on the same income – so called double taxation. Specifically, double taxation arises from disputes between taxpayers and tax administrations, over what amount of profit should be taxed and where the tax should be paid.

The Commission proposal is the result of a monitoring exercise on the application of the Arbitration Convention (AC). The revised code clarifies and provides common interpretation of some provisions of the AC in order to facilitate resolution of many more cases within the three-year time frame.

Changes to South Korean customs requirements for low value imports

As of July 1, 2009, Korean customs authorities have commenced enforcing strict screening of shipments with a declared value of less than US$100 to ensure that they fully comply with the requirements of the relevant legislation covering the non-dutiable importation of low value items.

The main articles of the law state that, in order to avoid duty, such items must be imported solely for the recipient’s personal use or as a commercial sample for business promotion purposes. For such consignments to be properly recorded for customs entry, shippers should ensure that full details are included on the air waybill for all low value non-dutiable shipments imported into Korea.

Free e-learning module on trade marks in China

The EU IPR SME Helpdesk has launched a free e-learning module on protecting trade marks in China. See www.china-iprhelpdesk.eu/emodule/index.html
Ryanair increases check-in bag allowance, but also increases charges

Ryanair has announced a series of changes to its baggage policies and charges, which will come into effect for all new bookings from October 1, 2009, onwards.

From the start of October, Ryanair passengers may travel with two checked-in bags. Each bag will have a separate 15kg allowance, which will allow passengers to travel, with up to 30kg of checked in baggage – double the current allowance of 15kg.

However, Ryanair is also increasing charges. The fee for the first checked-in bag is now €15 when booked on the internet or €30 when paid at the airport; meanwhile, the charge for the second checked-in bag is €35 when paid online or €70 at the airport. The airline is also increasing its excess baggage fees to €20 per kilogram.

Aer Lingus adds third daily service on Shannon-Heathrow route

Aer Lingus is to launch a third scheduled daily flight between Shannon and London Heathrow commencing on October 25.

The new mid-day flight from Shannon adds to the existing twice-daily morning and evening services provided by the airline.

However, cuts may be on the way on other routes. Analysts are predicting that Aer Lingus may reduce its overall capacity across routes by up to a quarter this winter in response to losses and reduced demand.

An end to charger confusion

Incompatibility between mobile chargers can be a major hassle: almost everyone has a collection of chargers that have become superfluous over time.

However, simplification is on the way. As a result of negotiations with the European Commission, major producers of mobile phones have agreed to harmonise chargers in the EU. In a Memorandum of Understanding, the industry has committed to provide chargers compatibility based on phones’ micro-USB connector. It is expected that the first generation of new inter-chargable mobile phones should reach the EU market from 2010 onwards.

Send up zzzzz’s on long-haul with noise cancelling earbuds

Whether you’re trying to work or sleep, headphones that block out airplane noise are a great idea, but over-the-ear types are too bulky for limited luggage space. Now, there’s an alternative: noise-cancelling earbuds that fit inside the ear—they look like your iPod ear-buds, but work much better. Choose from the pricey Audio-Technica ATH-ANC3 QuietPoint Earphones; middle-of-the-range Sony MDR-NC22 Noise Cancelling Earbud Headphone or the cheaper JVC HA-NCX77 Noise Cancelling Earbuds.

And let the LUGbuddy do the lugging

Another handy travel accessory is the LUGbuddy – a little, handle-like device that attaches to your wheeled suitcase to allow you to clip anything else on top of the bag: a coat, another small suitcase, etc. While most wheeled bags come with their own clips to attach other bags to, I find that doing that throws off the balance of my suitcase, making everything fall over or flop around, plus their use is limited to other handled bags – no coats, boxes, etc. The LUGbuddy attaches anything, very securely: a genius low-price little item which should become a mandatory travel accessory for all road warriors. (www.lugbuddy.com)
Sydney is Australia’s oldest and largest city, and is situated on one of the world’s most impressive harbours. Indeed, it is the harbour that is the city’s touchstone, the dividing line between north and south. It is no surprise that it has remained across the decades a magnet for Irish emigrants and business, as it has often been described as one of the world’s favourite cities-dynamic, sophisticated and cosmopolitan. Sydney’s climate alone is enough to seduce the weariest of visitor, its population of four million-plus well educated, multilingual and despite the lure of the beach and the BBQs, productive. www.sydney.com

FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE CITY:
From the arrivals point at both international and domestic terminals there are easily signposted rail stations. The Airport Link trains run at 10-minute intervals, and take approximately 15 minutes to Sydney’s Central Business District. From the airport, there are also direct bus services to areas such as King’s Cross, city centre and Darling Harbour. Taxis from the airport to downtown Sydney are, of course, another option; expect to pay in the region of A$25-30, depending on traffic.

SLEEP:
1st Choice: Blue Sydney is a heritage-listed property owned by the high-end Indian hotel chain, Taj. A Condé Nast Traveler 2007 ‘Gold List’ award winner, it is perfectly located on the city’s wharf, and enjoys amazing views. Rates from A$530. The Wharf at Woolloomooloo, 6 Cowper Wharf Road; 001-612-9331-9000; www.tajhotels.com

2nd Choice: The Westin Sydney is a multi-award winner (Condé Nast Traveler’s ‘Gold List’ since 2005; Travel + Leisure’s 500 List in 2008; awarded the inaugural 2009 Bentley Award for Outstanding Hotel Service by Luxury Travel Magazine) in the heart of the city. Rates from A$565. 1 Martin Place; 001-612-8223-1111; www.westin.com/sydney

EAT:
Lunch: Glass is a classy French brasserie-style restaurant that boasts a 30-metre ‘Wine Wall’ as well as a 13-metre floor-to-ceiling glass wall that frames a must-see view of the Queen Victoria Building across the street. Warm tones, earthy colours, superb cuisine. Hilton Sydney Hotel, 488 George Street; 001-612-9265-6068; www.glassbrasserie.com.au

Dinner: Icebergs is one of Sydney’s most iconic restaurants; it is located high on the cliffs, and offers modish Italian fare as well as panoramic views of Bondi Beach, with its accompanying breakers and bronzed bodies. Something of a celeb hangout, we believe. 1 Notts Avenue, Bondi Beach; 001-612-9365-9000; www.idrb.com

THREE THINGS TO DO IF YOU HAVE A FEW HOURS TO SPARE:
Shopping: Would you really travel all the way to Sydney and dare not to bring something home? Start at the Paddington end of Oxford Street, where the work of several Australian designers is on display in their swish shops. This area also has plenty of stylish café stops for a respite from shopping.

Sightseeing: If you’re stuck for time, but want to see something of the splendour of Sydney Harbour, then try out a Café Cruise, which takes just over an hour. Watch the landmarks drift by while you slake your thirst with afternoon tea. departs daily from the harbour; trips from A$37. www.captaincook.com.au

Art Gallery: The Art Gallery of New South Wales holds significant collections of Eurasian art, and presents almost forty exhibitions annually. Open daily (except Good Friday and Christmas Day), 10am-5pm; free admission to most exhibitions; Art Gallery Road, The Domain; 001-612-9225-1700; www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au
Now that President Obama is talking about opening up trade, some Cuba experts predict that the country could explode with creativity and entrepreneurial innovation.
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