

SPRING 2021 Volume 1
Issue 12

THE **b**ISME

THE BUSINESS OF IRISH SMEs

Paying it forward

Paycheck Plus CEO, Anne Reilly talks about the world of payroll and her thoughts on business today.

BREXIT FOCUS

Understanding the implications of the EU UK Trade Agreement

AN EFFICIENT COMPANY RESTRUCTURE PROCESS

Improving the examinership process for business

CASH IS STILL KING

Top tips on managing your cashflow

HR FOCUS

Managing absences due to COVID-19

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Irish **SME** Association



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Irish **ISME** Association

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Hello readers,

Fans of “Father Ted” appreciate the many brilliant aphorisms the show brought us. One of the best lines is from Father Ted himself, as he prepares to welcome three Bishops to Craggy Island for the upgrade to Class II Relic of the Holy Stone of Clonrichert. Afraid that Father Jack would roar his three-word life philosophy at the Bishops, he coaches him sternly to reply to any episcopal question with the meaningless “That would be an ecumenical matter.” He enjoys limited success!

Back in the real world, a significant amount of the reform being lobbied for by ISME is opposed by insiders trotting out the weasel words “*that would be a constitutional matter.*”

As recently as the signing into law of the Mother and Baby Homes Bill last October, the constitution was invoked as the reason why individuals are not allowed access to their personal records. The validity of these constitutional concerns has been challenged by many legal scholars.

For ISME’s part, our campaigns on the capping of damages in personal injuries awards, the banning of upward-only rent reviews, defamation reform, PIAB reform and an affordable examinership regime for SMEs have all had the “unconstitutional” epithet thrown at them by “experts” who prefer the status quo. You may have seen the excellent [Sunday Independent](#) opinion piece by lawyer Charles Lysaght, challenging the practice of politicians hiding behind the (often dubious) advices of the Attorney General. We wholeheartedly agree with his suggestion that the advices of the AG should be published.

A more recent [Judicial Council leak to the Irish Times](#) suggests that members of the judiciary are rejecting the findings of the Personal Injuries Commission. This is completely unacceptable in a democratic republic, and our Chair will be writing to the Taoiseach and cabinet about it.

The reopening of schools for special needs students was torpedoed in the third week of January by what amounted to a wildcat action by teachers’ unions. The Minister for Education herself



Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME

described the suggestion by the INTO General Secretary that his union did not instruct teachers not to go to work as “incredibly disingenuous.” At the time of writing, there have been no sanctions for the unions involved. Yet we are dealing with a situation where our childcare providers have been threatened with the withholding of all funding if they close their doors because their staff are out sick. The double standards in evidence here are very hard to swallow for private sector workers.

The one area we agree with teachers’ (and other) unions representing essential workers, is on the need for rapid antigen testing in the workplace. We called on the Tánaiste to roll out workplace testing in letters [before](#) and [after](#) Christmas. Essential workers in childcare, care of the elderly, healthcare, Gardaí, manufacturing, logistics, retail, grocery and food preparation cannot work from home. We should be aggressively rolling out in-workplace testing for these workers so that they can feel confident about working without the risk of infection. Professor Luke O’Neill recently described the Government failure to introduce rapid antigen testing as an “unrelenting mystery.” We would like that mystery resolved.

ISME has been disappointed but not surprised by the failure of pension providers to assist us in our pensions equity challenge against the Revenue Commissioners and Government. They would be significant beneficiaries from a successful challenge, yet they continue to behave as freeloaders on the backs of their customers. Nonetheless, ISME have launched a public fundraiser to press on with this challenge. We are asking you to assist with funding the challenge, and publicising our [fundraising campaign](#) among all private sector pension savers.

As always, stay safe,

Neil McDonnell

ISME CEO

A climbing plant with green leaves and pink flowers is shown growing along a blue grid line that starts from the bottom left and curves upwards and to the right. The background is a light blue grid.

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[Book here](#)

Thursday, 25th February,
8.30am and 3.30pm

[Book here](#)

InterTradelreland: Go -2-Tender Workshop - Online

Tuesday, 16th February,
9.30am and 4.30pm

[Book here](#)

Wednesday, 31st March,
9.30am and 4.30pm

[Book here](#)

NSAI: Important Changes for the Construction Sector, Post-Brexit

Tuesday, 16th March,
11.00am

[Book here](#)

InterTradelreland: Venture Capital Conference 2021 - Online

Thursday, 4th March,
9.00am-1.15pm

[Book here](#)

Enterprise Ireland: Technology Insights - Essential technical tools to enable a successful bioeconomy

Thursday, 25th March,
11.00am-11.45am

[Book here](#)

FREE WELLNESSES RESOURCES FROM LAYA HEALTHCARE

Following the largest ever research ever carried out among Irish employees and HR leaders about the challenges faced during COVID-19, ISME's wellness partners laya Healthcare have put together a series of [HR Leader Playbooks](#). Free to everyone, these playbooks are designed to support HR leaders as they navigate the uncharted water that is the post COVID-19 return to the workplace and what will become the 'new world of work'.

laya Healthcare have also developed **Wellbeing Live** - all free, all live and all available to you from their portal [here](#).

Get valuable insights and practical tips empowering you to live and feel better during this challenging time on their [COVID-19 expert podcast series](#).

If you want to provide further support for your employees, we would encourage you to take a look at our Wellness Programme with laya Healthcare and Spectrum.Life [here](#).

HSA ANNUAL REVIEW OF WORKPLACE INJURY

In December 2020, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) published its **Annual Review of Workplace Injury, Illness and Fatality Statistics for 2018-2019**. This report details the causes and characteristics of injuries, illnesses and fatalities in the workplace.

Key points from this report include

- 47 fatal work-related accidents were reported to the HSA in 2019. The total number of fatalities is up from 39 in 2018, but is comparable to the five-year average for 2015-2019 of 47.6 fatal accidents
- Construction is the second highest sector for fatal accidents, after agriculture
- The most common cause of an accident leading to a fatal injury was falling from height
- All but two of the 47 victims of fatal accidents were male
- Work-related non-fatal injuries also increased in 2019, with 9,335 reported to the HSA. Manual handling leading to personal injury was the most common cause of workplace accident in 2019, representing almost a third of all non-fatal accidents reported to the Authority. Slips or falls were the second most common, at 24%
- Manual handling and falls were also the two most prevalent causes of non-fatal accidents in each of the five years from 2015 to 2019, with back injuries being reported in 20% of worker accidents

The HSA's report emphasises the importance of ensuring that risk assessments are implemented, and reviewed as necessary to ensure employee safety. Effective supervision is seen as a significant factor in reducing incidents. The full report is available [here](#).



ODCE LAUNCH SINGLE GUIDE FOR COMPANIES

The Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) has prepared a **Single Guide for Companies** in response to frequent public requests for a single document to explain some of the rules and rights of the various participants of companies.

The guide has been prepared from the Companies Act for use by a non-professional audience in order to make the main requirements of company law more easily understandable. The Director wishes to make clear that this booklet is guidance only and cannot be construed in any way as an interpretation of the Companies Act. It is important to note that when readers have a doubt as to their legal obligations or rights, they should seek independent professional legal or accountancy advice as appropriate. You can click [here](#) to view their guides.



'TECH TALKS' - A SERIES OF WEBINAR DISCUSSIONS ON TECHNOLOGY TOPICS



'Tech Talks' is an industry series that the National College of Ireland Careers and Employability team run in the first and second semester of the college year over five or six weeks. It is aimed at technology students studying data analytics, software development, cyber, cloud, AI and ML and Blockchain. They will be running a similar series in February/March 2021 and would love to involve SME that are interested, to participate. Please email Órla O'Sullivan at orla.osullivan@ncirl.ie if you are interested in taking part.

SME & ENTREPRENEURSHIP GROWTH PLAN

The Government has published a plan for expansion of the SME base in the country. ISME contributed to this plan as members of the taskforce. The report is a long-term strategic blueprint for Irish SMEs and entrepreneurs. You can download the PDF [here](#).

THE SHOW ABOUT IRISH BUSINESS

Tune into the "must hear" weekly business show featuring Irish businesses from across the island of Ireland, [That Great Business Show](#) with Conall O Móráin and Jamie Heapslip. You can also view the show's [blog](#) highlighting positive, real, and money-making insights from Irish businesses.

ISME MEMBERS - WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

MEMBERS SHARING HOW THEIR BUSINESS CAN HELP

REMOTE WORKING

As 2020 has shown remote working could be the future of working. With high speed broadband in every corner of Ireland remote workers could pursue professional careers living in their own localities thus helping to build the economies and communities of rural Ireland. A National Broadband plan has never been more important. Rural broadband can empower SMEs to enable their day-to-day decisions, reach new customers and get the best out of their businesses. In 2021, Imagine will continue to rollout their High-Speed Broadband network. Find out more [here](#).

GERRY FENTON,
IMAGINE

With most of us now working from home we need to stop and think about our new working environment not only for ourselves but staff too.

Recent research has found that there are many health benefits of a height adjustable desk. One benefit of the desk includes lowering your risk of heart disease, weight gain and obesity. Scientists have now developed a much greater understanding of the effects of sitting on heart health, with prolonged sedentary time thought to increase the risk of heart disease by up to 147%.

There is no doubt that spending more time on your feet while working remotely is beneficial for heart health. ISME Member [m2.ie](#) can help. Click [here](#) to find out more.

DOROTHY MAHER,
M2 OFFICE

UPSKILL YOUR STAFF TO REBUILD YOUR BUSINESS

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



SKILLNET IRELAND NAMED AS BEST AGENCY SUPPORT TO BUSINESS

We are delighted to announce that Skillnet Ireland has been named 'Best Agency Support to Business' in the InBusiness Recognition Awards 2020, for the third year in a row!

Commenting on the award win, Paul Healy, Chief Executive of Skillnet Ireland said;

"It is a great pleasure for me to accept this InBusiness award on behalf of Skillnet Ireland. 2020 has been a year like no other and one we will all remember for a long time to come. For us at Skillnet Ireland, for our enterprise partners and for the businesses and workers we support, it's been a challenging year, but one in which we were able to respond with speed, agility and impact, to make a big difference to the businesses we support and to the lives of the workers who are employed in these businesses."



REVIEW OF 2020 SPEND ON DOMAIN REGISTRATION

The [.IE Domain Profile Report](#) is out now and explores and analyses the .ie database. This edition reveals the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on new .ie registrations and takes a closer look at the broader .ie domain ecosystem.


COVID-19 has promoted a mass mobilisation of digital across economy and society. 65,113 new .ie domains were registered in 2020, the highest ever figure and an almost 30% increase on 2019. The increase in .ie registrations was universal across the country. For the first time ever, annual .ie domain registrations increased in every county on the island of Ireland. At the end of 2020, the total number of .ie domains in the database was 309,853, a 10.3% increase on 2019. The database has grown by 46.9% on the same period five years ago (2015). You can read the full digital report [here](#).

SEAI & ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Sustainable Energy Authority Of Ireland (SEAI) are offering a free 'Introduction to Energy Management' course for SMEs. This is an online workshop designed to help you understand how much your business is spending on energy and what energy-saving measures you could implement to reduce consumption and cut your bills. The course consists of 2 one-hour sessions, with an optional follow-up phone call from an energy advisor. Find out more [here](#) or email business@seai.ie if you are interested in attending an online Energy Management workshop.

CREDIT UNIONS JOIN €2BN COVID-19 CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar TD announced two of the largest Credit Union associations in Ireland will join in the government's COVID-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme. Irish SMEs will now be able to borrow from a further twelve Credit Unions under the €2bn COVID-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme. These new providers from the Irish League of Credit Unions and the Credit Union Development Association, have a wide geographical range. Find out more about the scheme [here](#).



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

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Paying it forward

Anne Reilly,
CEO, Paycheck Plus

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

My career pivoted from finance to purchasing in multinationals, then to teaching, before I became a lecturer in Irish payroll and employment law. While lecturing I spotted a niche for payroll expertise in companies of all types. From that realisation, Paycheck Plus has grown organically to provide payroll outsource services with consistently accurate and timely delivery to employers of all sizes and sectors.

What do you enjoy about your role?

I'm passionate about payroll and providing solutions. I enjoy the interaction with our amazing team and so many wonderful clients. I love to see progress, whether that's our staff developing, our clients growing or the payroll industry evolving. I'm very fortunate to be in a position where I can create the strategy to develop our capabilities and culture that enhance progress. That is incredibly rewarding.

Tell us about Paycheck Plus and the changes that have taken place?

Paycheck Plus is now one of the top three indigenous Irish payroll providers, a long way from where we started. Our evolution has come from a commitment to continuous learning and improvements of 1%, a small amount, but over time creates significant progress. That ethos led to significant organisational developments including the introduction of a customer support service, a payroll platform, ISO and ISAE accreditations, numerous awards and most importantly Ireland's best payroll service.

“ Payroll is an essential service rather than a routine back office function

What can we expect from Paycheck Plus over the next few years?

We will continue to improve and grow. As always, our clients will be at the centre of that and their needs will drive what we do. The recent shift to remote working



and rapid legislative changes has brought significant challenges for payroll processors and emphasised the importance of hiring the right payroll staff. That led us to create '[Payroll Panel](#)', a specialist payroll recruitment service.

[Payroll Panel](#) is unique in being able to thoroughly understand client payroll needs, match the most appropriate candidates and then support them in their new role from our own team of experts. It's payroll recruitment from the payroll experts.

The payroll and software industries are competitive, in your opinion what makes a brand/product stand out in this busy space?

Consistent quality and customer service is key. With payroll, there is zero tolerance for errors or late payments and a growing need for added features and functionality such as self-service payslips, customer support, ISO accreditations and so on.

The reason Paycheck Plus has stood out and grown is flexibility and excellent service. We're attuned to economic and regulatory change. We watch what's happening on a macro level and listen to what our clients say. It sounds obvious, but listening to clients and continually aligning our services to their future needs, means we can consistently provide the optimum fit with accurate, compliant payroll, on-time, every-time.

How important do you believe the payroll function and professionals are in any organisation, particularly in SMEs?

I think the perception of the payroll function has completely changed in the last year. Payroll is an essential service rather than a routine back office function. With all the turmoil and legislative changes last year the importance of payroll resonated in most organisations. However, despite its importance, payroll often doesn't get the priority it deserves. It adds little value to the bottom line. One of the benefits of outsourcing payroll is enabling businesses focus on cash flow and other profit-making activities confident that payroll is being taken care of by the experts.

What are your thoughts on Brexit and the impact it will have on your business?

I think Brexit will ultimately be good for Ireland Inc. We are now the only native English-speaking country in Europe, and our cultural proximity to other English-speaking countries like the US and the UK will lead to more of that business coming here. It'll be a rocky road, there's going to be a lot of short-term inconvenience as we experience supply chain disruption, but the long-term windfall will be good, especially for Irish SMEs.

At Paycheck Plus, we're seeing many new international clients coming on board. We have an office in Manchester and process UK payroll there. Brexit significantly impacts data management and we've been preparing for it for some time from legal, compliance and commercial perspectives to ensure clients data is protected and secure.



The Paycheck Plus team at the Grand Opening of their office in Drogheda.

How has COVID-19 impacted your business in 2020 and what do you think will be the long-lasting affects for Irish business?

It seems counter-intuitive, but while the unemployment figures were surging, our payroll service continued to grow. This was caused by a sudden escalation in the difficulty of payroll processing. And I think that trend will continue, a lot of organisations and employees are assessing how they work. The transition to a 'new normal' will impact almost all businesses.

When we consider the scale of available capital in the market, I think SMEs will merge and consolidate, as they did after 2008. So, I expect to see several smaller Irish businesses absorbed by larger ones.

Redundancies are sadly inevitable in the short term, and with wage subsidy schemes winding down and remote working becoming the norm, one thing we can be sure of is that the coming months will bring about challenges for all organisations.

“ We are living in a VUCA world, it's volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. **”**

From your experience, what are the major business challenges you have overcome?

We are living in a VUCA world, it's volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. We have been through many challenges including the last recession, new banking systems, GDPR, PAYE modernization and COVID of course.

The acceleration in technology and innovation brought about by COVID-19 drive change and subsequently prepare us all for the next unexpected event. There will always be challenges, so we continually scan the horizon for opportunities and threats and take the necessary measures so we're prepared insofar as possible. Our risk and contingency plans are crucial to ensure continuity of services. As the saying goes, *'failing to prepare is preparing to fail'*.

Do you have a business mentor? What business advice was crucial to your success?

I engaged a mentor and coach for years and found that so rewarding that I have become an Executive Coach myself. There are many wonderful people who have helped, advised, supported and challenged me along the way, not least the wonderful network of female entrepreneurs I met through Going for Growth and ACORNS, where my fellow leads are some of my best advisors.

Now, I enjoy sharing my learning and I firmly believe that by sharing knowledge and experiences we can all grow stronger. That is very much reflected in the coaching culture we have created at Paycheck Plus and is a significant contributor to our success. I'm also able to contribute as a Non-Executive Director on Boards and involvement in a number of networks.

I took advice offered to me many years ago to surround myself with the best people and that has served me well.

Passion, planning and people are the three 'Ps' that many business owners attribute their success to. Would you agree with this mantra and what else makes a business successful?

At Paycheck Plus, we love all the P's – people, passion, planning, payroll, is what we are all about. If you have the right people who are passionate about their work and you create the right plan you get the final P which is "Progress".

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The EU UK trade agreement. A tariff-free deal?

Paul McMahon,
McMahon Legal

The Deal and Duties

The EU UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement is described as a duty-free agreement. However, this is not always the case and the devil is in the detail. Goods imported to Ireland from Great Britain qualify for zero duty under the Agreement, only if they can be shown to be of UK origin.

Rules of Origin

“Origin” is a term which we will have to get used to in Ireland. Unfortunately, it does not mean where the goods have last come from. Essentially it requires that the goods are primary products from the UK, have been manufactured, or at least have been subject to significant processing there.

There are many product-specific rules which depend on the tariff classification of the goods. They may require a particular type of processing or change in identity (tariff heading) or that the UK or EU originating content is less than a certain percentage of value or weight (often 50%).

The Agreement allows EU originating components and processing to count in deciding whether goods are of UK origin. However, at a minimum, there must be some processing within the United Kingdom. Certain types of minimal processing, such as preservation operations, breaking up or assembly of packages, and simple mixing (along with other listed insufficient processes) are not enough.

Exports to GB and NI

The position with origin applies equally to Irish imports into Great Britain. Goods qualify for zero duties where they are of EU origin so that EU manufactured, or processed goods qualify for zero duty when they are exported from Ireland to Great Britain.

There are no customs duties or processes for goods moving between Ireland and Northern Ireland. However, Northern Ireland components and goods are of UK origin, which may be relevant where they are components or included in goods exported to another country with which the EU has a trade agreement.



Impact on Ireland

Because of geography, Ireland may be hit hard by the origin rules in the Agreement. Many EU manufactured goods are supplied to both Great Britain and Ireland by UK distributors. The implications for Irish supply chains may be dramatic.

We have seen already the Percy Pigs problem. They are made in Germany and purchased by Marks & Spencer for distribution in the UK and Ireland. However, when they are re-exported to Ireland from GB, they are not of UK origin, so import duties apply.

Many goods sold in Ireland are manufactured outside the EU (e.g., Chinese manufactured goods). They will not qualify for reduced duties either upon import into Great Britain or on further import into Ireland. There may be duties at the point of import into Great Britain (as pre-2020) with further duties when they are imported into Ireland/the EU again.

(Continues on the next page)

Possible Mitigations

The actual tariff which applies when the goods do not qualify for zero duties under the EU UK Agreement depends on the EU or GB Tariff. It may be zero in many cases so that the issue of origin will not matter. The UK has eliminated many low-level duties in the GB Tariff so that in many cases, there may be no additional duty for goods from outside the EU compared to the position in 2020.

Origin issues do not arise where goods merely pass through the GB "land bridge", going from continental Europe to Ireland, where they have been placed under the customs transit procedure. There is no import at all and they remain EU goods at all times.

In some cases, GB distributors may be able to take advantage of rules on direct transport which allow goods to be temporarily warehoused or transhipped through a particular country without losing their origin status. Returned goods relief may be available for Irish importers. However, strict and narrow conditions apply and the rules are not primarily designed to provide relief for distributors in the state of export.

Where goods are imported from outside the EU, there is no credit for customs duties paid upon importation into Great Britain when the same goods are reimported into Ireland. There are customs procedures that UK distributors may be able to use to eliminate the double charge of duty.

Once again, conditions apply.

This is a very general overview of the position. Detailed consideration should always be given to your particular circumstances and the possibilities for relief or mitigation that might apply.

Paul McMahon is a solicitor, tax consultant, and a member of the InterTradeIreland Brexit panel. He has advised and presented extensively on all aspects of Brexit. He has part written and part compiled Brexit - An Irish Guide - available on brexitlegal.ie a website with detailed information on all Brexit issues.

Or visit [ISME's Brexit portal](#) for resources & information.



Derek Dunne, Manifest & Paul McMahon at an ISME Roadshow in 2019.

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An efficient company restructure process is in everyone's interest

Removing steps from examinership will not detract from it, it will reduce costs and make it more available.

With so many good businesses shut, the cash flow drain caused by COVID-19 closures has focussed attention on the effectiveness of examinership, which is the Irish corporate restructure process, and its usefulness across business sectors.

In the simplest terms, examinership gives a company breathing space against enforcement of debts, pending a scheme of arrangement of the debts being agreed by creditors, or imposed by a Court.

Currently there are at least five Court applications required to comply with the processes in an examinership. In each Court application, tests that are set out in the Companies Act 2014 must be satisfied to an evidentiary standard satisfactory to the Court. This involves solicitors and (usually) barristers, and very much adds to the costs associated with getting court protection, and thereafter the examinership process.

The purpose and impact of these court applications prompted me to prepare an analysis of examinership, from the initial application for Court protection, to the examinership process itself. This was informed by my making countless applications that took days to prepare (incurring significant costs on behalf of clients), that were granted as a matter of course. They added not a whit to the survival of the Company and made no difference save satisfying statutory obligations.

Previously, many viewed examinership as a charter for untrustworthy businesspeople wishing to avoid their liabilities. Dealing with these cases in practice I know this not to be so. I have seen the stress etched into business owners' faces, in the teeth of losing everything including (typically very important for them) their employees' livelihoods. All they want is for the business to survive, and if they can stay a part of it, all the better.



Barry Lyons, Barry Lyons Solicitors

In the absence of an efficient mechanism to resolve the liabilities incurred by business, the supports being rolled out by the State in response to the COVID-19 lockdowns are blunt indeed.

Companies need a way to repair their balance sheet; even if a business can access credit or investment (which is unlikely) all it can be used for is to address historic liabilities, and not provide for its cash flow requirements going forward.

In March 2020 I contacted ISME Chair Ross McCarthy with examinership reform proposals. The proposals reduced examinership costs by detuning the legal aspects of the process, while retaining access to the Court if required.

Duly satisfied with responses to due diligence on the proposals, ISME CEO Neil McDonnell made representations to the Banking and Payments Federation and [SME Recovery Ireland](#) both of which rowed in behind what we were proposing. In due course the subject was referred by Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise and Employment Leo Varadkar to the Insolvency sub-committee of the Company Law Review Group (CLRG) to which I was co-opted.

Following the 10 weeks of rigorous analysis from Revenue, the ODCE, ICTU, ten legal and accountancy insolvency practitioners (with over 100 years' experience between them), legal academics, IBEC, and the Attorney General's office, in late October 2020, the CLRG submitted a report to the Minister with recommendations on reform of the process. While different in ways from my ideas, I am satisfied they have the effect of the initial proposals.

Examinership needs to provide an efficient, non-judgemental framework for companies to survive and jobs to be saved. I believe the recommendations contained in the [CLRG report](#) accomplish that and need to be implemented urgently.

To find out more contact Barry on email blyons@lyonssolicitors.ie or phone 01 539 0060.

Member stories during COVID-19

Kilbaha Gallery

Kilbaha Gallery, run by sisters-in-law, Ailish and Liz, is an award-winning business on the Loop Head Peninsula. As for all businesses, 2020 proved to be a hugely challenging year for the gallery. Because their overall business model included an art gallery, a gift shop and a coffee shop on the Wild Atlantic Way, Kilbaha Gallery found itself straddling a few industries, from retail, to art, to hospitality and of course, tourism and thus, was impacted greatly.

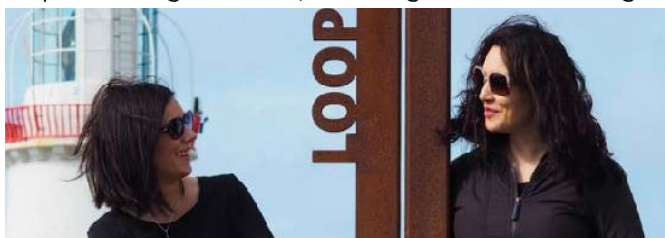


Facing the prospect of having to dramatically reduce their in-store capacity to account for social distancing, the ladies had to think long and hard. The prospect of regularly having to lockdown and reopen was also going to prove cost prohibitive.

Having already established a great website, the ladies made the decision in March 2020, to close the business to the public, temporarily losing the coffee shop and retail element, but retaining the art gallery online.

Ailish and Liz and their two remaining team members Michelle and Rosie, leaned heavily into digital marketing, servicing their already established and loyal clients, while also growing their new online customer base.

Thankfully, this early embracing of digital meant that the ladies were able to hit the ground running. Packing, logistics and shipping suddenly became a hugely important part of their business and new skills were acquired in digital media, in filming and video editing.



Liz & Ailish at Loop Head, the home of their unique store

"Our plan for 2021 is a phased reopening, with our main-focus remaining on the online business. We are extremely grateful to have been able to pivot to digital in the way that we have."

To find out more visit kilbahagallery.com.

Flotronic Pumps

Strange times indeed! Flotronic Pumps is a manufacturer of high-end Air Operated Double Diaphragm pumps for multiple industries. Traditionally we have relied on face-to-face interaction with our customer base, to correctly specify equipment for the applications their projects require. As Flotronic Pumps are not just a 'pump in a box', there are a huge range of add-ons and process specific upgrades which need discussion before a final specification is reached. When the virus hit, we found ourselves house and office bound, relying on email, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, phone calls and any communication means possible without physical contact.



Andrew Bishop demonstrating a Flotronic Pump

This required a rethink of how we target customers, and how we integrate with the technology available whilst still being as effective as possible. The good thing is that our Irish customer base were doing exactly the same thing. The majority of our work in Ireland is Pharmaceutical and Food. We also had the bonus opportunity of supplying pumps to companies manufacturing hand sanitizer. These industries are still going strong – one thing is certain; we will always need food and drugs!

The requirement for high quality, high specification pumping technology, coupled with the advantage Flotronic Pumps offer of easy maintenance and cleaning, remains strong across all 32 counties. Focussing on industries that are essential meant the right contacts were maintained and has ensured that we ended the year with our strongest sales ever!

This would not have been possible without the high quality 'best in class' attitude of Irish manufacturing. Long may it last.

Find out more go to Flotronicpumps.com

or email

Andrew.Bishop@
Flotronicpumps.com



Let's move forward, together.

We understand that businesses face immense challenges during these unprecedented times. InterTradeIreland is committed to continue supporting businesses on the island move forward amidst the uncertainty.

Our Emergency Business Solutions programme can provide £2,000/€2,250 fully funded consultancy support to help companies that trade cross-border address the key challenges related to Covid-19.

Here's how we can help:

- **Covid-19 recovery**
- **Staff training**
- **Financial guidance and planning**
- **HR issues**
- **Business risk**
- **Health & Safety**
- **Product diversification**
- **Business planning**

For advice and information on how to steer your business through Covid-19 recovery visit:

intertradeireland.com



recovery, planning
and guidance for business

Managing COVID-19 related absences in the workplace

Cait Lynch,
ISME HR Advisor

In the current COVID-19 climate, managing absences in the workplace can become a difficult issue for employers. Absence management and sick leave absenteeism can be difficult issues at the best of times. Taking into account additional considerations stemming from the current health crisis, management of absences becomes a balancing act between government guidance, public health advice and health and safety in the workplace. Employers need to ensure that they are following fair procedure and have a robust policy in place to navigate the absence management process successfully.

Many businesses are facing higher levels of absenteeism due to employees self-isolating or restricting movement, and the question of when they are obliged to pay an employee who is absent is arising more often. It is advised that employers have a clear COVID-19 policy that includes up to date information on the virus' symptoms, measures to take should an employee contract the virus, the steps and notification procedures employees must follow when absent due to COVID-19 or a suspected case, certified/self-certified sick leave procedures; and measures for returning to work. Employers should ensure that clear policies, practices and procedures are in place to deal with such absences.

There is no legal entitlement to sick pay while an employee is absent due to illness or injury, unless detailed in Sectoral Employment Order or Registered Employment Agreement. Some employers may have contractual sick pay entitlements in place.



When considering sick leave pay procedures for absences relating to COVID-19, employers must ensure they are honouring pre-existing contractual or organisational arrangements. Where the terms of eligibility to sick leave payment will ordinarily include reference to receipt of State Illness Benefit and a deduction from an organisation's sick pay procedure, employers must ensure any updated policy is reflective

of the current State supports offered in this respect. COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit Payment provides for an enhanced payment of €350.

The ordinary requirement of a 6-day waiting period does not apply to those who are eligible for receipt, so organisational policies should reflect this.

To be eligible for the enhanced payment an employee must be:

- self-isolating on the instruction of a doctor or the HSE due to being a probable source of infection or diagnosed with COVID-19
- absent from work and confined to their home or a medical facility. As periods of self-isolation must be certified by a doctor or the HSE, employees would only be entitled to paid sick leave in accordance with normal sick leave pay procedures.

If an employee is cocooning on health grounds, they are not eligible for the enhanced illness benefit, but may qualify for the standard illness benefit. This should be detailed in any sick pay policy which references the State Illness Benefit.

The term 'restricted movement' may cause confusion as to the entitlement of sick leave pay, and employers should consider their own organisational policies and procedures to ensure that those impacted by restricted movement are clear on whether or not an entitlement to pay for this period of time exists. Where an employee is restricting movement after non-essential travel in line with public health guidance, there is no requirement for the employer to pay for the period of absenteeism.

Employees working remotely can also be a source of confusion in the absence management process. It is important for any organisation with remote workers to review their absenteeism policies and procedures, ensuring that expectations for remote workers are clear and defined in relation to sick leave and payment.

Employers should review all absenteeism policies and procedures and ensure that they are fit for purpose in light of the current public health crisis. Fair and transparent policies provide a robust framework for dealing with any absenteeism issues that arise.

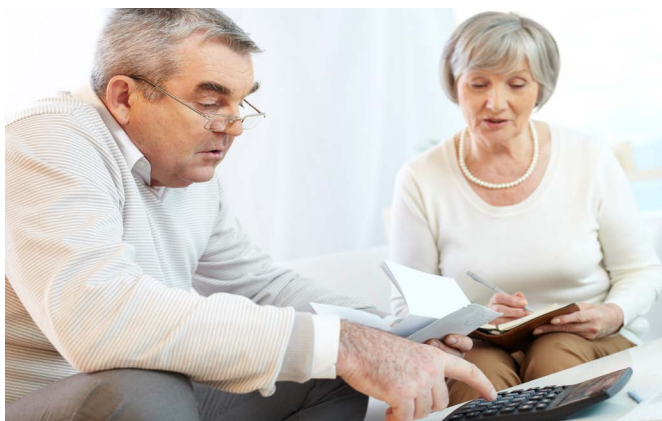
For further information ISME Members can contact HR@isme.ie

ISME launch crowdfunding campaign to back High Court challenge on pensions

ISME have initiated an innovative campaign to raise funds for a legal initiative to create an equitable system for private sector pension savers. By way of crowdfunding, ISME intends to raise €500,000 with the support of PAYE workers, professional groups, trade associations, trade unions and SME owners across Ireland in support of three plaintiffs who will challenge tax discrimination against private sector workers before the High Court.

The funds raised will support the formation of a technical team giving tax guidance, pensions expertise, actuarial assistance together with tax and constitutional law advice for the pension's equity challenge. It is intended to initiate proceedings in the High Court this year.

The last Public Service Pay Commission report found that while there is almost 100% pension coverage in the public sector, the overall figure for the private sector is just 40%. Workers in the private sector who aspire to a pension even close to that enjoyed by a public sector worker earning the same salary, would have to surrender more than a third of their salary to do so. Even if they could afford to do so, our taxation rules constrain them from doing so. Our taxation system permits only third division pensions for the private sector.



ISME is calling on business owners and individuals within the SME business community for private donations of €100, or whatever donors can afford, to support the challenge. ISME also will engage with private sector workers, pension trustees, pension brokers and other interested parties who have raised this issue previously, to raise the necessary funds.

As part of its planned Court action in pursuit of fair treatment for private sector workers with the existing

plaintiffs, ISME will pursue a number of objectives, including:

- ensuring private sector workers are not penalised for trying to save a pension pot of equivalent value to that which is provided to a public sector worker for little (or no) contribution;
- to allow private sector workers to save what they feel is appropriate to give them a decent standard of living post-retirement;
- ensuring that there remains an incentive for private sector workers to save money for their pensions; and
- minimising the burden on society caused by the pension deficit.

ISME CEO Neil Mc Donnell said:

"Private sector workers are not treated in a fair or balanced way when they try to save for a pension. As far as is possible, private sector workers and SME owners should enjoy parity with public sector workers in our pensions system. We are calling on private sector workers to support this campaign. Every private sector pension saver will benefit from a successful court challenge and we are asking for funding support so this can be achieved."



"It is ironic that those in the public service who declare tax relief on private pensions to be "tax expenditures" are themselves the beneficiaries of an enormous transfer of wealth from private sector workers to the public sector. Tax relief on private sector pensions savings is tax deferred, not tax avoided. With the support of the SME community, we have a great opportunity to fix this and to ensure a fair pension system on behalf of private sector workers."

For further information and to support the Pensions Equity Challenge, visit the GoFundMe page [here](#).

Any undisbursed funds raised via the GoFundMe campaign will be donated to [Social Entrepreneurs, The Jack and Jill Foundation & The Friends of the Royal Hospital Donnybrook](#)

Cash is Still King

Jamie O'Hanlon,
Managing Director, Avid Partners

Managing cash flow remains the single most important factor in surviving in business, and is one of the major challenges to arise out of the current business environment. Right now, you may have more cash leaving your business - payroll, rent, and other fixed or variable costs - than you have coming in.

Jamie O'Hanlon from Avid Partners explores tried and tested principles of effective cash flow management to help your business maintain a positive cash position in the months ahead.

Narrow Your Focus

For now, focus on a smaller window. We are preparing shorter-term cash flow models for our clients - forecasting over 13 weeks as opposed to the entire year. This narrow focus helps navigate short term challenges and uncertainties. Deal with what's in front of you and schedule cash coming in and going out over this shorter cycle.

Manage Costs

Identify the key cost drivers within your business and review all items - fixed and variable costs. Depending on your business model and industry, it's usually easier to cut variable costs, so tackle those first. For example, can you find a cheaper way to transport goods? In the medium to long term, think about how you can change fixed costs into variable ones e.g. contract manufacturing or third-party warehousing.

Lean Thinking

Where possible, defer non-essential capital expenditure, minimise discretionary spend and question every cost. Make this part of your business culture however don't just cut costs for the sake of it. Some can be delayed until the environment improves; others may be necessary to prepare your business for the rebound.

Debtor Management

Get cash into the business as soon as you can. Establish a formal debtor management process. Encourage payments upfront by accepting debit/credit cards or by offering discounts. Be aware of signs that a debtor may be in financial difficulties.

Supplier/Stock Management

Supplier relationships represent a flow of cash out of the business. Identify those strategic supply relationships.

Tighten stock management so that cash isn't tied up in surplus stock, improve internal processes and look for opportunities to negotiate new arrangements such as stock-holding facilities with suppliers.

Know Your numbers

Debtor days, creditor days, stock days, debt to equity ratio - managing these numbers will put you in better control, improve your ability to keep cash in your business and, help raise funds if needed. Talk to your accountant. They will advise what the optimum numbers are for your industry/business and keep you on track.

Pivot

The pandemic many have put pressure on your revenue stream. Think outside the box. You have fixed assets you use to generate revenue. Can you change your bricks and mortar business to an online shop? Necessity is often the mother of invention.

Stick to Your Promises

Know this is difficult right now however it's so important that we all continue to honour our financial commitments. Seek promises you can rely on and those promises are returned when we pay our suppliers, keeping that vital cash circulating in the economy.

A profitable business can fold due to a lack of cash however if you implement these steps to strengthen cash flow, your business will be in a much stronger position.

For further information you can contact

Jamie O'Hanlon,
Managing Director,
Avid Partners

Tel: 0818 303087,

email info@avidpartners.ie

or visit
avidpartners.ie



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A 2020 Wrap from the ISME L&D Team & What is in store for 2021

Along with many, we at ISME Skillnet, also went into a tailspin in March 2020. Eighty percent of our learning events were classroom based and many of our training panel were classroom-based experts. We watched in horror as businesses closed under the travel and social distancing restrictions, and the numbers on the live register rose rapidly (see the Live Register table below). We were also guilty of basing much of our learning in Dublin, making it sometimes difficult for our members in other regions take part.

If COVID has a silver lining, it forced us to rapidly address our shortcomings. Along with most businesses, we hastily adopted digital platforms and virtual classroom technology, something we should have done before.

Table: Live Register Highlights - February, March, April (up to 21st) 2020

Month in '20	February	March	April 2020
Live Register	182,616	205,209	212,000
Pandemic Unemployment Payment	0	283,037	584,000
Temporary Covid-19 Wage Subsidy	0	25,104	281,000
Total	182,616	513,350	1,077,000
Increase on previous month		330,734	563,650

Almost 60% of the 584,000 in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment had been put out of employment in four sectors - Accommodation & Food Services, Wholesale & Retail Trade, Construction, and Administration & Support Services.

Our long-standing partner Griffith College were the first to respond to the crisis. Together, we developed a free 12 week 'Reboot Your Business, Rethink Your Strategy' programme with notable presenters such as the economist Jim Power and successful businessman and ex-Senator, Pdraig O' Céidigh. It provided badly needed hope, morale, and helped business owners make difficult decisions. Over 1300 learners from all around the country tuned in each week.



In April we received much needed emergency funding from Skillnet Ireland enabling us to support these business sectors. We created the **Business Advisory Webinar series**, and during the remainder of the year, we provided 70 free webinars with over 2,000 people engaging in the series. This was the opposite of 2019 where SME engagement was negligible in continuous learning and upskilling. The level of engagement last year was truly great to see. It proved that the willingness to learn new skills existed, rather than a reluctance.

We are hoping for more such funding early 2021. This will mean we can continue to offer business owners 6 hours of free consulting with a well qualified business mentor / coach. From the emergency fund we assisted 12 businesses pivot, transform or realign their offering to suit the lockdown restrictions. Imagine what we could provide our members with more of this support funding!

In 2021 our training events will focus on the important issues: Digitalisation, Productivity, New Markets, Products, Services and Management Development programmes. We can provide a 40% subsidy to our members who wish to continue the learning journey, making the programmes more affordable.

As the pandemic eases and restrictions lift, we hope to blend the learning experience and bring back the high value of collaboration and networking opportunities that a classroom brings.

To find out more contact Adam Weatherley, ISME Learning & Development Manager on

adam@isme.ie



Will 2021 be the year for Insurance Reform?

Peter Boland,
Alliance for Insurance Reform

The [Government's Action Plan on Insurance Reform](#) published in December 2020, suggests that this administration might be serious about insurance reform. But for all the huffing and puffing over the last 4 years, nothing Government has done so far has applied any downward pressure on insurance premiums; and if the Government expects Ireland to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic through SMEs, then insurance must, and can be sorted in 2021. But only if 5 key actions are fully completed.

1. General damages for minor injuries must be dramatically reduced to reflect international norms and norms already established by the Court of Appeal.

We await the new personal injuries guidelines due to be adopted and published by the Judicial Council by 31st July at the latest. But because the judiciary have not entered into any public consultative process on this project, we do not know what the new guidelines will look like or when we will get to see them, if at all, before they are adopted by the courts.

An 80% reduction on damages for minor injuries would only bring us down to where England and Wales currently are and would still be nowhere near the equivalent damages in other European countries.

Overall, the Alliance expects general damages for minor, fully recovered soft tissue injuries to be recalibrated in the manner reflected in the ISME [Fair Book of Quantum](#) which correspond with our own independent academic advice.



2. Redefine and rebalance the “common duty of care” to require occupiers to take a duty of care that is reasonable, practical and proportionate.

We have received commitments to address this issue but await action from the Minister for Justice Helen McEntee that will look at the situation where many policyholders find themselves 100% liable for accidents regardless of the circumstances.

3. Establish a formal Garda response to insurance fraud.

Four years after the Cost of Insurance Working Group first addressed this issue, and despite commitments from An Garda Síochána in 2019 to a division-led approach, we are no closer to having a formal Garda response to insurance fraud.

4. Reform of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board.

If PIAB is not radically reformed, it will be irrelevant within a decade and the compensation of people injured due to the negligence of others will be a process managed and controlled by the legal profession, for the benefit of the legal profession, with dire consequences for the cost and availability of insurance cover in Ireland. We await urgent proposals for reform and enhancement of PIAB from Minister of State Robert Troy.

5. Produce a schedule of forecast reductions for reforms.

We need firm commitments from the insurance industry that all the reforms being worked on will actually lead to substantial reductions in insurance costs. Minister of State Sean Fleming is currently in consultation with the industry, and we await an assessment from him of the expected impact on premium levels of the reforms being planned. There are 66 actions in the [Government's Action Plan on Insurance Reform](#), but unless these 5 issues are addressed this year, then 2021 will go down as the year insurance could have been sorted,

Find out more on insurancereform.ie

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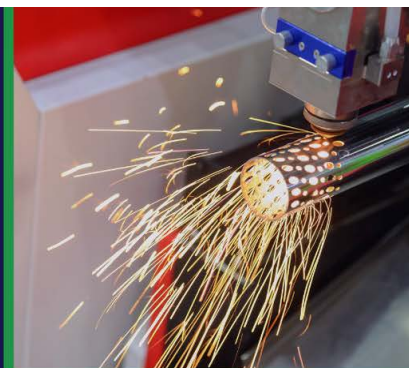
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Insights & advice for 2021

(Part 1)

Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future. Niels Bohr

With this caveat in mind Fergal O'Connor CEO in Buymedia looks into his advertising crystal ball and give us some insight and advice for those considering advertising in 2021. Buymedia has developed an online advertising platform and a set of simple tools to help SMEs plan, purchase, manage and learn from their advertising campaigns. Their ethos is to help SMEs compete against bigger brand advertisers by using the same insights and data available to big brands, so SME advertisers can target the right customers in the right place, reducing wasted advertising budget.

While COVID-19 continues to be the dominant 'c-word' of 2021, businesses considering advertising need to be aware of the other dominant 'c-word' when advertising to customers – change.

When we look at consumer and media data and insights for 2020, we see shifts in consumer behaviours and attitudes to purchasing a variety of goods and services. There are a number of these behaviours that will continue throughout 2021, regardless of lockdowns. For SMEs considering advertising, your planning process should include some sort of analysis of these changing consumer habits, as they can have a serious impact on the success or failure of your advertising.



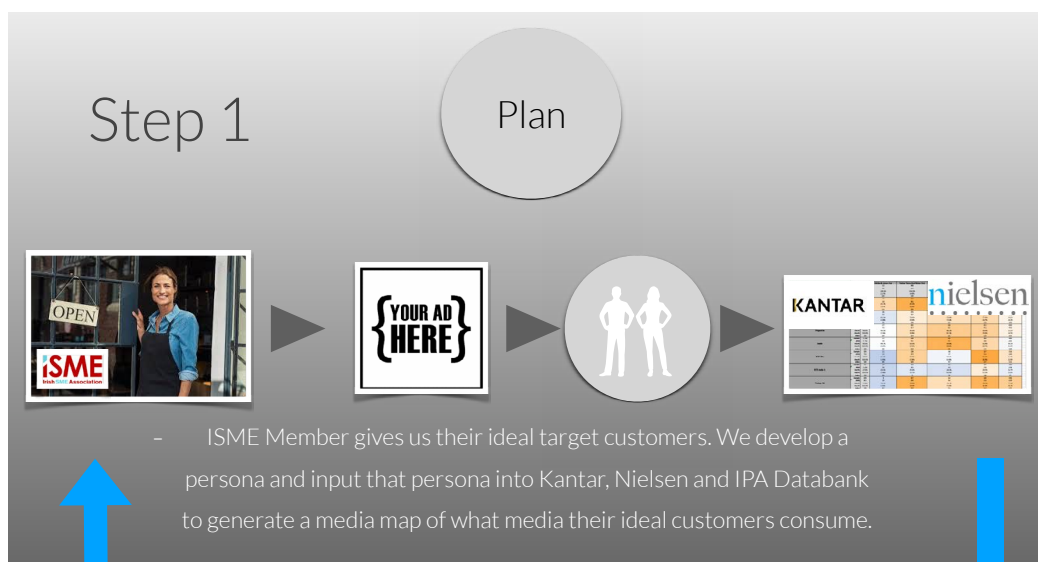
Fergal O'Connor,
CEO, Buymedia

From our experience, dealing with hundreds of SME advertisers, we've discovered there are 4 key pillars of successful advertising – planning, purchasing, management and learning. If a business can make small improvements to each of these 4 areas it has a massive impact on the return on advertising investment. In this issue, I'll be looking at the first 2 key pillars, planning and purchasing and will discuss management and learning in the next issue.

Pillar 1 – Planning

- **Do the research** – research companies are paid a lot of money by big brands to give them the latest consumer and media insights. This means that they are forearmed to make better data driven advertising decisions. SMEs on the other hand tend to use limited experience and gut instinct as their planning insights – neither are a good way to achieve the best return on your investment. Buymedia partners with Kantar, Nielsen and the IPA Databank (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising) to bring the latest consumer and media research to your planning process. McKinsey in its report, *Trends that will define 2021 and beyond*, discovered: in nine of 13 major countries surveyed, at least two-thirds of consumers say they have tried new kinds of shopping, with 13, 6% saying they intend to continue to do so.

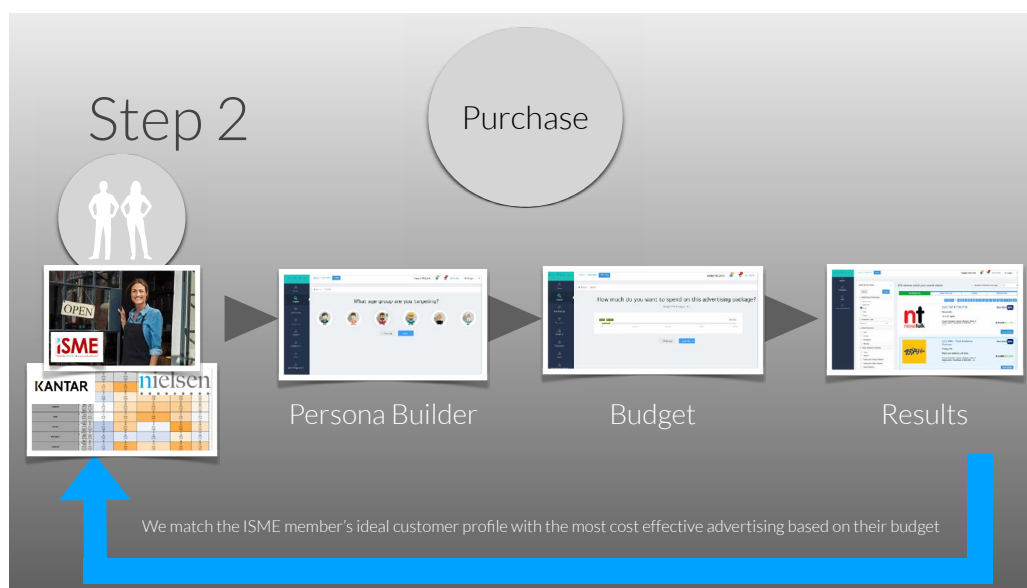
• **Don't buy advertising until...** not one euro should be spent on advertising until you have a media map of your ideal customer(s). This used to involve weeks of research, matching your ideal customer against consumer behaviour data and media consumption. At Buymedia we've



developed algorithms that analyses a number of consumer and media datasets to generate media effectiveness scores for every media title across all media channels, providing businesses with a map that can guide advertising decisions.

- **A new way to track consumer demand** – econometrics is the application of statistical and mathematical data to forecast future trends. An IPA report in November 2020 revealed that by applying econometric models to your own business' search history and share of search, we can predict your business' future market share. This helps us to inform future advertising requirements and activity further down the customer journey funnel.
- **Competition** – do you know what your competitors are doing when it comes to advertising? Buymedia has included competitive analysis in our advertising process, so before you make any advertising decisions you can be armed with the knowledge you need about your competitors – what are they spending on advertising and in what channels are they spending. Knowledge is power.
- **Balanced budget** – how do you know what portion of your budget should be allocated to marketing and advertising and then how should you most effectively allocate the advertising budget across media channels? Extensive IPA research over 10 years has shown that the ideal media mix for businesses who have a long-term growth strategy is a 60:40 media spend split - 60% of your budget should be allocated to building your brand (TV, Radio, OOH, Print) and 40% should be allocated to sales activation (PPC, Social advertising offers etc).
- **Bias** - don't allow bias to influence your advertising decisions. What worked before may not work now in the changing environment. Ebiquity, one of the world's leading advertising and media research companies surveyed leading marketing managers and advertising practitioners to find out what they considered the most effective media

Pillar 2 - Purchasing



channels, they then cross referenced this with the actual results from real world advertising campaigns. The results were shocking – even the best advertising practitioners were biased towards digital channels as the most effective where in fact some of the traditional media channels – TV, radio, print and out of home – were actually having more impact when it came to overall advertising effectiveness. The best way to overcome this is by using a number of data points so you are making data driven decisions to

help inform your advertising choices.

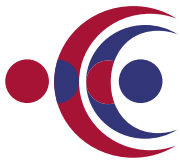
From our research and experience we've found that SME advertisers generally purchase advertising reactively rather than proactively. This has a number of negative consequences including:

- **Paying a premium for advertising** – the more sporadic and less pre-planned your advertising purchases, the more you pay for advertising. Media planning will reduce your cost of advertising. Often businesses decide where to advertise based on an 'offer' from, or a relationship with a media company – this is not advisable if your aim is to generate a repeatable and successful advertising model. The key to planning now is to make it flexible and adaptable
- **SMEs generally purchase advertising as an individual**

However, if now isn't the right time for your business to advertise then now is the time to plan. Because to fail to plan is a plan to fail.

For access to the reports or insights mentioned in this article please visit buymediahq.com or email: hello@buymedia.ie.

Buymedia is an ISME ADVANTAGE Affinity partner offering **15% reduction** in the cost of advertising per annum and more, to find out more visit: [here](#).



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 - a suite of 7 detailed Information Books
 - a suite of 12 'Quick Guides' written in Plain English

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www.odce.ie



PITCH MY BUSINESS

We will be running more in **Pitch my Business** events as part of the **Back to Business** initiative in 2021, the next event will take place on Thursday 11th February at 10.30am. Opening the session is Maureen McCowen from Soft Skill Success. Maureen is a Communication and Presentation Skills Specialist and will be providing tips on pitching and presenting. Take 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 LAUNCH THEIR PENSIONS EQUITY CAMPAIGN

On 1st February we launched our campaign to raise funds for a legal challenge to force the creation of a fair system for private sector pension savers. The last Public Service Pay Commission report found that while there is almost 100% pension coverage in the public sector, the overall figure for the private sector is 40%. This means that workers in the private sector who aspire to a pension even close to that of a similarly paid public sector worker, would have to surrender more than a third of their salary. To support the challenge ISME is calling on private pension holders to spread the word and to make a donation today. Read all about this campaign on [page 19](#).

COVID-19 HUB FOR MEMBERS

ISME have developed an online Members only hub with tools and templates to help guide you during this difficult time. Included in the COVID-19 page are explainers and links to all government schemes, HR resources, best practice advice and supports. Access by logging into the Members Area of the website [here](#)

ISME'S BREXIT PORTAL

ISME have created a page for BREXIT resources to help you navigate these unknown times. Included on the page is *A Brexit Guide* written by Paul McMahon who was a regular ISME Roadshow speaker in 2019. 'BrexitLegal.ie' is a comprehensive free website about Brexit for Irish business. Read more [here](#).

GET YOUR BUSINESS NOTICED WITH ISME

Advertising with ISME is an effective way to reach the Irish business community. You can advertise in our online publication The bISME, the next issue is out in April and ISME members enjoy up to 50% discount on advertising rates. ISME Members can advertise for free through the [Shop Local](#) and [Back to Business campaigns](#). If you wish to receive advertising rates and more details on promotional opportunities please email Marketing@isme.ie

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Getting Hired in a Virtual World - 2 Part Series

11th & 12th February,
12:00pm - 1:30pm
[Book here](#)

Back to Business – Pitch my Business

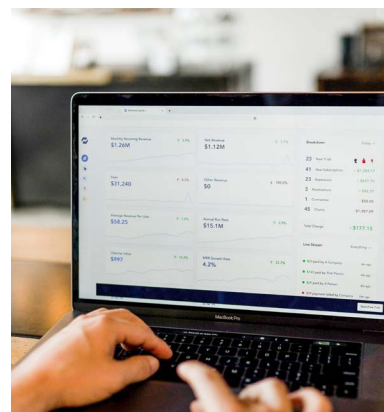
11th February, 10:30am
[Book here](#)

Your Website and Digital Marketing Strategies

16th, 17th, 18th February,
12:00pm- 1:30pm
[Book here](#)

ISME & Google Garage Workshop: Measuring what matters - Google Analytics

24th February, 11.00am
[Book here](#)



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Developing Your Network

2nd March,
12:00pm- 1:30pm
[Book here](#)

Delivering Excellent Service

3rd March,
12:00pm- 1:30pm
[Book here](#)

Pricing and Negotiation

4th March,
12:00pm- 1:30pm
[Book here](#)

Master Your Pitch - 3-Part Mini Series

23rd, 24th and 26th
March, 12:00pm- 1:30pm
[Book here](#)

ISME & Google Garage Workshop - Digital Marketing Strategy

24th March, 11:00am
[Book here](#)

ISME SKILLNET WILL BE BUSY IN 2021 OFFERING A SELECTION OF LONG AND SHORT-TERM COURSES DELIVERED ONLINE

Skills Connect

ISME Skillnet have received funding from Skillnet Ireland for training courses through the Skills Connect initiative in 2020/21. The Skills Connect Initiative is a 100% government funded initiative aimed solely at training unemployed people on a government support payment. It provides skills which are in demand by industry, combined with direct access to employers through securing a work placement. The courses include:

Essential Management Skills - (QQI Level 6) for Jobseekers & PUP Recipients

This fully funded programme by Optimum is aimed at those who are unemployed or temporarily unemployed due to COVID-19. This 6-module programme will help aspiring new managers, or current managers, to learn new skills that will help them secure a new role as quickly as possible in the current COVID-19 business environment, read full details [here](#). This course will launch on 24th February 24th, with one all-day session every Wednesday from 10am-4pm finishing on 7th April.

Internships wanted

ISME Skillnet is currently training 12 students in the Griffith College Sales and Marketing QQI Level 7 course. As this course is funded by the Skills-Connect initiative, we will be placing these learners on an internship afterwards. If your company would like to facilitate hosting an internship, please contact us at skillnet@isme.ie. Our certified and trained interns can assist with your sales, marketing social media and other needs! Contact us for further details.

2021 Lean & Fit Entrepreneurial Bootcamp

Business expert trainers Simon Haigh and Jason Cooper from GCM Advisory Group, have developed a 12-week programme to address 2021's business challenges. This programme is aimed at helping trainees navigate through what will be a challenging business year - read full details [here](#). This course will launch February 17th, with one session held every Wednesday from 12:30pm- 2pm and will finish April 5th. Fees: €150 ISME Members; €197.50 Non-Members

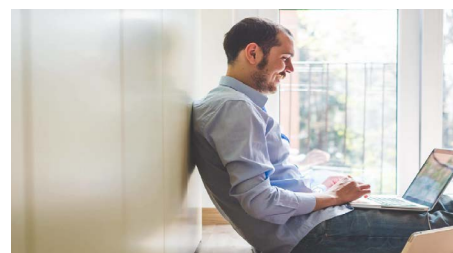
Introductory Certificate in Bookkeeping using Big Red Cloud

This practical, certified course with 12 week's access to Big Red Cloud, gives you a strong foundation in Bookkeeping Principles using practical worked examples and real-to-life case studies. You will also be introduced to VAT, RCT and Cash Budgeting. Ensuring that your business is as economical as possible we look at deductible expenses, including capital allowances, and payments that can be used to make employee payments most tax efficient. Click [here](#) for full course details.



ISME & GOOGLE WEBINARS IN 2021

We are adding more Google workshops in 2021 as part of its Grow with Google initiative. Their 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 next webinar will take place on Wednesday 24th February at 11.00am entitled **Measuring what matters: Google Analytics**. The session will help you gain insight into how consumers are engaging with your business online and discover the value of insight-based marketing and how interpreting data in the right way can help you create more effective business solutions by using strategies informed by real consumer truths.



Google Digital Garage

The focus of the next webinar on Wednesday 24th March 11.00am will be **Digital Marketing Strategy**. This workshop will be an introduction to digital marketing, the main digital marketing channels, and how to use them to build a digital marketing strategy. You'll learn the fundamentals of how to develop, implement and track a digital marketing strategy.

ISME'S Q4 BANK WATCH SURVEY REPORT

ISME's Q4 Bank Watch survey results are out now and one of the key findings was that loan acceptance rates drop while SME demand for credit rises.

Summary of findings

- Demand for credit is at 29%, up 18% from Q3
- Loan refusal rates increased from 29% to 37%, with 53% being successful, up 3% from Q3. However, only 10% were partially successful, compared to 21% in Q3
- Just under 9% availed of peer-to-peer funding
- 19% waited longer than 4 weeks between permission and drawdown
- 56% of SMEs believe banks are making it more difficult for SMEs to access finance.
- 20% of SMEs pay over €5,000 in Bank Charges (excluding interest).

Read the full Bank Watch Report [here](#)

NEW LOOK MEMBER'S MONTHLY

In February this year ISME launched a new style of monthly newsletter. The monthly can now be accessed via the Member's Area and the articles, resources and news can all be read directly on our website. Take a look [here](#).

ISME MEMBERS WORKING TOGETHER

PropertyLocator.ie has hit the ground running this year with the announcement that Elephant Click and Store has become their Lead Storage partner commencing with effect from 1st January 2021.

ISME are delighted to have played a part in this as our Sales Manager, Tom Corcoran introduced the two digital-based companies to each other which lead to this online collaboration.

PropertyLocator.ie is Ireland's only dedicated Commercial Property Digital Showroom and related business platform and launched in February 2020. The platform has enjoyed a steady increase in traffic over the final 6 months of 2020 and is looking forward to celebrating its first anniversary. The platform includes property listings all over Ireland from national and international agents including Lisney, JLL, Colliers, Knight Frank and BNP Paribas. Other lead partners on the Property Platform include AIB and CPL.

Elephant Click and Store is a leading offsite storage provider, supplying storage to commercial and domestic clients in a cost-effective manner. Its flexibility caters to clients' needs by allowing them to increase or decrease their storage space when necessary. Companies which use Elephant Click and Store include Specsavers, Hidden Hearing, Lidl and Aldi.

To celebrate the partnership, new customers can avail of a special introductory offer of one month's free storage by using the promotional code available on Elephant Click and Store page on Propertylocator.ie

If you are interested in working with another ISME member please view our Member Directory in the Members Area of isme.ie or contact membership@isme.ie

Setting Goals for Better Health

Orla O'Callaghan,
Occupational Health Lead,
Iaya Healthcare

As another New Year rolls round, millions of us worldwide will make a New Year's resolution to improve our lives. Many of these resolutions will commit us to making changes that promote a healthier lifestyle. Aside from making New Year's resolutions, keeping them is equally as important. Here we suggest 9 long-term habit changes that could help you to become healthier and stay healthy in 2021.

1. Be aware of hidden sugars in your hot drink

Steer clear of lattes, cappuccinos and hot chocolates and instead go for herbal teas. Green tea can be a great order as it has caffeine in it and is also linked to the reduction of body fat. Swap your cappuccino for a green tea and you'll quickly see the difference.

2. Switch white carbs to brown

Brown carbs are full of fibre and goodness. Switch to brown or wholegrain bread/rice/pasta.

3. Keep Moving

The more sedentary your life is, the more important it is to intentionality move. Build more steps into your day by standing up and walking around at least once every hour.

4. Eat slowly and mindfully

Your stomach is 10 to 15 minutes behind your brain in terms of feeling full. By eating too fast we eat too much and also force the stomach to expand. Ideally, you should chew your food for 20 to 30 seconds each mouthful. This helps to break down the food and your body absorbs the nutrients quicker. So put your fork down between each mouthful, chew your food slowly and properly and watch what a difference this makes.

5. Rest up

Recovery is just as important as exercise. Learn to read your body so you know when it's time to rest, and give it time to recover.

6. Cook

By cooking you are reducing your intake of processed foods. The fresher the foods in your life the better it is for you.



7. Try something different

Ireland is an adventure sports playground, from surfing to mountain biking and pretty much everything in between, so why not get out there and try some of it!

8. Surround yourself with like-minded people

If you want to be fit, be friends with fit people. Those you surround yourself with will have a big impact on you!

9. Treat yourself once a week

Whatever your treat meal is, on one day a week have whatever you want and enjoy it. This creates balance and longevity.

ISME, in partnership with Iaya Healthcare and Spectrum.Life, provide an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for Members.

Full details can be found [here](#).

Article courtesy of Iaya Healthcare

ISME **WELLNESS** PROGRAMME

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

UNLIMITED ACCESS FOR AN EMPLOYEE
AND THEIR FAMILY TO:

- 24/7 Freephone Mental wellbeing support
- Up to 6 Sessions of face to face Counselling
- 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.

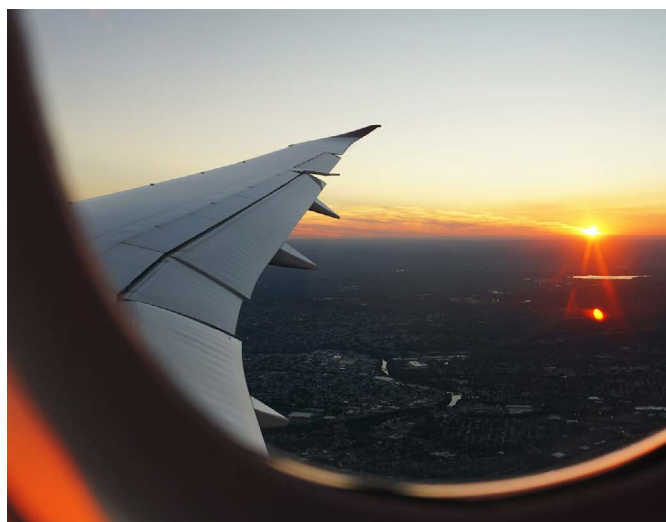
LEARN MORE >

Support your local ~~Sheriff~~ Travel Agent!

Dominic Burke,
Managing Director, Travel Centres

Because of both the way in which the travel industry works, and how our revenue model operates, I would contend that there are few businesses out there that have been impacted as profoundly as travel agents and tour operators right now.

Not only have our respective businesses been effectively shut down since the government advised against all non-essential travel; but we have had to retain and underwrite the cost of maintaining core staffing levels behind closed doors (or working from home) so that we could manage the repatriation of clients who were still abroad, or re-schedule / cancel the forward travel arrangements of all our customers.



Uniquely, because of the long tail that exists within our industry whereby travellers can book in respect of certain travel arrangements and products up to two or even three years in advance, most (and in some cases all) sales that had been generated and paid for back in 2019 and even 2018 had to be cancelled. Since commission payments are not realised until the person actually travels, these companies ended up seeing not only a catastrophic drop in income in 2020 but also for the previous year(s) as well!

Even though we are now 12 months into this pandemic and with no immediate end in sight,

travel agents throughout Ireland continue to work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that their respective customers receive the monies that they are due back as refunds to them. Travellers who utilised the services of travel agents and other licensed and bonded travel companies, quickly realised the qualitative difference in, and benefit of, entrusting both their money and their travel plans with professionals who have helped them navigate their way through the byzantine rules, regulations, processes and protocols that many carriers, hotel chains, cruise lines and other suppliers purposely put in their way to either slow down or deny the refunding of monies rightfully due to them. Unfortunately, as the old Irish saying goes *'eaten bread is soon forgotten'*, so I hope that in the months and years that follow, travellers will remember who had their back; who didn't over promise and under deliver and who didn't part consumers with their hard-earned money under false pretences.

The Internet is a wonderful resource — travel agents use it all the time — but it is just one of many resources that travel professionals refer to when constructing optimised travel plans for their clients. But make no mistake; there is a big difference between information and knowledge, and for the most part, you can only access the latter by utilising the services of a travel professional who is licensed and bonded and who can guarantee that your money is safe — come what may!

When this pandemic is behind us, whether that be in three, six or twelve months' time, most people will want to travel again. As we now know how badly things can go wrong when the unexpected happens, who would you prefer to be able to pick up the phone to if that happens — your local travel agent or the always engaged helpline of a low-cost carrier, foreign website or overseas hotel?

I know what I'd do, but perhaps I'm a little bit biased!

TravelCentres
Your one stop travel shop

www.travelcentres.ie

Sean Dwan, Speak for Success

A series that highlights the lives and interests of ISME members and staff. In this edition, The bISME talks to ISME Member, Sean Dwan, about his business interests and love of Toastmasters...

What interests do you have outside of work?

I have many interests - Toastmasters and most sports including Hurling, Rugby, Soccer, Golf, Snooker, Professional Boxing and Gaelic Football.

Why does being in toastmasters interest you?

It is a brilliant non-profit organisation. Although it is a slow burner, it is a marvellous way to get started in developing confidence and self-esteem particularly in the fields of public speaking / presentation skills/ leadership/thinking and listening skills.

I have been helped by various people in Toastmasters over the years and now I am in a position to help other, something I really enjoy. Toastmasters gave me confidence to travel to USA to train as a professional trainer

Do you have an interesting story about your hobby?

Life is one big story and I have many... At an International Toastmasters Conference, I unknowingly introduced a prominent businessman as the MC for the event, he wasn't even there but it did get a great laugh.



Sean speaking at a Toastmasters event.

What other hobbies/interests do you have?

I love most sports including Hurling, Rugby, Soccer, Professional Boxing, Golf, Snooker, Gaelic Football. I played Hurling at Club Senior Level in Tipperary. I also play golf and really like walking briskly in the fresh air.

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

I would love to learn a foreign language - Spanish in particular. I do take cookery lessons so I can boil a kettle and an egg and want to learn more. I would like to learn to dance properly - my wife has told me I am the worst dancer ever.

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

My company is Speak for Success International, offering presentation, public speaking, and confidence building skills training. I train CEOs, directors, managers, supervisors and others to deliver powerful messages. This can be across a range of situations such as speaking to management, in a boardroom to colleagues, at events and conferences or in social settings.

How has 2020 been for you and how have you coped?

It has been challenging due to COVID. I do train people online but face to face is much better for body language and voice projection is so important when speaking. I am building a client pipeline at this time and hope to be busy in the coming months.

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

It is absolutely essential as your mind is clearer and as a result helps you to develop new ideas particularly when your brain is at rest. Suddenly a great idea enters your open mind.

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

When I deliver training, I always say *"Balance is my favourite word in the English language"*. A number of years ago my work/life balance was askew - it was 90% work, 10% leisure. I have now dramatically changed this to 50 % / 50%.

An ideal work life balance is crucial as it gives you and your colleagues greater energy, greater mental capacity to deal with challenges and allows each person a degree of contentment *"Happiness is friendships and relationships"*

Find out more about Sean's work, [click here](#).

Credit where it's due during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Having difficulty getting a new business loan
or restructuring your existing debt with your bank?

Established by the Minister for Finance,
Credit Review is here to help.

**Talk to the credit experts today on 087 1217244
or visit creditreview.ie**

Credit Re✓view