

SUMMER 2021 Volume 1  
Issue 13

# THE **b**ISME

THE BUSINESS OF IRISH SMEs

## Meet ISME's new Chair

Margaret O'Rourke Doherty  
discusses her plans as incoming  
ISME Chair & the importance of SMEs

### Mandating COVID-19 Vaccination

What does this mean for employers?

### Improved communications & managing conflict

Top tips on managing conflict to benefit your business

### HR Focus

An update on the code of practice on the right to disconnect

### Legal Focus

Implications for the right to work remotely

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Irish **SME** Association

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# We are entering the most critical time for tens of thousands of businesses

Hello readers,

We hope it is not being foolishly optimistic to suggest, as we start the second quarter of the year, that we are exiting lockdown and entering the reopening of our economy. Our vaccine rollout has not progressed as planned, and NPHET continues to resist the endorsement of antigen testing in our workplaces, but the infection numbers look promising.

As the economy reopens, and as Government supports taper, this will be the most critical time for tens of thousands of businesses that have been shuttered during the pandemic. The Department of Enterprise ran a [Public Consultation](#) on “summary rescue” for small businesses which become insolvent. But we are worried that we will not see this on the statute books in time to save viable businesses which become insolvent this year. We are also very disappointed that our ICTU colleagues in the Company Law Review Group have [objected so strongly](#) to the summary rescue proposals. The failure to get this process enacted soon could cost thousands of jobs. Please let your TDs know how important this issue is.

The Judicial Council issued their [Personal Injuries Guidelines](#) in March. The (roughly) 50% reduction in damages is far less than the 80% reduction we sought, and compared to the £250 award for minor whiplash about to come into force in the UK, is still very generous. But it’s all we’ll get for now, so we will be turning our focus towards Occupier’s Liability, legal costs, perjury and defamation reform.



Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME

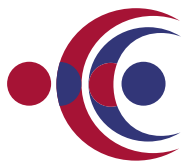
Our [Pensions Equity Challenge](#) continues, and thank you all for your support to date. We are engaging with other parties who may be able to assist us with funding this later this year, in the meantime, we ask you to share our [GoFundMe link](#) with interested colleagues and friends. This is important.

We will publish our pre-budget submission in May, as it is crucial to make the views of the business community known before our legislators and civil servants go on holiday. On the basis that the self-employed high-earners pay a USC levy, we’ve formally added a “solidarity tax” proposal of 3% for PAYE workers earning over €100k. We’re getting impatient for property tax reforms, and so will set out a clear roster of actions the Government needs to take, including levying immediate LPT on all houses built post-2013. We will call for the Government to incentivise life-long learning and a [“Blue Cert”](#) via the taxation system. And we will ask Government to stop discouraging people from working by studying our [Jobs Kill Zone](#) research paper and enacting its four simple actions.

With a fair wind behind our vaccine rollout, our next bISME will be full of business-reopening success stories!

Stay Safe!  
Neil McDonnell  
ISME CEO

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



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## USEFUL EVENTS FOR SMES

### How to Get Your Business Online Quickly

Tuesday, 4th May  
13.00 – 14.00  
[Book here](#)

### InterTradelreland - Seedcorn Competition Information workshops

4th -7th,  
11th – 14th May  
11.00 – 12.30  
[Book here](#)

### SEAI: Energy Management Training for SMEs

Part One:  
Wednesday, 5th May  
10:00 – 11:00

Part Two:  
Friday, 7th May,  
10:00 – 11:00  
To register email  
[Business@seai.ie](mailto:Business@seai.ie)

### Social Media & Marketing Show Ireland 2021

Tuesday, 11th May  
10:00 – 15:00  
[Book here](#)

### InterTradelreland Go to Tender Workshop

Wednesday 16th  
June  
9.30 & 4.30  
[Book here](#)

### InterTrade Ireland - Funding Advisory Service Workshop Dublin

Tuesday, 22nd June  
10.00 – 11.00  
[Book here](#)

## SEAI ENERGY SHOW

The SEAI Energy Show, Ireland's leading sustainable energy business event, returns on Wednesday, 28th and Thursday, 29th April 2021. The show will go online this year with a jam-packed programme of free workshops, expert briefings, and best practice demonstrations to help businesses learn about the latest energy market developments and how to save energy and costs for their organisation.

Key sessions of interest to businesses include:

- Upgrading our building stock – the challenges and opportunities
- Building the energy upgrade supply chain
- Achieving business decarbonisation
- Inspirational climate leadership – interview with Wyeth and Terra Spirits and Liqueurs on their climate action journey

For more details and to register in advance for this FREE event, visit [here](#).

## ARNOTTS LAUNCH PITCH' 21

This month Brown Thomas Arnotts launched Pitch'21 at Arnotts. This exciting new initiative is calling on budding Irish start-up companies and promising new brands, to pitch for an opportunity to retail in Ireland's iconic department store and online with the chance of winning a €10,000 business development fund.

The aim of the initiative is to support Irish designers, makers and entrepreneurs across a host of sectors - fashion, beauty, lifestyle, home and technology - who already have a product or range developed, to grow their brand further and to offer vital specialised mentoring and expertise in the world of retail.

Sign up [here](#).



## FACE FACTS

FACE COVERINGS ARE  
MANDATORY IN SHOPS  
& SHOPPING CENTRES

## FACE FACTS CAMPAIGN

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment are running a FACE FACTS campaign and have asked if you would like to receive material for your stores.

A sample image of the Face Facts campaign is available to view on Twitter [here](#).

If you would like to receive material, please contact their Communications Unit directly on:

[Sheryar.Qaiser@enterprise.gov.ie](mailto:Sheryar.Qaiser@enterprise.gov.ie)

to advise of the dimensions for a pdf poster for your shop and the dimensions for a poster or image for digi screens.



## WATCH BACK - HR Q&A: THE WORKPLACE AND HEALTH & SAFETY

Our HR Q&A in partnership with the HSA took place on Wednesday 31st March at 11.00am. ISME's HR Advisor Cait Lynch was joined by Joanne Harmon, Business & Education Support Manager, Health & Safety Authority. They gave advice and guidance to business owners and managers to help them understand the requirements for employers who have staff working both remotely or at their business premises. The event can be watched back [here](#).

## VIRUS. VACCINE. VISION.

Ireland's healthcare recently held a panel discussion, "Virus. Vaccine. Vision." where their panel of experts discussed the implications of Ireland's COVID-19 vaccination roll-out for employers.

Over 500 HR leaders attended the event and the questions asked, prompted a compelling debate that we expect will continue in the months ahead as we navigate the changing workplace during COVID-19.

To watch the event or share this fascinating panel discussion with your colleagues or other HR contacts, you can click [here](#).

## DATA PROTECTION FOR MARKETERS:

Steven Roberts, Head of Marketing at Griffith College, has written a new book *Data Protection for Marketers: A Practical Guide*.

The book offers advice and guidance for marketers and business owners. The book presents data privacy principles in a simple and transparent manner, focusing on the practical steps that marketers can adopt, along with useful case study examples. It is available now, for more information click [here](#).

## DATA PROTECTION FOR MARKETERS A PRACTICAL GUIDE



## ISME MEMBERS - WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

### OPENING IRELAND

Trade Shows have been at a standstill in Ireland since March 2020. This has been devastating for up to 15,000 SMEs in Ireland who rely on trade shows to sell their products.

These are not mass events or large attendance entertainment gatherings. The brushstrokes currently being applied by Government to events, are currently too broad.

It is vital that trade shows can resume this Autumn, and they should be aligned with the country's retail re-opening.

There is little difference between a person visiting a large department store to buy something and a retail buyer attending a large exhibition hall like the RDS to buy something at a trade fair.

With the vaccine roll out now gathering some momentum, I am hopeful that we can restart our business this autumn and assist thousands of SMEs to get back to work, in the process.

JOHN HICK,  
CEO, EVENTPRO

Ireland may be years behind the likes of Sweden and China in a push for a cashless economy, but we still have to embrace the global shift towards doing business online.

The pandemic has accelerated the rise of eCommerce, so small businesses can only survive through digital innovation, from click & collect to investing in a new website or social media.

The Government's Online Retail Scheme has been a lifeline, but it should be a springboard to a national level-up rather than a temporary emergency measure. From independent businesses to State agencies, we have to be ready for a digital future.

JIMMY WALSH,  
CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER,  
MATRIX INTERNET



## FREE ELEARNING ON HEALTH & SAFETY

The Health and Safety Authority provide a portal for health and safety courses on-line [here](#). The courses are free of charge and accessible 24/7. You can learn new skills and help prevent accidents and injury by taking a short on-line course. It's simple, just register, take the course whenever you wish and then download your certificate of completion when finished.

## UPSKILL YOUR STAFF TO REBUILD YOUR BUSINESS

In February 2021, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Simon Harris TD, launched two national upskilling programmes for employees in the hospitality and tourism sector, which were developed by SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards in consultation with the Irish Hotels Federation, Failte Ireland and the Regional Skills Fora.

The Hospitality sector, valued at upwards of €7.9bn to the economy, has been severely impacted by the pandemic, with over 100,000 jobs at risk due to COVID restrictions. To boost the retention and career progression of key talent, the two new [Developing Leaders for Hospitality and Tourism](#) programmes will provide highly subsidised upskilling opportunities, delivering critical team leadership and supervisory management skills to enable business recovery and growth.

The programmes are currently being rolled out nationwide by Education and Training Boards. Programme content includes areas such as Operational Skills, Customer Care, People Management, Finance and Controls, Sustainability and Digital Skills.



## Gather with the energy experts

The SEAI Energy Show is going online this year. Join up for lots of free events giving information and advice on how your business can save energy, money and switch to low carbon technologies.

**Date:** Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th April

Register now at [www.seai.ie/energyshow](http://www.seai.ie/energyshow)



#SEAIEnergyShow



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Skills to Advance

Make skills work for you



## Developing Leaders for Hospitality and Tourism

- Boost the retention and development of key talent
- Avail of highly subsidised training for enterprise

Contact your local Education and Training Board or visit [skillstoadvance.ie](https://skillstoadvance.ie)

# Meet ISME's New Chair

**Margaret O'Rourke Doherty,**  
CEO HABIC, Image Skillnet and incoming ISME Chair



Margaret at the launch of HABIC in 2019.

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

Business management and leadership has always been at the centre of my career – but I did things a little bit differently in that I had my family first before embarking on the management and leadership side of my career. I left my job at Peter Mark and had my two children, then I worked for MBNA. I re-trained as a florist, I then re-trained in agriculture and got a Masters in Organic Farming and a Masters in Business Management. I worked for National Organic Training Skillnet, and it was there that I saw the opportunity and need for support that the Skillnet model could give the Hair and Beauty sector, so I established Image Skillnet and subsequently the Hair and Beauty Industry Confederation (HABIC).

All of the colours and sectors of my career shape the knowledge I have. I've worked in accounts for a tiling company, a glass factory and an auto garage! I have worked across a broad spectrum of businesses and I've taken nuggets of experience and knowledge from all of them. It wasn't a conventional "leave school, go to college, work my way up" career. I very much had life experience, real-world experience, and education alongside that.

## What do you enjoy about your role?

I know we make a difference and I know what we do makes an impact on a lot of businesses and a lot of employees. I know we support people, so that's what I enjoy. I know what we do counts!

## Tell us about HABIC and Image Skillnet?

HABIC is a non-profit organisation formed to support the personal grooming industry, the services and support we provide to the industry have never been more needed. COVID-19 has demonstrated and highlighted many challenges for the industry. The personal grooming industry had no unified voice, little was known about the industry in terms of its value and contribution to the economy, this has significantly changed.

Image Skillnet is a dedicated training network supporting workforce development and lifelong learning for those working in the personal grooming industry. We support a large number of salons and professionals, and our contribution to the sector has been significant since 2017.

## How important do you believe learning & development is any business, particularly SMEs?

In my opinion, L&D is an essential part of any business no matter the size. The continual evolution of best practice gives a competitive advantage, adaptation or enhancement of operational processes, the inclusion of new services or products really strengthens a business. Additionally, investing in L&D helps support employees, making them feel valued, motivated, and confident in their role.

“We need to support SMEs in the right way. I'm passionate that they get the support they need once COVID is all over

## The Hair and Beauty sector has been very badly affected by COVID – what has been your members experience and how do you think it will impact the sector long term?

COVID-19 has decimated the personal grooming industry. Despite making significant investment and adopting enhanced health and safety measures, over and above what is legally required, that industry has remained shuttered. We believe the risks to customers in the "grey" market are far higher than they are in a properly maintained studio.

Our members are worried and unsure about what the future looks like due to the significant cost of COVID-19. Things like reduced salon capacity, productivity challenges, enhanced health and safety measures, booming black market, the gig economy, skills shortage and the rising cost of doing business in Ireland means the future for the industry will be challenging for many.

### What do you think will be the long-lasting impact of COVID for Irish business?

We have yet to discover how consumer trends have changed due to rolling lockdowns, and how consumer behaviour will impact business operations etc. With everything in life there will be challenges and opportunities. I believe the impact of COVID-19 has highlighted an opportunity to strengthen SMEs, and feel SMEs need additional support from the government to achieve increased productivity targets.

The rapid adoption of remote working has given many employers a different perspective as to what is both possible and not possible within organisations. For many this will mean a new way of working. There will be a long and profound effect from COVID-19, but it has demonstrated how important SMEs are in regard to employment and economic activity.

### In May 2021 you will be the new ISME Chair, talk to us about your plans over the next two years?

I'd like to see ISME's regional networks develop. I live in Leitrim, west of the Shannon, and that's what's great about the ISME's National Council - it's a mixed representative of all business sectors from all areas - it's a real reflection of SMEs throughout Ireland. The Pandemic has shown across the country that businesses, particularly SMEs have been really badly affected, and it's shown the need for Government to step up and support SMEs in a way they haven't before.

The findings of the [National SME Taskforce Report](#) are something I believe needs to be implemented in order to support businesses as we move forward. We can either take the positives and learn from the pandemic, or we can go back to "as is". We need to support SMEs in the right way. I'm passionate that they get the support they need once COVID is all over.

### Why do you think ISME is more important now than ever for Irish SMEs?

I think it's really important for every business to have the supports they need which ISME can offer- whether that be picking up the phone and getting a bit of advice on HR, getting business advice, or even to have your voice heard from a lobbying perspective. It's vital that businesses have their voices heard - particularly small businesses. Supports for large businesses and multinationals is great, but in reality, it's small businesses in towns and villages across Ireland, the corner shop or the hairdresser or the solicitors that's keeping those towns alive. So, it's vital, not just from a business perspective but even from a societal perspective that those types of businesses survive.

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

I came from a small family business (I grew up living over the local pub / restaurant, B&B and convenience shop all rolled into one) and understand the challenges around that. Keeping the bills paid, the roof over

your head, the staff sustained - all of those things are challenges for most SMEs. Growing a business is a hard thing to do from the ground up, and I take my hat off to any SME - and I wish more people understood the struggle and personal sacrifices so many people make to grow a business. Sustaining a business is not easy, it's challenging and not for the faint hearted - but it is rewarding.

Entrepreneurs have a drive that they need to fulfil. It's about satisfying a bigger ambition, and a willingness to "do". And that's why a body like ISME is so important, because it gives them that support and structure that can help them increase productivity and assist them along the way. When people actually reach out and use the supports that ISME provides, it's really valuable. Get involved, it's a no brainer!

### Do you have a business mentor?

My career has been varied and shaped by my parents' entrepreneurial journey. My father has been an entrepreneur all his life! I've had lots of business mentors - I've been lucky enough to be surrounded by people who have granted me opportunity and time.

“When people actually reach out and use the supports that ISME provides, it's really valuable. Get involved, it's a no brainer!”

### What three important pieces of advice would you impart to an SME in today's competitive climate?

My three pieces of advice are discipline, consistency, and "getting your foundations right" would be very important. And don't be afraid to ask for help! Ask for support - you're not on this journey alone! It can be a lonely ol' journey if you don't reach out or get involved. **Passion, planning and people are the three 'Ps' that**



**many business owners attribute their success to. Would you agree with this mantra and/or what else makes a business successful?**

I think discipline and consistency are very important. Being self-employed can be hard and being in business can be tough - and sometimes you will need discipline and consistency to get you through. Trusting your employees and letting people do their jobs is also important. You employ these people for a reason, let them get on with it! Passion is great, but some days it won't get you up and at your desk every morning, and it doesn't get you through the really hard jobs - discipline and consistency does.

To find out more visit [habic.ie](http://habic.ie) and [imageskillnet.ie](http://imageskillnet.ie)



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# COVID-19

## Credit Guarantee Scheme



### Key features of the Covid-19 Scheme

- Loans from €10,000 to a maximum of €1,000,000 per borrower;
- Terms of between 3 months up to 5.5 years;
- Loans unsecured up to €250,000 (unless it is a requirement of the product feature, e.g. asset finance, invoice discount facilities);
- The Scheme permits the refinance and rollover of debt incurred as a result of Covid-19 (e.g. Covid-19 related expenses that were initially funded through short term/temporary facilities such as overdrafts);
- Loans will be available up to the end of 2021.



### Loans can be used for

- Working capital or investment requirements.



### Scheme costs

- The interest rate applicable to the loan will be determined by the participating lender. In addition, the participating lender will collect a premium which is payable to the Government of Ireland.



### Who can apply?

To be eligible a borrower must

- Be a viable business with up to 499 employees (Micro, SME or small Mid-Cap enterprise), including Primary producers (Agriculture/Fishing);
- Have or expect to have a reduction of minimum 15% in the turnover or profitability as a result of Covid-19;
- Meet the eligibility criteria.



### How do I apply?

- The Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme is available through a wide range of lenders (banks, credit unions and non-bank finance providers).
- The updated list of the Scheme providers is available on the SBCI website [www.sbc.gov.ie](http://www.sbc.gov.ie)



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Does collaboration matter to your business?

Janet Toal, Innovation Manager,  
InterTradelreland

If a year ago you had been asked this question, chances are your response would have been different. Previously collaboration offered businesses the opportunity to add value, and was seen as a unique way in which to upskill and enable employee development.

The arrival of a pandemic however has impacted communication and the opportunity to collaborate effectively. With employees working from home, fragmented organisational structure has meant many businesses are now more removed from their customer base. As a result, opportunities to come together to challenge and progress change have been severely impacted. So perhaps the question is, can your business afford to miss out on the important benefits collaboration provides?

Janet Toal, Innovation Manager at InterTradelreland, says

*Collaboration is a powerful tool for those looking to support business recovery. Effective collaboration offers the facilitation and transfer of crucial skills, knowledge expertise and supports growth capability. Right now, it can be used to help your business in re-establishing connections and act as a catalyst for change and innovation.*

## 'The catalyst to innovation'

InterTradelreland's [Business Monitor Q4 2020](#) shows that 50% of businesses continue to struggle as the Brexit transition ends.

Yet the same businesses reported growth of 19% (Ireland) and 13% (Northern Ireland), illustrating that in spite of challenges, businesses continue to recognise the necessity to effect and implement change. Businesses are seeking solutions to issues including; declining sales, supply chain difficulties, low productivity and inefficiency. Whatever the challenge, now is an opportune time to consider what creative solutions or technologies could support your business to grow.

## How InterTradelreland can help your business collaborate

Developing these creative solutions however often poses more of a challenge than the problem itself. Perhaps a lack of technical skill or inexperience means innovation is a cost you believe your business simply cannot afford. That is where collaboration can help.

[InterTradelreland's Innovation Boost](#) (previously known as FUSION programme) is a unique cross-border support, collaborating applicant businesses with academic expertise. This partnership approach offers real opportunity to explore a diversity of knowledge, skills and experience. This often leads to innovative solutions that are embedded in the business by the recruitment of a graduate, whose salary is 50% funded by ITI. The benefits of the programme extend further with new product development, accessing new market opportunities and increased innovation capability - being only a few which participants of the programme have reported.

The success of the Innovation Boost programme can be seen in the recent 2021 ROI recipients of the Exemplar award. Together the four businesses awarded "Exemplar" status have reported sales of over a quarter of a million euro and savings of €640,000 as a direct result of their collaboration. During the next three years, combined sales are projected to grow to upwards of €1.5 million, with predicted savings of over €2 million. In addition, the opportunity for industrial experience, course material and graduate learning mean all partners benefit.

## Could this be the answer for your business?

So, if you recognise the potential benefits of using collaboration to innovate but have questions about where to start, then visit [www.intertradeireland.com](http://www.intertradeireland.com).

Find out how we're supporting innovation and with our experience you can get the help needed to really boost your business!



# Why Brand Positioning is essential for your business.



The modern world can be pretty hectic. Everywhere you look there's an advert, an idea, a brand trying to get your attention. Each day it feels harder and harder to make your voice heard.

## CLARITY AND SIMPLICITY

At TOTEM we talk a lot about how critical these elements are when creating truly meaningful branding. Branding that connects with your audience. Why? Well, it all comes down to positioning.

What unique position does your brand hold in the mind of your customers? What do you look like to them? Are you the biggest, the best, the nicest, the cheapest, or the most ethical choice?

It's so critical that you understand this, and work in a consistent way to create and reinforce this 'position'. This will motivate customer loyalty which, in turn, leads to growth. With each thing you say and do, you can build or break your brand.

## NOISE, NOISE, EVERYWHERE ...

According to Statista, in America, per-capita advertising spend is estimated to have reached \$726 in 2020. That's a staggering \$240 billion annually. But it's not just that.

Social Media has transformed how we live. We are now plugged in. Constantly.

The growth in online advertising over the last 20 years has been exponential. It's now estimated that the average person in 2021 encounters between 6,000 and 10,000 ads every single day.

It's a deafening assault. So how does your business get heard? To stand out, you need to cut through the clutter. Positioning is the answer.

## FIND YOUR SLOT...

Positioning isn't just about what you're putting out there. It's about what happens within the mind of your customer. Their perception of your company, and what it stands for.

That perception is going to evolve in their mind, but you can actively shape it. The key to doing this is through smart, strategic branding.

You can help ensure that the image you're putting out there, the image that sticks in people's minds, is the right one. From there, you can start building customer loyalty.

The first step starts with looking from the outside in. That's the perspective you'll need to find your concept – not from within your business, or your product.

You need to understand what it is your customers need. Their pain points. And then look at what competitors are offering them.

It's about choosing a position that customers really want. A position that plays to your strengths, and your competitors' weaknesses – your **Ideal Zone**.

## Your Ideal Zone



1

### IDEAL ZONE

You can own the space and customers want it.

2

### RISKY ZONE

You can provide what customers want, but so can others. You need to compete, invest and innovate to do it better.

3

### DANGER ZONE

Customers want it but your competitors can do it better.

4

### DISASTER ZONE

Customers don't want it and you and your competitors will just waste time and money fighting each other for empty space.

## AND KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Simplicity is our mantra here at TOTEM, and for good reason. In the hectic world of modern advertising, only the simplest and most obvious messages are going to cut through all the noise to reach your audience.

By simple, we by no way mean easy. Keeping it simple can be one of the most challenging and complex things you'll do. But it works. Simple ideas work. Simple words work. And simple concepts work. Why?

Your audience only have a split second to take in your message. If it's not clear, not thought-through, if it's too clever or too ambiguous, it will just get lost.

You have to do the distilling for them.

## BE SINGLE MINDED.

Once you've found your gap and simplified your message, you then have to be absolutely single-minded in owning it, and reinforcing your position in the mind of your customers.

Every interaction and experience they have with you strengthens or weakens that position, and one of the biggest challenges brands face is confused positioning.

Businesses start out knowing what they stand for, but over time campaigns get complicated. Messages get mixed. Different people are given responsibility for different media channels. The right hand stops talking to the left. When it happens, it can spell disaster for your brand.

## INCONSISTENCY - THE ENEMY OF POSITIONING.

If you're trying to position yourself as cutting-edge, you can't have an out-of-date, slow loading, clunky website. If your position is for the best quality, every message needs to be of the highest quality - not just your product. A poor customer service experience, a low-res Social Media image or poor quality, flimsy packaging.

These might seem like minor things, but they can be disastrous for your brand.

These experiences of inconsistency can damage any prospects of building customer loyalty. They can stunt the growth of your business.

A busy mind doesn't have time to give you the benefit of the doubt. They process all these experiences in an instant. It doesn't take long for you to be unseated from your position in their mind, for your claims of quality or innovation to be dismissed.

## STUCK IN THE WRONG SPOT?

At TOTEM, one of our specialities is helping brands reposition themselves. We guide businesses through a process of understanding where they are now, identifying their ideal positioning zone and creating impactful, simple, solutions. Meaningful Branding that stops your audience in their tracks.

**If you found this article interesting then be sure to attend our upcoming webinar in association with ISME this May.**



**Colin Byrne**  
Creative Director  
TOTEM

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# Mandating COVID-19 Vaccination

## – How Do I Handle It?

**In a recent article for Legal Island, solicitor Michelle Ryan addressed the vexed question of “Can we mandate that our employees get the COVID-19 Vaccination?”**

*As it currently stands, the vaccination programme, is a public health programme so employers will have no control over/involvement in which of their employees are vaccinated or otherwise.*

*The HSA has recently updated its regulations on “biological agents” to include COVID-19. These regulations require that, where a risk assessment shows a risk to employees from working with a biological agent, for which a vaccine is available, employers must offer a vaccine. However, employers cannot currently offer a COVID-19 vaccine, so it is unclear how these regulations actually fit with the COVID-19 vaccination programme.*

*Of note, the HSE has not mandated vaccination for their workers so it is hard to see how other employers could justify seeking to mandate it – even where they have a risk assessment to back it up. In any event, even if they could mandate it, there are issues and considerations in terms of data privacy, the constitutional right to bodily integrity, together with potential equality discrimination issues, for example employees who do not agree with vaccination on religious grounds.*

When asked what employers can do, Michelle suggests

*At a minimum, employers should provide information and education to employees around the vaccine and encourage their employees to be vaccinated to protect themselves and to help keep the workplace safe.*

*Employers will need to update their risk assessments and Work Safely protocols to reflect the availability of the vaccine. However, although the provisions of the Work Safely Protocol and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 oblige employers to take steps to remove*



Michelle Ryan RDJ solicitors

*or minimise any risks identified arising from their workplace risk assessments, employers cannot mandate vaccination and the vaccine is just one piece of the jigsaw in dealing with the COVID-19 threat. Employers must continue all their existing health and safety measures around COVID-19, including social distancing, masks etc. for the foreseeable future.*

As we are still currently some time away from the vaccine being widely available, employers would be best advised to hold off on making any definitive decisions pending further guidance from the Government. This situation is subject to further change as the vaccine rollout evolves and employers will need to keep up to date with developments in this regard. You can read the full article [here](#).

On a related point, please note that the [European Court of Human Rights](#) has just ruled that it was not a breach of the Convention to deny unvaccinated children places in a nursery. The issue of vaccines in society will run for years.

Legal Island is Ireland's leading employment law and workplace compliance training specialist. They run events (currently online), all delivered by leading employment law & HR practitioners, to provide the latest updates, practical tips and effective solutions for organisations. They offer a range of eLearning courses which enables organisation-wide training in key compliance areas such as data protection, diversity and inclusion, mental health and wellbeing and more. Their Irish Employment Law Hub is your one-stop-shop for in-depth articles, case law analysis, webinar recordings, podcasts, videos and more.



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\*Offer is subject to minimum requirements. Requirements include: Offer applies to new customers only. Contract start date must be after 01/01/2021. Contract duration must be a minimum of 12 months.

# Code of practice for employers and employees on the right to disconnect

Cait Lynch,  
ISME HR Advisor

The Workplace Relations Commission [Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Disconnect](#) was introduced on Thursday 1st April 2021. The Code aims to provide guidance on best practice for organisations and employees alike in respect of the right to disconnect.

Irish employment law already provides protections for employees in terms of hours of work, rest breaks etc. under the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, and health and safety protections under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and the Code does not mitigate an employer's responsibilities under these acts. The Code is seeking to address the issues that can arise from remote and flexible working due to the increased connectivity available through improved technology.

Employers should note that while failure to adhere to the guidance set out in the Code is not, in and of itself an offence, it is important for employers to be aware that should a claim come before the WRC or the Irish Courts, failure to adhere to the Code may be taken into consideration.

The Code is applicable regardless of whether an employee is a remote worker, office based or is a mobile worker.

## The code sets out a number of employer obligations such as:

- Detail employees' normal working hours or the hours they would reasonable be expected to work;
- Ensure employees take appropriate rest periods;
- Ensure a safe workplace; and
- Ensure no penalisation occurs where an employee acts in compliance with any relevant provision or performing any duty or exercising any right under section 27 of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.

## It also outlines a number of employee obligations:

- To manage their own work time and to take reasonable care to protect their own safety, health and welfare, in addition to the health and safety of co-workers;

- To co-operate fully with any appropriate mechanism utilised by an employer to record working time, including when working remotely;
- To be mindful of their colleagues, customers, clients and other peoples' rights to disconnect;
- To notify the employer in writing of any statutory rest break or period they are entitled to and were not able to avail of on a particular occasion, and the reason for not having availed of such rest period or break; and
- Being conscious of their work pattern and aware of their work-related wellbeing and taking remedial action if necessary.



Any employer wishing to implement a right to disconnect policy should be aware of any unintended consequences this might create, such as inadvertently discriminating against employees who for any reason may not work strictly within traditional office hours. An example of this may be an employee with caring duties or an employee with a disability. If an employer has any agreements in place around flexible working these should be considered when drafting a right to disconnect policy.

The Code emphasises the fact that the right to disconnect does not exist in a vacuum and regard should be had to business and operational needs, as well as an employee's right to disconnect. However, it does advise that there is a difference between occasional communications outside of normal working hours and where such communications become accepted and widespread practice.

For further information, ISME Members can contact [HR@isme.ie](mailto:HR@isme.ie)

# 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](https://intertradeireland.com)**



recovery, planning  
and guidance for business

# Advertising Insights & advice for 2021 (Part 2)

Fergal O'Connor, CEO, Buymedia

In the last issue of The bISME, I provided some insights and advice for SMEs considering advertising in 2021, and looked at 2 elements of the 4 key pillars of successful advertising we at Buymedia endorse – planning and purchasing. Now I am looking at the other 2 essentials – management and learning. If a business can make small improvements to each of the 4 pillars, it can have a massive impact on the return on advertising investment. Gartner recently reported that ‘Return on Investment’ is the number 1 metric for the top marketing managers globally.

## Pillar 3 – Managing

If you have achieved success in the first 2 pillars, well done. However, be wary because it's often the next 2 pillars where most business fail.

- **Integration of advertising across multiple media channels** - this has proven to be the most effective way to structure your advertising campaign. Research by the IPA shows that by advertising across 5 media channels, businesses using the exact same budgets can achieve a 35% increase on their advertising return on investment. The challenge for most businesses is that they don't have the data, resources or expertise to manage 5 media channels effectively. The same report shows only 8% of SMEs used the 5-channel media strategy.
- **Knowledge of channels** – your business needs to know what media channels are most effective for your target audience. Kantar, Nielsen, Gartner, World Advertising Research Council (WARC) all produce detailed media usage reports that Buymedia uses, to help effectively allocate your budget to the best media channels for your target customer. A recent Gartner CMO Spend Survey showed that the shift to digital will continue but investment in technology and traditional media will still be important for businesses in 2021.

We know that by streamlining your advertising processes and helping businesses manage the process and logistics of the campaigns e.g., ordering, scheduling, sending ad copy, it can help you better integrate your advertising campaigns and achieve a higher ROI.

## Pillar 4 – Learning

The final piece of the advertising puzzle is how does your business learn from previous advertising. If you are dealing with an agency, you'll likely get access to reports and recommendations but if you're an SME this level of expenditure is likely outside of your budget.

You can try to cobble together some excel sheets that may help give you some insight. Our approach is to combine all your advertising spend and metrics on one dashboard so you can monitor in real time the overview of your advertising campaigns. In time our artificial intelligence and machine learning will be able to take that data and make recommendations based on, not just your business performance, but your industry as a whole, while adjusting for market conditions and shifting consumer sands.

So why should your business advertise now, particularly when there is so much uncertainty? If your business can meet demand and supply challenges and can trade, then there is a good argument to be made for advertising now – remember advertising isn't just about generating sales today, it's about building market share for future growth. According to Gartner's CMO Spend Survey Part 1, the old adage states: “When times are good you should advertise. When times are bad you must advertise.”

Brand awareness and relevance in times of strife are more important than ever. A historical review of advertising during recessions found that most firms tend to cut back on paid media during a recession. However, 2009 research found that brands that continued to invest in advertising found their advertising's effectiveness increased as the noise from other brands was silenced. Interestingly these businesses also bounced back more quickly post-recession.

The ‘WARC Marketers Toolkit 2021’ gives some interesting insights for ‘brave’ businesses. 38% of businesses said they will be focusing on customer retention over acquisition, this means those businesses taking a bolder approach have an even greater chance of winning market share. WARC also sees an opportunity to win more customers – ‘consumers are significantly more likely to try new brands when they go through a major life event. Further disruption as markets exit the pandemic provide additional opportunities to win new customers.’

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.

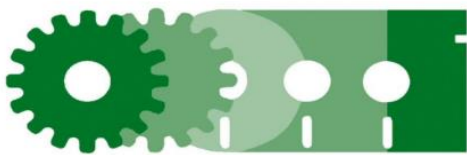
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# Member stories during COVID-19

## Skelligs Chocolate

The pandemic caused many people to feel lonely and isolated but it has also given rise to an initiative which makes people feel special and delivers happiness to someone's doorstep. **Consider it Cakes** is a group of hobby bakers who bake birthday cakes and delicious treats for special occasions like Christmas, Ramadan and Diwali for people in emergency accommodation and direct provision centres across Ireland.



COVID-19 has encouraged many people to show kindness and generosity to those who need it most as many experienced challenges in their own lives. This enabled the initiative to grow from two bakers to over 300 within the pandemic. But not only people but also Irish businesses want to support **Consider it Cakes** - ISME Member, Skelligs Chocolate is one of them. Based in Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry, Skelligs Chocolate generously donated a huge amount of baking chocolate to the cause and supports the bakers of the initiative this way.



*"I heard about Consider it Cakes and thought it is brilliant and it's our pleasure to support such a wonderful cause."* Colm Healy, Owner, Skelligs Chocolate

White, milk and dark Skelligs Chocolate has been delivered to bakers in different cities across Ireland in order to support them with their mission to "bake the world a better place - one cake at a time".

To find out more about this initiative click here or see the wonderful cakes on [www.instagram.com/consider\\_it\\_cakes](https://www.instagram.com/consider_it_cakes)

And you can visit Skelligs Chocolate online shop [here](#).

## Hibernian Health Check

COVID-19 testing has proven to be a powerful tool in the fight to keep industry moving forward in Ireland over the past several months, but it needs to be utilised in the correct manner with appropriate expectations set.

ISME Member, Hibernian Health Check (HHC) has been able to keep cement manufacturers, meat factories and many other essential services working with their bespoke COVID-19 testing programmes. Their model is to set a baseline with an initial lab-based PCR test, and then migrate to a regular, ongoing Antigen screening programme for the duration of the project.

*"With our team coming from a private laboratory background and with over 18,000 tests completed to date, it has been an incredible success. We've seen 100% concurrency between any positive Antigen tests and the confirmatory PCR analysis that follows. The service has helped stop several potential outbreaks at key times for clients across multiple sectors, and has built a high level of confidence for those who have been using the programme".* Steve Harnett, Director of Sales and Marketing



He added

*"We are now beginning to transition to non-invasive, saliva-based Antigen and PCR testing. This will allow anyone using the service to avoid the potential discomfort of traditional swab-taking while still maintaining a very high level of accuracy."*

HHC have also developed a dedicated testing management portal in-house to allow them to email or text user results, book courier collections, create lab or travel certificates, and export testing data.

For more information on a COVID-19 testing solution for your team, email Steve Hartnett on [steve@hhc.ie](mailto:steve@hhc.ie) or visit [hhc.ie](https://hhc.ie)

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# Civil workplaces are more profitable, creative, happier & healthier

Mary Lou Kennedy, Director, Oak Conflict Dynamics Ltd

*Maintaining civility becomes more challenging in the current stressful circumstances - how equipped are you to deal with it?*

Civil leaders do better! This is despite many examples of incivility by modern leaders who appear successful. However, research shows that their success is short lived and ultimately fails.

Civil workplaces are also more productive. Two thirds of workers report cutting back on their work effort when treated disrespectfully and almost half of those who witness incivility at work, report having fewer ideas and being less creative. The statistics continue to prove the point. Respect at work is the single greatest issue affecting people's wellbeing and contentment in their workplace.

But how do you stay civil as a manager or business owner in the face of growing pressures and particularly when it is due to the pandemic? Everyone is more stressed which can lead to less tolerance of others, thus the perfect circumstances for interpersonal conflict.

How do you cope with conflict between staff without getting sucked into it and letting it take huge amounts of your time and energy? How would you manage the scenario below?

John and Karen are valued members of the management team but just cannot get along. John claims Karen doesn't respect him and Karen says John is rude and self-serving. As manager, it takes hours to sort things out between them and the team is being continually obstructed in getting work done, at a time when there are so many demands on our time.

It is estimated that you, as manager or business owner, spend at least 30% of your time managing interpersonal conflict at work. If this is the case, how good are you at it? Do you get the results that merit that level of investment? Non-managers suggest not. The majority of non-managers (80%) believe their managers are not effective at managing conflict and do not resolve the underlying causes. This means that these types of disputes will re-occur and the time spent dealing with it is ineffective in the long-term.

Why is this? While conflict management training is now being delivered in-house in over 60% of companies, the main reason most managers don't deal well with conflict is because they don't know how to, or feel they lack the tools. In fact, over a third of all managers state they would prefer to parachute from an airplane for the first time rather than deal with a problem in their team.



Nobody does like dealing with conflict. When I ask people to tell me the kinds of words that come to mind when they hear the word 'conflict', over 90% of them are negative. They talk about 'anger', 'frustration', 'anxiety', 'tension', 'raised-voices', 'disappointment', 'hurt' etc. However, when prompted to consider the positive they talk about 'growth', 'clearing the air', 'learning new things', 'resolving differences' and 'greater trust'.

When imagining what workplaces would be like if conflict was managed well, people talk about them being 'happier', 'exciting', 'creative', 'positive', 'energising', and 'a great place to work'.

You have the opportunity to significantly reduce your operational costs, if you reduce conflict. Dan Dana, an author in this area tells us "conflict is the least recognised but most reducible cost in companies". Our businesses and workplaces are becoming less hierarchical and more dependent on teams and individual initiative and innovation. Working relationships are quickly becoming the most important competitive advantage you have in business.

If you are going to spend over 30% of your time dealing with conflict, make sure you are getting positive outcomes for this level of investment and keeping your team productive.

## TOP 5 TIPS:

1. Understand that your job is to create the context in which people resolve their own conflict - not resolve it for them
2. Intervene early and nip the problem in the bud rather than ignoring that a problem exists
3. Set a good example in self-managing your own reactions to conflict
4. Establish good internal protocols on how interpersonal conflict is managed in your company
5. Develop excellent in-house skills amongst your managers on how to manage conflict - they are spending at least a third of their time on it

Oak Conflict Dynamics offers third party resolution training which provides a practical, hands-on tool for you to use when managing others in conflict. It is a 6-hour programme delivered online with an instructor which will facilitate practical skills practices that will give you the confidence to intervene early and effectively in conflict in your workplace. To find out more visit the website [here](#).

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# The legal right to request to work remotely

## What this means for the employer

Claire O'Sullivan, Senior Associate, Kirwan McKeown James LLP

In the pre-COVID world there was a lot of talk about remote and flexible working, however while this was a reality in some industries and organisations, for most people the 5-day week at the office was the norm.

Much has been said about the pros and cons of working from home over the last 12 months. Whatever our personal views on the matter, remote and flexible working is here to stay.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment published the [National Remote Work Strategy](#) ("the Strategy") on 15 January 2021. So, what are the Government's aims and what does it mean for you as an employer?

The Strategy aims to ensure the "remote working is a permanent feature in the Irish workplace in a way that maximises economic, social and environmental benefits" and is built on three fundamental pillars:

- **Pillar 1** – Create a conducive environment
- **Pillar 2** – Develop and leverage remote work infrastructure
- **Pillar 3** – Build a remote work policy and guidance framework

Pillars 2 and 3 involve investing in remote working hubs and infrastructure such as the national broadband plan; developing data on incidence and frequency of working from home; mandates around remote working for public sector employees; putting in place appropriate tax arrangements for remote working, these issues will be undertaken by government at national level.

Pillar 1 involves putting in place legislation to give employees the legal right to request to remote work in addition to putting in place a Code of Practice setting out best practice around the Right to Disconnect.

**This pillar is the area that will most affect you as an employer,** you will need to be familiar with the legislation and the code of practice to ensure compliance. Failure to comply means that the potential for employment law claims are even greater than before.

It is anticipated that the legislation will not provide an unfettered right to work remotely or to avail of flexible working conditions. Employers can reasonably decline certain requests in line with the needs of the business. However, as an employer you need to acknowledge that the working landscape has changed and will not return to the way it was pre-COVID.

It is essential that you identify and assess the challenges that remote working presents for both you and your employees. While these will be specific to your business there are certain common trends emerging in the last 12 months such as:

**Employee Issues:** negative effect on mental health; isolation; stress; difficulty switching off; feel obliged to work longer hours.

**Employer Issues:** dampens creativity; less opportunity for group engagement on projects to stimulate ideas and enthusiasm; innovation deficit; lack of shared ownership and collegiality.

Analysis of the specific issues facing you and your employees will enable you to put in place a remote / flexible working policy that works best for you and your business.

In anticipation of the changes ahead, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment have developed a [web-page](#) which provides specific guidance and information for those looking to plan for the future.

While we hope that many of the consequences of COVID will not be here this time next year, remote and flexible working is something that will remain with us long into the future, and for the most part it is being welcomed by both employers and employees. It would also appear that many of the issues encountered by both employers and employees identified in this article will not be as stark once we are able to operate a more hybrid model of working from home and working in the office.

For any additional information on the issues raised in this article or any related issues please do not hesitate to contact at [claire.osullivan@kmj.ie](mailto:claire.osullivan@kmj.ie).

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

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## RESTART ▶▶▶ IRELAND

Our Restart Ireland webinar is now available to watch back.

On the day we were joined by over 200 businesses. Our panel answered questions about the vaccination roll out and reopening the Irish economy.

### The panel included:

Minister Robert Troy - Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Professor Luke O'Neill, School of Biochemistry and Immunology in Trinity College

Nuala Mulqueeney, Managing Director of Aillwee Cave and ISME Member.

The webinar can now be watched [back](#).

## ISME COVID-19 SURVEY APRIL 2021

On 13th April, ISME released the results of our seventh flash survey on COVID-19. The number of businesses who believe they can keep trading for more than 9 months has increased to 63%, up 13% from January

The survey found that 64% of respondents are availing of the TWSS or EWSS, making wages supports by far the largest liquidity solution availed of by business. Just 8% of those surveyed are availing of the COVID-19 Restrictions Support Scheme.

16% of respondents were availing of the pandemic unemployment payment (PUP) as a self-employed person, the same as in January.

On a positive note, the number of respondents who believe their business can operate for more than 9 months has increased to 63%, up 13% from January. The number of respondents who believe their businesses will cease operating remains at 1%, similar to January - full data in report below or click [here](#).

## Q1'21 TRENDS REPORT

The Q1'21 Business Trends Quarterly survey showed 5 out of 14 confidence indicators yielding declining results, dropping by two from the previous quarter.

- BREXIT Uncertainty dropped by 4% to 42%. Business Confidence rose massively by 39%, bringing the Q4 total to 6%, compared to -33% in Q4. This aligns with Economic Uncertainty, which dropped by 7% this quarter.
- There was a significant rise in Business Expectations, which rose from 26% in Q4 to 36% this quarter, rising by 10%. Business Environment continues to decline, while Profitability Expectations increased by 15%. It should be re-emphasised that levels have not hit the initial lows experienced in Q1'2020.
- The Current Employment confidence indicator decreased by 5%, while Future Employment increased by a further 13%, from 6% to 19%.
- Current Sales have decreased from -34% to -46%, while Sales Expectations have shown their greatest recovery since plummeting in Q1'20, increasing from -10% to 28%.
- 

Read the full report below or download [here](#).

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### ISME Members' Regional Meetings - South East

11th May  
13.00-14.00  
[Book here](#)

### HR Essentials in 2021

11th, 12th, 14th May  
12.00-13.30  
[Book here](#)

### FREE - Unlock the Potential of Microsoft Teams

13th May  
12 noon  
[Book here](#)

### ISME & Google Garage Workshop: Learn the basics of Google Ads

20th May  
11:00-12:00  
[Book here](#)

### ISME National Council Election & AGM

25th May  
11.30  
Email [marketing@isme.ie](mailto:marketing@isme.ie) to attend

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## Master Your Pitch: 3-Part Mini Series

25th, 26th, 28th May  
12.00-13.30

[Book here](#)

## Your Excel Journey: 4-Part Mini-Series

30th June & 2nd July  
Book here

## Back to Business - Pitch my Business

9th June  
10.30

[Book here](#)

## ISME & Google Garage Workshop: Shop Local: How to safely reach more local shoppers with Pointy from Google

3rd June,  
11:00-12:30

[Book here](#)

## NEW AFFINITIES

ISME is adding three new partners to the current ADVANTAGE Affinity programme providing ISME members with the opportunity to reduce costs and add value to their business.

They include:



### Broadband from Vodafone

ISME Members get:

- 10% discount on Vodafone Simply Broadband
- 15% discount on Vodafone Mobile Broadband - Simply Broadband 4G
- Discounts all run for the duration of the contract

Find out more on [here](#).

### Environmental Certification & Support from EcoMerit

ISME Members get:

- 10% discount on EcoMerit certification

EcoMerit Environmental Certification helps you improve your environmental performance, reduce costs, manage risk and enhance your marketing and brand appeal.

Find out more on [here](#).

### Merchant Services from PaymentPlus

Available from 5th May, ISME Members will get

- Launch offer - 6 months free terminal rental from May
- Merchant services on a no contract basis
- No termination fees
- Price Promise - if PaymentPlus can't show any savings, they will offer them a €50 Me2You gift voucher
- Next day fund settlement
- And more

Find out more [here](#)



## Pitch my business



## ISME'S 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 make a donation today. Find out more [here](#).



## Q1'21 GOVERNMENT SATISFACTION REPORT

ISME's latest Government Satisfaction Report finds SME's satisfaction with government performance declines.

The report also found:

- Medium sized enterprises most satisfied with government
- Micro businesses least satisfied with government performance
- Government's handling of costs to businesses trends negatively
- Services and Retail sectors most dissatisfied with government performance

Read the full report below or download [here](#).



## Q1'21 PROMPT PAYMENTS

SME's latest Prompt Payments report finds SME payment delays have improved, but only slightly.

The report also found payment times for SMEs remains high at 45 days. Read the full report below or download [here](#).

### COVID 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 July and ISME members enjoy up to 50% discount on advertising rates.

ISME Members: you can advertise for free through the [Shop Local](#) and [Back to Business](#) campaigns. If you wish to receive members rates and more details on promotional opportunities please email [Marketing@isme.ie](mailto:Marketing@isme.ie)

## GROW WITH GOOGLE

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on people and businesses everywhere. Together with Google we are working to offer a series of free webinars to help businesses navigate this uncertain time and find future opportunities for growth.

The next two webinars are *Learn the basics of Google Ads*, 20th May and *How to safely reach more local shoppers with Pointy from Google*, 3rd June.

These webinars are available to ISME members only. You can register for both [here](#).

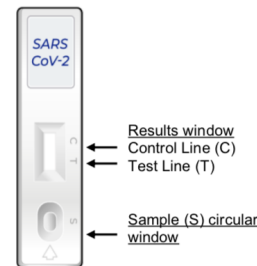
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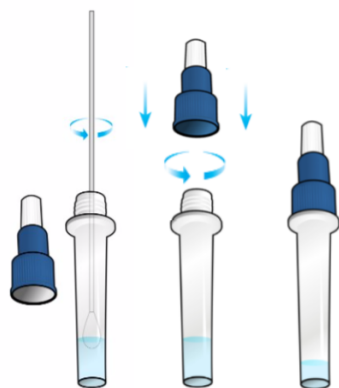
\*World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations for Antigen detection in the diagnosis of SARS-CoV2 infection using rapid immunoassays.- 11th Sept 2020

\*\* Hospital Universitario Principe de Asturias - Madrid, Spain.

Laboratoire de Virologie CHU Amiens - Picardie Amiens, France

## Procedure:

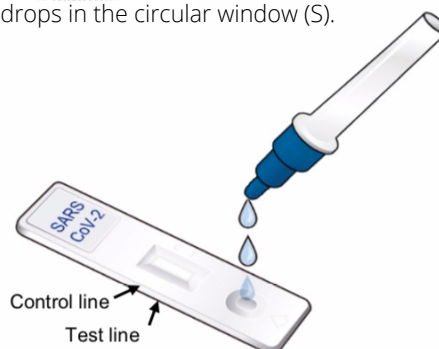
### Step 1:



Put the sample swab into the extraction vial,  
rotate for 15 seconds and extract the liquid.  
Close the vial with the blue cap.

### Step 2:

Add 3 drops in the circular window (S).



**Wait 10 minutes and read.**

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# Future of Work: Saying 'Hi' to Hybrid Work

Dr. Roisin Lyons, Assistant

Professor in Entrepreneurship and Innovation, DCU

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised essential questions about the precarity of jobs, the support available if one is unable to work, the skills one needs for current and future jobs or the quality of those jobs. Although flexible working systems had been a part of organisations for many decades, the massive dynamic impact of the pandemic forced a dramatic rethink in how people and organisations work. People across the world have now lived through lockdowns, and many employees have made the abrupt shift from working in conference rooms to working in living rooms.

*"Globally, the trend reflected from jobseekers is that the volume of job searches using the "Remote" filter on LinkedIn has increased by 60% since the beginning of March, and the share of Remote Job Applications has increased nearly 2.5 times globally from March."* Karin Kimbrough: Chief Economist, LinkedIn

Research suggests that from the employee perspective, challenges of mental health and wellbeing, adaptability to remote/flexible working, managing work productivity (whether living alone, in shared spaces or with families), technological barriers, work-life balance and fear of redundancy, have come to the forefront. With the emergence of remote leadership, senior management and HR managers have had to take many measures to support their employees with incentives, employee-engagement activities and more to reduce absenteeism, boost engagement, and performance and opportunities for career development through online learning platforms.

*"A hybrid model is likely to emerge that will try to balance the efficiencies gained by remote work, with the benefits of social interactions, and to creativity and innovation generated by working in person with others."* Elisabeth Reynolds: Executive Director, Task Force on the Work of the Future, MIT

Having lived with a pandemic for almost a year, the question still looms, 'What is the future of work?'. It is clear that we all are now living in a world where the lines between work life and home life are blurred. Organisations may need to accept that the future of work will not include regular 9am-5pm working hours. This new normal inches towards a hybrid working model that has

to work in the best interests of both the employee as well as the employer. There is a strong need for employee value proposition and need for resilience at both an organisational and individual level.

The McKinsey Institute, which tracks global economic trends, suggests that COVID-19 has moved the conversation about the future of work into the present, accentuating the need for a long-term perspective that does not just rebuild from past models, but develops strategies that create resilience for future crises. The remote work context that many currently find themselves in, is set to have a sustained impact on the way that companies host meetings, talks and non-essential tasks going forward. HR professionals recognise that more needs to be done to knit staff together into a cohesive workforce, and consider the mental health of employees as well as the cultural health of the organisation. Staff training, 'retire and return' programmes, enhanced digital and sentiment analysis, team-scheduling, 'flexible-forefronts' and other such initiatives may all factor into staffing strategies of the upcoming years, but more are needed.

This year the world will emerge from under the shadow of COVID-19, and things will adapt to a 'new-normal'. Yet, the climate crisis still rages - extreme weather events become more common, and the threat of carbon taxes mount internationally. Some may wonder if companies and workers should remain in this remote or flexible working model, and invest more fully in the innovations to improve it.

DCU/Workjuggle are running a research study which aims to explore current perceptions of our changing work practices, including remote and flexible/reduced-load work. Research findings are intended to inform and assist organisations in their adoption of new employee processes and tools to leverage new working trends. Additionally, this study investigates employee motivation, work-life balance, innovation, and company culture in the current context.

Please fill out our anonymous survey [here](#) and share it with your contacts. While we are especially interested in the perspective of HR managers and SMEs, all insights are extremely welcome.

# Tanya Thompson, Sluamor



## What interests do you have outside of work?

Unfortunately, I've been utterly focused on work for the last few months, so much so that I rarely do anything else. I absolutely love to go swimming, and prior to COVID-19, I'd swim several times per week. It's a great way to clear my mind while keeping fit. I used to play tennis as a child and have since taken it up. I'm really looking forward to having the tennis clubs open again.

## Do you have an interesting story about interests you've had?

Prior to coming to Ireland, I was heavily involved in motor racing. I used to navigate in rallies for years in Jamaica. It's so exhilarating to be speeding down narrow country roads, flying into and around corners, going much faster than you're allowed to normally and pushing those boundaries. However, there are downsides, like the day my driver took a corner a tad too wide. It was nothing that would typically cause us concern, until we saw a large white rock sitting in the grass alongside the road, directly ahead. As the car straightened, we edged past this stone which stood higher than the roof of our car. According to the spectators at the scene, our left rear wheel hit the rock and the back of the car catapulted through the air. I was convinced that we were going to flip over. We didn't, instead, we tore down the branches of a bunch of trees. This second impact was just enough to keep the car down. When we eventually landed, we came to a complete stop. I turned to my driver and asked, "I assume that we can't go any further". I will never forget what he said. "If we could, we'd still be going, my foot's still on the accelerator."

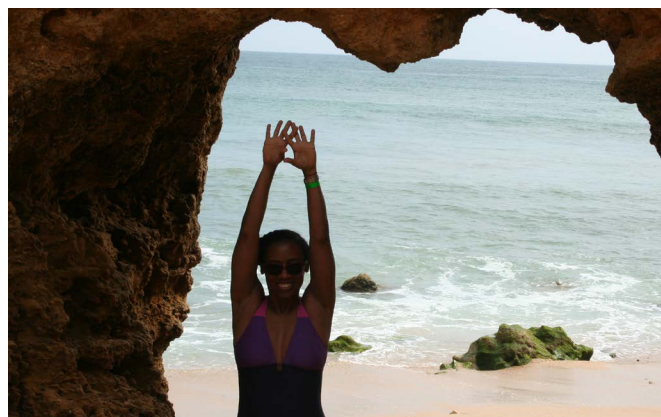
## Are there any hobbies or challenges you would like to try?

I used to go scuba diving when I was in my twenties. It's something that I'd really love to take up again on a regular basis. I find diving so utterly peaceful and breathtaking.

The two other things that come to mind are rock climbing and paragliding. As I answer these questions it's become crystal clear to me that I absolutely love to do activities that give me a bit of excitement or utter sense of calm. It's great way to keep fit as I get older. Plus, how cool would it be to be holding onto a piece of rock, high above the ground, relying solely on your own strength to keep you safe.

## Tell us about the work you do and your business?

I'm the CTO for Sluamor, an Irish start-up in the Procurement Software-as-a-Service space. Let's imagine that you need a new website, or new stationary supplier - in the past, you'd inevitably pick up the phone and call a couple of people you know, or go online. You either struggle to find someone, or just go with the suppliers you find, even though your gut tells you that they're not ideal. This is where Sluamor comes in, we're a self-service online platform that connects buyers and suppliers to help them complete business-to-business (B2B) transactions, saving time and finding more affordable and reliable suppliers, plus provide more genuine sales leads. I'm responsible for ensuring that Sluamor works as intended, and that it satisfies the needs of our customers.



## How important is work life balance to you?

We all need work life balance. I strongly believe that having interests outside of work is very important, as a means of taking care of your body and for mental wellbeing

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

I've been too focused on work over the last few months. As a result, I was so drained recently that I had to take some timeout to recoup. If I'd been playing tennis or swimming as I'd been doing pre-COVID those activities would have given me well-deserved, periodic breaks from work. I know that as an entrepreneur, it's my business that will suffer if I let myself collapse, even though I have partners who can readily take up the slack. As a result, it's imperative that we all listen to our bodies, and keep them strong through our various hobbies, so that we can maintain the tenacity needed to ensure the success of our businesses.

To find out more visit [Sluamor.com](https://sluamor.com).

A series that highlights the lives and interests of ISME members and staff. In this edition, The bISME talks to ISME Member, Tanya Thompson about Sluamor and her interests.



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