ALSO INSIDE

10 YEARS ON: WHY IS CENTRAL EUROPE STILL NOT IN OUR SIGHTS?
10 years after accession, Central Europe’s high-income markets should be on our radar

ON THE BALL
Digital sports marketing’s winning Irish players

BLUE SKIES AHEAD
Blue Insurance MD Ciarán Mulligan talks to The Market

HEALTH WAVE
The real opportunities behind the Gulf’s massive health spend

A PLACE IN THE COUNTRY
A look at some of Ireland’s regionally based exporters going for global
Contents

COVER STORY
014 Switzerland adds up
Switzerland - a big spender with Irish companies

REGIONS AND SECTORS
020 Tsar performers
Irish companies putting in a stellar performance in Russia

027 On the ball
Digital sports marketing’s winning Irish players

029 Unlocking global opportunities to supply multinationals
Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland collaborate in Global Sourcing initiative

034 Health wave
The real opportunities behind the Gulf’s massive health spend

037 Technology teaches the lessons of past’s imperfect
A look at Irish tech-players in international remembrance education

040 10 years on: Why is Central Europe still not in our sights?
10 years after the first wave of EU accession, most Central European economies are now in the high-income ranks

PEOPLE AND COMPANIES
010 Mama knows best
Interview with Clevamama founders Martina Craine and Suzanne Browne

025 Blue skies ahead
Blue Insurance Managing Director Ciarán Mulligan talks to The Market

BUSINESS
030 A place in the country
Ireland’s regional exporters are going for global

039 Making meetings collaborative, not competitive
US CEO Berny Dohrmann’s new book expounds the virtues of the collaborative workplace

REGULARS
002 Noticeboard
News for and from the export community

008 Diary
What’s on, where and when

048 Gadgetry
Game on

050 Good Reading
How to grow your company fast

052 Market Intelligence
Recently published market research

054 Trade Regulations
Trade regulation and negotiation update

055 Travel News
Flights and travel update

056 City Guide
Zurich
The Government’s Action Plan for Jobs 2014, published this February, is targeting €17.5bn in exports from Enterprise Ireland’s client base. It also sets a target for Enterprise Ireland to work with 55 new first-time exporters in 2014.

Among the enhanced supports provided for exporters in the 2014 plan is additional on-the-ground support by Enterprise Ireland in selected overseas markets, including China, South Korea, United Arab Emirates and South Africa. APJ 2014 also calls for a critical analysis of the Foreign Earnings Deduction scheme with a view to adapting it, if necessary, to encourage SMEs to expand into new foreign markets.

Meanwhile, Enterprise Ireland-coordinated export support programmes such as Access Silicon Valley, the International Selling Programme, the Market Access Grant and Graduates for International Growth are to continue, with new targets for 2014.

Other pro-export measures contained in the plan include a commitment to publish a languages education strategy, including foreign language education.

Targeted initiatives are set out for several sectors, including international education services, engineering services and cultural services and design. These include a commitment to implement the policies and actions outlined in the Review of the International Education, which is due to be published shortly. Another action area centres on supporting the Irish private sector to secure contracts for infrastructure, engineering and services projects, funded by international financial institutions. Meanwhile, 2015 is to be designated as the ‘Year of Irish Design’ in order to encourage more investment in design and design skills in Ireland and to promote Ireland’s reputation internationally.

Building on the more than 500 measures already implemented through Action Plan for Jobs 2012 and 2013, the 2014 Action Plan for Jobs contains 385 actions to be implemented by all 16 government departments and 46 agencies.

April launch for Irish Chamber of Commerce in Central Europe

An umbrella organisation is to be launched this April to connect Irish business people across Central and Eastern Europe. The organisation – the Irish Chamber of Commerce in Central Europe (i-Cham CE) – will seek to support Irish export-oriented businesses that are already present in, or looking to access, the 11 EU countries in the region.

“It has been set up to support Irish exporters and companies that want to access Central Europe, and we are doing that by leveraging the network of Irish business people already on the ground,” says Glen Farrell, who is co-executive director of the new organisation; Hungary-based Mark Downey is the other executive director. Traditionally, the way Irish business people cooperated in this region was quite informal, often done through the Enterprise Ireland office.

So in January 2013, a gathering in Warsaw discussed the possibility of setting up an umbrella organisation, one that could bring together groups already established.

Among the 11 countries, there are four main Irish networks: the Irish Chamber of Commerce in Poland; the Irish Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia; the Irish-Hungarian Business Circle; and the Czech Irish Business & Cultural Association. Other business associations have begun to develop in Romania, Bulgaria and in the Baltic states.

The Irish Exporters Association is to provide the infrastructure and is to host the organisation at their offices in Dublin, providing a gateway to the region for export-oriented companies.

“Usually the approach of an Irish export company would be to look at the 11 countries and then decide either on Poland, or Warsaw, or maybe Czech Republic, or Prague, and to start there and try to make it into other countries. Now we are saying, make contact with this new organisation or and you can look at the region rather than just individual countries,” Farrell explains.

The stated mission of i-Cham is to provide a platform for the various Irish chambers active in the region to cooperate; to raise awareness of Irish diasporas in the region and the value of their skills and experience to others; and to raise awareness of the opportunities in the region and provide a door in for Irish business to expand their businesses there.

It will also provide a vehicle for large, established Irish businesses to act as mentors for small Irish businesses looking to branch into the region, and act as a conduct for indigenous CEE businesses which may want to invest in Ireland. The new network is being launched with the support of the Enterprise Ireland offices in the region. [Anthony King]
Diploma seeks to foster food-sector management talent

Enterprise Ireland is partnering with University College Cork again this year to offer the modular one-year Diploma in Manufacturing Management Programme, which was launched last year, for food sector client companies. The programme is designed to address the development needs of employees seen to have future potential at middle management or senior management level. Its content is focused on the areas where managers need practical support to enhance their personal effectiveness and it aims to provide a grounding in the fundamentals of management in today’s food manufacturing environment.

The programme will commence in September 2014, with recruitment starting soon. For further information, contact sarah.buckley@enterprise-ireland.com

Case study on web attracts $150,000 Bahamas order for Dublin company

When staff at the Clondalkin-based company Dreamtec Software posted a Pat the Baker case study on their website, the aim had been to attract new business, but they hadn’t expected their initial query to come from as far away as the Bahamas.

“Purity Bakery was established in 1920 in the Bahamas,” explains Caitriona DePaor, Dreamtec’s Digital Marketing Manager. “The bakery produces a range of everyday baked goods and prides itself on the freshness of its produce. It is famous for its Bacardi rum cake, which is regarded by locals as an island delicacy.

“The management team in Purity Bakery read our case study online and saw that they were experiencing the same type of challenges as Pat the Baker. They contacted us, and we discussed the challenges they were having via webinar. In 2012, they had made a decision to upgrade their back office system with a new ERP software package called Globalbake. Globalbake would take care of all the office requirements, but they also wanted to automate as much of the field-based paperwork as possible, which meant using technology on board their delivery vehicles.

Dreamtec’s OutTrack system, accessed by the bakery’s delivery drivers via Motorola handheld devices, provided a solution that could be easily integrated with the Globalbake system, DePaor says. “As part of the engagement process, we estimated that Purity was processing upwards of 50,000 pieces of paper per month, with a potentially huge impact on accuracy, storage, costs and retrieval,” she told The Market. “We demonstrated the benefits of our software, and Purity came on board.”

The initial value of the sale was $150,000 and a further $100,000 is expected over the next three years. “We are delighted with the success of the contract,” DePaor says. “Now we hope to find other bakers with similar challenges.”

$100 billion in mega projects mooted to boost Abu Dhabi’s competitiveness

The capital of United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, is preparing to invest $100bn in mega projects to boost its economic competitiveness. In a recent report, the Director General of Abu Dhabi Council for Economic Development said that these projects will empower the role of the private sector and sustain the local economy’s growth in a manner that will lead the objectives of its economic vision for 2030.

The US$100 billion is to be invested in mega-scale housing, school, transport and other projects to transform Abu Dhabi into an integrated, cosmopolitan global city. The new report earmarks a portion of the investment for the Sheikh Zayed project, a state-of-the-art housing development in a triangle between Khalifa City A, Khalifa City B and Mohammed Bin Zayed City, which could house up to 370,000 Emirati families when complete.

Mooted transport-sector projects include developing a 131km metro system in Abu Dhabi. Meanwhile, it is anticipated that another 825,000 square metres of office space will be delivered by 2015.

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International clients look twice at Irish paperless P2W solution

OneLook Systems is looking for new employees to help with the company’s sales growth as more potential customers like what they see when they scan the firm’s permit-to-work (P2W) solution.

Company founders Pat King and Brendan Griffin set up OneLook in 2008 to develop a paperless P2W solution to streamline and improve facilities management workflow and health and safety operations at regulated manufacturing sites. The two former pharmaceutical industry workers claim their solution, SafePermit, is the most advanced P2W software ever developed, and their customers appear to agree.

“We got into the US market after our second customer Abbott Ireland got a visit from head office and the visitors decided our solution should be deployed in all their American facilities,” said CEO Pat King. “In another instance, a person moving from one pharmaceutical company to another has taken our product with him. In the last year, while concentrating on the US market, we’ve been approached by three UK companies who saw our website, liked what they saw and that generated new sales.”

In 2011, OneLook Systems approached Enterprise Ireland for R&D support to help make the product more affordable and more flexible, and the solution was relaunched in 2013 with more than 15 new customers being added to its client portfolio since then.

“We now have customers in Silicon Valley and Chicago, and our international client list is starting to grow rapidly,” says King. “We are serving the US from our offices in Carrigtwohill, but now we have a reseller who is going to develop the UK market for us. In the UK, we have William Grant & Sons and Imperial Tobacco as clients, and the reseller got us Heinz as a customer.

“In Ireland, we have had a very significant sales deal with Topaz, which has led us to further develop our solution. Previously, we were serving ring-fenced manufacturing facilities, but now with Topaz we are treating the whole island of Ireland as a ring-fenced facility with SafePermit being used for their 200 service stations across the country. It means that our market now includes fast food chains and retail multiples, and this gives us great opportunities overseas.” [Cian Molloy]

Japan-Ireland 2014 export excellence award goes to Fexco

The Ireland Japan Chamber of Commerce (IJCC) has presented its Excellent Exporters award for 2014 to Fexco, which announced a one million euro contract with Mitsubishi Tokyo UFJ Nicos in late 2013. Mitsubishi UFJ is one of the largest mega-banks in Japan, and this will be the first major launch of dynamic currency conversion (DCC) services in the Japanese market. DCC provides consumers with a rate of exchange at point-of-sale rather than waiting for a statement at the end of the billing cycle.

The initial roll-out of Fexco DCC in Japan will focus particularly on business travellers and tourists coming to Tokyo from the United States, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, Europe and Hong Kong, offering the service at hotels with large numbers of guests from these territories.

Separately, Fexco has been in the news recently following the major network expansion of No.1 Currency, its UK-based retail foreign exchange operation, with 20 new high street retail outlets.

Fexco is also to start operating its own retail outlets in Ireland under the No.1 Currency brand.

Collider, a movie produced by the independent Irish film and TV company beActive, has been nominated for Best Digital Program: Fiction at the 2014 International Digital Emmy Awards. The Irish company was also a nominee at the International Children’s Emmys with another of its digital productions Beat Girl.

Collider was directed by the Republic of Telly’s Jason Butler (his first feature). The action takes place in 2018, the year the planet has just collapsed, and the human species will be wiped out due to a succession of natural disasters and the emergence of a mutant race called the Unknown. The story focuses on a young scientist Peter Ansay, who sabotages CERN laboratories’ Large Hadron Collider when his credibility is wrongfully destroyed. It was shot in an old boutique hotel in the outskirts of Dublin City and at the Ballymore Eustace Water Treatment Works in Kildare, which was used to recreate the CERN complex.

The graphic novel of the same name is available in most comic book stores in Dublin and the full multiplatform experience includes a series of eight 11’ webisodes, a four-part 22’ TV series, two mobile apps (iOS and Android) and a collection of six digital comic books.

Best Digital Programme Emmy Nomination for beActive

Still from the Collider movie.

Photo: Eddie Hughes, EDirector Japan, Mr Takeshi Ijichi, Head of Fexco Japan with two IJCC Supporters.

Fexco is also to start operating its own retail outlets in Ireland under the No.1 Currency brand.
Viddyad scoops further recognition making Innovation award shortlist

Named as ‘one to watch’ in 2012 by the Wall Street Journal and winner of the ESB Spark of Genius Award at the Dublin Web Summit in October 2013, Viddyad has now been shortlisted in The Irish Times InterTradeIreland Innovation awards.

As the world’s first cloud-based video ad tool, Viddyad gives users access to over 10 million professional videos and images and allows them to create a video ad for their business in minutes. Using a play-before-you-pay model, users only pay when they are happy with their creation. Once bought, the video ad can then be used to promote a business on Google Adwords, LinkedIn, Facebook or any physical device.

Viddyad is among 18 organisations shortlisted, across the island of Ireland, in The Irish Times InterTradeIreland Innovation awards 2014. Others on the shortlist include Animal Health Ireland, BFree Foods and Richard Keenan & Co in the agri-foods category; APC Ltd, Equilume and Orbsen Therapeutics Ltd in biosciences; 360 Production and Komodomath.com in the creative industries; Airsynergy, the Irish Aviation Authority and OxyMem in the energy and environment category; Auxilion, Gesaky Interactive and Shimmer in IT and telecoms; and Andor Technology, Foldeaze Ltd, and Restored Hearing Ltd in manufacturing. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony on April 9, 2014. See www.irishtimes.com/innovation.

Wisconsin-based big cheese selects Irish quality management and traceability system

Wisconsin-based Mullins Cheese and Mullins Whey has selected a suite of quality management and traceability modules, from the Cork-based company SoftSuite, to support all aspects of whey and cheese production at its Mosinee facility.

As the largest family-owned and operated cheese manufacturer in Wisconsin, Mullins produces a range of cheese products for United States-wide distribution. Meanwhile, its whey products are distributed globally for use in nutritional supplements, sports drinks and food products.

The company is implementing the full SoftSuite set of modules to provide a plant-wide data collection and management system in order to eliminate areas of data disconnect within the facility and meet its traceability requirements.

LearnUpon closes €550k funding and reaches 100 customers in 18 months of operation

LearnUpon has recently closed a seed funding round, led by a US-based angel investor and supported by Enterprise Ireland, worth €550,000. The investment is aimed at enabling the company to ramp its already rapid growth to date and strengthen its position as the number one cloud-based learning management solution for training companies and SMEs.

Less than 18 months after launch, the company has also reached its 100th customer. Its main markets are the US and UK, and LearnUpon also has customers in Canada, Ireland, Australia, South Africa, Netherlands, and Spain.

Datalex selected as e-commerce partner for JetBlue Airways

Irish-headquartered Datalex has announced that its travel distribution platform (TDP) has been selected by JetBlue Airways as the airline’s new retail e-commerce platform. Based in New York, JetBlue carries in excess of 30 million customers each year to 82 cities in the United States, Caribbean and Latin America, with an average of 800 daily flights.

Datalex is technology partner to some of the world’s largest and most profitable travel retailers. Its customers, including Delta Air Lines, Air China, Virgin Atlantic, SITA and Aer Lingus, use Datalex’s TDP to maximise value from their complete retail brand experience.
New Hong Kong Consulate a boost for Irish firms

The Ireland Hong Kong Business Forum, along with Dublin Chamber of Commerce, which acts as secretariat for the forum, are among those welcoming the news that the Government is to open a new consulate in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is one of the few countries in the world from which Ireland imports more from than it exports. However, Ronan King, President of the Ireland Hong Kong Business Forum, says that the market offers some currently under-exploited opportunities for Irish companies.

While Hong Kong is best known as a global financial hub, according to King, interest from Irish companies is not just restricted to the financial services sector. “Hong Kong is a huge entry point for the Chinese mainland. Food is a major growth area, and there is a huge need for dairy products in particular. Irish companies such as Kerry Group and Greencore are already active there. The opening of the consulate will pave the way for many more Irish companies to start exporting more to Hong Kong and other Asian countries.”

A double-taxation agreement has been in place between Ireland and Hong Kong since 2010. Hong Kong’s legal framework is based on the English common law, which makes it easier for Irish and UK firms to do business there, King adds. “There is huge potential for a strategic relationship between Ireland and Hong Kong, which is a leading international trading and services hub. Not only does Hong Kong practise free trade, but it also has very competitive taxation, no foreign exchange control and a well-established rule of law and transparent regulations. It also boasts world class infrastructure and a well educated workforce.”

Opportunities for HR-solution providers at CIEET World Employment conference

The World Congress of the International Confederation of private employment agencies (CIEET) will take place in Belgium this May. CIEET consists of 47 national federations of private employment agencies and seven of the largest staffing companies worldwide (Adecco, USG, Randstad, Manpower, etc.) The conference, which will explore market trends and developments in the recruitment industry, will provide networking opportunities for Irish companies offering solutions in this space, according to Patrick Torrekens, Enterprise Ireland’s manager for the Benelux region. See www.ciett2014.com or email patrick.torrekens@enterprise-ireland.com for further information.

US$100 million China Ireland Technology Growth Capital Fund Launches

Atlantic Bridge Capital and WestSummit Capital have launched Summit Bridge Capital to manage a $100 million China-Ireland technology growth capital fund. The fund’s strategy will be to make equity investments in fast-growing technology companies with a presence in Ireland, which have a substantial or strategic interest in China, and in Chinese fast-growing technology companies that have a substantial presence or strategic interest in establishing a presence in Ireland as a gateway into the broader European market. The fund will be supported by the National Pensions Reserve Fund and China Investment Corporation.

Food syndicate to provide angel support for food, drink and nutraceutical start-ups

The newly formed business angel food syndicate of HBAN (Halo Business Angel Network) has invested in its first company, Elivar. Elivar has raised €700,000 from multiple sources, including the HBAN food syndicate, Enterprise Ireland and other private investors, to support the ongoing development of its sports nutrition products and brand.

Elivar was founded in Dublin by Donal Hanrahan and Len Dunne in 2012 to develop a range of sports nutrition products, specifically formulated and tailored for the over 35 age group. On the back of this investment, Elivar is now aiming to create ten new jobs by the end of 2015 and to expand its sales channels across Europe.
A new €75 million fund has been launched to support established Irish companies targeting significant revenue and jobs growth through export markets as part of the Development Capital Scheme set out in the Action Plan for Jobs. The BDO Development Capital Fund, which will be managed by Development Capital, a 100 per cent subsidiary of BDO, will invest development and growth capital in established, mid-sized and profitable companies to support and accelerate their export growth plans. Target companies for investment will be Irish and will typically be mid-sized, with high-growth potential and annual turnover of €15m to €50m.

“We will invest between €2m and €10m in approximately 15 investee companies, and our team will actively assist them accelerate and maximise these opportunities,” explains Sinead Heaney, Founding Director of the BDO Development Capital Fund.

Breaking new ground for an enterprise investment fund, the BDO Development Capital Fund will also bring together a partnership of large Irish corporates and industry experts who, together with Enterprise Ireland, will provide not only funding but also experience, expertise and international reach to help secure business growth opportunities. The corporate partners include Bank of Ireland, CRH plc, Glanbia plc and Glen Dimplex.

The companies invested in by the fund will also have access to industry experts who have created, grown and developed internationally successful Irish companies. These include Denis Brosnan, former CEO of Kerry Foods; Alan Crosbie, former Chairman Irish Examiner and family business expert; Dr Noel Kelly, former Executive Director of Kentz; Dr Jim Mountjoy, founder of Euristix; and Helen Ryan, former CEO Creganna Tactx Medical.

The BDO Development Capital Fund follows the announcement of a €125m Development Capital Fund in November 2013, also rolled out as part of the Action Plan for Jobs.
What's on

MARCH

Media & Entertainment Sector Market Study Visit to Italy
March 25 to 27
This study visit will take in the Bologna Children's Book Fair and a networking event coinciding with the Irish Film Festival in Rome.

v: Bologna & Rome
E: sara.bonomi@enterprise-ireland.com

Using the Internet to Compete in International Markets
March 27
Using the Internet to market products and services more successfully in international markets.

v: Athlone
E: eoin.osiochru@enterprise-ireland.com

North American Energy Seminar
March 27
Trillions of dollars are being invested in the oil and gas sector in the US, Canada and Mexico. This event aims to help to identify trends and opportunities.

v: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3
E: ross.ocolumn@enterprise-ireland.com

APRIL

Business Opportunities in Central Europe
April 3
This event will include four break-out sessions, covering software development and sales, supplying the manufacturing sector, food and beverages and opportunities in infrastructure (including cleantech), with invited buyers. Participants can also request one-to-one meetings.

v: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3
E: mike.hogan@enterprise-ireland.com

Workshop on Data Centres in Scandinavia
April 3
With participation from Facebook Sweden, Digital Realty and The Uptime Institute, this event is an opportunity to learn about new technology trends, energy-efficient solutions and why Scandinavia is becoming popular as a location for large scale data centre operations.

v: Stockholm
E: sten.mogard@enterprise-ireland.com

MIPTV 2014
April 7
MIPTV is the world’s most-established TV and digital content market and the biggest gathering of entertainment professionals.

v: Cannes
E: damien.mccarney@enterprise-ireland.com

Trade and Research Mission to Brussels
April 8
Mission to Brussels for Irish companies and academic institutions interested in research collaborations through Horizon 2020 and sales opportunities in the Benelux market.

v: Brussels
E: evelyn.smith@enterprise-ireland.com

UK Construction Network Event
April 9
The 7th ‘Fill these Boots’ networking event for the UK construction and property sector will coincide with President Higgins’s State Visit.

v: London
E: john.hunt@enterprise-ireland.com

US Consumer Markets Peer Learning
April 11
US legal and retail experts will deliver a seminar on how to set up and do business successfully in the US. Peer-to-peer learning opportunities will also be provided, with a focus on legal and logistical aspects.

v: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3
E: marieclaire.boey@enterprise-ireland.com

Software and Services London Embassy Dinner
April 15
Networking dinner for executives of innovative Irish software and services companies targeting business growth in the UK.

v: London
E: gavin.mcwhirter@enterprise-ireland.com

Customer Value Proposition Workshop
April 15
This workshop is designed to help you differentiate your organisation by the value you provide to your targets rather than solely by your products or services.

v: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3
E: claire.minogue@enterprise-ireland.com

Global Higher Education Exhibition (GHEDEX)
April 22
The Education in Ireland presence at this event will market Ireland as a study destination to Omani students.

v: Muscat
E: terry.mccarland@enterprise-ireland.com

US Equine Partner Event
April 23
A knowledge event for Equine industry clients seeking to understand the best ways to partner or distribute their product in the US.

v: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3
E: kevin.mccarthy@enterprise-ireland.com

E-Healthcare Market Study visit to Spain
April 24
Best practice workshop in the e-health sector and networking event in Spain to enhance presence in the market and identify new potential partners/clients.

v: Madrid
E: carmen.gcortina@enterprise-ireland.com

Pitching to Win New Business
April 29
This workshop aims to provide hands-on experience on how to successfully pitch your company’s product or service to achieve increased sales.

v: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3
E: claire.minogue@enterprise-ireland.com

International Exhibition & Conference on Higher Education, Saudi Arabia
April 15 to 18
The Education in Ireland presence at this event will market Ireland as a study destination to Saudi students.

v: Riyadh
E: terry.mccarland@enterprise-ireland.com

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v: Muscat
E: terry.mccarland@enterprise-ireland.com

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Trade Mission to Texas
May 5
Led by Minister Richard Bruton, this mission aims to increase and diversify the level of Irish exports to the Southern US. Open to participants from multiple industries, it will coincide with the Oil & Gas Offshore Technologies Conference in Houston.

European Petfood Market Innovation
May 6
The workshop will present up to date market data and innovation trends, as well as providing information on Enterprise Ireland’s innovation supports.

Aviation London Embassy Dinner
May 7
A minister-hosted embassy dinner to facilitate high level interactions between the Irish MRO sector and their UK based counterparts.

Sales Pipeline Management Workshop
May 8
One-day workshop and follow-up implementation session will enable companies to implement a structured and systematic sales pipeline management system.

Swiz ExpoCom Exhibition Russia
May 13
Swiz-ExpoComm 2014 is an international exhibition for telecommunications, control systems, IT and communication services.

Sources of Finance Available to Irish SMEs and How to Access Them
May 13 & 14
This workshop will focus on the necessary steps to ensure that a SME is successful in raising additional third-party funding.

Swiss Business Mission
May 14
This trade mission will include a number of receptions and events, offering networking opportunities with executives from the life sciences, financial, software, retail, and industrial sectors among others.

CIETT World Employment Conference
May 14
The International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (CIETT) comprises 47 national federations of private employment agencies and seven of the largest staffing companies worldwide (Addecco, USG, Randstad, Manpower, etc.). This conference will explore market trends and developments in the recruitment industry.

Italian Aviation Networking Event
May 15
A prestigious networking event to help build and improve relationships between Irish suppliers of products and services to the aviation industry in Italy and their existing and new potential customers.

Channel Partner Development Workshop
May 15
Facilitated by Envision Management Consultants, this workshop is designed to help companies to develop a strong route-to-market strategy.

EuroPCR
May 19
Study visit to conference/expo on developments in cardiovascular interventional technologies.

Middle East Petrotech 2014
May 19
This event attracts specialised businesses and some of the petroleum industry’s largest corporations as well as other major international companies.

European Bio-pharmaceutical Hitech Construction Partnering Forum
May to 21 to 23
An opportunity for Irish suppliers to meet with key European biopharma decision-makers.

Swedish Equestrian Trade Event
May 23 & 24
An exclusive auction of some of Sweden’s top horses, featuring a targeted trade exhibition area.

NAFSA 2014
May 25 to 30
NAFSA is the largest annual international education event in North America, bringing together over 10,000 education professionals. Education in Ireland will be a major sponsor and exhibitor and will be joined by around 20 of Ireland’s top universities and colleges.

Software & Internationally Traded Services Trade Mission to Australia
May 26
This trade mission will focus on the financial services, communications software, healthcare and travel end markets.

Beauty World Middle East 2014
May 27
Beauty World Middle East is the largest international trade fair for beauty products, hair, fragrances and wellbeing in the Middle East. Enterprise Ireland will organise an Irish pavilion at the event to showcase client companies.

Telefonica Opportunities
May 28
Half-day event planned in the Madrid Telefonica headquarters, looking for new business opportunities in the mobile group as well as creating a new network of relationships.

Opportunities in the Agricultural Sector in Eastern Europe
May 28
A seminar with agricultural market experts and distributors from Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, followed by individual meetings with market experts and the EI team.

Sviaz-ExpoComm 2014 is an international exhibition for telecommunications, control systems, IT and communication services.

V: Austin, Houston and other Southern US locations
E: nick.marmion@enterprise-ireland.com

Switzerland
V: Geneva and Basel
E: eddie.goodwin@enterprise-ireland.com

England
V: London
E: kevin.mitchell@enterprise-ireland.com

Aviation
V: East Point Business Park, Dublin 3
E: claire.roche@enterprise-ireland.com

Europe
V: Dublin
E: raul.marigorta@enterprise-ireland.com

Middle East
V: Dubai
E: claire.roche@enterprise-ireland.com

North America
V: San Diego, USA
E: gill.roe@enterprise-ireland.com

Southern US
V: Austin, Houston and other Southern US locations
E: nick.marmion@enterprise-ireland.com

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Italian Aviation Networking Event
May 15
A prestigious networking event to help build and improve relationships between Irish suppliers of products and services to the aviation industry in Italy and their existing and new potential customers.

Channel Partner Development Workshop
May 15
Facilitated by Envision Management Consultants, this workshop is designed to help companies to develop a strong route-to-market strategy.

EuroPCR
May 19
Study visit to conference/expo on developments in cardiovascular interventional technologies.

Middle East Petrotech 2014
May 19
This event attracts specialised businesses and some of the petroleum industry’s largest corporations as well as other major international companies.

European Bio-pharmaceutical Hitech Construction Partnering Forum
May to 21 to 23
An opportunity for Irish suppliers to meet with key European biopharma decision-makers.

Swedish Equestrian Trade Event
May 23 & 24
An exclusive auction of some of Sweden’s top horses, featuring a targeted trade exhibition area.

NAFSA 2014
May 25 to 30
NAFSA is the largest annual international education event in North America, bringing together over 10,000 education professionals. Education in Ireland will be a major sponsor and exhibitor and will be joined by around 20 of Ireland’s top universities and colleges.

Software & Internationally Traded Services Trade Mission to Australia
May 26
This trade mission will focus on the financial services, communications software, healthcare and travel end markets.

Beauty World Middle East 2014
May 27
Beauty World Middle East is the largest international trade fair for beauty products, hair, fragrances and wellbeing in the Middle East. Enterprise Ireland will organise an Irish pavilion at the event to showcase client companies.

Telefonica Opportunities
May 28
Half-day event planned in the Madrid Telefonica headquarters, looking for new business opportunities in the mobile group as well as creating a new network of relationships.

Opportunities in the Agricultural Sector in Eastern Europe
May 28
A seminar with agricultural market experts and distributors from Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, followed by individual meetings with market experts and the EI team.

Sviaz-ExpoComm 2014 is an international exhibition for telecommunications, control systems, IT and communication services.

V: Austin, Houston and other Southern US locations
E: nick.marmion@enterprise-ireland.com

Switzerland
V: Geneva and Basel
E: eddie.goodwin@enterprise-ireland.com

England
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Aviation
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Europe
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North America
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Southern US
V: Austin, Houston and other Southern US locations
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Coming from a background in financial services, sisters Martina Craine and Suzanne Browne found that their kids provided the inspiration to unlock their share of a market worth over US$45 billion globally. Tony Clayton-Lea reports.

“We knew the market in Ireland would be small, but when you’re importing for distribution, you’re given your territory, and we couldn’t step out of that, even into Northern Ireland. The only way we could get around that was to develop our own products.”

Martina Craine, CEO/co-founder of the Swords-based nursery product company Clevamama – the winner of Ulster Bank’s All Ireland Business Achievers Women-Led 2013 Business Award – remembers the very early days of her business well. With her co-founder sister, Suzanne Browne, Craine had returned to Ireland in 2003 after some time in Jersey where they worked in the financial services sector. Between the pair, they were mothers to three children under the age of two.

“And,” recalls Craine, “Suzanne had a baby with colic. Anyway, we sourced a baby bottle that was very different to anything we’d ever seen, and we each thought that perhaps we could market it. We reckoned we could, because we were stopped by so many people asking where we had got it from.”

Trading initially under the name of Handy Baby Products Ltd, the women approached the manufacturers of the Podee Baby Feeding Bottle, and after a bit of practical persuasion (which included the statistic that more than one million baby bottles were sold each year in Ireland), they secured an exclusive agreement to sell the bottle in Ireland.
Like most, if not all, erstwhile fledgling online retail companies, Clevamama (“we’ve never come across a nationality that didn’t understand what the name meant,” notes Craine with a smile) set up its offices in the respective houses of Craine and Suzanne. Big oaks from small acorns grow, and all of that, but the first major surprise of their business life was seeing a 40ft truck with a sizeable shipment land on Suzanne’s small driveway.

“The driver offloaded about five huge pallets of the baby bottles, and we had to load all of them into the spare bedroom, after which you wouldn’t have been able to fit in a church mouse. We thought we’d never sell all of the bottles, but we did. And even more after that.”

That particular baby bottle, says Craine, was sold only online via the Handy Baby website, but she and Suzanne correctly surmised that there were only so many bottles you could sell directly to mothers of colicky babies.

“We knew the market in Ireland would be small, but when you’re importing for distribution, you’re given your territory, and we couldn’t step out of that even into Northern Ireland. The only way we could get around that was to develop our own products.”

The company’s first branded success was the Clevamama™ Splash & Wrap Hooded Towel (it remains one of its best sellers – Amazon.com has ranked it number one by customers out of over 8,000 other related hooded towels).
Baby care products market to reach US$66.8 billion globally by 2017

According to a recent market research report by Transparency Market Research, the global baby care product market was worth US$44.7 billion in 2011 and will reach US$66.8 billion in 2017.

This growth is largely attributed to the growing baby population in developing nations, where the disposable income of parents has also increased considerably. Moreover, the average age of parents across the globe has increased, with older parents having more money to spend on their baby’s care and convenience, and the growing number of women entering into mainstream workforce has also helped the baby care market to grow. In addition, the market has also witnessed a growing trend in baby-specific products, especially organic-ingredient-based baby cosmetics.

The EMEA region was the largest market in 2011, with a revenue share of 34.5 per cent, followed by Asia-Pacific with a further 28.7 per cent revenue share in the same year. However, Latin America is expected to have the fastest growth rate of 8.9 per cent during the forecasted period of 2012 to 2017.


Because it was their own product with its registered design under their brand name, Clevamama could export it without geographical limitations.

“From then on we developed more and more products. Our aim was to develop products that wouldn’t end up in your usual pile of baby junk. Myself and Suzanne had three babies between us, and we had enough stuff we didn’t use, stuff that didn’t work, and so on.” On some projects, the sisters collaborated with researchers from Trinity College Dublin and Teagasc.

In 2006, Clevamama’s first port of call, so to speak, was the Germany-based Kind + Jugend, the world’s largest trade fair for baby accessories and other associated products for young children. Before setting up their stall in Cologne, the company forecasted a relatively conservative increase in turnover of just less than 50 per cent. Come 2007, that figure increased substantially. In 2013, Clevamama increased sales by 50 per cent, and the co-founders are projecting a substantial increase in sales by 2015, as well as adding to its employee headcount.

“Our first market was the UK,” explains Craine, “then Germany, and then the range started to build. It was going well, but we had a strong sense that we needed to build an international brand of choice. Products that are innovative, and that are used, and actually needed every day. The fact that Suzanne and myself were busy mothers, always on the lookout for products and accessories that had practical uses, was crucial. And it was also important to be involved with products that weren’t invented for the sake of it – and not developing products just to be first to market. We’re involved with the products we’re involved with because we want to be innovative, and they have to fill a need – and, of course, it goes without saying, they have to be commercially viable.”

Clevamama’s key to success, says Craine, hinges on five crucial elements: the first is the difference between selling to consumers and selling to retailers. “Selling to single customers is a completely different business, and that’s not us. Instead, we sell to high-street retailer multiples. Names that you’d recognise are Smyths in Ireland, and Mothercare and Toys R Us around the world. We also sell to all of the Amazon territories.”

Smyths and Mothercare, Craine emphasises, have each been “major supporters of us from the very start, with Mothercare a catalyst for Clevamama selling even further into international markets because they would recommend us as one of their Top 10 sellers.”

The second factor in the company’s year-on-year success is how it blends this difference in tandem with its utilisation of multimedia channels to drive and generate future sales and to develop the brand internationally. Last year, it recorded seven million hits on its Facebook page (with a high of 2,000 hits within a two week period).

“Yes,” accedes Craine (she admits that her sister Suzanne is the company’s social media expert), “we do very well on social media, and work exceptionally well with interaction and engagement. And we make sure that whatever country we work in that our social media speaks its language. For example, in Brazil, which is a huge focus for us this year, we engage online in Portuguese, in Spain we engage in Spanish, and so on. All social media engagement and interaction is managed in and delivered from our Dublin office.”

The third, Craine points out, “is that we’re easy to do business with. Our supply chain infrastructure is managed very closely in-house, which means that from start to finish, the purchasing and distribution process is streamlined with the minimum of fuss or nonsense.” The fourth is affordability. “When we price our products, we think of the mother pushing her stroller or pram or pushchair and how much money she’s going to part with – and everything we do is based on that.”

And the fifth? True innovation complemented by first-hand knowledge of what parents need to make their lives somewhat easier. The company’s current best-selling product, says Craine, is ClevaFoam, which it developed with Trinity College Dublin. It is scientifically proven to decrease the risk of ‘flat head’ syndrome in babies. “It reduces pressure on the back of a baby’s head by 50 per cent and increases support by 80 per cent.”

In total, Clevamama has distributed over 100 different baby accessory product lines, including bedtime, bathtime, gift, feeding and safety, and from the mid-2000s, it has been exporting to market from the UK and all across Europe to the outer territorial areas of Russia, the Middle East and Brazil. Bye-bye baby face, Clevamama has grown up.
InfoSecurity Ireland held a briefing for senior management and board members in Irish companies in November 2013. The White Paper from that event, summarised here, outlines some of the main cyber-security threats organisations may face and offers advice on how better to guard against them.

Staying safe

Addressing security needs the co-operation of all parts of a business. Key to making a successful business case for increased spend on security, or support for awareness training, is having good-quality, actionable information. By knowing where vulnerabilities exist, businesses can focus their efforts to minimise the risk.

There are useful independent sources which can help to identify risks to businesses. Verizon’s annual Data Breach Investigations Report (DBIR), now in its sixth year, offers a wide-ranging snapshot of the nature and extent of cyber risks that many businesses face. The 2013 report found that 75 per cent of attacks are opportunistic and not targeted at a specific organisation or person. The majority of these attacks were motivated by financial gain.

The DBIR analysed more than 47,000 security incidents and studied 621 confirmed data breaches. Its information derives from a wide range of sources globally, including national cyber incident reporting groups, law enforcement agencies and forensic services firms. Of some concern for any organisation is the fact that 69 per cent of incidents reported to Verizon were discovered by a third party – indicating that many victims were unaware their systems had been breached.

Putting these findings into an Irish context, the Irish Reporting and Information Security Service (IRISS-Cert) contributes data to the Verizon report. Almost three quarters of the incidents reported to IRISS in 2012 involved websites being hijacked by criminals to host phishing websites that target customers of financial providers in other countries. There were 15 security breaches resulting from hacking – a threefold increase over 2011.

Denial-of-service attacks doubled to 12 reported incidents out of a total of 429. A new threat, ransomware, was reported for the first time in 2012. In this type of attack, criminals hijack the data on a company’s servers and demand payment to decrypt it.

So what is at stake in a data breach or a cyber-attack? The main risks are reputational, financial and operational. Simply put, a company’s ability to serve customers – via the Web or mobile – can be severely impacted by an attack. A lack of proper security could lead to the loss of financial assets, or information and intellectual property ranging from plans and patents to royalties or formulae. As recent high-profile data breaches have shown, consumer information is a valued commodity for cybercriminals. Any organisation that fails to protect its customers is effectively putting their trust on the line.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN BE TAKEN?
The rapidly changing nature of the threats means that organisations need to become more aware of what is happening on an ongoing basis. The first step is to map the threat landscape that is unique to your organisation, in order to better allocate spending according to priorities and budgets. This involves knowing what information would pose a real risk to your organisation if it were lost; defining what risk means to your organisation, and what happens when that risk escalates. It’s worth keeping in mind that in today’s interconnected world, no organisation is an island: points of weakness may be in the business’s wider supply chain and ecosystem – not just internally.

Businesses should prepare a plan for a range of risk scenarios, leading to the deployment of often simple security controls inside and around the assets that really matter. Having a system of checks and balances also helps to ascertain which controls are effective and which are not. Regularly proving and testing your defences will help to build confidence in your organisation’s ability to manage risk in real time. Use this information to make targeted investments in places where protection is currently weakest, and this will deter many of the cybercriminals who typically look for the softest targets they can find.

Although the well-worn security maxim states that people are often the weakest link, they are also an excellent asset when employees are made aware of risks to the business and are given the means to easily report potential security incidents to a nominated person in the organisation. That’s especially critical, given that, according to the Verizon report, two-thirds of security breaches remain undiscovered for months.

WHAT NEXT?
Become certified to a standard like ISO 27001: this will give demonstrable proof to customers and external stakeholders that your business takes active steps to protect the data it holds. Good information security isn’t just best-practice business: establishing and maintaining trust in your organisation is a source of competitive advantage.

Material for this article was prepared from presentations given at an Information Security Forum hosted by InfoSecurity Ireland in November 2013. See www.infosecurityireland.org
Switzerland is home to several Fortune 500 companies, including Novartis, Roche, UBS, Zurich, Nestlé, the Swatch Group and Credit Suisse, as well as the headquarters of major multinationals and prominent NGOs such as the UN and the Red Cross.

Nested between the economic powerhouses of Germany, France and Italy, Switzerland sometimes falls below the radar for Irish firms with an eye on export markets. Yet with a population barely double that of our own, it is actually the 11th largest market globally for sales from Enterprise Ireland supported companies.

In 2012, exports to Switzerland were worth €275 million: one-third of the value of sales from Irish firms to Germany. Export growth to Switzerland over the past two years totalled 47 per cent – a rise more commonly found in a high-growth market category.

UNSUNG HERO
Enterprise Ireland’s country manager for Germany, Switzerland and Austria, Eddie Goodwin, calls it an “unsung hero” of overseas markets. One reason for the high numbers and consistent year-on-year growth, he says, is a close fit between the sectors where Switzerland is strong and those where Irish companies have developed expertise, such as pharmaceuticals services and technologies, medical devices, software and services for the financial services market and niche engineering areas. There are more than 200 companies supported by Enterprise Ireland currently active in the market, and deal sizes range from €10,000 to €40 million-plus.

Switzerland is a high-income country – as recently as 2011 it was the world’s wealthiest state per capita. Its GDP grew by 0.5 per cent in Q3 2013, and unemployment was 3.2 per cent in December 2013. The country is home to several Fortune 500 companies including Novartis, Roche, UBS, Zurich, Nestlé, the Swatch Group and Credit Suisse. It also hosts headquarters of major multinationals: ABB, Boots Alliance, Xstrata Glencore and prominent NGOs such as the UN and the Red Cross.

OPPORTUNITIES
Many of those large companies have English as their main corporate language, such as Novartis and Zurich Insurance. “You obviously have to have respect for the language – which changes from German to French to Italian, depending on the region – but it shouldn’t put a company off doing business in Switzerland,” says Goodwin.

“The image of Switzerland might be conservative and meticulous, but many don’t realise that the Swiss are very open to new technologies and comfortable dealing with earlier stage companies from smaller countries such as our own. Many of the companies there have international management or decision-makers who have extensive international experience. A number of Irish companies with an innovative offering have won a top reference customer in Switzerland that has opened up further business across Europe,” he adds.

But what of the recent referendum on limiting EU immigration? Goodwin says that...
it won’t affect the majority of Irish SMEs, as they will most likely be recruiting Swiss nationals to represent them in the market, or flying in and out, rather than locating a large number of Irish expats in the Switzerland. In any case, his gut instinct, he says, is that ultimately any measures to put an annual cap on EU immigration will be significantly weakened due to pressure from the Swiss business community, as well as the more general feeling that because of low voter turnout, the referendum outcome wasn’t truly representative of national wishes.

Bernd Gleixner is operations director with a Swiss medical devices company that has worked with several Irish companies in recent years. He says there are opportunities in this sector for Irish companies in Switzerland – provided they focus on innovation, deliver well on services and put a strong emphasis on research and development.

“We have enormous price pressure, and that means we are actively reducing the amount of manufacturing work done in Switzerland. For sure, that’s an opportunity for other countries like Ireland. That makes us open to doing business with everyone. We are used to sourcing material from outside Switzerland,” he tells The Market.

“The advantage of the Swiss market is that it has 700 medical device companies acting globally in a relatively small country. It’s in the middle of Europe, so travel is easy. It’s more manageable to introduce a new product here than in the US, which is a huge market,” he adds.

An active Irish diaspora can facilitate introductions to prospective customers. The Irish Business Network has three chapters in Switzerland, and many of its 350-plus members occupy senior positions in banking, pharmaceuticals and IT. Dr Valerie Guertler-Doyle, president of the network, says the group can connect Irish companies that have been referred by Enterprise Ireland with business decision-makers and influencers in Swiss companies.

FOCUS ON OPENNESS
To become established in the Swiss market, she urges Irish companies to compete by providing high-quality products and services, as Swiss companies are looking for innovation. “Smaller, agile companies working with large organisations can prove to be very successful.”

Openness scores points with Swiss prospects, she adds: “The sort of things that impress are giving examples of clients you’ve already worked with, and facilitating that contact with your prospective customer. Arranging for them to speak with or meet those clients shows huge transparency and trust.”

The Swiss preference for precision might be a cliché, but it’s a fact of the business culture. When presenting to prospects in Switzerland, Irish companies should be prepared to answer a lot of questions and provide high levels of detail. They must also listen to what the customer really wants, as opposed to leading with what the company has to sell.

“Understand what the customer’s need is, and get beyond the product: have the right package that suits best. For example, that might be if you can reduce inventory by 30 per cent,” Gleixner says.

Guertler-Doyle, who also holds a senior role at Novartis, says senior managers in Swiss companies tend to focus more on assessing a potential supplier’s credibility and won’t necessarily expect data-heavy presentations. However, when Irish companies start to work with the middle ranks in Swiss organisations, it’s a good idea to suggest bringing subject matter experts from the company to answer questions the Swiss customer may have. “Willingness to be open makes a huge difference,” she says.

Often risk-averse, Swiss organisations don’t switch suppliers on a whim. They expect a lot of communication before entering into a partnership, and many like to visit the vendor’s headquarters and conduct thorough risk assessment before choosing a supplier. “We are conservative in that way; it’s a little bit like a marriage, you think first and you don’t want to divorce every second week. Take time to get to know each other. In Switzerland, we are more in favour of long-term partnerships because at the end of the day, that’s what pays off,” Gleixner says.

Lastly, he says it’s important to follow through on promises, as Swiss customers have high expectations that must be met throughout the lifetime of a contract. The Swiss-German saying, ‘Liefere nöd lafere’, translates roughly as ‘Deliver, don’t just talk about it’. As Gleixner elaborates: “We are very result-oriented; we know about money and precision. Typically there are a lot of engineers in Switzerland, and you can expect that they look for the numbers. It’s nice drinking coffee with someone but at the end of the day, it’s about delivering.”
CASE STUDY: SONRU

Ed Hendrick had barely left the stage after giving a presentation at a trade show in 2011 when a fellow speaker, impressed by what he had just seen, approached him about taking a closer look at his technology, which uses online video to help companies in their early-stage recruitment and pre-selection process. A week later, Hendrick’s company Sonru had secured a pilot implementation at CERN, the renowned European centre for particle physics research based near Geneva.

Since then, Sonru has added other well-known names to its Swiss account, including Nestlé, Philip Morris International, the GAVI Alliance, DuPont and Baxter Healthcare. “We’re seeing continuous growth in the Swiss market, and we’re continuing to invest there. We definitely see it as a growth market,” says Hendrick. “The more we delved into the European market, the more we realised the Swiss market was very innovative. It’s an early adopter: Swiss companies tend to be open to new technologies, which is a benefit. The larger French and German markets tend in some cases to look to the Swiss to see what they’re doing. Plus it’s pretty similar to doing business in Ireland or the UK.”

Presentations have remained a key part of Sonru’s marketing mix in Switzerland, and it helps that sharing knowledge is embedded in CERN’s cultural DNA. Sonru has run conferences in association with the centre, sharing best-practice recruitment techniques with heads of recruitment in other Swiss organisations and important market influencers. The Wexford-based company also organises events through Enterprise Ireland and the Irish Embassy in Switzerland, inviting pre-selected prospects.

Hendrick recommends working early with key influencers when entering a new market like Switzerland. “It might be the very innovative HR director or head of talent, that’s always speaking at events, as well as innovative journalists, bloggers or keynote speakers. You might only be talking about two or three people, but if you can meet them and tell them about your product, they want to be the first to talk about the latest technology.”

James Purvis, CERN’s head of talent acquisition and the speaker who approached Hendrick in 2011, happens to be one such speaker, who presents at several European events. “He’s very influential. We’ve been very lucky that we started working with him,” says Hendrick. “We’re seeing continuous growth in the Swiss market, and we’re continuing to invest there. We definitely see it as a growth market.”

CASE STUDY: CLS

Long lead times are standard in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sector, but when a quality service meets a pressing need, quick wins can result. That’s the experience of Complete Lab Solutions, a Galway-based provider of outsourced sampling and analysis services. The high concentration of such companies near the Swiss border with Germany makes it a sweet spot as a market, explains CLS business development manager Martin Dooley. “For the higher-end analysis they can’t do in-house and can’t do locally, we offer a good alternative. At the moment, we’re new to the market, very competitive and streamlined, and we offer a very credible alternative in terms of price and turnaround time.”

CLS attended a trade show in Stuttgart under the Enterprise Ireland umbrella in February 2013, where it met with several potential customers. Following up a week later, it emerged that one Swiss medical device manufacturer had reached capacity in its own labs. Needing analysis quickly, the company asked CLS to conduct preliminary tests on a stent. “They were happy with the work we produced,” says Dooley. “They kind of embraced us as an outsourcing partner, to a certain extent, and we have developed a good relationship with them.”

In June, some of the Swiss company’s senior management and auditing team visited CLS’ facility in Galway – a positive sign, Dooley says. “We always
consider that a success, because it’s an investment of their time. Basically, they want to see the labs, meet the people and discuss the quality issues and determine what value we can give them.”

To build on its early Swiss success, CLS will avail of Enterprise Ireland’s Business Accelerator programme, working with a local experienced consultant who has extensive industry contacts. “Their role will be to try and generate meetings with the companies, and we will then fly over from Ireland to add the technical side of it and illustrate exactly what we can do. The business accelerator will get us in the door, and we will have a brief for them to ensure we’re meeting the right companies and the right people in the companies,” says Dooley.

“What we do aligns well with what they require in that area. It’s always difficult to forecast but we hope that Switzerland will become a major part of our export market. And we’re specifically targeting that area ... We found there is an appetite for outsourcing so we feel there is an obvious opportunity for us.”

CASE STUDY: NUALIGHT

Nualight’s project with Prodega, the upmarket cash and carry business of giant food retailer COOP, is a case in point of a Swiss willingness to embrace new technology. “The main reason we got into the Swiss market is that it’s typically very quick to work with energy-efficient or sustainable technologies, and it has a progressive retail culture. All of that adds up to a country willing to invest in retail infrastructure and with the money to do so,” says Nualight’s VP of marketing, Siobhan O’Dwyer.

“Pretty much anything we bring out that’s new and far ahead of where the market is, we find Switzerland is the first place to adopt it. I think if you genuinely have something innovative, you will open doors a hell of a lot faster ... customers will engage with smaller, newer, up-and-coming companies in a way they wouldn’t in a mature market. The Swiss are very fair: they will give people a chance, and they will look at different products and companies. I would say also they have very high expectations in terms of service delivery.”

Nualight worked closely with Prodega’s retail design and energy team to co-develop a 100 per cent LED lighting solution. The first result, retrofitted in Prodega’s store in Biel, delivered energy savings of more than 60 per cent. The solution has since won awards and is being rolled out in phases throughout Prodega’s 26 outlets in Switzerland.

The deal was almost 18 months in development and the meticulous Swiss nature was evident during the pilot phase. “The Swiss like to make sure they have researched everything, they’ve gone through the correct process not just from a due diligence point of view but an ethical one: they’re very open and transparent and proper. For a project as significant as this, you take the time to work with the supplier, test the pilot store, and ensure it’s the right model to roll out,” O’Dwyer says.

Despite the close collaboration, Nualight is free to use the solution with other customers because the same lighting product can be applied in many different ways. The deal is also strategically important in Nualight’s market positioning. “We are known as a refrigeration case specialist. With this project, we’ve taken a leap into the full store and that’s ultimately where we want to be,” says O’Dwyer.

This May, Enterprise Ireland will host a series of trade events in Switzerland. The itinerary, still being finalised as The Market went to press, will include a programme led by a government minister to the regions around Basel and Geneva focusing on life sciences and NGOs, multi-sectoral events and receptions, as well as a number of group events, receptions and individual meetings for companies. One part of the mission will focus on opportunities at CERN, which comes as the government is reportedly considering an application for membership of the renowned nuclear research lab – a move which supporters believe could boost Ireland’s reputation as a high-tech economy. For more information or to express an interest in taking part in the trade events, contact Eddie Goodwin: eddie.goodwin@enterprise-ireland.com or call +49 (0) 211 4705920.
What is the universe made of? How did it start? These are the questions engineers and physicists at CERN, Europe’s laboratory for particle physics, are seeking to answer, as they probe the fundamental structure of the universe using some of the world’s most powerful particle accelerators.

For many of us, they are abstract questions. But what is very real is the business potential generated by CERN. Now the prospects of Irish companies and research centres being able to bid for CERN contracts worth €500m every year look closer than ever, following a review initiated by the Minister of State for Research and Innovation, Sean Sherlock, this January, to assess the costs and benefits of Ireland joining the research organisation.

The €500m in contracts offered for tender every year span everything from the typical goods and services required by any large organisation (such as event marquees, construction services and health insurance for staff) to highly specialised component development, research and consultancy services. Not being a member of the organisation left Irish companies and researchers out in the cold in the past when it came to pitching for this business.

As well as offering supply opportunities, CERN operates a technology transfer office providing access to its technology portfolio through mechanisms such as R&D collaboration, licensing and spin-out companies. In recent years, CERN’s key focus has been its experiments with the Large Hadron Collider. But, in addition to particle physics research, it has been the birthplace of many unexpected scientific breakthroughs, for example, the World Wide Web (first developed at CERN in 1989), innovative medical imaging tools and latest generation solar panels.

The laboratory straddles the Franco-Swiss border near Geneva. Founded in 1954, its name comes from the acronym for the French ‘Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire’ or European Council for Nuclear Research. However, as scientific understanding of matter now goes much deeper than the nucleus, CERN’s main area of research is more correctly described as particle physics – the study of the fundamental constituents of matter and the forces acting between them.

The organisation, the largest particle physics research centre in the world, today has 21 member states and employs over 2,250 staff. But, at any one time, there can be up to 13,000 people on site, including users, students, subcontractors and visiting scientists.

Being part of CERN would bring multiple scientific and educational benefits, according to ‘Ireland for CERN’, a group of academics, students, business people and politicians, campaigning for Ireland to become an associate member. Supports, such as CERN providing training programmes for teachers and summer internships for students, would encourage more young people to consider careers in science, the groups says.

Ireland for CERN also points to longer term advantages of membership. For example, Ireland is aiming to position itself as a player in Big Data. Approximately 15PB (i.e. 15X1015 bytes) of data are generated annually at CERN, and as such, a large proportion of the contacts on offer are related to data handling and processing. In addition, CERN, which recently created a new office for medical applications, is at the cutting edge of medical technology – another key industry for Ireland.

For more information, see http://procurement.web.cern.ch/ for supplier opportunities and http://knowledgetransfer.web.cern.ch/ for technology transfer opportunities.

If Ireland becomes an associate member of CERN, contract opportunities worth €500m every year will be open to companies and higher education institutes here.

BIG BUSINESS WORTH €500M UP FOR GRABS FROM BIG SCIENCE
Donal Nugent hears the yin and yang of doing business in Russia.
t stretches over nine time zones, borders countries as diverse as Finland and Mongolia and is a close neighbour to Europe, Japan and the US. A country of dense cities and unpopulated expanses, the world’s sixth wealthiest nation is a place of huge resources, but also the highest levels of wealth inequity in the world. Even before the current political situation in Ukraine, in recent years, Russia’s political elite has become noted for an obtuse and sometimes belligerent attitude to the West, but as the vast amounts of money spent on the recent Winter Olympics show, this is also a country eager to assume a high-profile position on the world stage.

Russia isn’t like anywhere else in the world, and it may not be the easiest market an Irish company will ever enter. But many experienced Irish exporters are doing very well in Russia and finding it more rewarding than first impressions suggest. At the time of going to press, how that position would evolve was somewhat uncertain. On one hand, the situation in Ukraine was putting a serious strain on EU-Russian relations. But on the other hand, Ryanair was reportedly close to finalising direct flights linking Dublin, Moscow and St Petersburg, which – presuming a political agreement on Ukraine could be reached – would make Russia a much more attractive target market for Irish companies.

Gerard McCarthy is Enterprise Ireland’s manager for Russia/CIS. With up to 170 Irish companies doing business in Russia, word of mouth of the opportunity has begun to spread, he says. “A lot of the scare stories and the focus on corruption relate to the very top or the very bottom of the business environment. Irish companies are active in the middle range, where you have a largely regulated environment and where companies can do business in a fairly straightforward way.”

That said, McCarthy doesn’t deny that Russia’s image can be forbidding. “Russia, as a nation, is not particularly worried about our image of it,” he observes. “You’ll find a very supportive attitude to the West, but as the vast amounts of money spent on the recent Winter Olympics show, this is also a country eager to assume a high-profile position on the world stage.

While St Petersburg is the cultural capital, McCarthy says there is no doubt that Moscow, with its catchment area larger than Benelux, is the ‘go to’ city in terms of doing business. Experience points to a number of common mistakes that can cloud the first experiences of Irish companies in the marketplace, however. “The first is to not fully understand or appreciate the commitment and time that Russia requires. Time here means face-to-face time – you can’t do business through email or Skype. Even locally, in Moscow, if you want something done you’ll go to see someone; you won’t call them.”

The second common mistake is assuming business can be done through English. “English is not the first or even second language in Russia, so you have to arrive prepared with materials and a translator. Even if you are dealing with someone fluent in English, their colleagues are unlikely to be. Being prepared gives you an advantage over your competitors who aren’t.”

Russian law requires that a local office has to have a Russian citizen as its managing director, and this can complicate an office set up. A freelance representative or a distributor may be a more cost-effective solution in the early days.

One issue that can take some Irish companies by surprise is the scale of the deals they may be getting involved in. “When you get an idea of the size of the market, you find Irish companies may sometimes over-commit.” However, those who do can be assured, McCarthy insists, that a pragmatic approach to problem solving is part of the culture.

“In cases where we’ve seen contractual difficulties emerge, it is usually the Russian side who are willing to step in and take a hit so as to sort the problem quickly. The reflex isn’t to go to a lawyer. This can surprise people who expect Russian culture to be intransigent.”

Among the more technical issues companies can encounter, a lack of homogenisation in terms of certification and standards may be less easy to overcome quickly, but while this can be a big obstacle to those who encounter it, it doesn’t tend to affect most Irish companies trading in Russia, McCarthy says.

Of Irish businesses currently active in Russia, those in the aviation sector are making the biggest waves at the moment. “Aviation links between the two countries go all the way back to Aeroflot and the days when Aer Rianta effectively kicked off modern retailing in Russia.” On the other side of things, ICT companies may find the market a tougher slog because of the extreme strength of the local IT skill set.

Perhaps the best advice for first timers is to get the right introduction. The other key to getting off on the right track in Russia, McCarthy adds, “is about building trust. Russians want to know a company coming in with a solution isn’t just here for a one-off deal – you need to build a personal connection. No one is saying Russia is perfect but it’s a mass opportunity and a completely untapped market for most Irish companies.”

PICTURE FROM THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2014 WINTER OLYMPICS, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN SOCHI. THIS SCENE, FROM THE OPENING CEREMONY, REPRESENTS THE FAMOUS STATUE ‘WORKER AND KOLKHOZ WOMAN’ MADE BY VERA Mukhina IN 1937, WITH A HAMMER AND SICKLE FLYING OVER THE ARENA, SYMBOLISING THE PERIOD OF GREAT INDUSTRIALISATION FOLLOWING THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION.
A family-owned business based in Kilkenny, Hermitage is one of the world’s leading pig breeding and genetics companies. Central to its success is its BLUP (best linear unbiased predictor) tool, which allows customers to predict the genetic merit of animals based on their on-farm performance.

From a standing start eight years ago, Russia has evolved into a major market for the company, with the export of its high-health status breeding stock quickly extending as far as Siberia.

“Russia was, in many ways, far ahead of Europe in the ’70s and ’80s but with the end of the USSR, the system collapsed,” explains Hermitage’s international sales manager Gerry Douglas. Today, an ambitious government strategy plans to make Russia self-sufficient in food by 2020. Meat consumption is currently at 66kg [per person] per annum and, by 2020, is expected to be 75kg a head. Pork and poultry are the most popular by far and there is a huge drive at federal and regional level to encourage intensive animal production.”

Hermitage’s involvement began when the company met one of Russia’s largest independent pork producers at a trade fair. “They were looking for high-health-status stock very quickly and in high volumes. At the time, they had 10,000 sows. Now they have 120,000 and produce three million slaughter pigs annually, a huge figure but still just seven per cent to eight per cent of total Russian output.”

Bringing on board a local sales agent has been hugely important in the growth of the company, Douglas says. “Most people don’t speak English here so you have to work with that.” Being an overseas company isn’t necessarily a negative in his experience, however. “Russians, in many cases, would rather buy from a foreign company than a Russian one, so there is a real opportunity if you have the balance right.”

Customs can be complex, he warns, and if the paperwork isn’t absolutely accurate – and usually there is far more of it that Europeans are used to – a consignment can be left stranded until the issues are resolved. “There is a different mentality with regard to how things are done. When you visit a modern farm in Russia, having showered down, your first port of call will be the on-farm office where you’ll see a huge amount of paperwork being created. This feeds from a belief that more is better in terms of records and reporting.”

In autumn this year, Hermitage will begin a new chapter in Russia with the development of a 1,100 sow breeding nucleus in partnership with a local firm.
The SIS Group specialises in designing, manufacturing and building synthetic and natural sports surfaces and, in addition to schools, colleges, sports clubs and local authorities, the company counts some of the world’s major sports arenas among its clients. An Irish headquartered company, it has a manufacturing facility in the UK, and offices in the Netherlands, Turkey, the Middle East, Angola and Russia.

CEO George Mullan says the success the company has enjoyed is built “very much on the fact that we are a one-stop shop. We design, manufacture, construct and maintain the pitch. Our competitors, in general, tend to be companies that focus on different parts of this chain.” SIS also puts a strong emphasis on innovation, and Mullan points to SIS’s recent installation of the Saracens’ RFC pitch in London, the first synthetic pitch to be used in the English Premiership. “Ultimately, our focus is very heavily on what the customer wants. Repeat business represents 70 per cent of what we do.”

Russia and the CIS came into the picture five years ago when SIS was called in at the last minute to save a champion’s league final. “They had a real problem with the pitch, and we came in and fixed it.” In 2012, the company completed the pitch for the stadium in Donetsk, Ukraine, which hosted the European finals that year. Typical of the high specification that has given the company its reputation, it features drainage, a sub-air system, under-soil heating, irrigation, a natural root zone build up and a running track. The company went so far as to set up a “turf farm” in the Ukraine so turf could be grown locally to facilitate the stadium’s multi-functional use.

As its reputation grew in the region, SIS went on to develop pitches for F.C. Gabala in Azerbaijan and Ashgabat Studiu, Turkmenistan. In early 2014, the company began work on Spartak Moscow’s new ground, Otkritie Arena, which will see its opening game played this July. Group games and a semi-final of the 2018 World Cup are due to be played on this pitch. “The contract was won against stiff local and international competition,” Mullan says. The lucrative commercial nature of modern football has helped the company, which is steadfastly focused on a quality proposition. “Football used to be very much price driven, but a number of high-profile disasters in terms of stadium pitches mean there is now a much greater focus on delivering something that won’t fall apart on opening night.”

In terms of doing business in Russia, Mullan says the approach tends to be one of making purchases up front and for cash – underscored by the fact that a new company entering the market won’t be able to get credit for a time. “One of the reasons we set up SIS Russia was to build a credit line. Payment terms are very tight and that’s something Irish companies coming here need to understand.”

As to the company’s future in Russia, Mullan says: “Outside the major cities, you may have to re-establish your proposition a bit, but a stadium in Moscow gives us a lot of credibility. Reputation is incredibly important in our business. Most of your work will be seen on TV. If you get it wrong, your reputation is gone over-night, but if you get it right that opens a lot of doors.”

SIS has begun work on Spartak Moscow’s new ground, the Otkritie Arena, which will see its opening game played this July.
Among those in a new generation of Irish architectural practices aiming to get a foothold in overseas markets is Heneghan Peng, perhaps best known in Ireland for its work on the Giant’s Causeway Visitors’ Centre. In 2003, the firm’s designs were selected as the basis for the new Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo. With a planned opening in 2015, it promises to put Irish architecture on the global map in a way not seen before. Just three years later, all going to plan, a second building by the same firm will set down another global marker.

In 2013, Heneghan Peng saw off stiff competition to be selected as architects of Russia’s National Centre for Contemporary Art, a highly ambitious building earmarked for completion in 2018 and located in a prestigious Khodynskoye Pole site in Moscow.

The museum marks a first for Heneghan Peng in terms of activity in the Russian market. “The project is backed by the Russian Federation Ministry of Culture, and the competition to design it was seen as a fairly major one internationally. It attracted entries from all over the world,” Róisín Heneghan explains. As part of the selection process, the Ministry selected five firms which had a background in museum design and looked at an additional five proposals through an open design call. Heneghan Peng was in the first category. “It looked as if our experience and qualifications in terms of work done to date was a fit with what they were looking for,” Heneghan says. “They were looking for people who had a strong design portfolio but didn’t necessarily have a lot of major museum projects behind them – it was clear to us that they were open to younger firms and that the competition was designed to get as wide a response as possible.”

While the building of a prestigious one-off building can be a protracted affair, the selection of the winning design has the potential to be more fluid and Heneghan was impressed by the speed at which the process moved. “We made our original submission in September, and we found out we had won just a few months later.”

At the initial stages of the competition, the company submitted proposals in English and Russian, although the keynote presentation was given through English. “Ten people were submitting, and most were not Russian. They had simultaneous translation, which made things easier.” What happens next will involve multiple stakeholders and Heneghan says the learnings in the marketplace so far are that local knowledge is essential to taking the project forward.

“The construction industry in Russia has a reputation for having a certain way of doing things. When an architect from another country comes in, a certain degree of ‘Russification’ has to take place or you need to work with a local practice.”

As to the potential for making serious inroads in this huge market, Heneghan is upbeat but realistic. “There is no question but that it has opened the door, but building projects of this size have quite a long timeline. Once it emerges and becomes a talking point, we certainly expect it will generate a whole range of opportunities.”

Heneghan Peng saw off stiff competition to be selected as architects of Russia’s National Centre for Contemporary Art, a highly ambitious building earmarked for completion in 2018.
HOW DID BLUE COME ABOUT?
It started back in my previous company, Kindlon Insurances, where we made it to number one travel insurance provider in the space of six years there. During that time, I got to know Rowan Devereux, and he’d suggested we go into business together, but I kept saying no. But as the years went on, I decided I’d like to be my own boss. I spoke again with Rowan, and we decided to set up Blue Insurances.
Rowan had already set up a company under a different brand, and he had some clients already. We all took salary cuts at the start, and luckily all my clients came over from my previous job. In our first year, we also picked up Budget Travel, which was a particularly big tour operator at that time, and USIT, and that was a major coup for us.

HOW DID YOU SETTLE ON THE NAME?
People will remember a colour quicker than anything else. They also love blue because it reminds them of the sky, the sea and holidays – and that’s where our focus was going to be initially. So it was a case of a great colour that people would remember.

Within a year of being founded in 2003, Dublin-based Blue Insurances was the leading supplier in Ireland of travel insurance provided through the travel trade. Web-based, with a broad palette of niche insurance offerings, Blue has now set its sight on more mainstream sectors, including motor and health. John Stanley asked Managing Director Ciarán Mulligan to outline how the company has managed to consistently punch above its weight.
WHAT WERE KEY FACTORS IN YOUR EARLY SUCCESS?
Building our own website. We made it more flexible than any other site at the time, which in turn helped us win the award for best travel insurance company in our first year.

We tried to do everything really well from the start. The logo and the professionalism of our presentations made us look a much bigger company than we actually were. I think the image and how you portray yourself is really important.

We just seemed to get everything right from day one, from having a good online presence to good rates. We also offered customers white label options from the very beginning, which meant they could have an insurance platform sitting on top of their own website. No one else had offered it at that stage.

The perception out there is that we’ve spent a vast amount on marketing over the years. But that’s not true. During the recession, when everybody else stopped spending, we negotiated better rates for our business. That’s really worked for us because we still have good rates at the moment. That was a key thing: we kept spending and we kept growing when everyone else was at a plateau or declining in numbers.

We were also highly service orientated. From the start, unlike many brokers at that time, we opened on Saturdays and at lunchtime. Our attitude from day one has been that nothing should ever be a problem for the customer; we’re hands-on and contactable 24/7. We recognise that you can give a service along with a low-cost price.

So I suppose our success is due to a combination of things, and there’s always a little bit of luck – but sometimes you make that luck.

WHAT MISTAKES DID YOU MAKE?
Normally, you agree a really good deal to get a website built, but when you start adding on bits and pieces, the price starts going through the roof. You’re far better off having your developer in-house. So at the end of the first year, we decided to bring in the person we had outsourced to as a director with a shareholding. That’s something we should probably have done from day one. Now we’ve got eight developers.

Having in-house developers helps you move quickly. For example, we’re launching bicycle insurance soon, and we built that site in three weeks. It would probably have taken a large multinational a year or two to do that.

Another mistake was probably in Australia in 2010, where we used our underwriter’s website rather than our own to get up and running as fast as we could. But it’s too clunky and it’s too slow. We could have done much better if we had had our own site there from the start.

HOW IMPORTANT IS INNOVATION TO YOUR BUSINESS MODEL?
With multitrip.com in Ireland and the UK, you can book very easily on your smartphone, your tablet or your PC. By the end of this year, all our sites will be responsive to different platforms, and that’s the way we see things going. We’re always thinking ahead of the game, and we’re always trying to be innovative. If you follow, you’ll be left behind, or you won’t make those gains that you can do when you’re more innovative.

WHERE WILL FUTURE GROWTH COME FROM?
I think right now we’re probably at about perhaps 20 per cent or 30 per cent of our potential, or even less than that. We’re now starting to move on from the niche into the mainstream. We’ll be launching home and motor in April and later health, so all of that’s going to have a big impact on our turnover and income.

Now we’re in Ireland, the UK and a little bit in Australia. Our aim is to get the new bicycle business going in Ireland and the UK, begin home and motor in Ireland initially, and we’re looking at health insurance in July.

We’ve been focusing up to now on English-speaking countries, and that’s really why we haven’t got into other European countries. But now we’re becoming more focused on identifying opportunities in those countries that are growing, where their young people are travelling.

Internationally, we’ll be relaunching our Australian multitrip.com site and looking at bringing in some other products to that market, and we’re also currently in talks about launching in India.

We’re currently in discussions with a US underwriter about providing gadget insurance there through some company currently providing home insurance to one of the two big US motor providers. I’m also constantly getting calls from people regarding possibilities for multitrip in Mexico, Brazil and other places, and we’ve registered all the insurance domains for the UAE.

YOU PARTICIPATED IN ENTERPRISE IRELAND’S MANAGEMENT FOR GROWTH PROGRAMME. HOW DID YOU FIND IT?
It was really good and led to the restructuring of the company in a really good way. It was intense, but it’s nice to learn new stuff and to get inputs into your business from other people, including other participants as well as the mentors and leaders. I’d recommend any small or medium enterprise company to go on it. I think they’ll learn a huge amount from it, and in a year’s time, they’ll be a far better company.

One thing I should emphasise is just how important the senior management and the core teams are to our growth prospects. Everybody is so proactive about the company. You couldn’t have a better team of people to help you grow.
Innovation and imagination have the potential to create new markets, especially in the modern digital age. One of the shining examples of this is the emergence of Digital Sports Marketing, and its allied discipline, Player Performance/Player Analysis.

Highly original approaches in these related fields go far beyond being clever ideas. They offer genuinely new ways of creating value through evolved business models.

THERE’S AN APP FOR THAT

If you think that sounds far-fetched just consider the diversity of offerings from companies such as Huggity, Fantom, Converser and ShowMeGolf – and the level of enthusiastic support they have garnered in a relatively short period.

Established in 2011, Huggity’s extraordinary core product is FanPic. It involves capturing a 360 degree multibillion pixel image of fans at an event, such as a football match. This is launched on Facebook within 24 hours of the event, and people who attended are invited to zoom in on the image, find and tag themselves, then share that picture with their friends. Every image they share provides exposure for the accompanying sponsor branding. The firm’s current clients include Chevrolet, Manchester United, Bupa Australia and Sky Sports.

The key to sports digital marketing, suggests Paul Healy, MD of Fantom, is to focus on “engaging an audience and delighting a sponsor”. Healy’s company is the undisputed leader in digital trading cards/stickers. The Fantom app, available on web, tablet and mobile, turns the traditional game of collecting and swapping cards into an online “brand experience”.

Its client list currently includes such leading names as the Toronto Maple Leafs, Toronto FC, the English national soccer team, the Heineken Cup and a number of English Premier League teams. The company has also set sights firmly on the US market, where it has recently established a presence in Manhattan.

Fantom has found potential clients in North America far more receptive to direct contact than those in Europe. “Just with a phone call, you can get to first base much faster,” he says. Having a New York office means that Fantom can now commit to follow-up meetings within two days of a positive response. It also plans to leverage its North American achievements to relaunch in the UK soccer market.

Converser is a universal tool set that is embedded in a company’s mobile app to enable it to engage in more meaningful and personal conversations with the user. The company already has a base of around 100 customers in a range of sectors, primarily media and banking. The underlying aim is to help clients understand, segment and communicate with their app users, turning them into loyal customers and increasing long-term engagement and profitability.
“Sports fans are by far the most loyal in terms of app users. They have a voracious appetite for information, and you simply cannot over-communicate.”

It turns out, says Converser’s Barry Nolan, that sports fans are an ideal audience for this approach. “Sports fans are highly engaged,” he says. “They are by far the most loyal in terms of app users, and they have a voracious appetite for information.” With most clients the challenge is to communicate with relevance to the right user at the right time, not to be seen as a pushy communicator, Nolan says. But with sports fans “you simply cannot over-communicate”.

While it is still early days for the company in this arena, Nolan sees big potential.

Celtic Football Club is already a client, and prospects remain good as it begins to explore opportunities in the sports space.

PLAYER PERFORMANCE AND ANALYSIS
In the related area of player performance and analysis, GameKeeper is a digital scorecard device developed by a Danish company now operating out of Ireland. Founded by Dutch serial entrepreneur Erik Winther, it allows the capture and broadcasting of details of tournament and practice rounds from a range of events, in much the same way that data are provided from PGA competitions.

“This brings golf into the 21st century, enabling live broadcast on demand,” says Brad Furber, an American living in Denmark, who is also an active angel investor and adviser to the company.

Furber, who defines a start-up as “a temporary organisation in search of a repeatable, scalable business model” is quick to point out “we don't have all the answers yet”. So GameKeeper, already piloted by clubs in a number of countries, will initially be launched in the US through a tournament concept in partnerships with clubs there. "Premature scaling is not necessarily your friend," Furber says. “But if the device and product is a home run right out of the park, it won't be hard to scale up quickly.”

Why has this Danish/US start-up chosen to operate out of Ireland? “We’ve found the golf IQ in Ireland is higher and the passion greater than anywhere else in the world,” Furber enthuses. “We were attracted by the reception we got from everyone, including taxi-drivers and bartenders, and we got a good reception too from Enterprise Ireland. There are already a lot of golf technology companies located here, and there's also a branding issue for us. US golfers identify two other countries in the world with the game: Ireland and Scotland.”

SUPPORT FOR MARKET PLAYERS
All the above companies, along with a number of others active in the two areas, are currently participating in a series of innovative business development seminars and networks pioneered by Enterprise Ireland.

As Anne Oebels, software and services market adviser with Enterprise Ireland in Düsseldorf, explains: “Huggity was really the initial driver of this initiative when it was looking for a distributor in the German market. Through that, we became aware there were several companies active in the area of digital sports marketing. That led us to stage a conference at Croke Park last year on the subject of ‘Fan Engagement in the Digital Era’, featuring six client companies and organised in cooperation with five EI offices – London, Madrid, Milan, Warsaw and Düsseldorf.”

The conference was highly successful, attracting an audience of 70 key players from the world of sports from seven European countries. These included executives from such top football clubs as Borussia Dortmund, Benfica Lisboa, Atlético de Madrid and Borussia Mönchengladbach.

For 2014, EI will host an even more ambitious event in Ireland this May, with the involvement of nine EI offices: Düsseldorf, London, Brussels, Milan, Madrid, Stockholm, Warsaw, New York and Toronto. This will have two streams running in parallel, each featuring four client companies and offering extensive networking opportunities.

New York-based Kristie D’Agnes, EI’s Vice President, Digital Solutions, Advertising, Business Services & Industrial, says there is still a significant amount of red tape around sports marketing in the US, which requires specific industry knowledge to handle. EI has set up an advisory panel to help Irish firms address this surprisingly complex marketplace. It comprises representatives of a number of leading sports bodies, including the NFL, the PGA Tour, the World Wrestling Federation and the NLB basketball league.

Recently, Enterprise Ireland held a half-day event in Manhattan, involving panel members and client firms. The value of advisory panels, D’Agnes notes, is not just confined to participants’ present employment. “Professional sport is a relatively small and mobile industry. Often the value is as much in their contacts in places they have worked before, as it is in where they are now,” she says.
Senior management teams in Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland are collaborating in a Global Sourcing initiative aimed at maximising procurement opportunities for Irish business. Alan Hobbs, head of Global Sourcing at Enterprise Ireland, reports.

Unlocking global opportunities to supply multinationals

One of the aims set out in the Government’s Action Plan for Jobs is to build on the economic value of multinationals operating in Ireland.

As part of this objective, a new dedicated Global Sourcing team at Enterprise Ireland has been working closely with counterparts in IDA Ireland over the past year to identify multinationals representing potentially millions of euros in additional business right here on our doorstep. Meeting the needs of such companies could also open doors to wider opportunities with their parent and sister operations overseas.

Enterprise Ireland has carefully reviewed its client base to identify companies with products and services particularly suited to the variety of multinational companies with operations here. For example, the business processes outsourcing industry, with such companies as Abtran, Voxpro, Rigney Dolphin and Eishtec, could perform well in this space. The recently published Action Plan for Jobs 2014 targets an increase in global sourcing sales by EI client companies of €30m in 2014 and of €100m over three years.

Since Enterprise Ireland’s Global Sourcing team was established, it has made significant progress in identifying the potential of this marketplace and finding ways to address obstacles. Working closely with IDA Ireland, it has met with more than 100 multinationals to discuss their procurement strategies. Engineering, ICT, internationally traded services and life sciences, including medical devices and pharmaceuticals, have been identified as sectors offering good medium-term opportunities. The team has also engaged with significant Irish companies such as Ryanair, Aer Lingus and eircom to assess their procurement needs and strategies.

**GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Effective networking and identification of international champions are important elements in the Global Sourcing strategy. A number of roundtables and workshops have been undertaken over the past 12 months with the support of such organisations as Accenture, SAP, the ACCA’s CFO Forum, trade associations and chambers of commerce. The team has also spread its message in association with such initiatives as IBM’s Smart Cities and the Med In Ireland medical technologies showcase.

In the future, ministerial participation on trade missions abroad is set to sharpen the focus on global sourcing opportunities. There are even plans for a somewhat unusual trade mission to Ireland as a practical way of highlighting the ‘world-beating’ quality of Irish products and services on offer.

Enterprise Ireland is also in the process of strengthening its mentor panel by adding executives with relevant multinational expertise to advise would-be Irish suppliers. The agency is recruiting international champions in multinational operations in Ireland who can provide valuable introductions to their head offices and is tapping into the global Irish network.

Our research, however, has shown that there are no obvious trends or simple approaches that will provide a magic key to unlocking these opportunities. Every multinational, even ones operating in the same sector, approaches purchasing differently and gives their subsidiaries significantly different degrees of autonomy.

Fortunately, Irish export companies generally have a good understanding of just what it takes to compete with large, high-quality competitors overseas. But becoming a supplier to a large, well-established multinational is never easy in terms of meeting specifications, safety standards and the myriad technical certification and regulatory requirements.

Scale is another big challenge, with large international companies keen to drive efficiency by reducing the number of suppliers with whom they do business. It can be extremely difficult, even for a good supplier who has ticked all the relevant boxes, to displace existing suppliers that already have good working relationships with the buyer.

**INTERMEDIARIES**

One method being pursued to address the issues of familiarity and scale involves using well-placed intermediaries. Firms such as Accenture, PM Group and Mercury Engineering are already major purchasers of Irish products and services that they sell onto their multinational clients.

IDA Ireland’s increased focus on attracting much younger, high-growth companies to Ireland also offers Irish firms the chance to establish supplier relationships at a much earlier stage and to grow their business as their client grows.

More Irish companies supplying a greater number of multinationals could be the start of a virtuous circle attracting further overseas investments to Ireland, as the capabilities of innovative Irish exporting companies become a selling point to attract FDI. Therefore, the potential benefits of the Global Sourcing initiative are numerous and multifaceted.
A PLACE IN THE COUNTRY: REGIONAL EXPORTERS GO FOR GLOBAL

Company name: Itronik Interconnect

Location: The village of Kilchreest near Loughrea, Co Galway

What they do: Hand hygiene is widely considered as the most effective method of safeguarding against infection. Making sure staff wash their hands frequently though has traditionally been hard to enforce. Itronik, which currently employs four people, is behind a patented hygiene monitoring system called HigenX that uses radio frequency identification (RFID) tags to monitor hand-washing activity to ensure employees in the healthcare, food and hospitality sectors comply with hygiene rules and regulations.

Main overseas markets: Itronik’s first break came after it won a contract to supply HigenX across a number of branches of the fast-food chain Supermac’s in Ireland. Since then, it has expanded to the UK where it is working with a number of firms in the food industry and healthcare sector. Itronik has recently expanded to Brazil and intends to move into other Latin American countries in the next year.

Recent big win: Who said attending conferences was a waste of time? Itronik made some valuable contacts at the annual Global Food Safety Conference in London in 2011 that eventually led them to consider exploring opportunities and making initial sales in Sao Paulo. The company has recently partnered with a leading global healthcare organisation to trial HigenX in a number of different settings in Brazil in a contract valued at €140,000 up to June 2014. “If the trial succeeds, we expect the deal to be worth €2.5 million in 2015 and up to €4 million the following year,” said Mike Mahoney, managing director of Itronik.

“We’re initially installing HigenX with 85 customers in both healthcare and the food industry over the coming months. We’ll then continue rolling it out to about 300 customers by the end of this year,” he added.

As part of its move into Brazil, which is South America’s largest economy, the company linked up with a local sponsor, who helped open doors and, most importantly, secured them a small trial with a factory that allowed them to showcase their product. The sponsor has since joined the company and is focused on further expansion into Latin America.

“Our product has been well received so far and we’re confident of it doing well in other markets there,” said Mahoney.

Best thing about not being based in a city: “During the lean years, it was particularly good being in the country because we had no outgoings. We owned the building we’re in and so didn’t have expensive rents to worry about.”

Worst thing about not being based in a city: “The main drawback is the lack of proper broadband services.”
Company name: Portwest
Location: Westport, Co Mayo
What they do: Established in 1904 by Charles Hughes, Portwest is a company with an impressive heritage and an annual turnover of €75 million. This family-owned business specialises in the design and manufacture of high quality workwear, personal protective equipment and outdoor leisurewear.

While it’s selling its products widely, the firm retains deep ties with Westport, having adapted the town name to create its brand and incorporated Croagh Patrick into its logo.

Main overseas markets they’re in: As well as employing 300 people in Co Mayo, the clothing manufacturer has sales offices in six locations worldwide as well as warehouses in Ireland, Germany, Poland, the UK, the US and, most recently, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It also owns a factory in Bangladesh, which employs more than 1,000 people, and has permission to open a second facility in the country shortly. As well as selling into every European market, the company has brochures in 25 different languages.

Recent big win: Portwest was part of the Enterprise Ireland-backed Gulf trade mission, which saw 87 Irish companies travelling to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai with Taoiseach Enda Kenny in January 2014. The company announced the establishment of a new sales office in Dubai while on the mission. This is to lead to the creation of a further 50 jobs in Westport.

“The new warehouse is to service the Middle East, Africa and the Caspian region, areas in which we are looking to expand,” said Harry Hughes, managing director of Portwest and grand-nephew of the company’s founder. “We’re primarily selling to local distributors, who in turn sell to oil and gas companies in the areas.”

“We haven’t really experienced any difficulties in setting up there, partly because we took the decision to employ a local manager who knows the customs and practices – both commercial and cultural ones. That eased the way for us.

“In addition, for the past two or three years we’ve been attending trade shows and held plenty of meetings to work out how much potential there was. Once we established this, it was relatively painless to get going and take on sales people,” he added.

Best and worst thing about their non-city location: “Twenty years ago, there were major disadvantages to being here but now those issues have largely gone. We have better broadband and great transport links with Knock airport being nearby so I wouldn’t see any disadvantages for us nowadays,” he said.
Company name: FCS Global
Location: Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon
What they do: Established in 2002 by Mike Rowland as a support service provider for contact centres and enterprise networks in Ireland, FCS Global has expanded to the point where it now specialises in providing consultancy, phone system maintenance, network design, contact centre applications, project management, optimisation, installation and support services to a variety of clients worldwide. The company currently employs more than 60 staff.

Main overseas markets they’re in: FCS currently serves more than 3,000 sites in 170 countries. It has more than ten bases throughout Europe, South Africa and the US and is establishing more in Eastern Europe this year.

Recent big win: The communications firm recently announced details of a major expansion project that will see it establish a new training entity and engineering expansion to assist its push into the US market. The new facility, which is expected to create at least 10 jobs in Ballaghaderreen, will enable the firm to give engineers comprehensive training courses in multiple IP private automated branch exchange (PABX) telephone systems, legacy PABX and data system technologies.

“We deal with big system integrators and traditionally have worked as a subcontractor to them. Most of these companies are headquartered in the US and so in order for us to become a Tier 1 partner of these firms, we needed to have a larger presence there. Having a direct base in California means we can take one or two tiers and work directly with “the main guys,” said FCS Global’s owner and managing director Mike Rowland of the expansion.

Rowland admits that moving into the US is daunting, but the firm has already gained a number of customers and he’s optimistic about the company’s chances of greater success.

“We got assistance from Enterprise Ireland to do our market research, which meant we knew what we were getting into. The advantage that FCS has is we have worked for these companies outside the US, albeit indirectly. They are aware of who we are so it’s not like we’re a start-up company trying to get a foot in the door,” he said.

Best and worst thing about their non-city location: “The nature of our business is provision of service so it really doesn’t matter from a technical point of view whether we are in Roscommon, Dublin or Singapore. We remotely manage sites around the world and for this all you need is broadband and good staff. Roscommon is great particularly on the latter because there’s very little turnover of employees and smaller salaries.”

Company name: Retail Solutions
Location: Tuam, Co Galway
What they do: Established by Chris O’Neill and Seamus Quinn in 1995, the company, which employs 30 people, started out as point-of-sale providers, providing hardware and software to businesses. The firm has since expanded to the point where it now offers full tailor-made retail management systems that cater for all aspects of a business, including cash control, stock control, security, accounts packages, camera systems, self-scanning checkouts, deli systems and marketing.

Main overseas markets they’re in: The company’s customer base includes more than 850 sites in Ireland, but it also has a presence in Australia and, more recently, Britain. It is planning to expand into South Africa later this year.

Recent big win: Retail Solutions recently won two contracts with the retail groups CJ Lang & Sons, which is the master franchise-holder for Spar in Scotland, and European Food Brokers. The deals, which are valued at €1.8 million in total, will see Retail Solutions’ EPOS [electronic point of sale] systems installed at over 300 sites in the UK.

“The deals certainly were not easy to win,” said Jarlath Hennelly, general manager at Retail Solutions. “We had previously a deal with a distributor in the UK who was in the running for the contract, but didn’t really hold out much hope of winning it.”
“It seemed as though the two companies were going to hand the contract to another firm so we went over with our distributor to meet the firms in person. Luckily, they were blown away by what we were doing and by how scalable our solutions were. From there, we were in.

“The hardest part of winning the contracts wasn’t convincing the companies about how great we were, but doing the paperwork. The tender documents and contracts went into minute details and it was an ordeal to get the information done in time. It was all worth it though and we’re very excited about what lies ahead,” added Hennelly.

Best thing about not being based in a city:
“It can be difficult to attract talent to the area, which can be something of a drawback. However, for those that are interested in not having a long commute and being able to go home at lunchtime, our location is very attractive.”

Worst thing about not being based in a city:
“Internet provision is still a huge issue for anyone outside a major city or town. We rely on high-quality broadband to do our work, but the network infrastructure in Ireland is still very poor and makes things more difficult than they should be.”

Company name:  
C&F Green Energy

Location:  
Cashla, Athenry, Co Galway

What they do:
C&F Green Energy was established by former Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year John Flaherty in 2006 and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of C&F Tooling. The firm’s principal activity is the design and manufacture of wind turbines and renewable energy solutions.

Main overseas markets they’re in:
The C&F group as a whole is long-established as an export-led firm with manufacturing bases in the US, Czech Republic, China and the Philippines. C&F Green Energy is already making inroads into the UK and Italy, and is investigating a number of other potential markets.

Recent big win:
C&F Green Energy recently clinched a deal to sell wind turbines worth more than €15m to Graziella Green Power, one of Italy’s leading suppliers of electricity from green sources. C&F will ship the first of the 60 kW turbines shortly and the full consignment will be delivered by the middle of next year.

Around 20 of the units are to be installed on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia, while the remainder will be deployed in the south of Italy.

C&F won the Graziella contract against stiff competition from five competitors from the US and Italy.

“This is only our third year to market, having spent more than four years in development, and so the Graziella deal was a great win for us,” said Ray Leavy, director of renewables at C&F Green Energy.

“We started marketing in the UK initially and now have over a thousand machines installed there. I attended a number of trade shows in Italy and decided that rather than having agents operating for us there, we would open a company and appoint a general manager as the feed-in tariff (a support designed to accelerate investment in renewable energy technologies) was highly attractive. Outside of the Graziella deal, our Italian office is extremely busy and we’re happy with our move into the market,” he added.

From Italy, the firm plans to enter Greece, Turkey, Poland and Denmark over the next 12 months.

“We’re also paying close attention to Japan at the moment because it is currently paying the highest feed-in tariff in the world and following the nuclear shutdown, the government is trying to incentivise smaller firms to create their own power. We’re expecting an exceptional response from the market given the feedback we’ve received so far,” he added.

Best and worst thing about their non-city location:
“Our founder Johnny is a Galway man through and through, so there was never any doubt that we’d be based locally no matter how difficult things would be.”

Best thing about not being based in a city:
“It can be difficult to attract talent to the area, which can be something of a drawback …”

 Worst thing about not being based in a city:
“Internet provision is still a huge issue for anyone outside a major city or town. We rely on high-quality broadband to do our work, but the network infrastructure in Ireland is still very poor and makes things more difficult than they should be.”
The Gulf is ploughing money into healthcare, but the challenge is to identify the real opportunities behind the big numbers and connect with the decision-makers, Gordon Smith finds from talking to some of the Irish companies that are cracking this market.

Staggering sums are to be expected in any discussion about the resource-rich Gulf countries, and the numbers that apply to its healthcare sector are no exception. Saudi Arabia, the region’s single biggest healthcare market, currently has more than 100 hospital and 300 health clinic construction projects either slated or underway. An estimated 14,000 doctors will be needed across the Gulf in the next three years, while government forecasts estimate a total spend of $143 billion throughout the region by 2018 – three times current rates of healthcare investment.

Factors driving this flurry in spending include an influx of expats to the region – bringing expectations of Western-standard care with them – and an increase in ‘lifestyle’ illnesses such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Indigenous population growth is also pushing the health agenda, with Arab countries projected to grow from 347 million people to 461 million by 2025. In some Gulf States there are moves to provide universal healthcare for nationals.

IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES

Behind the statistics, the key to winning sales in the Gulf healthcare markets is to identify opportunities at a granular level. That means spending time visiting the market in person, meeting decision-makers and researching demand, says Eamon Sikafi, Enterprise Ireland’s market adviser for life sciences in the Gulf States.

It’s telling that for the 2014 Arab Health event in January this year, 20 attendees came from Ireland – an increase from eight in 2013. Irish healthcare companies are finding opportunities around the Gulf in areas such as medical devices, health IT and diagnostics. The challenges of hospital construction projects mean specialist project management skills are also in demand, and this plays to expertise built
on the back of major multinational healthcare and pharmaceutical facilities built in Ireland.

“The main thing is to show a presence here, to meet people in the hospitals, meet the Ministries of Health, and meet other healthcare providers. There are tenders; you have to show interest and be determined to come to this market, and ask and look around,” says Sikafi.

The Mater Private Hospital has been developing contacts in the Gulf for more than two years, says CEO Fergus Clancy. As The Market went to press, The Mater was on the cusp of its first major deal in the United Arab Emirates. It’s looking to crack a market traditionally served by high-end medical providers in the US and Europe, whereby governments in the Gulf provide overseas treatment for citizens suffering from complex conditions or with co-morbidities – other illnesses that complicate a treatment – where treatment isn’t available locally.

NARROWING YOUR TARGET
Understanding which Gulf countries to target is critical to avoid becoming overwhelmed, says Douglas Collins, CEO of PureHealth, a vehicle he set up specifically to represent Irish companies looking to target the healthcare markets in the region. “MENA [Middle East-North Africa] is huge. People are getting caught up in the numbers and excitement. A couple of opportunistic things may arise, but in a lot of cases there’s loads of interest but no deals,” he says.

Focusing primarily on the UAE, the Mater Hospital opted to represent itself directly in the market. “That may be one of the reasons why it’s taken so long for us to get traction, but to be honest, it’s the only way I’d be happy to do it. You have to put in the hard yards, spend time on the ground and meet people face to face so you understand what the customer wants and how you can deliver that.”

TIME ON THE GROUND
Time on the ground in the market has been invaluable in determining where the market needs are, says Clancy. Personal relationships are a critical part of Arab business culture, and many meetings are common before trust is built up between all sides.

“There’s no point in coming here and saying ‘we’re great at a certain type of procedure’ if there’s no service deficit or if they’re well catered for. The single most important thing is to spend time on the ground and by virtue of that, learn what needs to be learned. The issue of trust is also hugely important. Business simply can’t be done by correspondence. Culturally it doesn’t fit, and commercially, it doesn’t work,” he says.

Focusing primarily on the UAE, the Mater Hospital opted to represent itself directly in the market. A 19-year veteran of the healthcare sector in Ireland, Collins now lives in the UAE and has spent several years building a network of contacts throughout the region. Positioning himself as a ‘proxy CEO’ on behalf of Irish companies in the region, he has already worked with Gabriel Scientific and Oneview Healthcare to win significant deals. Such has been the volume of interest in the region by Irish companies that Collins is already expanding his team.

Through Collins, Gabriel Scientific won a $3 million contract with Planet Pharmacy, one of the region’s wealthiest pharmacy companies. It has signed a $10 million manufacturing and distribution licencing agreement with Al Abbas, a long-standing Emirati group company. In addition, at the trade and investment mission to the Gulf this year, Gabriel Scientific announced a distribution deal with the premium bedding chain Intercoil. The Dublin-based company’s

Gabriel Scientific won a $3 million contract with Planet Pharmacy, one of the region’s wealthiest pharmacy companies.
‘SleepAngel’ branded pillows use a patented bacteriological filter technology to prevent the spread of MRSA.

Oneview Healthcare announced its first commercial deployment in the region for its patient engagement software, having reached an agreement in principle with Dubai’s two MedClinic hospitals. Arab buyers are very image-conscious, and Collins says it’s no coincidence that Oneview and Gabriel Scientific both invested significant time and money in designing high-end branding, using Arab-specific content in their demos and polishing their presentations to suit local buyers.

“You can find situations where the person delivering the message is pretty poor at communicating. Companies need to identify a good communicator who can represent them and sell their product. I see that as very important in building a rapport with your potential client: those initial 10-15 minutes are important when making a pitch, and I’ve seen a lot of companies blow that,” says Collins.

**KNOW YOUR ROI**

Gabriel Scientific helped its case by developing a ‘ROI calculator’ tool to show financial directors the expected savings from a product that is three times more expensive than a regular pillow but lasts five times longer and solves the problem of hospital-acquired infection.

Collins’ challenge to Irish companies eyeing the Gulf is: “You can have innovation and be export-ready, but do you have a strong ROI model? That forces you to look at what price the market can bear. The illusion of the Middle East is that it’s flowing with money, but in fact the health authorities are on tight budgets, and the private hospitals are about making money.”

Partners are another common route to market in the Gulf, and, in some states such as Saudi Arabia, they are mandatory for foreign companies. SureWash provides training in hand hygiene technique and has developed a system that uses gesture recognition technology to give real-time feedback. In January, it announced a distribution agreement with Saudi company, Lana Al-Khaleej. “Having a distribution partner signed from such a large and influential market in the Middle East helps how we’re positioning SureWash for the wider region,” says sales director Sean Bay.

Bay confirms the company will operate a similar sales model in other Gulf markets. “We’ve had good interest from hospitals in the UAE and Oman, so we’re looking for distributors in those markets to develop those contacts. We won’t sell into a market unless we have support for customers there.”

**ADDED-VALUE PARTNERS**

Bay says there’s no definitive answer to working out the most suitable partner. “A lot of it is getting to meet them, knowing the people, do the background information. Try and talk to the hospitals who can tell you if they have worked with them. What I find interesting is what level of customer can they bring in front of me? If they bring a very high quality of purchaser, who has budget sign off, then you’re talking to a company that can deliver on sales reasonably quickly. Also, it’s good to get someone with a good degree of technical capability – you want their staff to be able to sell the product at a technical level.”

Sikafi adds that in some cases, a partner in the Gulf can be more than just a local sales rep. “A local partner can be a significant resource – it can be the Silicon Valley equivalent of ‘smart money’ and an investor,” he says.

Enterprise Ireland plans to continue its focus on healthcare in the Gulf this year and is adding to the team specifically for the Saudi market. At International Markets Week next September, Enterprise Ireland healthcare clients that have no formal presence in the Gulf can meet with advisers to ask about best approaches to the market and arrange meetings with prospects. Enterprise Ireland is also planning inward buyer visits specifically targeting the healthcare market, during which important decision-makers visit Ireland and get to hear from a range of providers.
As swathes of Europe, as well as Australia and New Zealand, enter a period of commemorating the First World War, Lucille Redmond looks at how the Flanders region is making remembrance a study in peace and how Irish companies are helping to recreate other stories from the past elsewhere.
The Battle of Culloden, the last stand of the Jacobites, led by Bonnie Prince Charles, was the last major battle to be fought on British soil, and its outcome has shaped European history. Today, that battleground, on Drumossie Moor to the northeast of Inverness in Scotland, is being brought to life by Zolkc, a Waterford-based company that makes GPS-guided tours – some on their V-Guide handheld devices, others that you download on to your phone.

**IRISH TECHNOLOGY**

Zolkc has helped to vividly recreate the Battle of Culloden using stories from contemporary letters, diaries and records, dating back over two and half centuries. As visitors take a path through the moor, GPS triggers audio and video at specific locations – the sites of the mutual slaughter of Dutch, French, Irish, English, German, Austrian and Scottish Jacobites and Williamites.

The Irish company, a spin out from the TSSG research group at Waterford Institute of Technology, specialises in technology-driven interpretation for tourism and heritage sites in the UK, in Ireland and, most recently, in North America.

Its multimedia products are also bringing the past to life at King John's Castle in Limerick, Waterford’s Viking Triangle and St Patrick’s Centre in Downpatrick. Meanwhile, tourists are downloading its iOS and Android apps to relive history at National Trust of Scotland sites.

In Hand Guides, another young Irish company, also sees a future in re-telling history for a new generation. Its hand-held MP3 players deliver customised audio content for visitors to The Book of Kells and Library at Trinity College Dublin. In other cases, the company helps to commemorate the far more recent past – for example in Manhattan at the 911 Families’ Tribute Centre.

**THE FLANDERS PROJECT**

2014 marks the start of what will be several years of commemorations – from the battlegrounds of the First World War to our own Easter Rising, and there will, no doubt, be many more opportunities for technology to play its part in reflecting on the lessons of the past.

The Flemish, who have their own history of cultural conflict, are taking a very particular line in their commemoration of the Great War: by using it as a form of peace study.

The Belgian approach, in museums scattered across the fields of the European theatre of war, involves the collective remembrance of civilians, soldiers and résistants; solidarity and partnership, remembering how wars led to such international groups as the UN and the EU; and working together to build a peaceful future.

How Flanders has preserved its scars of war is extraordinary. Trenches wind through peaceful fields that were once hell on earth; the landscape is free of intrusive notices. “You can see how close the soldiers were to each other,” says Patrick Torrekens, Enterprise Ireland’s Brussels-based market adviser for Benelux.

“They try to give the visitor as much hands-on experience as possible. From simple audio guides handed out to sophisticated augmented reality on smartphones, you get to see things as they were at time of Great War.”

On entering the In Flanders Fields museum, you get a badge with a soldier, medic or civilian’s name and your tour includes information about what happened to ‘your’ name.

This is part of a Great War remembrance project meticulously planned by the Belgian ministry for tourism and other ministries. Some 44 projects were approved from tenders from all over Flanders, centring on key projects in the In Flanders Fields museum, the Belfry Tower in Ypres, the Memorial Museum Passchendaele, Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery and the Talbot House in Poperinge, the Yser Tower Museum in Diksmuide and the Ganzepoot in Nieuwpoort.

**IRISH ROLE TO PLAY**

Patrick Torrekens believes that Ireland, through its own experience and mix of technology companies, has much to offer. “The Irish are natural storytellers,” he says. Moreover, a number of our academic centres like the Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction at Dublin City University or the Edward M Kennedy Institute for Conflict Intervention at Maynooth University are working to draw lessons about peace from conflicts of the past.

“The Irish have made sure that the memory of what happened in Ireland is very much alive,” Torrekens says. “The Flemish travel to Ireland to study this.”

In Belgium, as in Ireland and elsewhere, projects opening up historical information – like Google’s digitalisation of WWI records, the In Flanders Fields’ records of soldiers’ names, the cutting-edge free online Irish Census or the ‘Letters 1916’ crowd-sourced transcription initiative – are making history accessible. But more than just providing access, technology is enabling storytellers to put meat on the bones and create living memories.
In survey after survey, meetings get knocked by everyone from employees to senior executives as being among the biggest waste of work hours. In one poll, by the US staffing specialists Office Team, 45 per cent of senior executives said their firms would be more productive if they banned all meetings at least one day a week. “The problem that often occurs – beyond the obvious, like lacking a clear agenda – is the underlying current of competition that each person brings to the table,” writes Berny Dohrmann, chairman and founder of CEO Space International, and author of Redemption: The Cooperation Revolution.

“Signs that competition is causing unproductive meetings include one or two people dominating the floor; individuals touting their achievements; people consistently failing to contribute their ideas because they fear being criticised or ridiculed.” The drive to compete is so ingrained in most of us, we often don’t recognise it, Dohrmann says.

“We get it culturally. We learn it in school. It’s often reinforced within our own families as we’re growing up. We have to be aware of that and identify the culture we want, and then set about creating it – beginning with our meetings.”

Cooperative meetings yield far better results, he says. People working together toward a goal are more efficient, more productive and even happier. The group pulling together toward the same goal will achieve that goal far more quickly than individuals each pulling in opposite directions, Dohrmann says.

So how can you turn competition into cooperation – and wasted meetings into fruitful gatherings? He offers these suggestions:

— Begin instituting culture change by rewarding cooperative behaviour: When someone makes a suggestion that can help another individual or department, publicly acknowledge and praise that teamwork. Encourage inter-departmental interest, empathy and even personal bonds by allowing employees from one area to shadow employees from another. Remind everyone that when one department succeeds, everyone succeeds. Look for managers and employees who tend to be naturally cooperative and enlist them as mentors and leaders to encourage and spread the new culture.

— Identify and curb competitive behaviour in meetings: Avoid discouraging the behaviour with tactics that rely on public criticism, scorn or ridicule. Rather, set egalitarian standards, such as time limits for each person to speak, and stick to them. When someone strays off topic, discern whether he or she is sharing a potentially valuable idea or seeking a personal competitive advantage (i.e. by laying blame, self-promoting, etc.) before steering him/her back on topic.

— Participation is essential to cooperation. Require everyone to participate in meetings. Circulate the agenda in advance with the stated expectation that each attendee will come to the table prepared to address at least one item – even if it’s not an item within their area of responsibility. Participation is a key component of a cooperative work group, and making it the norm is often as simple as getting everyone into the habit.

“Set egalitarian standards, such as time limits for each person to speak. When someone strays off topic, discern whether he or she is sharing a potentially valuable idea or seeking a personal competitive advantage.”

Berny Dohrmann is chairman and founder of CEO Space International, one of the US’s largest support organisations for business owners. Indicted for criminal contempt for a $86,000 junk bond from an investment banking firm he had sold, he fought the charge in court, but lost in 1995 and went to prison for 18 months. He has since made a documentary about the experience and written Redemption: The Cooperation Revolution.

In a new book, US CEO Berny Dohrmann shares his views on how companies can benefit by moving from a competitive to a more collaborative atmosphere between colleagues.
It has been 10 years since the first wave of Central European nations joined the European Union. In that time, all eight of the original accession countries (and Croatia) have joined the ranks of ‘high-income’ economies, so it is no longer correct to refer to them as ‘emerging’ markets. They have emerged, writes Mike Hogan, who presents a compelling case for Irish companies to consider Central Europe.

Since 2004, Irish exports to the EU Central European (CE) region have grown over 300 per cent, and CE nationals account for nearly five per cent of Ireland’s population. All of the countries are easily accessible from Ireland by direct low-cost air connections. Thanks to their continued ‘catch-up’ dynamic, consisting of lower wage costs, a well-trained labour force, a healthier banking sector and less public and private debt, Central European economies are expected to continue growing faster than those of Western Europe, generating wide ranging export opportunities. So, with significant natural advantages on our side, why aren’t more Irish companies active in CE? Most likely because, despite 10 years of EU familiarity, misconceptions still abound about Central Europe.

NOT EMERGING MARKETS
So, exactly what type of markets are the EU countries of Central Europe? Any read of the Irish business media will tell the story of huge opportunities in emerging markets. Emerging markets go by many different names and groupings, whether they be BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), the ASEAN countries in Southeast Asia, or the latest grouping coined by former chairman of Goldman Sachs Management, Jim O’Neill, MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey).

Countries gain their emerging status for a wide variety of reasons – some because of good demographics, others because of their resource base, and yet others because they are moving from a period of authoritarianism to a more liberal market economy. While the Central European countries currently in the EU may have been emerging markets in the 1990s and 2000s, they are no longer emerging markets, and
IS CENTRAL NOT IN OUR SIGHTS?

this is a vital distinction for Irish companies looking to expand their export footprint. In comparative terms, it is easier to grow a country from a lower income to a middle income economy than from a middle economy to a higher income economy. This phenomenon is called the Middle Income Trap. All the original Central European accession countries, along with Croatia, are classified by the World Bank as high-income countries. These are defined as economies with gross national income (GNI) per person of over US€12,616. Romania and Bulgaria, which joined the EU in 2007, are classified as upper middle-income economies, but they too are closing in on high-income status. This distinction is very important, because, of the BRICS, only Russia is arguably a high-income country. None of the currently lauded MINT countries are in this category. All these emerging economies are either upper middle-income economies or lower. In simple terms, all of the 2004 accession countries have escaped the middle-income trap. While they are still developing, not one remains an emerging economy; they have emerged as mature, fully functioning market economies.

Knowing the end-market dynamic is important for Irish companies, since much of what Irish indigenous companies export mirrors the relativity of the Irish market, and in most cases, but not all, Irish companies need to sell domestically before they move to export. Therefore, Ireland’s export portfolio of goods and services is tailored to meet the demands of high-income economies. Bluntly put, we have less to sell to lower income economies. While well resourced and arguably larger Irish companies will rightly continue to chase business opportunities in the mainstream emerging markets, for many Irish SMEs, Central Europe is a logical and less risky export market to approach.

MANUFACTURING CENTRAL

At Central Europe’s core are the Visegrad economies of Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, which have garnered the lion’s share of European manufacturing investment. This has been influenced by two factors: the migration of Western European manufacturing capacity to Central Europe, and the repatriation of some forms of production from emerging markets to Central Europe due to rising emerging market labour costs and the need to shorten supply chains.

The Visegrad economies are strongly interconnected into the powerhouse economies of Germany and Austria, and when these countries do well, so do they. In late 2013, the World Bank noted that with the global economy at turning point “with strong trade and financial links with high-income Europe, the Central and Eastern European economies will benefit most from the [global] recovery.”

Along with global manufacturing giants such as Fiat, Volkswagen, Samsung, Toshiba and Merloni/Indesit, Irish corporations have established a strong manufacturing presence in Central Europe with the build-out of factories by companies such as Smurfit Kappa, CRH, Kingspan and ABP. In tandem, new manufacturing facilities requiring low-cost labour inputs will likely continue to migrate to lower cost EU countries such as Romania and Bulgaria. The Visegrad and Baltic states are moving up the value chain into sectors such as business process outsourcing (BPO), software development and lifesciences. Capital Economics Emerging Market Economist, William Jackson has suggested that, for the moment and into the near future, Central Europe is entering a ‘Goldilocks’ phase of relatively strong growth accompanied by low inflation.
If one takes it for granted that EU Central European markets are well matched as potential end-users of Ireland’s goods and services, the next obvious question for an Irish SME is why export to Central Europe, as against other EU or high-income economies? This is best answered by profiling the factors that makes Central Europe a compelling offering in market attractiveness terms.

**MARKET ENTRY ADVANTAGES**

**Access**
All 11 EU Central European countries have direct flights from Ireland, and all but two of their capitals (Sofia and Zagreb) can be reached within two to three hours by direct flights from Dublin, as well as additional flights from Cork and Shannon. The cost of accommodation and internal transportation is lower than in Ireland, making Central Europe only marginally more difficult to travel to than the UK, and at comparable, or cheaper, prices.

**Currency**
Four countries (Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia) use the euro, while all the remaining countries have a currency peg to the euro with a low degree of fluctuation, and they have committed to joining the euro within one to five years.

**Language**
This is a key factor for Irish companies in developing and maintaining relationships with end-users, distributors and agents. Though varying from country to country, there is a high level of English spoken and taught throughout the region. The EF English Proficiency Index for Europe ranks Estonia, Poland, Hungary and Slovenia in Europe’s Top 10 for English Language Proficiency just behind Sweden, Denmark and Norway. All 11 countries rank higher than France, Italy and Spain. In parallel, Polish is the second most spoken language in Ireland, and all the other languages of Central Europe are well represented among our population.

**Diaspora Effect**
According to the 2011 Census, one in 20 of Ireland’s population was born in an EU Central European country. This means that there is a large number of Irish companies with Central European employees who could be leveraged for home market knowledge and linguistic assistance for export purposes. Many of our early migrants from Central Europe have raised and educated their children in Ireland. They represent a fantastic export hiring resource, especially when they are equipped with a third level qualification. Likewise, many Irish companies have, as a first step, entered Central European markets using former employees who have returned home. Irish companies would be well advised to regularly re-examine the CVs of hires from Central Europe. Many have skills and qualifications that could easily be applied to exploring and harnessing export opportunities.

**FDI Hub**
Central Europe has been an extremely popular investment destination for manufacturing, IT, BPO and logistics multinationals. Many of these multinationals have Irish companies on their approved vendor lists and could act as a conduit to a first in-market sale. Newly arrived multinationals, especially OEMs from Korea, Japan and China are constantly looking for European suppliers. Irish companies, long used to servicing the needs of Ireland’s multinational community, could be well placed to meet their needs for products and services.

**EU Transfers**
From 2007 to 2013, the then 10 EU Central European countries benefited from EU structural and cohesion funds of €178.9 billion, excluding any national public and private contributions. The new EU budget will disburse similar funds to the now 11 EU Central European countries until 2020.

**Legal and Operating Environment**
All 11 countries are civil law jurisdictions, necessitating a higher level of administrative compliance, particularly through the use of public notaries. However, as in Ireland, EU law holds sway in terms of public procurement and as a court of last instance.

**Economic Growth**
All 11 countries are ahead of the EU average in growth terms, with some star performers such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania delivering close to four per cent growth in 2013.
Many Irish companies have a compelling export proposition that could readily be tailored to meet Central European market demands. While each of the EU Central European countries is unique in customer demands and expectations, there are some export opportunities that are common across the region. This has relevance for Irish companies taking a regional, as distinct from a bilateral, market approach.

Manufacturing Sub-Supply and Services
As previously noted, much of Europe’s manufacturing base is migrating to Central Europe. This is driven by a number of factors, including low to moderate labour and input costs, favourable tax treatment and proximity to end markets. Irish companies are adept at supplying products and services to multinational corporations in Ireland can replicate that business in Central Europe.

Infrastructure and Cleantech
Membership of the EU for Central European countries has secured billions in structural funds to modernise social and transport infrastructure and upgrade utilities, including water and the region’s disparate gas and electricity networks. These factors have created huge opportunities for Irish services, engineering and construction companies. In water, waste and renewables, each of the countries is under pressure to meet EU targets in terms of upgrade and compliance criteria. This will provide Irish companies with many years of prospective work for niche engineering services, green technologies and the project management skills to deliver projects on time and on budget.

Agricultural Technologies
All 11 countries continue to have a large section of their population engaged in agriculture and food production. The farming sector remains fragmented in terms of average individual unit size; however, consolidation of farms into larger units is gathering pace. The impending abolition of EU milk quotas in 2015 together with new EU funding for agricultural technologies coming on stream at the end of 2014 will provide a further spur for Irish companies producing agricultural machinery, veterinary chemicals, animal nutrition and crop protection solutions. Many have already gained a significant market presence.

Food and Beverages
Exports of Irish food and beverage products continue to evolve in Central Europe. Whereas all 11 countries were previously low consumers of dairy products, they are fast moving towards the European consumption average. Irish meat and dairy products have already gained a significant foothold in the market, helped in no small measure by word-of-mouth recommendation generated by the region’s diaspora in Ireland. In terms of local production, each country is also expanding food production, to service both their own market and to satisfy increased demand in Russia, which is unable to produce enough food for its own needs. Irish companies with products and services to facilitate better food and beverage production will find a ready market for the services in the region.

ICT
Central Europe is emerging as a key hub for both software development and business process outsourcing. Irish companies already collaborate with IT companies in Central Europe with respect to product and solution development. Now many Irish companies see these relationships as platforms to sell into Central Europe and further east.

On April 3, Enterprise Ireland will be hosting a seminar and business networking event in EI HQ in Dublin called “Expanding Your EU Exports – Business Opportunities in Central Europe” In addition to expert speakers and industry breakout sessions, the event will offer the opportunity of meeting buyers from Central Europe. For more information, contact Mike Hogan: mike.hogan@enterprise-ireland.com
### OVERVIEW OF THE 11 COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population (millions)</th>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>GDP per capita (US$)</th>
<th>IMF Data</th>
<th>Main Industrial Sectors</th>
<th>Export Opportunities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Leva</td>
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<td>Electronics, Life Sciences</td>
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PM GROUP ENGINEERS A NICHE IN POLAND

Con Murphy heads up PM Group in Poland. The company began operating in the Polish market in the 1990s but hit overnight success with Polish accession to the EU. Now with a staff of around 200, Murphy says the Polish operation provides a platform for the group to sell into nearby markets, including Germany.

PM Group offers a turnkey design, architecture and engineering service to the pharmaceutical market, but also to the food sector and increasingly to data centres. With 14 years under his belt in Poland, Murphy has witnessed a huge explosion of industrial development, and PM Group has thrived on a good customer base in advanced manufacturing, especially with the multinationals. “We built up a large architectural engineering capability here, serving predominantly the Polish market, but then we expanded,” he says, “and we have started to do quite a bit of work back west, and especially with our near neighbours Germany, which has undergone a mini boom.” Sixty per cent of the operation’s work is in Poland, but 40 per cent is back into mainland Europe and beyond Europe.

Murphy says the reputation for bureaucracy in Central European countries is well deserved, but he adds that he has never experienced graft at any level in Poland. His experience is that if you follow the rules then it is easy to do business, but you must follow procedures; this is particularly true for the construction sector. However, it is not so different from Germany and France in that respect, he says.

His advice is that it takes time to establish and not to underestimate the cost of breaking into the market. He has witnessed Irish companies come and go in recent years, not because they wouldn’t have made it eventually, but because “their pockets weren’t deep enough”. Most of PM Group’s customers are multinationals, and it is still a battle to sell services to indigenous Polish companies. Murphy puts that down to them not valuing the added services and opting for cheaper options. Also, though Poland is a huge market of 40 million people, it is also one of the most difficult to make good margins in. “You must accept that margins are going to always be tight, and you won’t make money overnight,” advises Murphy.

When hiring locally, he suggests companies should considering taking Polish staff to their Irish operations to instil company culture and a focus on service delivery, crucial in terms of repeat customers, and generally a weakness in Central Europe.

Murphy says PM Group pulled back from Romania and Bulgaria, partly due to low-cost competition there. Language was also an issue. He views the best markets as Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland. “The Czech Republic has ten million people but its population is quite dense. Slovakia is also a good market. It is business friendly and if you are looking at the Czech Republic I certainly wouldn’t exclude it.”

PPI ADHESIVES FINDS TRACTION IN SLOVAKIA

Waterford-based PPI Adhesives Products Ltd carries out 100 per cent of its production in Ireland but sales overseas account for 80 to 90 per cent of its turnover. Its network of sales offices includes Germany, Switzerland, Dubai, Hong Kong, South Korea, the USA and South Africa. In 2000, the company set up in Central Europe, opting for centrally located Slovakia.

PPI Adhesives supplies high-tech adhesive tape to a range of industries, including the automotive, electronics and electrical sectors. MD Dermot O’Callaghan says the business is seeing more opportunities now in Central Europe than in their traditional European markets. “We are confident of further growth,” he says. The company was first attracted to Central Europe in the late 1990s, when enquiries started to trickle in, and then some of their traditional customers starting moving production there. Initially, a number of German companies made the move, but since then all sorts of companies have followed suit, and PPI now has five staff in its Slovakian office.

O’Callaghan says that he hasn’t found Central Europe any harder to do business in than, say, the UK. Language has never been a problem, he says, adding that the most important move is to hire a local who knows the culture and has some contacts there. “We used
a local recruitment company, and they came up with some really good people. We’ve continued to use that company now that we are looking to new markets,” he adds, referring to a hire last year in Poland.

PPI Adhesives sees Poland as its next big target. “It has a bigger population, and there is more industry popping up there, so it is where we see the most growth coming from over the next couple of years,” says O’Callaghan. However, he has found that price is more of an issue there than in any of the other countries. “We just have a tougher time achieving prices in the Polish market.”

CZECH MATE FOR REALTIME TECHNOLOGIES

You need a local guy or gal, and you can then wrap a business around that person, advises Paddy White, CEO of Realtime Technologies. This is important from a language point of view but also in understanding how business is done, how government operates, and so on. “Get the right person, and they will bring business as well,” he says.

White launched Realtime in 1996 and now has a large facility in Clonshaugh, north Dublin, and another in the Czech Republic. The business started out reworking and repairing circuit boards, but it now offers a range of services to OEMs. Its office in Czech Republic opened in 2004 and serves multinationals but also indigenous companies. White had considered Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania as possible bases, but went for the Czech Republic partly because it was home to a large customer and had good links with Ireland. “There was a lot of openness as regards the government there, and Enterprise Ireland had a lot of connectivity into the Czech Republic,” he says.

Another advantage is its proximity and ties to Germany. “There are a lot of synergies between Czechs and Germans, and that is a big positive,” says White. Realtime Technologies now counts companies in the electronics, automotive, power supply and printed circuit boards industries among its clients.

POLAND IS LOCAL CONTROL HQ FOR CYLON

Eastern and Central Europe are still developing as markets for Cylon, a company specialising in smart energy systems for managing buildings. The company has found that while market demand is not as advanced as, say, Germany, there are plenty of new constructions in the bigger cities, and investors there increasingly see the value of sophisticated control systems for buildings, says Maciej Skrzyniarz, who covers a number of European countries and has also represented Cylon in his native Poland since 2009.

To date, Cylon has completed around 20 projects of varying sizes in Poland, and Skrzyniarz sees Slovakia and the Czech Republic as other interesting and expanding markets. He says face-to-face meetings with clients are essential, adding that it should be affordable for an Irish company to hire a consultant in Poland. Language isn’t an issue for Poles in their 30s, but a lot of the top people in companies are from an older generation that doesn’t necessarily speak English. “It is good to have a local person there,” he says. Ireland can seem far away for Polish companies seeking support.

Asked about tips for new market entrants, he advises initially steering clear of the public sector. “It is very difficult to go through the tendering and the law is complex,” he told The Market. “It is better to first go for a commercial project. Then, when you gain position, you can recognise where the potential is in the market and consider going for public tenders.”

Polish manufacturing tends to be low-cost and low-quality, Skrzyniarz adds, whereas Western Europe is seen as offering better quality and better technology. This is true in his area of building automation, he says. “When you are an international company like Cylon, that is an advantage. There is a mentality that technology from Western Europe is still ahead of Poland. It is seen as better.”
Microsoft’s foray into tablets with the Surface RT cost the company reported losses of $900m because it failed to crack the consumer market opened up by the Apple iPad. The irony is that the second iteration of its enterprise tablet, Surface Pro 2, has been woefully undersold in the segment where it wipes the floor with competitors. With more than 90 per cent of businesses running Windows on their desktops, the synergy with a compatible tablet is something Apple and Samsung can’t match.

But is Surface Pro 2 up to the job?

Available with 64GB or 128GB (€998), it’s a seriously classy piece of kit, successfully combining two form factors: the tablet and the laptop – the second comes courtesy of click-in keyboards, the €124.99 Touch Pad and the €134.99 Type Pad. With better battery life than its predecessor and some nice refinements – the kickstand has two positions – it’s arguably the most versatile computer on the market, combining the speed and power of an ultrabook with the touchscreen convenience of a tablet.

With a 10.6-inch HD screen powered by an NVIDIA Tegra 4 processor, it’s a delight to use from whichever way you come at it. The touchscreen is up with the best while the backlit keyboard does the job in laptop mode. A third input option is the digital pen – good for drawing but text conversion is too hit and miss to trust wholeheartedly.

Windows 8 users will doubtless have formed an opinion on the tiles interface that is spreading across all Microsoft devices – smartphones as well as laptops. I like its combination of order and customisation that makes easy work of giving prominence to favourite applications. A nice touch is the ability to split the screen, running two apps side-by-side.

When it’s time to get down to work, there’s a tile that lets you click to a Windows desktop where you can access the suite of familiar Office tools as well as some new ones. It’s the mixture of the old with the new that makes Surface 2 such an absorbing device. The quality is unquestionable, and it really does bridge two worlds, giving you the consumer friendly experience of a tablet alongside the no-nonsense functionality you need to get some work done.

Surface Pro 2
€889 (64GB)

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PlayStation 4, Xbox One

Around seven years since the last console spat between Sony and Microsoft, new versions of PlayStation and Xbox step back into the ring, asking gamers to splash the cash on the system they think will best serve their needs until the tail end of the decade. Past loyalty counts for nothing – PS4 and Xbox One are not backwards compatible, which means old games won’t play, so you’re starting from scratch, unless a familiar interface and similar controllers swing it for you, although in both cases these have been bulked out and feel more robust.

First off, good to see that the new consoles both include HDMI cables for plugging in to your high-def set. Since the launch of PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, HD TVs have become more affordable and near ubiquitous, which means more people will enjoy optimum resolution gameplay. Both play Blu-rays as well as DVDs, which is a step up for Microsoft because the 360 was DVD only.

Head to head, PS4 wins on aesthetics – so chic and minimal, it takes a while to find the power switch – and it’s smaller, with a neat sloping fascia. Microsoft’s console still suffers from the ‘PC-in-a-box’ look. But it’s all about the games, so it’s what’s going on under the bonnet that counts.

Truth be told, there’s not an awful lot to choose between them. Both use eight-core processors and custom chip sets. PS4 boasts a more powerful graphics engine but any significant differences will only emerge as game developers get more familiar with the capabilities. Right now, the best games on both are beautifully rendered, richer in detail than the previous generation though the actual physics of gameplay feels much the same.

Your choice may come down to price. The premium you pay for Xbox is largely explained by the inclusion of Kinect, the motion camera add-on box that uses active-infrared technology for gesture-based gameplay and some neat facial recognition tricks. A PS4 camera is available as an optional accessory for €70, but it doesn’t have the gesture control of Kinect, which has definitely been improved – its adjusted field of view makes it usable in much smaller rooms.

If you’re looking for a family-friendly console that will engage smaller kids – or you’re hooked on the fitness games – Kinect may be the best reason why you would choose one console over another.

If you’re looking for a family-friendly console that will engage smaller kids – or you’re hooked on the fitness games – Kinect may be the best reason why you would choose one console over another.
Lucille Redmond hates the title, but she writes that Accelerating Company Growth by Irish serial entrepreneur Brendan Dowling is full of clarity and great advice.

 Serial entrepreneur Brendan Dowling’s first and best lesson in marketing came not from the systematic courses of business study he undertook after his father’s business failed, but from an experience as a student doing a holiday job.

 In the summer, home from college, Dowling used to buy 1,000 punnets of strawberries locally for 75p and sell them for £1.50 in a market town. To make his profit, he had to sell every punnet and not be left with spoilage.

 One day, he arrived in town and found a farmer selling his own strawberries for £1 per punnet. Dowling told his helpers to take every punnet out of the van and spread them on the ground. A crowd gathered and they began to sell – slowly, foostering around with the change. The crowd got antsy and worried, and when they were crazed with desire, he pressed the ‘sell, sell, sell’ button.

 Every single punnet sold. “This taught me my first – and arguably, most important – lesson in how to deal with competition,” he writes. “You don’t need to have the best products or the best prices to beat the competition, as long as you get marketing.”

 Brendan Dowling is the founder and CEO of Digital Trading, which sells cloud technologies to companies and governments, and his advice calls on years of experience. He founded and ran iO Global, which traded services from companies that included Sony, EMI, Disney and Discovery to telecoms and media firms like BT in the UK and MTN in Nigeria. He was chief commercial officer for the mobile phone company Meteor; founder and CEO of imagine mobile; and owner-operator of Hire Store in Carlow and of Dowling & Co Chartered Accountants. As a baby entrepreneur in 1984, he ran his own aftershave company, Nautique.

 His carefully organised and laid-out book is chock-a-block with stories, but it’s also full of sensible, sound advice from his career and his experience as a business coach.

 The book is broken up into sections covering the prerequisites for accelerating growth, key areas that drive that growth and how to work with your board of directors and venture investors.

 His advice is hard-headed but soft-hearted, deep in common sense and often very
basic but absolutely right. “When I worked in a mobile operator, I sent all of the senior managers out to the stores to meet real people,” he writes. “They were very uncomfortable with this, but it opened their eyes to what was happening on the ground.”

Listening to the call centre calls and talking to employees, “you would be surprised at how many times I was inspired or a new idea was triggered from a conversation with a low-ranking employee who just cut to a problem that they were seeing on the ground and that the senior managers could not or would not see.”

The book provides guidelines to making a slide deck for your own company’s ‘Accelerated Growth Plan’ – a Jesuit-inspired hard look at where you are and where you’re going.

Dowling is generous with advice from his own failures or near-failures. Take the time he offered a complex package of content to mobile operators and was sideswiped out of the market by a firm with a simpler, more instantly desirable SMS-based package. Or the time he thought he’d sold a software service to Smart, a Philippines mobile operator with 25 million subscribers – but the deal slipped through his fingers as he celebrated, because Smart’s engineers were committed to their own software. The time he walked the streets trying to sell mushrooms to retailers – then got a huge deal when he realised he should be going to the wholesalers instead.

He learned from mistakes. “When I set up Nautique, there was only one customer that I focused on: the cosmetics buyer in Brown Thomas, the most important cosmetics store in Ireland. When she was happy, it was the key to winning all other customers; they fell like skittles once I was able to reference Brown Thomas.”

Driven by models; we bought very old Minis, painted them as imagine (the ‘Italian Job’ look) and used very good looking girls, but with attitude.

“There are some contradictions in his advice: Dowling talks about the importance of ethics, and of setting company values and protecting your employees – but then he advises “Keep senior management in-house and outsource everything else”, and confides that his own firm has outsourced all its non-core activities.

Some of his marketing stories are funny – like his guerrilla marketing operation for imagine at a concert in Slane Castle, where Vodafone was the main sponsor. “They had a row of new jeeps, all fully branded and being driven by models; we bought very old Minis, painted them as imagine (the ‘Italian Job’ look) and used very good looking girls, but with attitude.

“When our Minis arrived at the concert, uninvited, they drove past the Vodafone jeeps that were lined up outside the venue and went up to the gates of the venue. The organisers thought they looked so cute that they let them in and our girls drove around the concert venue giving out free toys with imagine branding. After the event, one of the Minis was escorted by a policeman through the front doors of a pub in the local town – for which we got front-page press coverage.”

Simplicity is his watchword in marketing: “Customers don’t do complicated,” he insists and describes a radio and TV ad imagine ran: ‘Dial this number now to get 20% off your cell phone bill’.

“When we first went out with this advertising, we had about 10 people in a call centre waiting to take the calls. We found we needed significantly more to handle the volume of calls – actually, the switchboard blew up due to the response to the first ad.”

In terms of customer psychology, he talks about his own lifelong loyalty to Bose after they took his old and broken system and revamped it for free. He also advises that “you must give customers a compelling reason to change their behaviour”.

At the moment, restaurants have a big problem – customers book tables, sometimes for several diners, and then don’t turn up. Dowling’s firm Digital Trading is offering a solution. “Restaurants typically use a paper diary for customer bookings. If customers fail to show on the day of the booking, there is a significant cost to the restaurant. So we focus on the problem and highlight that if they use our CRE service it automatically will send an SMS to remind the customer of the booking so that they can respond and confirm. If this catches even just one potential missed booking, it prevents the restaurant losing the revenue from the booking, which could be worth hundreds of euro when compared to the six cents they would pay us for the SMS.”

Accelerating Company Growth is a great chunk of advice and structural help. If you only buy one business book this spring, make it this.
Compiled by Enterprise Ireland’s Market Research Centre team.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

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

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

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

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ICT/SOFTWARE

Predictions 2014: Mobile Trends for Marketers: Navigate Beyond the Hype to Drive Near-Term Results
Forrester
January 2014

In 2014, there will be more than two billion smartphones globally. In its fifth annual mobile trends report, Forrester’s analysts highlight new mobile trends they expect to see this year as well as some over-hyped topics that they believe will fail to provide real business value in the short term.

India Tech Market Outlook: 2014 – Customer Obsession Takes Centre Stage For Technology Spending
Forrester
January 2014

IT purchases in India will reach US$29 billion in 2014. As in other emerging economies, India’s tech market is still largely hardware-driven, but spending on software and services is gaining prominence. This report analyses the technology management spending patterns of Indian organisations in 2013 and provides an outlook for 2014 based on customer-centric trends that will fundamentally shape technology spending patterns in the country.

A Better But Still Subpar Global Tech Market in 2014 and 2015
Forrester
January 2014

According to this forecast by Forrester, the global tech market will struggle to achieve six per cent growth in 2014. However, prospects look better for 2015. The US will be the pacesetter, with Latin America and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa also doing well. Analytics and applications in general and software-as-a-service (SaaS) applications in particular will attract the fastest growth of any IT spending category. IT consulting and implementation services will also rise; communications equipment will be moderately strong and computer equipment spending will lag, with the exception of tablets. Spending on IT outsourcing will grow more slowly than the overall tech market.

Who’s Who in Cloud Business Analytics
Gartner
January 2014

The emergent force of cloud business analytics (BA) holds the promise of improved agility, scalability and a lower total cost of ownership. This report describes market trends and profiles 19 vendors to make vendor selection easier for those BA and line of business leaders deploying BA solutions.

An Overview of European Smart City Developments: Smart City Projects Underline the Role of ICT in European Initiatives
Frost & Sullivan
November 2013

This report aims to give an overview of key areas of smart city developments. It finds that the deployment of ICT for the creation of smart cities is gaining a strong momentum in Europe, accentuated by the numerous pilot projects running at the regional, country and EU levels. Initiatives revolve around energy and water efficiency, mobility, infrastructure and platforms for open cities, citizen involvement and public administration services.

Innovations in Big Data Analytics: Data-led Innovations Leading to Convergence Across Markets
Frost & Sullivan
December 2013

This research focuses on various innovations in the Big Data analytics space along with the opportunities for convergence with various other futuristic technologies.

Digital Entertainment in the Home: Technologies and Global Markets
BCC Research
January 2014

This report examines technologies and factors influencing the markets for integrated home entertainment systems, with projections of compound annual growth rates through to 2018. Markets are broken down on a geographic basis, covering North America, Europe and Asia, and the figures are discussed within the context of the trends in construction activity, regulatory initiatives and the revenue potential associated with home entertainment systems.

FOOD, RETAIL AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS

China Online Retail Forecast, 2013 To 2018: China Online Sales To Pass $300 Billion By 2014
Forrester
January 2014

This report is designed to help eBusiness professionals understand how consumers and businesses are contributing to the rapid growth of eCommerce in China and which strategic initiatives eBusinesses should employ to drive sales across channels.

Domestic Kitchen and Bathroom Worktops Market Report – UK 2014–2018
Analysis
AMA
January 2014

This is the third edition of the AMA Research report on the UK Domestic Kitchen and Bathroom Worktops Market. The report covers kitchen and bathroom worktops, upstands and splashbacks, analysing the overall market within the context of the wider economic environment, as well as including reviews on product sectors, suppliers and distribution.

THE MARKET | SPRING 2014
As eCommerce approaches $300 billion in sales in the US, it has a more pronounced effect on virtually every shopping category and on the ecosystem of devices and delivery formats that supports it. This report highlights four trends that will dominate eCommerce in 2014: the growth of mobile research and buying; the inevitable rise of shipping prices; dynamic pricing; and cross-border growth.

**Apparel and Footwear Retailing in Brazil: Trends and Prospects, Global Briefing**
Euromonitor
January 2014
The briefing analyses Brazil’s apparel and footwear retailing landscape and assesses key category trends. As a member of the BRIC quartet, Brazil has garnered significant attention on the global apparel and footwear retailing stage. While international fashion brands navigate a challenging operational environment, domestic players continue to capitalise on the country’s booming middle class and emerging lower tier cities.

**UK Chilled Foods**
Keynote
January 2014
This report examines the UK’s chilled foods sector, focusing on a variety of categories, including pizzas, desserts, ready meals and salads. Growth is predicted in all of the categories considered, with the market exhibiting total value growth of 25.2% per cent between 2009 and 2013. The report also looks at some of the industry’s main manufacturers and distributors and examines buying behaviour.

**Critical Materials in Global Nanotechnology Markets**
BCC Research
January 2014
This report analyses the interrelationships between critical materials and nanotechnology, identifying current nanotechnology applications of critical materials, whose economics or even feasibility are negatively affected by potential shortages of those materials. The report also studies nanotechnology applications that can help to alleviate or avoid shortages of critical materials as well as analysing and quantifying the resulting impacts on the nanotechnology market.

**Analysis of the Global Tissue Diagnostic Market 2013 to 2017**
Frost & Sullivan
December 2013
This study investigates the global tissue diagnostics market for the period 2009 to 2017, covering the US, Western Europe, APAC and ROW and broadly classifying the market by the advance stains and pre-analytical segments. The study includes competitive analysis, product analysis, revenue forecasts and market shares for these segments. Major market drivers and restraints for the US and Western Europe are also discussed. Key histopathology laboratories are listed, and an effort has been made to collect the distributors and local suppliers in emerging countries.

**Analysis of the Global Biosimilars Market**
Frost & Sullivan
January 2014

**Global Biochip Markets: Microarrays and Lab-on-a-Chip**
BCC Research
January 2014
This report analyses the evolving wireless electronic health records (EHR) market, segmented on the basis of wireless patient monitoring EHR compatible devices, wireless EHR software, EHR mobile technologies, application markets, end-user markets and specialty markets. The study includes detailed analysis of key technologies such as blood glucose meters, BP monitors, pulse oximetry, capnography, stress monitoring, paediatric growth trackers, coagulation monitors, peak flow meters, etc., presenting market estimates for 2011, 2012 and 2017 for each of the micro and geographic markets.

**Global UPS Services Market**
Frost & Sullivan
January 2014
The global uninterruptible power supply (UPS) services market is a mature market with high opportunities for growth over the next five years, according to this analysis from Frost & Sullivan. The market is witnessing a phase of consolidation, with manufacturers looking for partnerships and alliances outside their geographic region to increase penetration. The service revenues from three-phase UPS systems dominate the overall market, mainly because of the high service costs associated with these systems. Meanwhile, the contracts segment is the major source of revenue in the UPS services market.
An update on customs compliance, trade regulations and negotiations

TRADE REGULATIONS, INFORMATION AND NEGOTIATIONS

EU and Afghanistan sign deal on WTO accession

The EU and Afghanistan have signed a deal concluding their bilateral negotiations on Afghanistan’s accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva. Accession to the WTO is hoped to make a lasting contribution to the process of stabilisation, economic reform and sustainable development in Afghanistan. The bilateral deal – signed by EU Ambassador Angelos Pangratis and Afghanistan’s Deputy Minister for Trade Mr Mozammil Shinwari – provides for lower tariffs and export duties for goods and for opening up services markets once Afghanistan joins the WTO. These commitments will be then embodied in the future Protocol of Accession of Afghanistan to the WTO.

EU in joint launch of WTO negotiations for green goods agreement

The EU has, together with 13 other WTO members, pledged to launch negotiations in the WTO on liberalising trade in so-called ‘green goods’, covering areas as diverse as tackling air pollution, managing waste, or generating renewable energy. The green goods initiative brings together Australia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Chinese Taipei, the EU, Hong Kong (China), Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Singapore and the US. Collectively, they account for around 90 per cent of the world trade in green goods.

New OECD export credit rules aimed at boosting railway development

New international rules on state financing of rail exports will boost the development of cleaner transportation infrastructure and help countries meet green growth objectives, the OECD said.

The new framework is designed to meet the variable needs of public authorities and exporters, in both advanced and emerging economies by lengthening repayment periods for contracts involving an overall value of more than $15.3 million. Terms provide for repayment up to 12 years for transactions in high-income OECD countries and of up to 14 years for transactions in all other countries. The RSU is applicable to export contracts for essential rail infrastructure assets, including rail control, electrification, tracks, rolling stock, and related construction and engineering work.

“Offering wider terms for the use of export credits in the rail sector will contribute to the creation of new railway projects, as well as the rehabilitation of existing rail infrastructure,” said David Drysdale, head of the OECD export credit division. The new Rail Sector Understanding took effect on 1 January 2014, for a four-year trial period. Its terms are applicable to an estimated accessible market – projects not reserved exclusively for domestic suppliers – expected to top $120 billion annually over the 2015-17 period.

Latvians now trading in euro

On 1 January 2014, Latvia adopted the euro as its official currency and the changeover is running smoothly and according to plan.

Myanmar eases company registration

Authorities in Myanmar (Burma) have indicated that they will speed up company registration by cancelling the ‘temporary permit’ issuance, as the country sees strong international investment.

Company formation traditionally worked in Myanmar by applying to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) to obtain a permit to trade and to register. This granted the applying company with a temporary company registration, followed by a permanent company registration, before a tax registration was issued to the company: a process that could take anywhere between two months to a year.

DICA has confirmed it is now abolishing the first stage, so companies will immediately receive their final documentation in a move aimed at reducing the administrative burdens for the authorities and investors. DICA reports the rate of foreign investment there has grown 500 per cent since revisions to its Foreign Investment Law were made in 2012. FDI in Myanmar accounted for over $3 billion in 2013.

Few US and European companies had set up in the country since the military handed over power to a quasi-civilian government in 2011. Multinationals who either are in the country now or are planning to set up there include Coca-Cola, British American Tobacco and Nissan. McKinsey estimates market growth could reach $200 billion in Myanmar by 2030.

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

Etihad to increase its Dublin service to twice-daily

Etihad Airways will begin operating a double-daily service between Abu Dhabi and Dublin from 15 July. This follows the earlier announcement by Emirates that it is doubling the number of flights it operates between its Dubai hub and Dublin.

TravelSIM offers business travellers call and data savings

At this year’s Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, TravelSIM, an international pre-paid communications service, announced that its 3.5 million user-base collectively saved over $200 million in calling and data download charges in 2013.

TravelSIM, a product of Top Connect, claims to be the world leader in international prepaid roaming solutions and says that it can save users up to 85 per cent on international roaming charges as well as offering very competitive data rates. Unlike local mobile operator cards, TravelSIM is designed for use around the world in over 190 countries.

Vienna Tops Mercer’s 2014 Quality of Living Rankings

Vienna is the city with the world's best quality of living, according to the Mercer 2014 Quality of Living rankings, in which European cities dominate. Zurich and Auckland follow in second and third place, respectively. Munich is in fourth place, followed by Vancouver, which is also the highest-ranking city in North America.

Ranking 25th globally, Singapore is the highest-ranking Asian city, while Dubai (73) ranks first across Middle East and Africa. The city of Pointe-à-Pitre (69), Guadeloupe, takes the top spot for Central and South America.

Since Poland’s accession to the European Union, Wroclaw (107) has witnessed tangible economic growth, partly due to its talent pool, improved infrastructure and foreign and internal direct investments. The EU has named Wroclaw as a European Capital of Culture for 2016.

Meanwhile, Manaus (125), Brazil, has been identified as an example of an emerging city in the Central and South America region due to its major industrial centre, which has seen the creation of the ‘Free Economic Zone of Manaus’, attracting talent and several multinational companies from other cities and regions.

With their considerable growth in the last decade, many second-tier Asian cities are also starting to emerge as important locations for multinationals. Examples include Cheonan (98), South Korea, which is strategically located in an area where several technology companies have operations. Over the past decades, Pune (139), India, has developed into an education hub and home to IT, other high-tech industries and automobile manufacturing. The city of Xian (141), China, has also witnessed some major developments, such as the establishment of an ‘Economic and Technological Development Zone’ to attract foreign investments.

In the Middle East and Africa region, Durban is identified as an example of an emerging city, due to the growth of its manufacturing industries and the increasing importance of the shipping port. Generally, though, this region dominates the lower end of the quality of living ranking, with five out of the bottom six cities. Baghdad (223) has the lowest overall ranking.

Top 5 Cities
1. Vienna, Austria
2. Zurich, Switzerland
3. Auckland, New Zealand
4. Munich, Germany
5. Vancouver, Canada
One of the sayings of Zurich-born humanist Reformation leader, Ulrich Zwingli, was “Pray and work”. His hard-line philosophy led the city on its path to becoming the commercial and financial centre of not only Switzerland but eventually of Europe. Of course, Zurich is synonymous with international banking; indeed, it maintains an economic, commercial and cultural significance that is at odds with its size. The city’s most important economic sectors aside from its financial and business services include IT and communications, medical and biotechnology, and it comes as no surprise to learn that it easily ranks in the top ten of leading global financial centres.

FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE CITY
Kloten Airport is located less than 10kms from the city centre. The airport has its own railway station, which is underground, which connects directly to stations in Zurich as well as most of the major Swiss cities and towns. Taxi services also operate from the airport into the city. www.zurich-airport.com

SLEEP
1st Choice: Considered one of Switzerland’s best hotels, the Widder, Rennweg 7, CH-8001, fuses historical architecture with modern design that effortlessly makes it the hotel of choice for an exclusive business event or meeting. www.widderhotel.ch

2nd Choice: Located in the heart of the city, the ALDEN Luxury Suite Hotel, Splugenstrasse 2, CH-8002, is a refined boutique establishment that dates back to 1895. Each of the 22 superbly appointed suites is fitted with a spa bathroom. There is also an outstanding restaurant (The Alden) onsite. www.alden.ch

EAT
Lunch: Sterne Foifi, Theaterstrasse 22, CH-8001, is a bustling grill restaurant located at the Bellevueplatz riverside quays. It has been serving quality food in an atmospheric area for many years, and has always been highly regarded as the ideal place for a casual business lunch. www.sternengrill.ch

Dinner: No client will leave Petermann’s Kunststuben restaurant unimpressed. Situated 10kms south of Zurich (Seestrasse 160, Kusnacht), it remains one of the most garlanded in Switzerland (including two Michelin stars), and noted for its often unique haute cuisine fare served within an 18th century-era building. www.kunststuben.com

THREE THINGS TO DO IF YOU HAVE A FEW HOURS TO SPARE
Relaxing: The village-like Neiderdorf is Zurich’s oldest quarter, and is distinguished by many small specialist shops, beautifully preserved bars, quaint restaurants, medieval houses, courtyards and picturesque cobbled streets.

Tourist Site: Fraumunster is the elegant city centre church famous for its internationally recognised stained-glass chancel windows by artist Marc Chagall. Situated beside the river, the church overlooks the splendid old town square.

Walking: Don’t arrive in Switzerland without a pair of walking boots and socks tucked into your luggage! The tallest point in the city is Uetliberg (Uetli Mountain), and as it’s located a mere 15 minutes away from the city centre, there’s very little excuse not to avail of its rustic hiking routes, mountainous ridges and breathtaking views of the city, which lies almost 3,000ft below.
## Enterprise Ireland International Network

### Head Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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