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Irish tech leaders on what it takes to win internationally

DUBARRY FILLS ITS OWN BOOTS
The Galway company rolls out a new sales strategy for Europe

BORN IN THE USA
Founder and CEO of neoSurgical Barry Russell on launching in the US

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Q&A with Chameleon Colour Systems on doing business in Turkey

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Specialist help available for early-stage exporters

Enterprise Ireland offers a suite of supports for companies that are considering exporting for the first time or are at the early stage of exporting but looking to put more strategy and structure around their export plans.

A dedicated Get Export Ready website provides ‘how to’ guides, links to relevant information, self-assessment tools and templates and an outline of supports. These include mentoring and advocacy; access to market information; a dedicated helpdesk; advice from successful exporting companies and access to a range of Enterprise Ireland funds.

The first step in engaging with the service is attendance at a half-day awareness event, which takes place at regional venues around the country. Here participants hear an export success case study, Enterprise Ireland’s potential division highlights available exporter supports and the local enterprise office talks about how it works with exporters locally.

Companies that decide to progress beyond this stage can then participate in a workshop where they are equipped with the tools to help them develop an export plan or strategy, they are provided with access to Enterprise Ireland’s market research centre and they are teamed with an advocate who will spend a half a day working with the company to gain an indepth view of its resources, products and operations. The advocate will advise them on their strategy and point them in the direction of appropriate Enterprise Ireland’s tools such as the online company health-check, designed to assess export readiness, and other tools on the potential exporters’ website, which will help them refine their export plan and get export ready.

Participants may also be teamed with a mentor to help them work on specific areas of concern or weakness.

Companies sufficiently prepared in terms of resources, operations and an export plan will then meet with Enterprise Ireland’s UK team in Dublin, which will take them onboard as they commence their journey into the UK market.

For further information of forthcoming exporting awareness workshops in your area, visit the events section at www.enterprise-ireland.com

Mcor Technologies wins Best of CES 2015 Award

Mcor Technologies, the Donegal-based manufacturer of desktop, paper-based 3D printers received a Best of CES 2015 Award by GeekBeat.TV in the category of 3D Printers in Las Vegas this January. Mcor beat nearly 60 3D printing exhibitors in the 3D Printing Tech Zone section of the show for the top prize. The company’s printers – unique because they are desktop-based and use standard paper – are capable of creating complex, full-colour, durable and stable physical 3D models from A4 sheets of copy paper.

Lifes2good Group secures €5 million invest for international expansion

This February, the BDO Development Capital Fund made its second investment since the launch of the €75million fund in March last year, as part of the Government’s Development Capital Scheme, aimed at providing growth capital for established, mid-sized and profitable companies to accelerate export-led growth.

The €5 million investment in the Lifes2Good Group is intended to power further international expansion of the Galway firm, founded in 1997 as an international, sales, marketing and distribution group of category-leading and clinically proven healthcare brands.

Commenting on the investment Lifes2Good Founder James Murphy said that it would provide the company with the funds needed to grow its current significant US and UK business, position other markets for accelerated growth and support new product and brand development through innovation and acquisition.
EU launches Innovation Fast Track -
to bring ideas to market quicker

The European Commission has launched the new, €200 million Fast Track to Innovation (FTI) pilot initiative to promote innovation by reducing the time it takes to bring innovative ideas to market.

Over the next two years, the pilot initiative will be open to all types of participants, particularly from industry, while stimulating first-time applications from industry and SMEs to Horizon 2020, the EU’s research and innovation funding programme.

Projects funded under the pilot are to be ‘business-driven’ to ensure promising innovative ideas are exploited faster. Activities eligible for support include systems validation in real working conditions, testing, piloting, business model validation as well as standard setting and pre-normative research. The pilot will be implemented through one common and continuously open call. Proposals can be submitted at any time with three cut-off dates in 2015: 29 April, 1 September and 1 December.

Export success sows the seeds
for expansion at agricultural
machinery firm

On the back of success in export markets, the agricultural machinery firm Samco is to build a new manufacturing plant near its Adare headquarters, doubling its current staff numbers to 60.

Founded in 1998 by former agricultural contractor Samuel Shine, Samco is best known for its 3-in-1 machine, designed for growing maize in colder climates.

In a single pass, the machine plants maize corn seed, sprays a pre-emergence herbicide and lays a thin layer of degradable film over the soil. The film acts as a cloche, increasing air and ground temperatures and protecting young seedlings from late frosts and adverse weather. In dry soils, it also helps retain moisture in the soil. The system is so successful that more than 90 per cent of Irish maize growers now use it.

To extend working time, the company has developed a CarryAll unit, which sits between a tractor and a maize drill, carrying 27 rolls of film, 3,000 litres of herbicide, spare parts and 600 litres of fertiliser. “Normally, a 3-in-1 machine could plant 10 acres at a time, but with the addition of the CarryAll unit, this can be increased to 30 acres. In places like Canada where the fields are bigger, and there might be a long journey from the water supply, having the CarryAll is a big advantage,” Shine told The Market. The company has also recently developed a version of the 3-in-1 for sowing soybean.

At present, France is Samco’s largest market. However, Canada, Samco’s fastest growing destination for export sales, looks set to overtake France in volume in the next few years, and the company is predicting that China may, in turn, overtake Canada over the next five to 10 years.

“At the moment, we have contracted out the manufacturing of our film to China,” said Shine. “But as well as making machinery here, we will also re-start film manufacture in Ireland, while the Chinese operation will serve our growing export markets.”

Neal’s Yard takes its remedies
with a pinch of Irish salt

Neal’s Yard Remedies, the organic health and beauty products company, headquartered in Covent Garden’s hip Neal’s Yard lane, has become one of the latest customers to source ingredients from an Irish start-up based in County Louth.

When Michael Fitzpatrick founded Oriel Sea Salt in 2010 to pioneer an eco-friendly means of harvesting salt and deep sea minerals from the ocean, he selected Port Oriel in Clogherhead as the location for its base because the coastal water there contains more brine than elsewhere along the Irish coastline.

The company first piloted a closed pressurised system for extracting salt and other minerals on a small scale before embarking on a €1m investment programme in specialist equipment that saw it begin full production in August 2013. The evaporation system used is extremely energy efficient, says Fitzpatrick. “We recycle the steam from the evaporation process to generate electricity and to heat our building. We also use the steam to heat the water that enters the evaporator from the sea.”

In addition to success in the pharmaceutical and personal care markets, Oriel Sea Salt is winning business in the food industry. The company recently signed a deal with O’Donnell Crisps, which is due to launch a crisp snack product flavoured with Oriel Sea Salt in the UK this March.
Dubai unveils ambitious 10-year healthcare plan

As part of a new 10-year strategy to meet healthcare needs, Dubai has announced plans to build three new medical colleges and five nursing schools. Launching the plan, Essa Al Maidoor, the director general of the Dubai Health Authority, said that the emirate will need 8,000 more beds, 7,323 more doctors and 8,510 nurses over the next decade.

Playing the green card wins UK kudos for Cork company

Cork company Cygnum's green credentials are currently in the limelight following its work on what is being billed as one of the UK’s most eco-friendly buildings. In 2013, Cygnum was asked to become involved in the construction of the University of East Anglia’s Enterprise Centre, a UK£8.5m timber-frame construction, designed according to 'Passivhaus' ultra-low-energy-use concepts.

The building has pioneered the use of locally grown Corsican pine for timber-frame construction – previously such pine would have been used for applications such as fence posts. Cygnum had to identify suitable pines for felling with the UK Forestry Commission and organise first-stage processing in the UK before the timber was transported to Ireland for kiln drying, planing and stress grading.

Cygnum also supplied a cellulose insulation manufactured from recycled newspaper, which was sourced from local schools to further reduce environmental impact and to provide a 'low embodied energy' alternative to standard insulation.

Cygnum's MD John Desmond describes it as the most challenging and rewarding building that he has worked on. “There were in excess of 3,000 numbered component parts supplied to be assembled on site like a 3D jigsaw. The requirement to achieve the Passivhaus standard in air-tightness levels, thermal bridging and insulation values is very onerous and requires huge attention to detail in design, in manufacturing and on site. It’s an exemplar low-carbon project, and the running costs will be minimal with little requirement for space heating.”

Established in 1997, Cygnum is a recognised market leader in timber frame construction in Ireland and has had a UK office since 2007. In 2011, the company successfully supplied the UK’s first school building in Wolverhampton, to conform to the Passivhaus ultra-low-energy standard, and since then, it has become a leading supplier of timber frame for large Passivhaus projects in Britain.

With a 5,000 sq m automated factory in Macroom, Cygnum currently employs 60 people, but Desmond expects that number to grow to 100 by the end of this year. “We are now the leading supplier of timber frame for large Passivhaus projects in the UK, and we have a substantial pipeline of business for the year ahead,” he told The Market. “We expect business to grow by more than 50 per cent in 2015.”

German Eco-Data Centre expert group visits Dublin

Enterprise Ireland, together with the German internet association, ECO, coordinated a data centre tour to Dublin by a sizeable group of German data centre industry players this March.

The event brought a group of over 50 Irish-German data centre industry representatives together for networking with some 15 Irish companies. The trip also included visits to data centre sites, including Ireland’s newest data centre by Digital Realty in Profile Park, the country’s first Tier III data centre. Participants also got to observe the manufacture of copper and fibre-optic cables in the CommScope Labs production plant.
Irish global hospitality network launched

Founded by Enda O’Coineen, the Irish Pubs Global Federation is a new not-for-profit network for owners and managers of Irish pubs worldwide. Speaking at its recent launch, Minister for the Diaspora, Jimmy Deenihan, TD, noted that the federation will provide an important platform for SME suppliers in Ireland’s hospitality sector to connect with the estimated 7,000 Irish pubs worldwide. “That connection will provide them with an opportunity to export their services, food and drink,” he added.

To date, organisations that have signed up as patrons of the new federation include Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia and Tourism Ireland together with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Eireann and several commercial concerns such as the Irish Dairy Board (Kerrygold), Alltech, Irish Distillers, Diageo (Guinness) and Kilcullen Kapital Partners.

Led by the newly appointed CEO John Byrne, the patrons are supporting a three-year plan and seven-year vision to build the Irish Pubs Global Federation Worldwide, to assist in the reinvention of the Irish pub as a link in with local communities and to develop Ireland’s position in the global hospitality industry as a place to source products and services.

“...the federation will provide an important platform for SME suppliers in Ireland’s hospitality sector to connect with the estimated 7,000 Irish pubs worldwide”.

ARI Wins Duty Free Concession at Auckland Airport

ARI (Aer Rianta International) has been selected by Auckland International Airport to operate one of two new duty free concessions at New Zealand’s largest international gateway.

The seven-year concession agreement, ARI’s first in the ANZ region, will cover 2,300 sq-m of retail space across arrival and departures areas, commencing in July 1, 2015. Among the concepts that helped ARI secure the win were a “Best of New Zealand and the World” retail offer and concept stores, the Whisky Collection and the Candy Cloud.

Shannon Foynes Port Company to upgrade facilities

Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC), Ireland’s largest bulk port company, has announced a series of projects to upgrade its port facilities on the Shannon Estuary. The first major project will be the infilling of the East Jetty in Foynes; a 12 month project designed to provide an increased operational area of activity and lead to improved bulk discharge times. The redevelopment will also allow the use of larger cranes that can handle more varied cargo. It is estimated that a total of €12 million will be spent by SFPC on this phase of the project in 2015.

European BioPharma Engineering and Construction Forum

Following success in 2014, the European BioPharmaceutical Engineering Partnering Forum in collaboration with ISPE Ireland will take place again in 2015. The event, on April 15 and 16, is intended to promote excellence in Irish biopharmaceutical engineering solutions to a pan-European audience of buyers and influencers. The first day will be devoted to a knowledge seminar and one-to-one partnering meetings, while on day two, the ISPE Ireland annual conference will be attended by Enterprise Ireland clients and buyers, and there will be a networking gala dinner in the evening.

Finance for Growth 2015 workshop series

Enterprise Ireland’s series of monthly Finance4Growth workshops for exporting SMEs will continue through 2015. The workshops, which take place in cities around the country, are geared towards those who work within the finance function of Enterprise Ireland client companies. Upcoming topics include implementing strategy throughout the company, attracting the right investors and project appraisal for innovation plans. For further details, visit the ‘events’ section at www.enterprise-ireland.com

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ANNOUNCING THE LAUNCH OF THE MULTI-MILLION EURO INVESTMENT PROGRAMME WERE SFPC CHAIRMAN, MICHAEL COLLINS; MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND TOURISM, PASCHAL DONOHUE AND SFPC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PAT KEATING.
Sod turned on Lakeland Dairies’ €36 million expansion

Lakeland Dairies Co-operative Society has commenced a €36 million investment in an expansion of milk powder processing operations at Bailieboro, Co. Cavan.

Lakeland Dairies processes over 800m litres of milk annually into a wide range of value-added dairy foodservice products and food ingredients, which it exports to over 70 countries worldwide.

Following the abolition of milk quotas later this year, annual milk supply to Lakeland Dairies is expected to increase by some 40 per cent to over one billion litres by 2020.

To match this expanded supply, the current expansion will see the installation of a new drying facility at Bailieboro. Lakeland currently produces 80,000 tonnes of milk powders a year, and this is set to rise to 130,000 tonnes on completion of the project in 2016. The investment is being supported by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation through Enterprise Ireland.

Money Point secures first Saudi contract

Four years of building good relations in Saudi Arabia have paid off for Irish company Money Point. Saudi-based ABANA Enterprise Group Company has signed a contract with Money Point to supply specialist cash management software for a new multibank cash centre in Riyadh—the first of its kind in the Kingdom.

ABANA intends to operate the multibank cash centre as a pilot project, and based on its success, the company is hoping to expand the network to other cities.

Founded in 1990 as a provider of cash-counting equipment, Money Point now has three divisions: hardware, software and consultancy.

“Initially, we investigated opportunities for selling software in the UK and Europe, but we soon learnt that the cash centres were dominated by the long-established larger players. We needed to look at more emerging markets where cash is favoured over electronic payments, so we looked at the African and Middle East markets and set up two international divisions to look after both regions,” he told The Market.

“Last October, we signed the contract in the embassy of Ireland in Riyadh with ABANA in Saudi in the presence of the Irish ambassador Tony Cotter and the EI Saudi market adviser Ikram Ur Rehman. That implicit Irish government endorsement of Money Point was important to our Saudi partnerships and supportive to Money Point. This contract is a very exciting venture for Money Point, and we are on target for the go live date in March this year.”

Australian Fire & Rescue goes for Gartan

Gartan Technologies, based in Letterkenny, has been awarded a major contract by Fire and Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW), one of the largest fire and rescue operations in the world. Gartan, which opened an office in Sydney in November 2014, develops specialised software that monitors the availability of personnel and helps them to manage their time.

The system from Gartan will help FRNSW ensure they have sufficient personnel available to respond to emergency callouts from 338 stations in New South Wales, a region larger than France and which responded to over 134,000 incidents in 2012/13.

Datalex software selected by Swiss International Air Lines

Datalex has been selected as a strategic technology partner to deliver a pricing innovation to Swiss International Air Lines. Software and services from the Dublin-headquartered plc is currently enabling a digital marketplace of over one billion shoppers, driven by many of the world’s largest and most profitable airline retailers.
Irish architectural practice Heneghan Peng is behind the design of two eagerly awaited museums, both important world firsts in their own ways. Mary Sweetman reports.

WORLD LEADING MUSEUMS, DESIGNED WITH AN IRISH ACCENT

Curious minds around the world are eagerly awaiting the opening of two museums of international significance, both designed by the Irish architectural practice Heneghan Peng. Very different in scope and vision, the two museums are both important world firsts in their own ways.

The Grand Egyptian Museum, outside Cairo, is grand in both its scale and setting. Described as the largest archaeological museum in the world, it is sited on 120 acres of land, just two kilometres from the legendary pyramids, where it will become part of an ambitious masterplan for the Giza plateau. For Egypt and the world, it will hold in trust a chronological statement of the country’s history over the past 7000 years, hosting more than 100,000 artefacts, about 3,500 of which belonged to King Tutankhamen.

Initiated by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, the open, international architectural design competition for the museum attracted what at that time was the largest number of entries of any such competition anywhere in the world. Heneghan Peng’s design won out from over 2,227 entries from 103 countries.

Heneghan Peng has also designed and is now an active partner in the build of the Palestinian Museum – another one of a kind, as the first museum to showcase Palestinian history, culture and contemporary life. Due to travel restrictions into and around Palestine, this museum cannot hope to attract the world to its doors in the same way as the Grand Egyptian Museum.

Instead, it has been conceived as a hub that will connect virtually with the Palestinian diaspora and international community around the world.

In 2013, the Economist named it among five of the world’s most fascinating new museums. Being built in two phases, the first 2,500 square metres are due to be completed in 2016.

Irish people who have toured the Giant’s Causeway Visitors’ Centre will already be familiar with Heneghan Peng’s work. Also close to home, the Irish practice designed the two permanent Central Park Bridges that have become part of the London Olympics legacy project as well as Greenwich University’s new library and School of Architecture and Construction, located along an approach from Greenwich Town to Greenwich Park, within the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site.

Elsewhere in the world, another prestige building designed by Heneghan Peng is set to open its doors in 2018. The Russian National Centre for Contemporary Art, backed by the Russian Federation Ministry of Culture and located in a prestigious Khodynskoye Pole site in Moscow, will set down another global marker for the Irish firm.

When asked about the company’s international success, director Roisin Heneghan simply says that first and foremost it’s about responding to the brief. “But,” she adds, “your design can’t be all things to all people, so once you have established the vision and direction, you must believe in it and stick to your guns.”

“Your design can’t be all things to all people, so once you have established the vision and direction, you must believe in it and stick to your guns.”
Irish manufacturer opens up a world of branding opportunities for independent cafés around Europe, and its next stop is the US. Mary Sweetman reports.

D
owning our morning brew from a neighbourhood café, most of us probably give our paper takeout cup less than a moment’s thought. But not so print industry veterans Hugh and Terry Fox. Back in 2008, when a client asked the father and son team to compare the costs having paper cups manufactured in China versus Europe, they were amazed to discover the poor level of service available to the café business. Back then, the lead time on a bespoke paper cup order was 10 to 16 weeks, and the minimum print run was 50,000, requiring an upfront investment only the larger café chains could afford. “Everyone else was using generic cups,” Terry recalls.

Applying ingenuity, research and decades of experience elsewhere in the industry, the pair brought about a minor revolution in the printing of paper cups, offering minimum orders of as few as 1,000 units in a turnaround time of just 15 days to anywhere in Europe. Suddenly, having its own uniquely branded takeout cup was within the reach of independent cafés everywhere on the continent. By putting their brand literally in the hands of their customers, cafés could have their name broadcast out in the streets, on to the underground and in the office. In 2010, Cup Print won the UK Café Society’s best new product award.

Cup Print was part of Enterprise Ireland’s Start-up Class of 2010. A German-language website helped the company to win the Best German Online Presence in the Irish Exporter to Germany awards 2012. This year, founder Terry Fox was named EY Entrepreneur of the Year in the Emerging Company category.

Today, Cup Print manufactures for independents anywhere in Europe where there’s a take-away café culture. The UK, Germany, Ireland and Scandinavia are its biggest markets. The UK’s largest cash and carry operator, Bookers Wholesale, offers its independent retail and coffee shop customers a seamless link-in to Cup Print’s manufacturing facilities. In the run up to the Christmas season, Cup Print has also bagged a deal to produce festive themed cups for Tchibo, a German chain of coffee retailers and cafés. Eighty per cent of the company’s turnover is now outside Ireland, and the O2 Shop, Porsche Bank, Food from Kew, Volvo, and Volkswagen are among the logos it has embossed on customers’ cups.

In France, where the trend for take-out coffees is just emerging, Cup Print is ready to launch, and the company has just confirmed a logistical strategy for the US, where an estimated 600 million cups of coffee are downed every year.

Last month, Cup Print printed 10 million cups, and the company is now offering customers a premium 8 day service as well as the standard 15-day turnaround. Set up in 2009 with seven people, the workforce at its plant in Ennis has grown to over 60 – all based on the dedicated execution of a simple idea. “We have given the market what it was looking for,” is how Terry Fox sums it up.
Growing interest in Irish art and design has potential to promote the country’s image in China. Mark Godfrey reports from Beijing.

MAJOR CHINESE ART DEALERSHIPS VISIT IRELAND

Possibly one of the most interesting presences at this January’s Showcase exhibition of craft and design in Dublin was a group of five Chinese buyers representing three major Chinese art dealerships. This, the first time that Chinese high-end art dealers and collectors joined Ireland’s largest art and design event, came about as a result of Enterprise Ireland China initially approaching the buyers and keeping in touch with them since 2014. While visiting the three-day show at the RDS, the visitors also had a meeting with Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCI) with a view to putting together an Irish craft and design brand for China.

Even as wealthy Chinese seek to buy luxury goods and décor, art has become a favourite asset class for wealthy Chinese seeking to collect but also to diversify their investments. Thus, China has become the world’s top market for art, with art purchases at auction by mainland Chinese buyers worth an estimated US$10 billion in 2014, according to data collected by the China Association of Auctioneers.

One of the firms visiting Showcase, Beijing Yiming Oriental Culture Media Co Ltd, was in Dublin keen on buying crafts, paintings and jewellery for six galleries the firm runs across China. Yiming has already purchased work by Irish artist Frank Clarke for one of the company’s Beijing galleries, according to company president Lian Yaokui.

Frank Clarke is also a favourite of one of the other buyers in Dublin: Li Qingming, president of Guo Tai Lu An (Beijing) Asset Management Co Ltd, which has three art centres and stores handling jewellery, paintings and designer houseware as well as luxury furniture. Having bought some of Clarke’s work, Li is now keen on Irish crystal and woolen wear. “I’m an entrepreneur, I have plenty of art collections. When I see art products I love, I never hesitate to purchase,” said Li. He will “definitely introduce” Irish arts and crafts to his customers and friends, who include “lots” of other entrepreneurs with a similar love for art collecting.

Another of the firms that travelled to Dublin, Beijing Hua Yi Bai Cheng Culture Media Co Ltd, has two art centres in Beijing’s wealthy villa belt, stocked with art, designer houseware and luxury goods. Company president Hong Xiaoguang, himself an artist, said he’s keen to purchase crafts, jewellery, paintings and fashion for his clients.

There’s a great opportunity in China for Irish craft and design, explains Paddy Sun, market advisor at Enterprise Ireland’s office in Beijing. He saw buyers from Yiming and other Chinese galleries charmed by a meeting with Irish president Michael D Higgins at an exhibition of Irish art in Beijing in December.

There’s also an education angle, said Sun, with art schools springing up in middle class Chinese suburbs. “The Chinese firms are very interested in cooperation on art training and education,” according to Sun. “Yiming Oriental and Huayibaicheng Ltd...have opened dozens of art training facilities in China. They wish to bring Chinese students to Ireland for art training and study. The model could be short-term training, formal college education and study tours. Enterprise Ireland and DCCI will investigate the condition and possibilities with those relevant art education units in Ireland.”

With education always in demand among China’s aspiring middle classes, Yiming boss Lian Yaokui wants to take Chinese painters to Ireland. Lian said he saw eight Chinese artists he took to Ireland in 2012 charmed by the landscapes and friendliness of the country. Lian wants to see an Irish art district or club set up in China to increase awareness of the country’s arts, crafts and design. Yiming also works with state media like China Central TV and China Radio International to produce educational programming about and with international artists: it has broadcast shows on Irish painter Frank Clarke’s art technique.

Due to the characteristic of high exposure of art and design in daily public life, the developments have potential to play an important role in promoting Ireland’s national and culture image in China, Sun believes.
**Spring/Summer Diary**

### APRIL

**MIPTV 2015**  
April 13-16  
Ireland on Screen, supported by Enterprise Ireland and Irish Film Board, will represent Irish TV producers and professional entertainment industry executives at Miptv.  
V: Cannes  
E: damien.mccarney@enterprise-ireland.com

**Customer Value Proposition**  
April 14  
Workshop programme designed to help you differentiate your organisation by the value you provide to your targets.  
V: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3  
E: claire.minogue@enterprise-ireland.com

**BioPharma Engineering and Construction Forum**  
April 15 - 16  
Promoting Irish excellence in biopharmaceutical engineering solutions to a pan-European audience of buyers and influencers.  
V: Dublin  
E: karen.hallez@enterprise-ireland.com

**IECHE Saudi Arabia**  
April 15  
Higher education fair to promote Ireland as a destination to scholarship and self-funded third level students.  
V: Riyadh  
E: terry.mcparland@enterprise-ireland.com

**Trade Mission to the Gulf States**  
April 19 - 23  
Trade mission to the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.  
V: Riyadh, Jeddah, Dubai, Doha, Abu Dhabi  
E: sean.davis@enterprise-ireland.com

**GHEDEX Oman**  
April 20  
Education in Ireland will host a number of institutions at the Global Higher Education Exhibition to promote Ireland as a destination to Omani third level students.  
V: Muscat  
E: terry.mcparland@enterprise-ireland.com

**World of Concrete Europe 2015**  
April 20  
Construction market study visit.  
V: Paris  
E: kelly.spillane@enterprise-ireland.com

**Interphex 2015**  
April 21  
Key US pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical manufacturing trade show of interest to clients in the engineering, process control, software, consumables and sub-supply sectors.  
V: New York  
E: ronan.kelly@enterprise-ireland.com

**Data Centre Event Finland**  
April 22  
One of the focuses will be on the new high-capacity data cable to connect Finland and Germany in 2015 and how that will attract international data centre investments to Finland.  
V: Helsinki  
E: karin.angus@enterprise-ireland.com

**Digital Marketing Strategy Workshop**  
April 22  
Programme is designed to help you create a digital marketing strategy for your company.  
V: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3  
E: monica.kinsella@enterprise-ireland.com

**UK Showcase for Advertising & Marketing Technology Companies**  
April 23  
Showcase of Irish technology, expertise and talent, plus latest advances and techniques, in digital advertising, design and marketing.  
V: London  
E: andy.carr@enterprise-ireland.com

### MAY

**Health IT USA**  
May 1  
Study visit for health IT companies.  
V: Boston  
E: ronan.kelly@enterprise-ireland.com

**Market Study Visit - African Healthcare Market**  
May 4 - 7  
Centred on the Africa Health Trade Fair.  
V: Johannesburg  
E: john.shiel@enterprise-ireland.com

**European Semiconductor Conference**  
May 7  
Half-day conference, providing insights on the current state of play in European semiconductor organisations. Senior executives and buyers will be invited to Ireland from semiconductor companies in Germany, Austria, France, the UK, Switzerland and Benelux.  
V: Dublin  
E: emer.obyrne@enterprise-ireland.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>UK Tendering Best Practice Workshops</td>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Series of workshops on how to tender, bid management and writing commercially successful bids.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benelux Construction and Engineering Trade Mission</td>
<td>May 12 - 13</td>
<td>Mission aimed at showcasing how Irish talent continues to innovate in the pharmaceutical, food and data centre and HR/employment areas.</td>
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<td>v: Brussels, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Amsterdam</td>
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<td>Investment, Fund Management and Compliance</td>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Financial services business event for funds, alternative investment and compliance clients.</td>
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<td>Buyer Visit: The Internet of Things</td>
<td>May 14</td>
<td>Invitation only event: selected clients with technology in the ‘Internet of Things’ space will be invited to meet a range of international buyers.</td>
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<td>Trade Mission to the Czech Republic and Poland</td>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>Mission will include networking events, with introductions to high-level business and government contacts, as well as individual meetings with local buyers.</td>
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<td>v: Warsaw and Prague</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smart Energy and M2M Solutions Market Study Visit to Poland</td>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>Opportunity for clients with offerings in the energy management, measurement and savings space to introduce their products and services to the Polish market.</td>
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<td>Nordic Banking Sector conference</td>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>Nordic banking sector conference and networking reception.</td>
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<td>Russian Showcase: Energy Efficiency Opportunities</td>
<td>June 7</td>
<td>Event to highlight opportunities for businesses to develop energy efficiency and sustainability.</td>
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<td>JUNE/JULY</td>
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<td>Baltic States Market Study Visit</td>
<td>June 7</td>
<td>Focused on opportunities in engineering, agricultural technologies, cleantech, production sub-supply and services and ICT.</td>
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<td>Digital Strategies for Overseas Markets</td>
<td>June 8</td>
<td>Event aimed at helping companies identify opportunities and build their project pipelines in the Greater China area via Hong Kong or Shanghai.</td>
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<td>Mystery Creek Fieldays, New Zealand</td>
<td>June 11</td>
<td>Enterprise Ireland will host an International Conference.</td>
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<td>Energy Efficiency Opportunities in Austria</td>
<td>June 23</td>
<td>Irish-Austrian partnering event on energy efficiency.</td>
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<td>Irish Visual Effects &amp; Film Industry UK</td>
<td>June 25</td>
<td>In conjunction with the ‘Design Ireland’ initiative, reception event aimed at bringing together the Irish film, Animation and VFX industry in one location.</td>
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BORN IN THE USA
Irish start-up neoSurgical has just signed an exclusive distribution deal for the US market. But, as founder and CEO Barry Russell explains, it has taken persistence and courage to get the company this far. Interview by John Stanley.

When neoSurgical was first poised to hit the US market, its team and products seemed to tick all the right boxes. “We knew the industry well and saw the opportunity in laparoscopic surgery for a new port closure device,” explains founder and CEO Barry Russell. “For the past 20 years or so, all closure devices have gone about the task in much the same way. But the market leader only had 15 per cent share, so we knew it was open to a new entrant. We also saw a very different way of doing it; one that requires less dexterity and experience. Young surgeons in training can use it without any difficulty – and that makes it a time-saving, game changer.”

PRODUCT POSITIONING
Sure enough, the basic concept was sound. But in finding the right position in the market, neoSurgical has learned a lot of lessons along the way. Russell reveals. That in itself is cause for thought, given the team’s enormous prior experience.

Russell himself is an engineer with both R&D and senior commercialisation experience, gained over 15 years working at a senior level for leading medtech companies. His handpicked executive team has similarly strong credentials, and the chairman, Pauric O’Grady, was MD of Johnson & Johnson in Ireland until his retirement in 2007.

In launching any new product, there’s a process to go through, Russell says. “Developing and protecting the IP, raising money and jumping the regulatory hurdles are just the beginning. Commercialisation is the most difficult piece of all. Large multinationals own the supply channels into hospitals across the globe, and they are consolidating all the time. To go up against that, no matter how good your product, is really difficult.”

PICKING A PATH
For any new medical device, the US is the best market to launch in, in Russell’s view. “Europe may be a big market of 300 million people, but there are huge language issues and different health service nuances to cope with in each country. In the US, you’re talking one price and one system.”

However, the challenges of obtaining FDA approval usually force most new medical devices to launch in Europe first. Fortunately for neoSurgical, even though neoClose is novel, it is sufficiently similar to devices already on the market in the US to skirt this problem.

The US market may be homogenous, but that does not make it easy. “In the US, you could sign-up with a big distributor – but do that and you’re left with no strategy and no leverage. If all goes well, that’s great. But any problems and you could be out in the cold, wondering where to turn next.”

Another possible option, quickly rejected, was putting in place a direct sales force. The cost of that in the US – €300,000 to €400,000 a person per year – is prohibitive, Russell says,
adding that a viable direct sales force requires a portfolio of more than one or two products.

So neoSurgical narrowed its list of options down to a couple of distributors and signed up with one of the smaller ones, fully intending to build its own network across the US.

TRIAL AND ERROR
“But with this kind of product, you simply cannot launch a beta version and tweak it as you go along,” Russell says. “After launch, we quickly got feedback from the market that, although it worked well if the surgeon had good technique, we really needed to change the delivery guide. We could either leave it as it was, a moderate product which would do OK, or we could take a step back and get it 100 per cent right.

“That was a hard decision to make mid-stream, after four or five years of hard work, but we took the view that the product deserved it, and we went back into redesign. It was a brave move at the time, but it took us less than five months to produce a redesigned product, including completing the FDA filing. That’s the advantage of small companies – and you do need that kind of agility to survive. When we brought the revised neoClose back to the market, the reaction was the difference between night and day, and we quickly received a lot of interest from corporates.”

Russell says the other mistake neoSurgical made was in its distribution strategy. “We had been advised to start small, launching in one state, one city or even just one hospital. ‘You don’t need to launch widely,’ we were told. ‘When you go widely, you go very shallow. Narrow and deep is best initially.’ But we had our own ideas.”

“With the relaunch, the big question was what route we were going to take this time. We went all the way to the altar with one of the very big distributors, but had we gone ahead with them, we would have been undervalued. With hindsight, they were simply trying to buy cash flow. Ultimately, deciding not to go that route was the best thing we could have done. Instead we decided that we needed to prove the product out in the marketplace and re-evaluate our strategy entirely. We also needed to raise more money, but what was our story for investors going to be on our go-to-market plans?”

NEXT MOVES
neoSurgical decided to stay small. “We ran a competitive process with a number of mid-tier players, ones where we’d be significant to them, in return for a national, exclusive deal. For close to four months, we ran through the process with four or five companies. We were assessing each other, looking at prices and margins.

The eventual winner, Symmetry Surgical Inc, was changing its business model at the time. That meant neoClose was going to be its lead product, positioning it as an innovator in the marketplace and helping to pull through its other products.”

neoSurgical already has a number of other IP ideas to bring to the market. “The trick is to boil one egg at a time,” Russell says. “The arrangement with Symmetry gives us both the confidence and the channel to start boiling the next egg.”

That in itself creates further tension. Should neoSurgical focus now on the next product or on launching its original one in more markets? “We will focus on neoClose in the US over the next six to nine months,” Russell says. After that, it will look at how best to move into Europe, Asia, Australia and Canada.

“Every week, we receive approaches from international distributors but we just won’t hand over to them to get international traction. We’re not prepared to make that move yet. We are going to stay focused on achieving success in the US, and that will give us options. Good logical, rational decision-making dictates that you cannot do too many things at one time. You simply don’t have infinite resources.”
Irish animation has well and truly come of age. But with industry veterans rolling out new partnerships, a bevy of bright-eyed next-generation start-ups on the scene and further market territories to conquer, this is an industry with plenty more scope to grow. Interviews by Tony Clayton-Lea.

WHAT NEXT FOR THE ENCHANTING WORLD OF IRISH ANIMATION?
This March, An Post launches a series of stamps celebrating Irish animation, underscoring the coming of age of what was once a specialist niche but is now truly an industry in its own right.

Animation created in Ireland is viewed in over 120 territories worldwide. Studios are working with some of the biggest names in global broadcasting—including Disney, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network and BBC—making animated series viewed by millions of children all over the world. And in recent years, Irish animation has been nominated for every major international award, including Academy Awards, BAFTAs, Emmys and Annies.

The latest in a long list of honours was this year’s Animated Feature Film Academy Awards nomination for Cartoon Saloon’s Song of the Sea. It’s the company’s second feting on the red carpet in Hollywood in less than a decade, following the nomination of Tomm Moore back in 2009 for The Secret of Kells.

Meanwhile, back at the studio, Cartoon Saloon is currently busy producing a new feature film The Breadwinner with the Canadian company Aircraft Pictures as well as working on a short film, Somewhere Down the Line.

The company is also active in the world of the small screen; its TV series Skunk Fu! has been broadcast in over 120 territories. And like other players on the Irish animation scene, Cartoon Saloon is growing its business by entering into partnerships with book publishers. Puffin Rock, due for broadcast with Nick Jr in the UK later this year, is an animated, cross-platform, preschool series Cartoon Saloon has developed in partnership with Dog Ears and Penguin.

VETERANS
Celebrating its 21st birthday, Brown Bag Films (BBF) is another industry veteran, with two Oscar nominations under its belt – Give Up Yer Aul Sins in 2002 and Granny O’Grimm’s Sleeping Beauty in 2010.

Now employing over 160 full-time staff, the company combines service work with in-house development and an increasing number of high-profile partnerships with the likes of Disney and Silvergate Media – a move that won it three Emmy awards in 2014 for Peter Rabbit as well as a host of BAFTA, Emmy, IFTA and Annie nominations for its hit shows Octonauts, Doc McStuffins, Bing and Henry Hugglemonster. The partnerships have also led to licensing and merchandising opportunities. For example, Henry Hugglemonster Disney toys launched in 2014.

Underscoring the movement of audiences online, one of BBF’s latest projects is a new animated series, The Stinky & Dirty Show, which received the greenlight from Amazon in February and is set to premiere exclusively to Amazon Prime members in the US, the UK and Germany in 2016.

“Taking creative risks and really pushing ourselves to produce innovative work was key to Brown Bag Films winning early contracts on high-profile shows,” recalls Jennie Stacey, Development Producer at BBF. “When pitching for our first CG animated television series, we made up for our lack of track record by winning over the client with a fresh creative approach to the source material.”

The strategic decision for the Dublin studio to focus solely on CG came in 2007. A recently opened studio in Manchester now looks after all the company’s 2D pipeline work, while Brown Bag has also opened an office in Los Angeles.

“Simultaneously,” Stacey explains, “we developed relationships with key international clients and broadcasters, building on our reputation in 2D series and short film production. We have always been export-focused, so time spent building these relationships is key, which means attending the international markets and travelling to key clients.

“We know we can never afford to stop pushing ourselves creatively and technologically,” she adds. “We need to be excited...
by the artistic challenges that every show presents. That's what ensures we retain the talented team who are central to our success.”

SPACE TO GROW
The need, then, to invest in developing a company’s own intellectual property and moving up the value chain is no different in animation from any other industry. But, as in any business, service work can easily dominate the studio, and development plans can wither under pressure of regular deadlines, as Director of Kavaleer Productions, Gary Timpson, explains.

Founded 13 years ago, the company combines work on commercials, apps and games with a portfolio of acclaimed shorts. And many of its co-produced, internationally syndicated hit TV series, (Boj, Wildernuts, Garth & Bev, Abadas and Lifeboat Luke) will be familiar to anyone who even casually tunes in to CBebbies (children’s BBC).

“The time it takes to shape a concept and raise the necessary finance is not in keeping with the day-to-day overheads and challenges of an average studio,” explains Timpson. “From a cash-flow standpoint, service work is obviously great and always welcome. But,” he adds, “it’s not as satisfying as coming up with an idea or assisting others via a co-production, and then financing it, producing and launching it across the world to millions of viewers.”

On this score, Timpson is upbeat about the new and user-friendlier Section 481 tax incentives. “The mechanism to securing the tax credit (of 32 per cent) is not that complicated, and the tax credit is now based on the cost of all cast and crew working in Ireland, regardless of nationality. There is also greater flexibility in the application process,” he says. “The obvious advantage is the level of interest it garners from external producers and financiers.”

In a nutshell, he puts the journey that the animation industry here in Ireland has made down to the quality and diversity of the concepts coming from the studios, the ever increasing standards of creative teams and the tenacity of the producers.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK
This need for tenacity is echoed by Meabh Tammemägi, a producer at Mooshku, who remembers her days in the early 1990s as European Account Coordinator at London-based Saatchi & Saatchi. Specifically, she recalls the company handbook (“a Saatchi bible, if you like”), that listed 50 ways in which an employee could attain not just success within the agency but in their own lives. “The one that has always stuck with me,” says Tammemägi, “was number 24: Remain Resolutely Positive. I’ve carried that with me through life. Perseverance and a positive attitude are an active choice. I don’t do ‘give up’.”

Mooshku, a “kid-focused” animated content company is one of a string of new kids on the block. And like the industry veterans, these new players are exploiting a whole range of opportunities to grow their business, from independent to collaborative productions, and from the world of TV to developing apps, games and eLearning products.

ONE TO WATCH
Having completed the adult animated documentary drama series, Tea with the Dead. Wiggleywoo, set up in 2012, is tipped as one to watch. The Dublin-based company is aiming to build a portfolio of commercial projects for “little and big kids worldwide”, with potential to work cross-platform and to generate licensing, merchandising and ancillary income. Animations currently in development include preschool projects, a feature film, an animated documentary drama series and numerous apps.

Others too are making cross-platform their mantra. Take Studio
POWWOW: current projects include Ship Antics, a trans-media comedy adventure for ages 6 to 12, an adventure game app on iOS and Android, a web and TV series and connected toys.

While the latest generation of start-ups might use the language of the tech industry to describe their products, like their predecessors, they are primarily motivated by creativity and a passion for what they do, insists Daniel Spencer, MD of Giant Animation Studios.

According to Spencer, his dream and that of his three co-founders was little more than to create amazing work. And although a number of reality checks may have punctured a few bubbles following the company launch in 2012, he insists that they haven’t stemmed the flow of creativity.

“Business is creative,” he affirms. “I may not be drawing every day anymore, but I am creatively putting together much larger productions, with much larger goals that, as individual artists, we couldn’t have achieved. Running Giant as a business stokes my creative passions and gets us closer to achieving our collective goals.”

The projects that receive the proverbial ‘green light’ with finances assured have to maintain the project’s core creative heartbeat in order to meet audience requirements, he adds, so that “on top of running a business, and securing a future vision for the company, we also have to create a passionate culture or environment”.

With that more mundane task of running a business, he says the company has had a helping hand from Enterprise Ireland. “We won Competitive Start funding, and it was Enterprise Ireland’s mentorship and networking that got us hitting milestones we were struggling to achieve because of not really having any formal legal/business training prior to starting the company.”

For now, it’s a case of watch this space, with a number of exciting projects currently in production, including Bobby Dazzler, a preschool action show; Creepers, a supernatural mystery series and TED-Ed, a series of short educational films.

JOURNEY NOT OVER YET

Others rising stars include Treehouse Republic, Sneaky Vegetables, Salty Dog Pictures and Pink Kong Studios. The number of SMEs in the sector has doubled over the past ten years.

“Enterprise Ireland is working to promote further growth within the industry, helping Irish animators to innovate and grow their businesses globally, develop new technologies and invest in leadership capability. One of our key focuses is supporting more start-ups, working with promoters through management development programmes and Competitive Start and female entrepreneurship funding,” says Eileen Bell, a digital media and content development adviser with Enterprise Ireland.

Meanwhile, among existing players there is a high level of R&D activity, investment in cloud and agile technologies, technically sophisticated 2D and 3D production facilities, continuous upskilling and a culture of keeping abreast of the latest technology. At the same time, companies are investing in strategic leadership, and several are Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year finalists.

“One of the really nice things about this industry is the level of social responsibility and business ethics,” Bell adds. “Companies dedicate expertise and time facilitating children’s creativity, supporting charities, mentoring youth capability and showcasing young talent.”

Within the industry, there is excitement about the reinvigoration of the Irish chapter of Women in Animation International, led by the CEO of Salty Dog Pictures, Deirdre Barry, and the potential for it to forge powerful links between Irish companies and women right at the very top of the animation industry globally. Meabh Tammemägi says that the group actively encourages more women into creative roles, helping to carve a path for new Irish talent. “We run regular networking events and are all about women connecting with the industry as a whole, including animation, VFX, gaming.”

Meanwhile, animators are also upbeat about John Rice the CEO of Jam Media having been appointed to the board of the Irish Film Board in 2013.

It’s also a sector that works together to help itself. With help from Enterprise Ireland, the industry has created its own CEO Forum. Back in 2008, the forum developed Animation Ireland as an umbrella brand to encourage the international positioning of Ireland as a leading centre for animation. Companies also partner through Animation Skillnet – an industry-led training network – and The Bridge an initiative aimed at coaching “Industry Ready” new participants.

So although it may seem like Irish animation has reached a pinnacle, it is more likely that we will look back and see that this was merely a plateau on the journey.
North America and the UK are key markets for Irish animation. But could Asia represent the next frontier, unleashing a new vein of as-yet untapped potential?

Report by Enterprise Ireland staff in Singapore and Japan.

**ASIA THE NEXT FRONTIER FOR IRISH ANIMATION?**

The landscape for animation collaboration in Asia is changing as major economic shifts merge with evolving technological capability. The strength of the licensing and merchandising market is growing as Asians gets richer. Companies are now looking to create their own intellectual property.

In the past, Western companies were only here to look for outsource partners; now they are looking for investments and co-production partners.

Attendance profiles from Asia’s leading entertainment content market – Asia TV Forum (ATF) – underscore the possible opportunities for Irish animators. Some 94 per cent of buyers at ATF 2014 were from Asia, while only 21 per cent of content presenters were from Europe.

Figures presented at ATF also reveal that average daily TV consumption by Asian kids is 2 hours and 32 mins, ahead of that in Europe and Australia. And in Asia, animation is a firm favourite among children (85 per cent), compared with other genres; only 9 per cent of Asian kids favour factual programming (e.g. news, current affairs and documentary content) and just 6 per cent favour live action (e.g. sports and physical games content).

**CHINA** In China, the animation industry is often referred to in its broader sense of AGC (animation/games/comics). In a country with a population of 1.3 billion, of which 27 per cent are under the age of 20, there is already a sizeable children’s market. Kid’s publications are valued at €1.2bn, children’s food €4bn, toys €2.5bn and children’s clothing €10bn.

A relaxing of the one-child policy is likely to mean a growing young population in the next five years, and the animation sector looks set to benefit from a number of drivers, including growth in smart phone penetration, stimulating demand for online content, and government support for the sector.

Not surprisingly, then, the domestic movie industry is starting to pay attention to animation: Chinese banks are lending to the sector; and value-chain integration is occurring as the toys, clothing and food sectors are increasingly using cartoon characters for marketing.

Despite structural change in the industry, it is likely to require international collaboration to fully exploit opportunities, given the local market preference for foreign productions and a lack of experience in entering international markets.

There are significant challenges for outsiders, including Government approval being required for all imported animation TV programmes; quotas for foreign movies and a ban on foreign productions being aired during prime time. IP infringement, while improving, has not completely gone way. The profit model relies on auxiliary sources of income (in contrast to the usual licensing model) and, of course, there are cultural and taste differences.

Nevertheless, major US players see potential. DreamWorks is building a production studio in Shanghai; Disney is partnering with Tencent to develop animation content; and Hasbro is partnering with Guangdong Alpha Animation for merchandising design.

**JAPAN** In contrast to China, the animation sector in Japan is very mature and diversified. When addressing the market here, the overseas movie giants attempt to embrace local cultural aspects. Take, for example, Warner Brothers’ *Puella Magi Madoka Magica*, *We Still Don’t Know the Name of the Flower We Saw That Day* and *Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure*.

Likewise, NBC Universal Entertainment Japan is very active in producing films based on Japanese games and light novels, and Disney’s current movie release *Big Hero 6* uses a lot of Japanese motifs.

As elsewhere, recent industry trends include integration with online gaming and social gaming. Increasing online broadcasting ‘fun animation’ is targeting adults (*NARUTO* or *One Piece*), as opposed to ‘the kids/family’ segment, which is generating on-demand premium programmes.

Other trends include the rise in popularity of animation songs in the music industry and the re-working of well-known animation productions as live action films with actors.

The Japanese Government is very active in promoting the content industry and has created a national Cool Japan Fund (www.cj-fund.co.jp/en). The Japanese are well accustomed to paying for digital content and are the number-one spenders worldwide in on-line gaming, representing half of all global spending.

Japan has a long and unique animation history, with a number of studios and stakeholders complexly intertwined. The potential for overseas firms is likely to be in identifying unique areas that could add value to the traditional business model, for example, a collaborative approach with the gaming industry or animation content to attract adults.

*Enterprise Ireland animation industry contacts in Asia: Juliyanah Jalil for the ASEAN market, Lawrence Lee for the Chinese market and Reiko Hiruma for Japan.*
Getting your distributor strategy right involves that classical combination of gut instincts and a structured, clinical approach to evaluating alternatives. For the benefit of those who rely a little too much on their gut, John Stanley asked exporters at different stages of company maturity for their theories on the cold science.
Distribution is all about finding the right partner,” says Ronan Clarke, founder of Smarter Surfaces. “Your distribution partners don’t necessarily need to be the largest, but they should be leaders in your market sector. What you’re looking for is the right fit – and that includes buy-in to your product throughout their organisation, not just at the top.”

The company started out in life as Smart Wall Paint when it launched its first award-winning whiteboard product at the end of 2011. It has since rebranded to reflect the growth in its product range.

“We began with a strong online presence in the UK, then the US, Canada and Australia. Within a year, we were receiving enquiries from distributors. We got it wrong a couple of times early on and discovered that it takes time to reverse out. Fortunately, we learned early while we were still small and we’ve become good at identifying partners we can work with.”

James Murphy, who founded the Galway-based international healthcare sales and marketing company Lifes2Good Group, has also learned how to cope with distribution difficulties. “I’ve opened and closed markets. Often you can get carried away and think you’re going to set the world on fire,” he says.

Like Clarke, Murphy is quite candid about having made some mistakes along the way. “Turkey is a fabulous market of 80 million people, which is growing fast. But although we did our research, the plans we made did not materialise. Our problem was with price points; there were too many people in the loop, and we also experienced slow payments. We were probably in that market too early.”

Lifes2Good also went into and exited Mexico. In both cases, the time between entry and exit was around 12 to 15 months. Murphy’s advice: “Nobody wants to fail, but if you’re going to, fail fast ... Ultimately, we didn’t get enough information, and we had to learn too many things as we went along.”

CULTURAL AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES
Smarter Surfaces’ MD also recognises how important it is to understand the cultural and legal differences between markets. “You have to be flexible to the local markets and in some cases that means simply accepting that this one is not for us,” Clarke says.

He’s also adamant about the value of having a truly multilingual team. “Language skills are a very important part of our business,” he says. This is an issue also identified by Richard Gladney, a successful agent for a number of years who then worked as International Sales Manager for a building energy control systems company before setting up his own company, Mr. Vent, a supplier of a wide range of ventilation equipment. Its contracts range from the London Olympic Stadium to hospitals, factories, retail stores, museums and even the National Library of Qatar.
“You have to be flexible to the local markets and in some cases that means simply accepting that this one is not for us.”

“It’s important not only to ensure that the principals from your agency speak English – or that at least you share a common language – but also that there’s a common language at every level in the two companies. For example, if there is a query about an invoice, the people in both accounts departments need to be able to communicate quickly and without any misunderstanding. The same goes for technical queries between your engineers and your distributor’s sales people. At every level, you want to ensure there’s no language barrier.”

Gladney is also mindful of the differences in regulatory requirements between countries. “You may think you know all there is to know about your product and how it can be marketed or installed, but assume nothing and check everything. There are differences in every country and you have to be aware of them at the outset.”

James Murphy agrees completely. Lifes2Good’s products are treated as medical in some markets and nutritional in others and he is acutely aware of the widely differing regulatory challenges that each national market can present – and the huge delays they can cause.

Murphy started with direct sales in Ireland, then in the UK and then in the US and Canada. “It is easiest to start in English speaking markets,” he says. “Then go into markets that are similar in terms of structure, which for us was Spain and Portugal.” The company is currently represented through distributors in eight markets and continuing to expand.

Like many others, Murphy is also a great believer in not expecting a distributor to do everything. Lifes2Good takes full responsibility for its own product marketing, for example, using its distribution partners for on-the-ground sales.

DEVELOP A STRATEGY

Over his career Jonathan McMillan, now manager in Enterprise Ireland’s New York office, has helped many hundreds of Irish companies of all sizes develop distribution channels in England, Scotland, Germany and the US. He identifies two big challenges in breaking into a new market: recruiting good sales people and managing the relationship with distributors, agents or value added resellers.

He says people have to be clear about the steps. First, they need to develop a complete strategy. “Identify what’s normal in that market. What do your competitors do, what do they charge? You must do the research and start with a proper plan. Only then should you start looking for a distributor to help you realise it.”

Finding, bringing on board and managing a distributor is something we Irish tend to fall down on, particularly SMEs,” he says. “I often hear Irish clients saying ‘just put me in front of the customer and I’ll make the sale.’ And that’s a big part of the problem; we’re just not used to trusting other people to do that for us.”

To identify the right distribution partner, McMillan suggests potential exporters start with a long list of potential distributors – then
undertake research and shorten it. “The good distributors are probably too busy to talk to you. You have to sell to them, convince them that they should talk to you.”

This is where a short, one or two page, partner value proposition – a clearly defined set of messages – comes in. Typically, this defines the market opportunity for the partner, aligns company messages to the potential partner’s strategic objectives, provides evidence that this proposal represents a “low-risk engagement” and outlines why the partnership is going to work. “Failure to take this approach means the Irish company may well end up talking to many people – but invariably the wrong ones,” McMillan says.

He suggests that a lot comes down to that delicate balance between finding a distributor who is big enough to open the right doors and can provide instant “reach” and one who, at the end of the day, has bigger fish to fry.

As soon as an exporter and a distributor are serious about doing business together, they should develop a detailed market and sales plan, McMillan urges. “You need a joint plan and a signed-off contract that sets out exactly what they are going to do, including the rewards for success and the penalties for failure. That’s what the best-in-class exporters do. They are very focused and they are very organised. I think engineers can be really good at this work,” he adds. “It’s all about process, and they have the mindset to make channels really work.”

GET THE PRICE RIGHT

Pricing is another extremely important issue that frequently does not receive the attention it should, McMillan says. “Hard to believe, but so many companies don’t work out their pricing properly. Take somebody selling a machine in the UK, for example, at £50,000. They may well decide they’ll settle for $75,000 in the US. But the cost of doing business here is very high, and they may quickly find that they have no margin worth talking about, if any. But if they do the research properly, they could well find that with the same product, properly sold, they could realise $150,000 here in New York. So you need to spend time doing the research, building the foundations.”

McMillan is well used to hearing Irish exporters groan when he tells them this. “They say ‘That’s OK if you’re Volvo or Caterpillar, but if we try to go in to a distributor with those demands, they’ll simply laugh at us.’ But that isn’t true, he insists. “You may well end up compromising on the terms, but at least you’ve had that serious conversation, and it shows you are serious about your business. They will respect your professionalism.”

Lifes2Good’s CEO, James Murphy has a final word of caution for exporters eyeing up potential distribution partners in new markets. “It is really important,” he says, “to do your calculations based on complete information, taking all costs into account. If you are not careful the numbers will always tell you what you want to see, you really have to be very aware of that.”
Germany might be a slow-burn market for healthcare solutions. But as the health ministry considers joining the dots, making reimbursement possible for connected health solutions, Anthony King spoke to some of the Irish companies planning to attend ConhIT in Berlin this April.

IT-FOR-HEALTH
Prognosis good but patience needed

Germany is one of the three big spenders in Europe in terms of healthcare, standing alongside the UK and France. It’s a market with a particularly challenging health insurance and reimbursement model. But market specialist Michael Heinlein says changes are afoot that may make it an increasingly attractive destination for companies offering health IT and connected health solutions.

Currently, there are well over 100 compulsory health insurance companies in Germany, all competing against one another; about 90 per cent of the German population is insured by one of these companies. The remaining 10 per cent are privately insured. Reimbursement proceeds according to strict rules as laid out in a service catalogue, a DRG (diagnosed related group). “This is all quite unique in Europe and really difficult to explain to anyone outside Germany. We Germans struggle to understand it ourselves,” says Heinlein.

Connected health has struggled to make it onto the catalogue as the market is siloed into primary care, acute care and so on. “Right now, there is no way to get reimbursement for telemedicine services, but this is a time of change,” he explains. Hospitals are convinced that telemedicine will have a positive impact on patient treatment. More significantly, draft proposals are on the health ministry’s desk that could culminate in an ‘e-Health law’.

“From next year, there may be a plan in place for reimbursements of such services. That would be a big change – a big opportunity for companies coming from abroad that already have e-health or m-health solutions,” says Heinlein.

IRISH ALREADY IN THE MARKET

Irish companies already in the market include the S3 Group, which works with medical device vendors in Germany and pharma companies in both Germany and over the border in Switzerland. “Innovative pharma and medical device vendors are positioning themselves for a future that is connected,” agrees S3’s business development manager Diarmuid Quinn.

“Imagine how healthcare will look in 20 years’ time. Is it going to be delivered as it is now in an episodic, reactive manner? Or is there going to be more care coordination and a situation where patients are active participants in their own health?”

Other Irish participants in Germany include Silvercloud Health, which formed a strategic partnership last year with AnyCare GmbH, and Shimmer Sensing.

Shimmer provides wearable sensor systems, of clinical grade, allowing data to be captured and communicated. The device is described as a best-in-class vehicle for data capture that is robust, unobtrusive and ready to use right away. “The data received from Shimmer is open and configurable,” explains the company’s marketing manager Martina Donohue.
Shimmer’s core markets are the US, the UK and Ireland, but it is expanding in Europe. “The German market is much more decentralised than most markets. Traction has been slow and steady,” Donohue says. “Preparing for and understanding the market and making sure the value you are offering is what the market needs are very important.”

REFERENCE SITE
Having a reference site in Germany itself is another prerequisite, according to Heinlein. “You need to find a partner for your first reference site, a partner willing to support you as a company in the market, perhaps with communication, for example.” He adds that you will also need a partner to help you serve the market, at minimum providing after-sales maintenance, since German buyers expect top-notch aftercare.

“When you come over to the German market, the big thing everybody will ask you, or try to figure out, is whether your company is taking the challenge seriously. It is simply not worth it for a hospital to have a solution installed and then find out, six months later, that the company has decided to pull out. It’s best to meet face-to-face and talk directly to potential users and customers, and figure out what their needs are. Then you have to convince people that you are taking this move to the German market seriously.”

This point is echoed by Orla Hughes, Enterprise Ireland’s market executive for Germany, Austria and Switzerland. She has seen Irish companies back off when they realise that a quick deal is not possible, so she stresses the importance of approaching the market in the right frame of mind from the get-go. “People play a really important role and having someone in the company who is a key point of contact is important. Once you’ve gained trust, things progress.”

LINING UP FOR GERMAN SUCCESS
Irish company Lincor Solutions clearly expects that the time invested in this market will yield a healthy return. The company’s server-based solution enables hospital and residential-care facilities to provide services to patients and hospital staff at the bedside, either through smart bedside terminals, on mobile devices or through an existing television. “We offer access to information for clinicians, nurses and even the housekeeping staff. Once we put a networked device into the bedroom, our LINC software delivers real-time access to applications that traditionally sat in the back offices,” explains sales manager John Logan.

Commenting on the company’s European strategy, Logan told The Market: “We continue to see growth in the Netherlands, the UK and France, and we recently signed our first business in the Nordics, but we really want to get to grips with the DACH [Germany, Austria, Switzerland] region. We see Germany as the sleeping giant.

“We have over 30,000 bedside deployed across the world, and our reliable, stable platform can satisfy the conservative nature of the German procurement model while delivering cutting-edge benefits. This is a market on the cusp of being huge for us.”

The Lincor system allows for quicker decision-making and medically improved outcomes. “The hospitals understand it and can see the value in it,” Logan says. “But”, he adds, “there is a huge change management programme that has to happen within a hospital to allow clinicians to change their workflow.” In some hospitals, nursing staff might use a clipboard or have paper-based records or only access electronic medical records at the nurse station.

INVESTMENT PAYS OFF
A further complexity, of a more cultural nature, arose when targeting the DACH region. Lincor’s promotion messaging includes the tagline ‘patient engagement’ – a term which doesn’t really have any resonance in the German language.

The company had developed a German website and localised its software, but after difficulties getting the ‘patient engagement’ tag across, Lincor also hired a local go-to-market consultant.

The investment paid off, with the company recently signing a contract to provide a tailored hardware and software solution for a private Swiss hospital, Clinica Hildebrand.

Logan says that there was a great deal of consultation and subsequent custom engineering with Clinica Hildebrand as well as a lot of Swiss intricacies in terms of the complex insurance billing matrix used. “We managed to engage with them quite early on and undertook a complex requirements-gathering exercise with full buy-in. There was a lot of exchange between our technical teams,” he adds. The result was the largest professional services contract Lincor had ever signed.

“Their primary driver is that they want a solution that fits exactly with their requirements,”
Logan says. “That is something true not just in Switzerland, but in Austria and Germany as well. Secondary to that is when can you deliver it, and, almost always, in last place is what kind of commercial agreement can we make. They still want a good commercial outcome, but you’ll only have that conversation in detail if your offering matches their exact and exacting requirements.”

SLOW BURN
The company is now eyeing a number of prospective clients elsewhere in the region, but Logan is aware that the Swiss reference won’t suffice in Germany; only a local reference will convince customers. “In the first half of 2015, we will be massively chasing that first win in Germany,” he says.

“The expectation from our side has been that we can jump into a market and start working with customers straight away, which we’ve done elsewhere after localising the message. This market, in general, needs a more studied approach, and it’s inevitable that it is going to be a little more long-term. But we are betting that having gone through the process of putting the infrastructure in place to do business in the DACH region, it will stand to us in coming years.”

Part of Logan’s confidence stems from Lincor having something unique to bring to the table. “A lot of our German competitors are delivering services over co-ax [cable], an analogue system that is totally outdated. They focus on patient entertainment. We deploy a fully IP-based system and focus on providing world-class software integration and delivering a suite of entertainment, information and clinical applications to patients and clinicians alike.”

CONHIT, BERLIN
Lincor will be one of a number of Irish companies participating in an Enterprise Ireland study visit to the ConhIT Industrial Fair & Congress in Berlin this April. The event, billed as the most important for health IT in Europe, will showcase IT solutions for healthcare and bring together manufacturers, policy-makers and users.

Hughes says that while ConhIT would be dwarfed by the sprawling annual Medica conference in November, it is quite niche and targeted purely at the IT-for-health industry. “It’s an ideal show, not too large, and you can reach a lot of interesting people,” she adds.

Heinlein, who has been facilitating workshops for Irish companies prior to ConhIT, agrees. “It’s really worthwhile to sit down in the congress area and listen to what solutions are important from the users’ point of view. I recommend people to go over and walk the floor of the conference. This is sufficient for a first approach. It is not necessary to get a booth, just to get an impression of the market.”

For further information about ConhIT and about the IT for healthcare market in Germany, contact orla.huges@enterprise-ireland.com
In advance of the first Arab-Irish Business Forum in Dublin this March, keynote speaker Galway-born Colm McLoughlin recounts his journey to becoming executive vice-chairman of duty-free retail at the world’s busiest international airport. Interview by Fiona Reddan.
It’s a $2 billion business, based in the busiest international airport in the world, with 6,000 employees and 27 million transactions every year. And it has its origins in Shannon, Co. Clare.

Back in 1983, influenced by the success of the Shannon Duty Free shop at Shannon Airport, the first and oldest duty free in the world, the Dubai government approached Aer Rianta for consultancy services.

“The civil aviation airport in Dubai wanted to make a proper duty-free airport and had read that the industry started in Shannon airport. Out of that arose the contract,” recalls Galway-born Colm McLoughlin. The deal involved a six-month contract, and McLoughlin and nine other people flew out from Ireland to set it up.

Following the successful launch, McLoughlin was offered the chance to stay on as general manager of the start-up operation. But although he arrived in Dubai on a two-year contract, McLoughlin never went home. “I didn’t know it would go beyond two years, but it’s been great fun,” he says. Today McLoughlin is executive vice-chairman of an operation that has expanded beyond what must have been his wildest dreams.

Although the Gulf’s airline giants were only fledglings at the time of the duty free launch – Emirates, in fact, only launched in 1985 – the duty free has been well placed to benefit from the enormous growth the region has seen. “The whole place of Dubai has changed in the same way as the population has grown. It has become more westernised, and the business has grown considerably,” notes McLoughlin.

Back in 1983, traffic at the airport was just 3 million, but last year, it topped 70 million, ousting London’s Heathrow Airport from the top spot as the busiest international airport in the world. Unsurprisingly then, duty-free sales have enjoyed a similar trajectory. From sales of just $20 million and employees of 100 back in 1983, Dubai Duty Free breached the $2 billion mark in 2014, and, in December, a new monthly sales record of $205 million was set. To put Dubai’s sales figures in context, in 2013 Dublin and Cork airports recorded combined retail sales of €214 million.

“To do that, we sold 98 million pieces of merchandise last year and had 27 million transactions on our registers,” notes McLoughlin. “We have customers from everywhere. A lot of business is Asian. We’ve seen a big increase in Chinese traffic through here; it accounts for about 12 per cent of business, and we’re seeing a continuing increase in African traffic.” The duty-free operation now employs 6,000 staff from 49 countries.

Perfume is the outlet’s biggest seller, accounting for a staggering $314 million in annual sales. When it comes to brands, Chanel is the top seller – an insight into the kind of money passing through the airport – followed by Johnnie Walker, Marlboro and Apple. The duty-free also sells its own range of merchandise, under the Akaru brand, the Japanese word for wellbeing. And the growth is not going to stop there. This year, Dubai Duty Free will open a new 7,000 sq-m retail space on 1 June.

All 28,000 sq-ft of retail space is managed by Dubai Duty Free, which is the sole concessionaire for all retail at the airport. “It’s a Government edict that Dubai Duty Free does all the retail,” says McLoughlin, adding that the profits from the business are then reinvested in building infrastructure at the airport, which is also on course to see further expansion. Recent developments include the world’s first and largest purpose-built A380 facility, Concourse A, opened in 2013. And the operation is on course to deliver a US$7.8 billion 2020 expansion plan. This includes Concourse D, a state-of-the-art facility for international airlines, the expansion of Terminal 2, and the complete refurbishment of Terminal 1.

While, for McLoughlin, it has been a tale of phenomenal growth, there have been challenges along the way. “We had to learn about passengers; learn how to source merchandise; about local distributors; and how to deal with staff from 49 different countries,” he recalls.

Dubai has been good to him, and the Irish connection is still strong at the airport. Although Aer Rianta’s contract with the Dubai Government may have only lasted for six months, the Irish connection didn’t end there. Three of the original 10 who flew out stayed on in Dubai, and the duty-free continues to employ a number of Irish staff. Not only that, but it also owns the Irish Village, a bar and restaurant complex, and sponsors the Irish Derby at The Curragh in Kildare.

While McLoughlin does see a time when he will spend half the year at home in Ireland, he intends to be in Dubai for the other six months. “There’s great freedom,” he says. And with the thermometer showing 30 degrees Celsius in February, the weather isn’t bad during winter either.
A panellist for the forthcoming Arab-Irish Business Forum, chairman and CEO of Glen Dimplex, Sean O’Driscoll, explains why the company has established a joint venture in the UAE. Interview by Fiona Reddan.
With a population of more than 40 million, it’s not surprising that a company of the scale of Glen Dimplex would be keen to gain not just a foothold in this burgeoning market, but a very real presence.

The Dublin-headquartered heating and electrical appliances manufacturer, which was founded in 1970, has been selling into the region for quite some time. Initially, it established relationships with distributors in the region, who then sold on their brands including Dimplex and Xpelair.

“They would have had very long relationships with our brands, and would have been very protective of them,” says Sean O’Driscoll, chairman and CEO of Glen Dimplex.

At the time, sales in the region would have been of the order of about €6 to €7 million, so not significant in the context of a business with a €2bn turnover. But the company was quick to spot the potential. “We recognised that we were effectively not investing enough time in developing the markets,” says O’Driscoll, adding “so eight years ago, we decided we needed to be more proactive.”

The result was the opening of an office in Dubai, staffed with two people. But then the financial crisis hit, and the feeling was that it wasn't possible to build up a presence with just two people on the ground. “As soon as the crisis passed through, we realised that we needed to do it very, very differently,” O’Driscoll recalls. One option for Glen Dimplex would have been to go down the acquisition road and acquire a company. But it was difficult to find a target. Instead the company decided to pursue a joint venture.

“Contacts are incredibly important – old relationships, family relationships. A lot of business is done from family to family business, and they remain incredibly loyal to one another,” O’Driscoll says. So Glen Dimplex made a concerted effort to find a partner who could provide the operation with these vital local contacts, a process that led them to Kingston Holdings. Founded in 1996, Kingston is a significant distributor of electronics/electrical distribution systems, headquartered in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

The new company, which employs 12, is called Xpelair Middle East, and it’s easy to see why this, rather than the Dimplex brand, was used. “Dimplex is a heating name; Xpelair is in the ventilation/heat recovery business,” says O’Driscoll. Indeed with summer temperatures that can exceed 40 degrees Celsius, heating systems are not something the Gulf countries will be buying.

But this doesn’t mean that Glen Dimplex won't be selling fires in the region. According to O’Driscoll, the new joint venture will also sell Morphy Richards domestic appliances, as well as Dimplex electric fire technology. The fires will not be marketed for heating, but for an interior design effect as a focal point within a room.

Xpelair Middle East has now been up and running for two years. The relationship got off on a firm footing, with Glen Dimplex happy to delegate the responsibility of setting it up to Kingston. Unlike other joint ventures, there is no termination date; it is an open-ended arrangement between the two companies.

“We will hopefully continue into perpetuity,” O’Driscoll says.

In addition to maintaining and respecting its existing distribution relationships, Glen Dimplex is hoping that the joint venture will lead to other opportunities. The business is forecasting year-on-year growth of 30 per cent, and O’Driscoll says he expects revenue to grow from four to five fold within the next five years, contributing in the low single digits to Glen Dimplex’s overall sales.

Establishing a presence in the Gulf region has taken Glen Dimplex time and effort. Of the Arab world, O’Driscoll says: “I would tell people that it’s not a homogenous region, and that you should be open to the differences,” he says. “The markets are very different; people think all the countries within the Middle East are the same, but it’s no different to Europe. We think from a distance that they are all the same, but they all have their own cultures, families and relationships.”
Most of us who fly Asian airlines won’t be aware that on board, we’re likely walking on carpets and sitting on seats woven by an Irish firm. Dublin-based Botany Weaving is one of a trio of specialised firms globally with the capacity and certification to provide textiles (carpets, curtains, seat coverings) for the world’s passenger aircraft.

Approved by Airbus and Boeing, the company supplies airlines across Asia – the continent accounts for 60 per cent of its market, explains marketing director David Avery. Expansion of fleets in the region means he’s visiting clients there every two weeks, with Vietnam Air one of his newest clients. “Asia is where the growth is and will be,” he explains.

GROWING OPPORTUNITIES
Botany is one of numerous Irish firms capitalising on a growing aviation market in Asia. Within the continent, one of the fastest growing markets for aviation services is the sprawling Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc. It’s made up of growing economies like the sprawling archipelagos of Indonesia and the Philippines; manufacturing-focused Vietnam and Singapore, which acts as a financial and legal services hub for the region, and the tourist mecca of Thailand.

Driving the region’s aviation market is the expansion of the middle class on the back of rising incomes. Asia’s middle class stands at 525 million but this figure is set to rise to 1.75 billion in 2020, points out Peter Bagnell, quality manager at Irish aircraft engineering services firm Aero Inspection. “By 2030, Asia will represent 66 per cent of the global middle class population,” notes Bagnell.

Aero Inspection services clients across the region from an office in Singapore. The city-state was the destination recently for a sizeable delegation of Irish aviation firms, which attended the giant Aviation Festival Asia, a gathering of 2,000 executives from major airlines and airport operators in the region. Enterprise Ireland’s Singapore office helped arrange one-to-one business meetings for Irish attendees and a roundtable discussion showcasing Irish aviation expertise.

Huge investment in airports and aircraft and the aviation services sector have become drivers of ASEAN economies, explains Smruti Inamdar, ASEAN director at Enterprise Ireland.
“Its [aviation] economic footprint is far and wide, spanning airlines, ground infrastructure as well as manufacturing of aircraft parts and hospitality equipment. There are also opportunities in soft services such as ticketing, catering, in-flight entertainment and retail...”

Indeed the figures for aviation expansion in the ASEAN region are astounding. Airlines from the Asian Pacific region will take delivery of 12,470 new aircraft with 100-plus seats worth US$2 trillion over the next 20 years, according to Sean Lee, head of communications for Asia at the aircraft maker Airbus. Notably, the region will account for a half of world demand in mid-size and very large jets. Within Asia, the ASEAN region is experiencing annual growth in passenger numbers in excess of the regional average of 5.7 per cent, with double-digit growth figures in some countries “reflecting economic growth and an increasing propensity to fly”.

Much of the growth in passenger numbers has been facilitated by the rise of local low-cost carriers. These together have a 58 per cent share of the total seats sold each year in ASEAN, according to Lee.

**GEOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC DRIVERS**

The region’s growing population and geography are also particular drivers for long-term growth in ASEAN, says James Drudy, engineering services manager at CAE Parc Aviation, a Dublin-based firm, sourcing pilots as well as engineering services for airlines worldwide. He looks at Indonesia, an archipelago of 250 million people: “If you want to travel from Medan to Surabaya [two cities in Indonesia], you can fly it in three hours as opposed to spending two days travelling by other modes of transport. Given the choice, you will fly every time. Airlines have a captive market.”

The increased number of aircraft operators and aircraft lessors targeting the ASEAN region was a key deciding factor in Aero Inspection opening its office in Singapore. The Shannon-based maintenance firm’s main customer base is aviation leasing firms, explains company quality manager Peter Bagnell. He explains how Singapore has attracted a lot of larger leasing firms through its Aviation Leasing Scheme, which offers incentives to firms who locate their Asian headquarters there.

Winning deals from Southeast Asia’s aviation players may not be all plain sailing, but if the region’s growth stays on track, it seems that for this market, the only way is up. Mark Godfrey reports from Asia.
ASEAN comprises growing economies like the sprawling archipelagos of Indonesia and the Philippines; manufacturing-focused Vietnam, Singapore, a financial and legal services hub for the region, and the tourist mecca of Thailand.

Singapore is also home to the Asia office of CAE Parc, but while lots of companies might have a regional office in Singapore, your approach will need to change depending on where and with whom you’re trying to do business, says James Drudy. “...If you’re looking to work with leasing companies only, then clearly Singapore is the place to be. However, if you’re looking to generate business directly from airlines or MROs, you will need to focus your attention across the region.”

Mobile Travel Technologies Ltd (MTT) plans to increase its ASEAN presence after it was selected by Singapore Airlines as a strategic mobile partner to relaunch the airline’s smartphone apps followed by a new tablet app. MTT already keeps staff in both Manila and a sales representative in Bangkok. Increasing numbers of private, especially low-cost airlines are “quick to respond to changing technologies”, explains Kathrina Gallogly, marketing director at the firm. She explains that a unique feature of Southeast Asia is that mobile phones are often the primary internet access point rather than computers. “Therefore airlines need to serve their customers via the channel that they use most.”

The ASEAN region also differs from key regional economies like China (where the state carriers dominate the airlines sector) in the number of private players. Intense competition is giving airport and airline operators a run for their money, explains Smruti Inamdar at Enterprise Ireland. “To differentiate their offerings, airport operators are trying to provide a seamless customer experience from the time they do their ticketing to the retail shopping environment. Most importantly, airports are seeking to diversify and improve ancillary revenues, for example, providing car rentals and hotel bookings.”

MAXIMISING EARNINGS

Helping the industry to maximise earnings is the forte of another Irish company, Dublin-based CarTrawler – which works with key Southeast Asian low-cost airlines Air Asia and Tiger Air to match air passengers up with car rentals and other types of ground transport. Chief technology officer Bobby Healy explains how airlines “give us their traffic, and we generate the most revenue possible out of it”. Asia offers the strongest growth in the region, “albeit from a much lower base. In the medium to long-term, there is a big market space,” says Healy. However, while there are no competitors in the region offering an equivalent to the firm’s services, Asia remains slow to take up car rental: it accounts for 8 per cent of the global car rental market. Thus CarTrawler has adjusted to include ground transport options like taxi and chauffeur driven cars. “We look at every way out of the airport and integrate that into our core product...”

Airlines in the region have an awareness of firms like CarTrawler, says Healy. “There is strong knowledge in Asia too of what we do...aviation is a parochial industry and everyone knows everyone. Right now, it’s about acquiring business partners and making sure we have the most up to-date products [for them]” he says. However, the region is not without its challenges: the lack of market research on the Southeast Asian market meant CarTrawler painstakingly built up the data itself, largely through hiring “feet on the ground” to do questionnaires and samples.

MARKET CHALLENGES

Indeed while opportunities are obvious, there are plenty of barriers to growth too in ASEAN aviation. “ASEAN is a highly competitive...”
Airlines from the Asian Pacific region will take delivery of 12,470 new aircraft with 100-plus seats worth US$2 trillion over the next 20 years.

marketplace with similar products and services, with price, in-market support and delivery times as differentiators,” explains Smruti Inamdar. While an in-market presence would be ideal, the high cost of market entry may deter clients from paying for a permanent presence in the region. In turn, a lack of market presence may signify lack of commitment, notes Inamdar. “Often end-customers want face-to-face meetings with suppliers and may perceive companies without a market presence as ‘here today, gone tomorrow’.” Another challenge meanwhile is the presence of foreign airport consortiums: “this may mean a squeeze for the small players unless there is early engagement with end customers”.

Helping overcome some of the barriers perhaps, Ireland’s own reputation as a centre for aviation has been helpful in some cases. There’s a strong network of Irish working in the aviation sector in Asia, says Bagnell. “I have found that Ireland’s expertise and competencies with regard to aviation are very well renowned.” Likewise, James Drudy at CAE Parc has found that executives in many of the airlines he’s spoken with in Asia are familiar with Ireland’s leasing experience. “That has helped open some doors for us.” Many airlines unfamiliar with CAE Parc’s flight crew business, meanwhile, know the firm’s technical capacities. “Many of our technical consultants have liaised with airlines on behalf of leasing companies during re-deliveries, and, prior to opening our office in Singapore in 2014, we had provided ferry flight services and design modifications to a number of airlines in the region.”

Looking ahead, it seems that Southeast Asia will offer lots of opportunities to those who do establish a presence. The drivers of future air travel growth are clearly in place in ASEAN, which looks set to become the world’s fourth largest economy by 2050, based on International Monetary Fund projections. New airports have been built, not only at the hubs like Bangkok and Singapore (which is adding a fourth passenger terminal), but also in secondary destinations: Hanoi is building a second. About US$115 billion has been committed to airport construction and development across the Asia-Pacific region, which is 45 per cent more than what Europe or North America are spending, according to estimates from the Centre for Aviation, a Sydney-based consultancy.

Airbus spokesman Sean Lee believes “the speed at which infrastructure growth can keep up with the demand for air travel will be an important factor as we move forward and will have a direct effect on whether we see continued increases in the frequency of the number of flights or a move towards larger aircraft on shorter services”.

Smruti Inamdar sees airlines in the region eager to get ahead of intense competition through differentiation. “They’re developing products targeted at different traveller classes, such as the establishment of low-cost subsidiary airlines, including low-cost, long-haul flights, and even designing business classes for low-cost budget carriers. They are also seeking to open new routes, increasing their fleets and expanding their networks.”

Domestic operations are growing fast, especially in Indonesia and Vietnam. But there’s also enormous growth potential, says Sean Lee. Countries like Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos are "only at the start of the cycle in terms of air travel, with enormous growth potential."
The tactics and strategies that have propelled Irish tech companies into global markets offer tantalising insights into what it takes to win internationally. Ian Campbell reports on three key success factors.

Talk to some of Ireland’s most successful tech start-ups and it quickly becomes apparent that launching a global business requires a rare mix of vision, persistence and serendipity. But while their journeys vary, the starting point is always the same: think outside of Ireland. “The only technology business in Ireland where you could stay in Ireland is a service type play, so we had to look abroad,” said Tom Morrisroe, founder of The Now Factory.

Donal Byrne was similarly focused when he became CEO at Corvil, having just come back from selling a business in California. “The single biggest thing I took from Silicon Valley is that success is about attitude and an unrelenting desire to win on a world stage. It’s more about a state of mind than a state of geography,” he said. “If you can develop that state of mind, you can build a successful high-tech company anywhere, just as long as you have the right team.”

For most firms, the pursuit of international markets goes hand in hand with raising funds. “It was obvious pretty early on that we wouldn’t get the return we needed out of Ireland. We needed a couple of million euro to internationalise the business,” says Jimmy Martin, CEO at the Advanced Manufacturing Control Systems Group (AMCS).

PICK AN INNOVATOR FOR YOUR REFERENCE SALE

Knowing your future lies abroad is one thing; making it happen is quite another. The Now Factory’s target customers were communication service providers, a relatively small list of prospects, but with some of them operating in Ireland, Tom Morrisroe had a first port of call. He knew that if he could secure a deal with a local multinational, he would have a stepping-stone to global markets. The problem was finding someone receptive to an innovative new service.

“You get people at the top of local multinationals who are creative and open, or people who are more operational. If they are more operational, they are not going to be interested in creating anything new,” he said.

Morrisroe got very good at spotting the difference – a first meeting will usually tell him if he’s wasting his time. With Vodafone Ireland, he found a local operation punching above its weight and delivering innovation back to its global organisation. The deal done, he was soon having conversations with Vodafone in other countries. And with one mobile operator on his books, it became a lot easier to sell to others.

Another company that has leveraged the global footprint of multinational customers is Clavis Insight. Founded by Garry Moroney after he sold Similarity Systems, he was providing analytics-based services when he spotted an
even bigger opportunity with CPG (consumer packaged goods) companies. “These firms saw massive potential in e-commerce, but it became obvious to us they wanted more intelligence and insight to focus on doing it properly, so we offered them ‘secret shopping’ on steroids,” he said.

The company’s software scours the world’s biggest online retailers to see how its client products are presented and performing. Moroney knew he had a compelling proposition and went straight to the top of the pyramid for potential customers. The first overseas office was opened in Boston from where he set about winning business from Unilever USA. A deal was done, validating the product and the strategy, and Clavis was up and running.

Today, nine out of the ten top CPGs including Coca-Cola and Nestlé use Clavis. Each one opened the door to new business in new territories. “It takes time to land these companies, but if you can do it, there is a massive opportunity because each becomes a market within itself; we work with some of them in more than ten different countries,” said Moroney.

Right now he’s looking to piggyback some of his clients’ moves to break into the Chinese market. Back in Dublin, he has recruited students with master’s degrees from Irish universities in data analytics, and work has begun on analysing the websites in the region.

INVEST IN THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND LOCATION
A key to international growth is having the right people in the right place, opening an overseas office and populating it with employees who know the lie of the land. For Datahug and Movidius, it was finding the right combination that made all the difference to their go-to-market strategies. Both leaned heavily on the expertise of their investors to make the move successful.

Datahug spent several years developing software that measured customer engagement by tracking every kind of interaction, but only when the product was aligned to CRM (customer relationship management) did it find its sweet spot. “At each step on the journey, there are light bulb moments and game-changing decisions to take it to another level. Then there’s another level, and another light bulb is required,” said chief executive Ray Smith.

Having identified the opportunity and discovered a primary customer base among tech firms, the route to market became more obvious. Last September, Datahug opened a San Francisco office headed up by a sales director with Silicon Valley experience, including time at the CRM giant Salesforce.com. The new recruit was introduced to the firm by its main investor, Irish-based venture capital company DFJ Esprit.

Like Datahug, Movidius was bringing in steady revenue but, it took the vision and guidance of its main investor, Atlantic Bridge in Dublin, to take the firm to the next level.

“SUCCESS IS ABOUT ATTITUDE AND AN UNRELENTING DESIRE TO WIN ON A WORLD STAGE. IF YOU CAN DEVELOP THAT STATE OF MIND, YOU CAN BUILD A SUCCESSFUL HIGH-TECH COMPANY ANYWHERE, JUST AS LONG AS YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TEAM.”

02 KIERAN CARRICK (VP SALES) AND RAY SMITH (CEO), DATAHUG

03 REMI-EL-OUAZZANE, MOVIDIUS
“We always believed Movidius had a great technology, but they were struggling to find a market,” said Gerry Maguire, a partner in Atlantic Bridge.

Smartphones turned out to be the big opportunity for the company’s low-powered chip technology. Atlantic not only committed to investing in the company, it set about finding the firm a Silicon Valley headquarters after Google became an early customer. The VC firm used its network of contacts to headhunt a chief executive to steer Movidius in the right direction. Remi El-Ouazzane joined in 2013 from Texas Instruments, where he had been working in a similar field. A perfect match for the company, he gave Movidius instant credibility in the Valley.

Corvil
The company’s streaming analytics platform provides new levels of operational intelligence for businesses that demand granular monitoring. Corvil counts many of the world’s largest banks and every major stock exchange among its customers. It has overseas offices in London, New York, Tokyo and Hong Kong.

“For each step on the journey, there are light bulb moments and game-changing decisions to take it to another level.”

GET CLOSE TO TARGET CUSTOMERS
Sometimes the market finds you. Corvil was ticking over and growing slowly until an enquiry came in from the London Stock Exchange that changed everything. “We could solve latency problems on their stock exchange network in very short timeframes. Within two weeks of meeting their CIO, I was back in Dublin telling our board that we had found our market,” recalled Donal Byrne. “The financial sector discovered us and we never looked back.”

The company now has offices in New York, London, Tokyo and Hong Kong. No coincidence that the cities have the world’s biggest stock exchanges. You have to get close to customers. “It’s the Churchill/Normandy principle,” said Byrne. “You pick a really important landing place and focus all your energy and forces on that spot. You have to be very focused on winning your first marquee customer, and then you have to expand on that.”

The Now Factory opened an American office because a customer was uncomfortable about having a supplier operating out of Ireland, even though it was logistically feasible. “When the deal is dependent on it, you don’t spend too long thinking about it. You just say yes and then figure out how to do it and make money out of it,” said Tom Morrisroe.

AMCS learnt the hard way about the importance of having feet on the ground. “The first time we tried to crack America was from a distance, going through someone else, but we needed to go direct,” said Jimmy Martin. “We have to go in on the ground, understand what our customers need and learn the nuances of the market to deliver on that need.”

Get it right and you become a global business. “When I started out, I thought I was busy when I was driving all around Munster; then it was all around Ireland. Now it’s aeroplanes and all around the world,” said Martin. “That’s how it evolves, and you evolve with it, adjusting to the culture of the market you are going after.”
Dubarry Marketing Director and Co-owner Michael Walsh explains why and how Scandinavia has become the latest market where the company is replacing a distributor with its own sales presence. Interview by Mary Sweetman.
Once upon a time, it was pretty much plain sailing for Dubarry and its trusty Dubs shoes, loved by marine sportspeople, seafarers and Ross O’Carroll-Kelly types alike. But evolution has been a constant for this Galway firm, which started out back in 1937 in a former workhouse and was rescued from the edge during the 1980s with a management buy-out.

Over the past decade, Dubarry has expanded its footprint into country living, with boots and footwear for all sorts of professional sporting and gentlemanly pursuits from horse riding to gardening and après-ski, and an accompanying clothing and luggage line to boot. At the same time, the company has been getting closer to its customers by gradually replacing its distributor network with a direct sales presence in targeted export markets.

The establishment of its first overseas subsidiary in the UK was followed in 2006 with Dubarry USA LLC, headquartered in Pennsylvania. Now the strategy is being replicated in Europe, where Germany/continental Europe is the company’s third largest market and Scandinavia its fourth.

**FRUSTRATIONS**

“One of the frustrations is that, as a company, you have a passion and belief about your products and your brand,” says Michael Walsh, Dubarry Marketing Director and Co-Owner. “But,” he adds, explaining the rationale for the move, “there is a gap between you and the end user, which, in the first instance, is the local representative, be that a distributor or an agent, and then, in turn, them selling on into retail.”

“Back 10 to 15 years ago, when we started to export quite seriously, we were a much smaller brand, with a much smaller range of products, and we were trying to partner up with someone with whom there was a decent synergy. But the reality with any of those potential partners is that they are already representing other products and, in some cases, competing products: the reason you select them is that they have that connection into the marketplace. So there is the potential for conflicts of interest in the time and the resources they are giving to your brand versus the other activities they are involved in.”

With the move into country lifestyle, Dubarry’s range expanded significantly, improving the economies of scale for a direct sales approach. At the same time, the company found that some of its distributors, who had been strong in the marine sector, didn’t evolve to provide the right fit in the new markets. This was the case in Scandinavia, the latest region for Dubarry to roll out its direct sales strategy.

“There was a mismatch, and, in time, that would have led to frustration in terms of us moving at a particular pace, and our distributor not being able to move at the same level,” Walsh explains. “So the next logical step was for us to establish our own subsidiary:”

**SCANDINAVIAN ROLLOUT**

As part of that move, in May 2014, Dubarry established a European warehouse and distribution centre in the Netherlands. And progress has followed swiftly. “We were obliged to give our Scandinavian distributor a six-month period of notice, which expired at the end of December. So from now on, it’s our own people, all Scandinavians, on the ground, servicing our Scandinavian retailers.

“It’s a very important market. It ticks a lot of the boxes for us: it has the climatic conditions that require the protection our boots offer, and the disposable incomes,” he continues. “Business [in Scandinavia] over the last five to six years had been hovering around the €400,000 pa mark, but our belief is that it could be a multiple of that.”

The plan is to have a total of four people on the ground in Scandinavia for the 2016 spring-summer presales. Dubarry’s first new recruit is a Swedish contact the company had met at numerous trade shows over the years. “He was always on our radar, so when we knew we were going to make this decision, he was one of the first people we contacted,” Walsh says.

The approach towards sales’ hires is to “pick people who would fit the bill of being our target customer themselves,” he explains. “We are not going to send in a guy with tattoos and nose rings. You pick people who have an understanding and an empathy with your customers, and that is one of the great benefits of attending shows and events. You get a great opportunity to meet and network with people who are there because they have a similar interest in the equestrian or the sailing world. For us, it’s always key to get someone who comes from that background.”

A further two sales people will be recruited locally, and the company has already hired a marketing professional to look after events, PR and social media.
“One of the other angles that has been very important in other markets is that we attend and build our stand at a lot of main equestrian/outdoor-oriented events,” Walsh says. “This year, we are scheduled to do about 15 events across Scandinavia. That’s very important, because it puts us in contact with the end user.”

Initially, the new team will work from their own homes. But there are plans to rent a showroom in Stockholm for the spring-summer 2016 collection, and that will become the new base. Ultimately, though, staff costs will represent the greatest outlay for the firm.

“There are a lot of considerations in terms of employing people in Scandinavia,” Walsh agrees. “The cost of employing people there is considerably higher than it is in most other European countries, and it isn’t just the salary costs but also the entitlements that people have. In Scandinavia, these are quite different than what people have in Ireland or, indeed, in most parts of continental Europe.

“We don’t operate on a commission basis,” he adds. “We operate on a good basic salary. This is an area where Enterprise Ireland is very useful in terms of getting benchmarks for a particular location. We pay the going rate and then offer incentives for over-achievement, so it’s not a question that our people have to sell to live; there’s a long-term approach to it.

“Obviously when you are controlling sales yourself, you are incurring additional costs because you are putting your own people on the ground,” he continues. “But, because you are taking a link out of the chain, you have that extra layer of margin to help cover the investment. When you are dealing with a third-party distributor, in many cases, it’s the owner of that business that you are dealing with, not their sales people.”

In contrast, he says, when you are employing the sales team directly, there can be no excuses, because you are giving them the proper training and resources. For Dubarry hires, that training includes two sales conferences at the company headquarters in Ballinasloe every year.

“Our international sales director would also be in the market at least four times per year,” Walsh adds. “Then I was in Scandinavia this week to look at media bookings and PR plans for autumn/winter, so we are in touch on a very regular basis: you are talking of between six and eight times a year.”

CENTRAL HR POLICY

What, though, if after all that investment, things still don’t work out due to lack of motivation or effort on behalf of a sales’ hire, who, after all, is based hundreds of miles from the supervisory eyes of HQ?

“We have a very good central HR policy, which is about annual reviews and appraisal of staff and their achievement of targets,” Walsh says. “In our organisation, because we sell twice a year, we would assess people on the basis of their performance for the spring/summer collection and on the autumn/winter collection. So if the writing is on the wall that people aren’t reaching targets, you go through a process of putting them on notice that their performance isn’t adequate. Invariably, it’s a bit like a marriage. If it’s beginning to dissolve, it tends to go in that direction, and people eventually realise it.

“Fortunately, the people we are employing are enthusiastic and hungry for getting out there. It’s a brand they like being associated with, and they see the challenge of taking the brand forward as a badge of honour. So, touch wood, we haven’t had that experience.”

That said, his advice is that regular contact is vital. “It’s not a question of ‘there are your samples, and we’ll see you next January’. I would say that staying touch and keeping on top of it is very important.”

BENELUX MARKETS

In tandem with developments in Scandinavia, Dubarry has embarked on similar moves for its Benelux markets, also served by the new Dutch distribution centre. Here, fortunately, the parting of ways with the existing distributor was more amicable. “They had actually been one of our star performing distributors over the past 23 years. But the founders had got to an age where they were looking for an exit plan, so we essentially acquired their infrastructure and some of their personnel. From a timing point of view, it suited them and it suited us,” Walsh says.

Into the future, the plan is that more markets will be served by the central distribution facility in the Netherlands, as Dubarry gradually replicates the approach elsewhere in Europe. “Nothing has been confirmed as yet, but having been through the process is very, very helpful,” Walsh says. “It’s now almost like a blueprint that we can roll out in the next market.”
Padraic Timon, Managing Director, Chameleon Colour Systems, lines up for a Q&A on his company’s experiences in Turkey.

#### PAINTING TURKEY ALL THE COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW

Chameleon Colour Systems specialises in the design, development and manufacture of paint mixing and tinting equipment that allows hardware stores or paint shops to provide consumers with custom shades that aren’t available on the shelves. The company was founded in 1992 in Tuam, Co Galway, and has since expanded, exporting to more than 57 countries. It has been selling in Turkey for 15 years.

Q How long have you been active in Turkey?

A From day one, in excess of 95 per cent of what we make has been exported. We have no direct contact with the shops; we sell to the paint brands, they buy our equipment and install it as part of their whole tinting system. If you take the likes of Dulux paint, these brands are part of global companies and decisions are made at corporate head office. Once we get approved, we go to each individual country. Turkey has been a very successful market for us recently. For example, the company which owns Dulux has a plant in Turkey and bought some equipment for its Turkish customers. That would have been my first reason to visit Turkey, 15 years ago. In the last five years, it’s become apparent that Turkey is a big market and growing very rapidly. Coinciding with the downturn in northern Europe, we’ve been working hard on identifying high-growth markets. What that basically involves is getting out to the local market. From my experience, you cannot make any progress unless you do that.

Q How did you get started there, and what were your first impressions?

A Istanbul is culturally very different. It’s an immense city; there’s no other way than to get out and do it. From east to west in Istanbul is probably about 100km. I drive to most of the meetings, and the place is phenomenally big. By the time you get out of the airport, you could be driving for an hour and a half or two hours through a combination of distance and traffic. Most of the commercial decisions are made in Istanbul, although some of our engineers have gone to remote towns. We get the names of the paint companies, and we try and get meetings with them – very similar to the process in any other country. Our experience has been that the Turkish people we’ve met have been extremely friendly when you finally get to meet with them, but the process is very slow. Your initial contacts are never really the decision makers, and it’s hard to establish who those people are. You’ve got to be patient and temper your enthusiasm.
Your first meeting might go well but nothing might then happen. It could take a couple of attempts before meeting the key decision-maker. It’s a very hierarchical system in business.

There are people whose job it is to keep the machines running, and they are a very important first point of contact. They generally tend to be people who have been promoted through the system, such as the product manager or the equipment manager, although this person isn’t someone that might appear on the board of directors. They influence the final decision maker about what machine the shop buys. It’s rare, if ever, that the purchasing manager has that kind of influence, except at the last stage of the negotiation. But reaching those influencers can be quite difficult. They might not even be middle management, but they’re a kind of gatekeeper that we had to figure out how to contact. Certainly I’ve attended meetings in Turkey where I knew I was talking to the wrong person, and even trying to get into who the right person is has been a challenge.

**Q** What route to market have you used in Turkey?

**A** It’s evolving. Our type of transaction might only occur once a year with a paint company. The difficulty for an agent is the number of transactions is relatively infrequent. Certainly, for some small to medium companies, there’s merit in having an agent, but our success has been in customer service, and if you place great value in that, you need to be careful handling that over to an agent, who may have other balls to juggle. But there are other markets in Europe where we work with agents on a non-exclusive basis. If a company in Turkey comes to us and needs spare parts based locally, we certainly would do that. We have four significant customers in Turkey and we have built up good relationships with them, but there’s no right answer to it. The model could change.

**Q** What business development and marketing activities have been the most effective for you?

**A** The most important part is customer facing – going over there and meeting them. Someone from our company would visit about four or five times a year and spend at least a day with them. Exhibitions are important for meeting paint companies, but they’re not necessarily exclusively in Turkey. From our point of view, direct contact is what it’s all about. I made a trip recently, and I met service engineers who passed on small nuggets of information that we can factor in for future products, or for when we talk to their bosses.

In terms of branding, each machine we install would be recognised as a Chameleon machine. Quite often, one paint company might go into the shop of their competitor, and they might see our equipment and think they need to check it out.

**Q** What’s your strategy to grow your Turkish business in the future?

**A** We’ve got to protect and manage the business we’ve had to date, and each year we hope to identify one or two prospective customers and convince them to take our equipment for testing. We should be able to have a better run at it because we’ve learned lessons from the first customers. Obviously, if we had close regular contact, we’d hear the local news or gossip. It is always a concern that while we might feel things are going well, we’re not on the ground having a coffee with customers and end-users on a regular basis where you would pick up the news.

A very small proportion of paint shops in Turkey have installed tinting machines, so the paint market doesn’t necessarily need to grow for our market to grow. Tinted paint is more profitable for paint companies, and more of them want to provide this. Our ability to take part of that growth is down to the same issues: we’ve got to work extremely hard to make sure the products are successful, and, if we do that, we’ll retain the business. If we give people no reason to change, they’ll stay loyal. I realise that if we had a Turkish speaker, it would be a great way for us to protect our business. The volume of business wouldn’t warrant hiring a Turkish employee yet, but we wouldn’t rule it out.

**Q** In conclusion, how would you summarise the market?

**A** Turkey is very accessible. I’ve noticed many people are unaware that there’s a direct service from Dublin to Istanbul: it’s around a four-hour flight. If you think your business has potential, I would encourage people to go and have a look at the market. The cultures aren’t that far apart once you get talking to people. You need to meet them a few times and be patient. By that stage, you’ll know if the product has potential.

Coinciding with the downturn in northern Europe, we’ve been working hard on identifying high-growth markets. In the last five years, it’s become apparent that Turkey is a big market and growing very rapidly.
Licensing new technology has enabled Ceramicx to develop cutting-edge innovation that will power the company’s latest wave of international growth. Anthony King reports.
The Aston Martin BD9 touring car contains aluminium panels alongside fibre reinforced plastic panels that are bound together with super-strength adhesives. Irish company Ceramicx developed the system to meld the composites using controlled infrared emitters.

Infrared is a form of energy applied as heat in many industrial processes. This invisible spectrum of light has become all the more important as plastics and plastic composite play a greater role in electronics, packaging, automotive and aviation.

West Cork-based company Ceramicx specialises in infrared heating technology. Its applications include long-wave ceramic emitters, which are used for curing processes in the thermoplastics industry and energy efficient ovens for the food industry.

Ceramicx is now announcing a world-first in launching the Herschel, a machine that measures and maps infrared heating. “Infrared is invisible, of course, so it’s a hard thing to quantify. Usually people measure infrared output as the heat produced as a secondary reaction, but the Herschel maps the output of an emitter in watts [power] per cm²,” explains Cathal Wilson, director at Ceramicx.

The technology, first pioneered at Trinity College Dublin’s Manufacturing Research Facility, is named after William Herschel, the German-born astronomer who moved to Britain in the eighteenth century and became famous for his large telescopes. He also discovered infrared radiation and the planet Uranus.

The licensing deal with Ceramicx and subsequent process of technology transfer was the fruit of an Innovation Partnership, part funded by Enterprise Ireland. In turn, it has unleashed a new avenue for international sales for the West Cork company.

Ceramicx is upskilling its staff of 65 and preparing to double its floor space, adding further labs, offices and manufacturing capacity. The Ballydehob firm is no newbie, though. The company has been perfecting its infrared heat work for 25 years, and it exports to 65 countries, with key markets being China, Germany, the UK and the US. A further new office is scheduled to open shortly in Turkey.

Ceramicx will use the breakthrough technology to further refine the infrared heaters and ovens it develops in-house for food and other manufacturers. But the company also expects demand for Herschel as a test instrument for large companies that rely on infrared energy in manufacturing.

Like baking a cake, there is a heat recipe in every material, and there are a number of variables that must be controlled to get the best, most efficient and most cost-effective solution. The Herschel will allow manufacturers to refine the dial on their heat recipe with amazing precision.

“There are probably five or six major companies in the world that would be interested in this new technology,” Wilson says. These include the likes of Corning Glass, European Aerospace, Boeing and leading edge tech companies serving likes of NASA.

The company came to realise the need for a machine like Herschel after it had worked through a challenging assignment developing a finished oven for Corning Inc., the makers of the Gorilla Glass used in mobile devices such as the Apple and Samsung smartphones. A curved piece of glass 0.7mm-thick was required, and the initial calculation and trial stages of the glass finishing project engaged five Ceramicx engineers for over a week. “If I had been able to put the problem in front of the Herschel, I could essentially have had the figures immediately,” Wilson explains.

Within its own processes, the machine is enabling Ceramicx to create more energy efficient thermoforming machines for industry. For example, the company recently built an oven for a UK thermoforming based packaging manufacturer using data from the Herschel. The result was an oven that, when independently assessed, was 42 per cent more energy efficient, delivering savings for the company of £1,500 per oven per month. “That bites hard, especially when a plant may have ten lines running,” Wilson observes.

Another application is in the production of energy efficient ovens for manufacturers of foods such as biscuits, cereals and pizzas. Ceramicx has developed 12 food-industry related patents for Black and Decker, and the Irish company holds the commercial rights for the application of these patents in industrial-scale projects in Europe.

In the case of the Aston Martin BD9, Ceramicx designed and built not only a radiant infrared emitter, but it came up with the best possible solution so that the energy would be adequately absorbed, and the cure would take place in sympathy with the best chemical and mechanical characteristics of the bond. The result is an adhesive bond stronger than a weld, explains Wilson.

Commenting on the impact of Herschel, Cathal's father, Ceramicx founder and managing director Frank Wilson observes: “For thousands of years, man has played with steel, trying out various heat works to it to make it suitable for certain jobs. In recent years, the plastics industry and other materials sectors have begun to realise that there is a whole range of heat work that can also be applied to improve the performance of these materials also.” For these industries, he says, “the benefits will be immeasurable.”
It’s a new open source technology that’s barely been heard of outside of the tech sector and yet one Irish startup firm is rapidly becoming the world leader in this field.

Node.js is a software platform that enables enterprises to easily create lean, efficient, high-performing and ultra-scalable software systems with JavaScript, the programming language used to make web pages interactive.

The technology, which was created by US developer Ryan Dahl in 2009, is tipped by many Silicon Valley insiders to be the next big thing. Use of the platform has been growing at an exponential rate over the past few years, with well-known firms such as Yahoo, PayPal, Groupon, LinkedIn, Netflix and Microsoft all now using it.

The good news from an Irish perspective is that the team behind Waterford-based NearForm is already considered to be one of the world’s leading providers of large-scale Node.js solutions and recognised authorities in the field. This is despite the fact the firm was only founded just over three years ago.

As well as having early mover advantage, the company founders are both highly respected in the tech community, in part because of their involvement with the world’s biggest annual node.js conference, which draws hundreds of engineers to Waterford every year.

To say that the company is expanding at a fast rate is no exaggeration. NearForm employs 34 people at present but is expecting to double its workforce by the end of 2015. Moreover, as of December 2014, the company had already booked €3.5 million in sales for this year and had more than 40 recurring customers based across the globe.

The company, which was set up in December 2011, has developed a product that enables developers to use Node.js to develop e-commerce products for enterprises more efficiently and cheaply.

It is run by Cian O’Maidin, who was voted among the most influential leaders in Irish technology in 2012. He is the only EU representative on the World Node.js Advisory Board, which is taking steps towards creating a fully open governance model for the technology. Co-founder Richard Rodger was formerly chief technology officer with FeedHenry, another Waterford-based startup, which was acquired by Red Hat last year for €63.5 million.

According to O’Maidin, while few people outside of the tech community are familiar with Node.js, this is about to change. He said that NearForm has an early-to-market advantage over its competitors, but added that some of the biggest names in the technology world are taking an active interest in the new platform.

“We’re one of the first specialist companies globally to work on Node.js technology (and) at this point we have more experience at delivery with this technology into the enterprise than any other firm in the world. A double-digit percentage of all the Node programs in the world use modules written by people at NearForm so we’re very much integral to the whole Node.js project,” said O’Maidin.
Charlie Taylor reports that Waterford-based startup NearForm is fast becoming a world leader in Node.js – a software platform tipped by Silicon Valley insider to be ‘the next big thing’.
“There are a few start-ups in the US that have a bit of funding, which are operating in this area and then you’ve also got the likes of Oracle, IBM, Microsoft and SAP who are all getting into this space as well but we’re out ahead at present.”

NearForm has delivered over 50 large-scale production systems for clients in Ireland, the UK and the USA. The company’s clients include banks, media companies, Fortune 500 firms and Silicon Valley startups.

In 2012, the service it built for the Sunday Business Post was awarded a 2012 Nokia Digital Media Award for bringing about the world’s first online newspaper to be powered entirely by Node.js and HTML5. Other clients include publisher Conde Nast and Open Jaw Technologies, the Dublin-based travel tech firm acquired by GuestLogix for $41.2 million (€33.4 million) in December.

“We help clients to adopt this technology, which is a new way of working that crosses everything from education and training to professional services, system architecture and so on. We’ve built a suite of tools for customers centred on application development, deployment and monitoring and we offer training, consulting, implementation and support,” said O’Maidin.

“About 60 per cent of our business is currently in the US, with about 20 per cent in the UK and 20 per cent for the rest of the world. North America and Britain will continue to be our main interest for the next while, because if you focus on those two markets and win in those locations, then you’re set up to do well elsewhere.”

In terms of its route to market, O’Maidin said the company has gained from its links to players in the tech world. “It’s really been down to activity in the open source community, which has opened up lots of relationships in big enterprise companies.”

In December, Enterprise Ireland approved a €400,000 investment in NearForm as part of an overall larger funding round designed to enable the firm to execute its business plan.

However, as O’Maidin points out, the company has so far done things all its own way. “We’ve never raised money but have nonetheless gone from zero to 35 staff and multimillion euros of revenue with no funding. We’re currently growing at north of 100 per cent a year.”

To take the business to the next level, he and Rodgers are aware that they need to bring in more expertise. “We are expecting to have some big product and hiring announcements into the latter half of 2015. We’ve people coming in at board level who have sold companies for billions of dollars so that’s the kind of level of expertise and experience we have coming in to take us further,” he said.

“Scaling the company will be done primarily through hiring in a middle management layer. At this moment, we’re all engineers and we’ve the experience to get us to this point, but now we need to bring in the pure business people to help us grow the business. We’re also hiring sales people in North America and investing significantly in engineering and R&D and expecting to grow through partnerships.”
Malaysia started out on a journey of transformation in December 1996 with the National IT Council’s launch of a National IT Agenda, aimed at transforming Malaysia into a modern state by the year 2020 through the transition to a knowledge-based society.

Part of its Digital Malaysia programme, launched in 2011 and being led by the government agency Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC), is aimed at the population in the bottom 40 per cent by household income (B40). The vision is to enable this group to earn additional income by performing tasks available in the microsourcing/crowdsourcing industry.

Massolution was selected in 2013 by MDeC as the programme’s strategic international partner. Massolution’s triple mandate has been to help with the formation and implementation of plans to qualify and develop Malaysia’s digital talent pool, with a specific focus on the B40 population; to upgrade local capacity and strengthen domestic CSPs; and to launch market-based initiatives to drive domestic and international demand for digital jobs to Malaysian workers.

As part of this plan, eRezeki (rezeki means livelihood in Malay) community centres are to be established during 2015 as work hubs to support the on-boarding, profiling, training and deployment of many thousands of Malaysian digital workers over the coming years.

While the focus will be on the B40 population, MDeC and Massolution have analysed the market as a whole, with an eye towards developing a complete market ecosystem and driving additional digital work for the 100,000+ Malaysian workers who are already online. Of this current online Malaysian workforce, 70 per cent are between the ages of 17 and 30, are well educated and are capable of performing a range of tasks from simple data entry jobs to graphic design, research and consulting.

As part of a hub-and-spoke model, the eRezeki centres will serve as validation and quality control hubs to support the distribution of work to potentially hundreds of community-based digital work centres (DWCs) at universities, libraries and mosques, as well as the 2,500 existing 15-to-30-seat telecentres established in Malaysia over recent years. Target markets will include domestic and international firms as well as the Malay public sector.

The government is hoping that its unique, structured approach towards developing and managing the national talent pool will provide Malaysia with an edge over competing locations seeking work from businesses and established CSP marketplaces.

It’s an unprecedented programme that’s looking to improve the economy by giving Malaysians the ability to learn new skills, find more and better work and earn more wages. Digital Malaysia’s goals are to provide high-performing digital workers with an additional US $1,750 per year. Currently, the B40s earn an average of $450 to $870 per month so this would represent a significant boost in their income, which should, in turn, stimulate the economy at large.
Although the Brazilian market is a tough nut, once cracked, Irish exporters find they can expand rapidly and achieve good margins there. So for those with the cash flow and determination to stay the course, there are enormous opportunities, writes Eoghan O’Briain, Enterprise Ireland, São Paulo.

A growing number of indigenous Irish companies are taking advantage of the huge potential offered by the Brazilian market.

Despite a slowdown in GDP growth to 0.2 per cent in 2014, Brazil’s large internal market, expanding middle class and favourable demographics continue to present enormous long-term potential for Irish exporters.

While GDP growth slowed in 2014, the average growth rate over the period 2006-2014 was an impressive 3.2 per cent. The unemployment rate remains at record low levels of 4.8 per cent, helping to maintain consumer spending, and, following Brazil’s hosting of the 2014 Soccer World Cup, the next Olympic Games will take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

GLOBAL AMBITIONS

Now the seventh largest economy in the world (US $3 trillion), and with a population of 203 million people, Brazil is a market that Irish companies with global ambitions cannot ignore.

São Paulo state alone, where the Enterprise Ireland office is based, represents a population of nearly 44 million people
and a larger GDP than countries such as Poland, Argentina, Saudi Arabia and Sweden. The concentration of consumers and businesses in the region surrounding São Paulo city makes it a logical starting point for many Irish exporters.

An increasing number of Irish companies are investing in expanding their presence in Brazil across a range of activities, including manufacturing, sales and services operations. Established exporters with a strong presence in Brazil include Kerry Group, Carbery, Suretank, Combilift, TaxBack, S3 Group, Slainte Healthcare and Openet amongst others.

While the potential market in Brazil is enormous, the challenges are daunting, including stifling bureaucracy, a complicated tax system and the high cost of doing business in the main cities. Apart from having the right product differentiated from local competition, it takes a huge commitment in management skills, tenacity and patience to succeed in Brazil. A combination of bureaucracy, complicated tax and customs procedures and a culture of doing business face-to-face means it often takes 18 months or two years for clients to make real progress and start seeing the return on their upfront investments of time and money.
This makes it a market suited to companies with long investment horizons, healthy cash flow and the tenacity to realise the enormous scale of the opportunity. The experience of many EI clients is that you can expand rapidly once you have established a strong reputation locally. Moreover, profit margins are often higher in Brazil once the initial barriers to entry have been overcome.

It is no surprise, then, to see an increasing number of Irish exporters target Brazil across a range of sectors, including aviation, telecommunications services and hardware, financial services, equipment manufacturing, education and private healthcare.

HUGE OPPORTUNITIES

The past decade has seen huge transformations in Brazil, with the middle class almost doubling from 66 to 118 million people. The population in the higher income bands has increased from 13 to 29 million over the decade.

One of the major consequences is that the consumer market has exploded, as many people have access for the first time to airline travel, their own car, higher education, learning a second language and private healthcare.

For example, the share of people between 25-34 years old with at least an undergraduate degree grew from just 8.1 per cent in 2004 to more than 15 per cent in 2013, turning Brazil into a priority market for Irish higher education institutions. Under the Science without Borders programme, the Brazilian Government has funded international exchanges for 101,000 students. Irish institutions have received 3,300 students so far, mainly in science and engineering courses.

New cars sales have more than doubled in a decade, creating greater economic opportunities but also increasing congestion in the main cities. Domestic airline travel nearly tripled from 44 million passengers in 2004 to 116 million in 2013, while international travel also doubled.

As greater competition between airlines has resulted in more accessible prices, the burgeoning middle class has increasingly been able to substitute long-distance bus travel for air travel. This rapid expansion in both domestic and international travel has opened up opportunities for Irish companies such as MTT, which has designed an app for LATAM group. Launched in 2014, the mobile app is a key component in the customer centric approach of the LATAM Airlines Group. It enables 60 million LAN and TAM passengers to plan and manage their journey at the touch of a finger at any time and from anywhere.

Enterprise Ireland has noticed that some companies can focus too much on the difficulty of entering the Brazilian market. The increasing number of successful Irish companies in Latin America shows that the time and money invested can reap huge rewards. While the challenges in terms of culture and complex tax, legal and regulatory systems are daunting, the rapid emergence of millions of middle class consumers over the past decade means that ambitious Irish companies with unique products can win business that local competitors are not always equipped to capture.

It is an exciting time to enter the Brazilian market; the key is to thoroughly research the costs and timelines required to succeed, commit to the market and invest in building a strong local presence.

Science without Borders creating Irish-Brazilian R&D links and a new ‘diaspora’

With an established, respected profile among the global science community, Brazil is increasingly focused on looking outwards and internationalising its research activity and higher education system in general. A total of 22 Irish higher education institutions are currently participating in the Brazilian student mobility programme – Science without Borders.

The initiative is a large-scale, Brazilian scholarship programme, primarily funded by the Brazilian federal government. Seeking to strengthen the country’s innovation and competitiveness through international mobility for undergraduates, graduates and researchers, it aims to support the mobility of 101,000 Brazilian students over the period 2012-2015.

Under the Education in Ireland mandate, over the past eight years, Enterprise Ireland has worked closely with the Embassy of Ireland to bolster the positioning of Ireland as a destination for Brazilian third level students. This has involved close cooperation with the main scholarship bodies and the Ministry of Education in Brazil. Education in Ireland has arranged for all of the Irish higher education institutes to visit Brazil and participate at the main education fairs, often with the event and delegation supported by a visit from the Irish Minister of Education. By the end of the first phase of the programme, 3,300 Brazilian students will have travelled to Ireland. This is over 3 per cent of the total programme places, available for the first phase – a remarkable achievement for a country the size of Ireland.

For the 2014 call, Ireland ranks as the fourth most popular destination in terms of the number of subscribers or candidates who have selected it as a preferred destination to study through the Science without Borders Programme.

This has created a large pool of young Brazilian graduates with knowledge and positive experiences of Ireland, who represent a potential resource for Irish companies planning to grow their operations in Brazil. Enterprise Ireland’s São Paulo office has a register of students and researchers who have spent time in Ireland through the Science without Borders programme, who have expressed interest in working with Irish companies.

Similarly, Science with Borders has seeded Irish-Brazilian R&D partnerships and linkages. The first Brazilian-Irish Science Week, which took place in Dublin Castle this February, brought together senior researchers from the Brazilian and Irish research communities to showcase successful collaborations and explore pathways for future cooperation. The range of strategic thematic areas explored included information and communications technologies; environmental science and technologies; advanced materials and nanotechnology; biopharmaceuticals, biotechnology and health; and sustainable energy and agri-production.
Irish tech firms such as Accuris Networks, Openet and MTT have been operating in Brazil for the past few years. And while each found it tough going initially, they are all now beginning to see their investments pay off.

Dublin telecoms software firm Accuris Networks, for example, recently agreed a second partnership arrangement there when it signed a deal with the local telecommunications service provider Linktel to give Brazilians visiting North America access to Wi-Fi networks when roaming.

Gustavo Strenger, vice-president of sales and business development for Latin America at Accuris, has spent 25 years working for companies looking to break into Brazil. He admits that it takes time to be successful. But he adds: “To do business in Brazil is not impossible. The secret sauce is to work hard and be extremely patient. It is also important to understand local business and the culture here.

“We opened our Latin America office in Brazil in January 2013. Now, after two years, we have two customers and expect to continue to see growth here and in the wider Latin America markets over the coming years. Brazil is one of the most important of all the countries here for Accuris, as the country represents between 40 and 50 per cent of all revenue for mobile in Latin America, and many companies who achieve success here then move in to nearby countries.”

Caique Severo, director at Latam Connection, a company that helps exporters get started in Latin America agrees that although Brazil is a tough place in which to win deals, there are plenty of opportunities for those prepared to play the long game and build business slowly.

“Personal relationships are still highly valued when doing business here. As in many other places, it is much easier to get a meeting if you previously know your prospects.”

Gustavo Strenger, Vice-President, Sales and Business Development for Latin America, Accuris

Caique Severo, Director, Latam Connection

Technology is one of the sectors where Irish companies are doing well. Charlie Taylor spoke to some of the players bringing Irish tech solutions to Brazil.
A recent World Bank report ranks Brazil as the 120th country in terms of ease of doing business, putting us behind Jordan, Belize and Nicaragua. Most of the difficulties come from regulatory and bureaucracy demands, but that is not the only problem companies face. Navigating the Brazilian culture and business practices also requires patience. Brazilians are very friendly and rarely say no. This may be taken as a good start in your first business meeting, but getting from that first yes to a deal is far from certain.

“Personal relationships are still highly valued when doing business here,” he continues. “As in many other places, it is much easier to get a meeting if you previously know your prospects. The digital market here in particular is expanding very fast, and so there is more interest in finding new solutions. This may make people more open to get in touch with international technology companies.”

Severo advises that companies serious about the market need to consider language issues, particularly when it comes to the final negotiations. “The language barrier is higher than it seems,” he told The Market. “Many people do speak English but not at a high level, which may make customers feel insecure about doing business with a company from outside Brazil. This is something that is particularly important to be aware of when discussing contract terms, because sometimes the understanding of a clause may be taken differently because one is not a native English speaker.”

That said, he believes there are countless opportunities for exporters entering the marketplace, with broadband penetration and mobile commerce still to see further growth, and the increase in living standards that Brazilians have experienced over the last decade fuelling demand for what previously might have been regarded as luxury products and services. “In the past nine years, the domestic air travel market grew 164 per cent, and higher education, private health, leisure options, fashion and technology are also getting more space in people’s budgets.”

Another Dublin-based company operating in Brazil is Openet – a firm whose software is used by more than 600 million mobile phone users worldwide. Openet opened a small sales office in Brazil in 2007. It now employs 35 people locally and is happy with success to date.

“We went there as it is the premier economy, along with Mexico, in Latin America – with a large market that other South American countries see as a prestigious country in which to be doing business,” explains Niall Norton, chief executive of Openet.

“Brazil, like many Latin American countries, is a marketplace that offers tremendous opportunities, but is not for those who cannot commit to a multi-year investment in market development. Customers in Brazil are excellent to deal with, but quite suspicious of overseas companies that cannot demonstrate that they won’t just be there for a short while if they are not immediately successful,” he said.

Outside of the commitment issue, he adds that the challenges of doing business in Brazil are threefold. “One, Portuguese is the spoken language not Spanish, which makes it an unusual location in Latin America. Two, labour laws are quite onerous – more like France than Ireland in many ways. And three, the economic environment needs to be understood in depth...A business in Brazil needs to be aware of inflation, currency exchange rates, taxation and restrictions on foreign currencies and assets.”

However, he points out that Openet has stayed the course for good reasons. “Our experience has been positive. It is slow to attract new customers – but they are great customers. And our people there are fantastic employees. Truly, they are.”

For Caique Severo this is, above all, a country where despite numerous frustrations, a little charm goes a long way. “It may take a while, but if you find the right market, there are big opportunities. Irish people are as friendly as Brazilians, and you can leverage this when meeting people in business situations. Don’t be afraid to demonstrate that. A big smile and friendly handshake always makes for a good start.”
The rapid adoption of smartphones and the ongoing shift from offline to online is disrupting industries. While this is a global phenomenon, the pace of transformation in Brazil is breath-taking. Local suppliers can often struggle to adapt quickly, creating huge opportunities for international players with the best software and services across a range of areas such as mobile security, Wi-Fi roaming, anti-fraud and authentication software, big data analysis and mobile apps.

As the subscriber base reaches saturation, consumers are increasingly demanding better services and taking advantage of their mobile phone to access the web, interact on social networks and shop online, which is opening up opportunities for Irish companies.

According to market intelligence specialists IDC, the Brazilian market for ICT was worth US$175 billion in 2014, making it the fourth largest globally.

Data from Telebrasil, the association of telecommunications providers, estimated the telecoms market alone at US$116 billion in 2014, with wireless services accounting for $42 billion, fixed telephony $26.2 billion, fixed broadband $13.6 billion and pay television $13 billion.

The appetite of Brazilian consumers for technology products and services has exploded in recent years. Consumer adoption of smartphones, mobile broadband and ecommerce is growing rapidly despite more subdued economic growth since 2013.

In 2014, e-commerce grew 24 per cent to US$12.5 billion despite flat economic growth – in total 51.5 million people made at least one online purchase in 2014. There is potential for further growth, as only 10 per cent of transactions in Brazil are currently made on mobile devices compared to 27 per cent in the US.

Broadband penetration continues to grow, with 23 million fixed line subscriptions compared to 129 million mobile subscribers spread across 3,400 cities. More than 62 million people access the web on a tablet or mobile phone, and there is huge scope for further rapid growth as smartphones and accessible tablets with price points below US$200 become more widely adopted.

The growth of Brazil’s middle classes has prompted a surge in mobile phone ownership over the past decade: mobile phone subscriptions have risen from just 46 million to over 276 million at the end of 2014. There are now 129 million lines with 3G connectivity and 4.2 million with 4G connectivity, as the ongoing rollout of a 4G Long Term Evolution network gains momentum.

Thanks to government support in the form of auctions that encourage telecom carriers to purchase 4G bandwidth at competitive prices, Brazil is laying the groundwork for widespread 4G access. The four major telecom companies in Brazil are expected to offer 4G in all Brazilian cities with a population of 100,000 or more by the end of 2016. Data cost prices are also falling in Brazil, as carriers offer competitive pricing plans.

Given these trends, it is no surprise that consumers across all income brackets are switching to smartphones – 15.1 million smartphones were sold in Q3 2014 compared to only 4.7 million traditional phones.

Digital advertising expenditure in Brazil reached US$2.88 billion in 2014, more than half the US$5.19 billion figure for the entire Latin American region. Brazil is already the third largest market for Facebook users and fifth for Twitter.

Enterprise Ireland has retained a network of market experts across the ICT sector in Brazil to support our clients and act as a sounding board for our clients as well as providing them with key contacts and market intelligence.
Ian Campbell gives the low down on three new gadget-releases for work, play or both.

SPRING INTO ACTION

Toshiba Chromebook CB30-102
€250

Waiting for a laptop to boot up or applications to open has tested the patience of most of us at some stage. No wonder tablets with their “instant on” appeal have grabbed our attention. You will get the same frisson of excitement if you spend time with a Chromebook laptop. Running Google’s Chrome operating system (OS), it switches on and is ready for action in seconds.

Though they first appeared in 2011, Chromebooks still represent a tiny 1 per cent of the laptop market, but sales are creeping up, and I’d bet on more converts as people get to play with them. This Toshiba amply demonstrates why: ultra-cheap asking price (particularly for a 13.3-inch screen), slim design (20.2mm at its widest), light weight (1.5kg) and long-lasting battery (up to nine hours).

Style-wise it shares the same shiny silver aesthetic of a MacBookPro but without the build quality or screen resolution. That said, the workhorse ergonomics and the less than bedazzling 1,366x768 pixel screen do the job, and you get what you pay for.

The big idea with Chromebooks is that you do everything through a browser, connected to the web, and keep your content in the cloud. You get 100Gb of free Google storage when you buy a Chromebook, compared to just 16Gb on the Toshiba’s built-in drive. This is also why it’s so simple and fast to use – it’s joyously uncluttered.

Google Drive is built into the OS, and you are encouraged to live online in the Google universe – Gmail and YouTube (owned by Google) are two of the fixtures in the toolbar across the bottom of the screen. On the right, there are settings, account details, Wi-Fi and battery status. That’s pretty much it apart from a pop-up that displays apps downloaded from ChromeStore.

To be fair to Google, apps are available for a broad range of cloud services, including Microsoft. You can download the likes of Word, PowerPoint and OneDrive and use Office 365 as your main online repository if you have a subscription. Other services like Dropbox are also available.

Chromebook is a bit of a culture change if you’re hardwired to the idea of having a hard drive with all your content at your fingertips, but as Wi-Fi becomes easier to access and more ubiquitous, the clean and simple functionality of Chromebook becomes even more compelling. And you can work on documents offline, so a case can be made for it as a work tool as well as a social media device.
The SmartWatch
3 pairs with
Android phones
and is stylish in a geek chic kind of way. But there is plenty of room for improvement.

Chromecast
€39

TV manufacturers are slowly getting to grips with offering up web content on the biggest screen in the house, but it can still be a clunky experience on older sets. Not everyone wants to splash out on a new telly to do it better, which might explain why Google Chromecast is proving so popular. A neat dongle that is a little bit bigger than a standard USB key, it plugs into a TV's HDMI port and pairs with a smartphone, tablet or laptop over your Wi-Fi network.

What Google and others have recognised is that a second screen—phone, tablet or laptop—is a better way of putting web content on a TV than trying to do it natively. The Chromecast app you will need is available for Apple and Android devices, not a Windows phone, but it will work with a Windows laptop from OS 7 onwards.

As more and more mobile apps become available, it's the smartphone interaction that's most impressive, turning the humble TV into a multimedia hub for everything from movies on-demand to home photos.

Download the app to your smartphone and make the connection, then use other apps to provide the content – YouTube and Netflix are the most popular. Alternatively, connect a laptop with an additional plug-in, Google Extension, and share any web content. It's powered by a plug or directly from the TV via a USB socket. Great value, great product.

Sony SmartWatch 3
€229

Now on its third iteration, Sony's SmartWatch along with Samsung's Galaxy Gear Watch have pushed the boundaries in connected wearables without coming up with killer products. The SmartWatch 3 pairs with Android phones and is stylish in a geek chic kind of way. But there is plenty of room for improvement. Features and functionality are quirky and interesting rather than convincing and must-have. The fascia on the 1.6-inch removable screen has enough variations of a digital clock to offer something for everyone, and the adjustable rubber band is comfortable enough. To get to its multimedia features, you first have to download the Android Wear app to your phone and share it with the watch over NFC or Bluetooth.

Tethered to your smartphone, a vibration and screen message will alert you to any calls, texts, emails or notes – but no, you can’t take a call on the watch. The only time you talk to it is to give Google voice-activated commands – which work very well.

Plenty of other apps are available with the onus on fitness – daily workout routines are a big favourite of the first wave of wearables. Onboard GPS means you can see where you’re going without getting your phone out, and, with 4Gb of memory, you can store and play music directly from the watch just as long as you’re wearing a Bluetooth headset.

Like those early MP3 players I mentioned, the interface is not very user-friendly, and it's fiddly to set anything up. Unless you’re really sold on the fitness aspects, the SmartWatch comes across as a bit of a luxury you can probably do without. Let's see if Apple can make smart watches indispensable.
In the icy winter of 1695, the cargo ship *Ouzel* sailed out of Dublin and disappeared. The year is famous among meteorologists because the warm saline current known as the North Atlantic Drift disappeared, with extreme effects on climate. Europe froze.

The *Ouzel* – an ouzel is a blackbird – flew away and didn’t come back. Eventually its owners, the Dublin merchants Ferris, Twigg and Cash, claimed and were paid out on the insurance they had taken out on the ship’s cargo of woollen goods.

Five years later, the *Ouzel* reappeared in Dublin, laden with gold and jewels, the crew telling how they had been taken by corsairs and forced to act as pirates.

The insurers said the ship and its rich cargo were theirs, since they had paid out on the claim. The merchants disputed this, saying they had only insured the outbound merchandise. The dispute went to court, but after several years with no resolution, it was agreed that a number of merchants would arbitrate, and the profits would be used to the benefit of destitute members of the commercial community.

Or that’s the story that has come down to us. The Ouzel Galley Society, formed in the ship’s name, existed from the 1740s to the 1880s, and its members dined and drank famously in the pubs and hotels of its time, as well as arbitrating trade disputes. This society is one of the precursors of Dublin Chamber of Commerce.

In his fascinating history *A Most Respectable Meeting of Merchants*, Enda MacMahon starts with the city’s guilds-mediaeval, each with its colours. Merchants, the ancestors of today’s SMEs, paraded every year in blue-and-yellow.

The first Dublin Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1783 – United Irishmen Napper Tandy and Oliver Bond were members – and the second in 1805. But the Dublin Chamber really started in 1820, as a coffee room with newspapers available, open seven days a week in Commercial Buildings (beside today’s Central Bank). Businesspeople got together to fight things like crooked porters at the Custom House and illegal port charges imposed by Lord Henry Seymour Conway, the Patentee Craner and Wharfinger (“wonderfully titled”, writes MacMahon).
In the 1920s, William Martin Murphy puffed the advantage of the chamber’s fine centrally located rooms for a small annual subscription of £2, with “excellent telegraphic service of financial and general news, together with a supply of newspapers, magazines and reference books”.

Murphy, the most prominent businessman of the era, was president of the chamber during the lockout of 1913, of which he's normally seen as the moustachioed villain. He comes out as a more sympathetic character in MacMahon's book; under his presidency the chamber backed off from any official stance on the lockout in which many of its members were involved, and refused to discuss rival motions from dairyman Richard Jones proposing support for employers, versus Edward Lee of Lee's drapery in Rathmines that the employers should stop refusing to employ union members.

This unputdownable book brings the history of Dublin Chamber of Commerce up to the gradual revival of Irish industry in the 20th century, through the Celtic Tiger to the housing bubble and the crash of 2008. A fabulous book.

Bamboo & Fern, the story of Ava Brown, subtitled 'Jamaica's 'Corporate Queen', is the classic Cinderella cycle of those with terrible childhood experiences – hope and ambition, followed by success, a crash and then hope for better things, a tortuous climb of two steps forward, one step back.

One of nine children of a poor Jamaican family, she was taken from school early to sell mangoes to help support her mother and siblings.

She studied every moment she could, ran messages for neighbours – and was adopted into the home of a father figure. At first, this was a rags-to-riches story, but soon she found she was effectively a maid.

Determined to become a lawyer, she found herself in a line of students trying to get to college; refused, she doorstepped Burchell Whiteman in his Ministry of Education. His generous backing got her not into law school, but teacher's training college, and so continues Brown's rollercoaster story. Her editors failed her a little – there are contradictions here and there that at times discourage the reader. But it's an interesting story of a determined woman.

Her editors failed her a little – there are contradictions here and there that at times discourage the reader. But it's an interesting story of a determined woman.

The Naked CEO comes from Alex Malley, chief executive of accountancy giant CPA Australia, listed in The Accountant as one of the world’s 50 most influential people in his business, and host of the Australian leadership discussion TV series The Bottom Line.

The book comes out of the mentoring community thenakedceo.com, and is chock-a-block full of excellent advice.

When you make a wrong decision or take what seems like a wrong turning, Malley writes, you haven’t made a mistake – you’ve made a friend. Like your friends, your mistakes make you stronger and smarter.

The secret is to acknowledge your mistakes and study them. When you have a mistake under the scalpel, when you open up its anatomy and see what happened and how, you learn about accountability, and that’s an essential quality for a man or woman leading a company.

“I find it disappointing when someone who has contributed to a mistake does not consider how to fix it before raising it with me,” he writes. “The negativity surrounding the issue may be minimised when the problem and possible solution are offered at the same time.”

Malley says one thing that people schooled in the set-for-success career path of business degrees and high-flying industrial boardrooms should hear: insights can come from everywhere. He tells a story about sitting beside his mother’s hospital bed as a scared kid. Doctors and nurses came in and out, but nobody talked to him or seemed to see him. Then a cleaner came in, and said, “You must be Alex. Your mother has told me all about you and your brothers and sisters. I think your mother is great, you’re lucky to have her.”

The encounter was “so brief, but so poignant”, says Malley. “... And he gave me a renewed appreciation that insight can come from anyone, at any time.”

He recommends looking everywhere for insights, writing down your own creative thoughts and expanding them, starting conversations with people you don't know, in many different environments. Learn body language, he says – so you know when to back off, too.

His book is full of snippets quotes from Malley himself, brief essays from his mentees, key points. Very accessible.

A mentor in your pocket, The Naked CEO is an excellent resource, especially for those starting out in business.

A Most Respectable Meeting of Merchants: Dublin Chamber of Commerce: A History by Enda MacMahon, Londubh Books

Bamboo & Fern by Ava Brown, New Generation

The Naked CEO: The Truth You Need to Build a Big Life by Alex Malley, Wiley
MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Compiled by Enterprise Ireland’s Market Research Centre team.

Enterprise Ireland’s Market Research Centre hosts Ireland’s most comprehensive collection of business intelligence resources and is staffed by specialists who can assist EI clients find company, market and project information.

The centre subscribes to a wide variety of databases, including:
- Frost & Sullivan
- Forrester
- Euromonitor Passports
- AMA Research
- BvD Orbis

The reports summarised on these pages are just a sample of the type of information available. Follow us on Twitter @EI_MRC to see further examples of recent reports available or check out the MRC site at www.enterprise-ireland.com/MRC

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ICT/SOFTWARE

The Global Tech Market Outlook For 2015 To 2016: Five Themes That Will Define the Tech Market
Forrester
January 2015

As CIOs prepare and manage their 2015 tech budgets, they can confidently push for increases of 4 per cent to 6 per cent in their purchases of tech goods and services, depending on their country. Tech spending in the US, China, India, the UK and the Nordics will be at the high end of this range; in the rest of Europe and Latin America, growth will be at the low end. Demand will be strongest for software, especially for analytics and cloud apps and related services, but weaker in hardware and outsourcing, creating savings opportunities. New project spending will be strong, much of it for technologies that support the business technology agenda for winning, serving and retaining customers.

Predictions 2015: Software Platforms Drive Internet-of-Things Adoption – How the Connected World Will Advance
Forrester
November 2014

The Internet of Things (IoT) has become hugely visible as firms like Cisco Systems and General Electric (GE) promote the size of the market and number of connected devices, and IBM talks about building a smarter planet. With industry discussion at an all-time high, what’s coming next? Forrester believes that the IoT trend is about to enter a second stage in its development that will focus on software application platforms that provide prebuilt connectivity, security, management and analytics capabilities. Firms ranging from Ayla Networks to GE to PTC offer such platforms to make it easier for product manufacturers and asset owner/operators to implement IoT solutions. As the IoT focus shifts away from devices and networks towards platforms and applications, CIOs have a central role to play in helping their line-of-business counterparts understand how to incorporate the IoT into their business technology agenda.

The Mobile Wallet: A Pathway to Creating the Consumer-Centric Experience of Tomorrow
Euromonitor
January 2015

This report discusses today’s mobile payments landscape, mobile lessons from Starbucks and best practices for implementation. When Starbucks Corp came to market in 2011 with its mobile payments app, there had yet to be a company that had gained much traction with the relatively new idea of a consumer using a mobile phone to make an in-store purchase. Now, the coffeehouse giant has gained considerable attention in this burgeoning industry. For merchants looking to replicate Starbucks’ success, there are 10 best practices to keep in mind before designing, developing and launching a mobile payments app.

The Top 10 Strategic Technology Trends for 2015
Gartner
January 2015

Gartner’s 2015 top 10 strategic technology trends for IT leaders are the prime enablers behind new digital business opportunities. Their disruptive power stems from merging virtual and physical worlds, the growth of intelligence everywhere and the emerging new realities of IT. Computing everywhere, the Internet of Things and 3D printing, combined, are creating new business opportunities from a blending of the physical and virtual worlds. Intelligence everywhere is quickly approaching, fuelled by advanced, pervasive and invisible analytics, context-rich systems and smart machines. Digital business is driving new IT realities, including cloud/client computing, software-defined applications and infrastructure, web-scale IT and risk-based security and self-protection.

Wearable Technologies: Has the Next Enterprise Game Changer Arrived?
Frost & Sullivan
December 2014

The latest disruption to impact the enterprise world is wearable technology, which threatens to challenge the status quo of existing processes and procedures in a wide range of industries, including retail, manufacturing and healthcare. The market for wearables is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years. The factors accelerating market growth include the ability of wearables to act as a gateway to the IoT world, to provide contextual computing capability and to empower the wearer with unique capabilities. However, some key challenges need to be overcome before mass adoption becomes possible.

3D Printing Technology – 9 Dimensional Assessment (Technical Insights): Ushering the Future of Manufacturing and Creativity
Frost & Sullivan
December 2014

The future of three-dimensional (3D) printing and its market implications will be determined by the breadth and depth of application potential it carries and its ability to unleash a whole new world of application segments. Right from printing a mobile phone cover to reconstructing human organs, 3D printing has shown its technology capability in the world of prototyping. Its impact in the future is expected to go beyond market predictions across multiple industries.
**FOOD, RETAIL AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS**

**European Retail Segmentation: Emerging Patterns of Multi-Touch-Point Shopping**

*Forrester*

*April 2014*

This report uses Forrester’s global retail segmentation to help ebusines professionals understand the nuances of shopper behaviour across European markets. The segmentation identifies key touch-points used along the path to purchase to help create the most relevant shopping experiences for target customers.

**The Global eCommerce Opportunity**

*Forrester*

*March 2014*

Gone are the days when most brands offered just one or two international sites. Today, a global ecommerce footprint is the end goal. This report examines how ecommerce organisations are tackling global markets, where they’re falling short and what they can do to maximise opportunities.

**Trends in Frozen Food 2014**

*Datamonitor*

*March 2014*

This market briefing outlines the most important consumer and product trends impacting the frozen food category globally, using Datamonitor’s TrendSights mega-trend framework.

**Consumer and Innovation Trends in Pet Care 2014**

*Datamonitor*

*February 2014*

Using Datamonitor’s TrendSights mega-trend framework to organise key themes, this brief outlines the most important consumer and product trends impacting the pet care category globally.

**Confectionery UK 2014**

*Key Note*

*April 2014*

The analysis argues that the way in which short- and long-term trends will combine in the coming years will shape the future outlook of the UK confectionery market. This is particularly relevant given the upcoming 2016 deadline set by the Government’s Responsibility Deal, which many major manufacturers signed with the aim of improving public health.

Key Note forecasts modest market growth of 11.7 per cent between 2014 and 2018.

**CLEANTECH, LIFE SCIENCE, CONSTRUCTION AND INDUSTRIAL**

**Product and Pipeline Assessment of the Global Orphan Drugs Market**

*Frost & Sullivan*

*February 2014*

This research provides a global overview and analysis of global orphan drugs development, with an emphasis on the US market. It provides an analysis of drug development and regulatory activity by disease area and geography, a detailed product and pipeline analysis of orphan drugs by therapeutic area and disease and a company analysis, including key companies to watch.

**Medical Devices Pricing & Reimbursement 2014**

*Business Monitor International*

*March 2014*

This guide provides information on medical device pricing and reimbursement in 17 established and emerging economies. It examines the increasing role that health technology assessment plays in the reimbursement decision-making process and procurement strategies, both of which have a direct impact on device pricing. The regions covered include Asia Pacific, the USA, EU and Americas.

**Data Centre Construction Market Report: UK 2014 – 2018 Analysis**

*AMA Research*

*February 2014*

This report provides both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data centre construction sector. It focuses on market size and trends, influences, key end-use sectors and future prospects.

**US Markets for Peripheral Vascular Devices**

*Medtech Insight*

*March 2014*

In 2012, approximately 3.8 million interventional procedures for the diagnosis and treatment of peripheral vascular devices were performed in the US, generating an estimated $1.67bn sales. The number of interventions is expected to increase at a CAGR of 2.0 per cent during the forecast period. This report includes analyses of products, current and forecast markets and competitors and opportunities.

**Peripheral Vascular Products: Technologies and Global Markets**

*BCC Research*

*February 2014*

According to BCC, the global market for peripheral vascular surgical devices reached $5.8 billion in 2012. This market is projected to grow from $6.2 billion in 2013 to $8.4 billion in 2018 with CAGR of 6.3 per cent from 2013 to 2018. The US accounted for a 52 per cent share of the overall market in 2012 and is forecast to decline to a 47 per cent share of the overall market in 2018. Europe accounted for a 26 per cent share of the overall market in 2012 and is forecast to decline to 22 per cent of the overall market in 2018.
An update on customs compliance, trade regulations and negotiations

TRADE REGULATIONS, INFORMATION AND NEGOTIATIONS

Information on export duties and regulation is available in the ‘Export’ section of Enterprise Ireland’s website.

EU-Kazakhstan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

The EU and Kazakhstan have initialled an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, aimed at facilitating stronger political and economic relations between the two territories. Kazakhstan is the first Central Asian partner to have concluded an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU. In the area of trade and business, the agreement seeks to ensure a better regulatory environment in areas such as trade in services, establishment and operation of companies, capital movements, raw materials and energy, government procurement and intellectual property rights.

European Parliament provides green light for EU-Georgia trade area

The European Parliament has given its formal backing to the EU-Georgia Association Agreement that includes the creation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (FTA). Applied provisionally since September 2014, the FTA provides for a closer economic integration between the two partners. It offers Georgia better access to the EU market for its goods and services. It sets also a path for trade-related reforms that will boost access for Georgian goods to the EU market and increase consumer safety in Georgia. In addition, as the agreement promotes an open, stable and predictable policy-making environment, it is expected to encourage European direct investment in Georgia.

EU requests WTO dispute settlement panel over Russia’s excessive import duties

The EU has requested the establishment of a dispute settlement panel at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva over Russia’s excessive import duties, in particular on paper products, refrigerators and palm oil. Russia is currently diverging from what was agreed at the time of its joining the WTO in two ways: by applying a higher duty rate, e.g. 15 per cent instead of 5 per cent for paper products, or, in case of refrigerators and palm oil, fixing a minimum amount to be paid even if not justified by the agreed duty rate expressed in a percentage of the product value.

Initalling of EU Trade Agreement with Ecuador

A new protocol has been initialled to allow Ecuador to join its neighbours, Colombia and Peru, in a preferential trade relationship with the EU. The negotiations for a trade agreement between the EU and the Andean Community (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) were launched in June 2007. After stalling in 2008, the talks continued in 2009 with Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. However, in July of that year, Ecuador dropped out of the negotiations. An agreement was subsequently concluded with Colombia and Peru in March 2010 and signed in June 2012.

During this time, contacts were maintained with Ecuador and Bolivia, and Ecuador returned to the negotiating table in January 2014.

The agreement that has now been initialled will allow Ecuador to benefit from improved access for its main exports to the EU – fisheries, bananas, cut flowers, coffee, cocoa, fruits and nuts. It is also hoped that the agreement will also provide improved access to the Ecuadorian market for many key EU exports, for example, in the automotive sector and for alcoholic beverages.

WTO condemns Argentina’s import restrictions

The WTO’s Appellate Body has confirmed that various practices imposed by the Argentinean authorities on companies as a condition to import goods into the country are illegal under WTO law. According to the ruling, Argentina should no longer require foreign firms to limit their imports, offset the value of imports with equivalent exports, invest in the country and keep their profits there, or use certain amounts of Argentine content in their products. The WTO’s Appellate Body also confirmed that Argentina should not require firms to secure an approval for their imports using the procedure known as the Advanced Sworn Import Declaration. The WTO has requested Argentina to now renounce these practices.

European Union and Myanmar/Burma conclude first round of trade talks

The first round of negotiations on an investment protection agreement between the European Union and Myanmar/Burma took place this February in Yangon. This round offered the EU the opportunity to present its text proposal and to have a first exchange of views on the text with Myanmar/Burma.

The country’s Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) has reported that the rate of foreign investment in Myanmar has grown 500 per cent since revisions to its Foreign Investment Law in 2012. FDI in Myanmar reached over $3 billion in 2013.

This, the first standalone agreement on investment protection negotiated by the EU, would cover investors from all 28 member states, as no member state currently has an investment protection agreement in place with Myanmar/Burma. The next round of negotiations will take place in May 2015.
According to data just released by the greenfield investment monitor fDi Markets, the stream of foreign investments began to weaken in 2014. In the first three quarters of the year, investors launched 12,525 new ventures, down 4.9 per cent, compared with 13,164 projects initiated in the same period of 2013.

Defying the downward trend, however, Egypt was the most improved destination for FDI worldwide. Recovering from the impact of the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 and the military ousting of President Mohammed Morsi in 2013, the country saw a 61 per cent increase in new cross-border ventures in the first three quarters of 2014, with 58 projects recorded.

Egypt and key Asian economies the fastest growing investment destinations of 2014

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Second on the list of the countries that recorded the biggest gains in FDI in 2014 was Vietnam, according to fDi Markets. In the first three quarters of 2014, the country secured 151 new projects, up 57 per cent from the same period a year earlier. Vietnam was closely followed by ASEAN co-members Malaysia and Philippines, with India coming in fifth place for growth in new foreign investment over the year.

Scandinavian Airlines to increase frequency on Dublin to Stockholm route

Scandinavian Airlines has announced a further increase in service on its Dublin-to-Stockholm route for summer 2015, adding two additional frequencies a week. The current SAS summer timetable operates six days a week on the Dublin to Stockholm route. SAS now plans to increase this to seven days. In addition, SAS is to add an additional seasonal flight on Sundays, providing a double-daily service during the summer period.
LILLE

With the recent addition of the town of Lomme, the ancient city of Lille’s official population is approaching 220,000. Now the 10th largest city and fourth largest metropolis in France, and with over 35 per cent of its population under the age of 25, Lille is earning its spurs as a vivid, vibrant and vital city. A former European Capital of Culture (in 2004), Lille has also subsequently strengthened its status as a must-see destination for culture and tourism as well as for many trade events.

FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE CITY:
Lille Lesquin International Airport is located 15 minutes (11km) from the city centre, but its passenger traffic is deemed to be unexceptional due to the city’s proximity to airports at Brussels and Paris-CDG. The city is 80 minutes on the Eurostar line to/from London, one hour by train from Paris and less than 40 minutes from Brussels.

SLEEP:
1st Choice: Hermitage Gantois, 224 rue de Paris, is an exceptional 5 star hotel in the heart of Lille that blends history with modern design, charm with business; it also boasts an excellent restaurant that is perfect for mixing work with leisure. Free Wi-Fi. www.hotelhermitagegantois.com

2nd Choice: Carlton Hotel, 3 rue de Paris, is a perfectly situated 4-star hotel (deceptively luxurious!) right beside the Opera, the Vielle Bourse, and the city’s very own Grand Place. Free wi-fi. www.carltonlille.com

EAT:
Lunch: Au Vieux de la Vieille, 2-4 rue des Vieux Murs, is regarded as one of the best restaurants in the city for regional cuisine. Located on the cobblestoned place de l’Oignon, during the warmer months, it has outdoor seating. It doesn’t get more ‘French charm’ than this!

Dinner: If sophistication is the name of the game, then look no further than A l’Huitriere, 3 rue des Chats Bossus. This is a smart restaurant known citywide for its range of seafood and its well stocked wine cellar. On the premises there is also an oyster bar, which comes with a lower price tag. www.huitriere.fr

THREE THINGS TO DO IF YOU HAVE A FEW HOURS TO SPARE:
Relaxing: If you’re looking for a quaint place to relax in, take a seat and a morning coffee in Le Meert, 27 Rue Esquermoise, which is quite likely one of the oldest (it has remained unchanged since 1839) and most elegant patisserie-confiserie (cake and sweet shop) you’ll ever set foot in.

Tourist Attraction: Lille Museum of Fine Arts, 18 Rue de Valmy, is France’s second most popular museum (the Louvre, Paris, is number one). It houses an impressive range of paintings covering all art forms from the 16th-20th century. www.pba-lille.fr

Walking: Lille’s so-called ‘old centre’ is a substantial area containing numerous 17th and 18th century townhouses and other buildings. Make a special effort to take in the beautifully positioned Vieille Bourse, a perfect square located between Place de Theatre and Grand Place.
# Enterprise Ireland International Network

## Head Office

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