

THE bISME

THE BUSINESS OF IRISH SMEs

Taking stock of Irish Business today

Newstalk's Business Editor Vincent Wall talks about the world of radio and key issues facing Irish business

CRITICAL NEED FOR SMES TO PREPARE FOR THE END OF THE BREXIT TRANSITION PERIOD

Advice & actions to take before January 2021

HR FOCUS

Understanding Parent vs Parental Leave

COPING WITH COVID THROUGH THE GROWTH MINDSET

Transforming our decision making as we adapt to change

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Neil McDonnell voices his deep concern about the COVID crisis

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Credit Review





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Dark days for small business & the people behind them

Hello readers

This is a difficult piece to write. October has seen us return to a highly restrictive lockdown as COVID-19 infection numbers rise. We know that lockdown is a natural public health response to rapidly increasing infection rates, but it is not a solution to the pandemic. In those countries which have successfully tackled COVID-19, lockdown is not the solution, it is used to create breathing space for public health, while control measures are put in place. That has not been the case in Ireland.

As you know, ISME has been loath to criticise the public health effort in the control of COVID-19. We were reticent to criticise public servants as they dealt with the onset of this crisis in Q1 and Q2. We felt it important to give them time to respond. We now feel it is no longer appropriate for us to remain silent.

The period following our spring lockdown has been wasted. We have not instituted a robust testing, tracing, isolation and control (TTIC) system. Without this, we suffer the pain of lockdown without the reward of a virus controlled in society. We are not managing COVID-19. COVID-19 is managing us.

As of now, NPHEP appears exclusively wedded to PCR testing as the methodology of testing. While PCR is regarded as the gold-standard of COVID testing, it is expensive and time-consuming. Other countries have introduced cheaper testing methods with faster results such as antigen testing, albeit with lower levels of accuracy.

Despite our National Virus Reference Laboratory at UCD strongly advocating for the retention of PCR testing as our main testing methodology, they announced their inability to staff testing for two consecutive weekends. This is unacceptable. We need a rapid and robust testing regime consistent with the seriousness of the place we are in.

What has worked in Australia, New Zealand and those Pacific Rim countries which have controlled COVID-19, is not just a lockdown of society. It is a lockdown to reduce the R₀ below 1.0, accompanied by border quarantine measures; strong public health infrastructure; good testing infrastructure; and crucially, a solid legal framework for quarantine and isolation. Ireland is running with lockdown as the only shot in its gun. This approach is not merely doomed to fail, it will fail while causing



Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME.

untold misery, ill-health, and penury throughout society.

NPHEP is composed of some 30(+) public servants; well-meaning, devoted and intelligent, but completely unaware of the ruin resulting from successive lockdowns. Most of them earn over €150,000 per annum, and none are exposed to the financial and psychological shock of being forced onto the PUP. We believe their advice to Government is fundamentally flawed in this regard.

Work is not just a means to put bread on the table. It is an essential component of mental wellbeing, of the pursuit of purpose, and of social interaction. Shutting so many businesses causes not just serious commercial impacts, it is provoking profound social, personal, and mental crises for people.

Members are reporting suicides among work colleagues, friends, or family members. This is always a difficult, delicate subject, and as lay-people, we all struggle to deal with those whose mental health is suffering. Suicide is an irreversible response to a reversible situation. Please look out for each other, and make sure every colleague knows they are not alone. The HSE's Resources for Suicide Prevention are available [here](#).

This is a difficult time for you, for your families, and for your employees. But it will end. Please bear that in mind, and make every effort to help those around you, and ask for help when you need it.

We all have our part to play. ISME is including our personal responsibility message in every email we send:

WASH HANDS | MASK UP | MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE | FOLLOW THE FRAMEWORK

Lastly, it is essential that you actively engage with your TDs and Ministers to let them know what is happening, and how they can ease lockdown without damaging the fight against COVID-19. You can find their contact details [here](#) and view the letter we sent to all TDs on 2nd November [here](#).

Stay Safe,

Neil McDonnell

ISME CEO

ISME WELLNESS PROGRAMME

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

UNLIMITED ACCESS FOR AN EMPLOYEE
AND THEIR FAMILY TO:

- 24/7 Freephone Mental wellbeing support
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- Video/telephone counselling option
- Support across finance, legal, mediation, parenting coaching, life coaching and more

€500 p.a. for up to 30 employees, for each subsequent employee €9 per employee p.a.

[LEARN MORE >](#)

USEFUL EVENTS FOR SMEs

Low Carbon Supports for SMEs – Online briefing from SEAI

Tuesday, 17th November
10.00am-10.45am

[Book here](#)

Pendulum Resurgence – Emerging from disruption

Friday, 27th November
All day

[Book here](#)

InterTradeIreland Equity Advisory Centre - Online

Tuesday, 8th December
Time-slot will be assigned between 8.30am and 3.30pm

[Book here](#)

Thursday, 10th December
Time-slot will be assigned between 8.30am and 3.30pm

[Book here.](#)

Tuesday, 15th December
Time-slot will be assigned between 8.30am and 3.30pm

[Book here.](#)

InterTradeIreland Go-2-Tender Workshop

Thursday, 19th November
9.30am-4.30pm

[Book here](#)

InterTradeIreland Go-2-Tender Workshop - Public Sector Construction Market

Thursday, 10th December
9.30am-4.30pm

[Book here](#)

INTRODUCING THAT GREAT BUSINESS SHOW

ISME is delighted to see that broadcaster, businessman and the MC for ISME's Annual Conferences for the past four years, Conall O Móráin has launched a new podcast called ***That Great Business Show***.

He is teaming up with rugby star and businessman Jamie Heaslip. The new podcast series is a weekly business show featuring Irish businesses from across the island of Ireland.

Commenting, Conall O Móráin said, "I'm thrilled to be back on air with *That Great Business Show*. Given the COVID turmoil we're all living with we're particularly keen to do our bit to help Irish businesses succeed.

"Our TeamGBS (Great Business Show) will back the truly brave, those who put their cash and careers on the line to pursue their dreams of commercial success. Jamie and I felt it was the perfect time to do our bit to give practical advice to businesses, across all sectors, on how to succeed in this time of adversity."

ThatGreatBusinessShow.com is available now across all podcast platforms.



FREE ONLINE TRAINING WITH THE SEAI ENERGY ACADEMY INSPECTIONS

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has launched the Energy Academy, a free online training resource to help businesses reduce their energy costs. The Energy Academy can help businesses to lower energy bills by as much as 10%, through education and training on changing energy use behaviours. Sign up [here](#).



GUIDANCE FOR WORKING REMOTELY

In July 2020 the Department of Business held a Public Consultation on Remote Work Guidance for employers and employees. The full findings of the consultation are [available here](#). In response to the results of the consultation, a guidance page has been set up and acts as a live resource for employers and employees adopting remote working practices. As such, it will be updated as new guidance is developed to support workers and business, both in response to COVID-19 and in the longer-term.

SOLAS ANNOUNCE NEW LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) developed a new Leadership and Management training initiative, in collaboration with employers, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the Regional Skills Fora. The highly subsidised training is available to employers to upskill their staff and help rebuild their business during COVID-19.

The programme is part of the national Skills to Advance Further Education and Training initiative, which supports businesses to develop their employees. It is being rolled out by the ETBs nationwide.

The Leadership and Management programme aims to upskill supervisory staff in areas including change management, motivating workers, digital skills and remote working.

SOLAS, the ETBs and their enterprise partners encourage employers across all industry sectors to avail of this opportunity to upskill key managers at this critical time for business recovery. Companies will have access to local high-quality online training to deal with the new business environment, its challenges and opportunities.

Further information is available at www.skillsstoadvance.ie or by contacting your local Education and Training Board.

ISME MEMBERS – WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

SHOPPING LOCAL

"In a world that seems to be turned upside down, at this time, it is now, more than ever, very important to shop locally. By shopping locally we are all supporting indigenous Irish producers and manufacturers, who are the backbone of Irish communities, who employ locally, and spend locally. If we don't do this, it will lead to the destruction and demise of both urban and rural communities in Ireland"

D.J KELLEHER,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
RIVERVIEW EGGS LTD

BUDGET 2021

"We welcomed the increase of the Earned Income Credit for the self employed which was increased from €1,500 to €1,650. This now makes it equal with the PAYE credit.

Another positive was the reduction in VAT from 13.5% - 9% however we believe the temporary reduction in the 23% VAT rate should be made permanent.

Finally we noted the significant spend on health and hope that some of this can be invested in the introduction of a fit for purpose testing regime, that will keep Ireland in Level 1 & 2"

ISME BUDGET 2021 COMMITTEE:

ROSS MCCARTHY, KEYSTONE PROCUREMENT

EILIS QUINLAN, QUINLAN & CO.

JAMIE O'HANLON, AVID PARTNERS

LEVEL 5 & BUSINESS

Overview of
**Covid
Restrictions
Support
Scheme (CRSS)**

COVID RESTRICTIONS SUPPORT SCHEME

In his Budget speech on 13th October 2020, the Minister for Finance announced his intention to introduce the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme ("CRSS").

This scheme is an additional support for businesses subject to significant Covid-19 restrictions

The scheme is intended to be in addition to the supports provided to employers under the Employer Wage Support Scheme. CRSS will be available to companies and self-employed individuals operating a business, profits from which are chargeable to tax under Case I of Schedule D.

Qualifying taxpayers will be able to log on to ROS and register for CRSS. The registration process will include providing details such as the location of the business and average weekly turnover for 2019. Once they have registered, a taxpayer will be able to make a claim for the period their business is restricted from operating. Read more [here](#).

Wellbeing Live

with Laya Healthcare



FREE WELLNESSES RESOURCES FROM LAYA HEALTHCARE

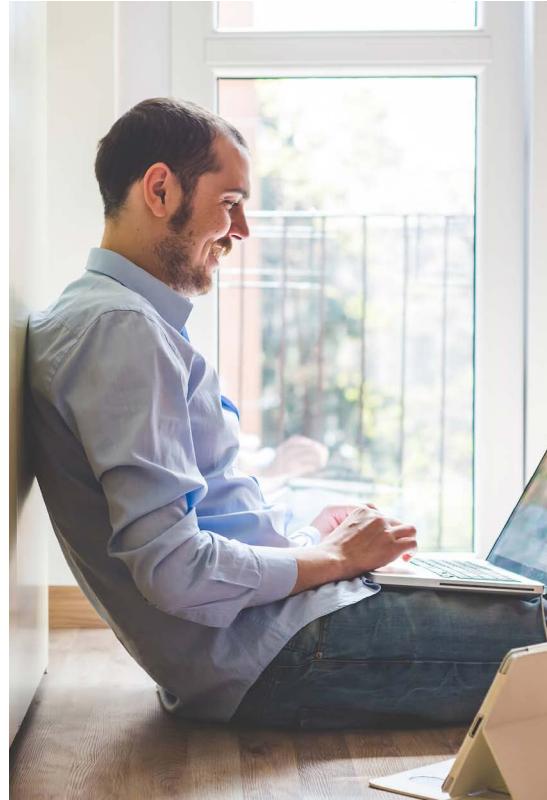
Every day we hear horrific stories that are reminders to look after each other and our mental health in these unprecedented times. Our wellness partners Laya Healthcare have developed Wellbeing Live – all free, all live and all available to you at home. Take a look at their portal [here](#) and if you want to further support your employees we would encourage you to take a look at our Wellness Programme [here](#).

GOOGLE PROVIDING FREE DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING TO ISME MEMBERS

Google Ireland is partnering with ISME on a series of trainings as part of its **Grow with Google** initiative. Kicking off on 25th November, the online courses and webinars, which are free to ISME members, will provide SMEs with practical training to help them grow and enhance their online presence.

The first webinar will take place on Wednesday 25th November at 11.00 am and will focus on Search & Maps with Google My Business. The second webinar, Get started with search engine optimisation (SEO), will take place the following Wednesday, the 2nd of December.

You can register for both [here](#).



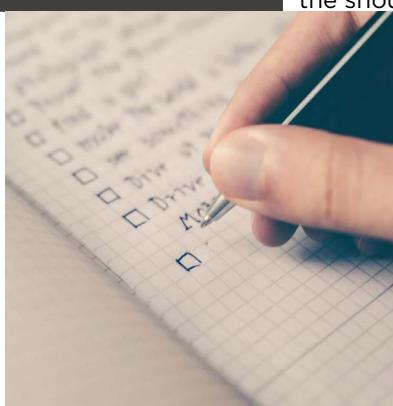
STAY AND SPEND

Stay and Spend is a tax scheme that has been created to support the Irish tourism and hospitality sector to help drive sales during the shoulder season.

GETTING BUSINESS BREXIT READY

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement and we are now in a transitional period until 31 December 2020. During this time, the UK remains part of the EU Single Market and Customs Union so EU rules and regulations continue to apply. Whatever the shape of the future trading relationship with the UK post transition, trading conditions with the UK will change and businesses need to prepare for that change.

The Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation has produced the **Brexit Readiness Checklist** which highlights some of the key actions that businesses can take to get ready for the changes Brexit will bring from 1 January 2021. The checklist includes links to the relevant Agencies who can provide the necessary guidance and support to businesses. Take a look [here](#)



The scheme will provide a maximum of €125 in income tax credits to tax-payers who spend up to €625 in restaurants, pubs, hotels, B&Bs and other qualifying businesses, from 1st October 2020 to 30th April 2021, including over the Christmas period. It is available to 2.7 million Irish consumers and will see taxpayers earn a tax credit equal to 20% of qualifying expenditure on accommodation, food and non-alcoholic drinks up to a maximum credit of €125.

It is important that eligible hospitality businesses register for the Stay and Spend Scheme as a service provider. You or your registered agent can register for the scheme by using the 'Stay and Spend - Service Provider Registration' link in the 'Other Services' section of ROS, Revenue's Online Service [here](#).



"The course is tailored to the needs of our business"

Skills to Advance

Highly subsidised Supervisory Management training

- To help team leaders and supervisors meet the business challenges of Covid-19
- To upskill in people management, digital and remote working

Contact your local Education and Training Board or visit skillstoadvance.ie

Taking stock of Irish Business today

Vincent Wall,
Business Editor, Newstalk



Talk us through your career and what has led you to this point?

I think when most people write or talk about their careers these days, they reflect a process that, to some degree, has been planned in terms of the skills, levels of responsibility and networking opportunities they have sought to achieve on each step of the journey. I can only admire this level of strategic focus. I, on the other hand, having tried my hand at bank work and teaching, have worked in the broad communications sector most of my adult life. I've principally been a business and financial journalist with the likes of RTÉ, Independent Newspapers, Business & Finance and Newstalk, where I am currently contracted, and a communications manager and consultant with the daa, and as a self-employed contractor. I've enjoyed each role, but have to admit that very few were planned. They seem to have come about principally due to a bit of luck or a gut feeling that it was time to move on and try something else...I hope I'm not running out of road

What do you enjoy about your role as Business Editor in Newstalk?

Apart from getting out of bed at 4.15 am on working days you mean? I have to say, as somebody who has been around a while, Newstalk has been a very energising place to work given the youthful average age demographic, the energy and can-do spirit of all who work there. I also particularly enjoy the contrast between the more reflective and longer interviews we carry out for our weekend podcast/broadcast, *Taking Stock*, and the more immediate material on weekdays for *Breakfast Business* and news bulletins

Tell us about your podcast series *Taking Stock* with Vincent Wall?

Taking Stock was launched in March of last year, so we're well into our second season of weekly podcasts from Friday mornings and broadcasts on Newstalk at 10am on Sundays. And while it's evolving all the time in terms of the topics we cover, broadly speaking our objective has remained the same - to offer detailed interviews with specialist contributors about current and prospective business and economic trends impacting Ireland and the wider globe. I work on my own on *Breakfast Business* and news bulletins, so it's great to have the support of producer, Stephen Jordan and a small team of great researchers on *Taking Stock*.

“

Newstalk has been a very energising place to work given the youthful average age demographic, the energy and can-do spirit of all who work there.

What changes have you seen in the world of journalism over the last few years?

Clearly the most transformative change over the past twenty years has been from newspapers to online in terms of print journalism, and the impact that has had on many traditional news organisations, internationally, nationally and locally. Broadcasting has been impacted by significantly more competition in the field and the growing popularity of podcasts. But in Ireland at least, it

has still not been disrupted to the same degree as the print sector. That said, the “hoovering” of advertising revenues by the tech giants is becoming an existential threat for all.

The other major change has been the impact of social media, not only in terms of how people source their information – accurate or not – but also in the number of journalists who tend to use platforms such as Twitter to break stories, frequently in advance of the organisations that employ them. I suppose it can be chalked down as a form of marketing for all parties concerned, but from a commercial point of view, I find it difficult to rationalise

What do you think are the challenges and opportunities facing radio in a busy global media market?

The principal challenge for commercial radio is to secure sufficient advertising revenues to finance broadcast operations, while providing some reasonable return for owners or investors. This is obviously a greater challenge for a talk-radio operation such as Newstalk, which by its nature has a much higher requirement for presenters, journalists, producers, researchers and production staff, than a music-driven station

The opportunity, I suppose, is to continue delivering consistent high-quality content that drives listenership numbers and thereby convinces advertisers that radio remains a very effective and immediate medium for reaching target audiences. I think we are lucky in Ireland in that we still value accurate and objective broadcast coverage of news, current affairs and sport, and relish the cut and thrust of informed opinion delivered by the human voice. Long may that continue!

You recently presented ISME’s Virtual Brexit panel discussion (20th October), what are your thoughts on Brexit and the impact it will have on business in Ireland?

Well, we’re all pretty familiar I think with the big picture impact of Brexit on our economy, particularly if the UK and EU fail to hammer out a minimal trade agreement, and tariffs and quotas are triggered. The recent webinar I hosted for ISME for the benefit of SME businesses, revealed however, just how complex the various customs registration and product certification procedures will be, and that will now inevitably apply for even small volumes or ranges of product imports and exports; a complexity and cost all firms could do without. Once again, the incredible resilience of Irish businesses will be tested to the limit in many cases.

COVID has impacted Irish business like nothing else, in particular SMEs, have you noticed any specific business trends that you believe will continue in the future?

Obviously, the biggest trend has been the accelerated move online, not just for business meetings and events, but for all manner of retail and other transactions. The COVID crisis has shown us that online and virtual activity can work to a much greater degree than previously thought, and has brought advantages in terms of convenience, greater choice, competitive pricing, and flexibility for those of us who can work from home. The long-term downside of course will be the impact on those local retailers that can’t compete either on price, convenience or product range.

As a commentator on businesses, what do you think will be the fallout of COVID and Brexit for Irish SMEs over the next few years?

The confluence of two of the greatest threats ever to face Irish SMEs, COVID and Brexit, will certainly test the resilience of very many of them, and regardless of the scale and nature of support from the State, some of those who came into the crisis with significant borrowings, high fixed overheads, or an over-dependency on either the hospitality sector or the UK market, may, unfortunately, not make it through. Those that do survive, hopefully the majority, will be all the more robust as a result, in terms of their cost base, cash flows, innovative use of technology and ability to secure alternative markets for their products and services



One area where I think we could do a lot better is to incentivise the release of the huge savings built up by those whose jobs & earnings haven’t been affected

What measures do you think need to be put in place for the economy to recover?

I think the two governments in place since the COVID crisis hit us, have done a pretty good job in terms of their direct and indirect support measures for businesses and employees. I also think that in those instances where they have been too cautious or bureaucratic in their initial responses, they have listened and responded well to those issues. One area where I think we could still do a lot better is to incentivise the release of the huge savings built up by those whose jobs and earnings haven’t been affected, and who are either not in a position to, or reluctant to spend or invest. For instance, an expansion of the tax-free gift voucher system once it is spent in Irish shops and businesses would be welcome, or a speedier modification of the EISS scheme to encourage greater equity or debt investment in growing Irish firms

Do you have a business mentor? What business advice did you receive that you rated?

I’ve never had a specific mentor, but over the years have been fortunate to have benefitted from the counsel of a number of experienced business practitioners who were generous with their time and advice. One of those suggested, when I first set up my own business, to take on an employee who could look after much of the basics while I focused on growing the client base. It was not long after the Financial Crash and I’m afraid I didn’t have the courage to follow that advice. As a consequence, I have come to admire deeply those business people who actually provide employment and take on responsibility for the livelihoods of others as well as themselves. They are amongst the true modern heroes, in my view.

Find out more about Vincent’s *Taking Stock* podcast series [here](#).



Member stories during COVID-19

Gilligan's Farm

We're a family owned farming and butcher operation based in Roscommon supplying beef and lamb to retail outlets, restaurants and hotels. The restaurant and hotel trade makes up a large portion of our business, so when COVID hit, like so many others, it had a huge impact on our business.



We needed to shift a lot of stock at the time, so we posted on social to see if there was demand to buy directly from our farm and got a great response! After that, we decided to set up an online store, offering a click and collect service, as well as farm to door delivery across the Dublin area.

Pivoting to online sales has been a steep learning curve for our business but also an exciting one. We've had to switch our marketing from a B2B to a B2C audience overnight and have relied a lot on social and Google advertising to do that.

We've also been fortunate enough to get support from some of the chefs that we supply like Eric Matthews, Head Chef at Chapter One and Ben Dineen, Executive Chef at l'Gueleton. They've helped to introduce us to a larger consumer base in Dublin by sharing recipes and content on social media.

We're continuing to learn and adapt with the times. If one thing is for certain it's that nothing ever stays the same!

For more information about Gilligan's Farm or to place an online order visit gilligansfarm.ie

**Catherine Fitzsimons-Belgaïd, FreshThinking**

Like most businesses in the current pandemic, FreshThinking has been negatively impacted, as the core of our business is providing human resource management services to the SME sector in Ireland. Over 90 per cent of our clients are classified as non-essential services and have unfortunately experienced extensive closures resulting in temporary layoffs, while some have unfortunately had to close their businesses with the expectation that they will never return.



Fortunately, FreshThinking has managed to keep our business afloat by focusing on the area of training and development which we believe is a key to continuous improvement and smarter business. While we have seen a downturn in the usual demand for consultancy and workplace mediation related services, we have experienced the rise in demand for online services which has resulted in the increased interest in our online workshops which we provide in popular topical areas such as workplace investigation, workplace disciplinary, workplace performance management and employment law issues.

We predict, that workplace related issues will be huge in the aftermath of COVID-19, as businesses will find themselves dealing with issues that have caused breaches in contract, legislation and other related rights and duties. At FreshThinking, we are currently working very hard to identify how our services may be improved and developed to meet the tsunami of demand that will inevitably come down the tracks. Meanwhile, we are working hard to ensure our clients are upskilled and informed on how to improve their own performance and add value to their respective organisations.

Find out more on
www.freshthinking.ie



The critical need for SMEs to prepare for the end of the Brexit transition period

Martin Agnew, Director, Across Borders Consulting

Though Brexit has been a legal reality since 31st January 2020, people and business in Ireland have largely been insulated from the consequences because of the existence of the 11-month long transition period taking us to the end 2020. This continues to bind the UK to the EU customs union, single market and rules meaning little has practically changed.

The 31st December will mark the beginning of a new trading reality for Irish SME's that they will need to adapt to moving forward.

Current status

The EU and UK are engaged in ongoing Free Trade Agreement negotiations. Though a Free Trade Agreement would be welcome to minimise tariffs, even if it were in place from 1st January 2021, that does not mean customs controls will be removed. There will be controls regardless.

In addition, a Free Trade Agreement does not necessarily mean all customs tariffs will be removed for products moving between Great Britain and Ireland. These details are subject to line by line agreement of product classification duty rates in negotiations.

Given these facts, companies need to make the same preparations, regardless of whether or not a Free Trade Agreement is in place from the end of this year.

Who will be affected?

The end of the transition period will mean business in Ireland that are:

- Sourcing products from Great Britain ("GB")
- Selling products to GB
- Sourcing/selling products from Europe that pass through the British landbridge; will have customs reporting, documentation and information obligations

What companies need to do now

With such a small-time frame left to prepare, the one certainty we know is that goods moving

between the UK and Ireland will be subject to customs control from 1st January 2021.

Irish Companies receiving products from, and sending products to/through Great Britain, should take the following critical actions:

- Undertake a review of their supply chains to understand how the end of the Brexit transition period will impact them, and understand how they will submit customs declarations to the authorities
- Develop the required knowledge to identify and communicate accurate information to Revenue on impacted goods flows, and calculate what the potential financial impact will be due to any introduction of customs duties and import VAT
- Put in place the relevant authorisations and facilities to pay import duties/VAT
- Seek approval from Revenue for the required facilitations and certifications to operate efficiently and cost effectively to mitigate any negative impacts
- Assign Tariff Classification codes to products
- Determine the Origin and Customs values of products
- Identify and implement customs duty saving opportunities to stay competitive.

Businesses have difficult choices to make in the coming months. Engaging the services of a customs advisor, either independently or through one of the various supports available, is a critical step. Companies must prepare now because, ready or not, on the 1st January 2021 a new trading reality dawns for Irish business.

Across Borders Consulting specialises in providing customs and trade advice to companies preparing for Brexit. Please contact us around any aspect of your preparations for the new trading reality and for assistance to access Brexit financial supports on:

info@abconsulting.ie
or go to
www.abconsulting.ie



Understanding Parent vs Parental Leave

Budget 2021 saw the announcement of a significant change to the entitlement for Parents leave for relevant parents in Ireland. In September 2020, the Parental Leave Act 1998 was also significantly updated. Despite the similar name there are some significant differences between these two types of leave. Employers should be updating their handbooks and policies to reflect the changes that have already occurred, and be preparing to update expected changes in 2021.

Parents leave

The current 2 weeks' parent's leave will increase to 5 weeks for each parent. Employees are entitled to apply for Parent's benefit while taking their entitlement to Parents leave. Qualifying parents can currently take 2 weeks within the first year of their child's life (or within the first year of adoption). When the new entitlement outlined in the budget is enacted into legislation, parents will be able to take Parent's leave during the first 2 years of the child's life (or 2 years from adoption). These changes require legislation before becoming law. This is expected to be enacted in April 2021.

This leave can be taken as one continuous period of 2 weeks leave or periods of not less than 1 week. Parent's leave cannot be transferred between parents – except in specified circumstances such as the death of one of the parents.

Employees are treated as being in employment while they are on Parent's leave. Annual leave continues to accrue, and employees are entitled to benefit from any public holidays that occur during Parent's leave.

Employers are entitled to six weeks' notice in writing of the employees' intention to take Parents leave, and an employer can postpone Parent's leave for up to twelve weeks for relevant business reasons.

Parental leave

Since September 2020 both parents can take up to 26 weeks of Parental leave before their child's 12th birthday. Parental leave is unpaid leave and there is no state benefit that can be claimed.

Parental leave can be taken in the following forms:

- One continuous period of leave
- 2 separate blocks of a minimum of 6 weeks each
- Broken down into working days/hours the employer consents

There must be a gap of at least 10 weeks between the 2 periods of parental leave per child.

An employee must be treated as if they are still working, for employment rights purposes. Annual leave is accrued, and employees must receive benefit for any public holiday occurring during the period of leave.

An employer can postpone an application for Parental leave for up to six months. Grounds for such a postponement include lack of cover, or the fact that other employees are already on Parental leave. Normally only one postponement is allowed, but leave may be postponed twice if the reason is seasonal variations in the volume of work.

Entitlements for parents have significantly increased over the last few years and it is vitally important that employers keep policies and procedures up to date to remain compliant with current legislation. ISME have information on all statutory leave entitlements available in the Members Area on our website.

For advice on leave or other HR issues, ISME Members can contact hr@isme.ie.



ISME HR Advisor - Cait Lynch

At the Borderline: Tackling Issues of International Trade Post-Brexit

As a small open economy, Ireland has always been dependent on international trade. We have developed connections all over the globe and converted these connections into trading relationships, which have been the catalyst to help our economy grow.

In recent years, our strongest trading relationship is with our nearest neighbour, the UK. However, we are now close to 50 days away from the biggest upset to this trading relationship that we have ever seen.

On 31st December 2020, the transition period ends, and the UK will be treated as a third country. To trade with the UK, customs declarations will have to accompany goods moving in or out of the UK. Trading with the UK, from a customs perspective, will be the same as trading with a country with no trade deal, where international trade in the absence of a trade agreement takes place under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

The scale of the problem

We currently have approximately 94,000 Irish firms trading with the UK. To continue to trade with the UK post-Brexit, an Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) will be required, which over 50,000 Irish firms trading with the UK currently do not have.

An application for an EORI number is completed online, takes approximately 5 minutes and is critical for all 50,000 of these companies should they wish to continue to trade with the UK. Without this number, these companies will cease trading with the UK. It is that simple.

In addition to requiring an EORI number, all goods will have to be accompanied by a customs declaration.

As we go from 1.6 million customs declarations per annum to 20 million customs declarations per annum, capacity issues with existing brokers and freight forwarders to complete the required declarations will become sorely obvious.



Tackling the problem

To help address the problem, Skillnet Ireland have partnered with the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (CILT) and CILT Skillnet, under the Getting Ireland Brexit Ready initiative, to develop a unique upskilling initiative. **Clear Customs**, a free, online training programme, is designed to support Irish businesses develop the capacity to deal with the additional customs requirements that will be needed.

Clear Customs will train up to 3,000 learners in how to make a customs declaration, for export and import. The training is delivered online by experienced customs professionals, supported by an innovative app-based programme, to develop critical skills.



The course is free to eligible applicants and is accredited by Carlow Institute of Technology. Upon successful completion participants will be awarded a Certificate of Customs Clearance Procedures (10 credits at Level 6).

Stop waiting, start preparing

Brexit is coming and goods will only be able to move to and from the UK accompanied by a customs declaration. Without a declaration, there will be no movement.

Skillnet Ireland encourages all companies trading with the UK to start preparing now, to apply for an EORI number, contact a freight forwarder or customs broker to see if they will make declarations on your behalf, and finally, join them on the **Clear Customs** training programme.

Visit www.clearcustoms.ie to learn more.

ISME & Google supporting SMEs with free digital skills training

Google Ireland is partnering with ISME on a series of trainings as part of its **Grow with Google** initiative.

Grow with Google brings free training to Small and Medium Enterprises to help them grow their business successfully online, and provides free resources and support to help them overcome the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a long-term supporter of Irish SMEs, Google wants to ensure Irish businesses can gain access to the digital skills training they need to help them navigate through these uncertain times and find future opportunities for growth.

Beginning Wednesday 25th November, a team of Google experts will deliver the webinars via YouTube, with the first live event focusing on how businesses can ensure they're being found on Search & Maps with Google My Business. Each webinar is 1 hour in duration and will include a live Q&A. Businesses are encouraged to participate and take advantage of the expert speakers' knowledge and insights.

Commenting, Damian Lynch, Head of Google Customer Solutions Ireland, said

"By partnering with ISME we hope to equip business people with the digital skills and expertise to drive business growth by increasing their presence online. Google is committed to supporting Irish SMEs in their recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 and we hope that these trainings will supply ISME members with life-long online skills that will help them overcome the current challenges they are facing and help to navigate their way through the digital transformation process."

Adam Weatherley, Learning and Development Manager in ISME added

"I believe that this series of online courses and webinars from Google will certainly complement our existing training activity focusing on digitalisation and marketing. The partnership with Google will allow ISME Members to gain knowledge and skills to use their free business tools. This year more than ever, it has been apparent that for many businesses, the need to have an online

presence is crucial, and we at ISME will continue to develop programmes to support this."

Grow with Google aims to help people and businesses acquire the skills needed to embrace the opportunities that technology presents in today's working world. As part of this, Google has committed support for 60,000 Irish SMEs and to provide free training to 40,000 people in digital skills by the end of 2021.

The first webinar will take place on Wednesday 25th November at 11.00am with Niall McLaughlin, Digital Strategy Consultant, Google. The session will focus on Search & Maps with Google My Business - a guide to the Google My Business platform to ensure customers can find accurate, updated information on Google Search and Maps.

The next webinar will be on Wednesday 2nd December at 11.00am with Alison Gogarty, Account Manager, Large Customer Sales, Google. It will look at Search Engine Optimization and will show how to get started and gain a better understanding of how search engines work and what Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is all about.

Read more about the course content and trainers [here](#). ISME Members can sign up free of charge [here](#).



Niall McLaughlin, Digital Strategy Consultant, Google



Google Digital Garage

Coping with COVID through the growth mindset

Margaret Dorgan,
Executive Coach & Communications Specialist

If the current environment has been directly challenging your business, then you will probably have spent a lot of time over the last few months asking yourself tough questions about how you can best support your staff and sustain your enterprise. Questions from how can you build team confidence and sustainability amidst such uncertainty, to whether you will even have a business at the end of all this?

Just as there is no silver bullet to solve the pandemic, you as a business owner can only make decisions based on the situation presented, and the resources available to you. In writing this article, however, my goal is to ask you to recognise that just because we don't have all the answers, it doesn't mean we can't do powerful things along the way. It isn't easy in an environment of fear and uncertainty, but I believe that by dialing up our curiosity and opening ourselves up to the growth mindset, to new relationships and to ways of doing, we can bring something valuable to our thinking that could powerfully transform our decision making as we adapt to change in real time.

In this article I've set out some of my key principles for embracing the growth mindset in these hugely difficult times. We need in the first instance to put on our own mask, address our own responsibilities and recognise our need to protect ourselves so that we can be there to meet the needs of others (all the more potent an analogy during COVID). Whether the current challenges are storms you can just about weather out, or fires from which you can rise from like a phoenix, your physical and mental resilience is being called on as never before at this challenging time. How you frame this reality will ultimately determine your ability to get through it.

Leadership - audit your business' sense of purpose

Whether your business is delivering a service or a product, I strongly recommend an audit of what you are doing, through the prism of adaptability and customisation. What does your customer need right now in this changed landscape and how do you and your team adapt your business offering to accommodate these requirements?

Top tip: Ensure you are tone sensitive in all your communications - manage expectations

Key question: What methodology will keep your business relevant to the here and now of your customers?

Tool: Customer Audit

Set new business goals

Covitise your current business strategy - Brexit has few upsides but it did at least set many Irish businesses thinking about how they would deal with hitting a cliff edge. We are now in an enhanced version of that reality and we have to navigate government guidelines and restrictions, and our customers' needs and behaviors. Communicate clear SMART goals and ensure feedback loops at each stage with relevant stakeholders. Refresh your offering accordingly.

Top Tip: Desk research - what are your competition doing?

Key question: What new thinking is working in other sectors? How could you adopt it to yours?

Tool: Planning, organising and staffing Audit

Develop a positive culture

Your team is feeling isolated and challenged at the moment. Having adapted to long term remote working, they continue to balance a busy home, work obligations and ever-present tech challenges, while being overwhelmed with constant negative news updates around the pandemic. The lack of interpersonal connectivity with co-workers, that could otherwise help them process and deal with change, has been taken out of the equation. As a leader you will need to reassure your employees and above all lead by example. How can you support creativity and innovation within your business? What else could you be doing, how are your team feeding into solutions?

Top Tip: Communicate effectively - dial up clarity and be honest about developments in real time.

Key question: What resources / supports are available for you and your business right now?

Tool: Time Management and Accommodation Audit

Engage and flex your 'allowing muscle'

This is key to the process of opening yourself to new thinking and perspectives. These are the concepts you address as you open yourself up to allowing:

- Go right back to the building blocks of your business - how can you allow for doing business differently?
- Allow yourself to acknowledge your current reality

- Allow yourself to be good with change (the opposite of allowing is resistance)
- Allow yourself some space to re-think your direction
- Allow yourself perspective (pull the lens back)
- Allow yourself to move from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset
- Allow yourself to try things differently (call it a pilot to allow for it not working out)
- Allow other perspectives, possible collaborations, idea synthesis

Top Tip: Reframe your questioning

Key Question: Setting aside the challenges, what opportunities could COVID-19 pose for your business offering?

Tool: Develop new habits of allowing

Who showed up when you showed up during COVID-19? In years to come, we will all be asking ourselves this question in one form or another. By putting in place the structures and thinking I recommend, I believe we can answer it with pride while adding value to your brand.

Margaret Dorgan is an Executive Coach & Communications Specialist, founder of Love Your Work & Catalyst Coaching and a trainer with ISME SKillnet.

Contact Margaret on <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mdorgan/>



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TransferMate is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. TransferMate provides payments services and is regulated globally.

ISME's BREXIT Advice & Support

ISME have been providing advice, support news and updates on Brexit over the last 2 years and as the time nears when Brexit will be reality, we encourage businesses to go isme.ie/brexit to keep informed.

Here you can see a summary of the information you can access on isme.ie.

Grants & Funding

There are a selection of grants and vouchers available from InterTradeIreland, Enterprise Ireland and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI). You can view details [here](#).

Resources

You will find details about resources from organisations and experts that cover the range of areas that are impacted by Brexit.

BrexitLegal

A Brexit Guide written by ISME Roadshow speaker, Paul McMahon. [BrexitLegal.ie](#) is a comprehensive free website about Brexit for Irish business.

Central Bank - Financial Service Firms

To ensure that financial services firms are adequately prepared and resilient enough to cope with the possible effects of Brexit, the Central Bank created their [FAQ's](#) which gives general information to financial services firms considering relocating their operation from the UK to Ireland.

The Central Bank published a [Financial Stability Note](#), outlining the landscape for London and other EU financial centres post-Brexit.

Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI)

You can read useful information and find out about supports and services [here](#).

The DBEI [Brexit Preparedness Checklist](#) identifies the essential actions that firms can take to ensure that they will still be able to trade with the UK after it leaves the EU.

The DEBI produced their [Ireland & the Impacts of Brexit report](#) outlining the strategic implications for Ireland arising from changing EU-UK trading relations.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

You can get an overview of key Government and EU official documents on the Brexit negotiations and Ireland's Brexit preparedness measures and supports including a calendar of Brexit-related events for

businesses, find out more [here](#).

Driving on the island of Ireland

Green Card: If there is a no deal Brexit you will need a Green Card if you drive an Irish registered vehicle in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the UK. A Green Card will stop you being treated as 'uninsured' by the police when driving your vehicle. Read more from MiBi [here](#).

Driving License: In the event of a no-deal Brexit the driving license of a UK license holder living here in Ireland will not be recognised, and the driver will not be able to continue to drive in Ireland on that license. The National Driver License Service has the links you need [here](#).

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland offer a wide range of supports, including [Online Customs Training](#), the [Act On Consultancy](#), to enable Irish businesses to take critical action and address their exposure to Brexit; plus their prepare for Brexit tools such as the [Brexit Readiness Checker](#) and the [Brexit Scorecard](#): Find out more about their supports on page 28 or [here](#).

EU Commission Q&A on the sale of UK Goods post-Brexit

The EU Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs published a "[Notice to stakeholders – withdrawal of the United Kingdom and EU rules in the field of industrial products](#)."

Health and Safety Authority (HSA)

The HSA provide a support service for Irish chemical companies and SMEs on meeting legislative duties and ensuring they can source chemicals and sell in the EU. In addition, the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) which is part of the HSA can offer advice on accreditation matters. Learn more [here](#).

InterTradeIreland

How would EU tariffs affect your business? Go to InterTradeIreland's Tariff Checker [here](#)

Read A Simple Guide to Cross Border Business [here](#).

Find out about their Brexit events [here](#).

View their section on Supply Chains [here](#).

Local Enterprise Offices

Brexit information and supports can be found [here](#).

National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)

The NSAI Brexit Unit is specifically focused on

examining and communicating the impacts of Brexit on the standards and certification of products and services.

Click [here](#) to view their Brexit factsheets which provides information about the potential Brexit impacts for different sectors and view details on [certification](#) and [standards](#).

Office of the Revenue Commissioners

Information relating to Customs formalities is available here.

The country of origin of goods is a factor in determining the amount of duty payable. Other factors include the type and value of the goods. Find out more about preferential and non-preferential origin [here](#).

Customer Brexit Information Seminar. View 138 slides from Revenue, Department of Agriculture, food and Marine and the HSE. Available [here](#).

Webinars & Events

ISME Virtual Brexit Discussion

ISME partnering with Skillnet Ireland hosted a live Virtual Brexit Discussion on Tuesday, 20th October. The event was hosted by Newstalk's Business Editor, Vincent Wall with panellists Katy Hayward, Dave Flynn, Giles O'Neill, Derek Dunne and Paul McMahon. It focused on a number of key issues including importing, exporting & customs; legal ramifications; supports; and cross-border trading. Watch the webinar and view speaker bios [here](#).

Enterprise Ireland's BREXIT webinars

Their Brexit Webinars outline the key issues Brexit presents and the practical steps to manage and reduce the impact on your business. Browse their vast selection of webinars [here](#).

NSAI BREXIT Webinar Series

NSAI's Brexit Unit presented a series of four weekly webinars to explain and address how standards, certification, manufacturing and trade will intersect with Brexit in the coming months. You can watch the webinars [here](#).

Imports and Exports

Here you can source information on the grants, training and advice for businesses who import and export and need to get a better understanding about how Brexit will impact customs.

Skillnet Ireland - Clear Customs Training

The Irish Government, partnered with, Skillnet Ireland to launch Clear Customs – Essential Customs Training to support Irish businesses trading with, or through the UK, in preparing for new customs formalities arising from Brexit. Read more about Skillnet Ireland's Clear Customs online training platform to prepare businesses for customs changes post-Brexit on page 15 or [here](#).

Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI)

If you are a trader who imports or exports goods into or out of the European Union (EU), you will need a unique EORI number. This number is valid throughout the EU. It is used as a common reference number for interactions with the customs authorities in any Member State. A

short eLearning tool for EORI is available to download from the [European Commission website](#).

You will find further information about how to register for EORI and you can access the EORI system in the Revenue's [online services section](#).

You may have had your EORI number aligned to your existing Value Added Tax (VAT) number. You can check if you were automatically registered for EORI by accessing the [Economic Operator Identification](#) and Registration system. You should insert your existing VAT number prefixed by "IE" under "Validate EORI numbers".

If you need further information, Revenue operates a [helpline](#) for queries on EORI.

Ready for Customs - Grant from Enterprise Ireland

Provides companies with financial assistance to cover the costs of taking on much needed additional customs clearance staff. Find out more [here](#)

Customs Contacts

For advice or assistance on customs queries you can contact [Manifesto](#) and [Across Borders Consulting](#).

InterTradeIreland

A dedicated hub for all things BREXIT – [here](#)

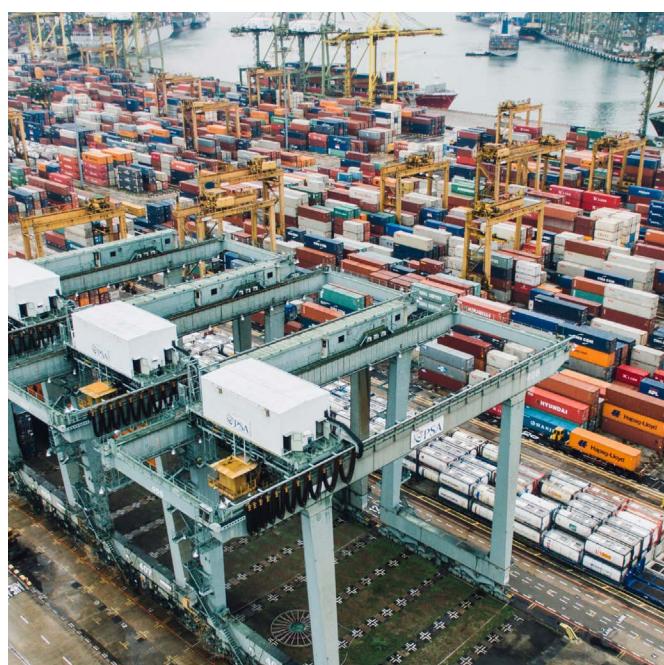
How would EU tariffs affect your business? Go to InterTradeIreland's Tariff Checker [here](#)

Read A Simple Guide to Cross Border Business [here](#).

InterTradeIreland have created free supply chain supports to help you identify where your key opportunities and risks are and what actions you can take now to protect supply chains. Read [here](#)

New Markets Post BREXIT

ISME have created an online resource that can be used to help you develop new market opportunities post-Brexit. Each page contains key information on the chosen country including embassy details, Enterprise Ireland offices, VAT & taxes, travel links and much more. Visit our **Doing Business Abroad** resource [here](#).



Ergonomics-Top 5 pitfalls to avoid when working from home

Brian Crinion,
Chartered Physiotherapist

Working from home is now the new norm in these COVID-19 times where our homes are transforming into workspaces. We are all so used to the daily routine of the office, we take it for granted. We have identified some common pitfalls when working from home and how to address them immediately.

Laptops and couches

Convenience does not always mean best practice. The couch is not a suitable work area and don't sacrifice short term comfort for long term issues. This should be avoided at all costs

Non-adjustable equipment

Equipment with the greatest adjustability allows for the greatest chance of finding a comfortable position. In the short term, use what you have available to raise your screen (make sure it is safe and stable) and use an external keyboard and mouse to help you to position your screen at the best possible height.

Confined spaces

Avoid putting your desk in small or overcrowded spaces. It needs its own area and the proper amount of freedom in which to work. Set up a designated area for the time you are working at home, try to prioritise this and put in the time to setting it up as close to ideal as possible. Try not to let your work area be disturbed and constantly moved around. This only leads to bad habits and the feeling of "I just need to get this done" and then sacrificing your ideal positioning.



Poor light or poor air

Makes sure the area is well lit and ventilated. This can affect concentration, the eyes and overall health. Fresh air and natural light can help to boost productivity and concentration. Find a space that works for you and set it up and keep it.



Reduction in break times

The time you "gain" by skipping breaks is lost in your energy levels. Be disciplined and take scheduled, regular break times. When "working out" in the gym you would never skip your rest periods in between sets of weights, your workstation works the same. Break times are an essential part of your productivity and work day.

Productivity can be affected in many ways. If your positioning is not correct, it has an adverse effect on your energy levels, concentration and potentially long-term health. We hope these tips help you make the most out of your home working.

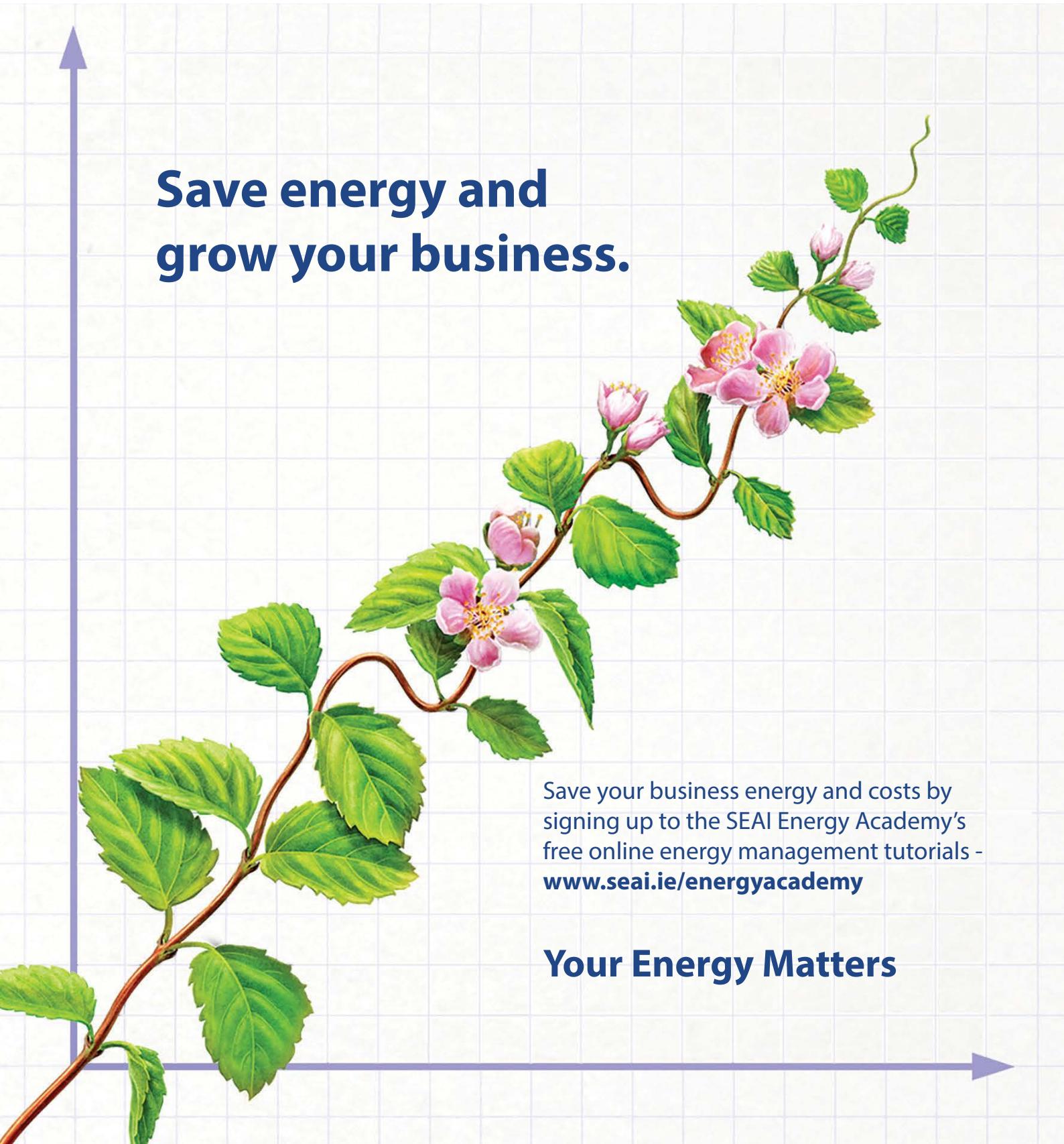
ISME, in partnership with Laya Healthcare and Spectrum Life, provide an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for Members. Full details can be found [here](#).

Brian Crinion is a Chartered Physiotherapist working in partnership with Spectrum Life and Laya Healthcare. His practical tips around ergonomics are designed to help people adapt to working from home

Article courtesy of Laya Healthcare



**Save energy and
grow your business.**



Save your business energy and costs by signing up to the SEAI Energy Academy's free online energy management tutorials - www.seai.ie/energyacademy

Your Energy Matters

PITCH MY BUSINESS

Continuing our successful **Pitch my business** series, the next event will take place on Wednesday 18th November at 10.30am. We are delighted that Barney Callaghan, Executive Coach and owner of Callaghan Associates, will be speaking at the start of the event. Don't miss this opportunity to promote your business and network. To allow more businesses to be involved we've reduced the pitch time to 2 minutes. All welcome, free registration and details [here](#).



ISME CEO WRITES TO EACH TD OUTLINING CONCERN OVER LOCKDOWNS

ISME's CEO, Neil McDonnell wrote to all TDs in Ireland to express the organisation's grave concern at the latest national 'lockdown' on Monday 2nd November. ISME believe that there are more effective, evidence-based and successful ways to respond to COVID-19, other than an arbitrary national lockdown. Neil called on TD's to use their position in Dáil Eireann to ensure that Government responds in a more effective, strategic and sympathetic manner to the pandemic. Read the letter in full [here](#)

GETTING BACK TO BUSINESS WITH ISME

We launched this initiative in June which provides Members with a platform to promote their business, network and get key information during the COVID-19 crisis. We have been delighted with the response to **Back to Business** and you can view member ads and offers, webinars, advice and blogs focusing on key tools and advice needed to get back to business. You are welcome to submit your free advert for the campaign to marketing@isme.ie - spec available [here](#). View the portal [here](#).



The banner features the ISME logo (red circle with 'ISME' and 'Irish SME Association') and the text 'Back to Business'. Below it, the slogan 'Lets get Irish business back to business' is displayed.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Back to Business - Pitch my business

Wednesday 18th November
10.30am

[Book here](#)

Introductory Certificate in Bookkeeping using Big Red Cloud

[Available now online](#)

Being found on Search & Maps with Google My Business

Wednesday 25th November
11.00am

[Book here](#)

Get started with search engine optimisation (SEO)

Wednesday 2nd December
11.00am

[Book here](#)



Member ads and offers
Advice and blogs
Free webinars

[Visit the portal >](#)

#BacktoBusiness

SHOP LOCAL...NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS

ISME launched its ‘**Shop Local ...Not Just for Christmas**’ campaign on 9th November highlighting the importance of supporting Irish businesses throughout the year. We hope Members offering business to business services, consumer products and services across the retail, hospitality and personal grooming sectors will join this initiative and avail of the opportunity to promote their business free of charge.

Every €10 spent on Irish products generates more than €40 of benefit for related businesses, which highlights the importance of shopping local to maintain employment in our communities.

As businesses face into the Christmas shopping period, ISME is encouraging consumers to not only shop locally this festive season, but to make a conscious effort to continue to support Irish businesses in 2021. Irish SMEs are currently facing significant pressure with business closures and other restrictions associated with COVID-19. This is further amplified by rising insurance costs and Brexit.

Neil McDonnell, CEO of ISME said: “*It is more important than ever before to shop local, and this year we want to encourage consumers to continue to support Irish SMEs beyond the Christmas period and throughout 2021. The difficulties faced by Irish businesses since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic are very serious, and SMEs have had to make significant investments in enabling online offerings, purchasing equipment, and implementing procedures to adhere to Government guidelines, including screens, PPE and outdoor dining facilities.*”

ISME is encouraging Irish consumers to think of the bigger picture when supporting Irish businesses. As well as employing local people, SMEs also carry a high percentage of locally produced goods and revenue and employment is generated in other local services and suppliers and other small firms.

Neil added: “*Since March, Irish consumers have largely moved away from international online shopping, as 53% estimate that they have done most of their online shopping with Irish SMEs. Buying Irish-made goods and services helps to ensure their quality, traceability, and value-for-money. Over the coming months, we are calling on Irish consumers to continue this trend and make that effort to shop locally, both online and in person.”*

To find out more about the Shop Local ...not just for Christmas campaign and to explore the list of businesses involved in the ‘Shop Local – not just for Christmas’ campaign, please visit [here](#). We have produced a poster that businesses can download [here](#) and display online or at their premises.

BREXIT INFORMATION & WEBINAR

As Brexit has not gone away and key dates are looming, we want to remind you to visit [isme.ie/brexit](#) to get updates and advice. Another valuable tool is the newly added section on Imports & Exports which you can look at [here](#).

ISME, along with Skillnet Ireland hosted a live Virtual Brexit Discussion with a selection of subject experts. The event was hosted by Newstalk’s Business Editor, Vincent Wall and is available to watch back [here](#).



UPDATED FAQS

ISME have created a detailed COVID-19 FAQ section on [isme.ie](#). Here you will find answers to the most frequently asked questions to our HR Advisor and Membership team. Topics covered include: health and safety obligations, annual leave and discretionary travel, absence from work and payment obligations, cost saving measures, entitlements and supports, statutory redundancy, long term absence and protected leave, employee relations during COVID-19, returning to work - safety protocols.

Read the FAQs in full [here](#).

Shop Local
Not just for Christmas

Spend with Irish SMEs

Take a look here >

Learning & Development Update

Give Your Business a Boost in 2021

- Make Your Business More Competitive
- Further Develop Your Workplace Skills
- Improve Your Problem-Solving Capabilities
- 4 Modules over 6 months - completed in your place of work
- 100% Online with Tutor Paced Interactions

Since 2017, ISME has been a key business partner developing this vital business programme which we recently piloted to great success. We are very proud of what we have achieved with our European partners under the steady leadership and guidance of The University of Limerick.

When we initially embarked on the project, we had no idea just how relevant it would become with the arrival of COVID-19 and the rather overshadowed Brexit issue. It is aimed solely at Irish SMEs, and suitable for those who wish to develop their skills through workplace learning.

This programme is timely, strategically aligned to the COVID/Brexit business environment and, most importantly, easy to enrol and complete. To have this type of programme available to SMEs in their time of need is hugely valuable.

The programme takes approximately 6 months to complete, is accredited with University of Limerick to QQI Level 8, and consists of 4 modules:

- Using Research to Identify Future Opportunities
- Smart Methods to Gather and Analyse Data
- Managing Your Innovation Project
- Evaluating Success & Future Opportunities

We will be running this important programme during 2021.

Adam Weatherley, ISME's Learning & Development Manager said:

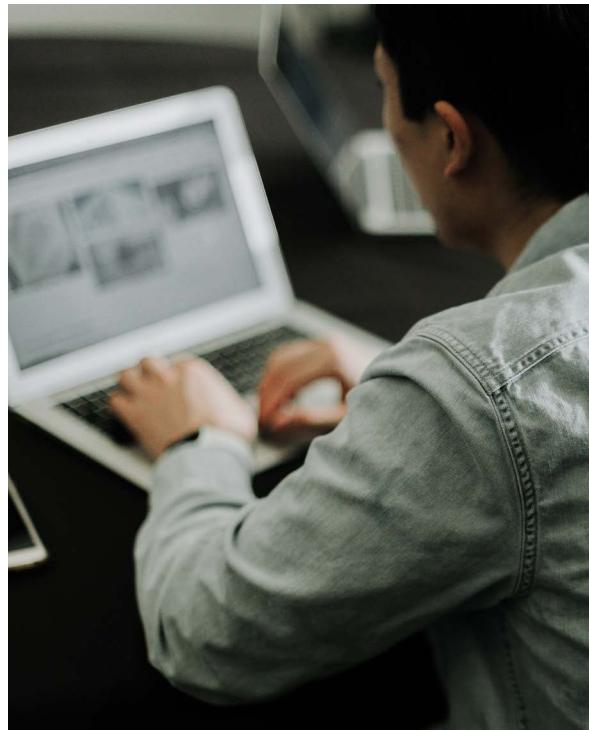
"With the results of the 150 companies who participated in the pilot phase of the project, we know that the "Smart Research - 21st Century Skills for Business" will significantly assist Irish SMEs tackle the complex business issues that we know face. To be able to research new markets, products and services, using a modern and sophisticated framework, will greatly increase SME's chances of success".

To learn more about this programme please contact Adam at adam@isme.ie

BUSINESS ADVISORY SERVICE

ISME Skillnet is offering a free Business Advisory Service to help business owners relaunch their business in a confident and organised manner. The service consists of 6 hours of mentoring with a professionally qualified business coach, carefully selected by ISME.

If interested, please contact Adam at adam@isme.ie



ISME'S BUDGET 2021 COMMENTARY

ISME broadly welcomed the budget in which there were a number of measures designed to keep businesses and their employees going. There are some minor adjustments to the Capital Gains Tax regime. Entrepreneurs should find it easier to qualify for the Entrepreneur Relief, which gives a reduced rate of CGT of 10% compared with a normal rate of 33% on gains from the disposal of business assets. Previously, you had to own at least 5% of a company for a continuous period of 3 years, in the 5 years immediately prior to the disposal, in order to qualify for this relief. Now however, you must have just owned at least 5% for a "continuous period of any 3 years".

Intangible assets acquired after 13 October 2020 will now be fully within the scope of balancing charge rules

Read more [here](#).



Oifig an Stiúrthóra um
Fhorfheidhmiú Corparáideach
Office of the Director
of Corporate Enforcement

Are you a company director
or company secretary?



If so, you have statutory
obligations under the
Companies Act

To help you meet your statutory obligations, the
Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE):

- ▶ provides accurate and reliable information in a simplified format;
- ▶ promotes effective compliance and best practice;
- ▶ assists you make informed decisions by providing a **FAQ section** on our website with over 90 questions and answers;
- ▶ assists companies and their officers understand their duties under company law by providing:
 - a suite of 7 detailed Information Books
 - a suite of 12 'Quick Guides' written in Plain English

Visit our website for our publications, FAQs and activities

www.odce.ie



The common & forgotten pitfalls of receiving international payments

Steve Thompson, TransferMate

A growing business has just made its first sale to a new customer in Singapore. It's a big deal because the company has been working on attracting clients in Asia for quite a while. They sent the customer an invoice and they're waiting for the funds to hit their bank account. They've been waiting for some time. The big day finally comes, but something is not right. The amount deposited into the account is much less than the invoiced amount. What happened?

One of the most challenging aspects of international expansion can be receiving money from international customers, and the above scenario is quite common. Many of you have probably experienced this in your businesses before and can guess some of the places where things went wrong.

When doing business internationally, getting a payment from clients abroad often means changing currencies, but banks don't just do that for free. There are fees for changing Singapore Dollars to U.S. Dollars, for example. Not to mention, there are often other wire transfer fees as the funds make their way through intermediary banks.

For businesses looking to expand with international customers, there are a few things to keep in mind when requesting payments. For those of you already operating overseas, this is a good refresher of how to streamline international receivables.



Keep in mind the basics

First, the basics of the foreign currency markets can play a large role in transferring money across borders. The exchange rate between two currencies fluctuates constantly throughout the day, so it's hard to keep tabs on it entirely. However, this month might generally be a better (or worse) time to send an invoice asking for payment than it was last month.

For example, the exchange rate for USD/SGD was about 1.43 on April 1, 2020, but on January 1, 2020 the rate was 1.34. That means that in order for the Singapore customer to pay a 5,000 USD invoice, it would cost

them 450 SGD more in April than in January. Knowing that, the customer might try to delay payment now and wait for a better exchange rate.

Fees at each step

The next possible problem that can arise (for example, when the customer does pay about 7,150 SGD) is a wire fee to send the payments, making it not very enticing for them to return as a customer.

As the payment makes its way through the corresponding banking system, international and exchange fees are taken out of that 7,150 SGD and the amount of U.S. dollars deposited into the recipient account could be closer to 4,850 USD.

A bad workaround

There are a few things international businesses can do to mitigate the above problems and ensure the amount received equals the amount billed. The billing company could pad in an extra fee for FX and invoice for more U.S. dollars. This is not an ideal solution and it would not build trust in the paying company.

How to make sure the amount billed = amount received

There is a better solution with international payments technology like TransferMate, a B2B payments company part owned by ING (Europe's 5th largest bank). With TransferMate's network of local bank accounts, the paying company can send SGD to TransferMate in Singapore and TransferMate will deliver USD to the billing company in their local U.S. account. There are no wire transfer fees and TransferMate clients can lock in a preferential exchange rate.

Both companies should still monitor the FX markets in order to know when the rates are best. But, if the transfers become common enough and the company knows it will be making a payment regularly, they can lock in a rate for a fixed period of time with a forward contract.

Overall, gaining international customers is one of the easiest ways to expand your business, but it's important to be smart about how to bill internationally to retain those customers.

TransferMate is an ISME ADVANTAGE Affinity partner offering no transfer fees on standard money transfers over €1,000 for the business and their staff, find out more here. Members can get full details on how to avail of this when they log into the Members Area.

Getting Ready for a Fundamental Change in our Trading Relationship with the UK

Giles O'Neill, Brexit Unit Manager, Enterprise Ireland

Regardless of the outcome of the current negotiations on a Brexit deal, our trading relationship with the UK will change fundamentally and irrevocably on 1st January 2021. While the Brexit process may have been plagued with uncertainty up until now, the one absolute certainty in relation to the trading relationship, is that moving goods to, from or through the UK (excluding Northern Ireland) will require a customs declaration from 1st January 2021.

That will present a massive challenge for Irish businesses. To put the scale in context, nearly 100,000 Irish companies trade with the UK. At present, Irish businesses generate around 1.7 million customs declarations annually, but that will rise to 20 million next year as a result of Brexit.

Goods won't move without a declaration. There are around 60 points of data in a typical customs declaration and these are connected to various aspects of the shipment. If you get one piece of data wrong, then everything slows down or stops. While some elements of the customs declaration process will be automated, the new situation will generate a requirement for an additional 2,000 trained people in the area.

The government has put in place a new €20 million **Ready for Customs fund** managed by Enterprise Ireland to assist Irish businesses to meet this challenge. The **Ready for Customs fund** provides grants of up to €9,000 for each new full-time employee engaged in customs work. Businesses which employ a new person to deal with customs on a part-time basis can get a grant of up to €4,500. It also covers costs associated with redeploying an existing member of staff. The grants can be used for employee salary costs and a contribution towards overheads, including software and IT infrastructure.

Of course, many companies use third party logistics providers, freight forwarders and customs intermediaries to look after customs declarations on their behalf. If you do, make sure they are ready for the additional work, and that they have taken on additional people to manage this element of your business on your behalf.

The very last thing businesses want to see is shipments stuck at ports in January because Irish businesses have been overwhelmed by the sheer volume of extra work

created by Brexit. Research indicates that insufficient customs clearance capacity is a significant risk for Irish enterprises from 1st January 2021. Business needs to act now to build capacity and this grant will help them meet the challenge that will become very real on 1st January next.

While getting ready for the certain changes in the customs area is vital, businesses also need to review their overall Brexit plans now. 2020 has been a turbulent, challenging year for businesses and it is understandable that Brexit planning was overshadowed by the need to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with less than 60 days to go, it is imperative that companies dedicate time and resources to Brexit planning.

To assist companies, Enterprise Ireland has recently launched the **Brexit Readiness Checker**. The online tool assesses preparedness across a range of topics including customs procedures, finance & currency management and strategic sourcing. The **Brexit Readiness Checker** provides companies with an individual report, highlighting areas for action and providing information on support and advice available from State agencies and others to help companies prepare for Brexit. You can access the online tool [here](#).

Brexit becomes a reality on 1st January next. Being ready for the fundamental change in our trading relationship with the UK must be a priority for business. This is the time to act - information, advice and support is available. I would urge every business in Ireland to act now.



Marcella O'Reilly, Director, Crookstown Business Park

What interests do you have outside of work?

I have many interests outside of work. I like to try new things, I enjoy walking, hiking, swimming, sewing, painting just to mention a few. I have been renovating an old house for the last few months and I am loving it.

Why does house renovation interest you?

I suppose because I have learned so many new skills, from interior design to actual remodelling.

I have just made a concrete countertop and tiled a floor this week, things I did not think I could do but with a little research and sometimes a bit of trial and error, it is amazing what you can do.

I find it therapeutic; you get a real kick when you see the finished product. I worked in retail for over thirty years this is so different, it is something I would like to do more of in the future.



What other hobbies/interests do you have?

I love walking, it is such an easy way to get exercise and see the nature around you. Walking is addictive, it can be a solitary hobby, or it can be shared with family or friends, walking has been a life saver for people during this pandemic.

Are there any hobbies or challenges you would like to try?

Yes, I want to try Yoga I have this romantic notion about Yoga. I am sure reality is different but I would like to give it a try.

A series that highlights the lives and interests of ISME members and staff. In this edition, The bISME talks to ISME Member, Marcella O'Reilly, about her business interests and her new found hobby...

How important do you think it is to have an interest outside work and how do you think it can benefit your work?

It is so important; we all need space and time out from our respective businesses. When you run a business, it can become all-consuming, especially in the initial years. So, if you are not healthy in mind and body it reflects on your business

Talk to us about the work you do and your business interests?

I owned and ran a boutique for eighteen years called Buy Design I sold that business last year. My husband and I have a retail business park in Crookstown, Athy, Co Kildare, so right now I am involved in the promotion and development of this business.

How has the last 6 months been for you and how have you coped?

We have been lucky so far. Our clients are well established and not very exposed to the effects of COVID-19 but I do know that business like catering and retail are really struggling but hopefully there is an end in sight.

Do you think this work life balance is something individuals and particularly employers need in their life to have a successful business?

Yes, I think I finally got the balance right. I have five children so when I started my business, time was a scarce commodity. It is difficult when you are getting a business off the ground but if you want to think outside the box you need to get outside the box.

You can find out about Buy Design on Facebook by clicking [here](#) and for the Crookstown Business Park [Click here](#)

