

SUMMER 2024 Volume 1 Issue 25

THE **b**ISME

THE BUSINESS OF IRISH SMEs

From Healthcare to Hospitality

A Journey of
Compassion and
Community

An interview with Amanda Torrens

ISME at work for you

ISME launch Pre-Budget Submission

HR Focus

Auto-Enrolment –Yet another revised start date

The blnsight

Family Business: An alternative solution to the succession issue

Save time, money and energy

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We know that for small businesses, every day is a busy day with new challenges – but with the help of your Local Enterprise Office, staying competitive and becoming more productive is much easier.

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Find out more at allinadayswork.ie





Volume 1 Issue 25
SUMMER 2024

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Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive, ISME

Colleagues,

Thankfully, with the Aer Lingus strike now behind us, those of you not in peak summer activity can look forward to a well-earned holiday. We wish you the best either way.

While the politicians deny it, we see the likelihood of the 33rd Dáil making it to Christmas as decreasing daily. The only substantive issue is whether we will have a budget or not, and recent media reports have started the kite-flying already. We obviously concerned about a budget give-away, since current account expenditure has been increasing at a rapid pace over the last five years. We completed and submitted our [Pre Budget Submission 2025](#). You will notice that we have simplified this year's submission into "themes" one or more of which will be of interest to you and your business. We ask that you copy and paste from this liberally and raise the issues that affect your business with your local politicians.

We have had several enquiries from members about the promised [INCREASED TRADING ONLINE VOUCHERS of €5,000](#). We contacted the Department of Enterprise, which has advised us that there were some details that needed to be worked through, including final sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. We are assured that this process is almost complete, and that the increase grant should be available in the second half of August.

The Department of Enterprise National [Enterprise Hub](#) is now open. This is a single data source point for all government supports for business. The intention is that you can filter down to the requirement for your business quite quickly. There is also a dedicated phoneline help facility available. Please give us feedback on what you think of the site, and we will pass it on.

We hope your business was not affected by the "blue screen of death" outage triggered by a faulty update from the IT security firm CrowdStrike in July. Your business should be taking steps right now to ensure compliance with the [Network and Information Systems Directive \(NIS2\)](#) on cyber security. A recent Microsoft survey suggested that 80% of businesses are unprepared for NIS2. This is not just a matter of training and preparation. If you are paying for cyber insurance, it is likely your underwriter will soon require some evidence of compliance with NIS2. Do not leave this topic to chance- failure to prepare and comply could leave you uninsured and unprepared for the next IT failure.

One of the issues affecting many businesses, but particularly retail, has been that of defamation reform. [We met with Minister of State Browne](#) in April, and understood that we would see the reform bill published in mid-May to early June. That has yet to happen, and the window is closing. Without reform, we will see many more shops pay out thousands of euro to shoplifters and miscreants taking advantage of our outrageous and in our view unconstitutional laws

Here in Kildare Street we noted with some concern a story last month about a [fall in applications for SCARP](#) even though small business insolvencies are on the rise. We know that a lot of you are under severe pressure because of the increases in labour costs and VAT this year. [SCARP](#) is a simple, affordable process that allows viable SMEs experiencing temporary financial problems to restructure with the agreement of creditors. ISME fought long and hard to get SCARP onto the statute books. It's a great system that can keep a good business going, even in the face of significant trading difficulty. If your business faces a seemingly insurmountable trading or debt problem.

While there is still some indecision about the date of implementation, it is clear that auto-enrolment is going ahead in 2025. We therefore ask you to ensure that your cashflow budgeting for 2025 assumes a start-up of auto-enrolment payments of 1.55 of payroll for relevant staff in [Q1 2025](#).

The [Low Pay Commission](#) has recommended the abolition of the sub-minimum rates of pay under the minimum wage. This is a stupid, ill-judged measure which shows how out of touch the Low Pay Commission is. Removal of the sub-minimum rates will strongly discourage small service businesses and retailers from hiring student labour during their summer breaks. These are typically the first experience of working for most young people, and hard though they might work, they are not experienced nor are they productive. We will strongly oppose the abolition of sub-minimum rates.

Remember, if you need money, the [ISME FINANCE FINDER](#) is the first place to go. The [Growth and Sustainability Loan Scheme](#) will provide the lowest cost finance to businesses investing in solar PV, insulation or other energy-saving schemes. You can access all sources of finance through the finance finder so make sure to use it.

Neil McDonnell
ISME CEO



Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme

Low-Cost Finance For SMEs, Farmers & Fishers

The Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme supports businesses impacted by additional costs due to the conflict in Ukraine with low-cost finance of up to €1 million.

Find out more at sbci.gov.ie



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ISME Makes Submission for Budget 2025

ISME, the Irish Small & Medium Enterprises Association, representing over 10,500 SME businesses employing more than 245,000 people across Ireland, has made a detailed submission for Budget 2025 to the Minister for Finance Michael McGrath TD, Minister for Public Expenditure Paschal Donohoe, and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Peter Burke TD. The submission highlights 11 main themes.

Neil McDonnell, Chief Executive of ISME, emphasised the current benign fiscal situation, which presents an opportunity for the Government to make strategic choices rather than reactive decisions. He stressed the necessity for formal state engagement with the SME sector, which comprises 99.8% of Ireland's business demography and employs 60% of the workforce. McDonnell noted that despite political lip service, substantive engagement with SMEs remains lacking. The recent government supports are seen as politically expedient rather than strategically sound. He called for SME representation on the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) to ensure their critical role in the economy is recognized.

Key Recommendations in ISME's Submission:

- **Engagement with SMEs:** ISME calls for a reconfiguration of LEEF to include proportional SME representation, reflecting their significant economic contribution.
- **National Minimum Wage:** ISME recommends that increases in the National Minimum Wage should not exceed the Consumer Price Index. The methodology for setting the minimum wage should consider the unique characteristics of the Irish business landscape, and the Low Pay Commission should include adequate SME representation.
- **Industrial Policy:** ISME suggests a policy review of the interaction between indigenous enterprises and the multinational sector. Tax and finance policies should support indigenous enterprise, and the Rainy-Day Fund should be expanded given the potential decline in corporation tax receipts.
- **Housing and Infrastructure:** ISME advocates for government intervention in the rental market through tax and regulatory measures to encourage private rented accommodation. Construction targets should be increased from 30,000 to at least 50,000 units per annum in line with the Housing Commission Report.
- **VAT Rates:** ISME proposes lowering the standard and reduced VAT rates to 21% and 9% respectively.

The Commission for the Regulation of Utilities should investigate high energy prices in Ireland, and the National Competitiveness and Productivity Commission should reinstate the Cost of Doing Business in Ireland report.

- **Public Spending and Services:** ISME calls for the establishment of a Public Spending Commission to ensure efficient and effective use of public funds. A standing Public Service Pay Commission, similar to the UK's Office of Manpower Economics, should recommend fair pay rates in the public service.
- **Personal Taxation:** ISME recommends targeting the removal of workers on the average industrial wage from the marginal tax rate. They suggest an 8.8% PRSI rate covering all earnings up to the national minimum wage and reducing VAT rates.
- **Legal Reform:** ISME urges comprehensive legal reforms to tackle high legal costs and improve infrastructure development, housing affordability, family law, free speech, and timely commercial dispute resolution. The Courts Service should implement procedural reforms using ICT and case management, and the Legal Services Regulatory Authority should establish a specialist conveyancer profession.
- **Social Insurance:** ISME proposes a 2% PRSI rate on all income and a 6% PRSI on income above €424 per week to address the €350 billion shortfall in the Social Insurance Fund.
- **Green Transition**:** ISME highlights the need for consistent economic incentives to support the green transition. The recent decline in Electric Vehicle sales indicates the necessity for stable and visible incentives for consumers and businesses.
- **Upskilling the Workforce:** ISME calls for the reinstatement of pre-2016 apprenticeship supports and the adoption of a basic business qualification for SME owners and managers, akin to the ISME Blue Cert proposal.

In conclusion, ISME's comprehensive submission for Budget 2025 aims to secure substantial and strategic support for Ireland's SME sector, ensuring their continued contribution to the national economy and addressing key issues from housing to taxation and green initiatives. A copy of the full submission can be accessed [here](#).

CONSULTATION AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES ANONYMOUS ONLINE SURVEY

WE
WANT
TO HEAR
FROM
YOU



USEFUL EVENTS FOR SMES

**Mark your calendars
for the ISME
Business Lunch...**
Friday, November
29th.

**Autumn Gift + Home
Fair 2024**, Sunday
25th – Tuesday 27th
August, RDS Dublin,
Book here

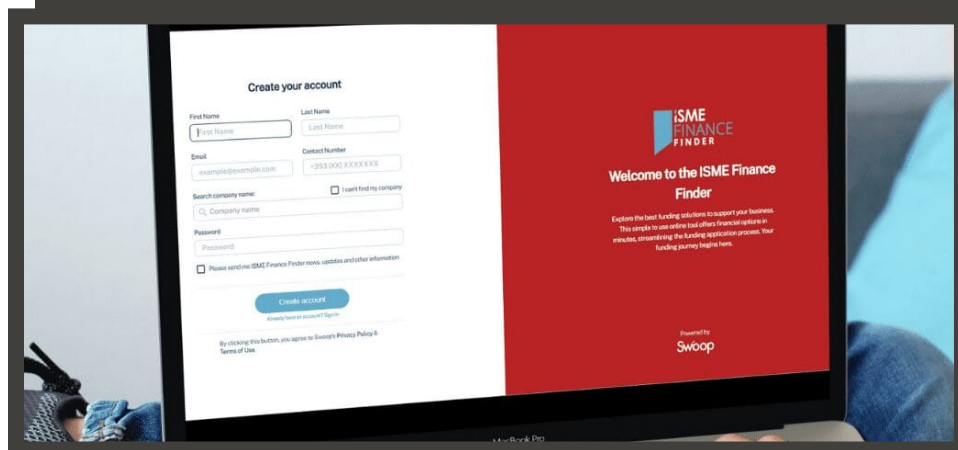
**NextGen | Digital
Summit 2024**,
Thursday, 5th
September, Croke
Park,
Book here

**DigiMarCon Ireland
2024**, Thursday 5th –
Friday 6th September,
The Westin Dublin
Hotel,
Book here

ISME Finance Finder

To support businesses in accessing funding the ISME Finance Finder, powered by Swoop Funding, has updated and improved its online platform by introducing cashflow and forecasting tools, banking and accounting system integration, as well as equity funding.

Register here now to explore the funding options available or to start a conversation about how much you could raise through equity. Your funding journey starts now by going to www.isme.ie/finance-finder



ISME HR Hub - Your HR Support

To support Members to deal with the ever-changing world of HR and employment law, we have created a portal to give you access to guides, templates, contracts, policies and more to support you in managing HR in your business. We have curated the information based on the HR Life Cycle: Attraction, Recruitment, Onboarding, Policies & Training, Performance Management and Exit.

You can also find information from government agencies and other third parties in our General Information & Resources page, links to the top downloads and view our selection of blogs including Statutory Sick Pay FAQs and EU Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions. To find out how it works and looks, click on the video about the portal [here](#). To use the ISME HR Hub log into the Members Area, click on the top left button.

Save Now with ISME's Affinity Programme

Take a look at the most recent addition to the ISME ADVANTAGE Affinity programme from ISME Member business [Me2You](#).

Order over €5,000 and get €50 gift card free. Other offers include discounted acceptance rates for all new ISME member merchants/retailers joining Me2You gift card.

View all our Affinity programmes [here](#). ISME Members can access all offers when they log into the Members Area.



Spend Local This Summer

We want to continue our Shop Local message by encouraging people to Think Local and Shop Local this summer for holidays, activities, entertainment and shopping.

ISME Members can advertise for free so please add your details [here](#) if you would like your business featured or to update your existing ad in our [Shop Local portals](#). To find out more please contact marketing@isme.ie



ISME taking bookings now for ads in the 2025 Wall planner

We will be printing and distributing our popular 2025 ISME Wall Planners to the membership before the end of the year. We offer advertising space on the planner, a great B2B tool which will be distributed to all ISME Members nationwide. There are four sizes available for advertising, and as always, ISME Members receive a discounted rate. Book your spot now as they sell fast.

Download the spec [here](#) or email marketing@isme.ie for more information.

Wellness for your team

ISME partners with Laya healthcare and their health & wellbeing provider, SpectrumLife to provide 24/7 Mental Wellbeing Support Programme (EAP) for ISME Members. We offer unlimited access for your employees and their families to a 365 freephone EAP service, accessible via website, app, or live chat. The cost for up to 30 employees is €500 + VAT and each subsequent employee €9 per employee. Find out more [here](#).

Mark your calendars for the ISME Business Lunch...

Friday, November 29th. This exclusive event is the perfect opportunity to network and discuss industry trends with fellow professionals. Location details will be confirmed soon. Don't miss out on this chance to connect and collaborate.



SEAI Survey

At SEAI, they have noticed an increased interest in biomass options being discussed in all commercial sectors, in particular among SME's. To further understand their target market SEAI are carrying out a short survey on biomass to assess both the driving and limiting factors that affect take up of biomass options, and to understand the current perceptions of biomass among SME's.

They would be very grateful if you can take the time to fill this in before July 26th. The survey should take no more than 8 minutes of your time, and this data will be used to inform SEAI's biomass offerings.

Complete the survey [here](#).



Corporate Enforcement Authority publishes first annual report

The Corporate Enforcement Authority (CEA) published its first Annual Report in June 19. The Report, which covers the initial period to 31 December 2023, provides a comprehensive account of the steps taken to establish the CEA's presence, and of the work undertaken to build the organisation's operational capability. The Report includes 17 case studies that illustrate the breadth of the CEA's impact and demonstrate a considered and graduated approach towards the deployment of enforcement powers.

Marking the publication of the Report, the CEA's Chief Executive Officer, Ian Drennan said:

We seek to empower our stakeholders both through the provision of accurate, impartial, and accessible information, and through our outreach activities. Examples of the former include Information Notes that we issued over the period, which dealt with topics including early warning tools, right of access to companies' registers of members, and the risks associated with accepting company directorships in certain circumstances.

The CEA's first Annual Report can be accessed on cea.gov.ie

New Module from SEAI

SEAI has released a new module - Introduction to Energy in Hotels. This module has been designed to support hotels on their energy efficiency journey. It will help businesses understand their energy use, identify quick wins and investment opportunities.

You can access the module [here](#)



Healthy Workplace

The Healthy Workplace Framework is a government strategy to enhance the health and wellbeing of Ireland's workers. A committee led by the Department of Health and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment oversaw the development of this Framework and set the strategic direction for workplace policies and programmes to enhance the health of workers.

A new Healthy Workplace website was recently launched and features interactive tools to facilitate the delivery and evaluation of health and wellbeing initiatives in workplaces of any size. This website aims to be the one-stop-shop for everything you need to make your workplace a Healthy Workplace. It is designed to cater for the needs of public and private organisations and is targeted towards members of staff from Wellness/Health Promotion, Human Resources, Occupational Health, Health & Safety, decision-makers in senior management, and employees hoping to champion a Healthy Workplace.

Find out more on <https://healthyworkplace.ie>

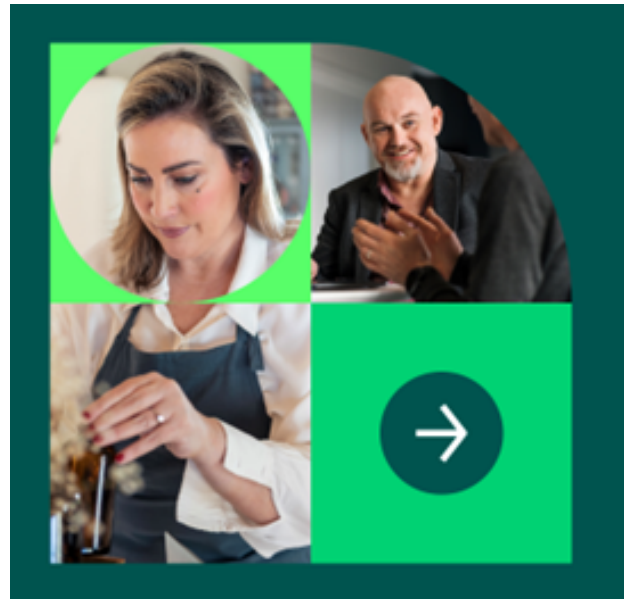
New free service makes it easier for Irish businesses to access supports.

Running a business isn't easy, there are lots of things that can get in the way of success. Rising costs, increasing competition, struggling to find the right talent, and not having the time to focus on the important things. It's not easy but accessing support should be. And it starts here.

Bringing together over 180 supports from 19 different departments and agencies, the new National Enterprise Hub is the single source for all government support for your business. With everything from simple, easy-to-access grants to expert advice and training, our website has all the information, all in one place.

And don't worry about not knowing what you need: our helpful team of trained advisors available online or over the phone ((01) 727 2100) will guide you every step of the way. So, whether you've applied for supports before, or it's your first time, we're here to help you get started.

Support starts here, visit www.neh.gov.ie for more information.



HSA Conference

The HSA will be hosting a National Conference on Safety Representatives in Dublin Castle on the 12th of November 2024.

All current Safety Representatives, employers, training organisations, instructors, professional health, and safety practitioners, those interested in occupational health and safety and anyone with occupational health and safety responsibilities are welcome to attend the conference.

The conference will include keynote speakers, panel discussion and round table discussions.

Click [here](#) to book your spot and learn more.

Green Business Supports

Ireland has a target to reduce carbon emissions (greenhouse gas emissions) by 51% by 2030, and to achieve a climate neutral economy by 2050. (source: Government Report). The sectoral emissions ceilings (SECs) agreed in July 2022 put in place targets for each sector to achieve this. The target for the enterprise sector is to reduce emissions by 35% by 2030. In order to do this, businesses are encouraged to invest in a greener future, through sustainable products, services and business models.

Whether your business is big or small, it is important to reduce emissions and promote sustainability in how you work. [Click here](#) to find a number of training, mentoring and financial supports for companies trying to reduce their carbon footprint.

HSA Updates

[Occupational Health and Safety Guidance on Vulnerable Workers in the Workplace](#) guidance is written for employers and employees in all work sectors, including agency workers, contractors, migrant workers, part-time and temporary workers, and gig workers.

A new course [Vulnerable Workers: A short Course for Employees](#) is now live on [hsalearning.ie](#). This short awareness-raising course is for employees, including those who are vulnerable workers. The course will also be helpful to employers and managers, supervisors, safety personnel, and to organisations or educational bodies that are helping vulnerable persons to prepare for the workplace

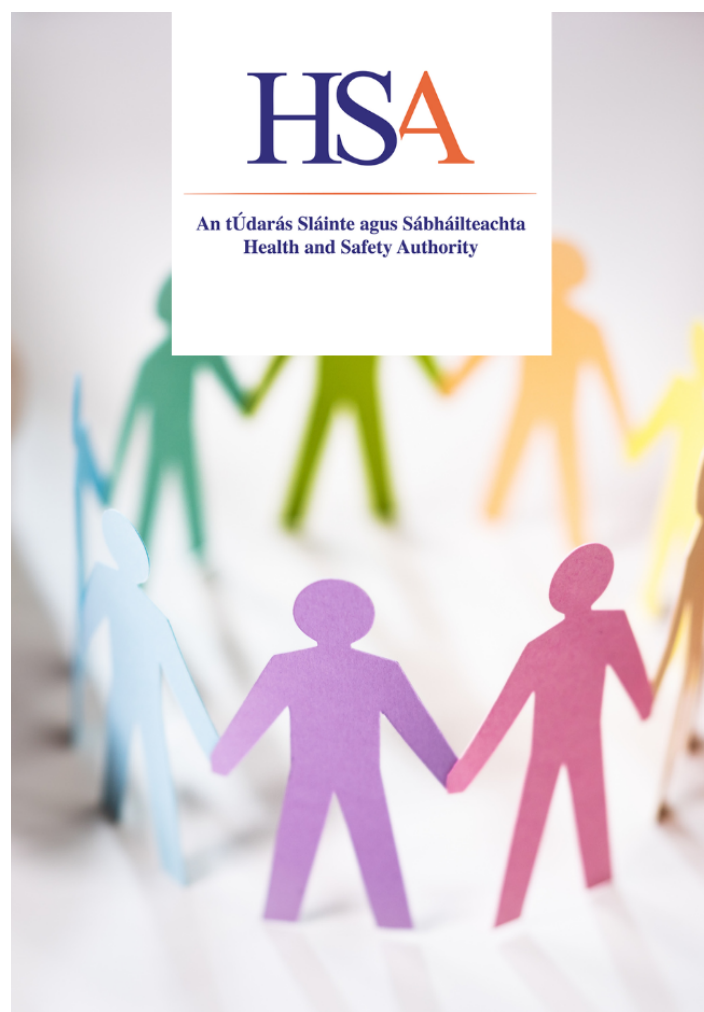
[Why a Health and Safety Inspector Calls](#) to your Workplace guidance explains to you what to expect when a HSA inspector calls to your workplace to carry out an inspection or an investigation. It also explains what we do with the personal data we are required to collect during our workplace inspections and investigations.

A new course '[Protecting Vulnerable Workers](#)' is now live on [hsalearning.ie](#). The course is accessible from a new topic titled 'Vulnerable Workers' on [hsalearning.ie](#). This course is targeted at employers/managers/supervisors—across all sectors. It includes a definition of vulnerable workers (VWs), examples of VWs, some profiling around specific cohorts, accident data (including HSA accident trends data 2013 to 2022), an explanation of vulnerability and some indicative personas. In addition, we have a useful checklist which provides examples of what a prevention approach looks like.

New information sheet on occupational noise is written for employers and employees to raise awareness and control the risk of workplace noise. It is applicable to all sectors. Please see: [Sound matters - Occupational Noise](#)

New Topic Page on Human Factors: [Human Factors - Health and Safety Authority \(hsa.ie\)](#)

[Vulnerable Workers Information Sheet](#) is written for employers, managers, and supervisors. The purpose of this information sheet is to raise awareness around vulnerable workers, employer responsibilities in relation to protecting vulnerable workers, and protection practices.



[Vulnerable Workers Topic Page on HSA Website](#) provides some high-level information about vulnerable workers and some signposting to key resources.

The HSA are delighted to have reached a huge milestone with BeSMART.ie with over 100,000 users.

[Psychosocial Risk Assessment: Guidance for Exposure to Sensitive Content](#) was developed by the Health and Safety Authority and the State Claims Agency. It was developed in order to assist organisations employing people in roles which expose them to sensitive content as part of their assigned duties or other employees who are unexpectedly exposed in their role.

[Exposure to Sensitive Content Risk Assessment Template](#) was developed by HSA to support organisations employing people in roles which expose them to sensitive content.

Credit where it's due.

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.

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Credit Review

From Healthcare to Hospitality

An interview with Amanda Torrens



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

I have had various jobs and workplace experiences throughout my life, but we will use Healthcare as the starting point today. In the 1990's I was working in Northern Ireland in the Homecare sector. Private nursing homes were not common in Donegal at this point and after researching the area it was clear that there was an opportunity not only for a business but a very real need for a high-quality private service.

I opened our first Brindley Healthcare home at Convoy in 2000. Over the next twenty one years, Brindley Healthcare grew to eleven homes and a private homecare service. Brindley Healthcare had a presence in every province in Ireland. The business grew very organically over this time by identifying needs and providing what we believed to be a very professional service albeit in a homely and family orientated way. To ensure the quality of our service, I took a very hands-on approach throughout this time, from driving a digger to help with foundations, working in the kitchen and housekeeping and knowing all of my team and families no matter where the home or service was situated. In 2020 I was approached by a multinational company who wished to acquire Brindley Healthcare. At that stage we were in the middle of Covid and I didn't feel that my team or our families would be best served by a change at that point so I held off until 2021 as there was more stability for all.

This sale was to have huge implications and changes both personally and in my business acumen at this point.

I was not ready to hang my boots up yet in business and I had always had an interest in the hospitality sector. Barberstown Castle had been one of our preferred locations to go to within our area. An opportunity arose to purchase Barberstown Castle and I had a very keen interest in developing it and to help it reach it's full potential within the community of Straffan and Kildare.

What do you enjoy about your current role as the Owner and CEO of Barberstown Castle?

In my current role, I do not really see myself as the owner of Barberstown Castle. I do not think you can really say that you truly own a huge piece of Irish history, you are merely a custodian for a short space of time. The castle has stood on the Kildare landscape for over 750 years and it has been engrained in the local community as a focal point. I believe in my time; I can help improve the experience of our guests and visitors and hopefully help them create very special memories in a very special location that has stood the test of time.

How does your experience in the healthcare industry compare to owning a hotel and being part of the hospitality sector?

As with many businesses in any sector there are always going to be basic similarities. While there certainly are similarities between the two sectors, there are also some very fundamental differences. In any business it is about building up and retaining a strong team and deciding how you are going to lead and guide the team for the best results.

Tell us about Barberstown Castle and the changes that have taken place since you acquired the property?

We were very lucky with Barberstown in that it always had a great reputation as a premier wedding venue. The previous owner had not just maintained the buildings and grounds, but any work undertaken had been completed to an exceptional standard. This gave us an extraordinarily solid foundation to work from however there had been a perception that Barberstown Castle had only been a wedding venue and not really open or inviting for any other hospitality business. In the last two years plus, we have been changing that perception and trying to achieve one of our main goals, which is being the friendliest hotel in Ireland and giving memories to our guests of being a home away from home, where everyone is welcome. We have expanded our food and drinks offering in both our fine dining experience in the Barton Rooms and more casual dining in our Garden Bar. We have also made great headway into the business sectors in offering a suitable venue for corporate events and meetings both large and small. Our business accommodation rates on weekdays also reflect our desire to promote an alternative to city centre prices.

From a local perspective when we initially took over there were 12 members of staff and at the last count, our team has now expanded to 135. This reflects the increased standards and level of service on offer to all at Barberstown Castle. It also shows us that what we have created is being embraced not just in the local community but is also reflected in the number of national and international guests that visit us here.

What plans and opportunities do you see for Barberstown Castle over the next few years?

At the moment we are in the middle of updating our accommodation throughout the castle. As part of this we are just about to launch our Presidential Suite,

which will allow our guests to experience the heights of exclusivity and luxury while staying in a medieval castle built in 1288. This will offer an unparalleled opportunity to create some very special memories. We are also launching our updated executive and bridal suites which have been renovated and refurbished to the highest standard but having in mind the overall character of our castle.



As the owner of Barberstown Castle, you have been actively supporting horse racing with various sponsorships, can you tell us a bit about your keen interest in supporting racing?

At heart I am a very simple Donegal girl from a farming background. My family have always had a huge interest in horses. Growing up, my father James nurtured this passion in both my sister Gillian and I. I believe that the equine industry in Ireland is something incredibly special and is respected and envied worldwide for its exceptional standards. In a small way, Barberstown Castle has allowed me to support this industry, especially locally, with some of the best racecourses and horse sales in the country on our doorstep.

I suppose I am incredibly lucky in that I can combine my love of horses and racing within my "work". In turn, since we have had Barberstown Castle, our support has not gone unnoticed, and the equine sectors have supported us with their patronage

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

Staffing and building our team is always a challenge and in the last number of years, this has been a concern in every section of business, not just hospitality. Withdrawal of supports, increases in VAT, increases in fuel and utilities, increases in the prices of all products and increases in wages are and always have been challenges but we are Irish and that brings resilience and determination, so I am hopeful for the future.

Do you have a business mentor? What business advice was crucial to your success and what three important pieces of advice would you impart to an SME business in today's competitive climate?

Throughout my business life I have been incredibly lucky in having very close family, friends and mentors that have guided me with advice and help, some of it I have even taken on board. I have always found it helpful to bounce ideas and thoughts off people I trust to get a clear and perhaps better perspective on things. I think building a dedicated and strong team around you is essential in any business. You need to acknowledge that you do not have all of the answers and skills yourself, that you need help every now and then to see your plans and visions through. Look outside of your familiar surroundings every now and then to get a fresh and new perspective and innovative ideas. You need to lead from the front, leading your team by supporting them and explaining the goals and results that can be achieved together. Get to understand every role and job in your business and by doing so you will be able to guide your company / business into the future by a better understanding.





An Even Better Place to Work

Performance Management Engagement

Addressing the Modern Workplace Challenges
Through Engagement

In an age where the nature of work is constantly changing, organisations are experiencing a pivotal shift in workplace dynamics. The need for innovative solutions to Employee Engagement and organisational health has never been greater. An Even Better Place to Work (bp2w®) exists to meet these evolving needs, fostering transformative changes in both individual performance and company-wide culture.



Understanding the Need for Engagement Programs

A robust Transformational Employee Performance Engagement program like bp2w® is essential, addressing multiple dimensions of workplace challenges:

- **Employee Burn Out:** An alarming number of professionals report feeling burnt out at work, necessitating programs that promote well-being.
- **Intergenerational Workforces:** With a diverse range of employee ages, tailored programs can bridge the gap and ensure mutual understanding and respect.
- **Global Dispersal:** As teams become more geographically dispersed, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration is crucial.
- **Technological Disruptions:** Automation and AI are reshaping job roles, requiring employees to adapt quickly and efficiently.

The Relevance of bp2w® in Meeting Workplace Needs

bp2w® responds to these critical challenges by:

- **Promoting Adaptability:** Assisting employees to be more resilient to change and flexible in their roles.
- **Encouraging Mindfulness:** Introducing practices that address mental and emotional health in a proactive manner.
- **Supporting Development:** Facilitating continuous personal and professional growth through workshops, training, and mentorship programs.

BENEFITS THROUGH THE LENS OF RESEARCH

A wealth of research underscores the importance of Employee Engagement:

- **Increased Productivity:** According to Gallup, there is up to 21% increase in productivity with higher engagement levels.
- **Reduced Absenteeism:** Highly engaged workplaces see 41% lower absenteeism.
- **Profitability:** Engaged teams lead to 21% greater profitability.

Investing in an employee engagement program like bp2w® is not just beneficial; it is strategic and essential in addressing contemporary workplace challenges. If these issues resonate with your organisation, and you recognise the importance of fostering a dynamic, adaptive, and engaged workforce, learn how An Even Better Place to Work can contribute to your success and employee satisfaction.

To explore the transformative impact of bp2w® for your company, get in touch with us.

Together, let's build a workplace that is not just better but the best it can be.

CALL US FOR MORE INFO



+353 87 700 2629

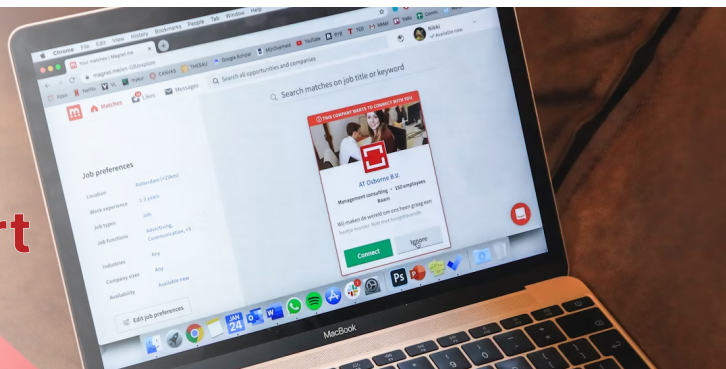


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Auto-Enrolment – Yet another revised start date....



The Automatic Enrolment Retirement Savings Systems Bill 2024 was published by the Minister for Social Protection on 5th April and is currently in the process of being debated in the Dáil. The Bill provides for the establishment of an automatic enrolment retirement savings system (i.e. Auto-Enrolment) for employees in employment who are not covered by a qualifying pension scheme. It also provides for the establishment of a new State body to be known as An tÚdarás Náisiúnta um Uathrollú Coigiltis Scoir (National Auto-Enrolment Retirement Savings Authority), which will administer the system for and on behalf of the participants. **The Scheme is due to commence in January 2025.**

Some of the main points are as follows:

The National Auto-Enrolment Retirement Savings Authority (NAERSA) will be the body responsible for the administration of Auto-Enrolment (AE). It will:

- Decide which employees should be enrolled and inform employers.
- Collect contributions from employers and the State and distribute them to Registered Providers for investment.
- Operate an online portal where employees can log into their account, see their account balance, and make decisions such as opting out.
- Provide printed statements to those who do not have digital access.
- Facilitate the 'pot-follows-member' approach whereby employees will have only one account with NAERSA over their working life.

Auto-Enrolment for Employees

- Employees aged between 23 and 60 years, who earn more than €20,000 a year across all employments, and who are not currently a member of a workplace pension scheme or PRSA, will be automatically enrolled in the AE scheme.

- Employees outside the earnings and age brackets, who are not a member of a workplace pension scheme or PRSA, may opt into the scheme.
- Eligible employees will be enrolled in the scheme for the first 6 months. There will be a 2-month window during month 7 and 8 where employees can opt out.
- Employee contributions will start at 1.5% of the gross pay. They will increase to 3% in year 4, 4.5% in year 7, and 6% in year 10.
- In month 7 and 8 following each rate increase, employees will also be able to opt out.
- Employees who opt out will receive a refund of their employee contribution. The employer contribution and State contribution will remain in the pot.
- Employees will be able to suspend their contributions at any time outside of the 6-month mandatory participation period.
- Every €3 an employee contributes will be matched by an employer contribution, and the State will also top-up by a further €1. Employer and State contributions will be capped at an upper earnings limit of €80,000 per year.

Auto-Enrolment for Employers

- Eligible employees, who are not provided with a workplace pension or PRSA in that employment, will be automatically enrolled.
- Employers will not be responsible for deciding who should be enrolled.
- Employers will need to ensure that their payroll software will be capable of taking an enrolment instruction, calculating, and returning contribution amounts to the Authority.
- While contributions will be calculated based on the employee's gross pay, they will be deducted from the employee's net pay.

- Employers will be required to match the employee's pension contribution, subject to an upper earnings limit of €80,000.
- Employer contributions will be deductible for income tax/corporation tax purposes.
- Employers who fail to meet their obligations will be subject to penalties and possible prosecution.
- Employers cannot penalise or threaten to penalise their employees for exercising their right to participate in auto-enrolment.

Auto-Enrolment for the Pensions Industry

- The scheme is being designed to run in parallel with the existing pensions industry.
- Existing pension schemes or PRSAs will continue. Employees who are contributing (or where their employer is contributing) to a workplace pension or PRSA will not be eligible for Auto-Enrolment.
- Pension providers will have the opportunity to be involved in the AE system and those selected to provide investment management services will be called Registered Providers.
- Registered Providers will not have any direct contact or relationship with employees.

As always, if you require any support with HR or Employment Law you can contact the ISME HR Team on 01 6622755 Option 2 or via HR@ISME.ie. Members also have access to a full suite of HR templates regarding Absence management on the ISME HR Hub .



SME Cashflows and Debt Restructuring with repayment of Revenue Warehousing

The government's Debt Warehousing Scheme provided vital financial relief to businesses coping with COVID-19, allowing the deferring of tax liabilities, easing cash flow pressures and allowing businesses to allocate funds to essential areas such as payroll and operational expenses.

Following its conclusions on 1st May 2024, business owners who utilised the Warehouse have had to put a repayment plan in place, by either paying in full or via a Phased Payment Arrangement (PPA). This is now an additional debt obligation and many businesses need to ensure their cash reserves are adequate to continue and grow operations.

It may now be timely to review all cashflows in and out of the business, including all debt repayments, and ensure the debt structure in place best suits the needs of the business and its future prospects.

Each business's financial situation is unique, and some may require a debt restructuring plan to meet its specific needs, others may require additional lines of credit. Seeking professional advice is highly recommended to ensure that SME's make informed decisions based on their individual financial circumstances.

What if the bank refuses to restructure debt or provide additional credit?

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Gig Workers, Gig Economy, and Platform Work

Dr Joan Cahil & Brian Molloy, Health and Safety Authority

A gig worker is a person who works in the gig economy. They are also known as a freelancer or independent contractor. Gig work typically covers short-term, informal working relationships where work is 'on-demand' and delivered on a task-by-task basis.

The gig economy refers to a situation where a person (gig worker) is hired through an app or website to undertake a role for a third party. The gig economy is also referred to as the platform economy or the share economy. The app or website is produced and managed by an organization/platform. For example, a food delivery platform provides food delivery services marketed to food outlets, usually through a mobile device application. The platform engages delivery riders to deliver the food produced by the food outlet.

Digital platform work is defined as all paid work provided through and/or on an online platform. An online platform is a digital marketplace that allows the demand and supply of work to be matched to carry out specific tasks. As such, work can be performed completely online and/or on-location.

Algorithmic management refers to the use of algorithms and data-driven systems to make decisions, allocate tasks, direct work, and manage workflows in organizations. As highlighted in a recent report by the European Commission (2024), algorithmic management is still a relatively new and largely unregulated phenomenon in the platform economy.

Gig Workers & Occupational Safety and Health

Gig and platform workers can be considered vulnerable workers. Vulnerable Workers are people who may be particularly sensitive or over exposed to potential health and safety risks in comparison to the general working population. A worker may have several different vulnerabilities linked to different personal and job factors.

Gig workers are exposed to similar hazards in the workplace as other workers. However, the risk may be higher due to the way work is organized (for example, social isolation), and/or specific features of their work contract (for example, job insecurity arising from contract or temporary work). In addition, risks linked to algorithmic management for gig workers need to

be considered.

EU Directive- Improving Working Conditions in Platform Work

On 11 March 2024, the 'Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on Improving Working Conditions in Platform Work' was approved. This directive aims at improving working conditions in platform work. The Directive includes measures to determine the employment status of people working through digital labour platforms (enabling them to benefit from any labour rights they are entitled). It also includes measures to improve the protection of the personal data of persons performing platform work. In addition, the Directive details new rights for both workers and self-employed people regarding algorithmic management. This includes the right to contest automated decisions.

The Directive will be finalised in all official languages and formally adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. After the formal steps of adoption are completed, EU-27 member states will have two years to transpose the directive into their national legislation. The question of employment status for platform workers will be determined by each EU member state. Enterprises using services performed by self-employed persons through digital platforms will need to consider how this directive is transposed in Irish legislation.

Further Information

For more information, please see the following:

[HSA Vulnerable workers topic page](#)

[European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Insights on Digital Platform Work](#)

[European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Digital Platform Work – OSH Implications](#)

[Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on Improving Working Conditions in Platform Work](#)

[European Commission and Joint Research Centre Report on algorithmic management practices in regular workplaces – Case studies in logistics and healthcare](#)

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Ins and outs of Retirement and what this means for Employers

Mandatory retirement ages are topical at the moment in the context of age discrimination claims. In Ireland there is no statutory compulsory retirement age for private sector employees. Many organisations are seeking to impose mandatory retirement age on employees, some of which do not want to retire. This has led to a considerable number of claims challenging company mandatory retirement ages and discriminatory claims.

The Workplace Relations Commission ('WRC') 2022 Annual Report highlights a substantial increase in the number of age related discrimination complaints arising under the EEA (we await the 2023 Annual report to be released shortly). In 2022 there was 514 claims submitted, compared to 2021 where only 186 claims were submitted.

It is up to each company to decide if they wish to have a retirement age or not. In the past, all companies would state a Retirement Age in line with the state of 65 years and it was a clean cut as that. This is not the case now and it is vital that when a company define a retirement age that this is married with objective justification whereby the company would need to stand over the reasons why that age profile was chosen. Given that the current State Pension Benefit age is 66 years – now most companies currently opt for this.

Failure to provide an objective justification for the chosen company retirement age or have a robust process in place, will impose a high risk of failure to successfully defending an unfair dismissal claim or a discrimination claim under Employment Equality Acts 1998-2021 (the "EEA").

Recommended internal procedure to ensure compliance:

- Employers should refer to the Code of Practice on Longer Working (The Code of Practice) when managing retirement age in their organisation -<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/600/made/en/pdf>
- Ensure that an employee's employment contract contains an expressed mandatory retirement age and that once the retirement age that is set out in the Contract is reached then the employer prompts a 2 way conversation regarding the employee's plans.
- It is best practice for the employer to notify the employee 6 to 12 months in advance of the date on which the company intends to retire the employee. Ideally, this notice should be followed up by a meeting to address any possible employee issues, to explore supportive measures to assist with retirement etc.

- Each case/employee should be individually assessed on a case by case basis.
- In the case the employee requests to remain working, it would be advisable to consider offering the employee a Fixed-Term Contract for 1 years duration. Then the Job Chat can be had again in a years' time. This can also include change in terms & conditions that have been agreed upon by both parties. The Code of Practice sets out a very helpful step-by-step plan for employers to follow when managing such a request.

It is vital that employers have robust practices and policies in place to prevent any instances of age discrimination:

- An established custom and practice - consistency is key, it is important to note that where an employer deviates from its mandatory retirement policy, it undermines that policy. This will make it challenging to rely on the company retirement policy and it can make defending a claim more complicated.
- Ensure that the company have an internal Retirement Policy regarding how the company handles retirement and explain why they have implemented a retirement age. This will support the expressed mandatory retirement age in the employees contract of employment. Furthermore, it would be advisable to follow your company policy and only deviate from it in exceptional circumstances where that deviation can be genuinely distinguished on the basis of its individual circumstances. This policy must clearly set out the considered objective justification(s) for that retirement age which is consistently applied without deviation within the organisation.

Examples of objective justifications affirmed by Irish courts include the following:

- Establishing a balanced age structure, encouraging recruitment of young people
- Inter-generational fairness or preserving the dignity of older workers;
- Motivation and dynamism through the increased prospect of promotion;
- To ensure that vacancies became available in order to encourage the recruitment and promotion of younger people;
- Desire to avoid capability issues;
- Health and safety concerns for the public and the employee – generally only applicable to employees in more safety critical occupations

An important recent case to note is that of Mr. Doolin v Eir Business Eircom Limited. This case is understood to be the first case where the adjudicator has ordered a reinstatement for a complaint under the EEA.

Mr. Doolin was employed as a desktop support agent with Eir. Mr. Doolin was informed that he would have to retire as soon as he turned 65 years of age.

Mr Doolin took a claim to the WRC claiming the decision by management to impose a mandatory retirement age was "unfair".

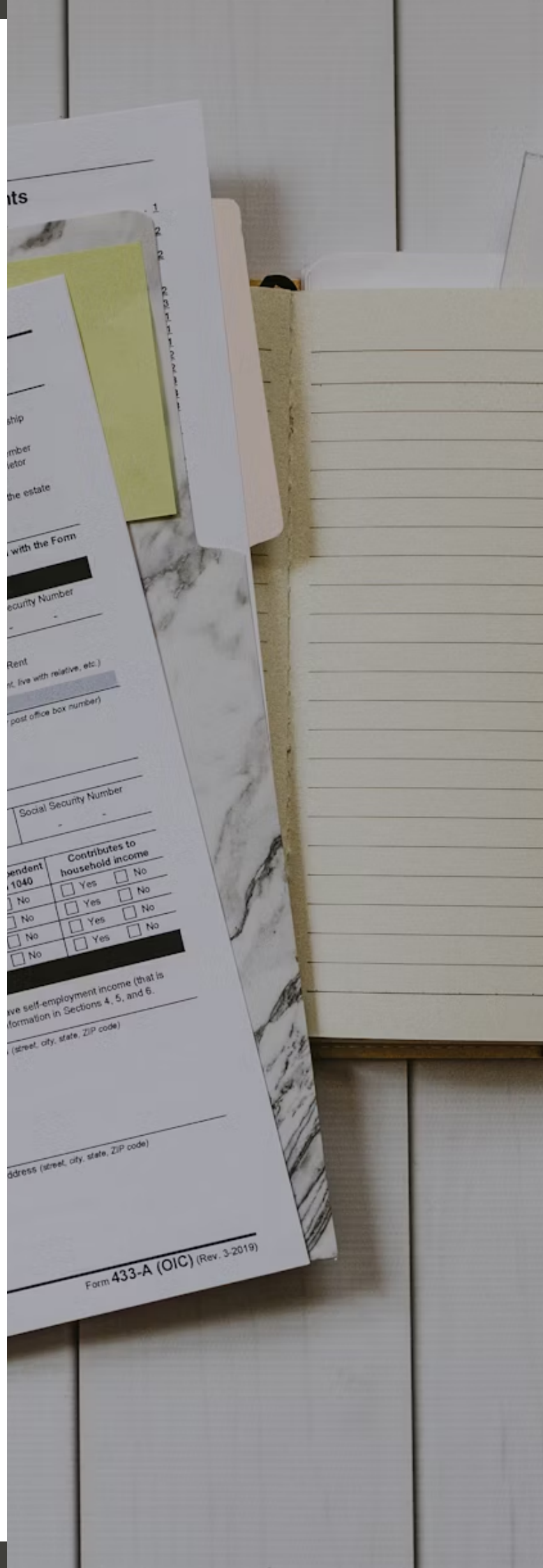
The Company denied discrimination and their defense was that the this mandatory retirement age was objectively justifiable on grounds of intergenerational fairness as it needed to maintain an age balance and for succession planning reasons to avoid the risk of large cohorts of staff retiring at the same time. The company also put forward evidence that that the Company would incur additional costs and bureaucratic challenges if it couldn't apply a single retirement age and that the company were concerned with health and safety implications as up to 85 per cent of their workers performed duties outside of the office.

The Adjudicator didn't accept the alleged point regarding maintaining intergenerational fairness and the associated need to safeguard career progression. The Adjudicator did not believe retaining him in employment would have impeded the career progression of any other employee. The argument of the mass retirement scenario argument also was not accepted as Mr Doolin worked in a small and non-strategic IT department. The Adjudicator dismissed the health and safety concerns and said that did not apply to Mr Doolin because he was "exclusively office- and desk-based".

Eir was ordered by the WRC to reinstate Thomas Doolin to his previous job effective from the imposed retirement date. While there was no award for compensation, the reinstatement order meant Mr Doolin was entitled to be paid his salary for the time he was out of work .

Business owners should take note of this case and understand that where a complainant is successful before the WRC, you are faced with the possibility of a heavy fine, re-instatement or re-engagement alongside substantial reputational damage and costly legal fees.

ISME provide templates that can assist members have a robust contract and policy in place for their team in relation to this topic. For further information or support on this or any HR matter, ISME Members can contact the HR Advice line via HR@ISME.ie or 01 6622755.



Family Business: An alternative solution to the succession issue

Demographic shifts are reshaping the landscape for family businesses, with a growing number of owners nearing retirement without a clear successor. In Germany alone, over 31% of SME owners are now over 60 years old, with similar trends occurring in Ireland. Recognising this challenge and striving to be part of the solution, Rob Forsyth launched Elevate Capital in early 2024.

His vision? To acquire a high-potential Irish SME and ensure a seamless transition for the retiring owner while laying a foundation for future growth.

"This approach is known as 'Entrepreneurship Through Acquisition' (ETA) whereby an individual backed by a small group of external investors acquires an established SME/family business. Following acquisition, the individual takes on the lead role of 'owner operator'," said Rob.

"The concept first originated at Stanford Business School in the 1980s and is now a common-place solution to owner succession in both the mainland Europe and the US — where it is taught as part of MBA programs. Despite the popularity further afield, it is still in its infancy and relatively unknown in the UK and Ireland."

The steps involved in an ETA transaction are not dissimilar to that of a larger business transaction with both parties requiring legal and financial advisory to reach deal completion. However, the ETA process has the capacity to be more relationship driven and bespoke based on Seller needs. This will usually involve more direct interaction between Buyer and Seller both throughout the process and post closure. (high level transaction process outline in panel)

From the Seller's perspective, this is often their first and only business sale. They are handing over the keys to 30-40+ years of hard work and entrusting it to a new steward. Naturally, this level of change can come with a lot of anxiety about ensuring the preservation of their legacy and preparing for a new life stage post-sale.

For the Buyer, they are embarking on a career and financial commitment that is usually unparalleled in their lifetime. They are placing a high degree of faith in the Seller being aligned on a successful post-sale outcome.

With this in mind, for a successful transaction and post-acquisition journey, Rob believes that "chemistry and trust between the two parties is paramount and should be the number one priority. It is key during those initial meetings to forge that trust, and this relationship should be continually invested in throughout the journey."

Having grown up around the family business, a flooring distribution SME, Rob learned at an early age — usually around the dinner table — both the opportunities and challenges inherent in running an owner managed business, but ultimately the over-riding fulfilment that can be found in both creating employment and satisfying a customer need state.

Having started his career as an accountant with KPMG, Rob has spent the last 15 years working in a variety of roles across strategy, finance and operations in large multinational organisations.

Understanding the changing demographic trends and recognising the gap in the market, he saw a significant opportunity to marry this corporate experience with the right Irish SME through making a full/partial acquisition, which has in turn led to the inception of Elevate Capital.

"Not all family businesses have a son or daughter who wants to take over the family business or is indeed equipped for that role, naturally this can create complexities for business owners when it comes to succession planning.

"Where this challenge exists, the alternatives usually include a sale to a competitor, sale to private equity — where the business is of a significant size — and in the worst-case scenario, closing the doors entirely.



"These options are not always preferable to the retiring owner, which is where ETA and Elevate Capital, can play a unique role in offering a more favourable alternative to the seller."

The advantage of an Entrepreneurial Through Acquisition (ETA) for the Seller is the reassurance that your business will continue to grow and succeed independently, rather than being absorbed by a competitor or included in a private equity roll-up.

The Sales Process

Initial Meetings:

The Buyer and Seller are introduced and have at least one meeting to discuss the potential sale. These meetings help both sides understand each other's motivations and what they hope to achieve.

Information Sharing:

If there's a good fit, they move on to sharing some high-level information. But before anything sensitive is shared, the Seller should make sure a confidentiality agreement has been put in place. This information sharing allows the Buyer to start their preliminary analysis and come up with a potential offer.

Initial Offer:

Having carried out the preliminary analysis, the Buyer makes an initial offer. If the Seller accepts the offer, the Buyer drafts a Letter of Intent (LOI) or Head of Terms which formalises the offer. Both parties sign this legal document. The signing of the LOI creates a window of 'exclusivity' whereby the Seller agrees not to engage other interested buyers.

Due Diligence (DD):

During this exclusivity period, the Buyer and their advisory team dig deeper into the business. They'll look at detailed financial, commercial, and legal records. This step is carried out to support and substantiate their understanding of the business.

Share Purchase Agreement (SPA):

If everything looks good after DD, they move to the legal stuff. The Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) is the final contract for the sale. It's a detailed legal document that lays out all the terms of the sale and both sides need to be happy with the details.

Transition Agreement:

Usually, the SPA includes a transition agreement. This means the Seller agrees to work in the business in some form for 12 months post-sale to help the Buyer transition into the 'Owner Operator' role. Whilst the sale is technically closed at this point, this transition period is crucial for ensuring a smooth handover and setting the Buyer up for success.

When evaluating the right business for acquisition, there is no one-size-fits-all set of criteria for an acquisition entrepreneur. The selection criteria are typically personal to the Buyer and based on their unique skillset and ambitions. However, one common factor is that Buyers often seek businesses with a proven track record of stable revenue and cash flow generation over a sustained period of time.

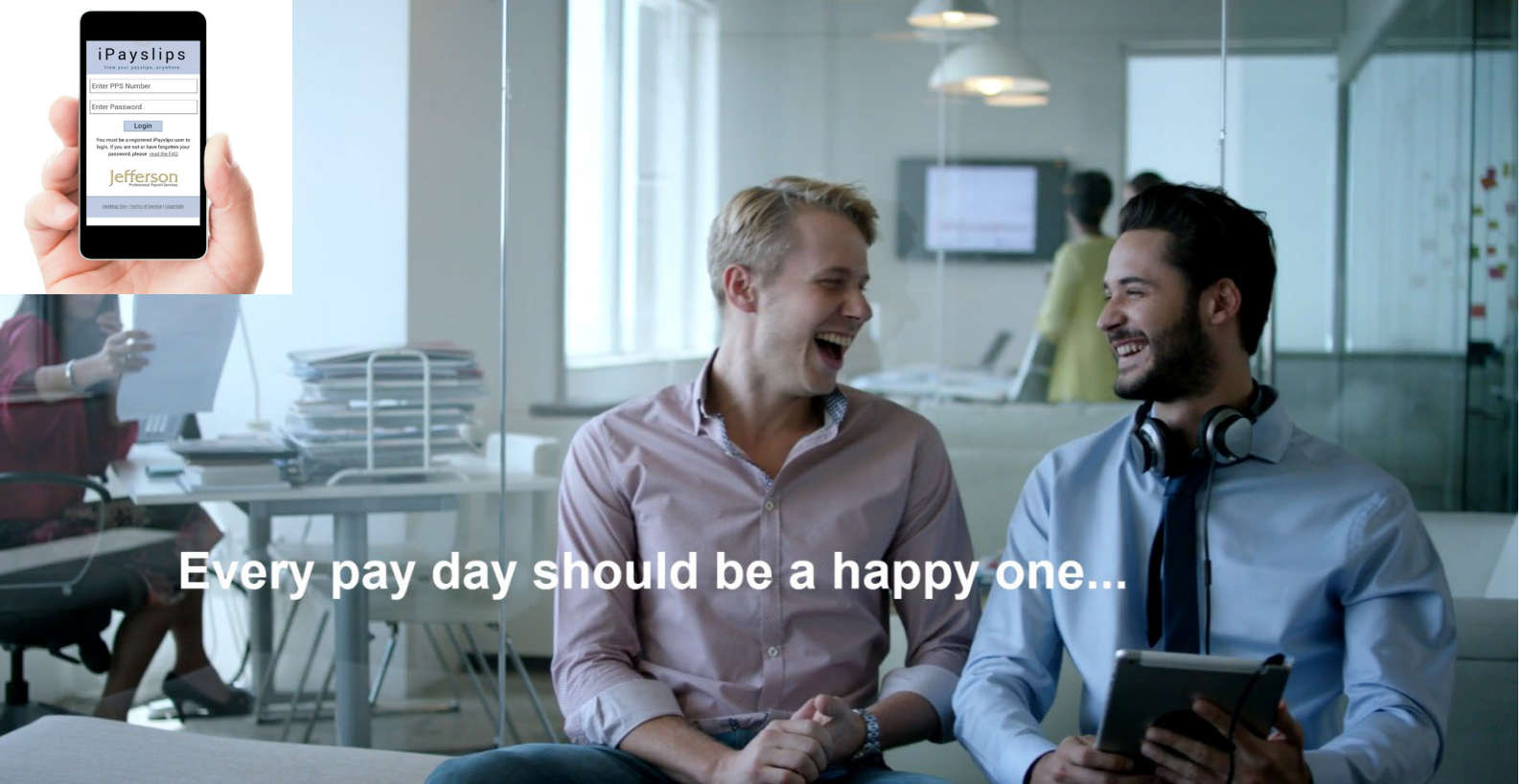
Beyond individual transactions, Rob believes in the broader societal impact of ETA: "We know that FDI is a central pillar to the Irish economy, but a thriving SME sector is crucial for Ireland's future economic success. "By connecting seasoned talent with established businesses, ETA doesn't just facilitate transactions — but instead fosters a stronger and more independent Irish economy."

Elevate Capital are currently seeking introductions to businesses in the Leinster region in the B2B Distribution or Service sector with an annual profit range of between €0.5m to €1m and ideally.

If you'd like to find out more, please reach out to info@elevatecapital.ie



Rob Forsyth, Founder and Director at Elevate Capital



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Empowering Small to Mid-Sized Retailers: Zenbundle's Revolutionary No-Code Shopify App



LEFT: GIACOMO TRUDU: CO-FOUNDER & CTO
RIGHT: SHANE FAY: CO-FOUNDER & CEO

In the rapidly evolving world of e-commerce, retail media is emerging as a booming opportunity, allowing retailers to capitalise on their digital real estate by creating paid advertisements on their online platforms with innovative ad formats like Sponsored Products, native embed ads, and post-purchase offers. Traditionally, this lucrative space has been dominated by big retailers who can afford the high technical costs and complexity involved in developing a retail media platform. However, Zenbundle is changing the game with the launch of its innovative plug-and-play, no-code Shopify app, designed specifically to level the playing field for small to mid-sized retailers.

Zenbundle's new app empowers Shopify-powered merchants to effortlessly build, monetize, and grow their own retail media advertising business directly from within their Shopify Admin interface. This groundbreaking solution breaks down the barriers of high technical complexity and costs, enabling merchants to capitalise on the retail media opportunity within hours, with low upfront costs and a fair, transparent pay-as-you-grow pricing model.

A Game-Changer for Small to Mid-Sized Retailers

Zenbundle's Retail Media Platform offers a seamless integration process, allowing merchants to create, control, and monetize ad campaigns for their existing vendors swiftly. The platform supports a wide range of top-tier ad formats, including Sponsored Products, Display, Native, Brand Pages, and Video Ads, providing merchants with the tools they need to elevate their stores and drive revenue growth.

One of the key benefits of Zenbundle's app is its comprehensive analytics, which enable merchants to track ad performance and revenue with ease. This data-driven approach allows retailers to make informed decisions and scale their retail media ad business efficiently, without the hefty upfront costs typically associated with such platforms.

Easy Setup and Total Control Over Your Store's Look

Zenbundle's app makes it easy for merchants to onboard and monetize both existing vendors and new advertisers.

The platform's user-friendly interface allows merchants to manage stunning ads that blend seamlessly into their store's user experience, ensuring a smooth and

engaging shopping journey for customers. Additionally, merchants can sell post-purchase upsell and cross-sell ad campaigns to further boost revenue and drive advertiser-funded offsite audience extension campaigns to increase traffic.

Empowering Merchants with Robust Tools

"Our new Shopify app revolutionises retail media by levelling the playing field for small to mid-sized retailers," said Shane Fay, Co-Founder and CEO at Zenbundle. "With Zenbundle's plug-and-play solution, Shopify-powered retailers can easily onboard and incrementally monetize existing suppliers or new advertisers, manage stunning ads, and drive substantial revenue growth. This launch underscores our commitment to democratising retail media for all retailers with an intuitive, powerful platform that enables retailers of all sizes to capitalise on the booming retail media landscape."

Zenbundle's app is designed to be quick to integrate and simple to use, enabling merchants to launch and grow their retail media platforms within hours. The app's pay-as-you-grow pricing model is particularly beneficial for small to mid-sized retailers, offering a free-tier to get started, then cancel-anytime paid tiers with usage-based fees directly linked to ad revenue, ensuring flexibility and transparency.

A Special Offer for all ISME Members

Get started for free and receive €500 credit to use on ad campaigns. For more information and to get started with Zenbundle's new Shopify app, click to visit the Shopify App Store today. Join the growing number of small to mid-sized retailers who are transforming their businesses with the power of Zenbundle's retail media solutions. To claim the exclusive ISME €500 credit, visit zenbundle.com/isme. Offer ends 31/07/24.

About Zenbundle

Zenbundle is an Enterprise Ireland backed AdTech startup committed to levelling the playing field for small to mid-sized retailers. By providing an accessible, no-code solution with top-tier ad formats and comprehensive analytics, Zenbundle empowers merchants to launch, monetize, and grow their own retail media networks quickly and efficiently. For more information, visit www.zenbundle.com.

The Formula for a Successful Negotiation

Daniel Freeman, Senior Consultant for Scotwork International



Negotiation is a fundamental aspect of business that directly impacts the bottom line, yet it remains an area where many professionals struggle to excel. Recent findings from Scotwork's negotiation capability survey, which analysed responses from over 5,000 negotiators across nearly 40 sectors globally, highlight critical gaps in negotiation strategies that need urgent attention.

One major revelation from the survey is that over 60% of negotiators enter discussions without intending to make concessions. This approach to negotiation not only limits the potential for creative solutions but also increases the likelihood of deadlock and the ability to achieve priority objectives. Successful negotiation is not about 'winning' at all costs; it's about finding a mutually beneficial agreement where both parties can grow value.

Furthermore, only 23% of negotiators believe their results always create long-term value for their business. This statistic underscores a significant issue: negotiators fail to consider the long-term implications of their deals. If you rely on sustained business partnerships, long-term value should be considered as part of your negotiation strategy, ensuring that agreements not only serve immediate needs but also foster ongoing relationships and future opportunities. Negotiations can often prioritise short-term gains, only to realise that long-term value was sacrificed, ultimately harming the business relationship.

Preparation is another critical area where negotiators often fall short. The survey reveals that 41% of respondents occasionally have no time to prepare properly before entering a negotiation, and only 26% know what questions they will ask when they meet the other party. This lack of preparation can lead to confusion over what the main objectives are, not being clear on the information needed to deliver the right solutions and struggling to negotiate when not outlining the trading variables in advance. A structured preparation framework is essential to navigate negotiations effectively; thorough preparation can make the difference between a successful negotiation and a missed opportunity.

Nearly half of negotiators do not consider what is important to themselves before they start negotiating, and only 18% come prepared with a fallback plan in case an agreement is not reached. These figures highlight the importance of strategic foresight and having a clear understanding of one's objectives and alternatives. Without considering the options in advance, negotiators are at a disadvantage and may struggle to steer the negotiation in a favourable direction. Lacking the ability to realise when you need to take a different path can prevent even the most experienced negotiators from finding the right solution needed to move forward.

For SMEs in Ireland, effective negotiation is even more critical. In a competitive landscape where resources are often limited, the ability to negotiate effectively can mean the difference between securing a pivotal deal or missing out on crucial opportunities. By recognising that negotiation is a core competency and the driver of business growth and aptitude, SMEs can better navigate market challenges, foster stronger partnerships, and ultimately drive growth and innovation in business.

The journey towards mastering negotiation skills is an ongoing endeavour, marked by continuous learning and improvement. The formula for successful negotiation lies in preparation, strategy, and the willingness to seek to understand, ensuring that all parties walk away feeling they have gained value.

About Daniel Freeman

Daniel is a Senior Consultant for Scotwork International in Ireland, providing negotiation training and consultancy to executives and organisations across multiple sectors. He has trained a wide range of global and local organisations, assessing their internal negotiation capabilities and developing strategies to roll out negotiation initiatives throughout various business infrastructures. Daniel's negotiation experience was shaped by working in the optics industry for 8 years, holding key managerial positions at Hoya Vision Care tasked with negotiating new contracts, business expansion and acquisition, and creating new channels of distribution across Ireland.

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This project is funded by the Higher Education Authority under
Human Capital Initiative Pillar 3 Innovation and Agility

Sinead Farrell

ISME HR Advisor

What interests/hobbies do you have outside of work?

My personal life is built around my two young children and enjoying life through their lens.

They are both passionate about sports, in particular GAA which I like to get involved in. Since I have very limited football skills, I support with the club operations instead and organize the Fruit stand for all the children to enjoy after their training on a Saturday morning.

When I'm not at work or with my family, I enjoy yoga and using it as an opportunity to de-stress after our busy days.

Why do these hobbies interest you?

I quickly learned to keep my children engaged with their activities, we needed to show interest in them to help them to connect with the activity. Becoming involved, helps me play a part in supporting the club and creates a further connection with my children.

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

As the summer progresses, I want to challenge myself to completing a "couch to 5K" with the goal of completing a 10k when the Autumn race season commences.

Talk to us about the work you do at ISME?

At ISME, I am a HR Advisor supporting our members on their people related matters that occur within their operations.

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

Practicing yoga is amazing for relaxing the body and clearing the mind particularly at the end of a busy day. It allows me to come to work with the fresh mind and cleanse stresses that might be carried from the previous day.

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

Absolutely, an employer with a less stressed, more relaxed workforce is proven to be more productive with greater employment engagement and longer-term retention.

Another side of...



A series that highlights the lives and interests of ISME members and staff. In this edition, The bISME talks to Sinead Farrell, ISME HR Advisor about her hobbies and work.