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Lead Investor
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Syndicated investment
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Hybrid
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Crescent Diagnostics
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Noticeboard

It’s a Grand National... and international for Galway company

It was winner and losers alright at this year’s Grand National, when all 40 runners and rides made it around the gruelling course with no injuries thanks to technology developed by EasyFix Rubber Solutions in Ballinasloe.

Punters, jockeys and horses at Aintree would have noticed little difference in the fences’ spruce-covered appearance, but part of their internal structure is now made from rubber, making the fences much more forgiving of mistakes and less prone to causing injuries. EasyFix fences are now standard on Irish racecourses and have been adopted on all five major racecourses in Norway and Sweden.

“Equine accounts for about 10% of our sales, but it is the most high-profile,” says Michael Earls, founder and MD of EasyFix, which is sponsoring a series of novice hurdles this summer at Ballinrobe, Galway, Roscommon and Sligo.

“Our biggest seller is a slat rubber flooring system for beef and dairy cattle. Our fastest growing product is our slat rubber system for veal, which is selling very well in Holland, France and Germany. A big driver is new European regulations on calf welfare that will come into effect in 2020.

“Last year was the best year we had, and we are expecting growth of 30% this year,” the former Galway county hurler told The Market. “We are now selling in 32 countries, and we’ve just completed an installation at a cattle farm in Botswana.”

Irish company to manage eBook distribution for world’s largest publisher

The Cork-based company ePbDirect has been appointed by The Random House Group to manage distribution of its eBook assets and provide retailer support for Random House in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India.

The Cork company currently supplies eBooks to over 1,000 on-line retailers and over 25,500 libraries. In addition, it powers the eBook platforms of some of the world’s largest publishing and technology companies, handling their storage, distribution, administration, billing and sales reporting requirements.

Under the new deal, ePbDirect will provide The Random House Group with digital distribution, eBook sales analytics and a number of innovative tools, delivering complete eBook visibility on market data, including rights, pricing and inventory on the company’s titles across all major outlets.

Random House, one of the ‘Big Six’ publishing companies (along with Hachette, Macmillan, Penguin, HarperCollins and Simon & Schuster), is the largest general interest book publisher in the world, and the company could be set to become significantly bigger if a planned merger with Penguin goes ahead.

Job well done in Ireland lands SeaChange business across Europe

Do a job well and you will often get asked to do it again, which is why the Naas behavioural psychology consultancy SeaChange now finds itself working with Danone in locations across Europe.

The firm, established by husband and wife team Ger and Tempy Cummins, specialises in inculcating best practice in organisations, whether in the areas of corporate and commercial health and safety; quality; leadership development; selection and assessment or in standard operating procedures.

When the company started working with personnel at the Danone Baby Nutrition Plant in Macroom, it engaged the workforce in local groups to focus people on safety within their own work areas. Then Job Safety Awareness cards were displayed to visually represent local risks and hazards, new safety routines were started and safety activities were linked to key performance indicators.

After the four-step process, the workforce scored a 150% increase on the ‘DuPont Safety Wise Score’ (an internationally recognised auditing tool). In addition, productivity and efficiency increased, absenteeism fell from 10% to 2.5% and the project won a ‘Best H&S Initiative’ within the Danone group. Moreover, this improved performance was pivotal in the Cork plant being selected for a €52m expansion.

The good news for SeaChange is that Danone has asked the Naas company to run its programme at other baby nutrition plants in France, Germany and the Netherlands.

“We are delighted. We have a six figure turnover that is due to increase by 50% this year,” said Tempy. “Danone has been great to work with, and we are using our experience with them to go for other business in mainland Europe.”

Irish tech start-up picked from 400 companies as a global health-care transformer

Dublin-based health technology start-up, GetHealth has been announced as one of 10 international companies picked as a ‘healthcare transformer’ by the New York-based programme, StartUp Health Academy. Each transformer chosen will participate in a three-year programme run by Start-Up Health in partnership with General Electric.

GetHealth Limited, started in September 2011 by two undergraduate students, competed against over 400 companies from around the world to earn a place on the programme. The company has developed a mobile app which makes getting healthy simple and fun for users. It enables users to check-in and earn points for their daily health achievements, such as eating their five fruit and vegetables or doing 30 minutes of exercise. The app also has a social component, allowing users to connect with other like-minded individuals so that they can support and motivate one another in achieving their health goals.

GetHealth was initially funded by the NDRC Launchpad programme in September 2011 and has also been recipient of the Competitive Start Fund through Enterprise Ireland.
UK Theatres call ‘Encore!’ for Ticketsolve solution

Theatres and performing-arts venue managers across the UK and Ireland are calling ‘Encore!’ and ‘More!’ following their successful implementation of the ticketing system developed by Dublin company Ticketsolve, which now has 140 venues as customers.

The company was founded in 2008 when the Dublin International Film Festival came looking for a way to integrate its online ticketing system with its online box office system. “We then started to research the wider market and saw that there were many performing arts venues which wanted to cut out the middleman and take ownership of their online ticket sales,” explains business development director Paul Fadden.

“Our first UK client was Komedia in Bath and Brighton, which previously had its ticketing systems crash because of high demand or technical faults. Our system is robust and allows for customer relationship management, such as targeted emails. Because the architecture we have used is very nimble, it is easily adaptable to new demands from customers, for example, we are fully integratable with social media, so our clients can do things like having audiences book tickets via their Facebook page.

“In addition to theatres, a new market for us is tourist information offices. We’ve now reached a certain level of critical mass. When we contact new potential customers 40 to 50% have already heard of us, and what they have heard is very positive.”

Roaming charge mandate to provide European boost for Tango Telecom

A n inhalator for horses developed by Irish company Nortev has won its German distributor a technology award at the biannual Equitana trade fair in Essen.

The Flexineb is a fast, portable equine inhaler/nebuliser device that is simple to use and noise free. The system is designed to generate the ideal aerosol particle size of a wide range of drugs, including corticosteroids, bronchodilators, saline and antibiotics. It is also extremely portable and offers in excess of three hours of operation before its battery needs recharging.

Company founder and MD Gavin O’Sullivan says the award, presented to its German distributor was a further boost to the company after 18 months of very successful trading in Germany. “We are now selling to in excess of 20 countries, but our best performing country is Germany, which is likely to account for 20 to 25% of turnover this year,” said O’Sullivan.

“There are a number of factors behind our success there. We have an excellent distributor, and he has great passion, partly because he is establishing himself in the market. He distributes only one other product, a laser pen.

The German market is different to the UK market, where horse racing dominates and where vets are key to getting to the trainers who are the final decision makers, according to O’Sullivan. “In Germany, there is a greater proportion of individual horse-owners who compete themselves in show-jumping events at the weekend and who make their own decisions about animal care.

“The Germans also buy a lot online, and that has helped us too,” he told The Market.

Outside of Germany, Nortev has also been winning plaudits. The device was a highly-commended runner-up in the 2012 British Equine Trade Association Innovation Awards and was also featured on the cover of the UK’s Veterinary Record magazine.
3D4Medical continues to bite the Apple

“... Apple has been very good to us; they are responsible for nearly all our marketing. We are getting enquiries about producing Microsoft and Android compatible versions of our apps, but we are very reluctant to do anything that might harm our relationship with Apple.”

Cork firm’s Massachusetts office brings smartphone security to the US

Cork-based Inhance Technology has opened a new office in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to serve the American market, which now accounts for about 50% of company revenue.

In January this year, the company rebranded itself, changing its name from Yougetitback, to better reflect the fact that it was a B2B operation, rather than a company focused chiefly on consumers. Inhance Technology’s customers are telcos and insurance companies, and, in the US, most of these are based on the east coast where the new US office is based.

The company received a major boost in July last year when it was awarded a US patent for systems and methods for detecting the loss, theft and/or unauthorised use of a mobile device, such as a smartphone, a laptop or a tablet, and for altering the functionality of the mobile device in response.

“With the explosive growth in the sales of smart devices, consumer demand for mobile insurance has also increased exponentially,” said VP of Marketing Lorraine Duffy. “However, the type of mobile insurance sought has changed, as consumers seek to protect not only their expensive device, but also the content and data on that device. We discovered there was a real need to provide to insurance providers a consumer security product with anti-theft, parental control, data backup and location features. This product can be wrapped around traditional insurance programmes to help the companies sell more policies, while also reducing fraud and customer attrition.”

In the last year, the company’s staff numbers have doubled to 40 and are expected to increase to 50 in the next 12 months. Projected revenue for 2013 is €5m, with the company pursuing an aggressive growth strategy over the next three years. Duffy said: “We are seeing the early stages of massive growth in Canada and in European countries like Spain, Holland and the UK. We are already on the ground in Russia, which is another massive market, and we are going live in Thailand, with our first customer in Asia. As well as serving the US and Canada, our US office is important to our strategy for Central and South America.”
Export development programmes provide hat-trick for Capstone

SureWash technology in permanent exhibition at Pacific Science Center

Technology from the Irish company SureWash is included in a new health and wellness exhibition the US’s Pacific Science Center in Seattle. The Wellbody Academy, the first new permanent exhibition at the centre in more than a decade, was established to demonstrate good living practices in hygiene, nutrition, exercise and sleep.

The Irish company’s technology promotes effective hand-hygiene techniques, which can lead to a reduction in hospital acquired infections and ultimately save lives.

The inclusion of it hand-hygiene training system in the new exhibition was supported by a group of clinical experts associated with the Pacific Science Center. Furthermore, each of the three SureWash hand-hygiene training systems on display were sponsored directly by the Seattle Children’s Hospital – further validating the opportunity for SureWash’s technology in the US healthcare environment. The exhibit was visited by the Taoiseach during his recent trade visit to the US.

Quality shines down under

Health Care Informed (HCI) has won a contract with one of Australia’s top pathology providers, with major labs throughout the country. The Irish company’s latest Australian customer Specialist Diagnostic Services (SDS) currently performs more than nine million pathology services annually in various territories throughout Australia.

“We will develop an integrated Quality Management System for SDS to fulfil their regulatory requirements and support their drive for patient safety and continuous quality improvement”, says HCI’s MD John Sweeney. “In doing this we are also able to provide significant cost savings by providing one unified quality management framework.”

Australia has become a key international market for HCI, after the Galway headquartered company set up an office in Melbourne four years ago. There is a strong focus on quality management systems in the Australian healthcare systems, Sweeney explains. “And because the country is so large and so diverse, they are very open to utilising innovative IT systems and looking at new and improving ways of operating.”

The Australian market itself is large, and the diversity and the physical distances of the country mean that HCI’s services appeal. Still, it took almost 12 months for the company to land its first contract down under. The company’s reputation recently got a booster shot after it designed an internal quality management system for ACHS, the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards, the regulatory body for acute care for all hospitals in Australia.

Following a similar quality management system development project for South Australian (SA) Pathology, completed last year, the customer identified a return on investment of Au$500,000, says Sweeney, which represented a significant saving in time and energy and cash.

Export development programmes provide hat-trick for Capstone

Capstone Intelligent Solutions supplies communication solutions to small and mid-sized multinational companies and has clients that include banks, law firms, technology firms and hotel chains. Last year, the company had a turnover of €4m, and it expects to increase that figure to €5.2m this year.

“Increasingly, our focus is on overseas business,” European sales director Rob Magee told The Market. “Last year there was a 66/33 split between domestic and foreign business. This year the split is likely to be 50/50, and we will be recruiting more staff.

“We have been an Enterprise Ireland client since April 2011 and have taken part in three EI programmes since then.

“The first was an international feasibility study that looked at potential opportunities in the UK, France and Germany, and that led to us launching in the UK last year and setting up a successful London office.

“We then availed of EI’s International Trade Fair Programme and received grant aid to attend a fair in Boston in May of last year, where we were the only non-US company present, and where we had the opportunity to promote ourselves to 5,000 potential end-users of our technology and services. One deal that came out of that was with a medical device manufacturer, Teleflex, whom we will be helping in Singapore.

“Thirdly, we took part in the eBusiness Marketing Initiative, which helped us improve our online presence making it easier for potential clients to find us, and that has already started happening. A new client called CareerBuilder came to us via our website. We have signed a €35,000 contract with this company, and we also have the additional possibility of more business with it and its clients in eight countries across the EMEA region.
Irish Business

Irish consumer brands showcased in Dubai

Some 21 Irish consumer retail companies travelled to Dubai last month for a Retail Ireland event, aimed at showcasing leading Irish brands and helping them to explore commercial opportunities in the Middle East.

The two-day event was designed to educate Irish retail companies on doing business in the region and familiarise them with some of the most prominent players – both retailers and distributors – such as the Al Tayer Group, Chalhoub, Jashanmal, Qatar Luxury, Home Centre and Namshi.com. The format included education and information sharing sessions, as well as meetings with some of the GCC’s biggest retail names.

Businesses that took part included the natural skincare company Human+Kind and the bedding manufacturer Pownall and Hampson, both of which are already active suppliers in the UAE. The delegation also included soft furnishings, contemporary fashion and bespoke jewellery brands.

Croatia to become 28th EU Member State

Subject to a ratification procedure, the Republic of Croatia is due to become the 28th EU Member State on 1 July, 2013.

Prior to the global financial crisis of 2008-09, the economy grew at a healthy 4-5% annually, incomes doubled and economic and social opportunities dramatically improved. However, since the crisis, the country has been in recession for four years, losing almost 11% of its output.

Croatia has a population of 4.4 million. The country lies along three Pan-European transport corridors between the European Union and south-eastern Europe, and the Croatian authorities have invested heavily in developing their pan-European transport network primarily through public funding, focusing mainly on roads, motorways and ports. The euro area accounts for about half of Croatia’s trade (primarily with Germany and Italy) and is the source of about three-quarters of foreign-direct investment (FDI) flows into the country.
Game on for Germany

Germany was the name of the game for Irish developers and creators this April. Since 2003, Quo Vadis has become Germany’s largest conference for the video games industry. First chosen in 2007, the Berlin venue embodies everything games are about: youth culture, creativity and a love of play. The conference runs in parallel with Deutsche Gamestage, and between them, the two events attract around 3,000 visitors every year.

Coinciding with the Berlin events, this year Enterprise Ireland brought together a panel focusing on gaming in Ireland, with panellists including representatives from Digit Game Studios, currently in negotiations for the licensing of its game ‘King of the Realms’ in Germany, and BitSmith Games, which is just launching the German version of ‘Ku, shroud of the Morrigan’, based on Irish mythology. Earlier this year, the game was the overall winner at Games Fleadh back in Ireland.

Also coinciding with Quo Vadis, the Irish Ambassador to Germany hosted a networking event in the Irish Embassy, under the banner of ‘Vorsprung durch Irland: The Future of Gaming’. Among the speakers were representatives of Havoc, Keywords International, Swrve and Flashpoint.

Anne Oebels, a software and services market adviser with Enterprise Ireland in Dusseldorf, believes that Germany offers plenty of opportunities for Irish gaming companies. With 36 million active gamers, it is the third largest gaming market globally (after the US and Russia). Some 44% of the population are active gamers, and it has the highest percentage worldwide of gamers spending money on games, translating to an annual spend of €4.6 billion.

Wayra launches new call for digital start-ups

Wayra, Telefónica’s global startup accelerator, has announced a new call for projects in Ireland. Entrepreneurs are being invited to submit digital projects, up to 26 May, to win a place at one of eight academies, including Wayra Dublin, where up to 10 places are available.

The focus of this call is on products and solutions in the fields of big data, M2M (Machine to Machine), mobile, virtualisation and cloud services. However, Wayra is open to any kind of proposal in the fields of technological innovation.

After passing through the selection process, the best projects take part in the acceleration programme, which provides them with financing of €40,000; expert mentors; dedicated workspace for their team for up to nine months at Wayra Dublin and favourable commercial terms with leading technology suppliers. In addition, each business has the potential to access the Telefónica Group’s businesses worldwide, and entrepreneurs will join Wayra’s investor, partner and expert network in different parts of the world. See http://wayra.org/en/joinus.

TEDx is coming to University College Dublin

The first ever TEDx event at University College Dublin will take place this June. TEDxUCD, on 12 June, will be held in the Garret FitzGerald Debating Chamber, a new venue in the recently opened UCD Students Centre, which resembles a mini-parliament.

In the spirit of ideas worth spreading, TEDx is a programme of local, self-organised events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. At a TEDx event, TED Talks videos and live speakers combine to spark deep discussion and connection in a small group.

To nominate someone who would make a great TEDx speaker, and who has a link with UCD, contacting caroline. gill@ucd.ie.
Motorola Solutions EMEA chooses technology from Channel Mechanics

Motorola Solutions has selected technology from the young Irish company Channel Mechanics to increase the productivity and efficiency of its channel of over 3,000 resellers and 40 distributors in EMEA markets.

Channel Mechanics, a high-potential start-up, focuses on channel enablement and operational components for manufacturers that use distributors and resellers in the resale of their products and services. The company’s mission is to provide enterprise ‘Channel Enablement as a Service’ capabilities that allow rapid execution of sales and marketing programmes, promotions or initiatives, globally or locally, through all tiers of the channel.

Channel Mechanics will be rolling out two different capabilities within its channelIT solution to support demos and promotions for Motorola Solutions EMEA, designed to allow the company to control the consumption of its products and offer flexible ways of promotional pricing.

Event to focus on succeeding in the US education technology market

The education market in the US is in a state of disruption. There is a significant opportunity to sell new learning technologies to all levels of the US system. Specifically, the ‘k-12’ and ‘higher ed’ markets are forecast to grow by 20% (to $13.4bn) and 18% (to $39.8bn) respectively in the period from 2012-2017, far surpassing corporate e-learning, with forecast growth of 5% to $12.3bn.

The competitive environment is evolving rapidly as a result of a significant spike in VC investment and the emergence of a large number of both private and non-profit edtech players. In Ireland, a number of new edtech companies are also emerging, focusing one of three sectors: k-12, higher ed or consumer education markets.

Helping Irish companies to understand how to tap the potential of this market, ‘How to Succeed in the US Edtech Market’ will take place on 26 June. For further information, contact Michelle Dervan, Manager – USA, Education in Ireland, E: michelle.dervan@enterprise-ireland.com, T: +1 212 5460480

New international scholarships to strengthen links with emerging markets

A new international scholarship scheme has been launched with the aim of attracting top students from priority and emerging markets to study in Ireland.

The first group of 20 international students have received their scholarships. The students from India, China and Brazil are in either their final year of undergraduate studies or at post-graduate level. Under the Government of Ireland International Scholarships, they have all fees and registration charges waived and also receive €10,000 to cover living expenses for one year of study in Ireland.

A further 22 scholarships will be awarded to students from China, India, Brazil and the United States for the 2013/14 academic year.

“This new scholarship scheme is a key part of our efforts to promote Ireland as a centre for international study. International students contribute over a billion euro each year to the Irish economy,” the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn TD commented as he launched the programme. “We are a trading economy, and so we need to raise Ireland’s links with major emerging markets like China, Brazil and India. By awarding scholarships to top students from these countries, we are making an investment in our future trading relationships, which will benefit Irish business, tourism and cultural interests overseas.”

Cloud adoption events to help SMEs grow exports

The Irish Internet Association, in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and sponsored by Microsoft, is holding a series of Cloud awareness and adoption events for summer 2013, aimed at helping Irish SMEs assess the potential of using cloud-based business models to support their export growth. The first event takes place in Galway on Thursday 30 May, 2013, and will be followed by events in Dublin and Cork. See www.iia.ie/cloudroadshow

€300k investment to see Glenilen grow its yoghurt business

Glenilen Farm, a family dairy business in West Cork with a current turnover close to €4 million, is investing some €300k in the production and distribution of a new range of yoghurt products for children and babies. The new product range is now available in supermarkets.

Continuing its focus on the use of natural ingredients, Glenilen Farm is anticipating approximately €900,000 worth of annual sales of Glenilen Farm Yummy Yoghurts for kids and Fromage Frais Style yoghurts for babies 6+ months, targeting consumers throughout Ireland and the UK.
€650K investment for meditative breathing aid

Zinc Software, a Dublin-based company developing a biofeedback gaming platform for iOS and Android devices, has raised €650k in funding through Kernel Capital’s MedTech Accelerator Fund; the AIB Seed Capital Fund, co-managed by Dublin BIC; Enterprise Ireland and PCH International.

“We are delighted to have raised this investment, which will enable us to bring our first product, the Zen, to market,” said Darran Hughes, CEO of Zinc Software. “The Zen gamifies meditative breathing and allows anyone to take 10 minutes out of their day to re-energise and refocus. In the near future, we will rapidly see the growth in body-oriented sensors and apps, which will make healthy living fun and engaging.”

Zinc is the first European company to partner with PCH International, as part of its Accelerator programme. Commenting on the investment, PCH International CEO Liam Casey said that products being developed by Zinc were “game changers” for the health and wellness market. “PCH will help them achieve scale and bring an exciting new product to market,” he said. “Our PCH Accelerator programme brings the most innovative hardware products to market quickly, and we believe we are building the Fortune 500 brands of the future.”

Leaf Investments seeks to fund learning tech start-ups

Leaf Investments, a recently established boutique investment fund for the learning technology sector, has announced that it is actively seeking to build a portfolio of investments in early-stage learning technology companies.

Backed by the Irish educational publisher Folens, over the next two to three years, Leaf is seeking to deploy €250k to €1 million in support of early-stage companies either as part of a syndicate or as a sole investor.

The learning technology sector is experiencing significant growth as demonstrated by the eLearning market, which is the fastest growing education market today, standing at €31bn in 2012 and forecast for an average growth rate of 23% out to 2017.

In 2012, Leaf backed two businesses, EmpowerTheUser (ETU) and StoryToys. Commenting on the fund, Hugh O’Driscoll, partner at Leaf Investments, said, “It’s a really interesting time for investment in learning technologies with advances in digital and mobile technologies enabling disruptive, immersive learning experiences. The increased attention the sector is receiving from mainstream funds underlines this. However, there are certain industry specific nuances that investors need to understand in order to deliver shareholder returns.”
MAY

Hospitalar 2013 - LS Trade Fair
May 21 to 24
A leading international trade show for hospitals, laboratories, pharmacies, health clinics and medical offices in Latin America. The most relevant companies in the healthcare sector will occupy 82,000sqm of exhibition area to present what is most innovative and efficient worldwide for use in this market.

v: São Paulo
e: andrea.rangel@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +55 11 33554801

Pharma/Engineering/Construction Event Belgium
May 25
Belgium is an important location for the pharmaceutical industry. Enterprise Ireland is organising a reception and dinner to allow Irish clients targeting this sector to strengthen their networks of contacts in Belgium.

v: Brussels
e: paul.maguire@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +32 02 6739866

NAFSA 2013 - USA
May 26 to 31
Education in Ireland will be exhibiting at NAFSA 2013 in St Louis along with all nine universities on the island of Ireland and several other HEIs.

v: St Louis
e: gill.roe@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +353 1 7272365

E-Commerce/Social Media Consumer Products in the USA
May 29
A seminar and one-to-one meetings with experts will be held to assist Irish companies targeting the US consumer market on the importance of strategies for e-commerce and social media. Industry experts from the USA will take part in this event.

v: Dublin
e: ann.cronin@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +353 21 4800225

International Lead Generation - Shaping Business
May 28
Part of the Excel at Export Selling workshop series, this practical one-day workshop and follow-up coaching programme is aimed at enabling businesses to plan and implement more effective lead generation programmes.

v: East Point Business Park,
Dublin 3
e: bridgin.durnin@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +353 1 7272734

Driving Competitiveness
May 28
An EU Presidency conference focusing on what companies are doing to practically improve their competitiveness. Cases will be presented in five parallel streams, allowing participants to choose the cases most relevant to them.

v: Dublin Castle
e: richard.keeigan@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +353 1 7272334

JUNE

Week of Innovative Regions in Europe WIRE IV
June 5 to 7
This conference will address the Innovation Union context of the ‘Capacities’ work programme, especially that of the Research Potential Programme, with emphasis on research and innovation as key drivers of competitiveness, jobs, sustainable growth and social progress.

v: Cork
e: ciara.clogher@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +353 1 7272725
w: http://wire2013.eu

MIFA - France
June 10
MIFA is the leading European animation conference and trade fair. It is attended by 2,500 professionals from TV, digital media and new platforms. Enterprise Ireland will organise networking events at MIFA for Irish clients and industry contacts.

v: Annecy
e: eileen.bell@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +353 1 7272148

New Market Opportunity Mission to Alberta – Canada
June 10 to 13
This visit is designed to give Enterprise Ireland clients exposure to the opportunities in Western Canada through a series of meetings and networking opportunities.

v: Calgary Edmonton
e: ross.ocolmain@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +1 416 9345033

EuroSME 2013
June 11 & 12
EuroSME 2013 will focus on SME aspects of innovation, growth and jobs and will consider the role of the SME in the Europe of 2020.

v: Dublin Castle
e: ciara.clogher@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +353 1 7272725
w: www.eurosme2013.eu

Mystery Creek Fieldays, New Zealand 2013
June 12 to 15
Enterprise Ireland will host an Ireland national stand at Mystery Creek Fieldays – the largest agribusiness event in the Southern Hemisphere. New Zealand is the world leader in agricultural and pastoral farming, and National Fielddays is a great launch platform for Irish companies to showcase their cutting edge technology and innovative solutions.

v: Hamilton
e: christopher.littlewood@enterprise-ireland.com
p: +61 2 94738517
Market study visit to Pennsylvania Life Science Cluster & MD&M East
June 17 to 21
A first-time ‘Exploring New Markets’ visit to one of the largest pharmaceutical and medical device clusters in the US. Over 80% of the world’s pharmaceutical companies have a manufacturing or R&D base in the Philadelphia region. In conjunction with the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and their economic development arms, this visit will open doors and educate client companies about the pharma and med device companies in the cluster. MD&M East will be the key event for the device companies taking part.

Growth Strategies for SMEs
June 18 & 19
This workshop will explore how to achieve sustainable growth, with particular focus on mergers, acquisitions and joint ventures.

EuroNanoForum 2013
June 18 to 20
The main focus of this conference will be the commercialisation of nanotechnology, exploiting its potential for new applications, pushing it from an enabling technology to development and on to end-product use.

EuroNanoForum 2013 - Brokerage Event
June 20
On the 3rd day of the EuroNanoForum conference, there will be a separate brokerage event, hosted by the Enterprise Europe Network. This will target a wide spectrum of innovative companies, universities and researchers from Europe, interested in sharing new project ideas and finding collaboration partners.

Food Innovation Mission to Switzerland
June 28
Switzerland is a key location for innovation and investment in the food industry. Enterprise Ireland is organising a mission to create new relationships between Swiss and Irish companies for collaboration on innovation.

Falsterbo Horse Show – Equine Study Visit
July 6 to 14
The Falsterbo Horse Show is the largest outdoor equine event in the Nordic countries. It provides an excellent opportunity for Irish companies in this sector to meet key buyers and decision makers from across these markets.

Ireland @ Microsoft WPC 2013
July 7 to 11
Participation at this event is a key opportunity for Irish clients to leverage the Microsoft partner channel, create awareness of ISV solutions and reach end-customers.

Children’s Media Conference
July 8 to 11
The UK Children’s Media Conference is attended by media and entertainment leaders, buying, developing, producing and distributing content for children on all platforms. Delegates from TV, interactive media, games, licensing, toys, e-learning and publishing all attend this event.

Using the Internet to Compete in International Markets
July 16
This event will focus on how Enterprise Ireland client companies can use the internet to market their products and services more successfully in international markets and on the strategies and processes needed to identify, reach and retain new customers on the web.

Software & Services Trade Mission to Australia
July 29 to August 2
Software exporters have been successful in Australia; it is Ireland’s third largest market. The objective of this mission is to highlight Irish capability in financial services, telecoms and e-health, through introductions to potential new customers and partners.

Exploring Exporting - 2 Day Workshop
Ongoing
New series of two-day workshops delivered approximately three weeks apart to assist early and pre-export companies make sound business decisions on whether exporting is for them, understand how to export and how to plan for successful export entry.

US Retail Technology Market Visit
August 4 to 7
Enterprise Ireland is hosting a market study visit to the RetailNow expo in Las Vegas, which is the premier convention and fair for all professionals in the retail technology industry.

IRELAND @ VM World 2013
August 26 to 29
VM World has emerged as an important conference/show for IaaS/SaaS clients to attend for partnering with VMWare and as a channel event.

Software & Services Trade Mission to France
September 24 to 27
This mission will target the French market and highlight Irish capability in software and services.

Email details of your upcoming business events to the.market@enterprise-ireland.com
Having recently established a manufacturing facility in Indonesia, H&K International is preparing to embark on a whole new phase of growth in the Asia Pacific region. Donal Nugent reports.

ASIAN FUSION

Set up in Canada in 1975 and, today, an Irish-owned supplier of kitchen equipment to the international fast food and casual dining industry, H&K International may be among the lower-profile Irish manufacturing success stories, but a close look at its business model suggests lessons from which any exporter serious about global growth could learn.

Operating in a highly cost-conscious sector, H&K’s ability to retain a sharp edge over its competitors in vastly diverse markets is noteworthy to say the least. Having recently established a manufacturing facility in Indonesia, in addition to plants already in operation in the US, UK and Mexico, the company is preparing to embark on a whole new phase of growth in the Asia Pacific region.

H&K’s expansion mirrors that of its long-standing client base, with chains such as McDonald’s, Subway and Burger King on upward growth trajectories across Asia’s developing economies.

David Spain, Chief Financial Officer, H&K, explains that the key to the company’s success has been the hands-on approach it takes to supply and logistics, effectively becoming a trusted partner in building and refitting projects.

While serving the Asian market is, itself, nothing new – the company had a close relationship with its business partner in Indonesia for some 17 years – what has changed with the opening of the new manufacturing facility is the level of service it can now offer.

“Asia is a market we have been familiar with for many years, and many of our customers have been active there for decades. McDonald’s has 3,000 outlets in Japan, for example. But, until recently, we were supporting Asia through a ship-to-port model. You ordered a package, we shipped it and you picked it up at the port. So, effectively, there was a reduced level of service, with less handholding and less choice, compared to more mature markets.”

Responding to the region’s rapid economic growth over the last few years, the company has now evolved that model significantly. “We needed to be able to reflect our customers’ growing presence on the ground by offering a lot more services, for example, in the area of after sales,” Spain explains.

ON THE GROUND

H&K has taken a two-pronged approach to the opportunity in Asia, focusing on China, through partnership with local manufacturers, and on South East Asia by buying out the Indonesian company with which it had a long-standing partnership.

“We had worked very well with that local partner, in terms of the quality of equipment and work practices, and so it made sense to build on that when we saw the opportunity to expand.”

The facility, located outside Jakarta, employs 150 people in total and, in the takeover process, H&K kept the existing management team. “This
allowed us to hit the ground running, while we also brought in expertise from other parts of H&K to develop the facility in terms of best practice. We will be investing around $10m in the next three to five years in increasing its capacity.”

As an approach to setting up a manufacturing operation, Spain stresses that “what really worked for us was the fact that we slipped into the glove of former owner. That removed a lot of obstacles and challenges. It also meant we knew we had a facility we could work.”

As to whether this approach makes growth and expansion a more streamlined process, he argues that it is all relative.

“Compared to China, it certainly is,” he told The Market. “Whereas, compared to Europe, it is not. There is a free trade zone and we are working through that. But, for example, it takes six months to get an importation licence, which we have to have as we are starting as a new entity, and as a foreign-owned business.”

Exporting is somewhat more straightforward, but “you do have to get the paperwork right. Exporting to China and Japan and across South East Asia is not an issue once you have the correct documentation. However, one of the cultural challenges you will see as you move across Asia is that the quality of information you have access to may not be what you are used to in the West. My advice would be not to take the first answer you are given as correct. The input of trusted advisers is critical and you also have to recognise that things here move at a different pace.”

The new plant in Indonesia will still operate to a ship-to-port model, but with a broader offering and better customer support across the South East Asia region.

From a standing start 12 months ago, the company now has three staff based in Singapore and is looking in depth at the opportunities in neighbouring countries, including Australia, one of the first markets the new facility is serving.

Spain points to China as an example of the scale of opportunity emerging. “It took McDonald’s 20 years to open its first 1,000 restaurants in China, and it now plans to open 1,000 every three years, effectively one a day.”

Even in the region’s more sluggish economies, recession isn’t necessarily a bad thing for those who fit out casual dining facilities. “If you look at Japan, where some of our clients have seen their sales struggle, they recognise that they can’t just sit back and do nothing, so they are willing to invest in their facilities and that’s obviously an opportunity for us.”

SEGREGATE

As it intensifies its presence across Asia significantly, Spain says that the company’s knowledge of the region, and its nuances, has grown.

“If there is one piece of advice I would give to someone looking at the Asia Pacific region it is not to see it as a whole, but to recognise that you need to segregate it and to look at every country and region individually. China is completely different to Japan and, while things may be a little more homogenous in the South East region, you’ll still find customers have different requirements, and that you have to customise your offering accordingly.”

As to why an Irish manufacturing company has proved so successful in a region famous for its ability to undercut others on price, David says “our secret is probably that we don’t take anything for granted. As a management team, we have always been involved in the details and [we] pay attention to detail. We are a close-knit team, and we take a sleeves-rolled-up approach.”

For those entering new markets where there is a lot of pressure on price and different expectations of value than they may be used to in the West, his advice is to “put your plan together and stay organised; control the controllables and manage the uncontrollables. When you have the right building blocks in place, you can find opportunities even in a very tough environment.”
What persuaded an Irish software developer, a timber company and a services firm to target the North West of England? Ian Campbell talks to Irish businesses that have found the north anything but grim.
For Irish businesses looking to expand overseas, Britain is an obvious destination. Same language, similar culture, and close proximity. Less obvious, perhaps, is the idea that you target the North West of England rather than London and the South East. Listen to Irish businesses, however, and there’s a compelling case to be made.

On a good day, you can fly from Dublin to Manchester in less than 40 minutes and find yourself in Britain’s second biggest city. Greater Manchester has a population of just under three million. But a combination of good roads and infrastructure, including a second airport in Liverpool, ratchets up the selling points for the entire North West.

The region encompasses a corner of England that stretches from Carlisle near the Scottish border down to Chester and the Welsh border. With a population of just under seven million, it’s the third most populated region and the largest functional economic area after Greater London and the South East. It’s also a much more affordable place to do business, both in terms of wages and renting office space.

Well served by infrastructure and motorways in particular, it’s a short travel time between towns in the region, while its central position makes the rest of Britain accessible. No coincidence that the BBC chose Manchester – or Media City in Salford, to be exact – for its new headquarters when it moved from London as part of its decentralisation strategy.

Closer to home, Enterprise Ireland also encourages clients to be less London-centric in their approach to Britain. “There is huge growth and energy in the North West, and physically it’s the closest place in England to Ireland,” said Gavin McWhirter, EI’s UK manager for key sectors. “Liverpool was the port of call when the boats came over. Over a hundred years of immigration has created a permanent connection.”

Liverpool has become the UK base for Waterford Technologies, although the journey there was more circuitous than the one taken by the first immigrants. It tried London and Birmingham before it was persuaded north by a growing number of clients in the region. The Irish software company makes email and file archive solutions and has been doing business in the UK almost since it started in 2003. The office in Pall Mall Street in Liverpool’s city centre was opened last year and is home to six staff: three sales people and three in tech support.

“You have to be on the ground, seeing the challenges companies face and networking with people,” he said.

While geography is no obstacle to selling Waterford’s software, which is useful for any business with rudimentary IT systems, for Glennon Brothers, the geography is the opportunity. A timber processing firm that specialises in a type of spruce wood that grows in Ireland and Northern Britain, its core customers are unsurprisingly located in the same regions.

“You have to be on the ground, seeing the challenges companies face and networking with people,” he said.
While the south of England has a tradition of importing timber products from Scandinavia, the north of Britain takes its wood products from local suppliers. Glennon made sure it became one through the acquisition of two processing facilities in Scotland and a concerted effort to get to know its UK customers.

Selling the timber material used in pallets was how its UK business started 15 years ago. The UK’s second largest pallet manufacturer, based in Manchester, signed a contract with Glennon. “The pallet business was 15 per cent of our total sales at that point, but it was fully saturated in Ireland so we had to move somewhere else,” recalled Mike Glennon, joint managing director.

When the Irish construction industry collapsed, success in the UK became fundamental to survival. To advance its strategy, Glennon dropped the agent it had been using and went direct. “There’s only a small strip of water between Ireland and the UK, and we felt that our unique selling point was our customer relationships and our service, because we were never going to be the cheapest,” said Glennon. “We started representing ourselves with a rep who would go over one week a month. It didn’t take too long to get a sense of the scale of the opportunity and identify the large players.”

Through a combination of trade bodies and time spent on the ground, the company got to know the market, bolstered by the Scottish acquisitions that gave it “skin in the game”. By presenting itself as a one-stop shop for softwood solutions to anywhere in Britain, it achieved preferred supplier status from major buying groups. “It takes a lot of negotiation and a fair bit of due diligence. We invested in getting health and safety compliant and regularly bring clients on visits to our plants to make them feel comfortable with us,” he said.

Being Irish also helps in the region, according to Glennon. “We had an event in the North West recently where everyone seemed to have an Irish connection. And it helped that the managing director of the original pallet company was of Irish descent,” he said. “Building trust comes naturally to an Irish mind-set, and our ability to laugh at ourselves puts people at ease. We’re good at forming relationships.”

### RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

When Jack Nagle left his role as operations director for Boston Scientific in Cork to launch his own business, Alpha Primary Care, he knew that the UK had the size and scale he needed to succeed. He set up his company headquarters in Salford, the same borough of Greater Manchester that’s home to Media City.

“We originally started in Ireland to get the experience we knew we’d need to get into the UK and work with the NHS [National Health Service],” he said. “It gave us traction that we used when we came over to develop and run some pilot projects.”

The firm provides managed services to GP practices and healthcare professionals, improving their processes and driving efficiency through carefully honed management techniques. Utilising a pool of contract workers, the firm employs just eight full-time staff, with three focused exclusively on the UK.

Why Salford? A crucial contact was a former NHS consultant who was based in Manchester, along with some other names supplied by Enterprise Ireland. It quickly became apparent that the region had plenty of opportunities to target. “There is so much going on in London, but it’s hard to get in there. We felt we had a better opportunity in Manchester and used market research to identify GP practices and the people most likely to use our services,” said Nagle.

To raise its profile, trade shows were attended and articles generated in specialist magazines. But the main strategy was based on developing relationships with key groups. “Once we found like-minded people, we would go in and do a pilot. That gave us something to build on,” explained Nagle.
The firm is also targeting London and Newcastle in a three-pronged move on UK. “If you are on the ground in Britain, the geographic spread becomes quite onerous. It makes sense to focus on key areas,” said Nagle. “London is the most attractive market, but Manchester is second. It’s a good city for us and has a lot going for it in terms of size, scale and development.”

UK TRADE MISSION TO NORTH WEST ENGLAND
The North West region of the UK spans an area of approximately 14,000 km, and, with just under 7 million inhabitants, is more populous than four EU countries (Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Luxembourg). With Scotland to the north, the Pennines to the east and the Irish Sea to the west, north west England is home to 350,000 companies and has a regional economy worth £121 billion each year.

Examples of major companies with a significant base in the region include Betfred, Unilever PLC, Shop Direct Holdings Limited, Home Delivery Network Limited, AMEC, United Utilities, MBNA, Iceland Foods, GB Oils, The Co-operative Group and many others.

In October 2013, Enterprise Ireland plans to support a group of up to 20 Irish software and services companies to travel to this region of England and help them identify potential new customers. Participating companies must be committed to growing their export business into the UK.

For more information, contact Gavin McWhirter, E: gavin.mcwhirter@enterprise-ireland.com, T: +44 (0) 20 7438 8722
Daimler Trucks is the largest manufacturer of heavy commercial vehicles in the world today, employing over 80,000 people. Last year, despite very difficult markets, it sold 462,000 vehicles and earned a profit of €1.7 billion on sales of €31.4 billion. At the center of its global strategy development is a young Irish engineer. John Stanley asks the 36-year-old from Castlebar, Co Mayo, how he reached such a critical position at the heart of the German automotive giant.

When he was 11 years old, Alex Corcoran opted to become a boarder at Dublin’s Castleknock College. It is a decision he has never regretted, partly because it developed his independence. It also developed his aptitude for chemistry, physics, maths and applied maths, and he went on to study engineering at University College Dublin.

He also had an enthusiasm for knowing exactly how cars and combustion engines worked and set his sights at an early age on working in the automotive or aerospace industry.

In 1998, his third year in college, he secured a three month internship in Munich with BMW, at that time carrying out research with UCD into ways of machining various metals. “I loved the work, the city and the whole environment of the automotive world,” he recalls.

On his return he was encouraged by Prof Gerald Byrne, now Dean of Engineering and College Principal at UCD, to take a masters in laser drilling for turbine applications in conjunction with Cork-based SIFCO Ireland. Later, Prof Byrne arranged an internship for Corcoran at Daimler, which was doing similar research. He obviously made a good impression because before he left he was offered a job as a development engineer as soon as he had completed his masters. This gave him the perfect opportunity to combine his interest in research with doing a doctorate, something he had not previously contemplated.

Having persuaded Prof Byrne to supervise him, Corcoran spent the next three years with Daimler in Ulm carrying out a PhD research programme into the potential of novel integrated process chains for manufacturing automotive powertrain components. Looking back, he thinks that doctorate was important for his career because it increased his credibility and acceptance within Daimler, leading to more responsibility, including project leads.

Over the next four years he was responsible for developing, evaluating and implementing flexible manufacturing systems, particularly for powertrain production. These included a number of projects in the US with Chrysler, which merged with Daimler between 1998 and 2007.

Corcoran enjoyed the international aspect of that job, and when Daimler split from Chrysler, he looked internally for new opportunities. He found them in the truck division, the most international of Daimler’s activities, with 27 manufacturing locations worldwide. There he became a lead consultant in a team embedding ‘lean’ principles throughout the global business. This was an exciting project, which also increased his network of contacts and enabled him to progress into his first management role, responsible for performance management. After a further two years, however, Corcoran began to hanker for an opportunity to move into the strategy area.
**Know the Details ... Precisely**

If you want to do business with Germans, you have to know the details; you have to be precise,” Alex Corcoran stresses. “Bear in mind that they will always look closely at the quality you are selling. They also want to know that they are doing business that is sustainable over the next 10, 15 or 20 years. At heart, they always want a long-term partnership.”

One of his lasting memories is from his early research days in Ulm. “We had to build a rig to do a particular test, and I sent down a detailed drawing. I thought I had covered everything but the engineer responsible for building the rig, which was only two months, soon came back to me. I had not specified the screw sizes, the thread or the thread pitch. It was obvious to him that I had not fully thought this through. That certainly belongs to the mindset you will encounter doing business in Germany:”

“After eight years with the business, I wanted to see what the bigger picture is like for a company like Daimler,” he told The Market. An internal mentor helped him, and, over the space of six months, he had a number of informal meetings with Daimler directors of strategy, giving him the opportunity to discuss and flag up his interest in the area.

In February 2011, he was appointed to a new position of Manager Strategy Daimler Trucks and Multi-brand Management. In this position, he has an overall responsibility for identifying and evaluating business development opportunities for all five of Daimler’s truck brands. The position is unique and involves working with different regional and brand strategists. “Once a topic spans multiple regions or brands, it lands with me,” he explains. That can be a tough challenge, involving diplomacy as well as careful analysis and creativity.

“From the outset we had to get the people from the regions involved and on board. But it’s been a very positive experience, looking at how we can apply our strengths across the global teams and seeking opportunities and synergies for our business across regions,” Corcoran says.

He describes strategy as being quite different from the day-to-day work of engineering. “It requires an eye for detail but at the same time creativity in finding new solutions. It’s one of the few jobs to identify the future pain points and how to alleviate them,” he adds.

So what are those pain points right now for Daimler Trucks? “Unlike cars, trucks are a rational purchase and many markets are floundering due to the general economic situation, so a lot of our strategy is about managing this situation and part of that is keeping a close eye on our competitors’ moves.

“But we also have high-growth opportunities in the truck business. Much of this growth will come from the emerging markets in particular. In these countries, we’re looking at the evolution of a new mid-priced segment for commercial vehicles. This can be best described as a market segment between the high-priced western brands such as Mercedes-Benz and the low-priced offerings from China and India. In addition, these and other countries are also now adopting new emissions regulations and that, too, is a significant area of opportunity for us.”

Product cycles for trucks are typically far longer than for cars, with models typically lasting 15 years before replacement. But how do strategists cope with the fact that the further you look into the future, the fuzzier the vision becomes?

“We develop a ‘comprehensive best guess’ for any given time period, then work backwards from that,” explains Corcoran. “We put milestones in place, so we know exactly when we need to make each critical decision that will involve us putting our money on the table. That way, we can assess how accurate our best guess is the closer we get to it and amend our strategy accordingly.”

**If You Want to Get Ahead, Get a Language**

Alex Corcoran has strong words of advice for anyone wanting to work in or do business with Germany: “Work hard to become more proficient in German than they are in English.” That’s a tall order, given that most Germans start to learn English at six years of age and can speak it extremely well as a result.

Germans are also very polite, so they will generally make the effort to converse in English in meetings with native English speakers. “But if you can converse in German, that earns you huge respect,” Corcoran says.

“That was reinforced for me during my time at BMW. A lot of people from Rover were there, and it was blatantly obvious that they were being seriously hampered by their inability to speak German. Meetings might start in English, but, if the majority of people attending were German speakers, they would invariably revert to German, particularly when the important issues were being discussed. It meant the English speakers were always on the back foot.”

How did Corcoran become proficient? He did German at school, and he knew that the best opportunities for his chosen career would be either in Japan or Germany. At college, he had a summer job in Hamburg Port, and, on his return, he enrolled in the Goethe Institute, where he spent two years building a strong foundation in German grammar. “After that, I just needed to acquire the extended vocabulary necessary for any specific requirement.”
The global music industry is adapting to the digital age at an accelerated rate, and new models for creating, consuming and accessing music are constantly being introduced into new markets. This digital landscape provides both opportunities and challenges for record labels, producers and artists. The internet makes the distribution of music faster and easier to access, but issues of piracy have risen. There is a strong feeling in the industry that artists should be rewarded financially for their work in the digital environment, just as they have always been in the physical world. In spite of technological advances, the consumer must accept that this revolution of choice does not make music free.

Not only does the internet create a financial gap for artists and record labels, it also creates a shortage of consumer data. “The music industry is in flux,” says Brendan O’Driscoll, CEO of the music discovery start-up company Soundwave Analytics. “It is suffering from a shortage of data. It used to rely on data based on physical sales to see where their customers were and what they were listening to. However, now 95% of music downloads are illegal so the light has been turned off over the market.”

In the UK, digital revenues stand at one-third of industry income – an important statistic when one considers that this surpasses those of other creative industries (e.g. film, books and newspapers). There is a mood of optimism in the music industry here, and Enterprise Ireland sees this as an opportunity for Irish companies.

Ireland is home to some of the most exciting and forward-thinking music technology start-ups that are focused on driving opportunity and addressing the challenges faced by the music industry. Thought-leading companies such as 45sound, Seevl, WholeWorldBand, Soundwave Analytics, Mabanode, Huggity, Riffstation and Ticketfriend are but a few of the ones to watch.

To highlight this strong cluster, an Innovation in Music Technology Showcase is being run by Enterprise Ireland’s New Market Entrants Team in Dublin at the end of May. The New Market Entrants Team, based in Enterprise Ireland’s UK office, works with high-potential start-up (HPSU) companies, helping to build disruptive businesses across dynamic sectors, including online, digital and mobile.

Leading music technology representatives from companies such as Mobile Roadie, Mint Digital and Music Ally will hear about the impact of digital technology on the future of the music industry and learn about new ways of driving revenue in their business in the surroundings of The Sugar Club, one of Dublin’s most creative music venues. Topics on the day will range from digital fan engagement strategies to collaborative content creation and music discovery to mobile festivals.

John Holland, CEO of audio-visual music platform WholeWorldBand, is one of eight speakers on the day who will share insights into how companies might change the music business: “Internet technology companies and platforms like Spotify, YouTube and SoundCloud are changing how music is discovered and consumed. At WholeWorldBand we are looking to enhance the collaborative composition, creation and recording of music,” he told The Market.

Digital was once feared to be the killer of the music industry but this mindset is constantly shifting. According to the IFPI (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry), “the music industry has grasped the opportunities of the digital world in a way few, if any, other businesses can claim to have done”.

For more information on Enterprise Ireland’s activity in the UK music industry, contact aislinn.mahon@enterprise-ireland.com
It may be cold outside, but investment in transport infrastructure is hotting up in the Nordics. Anthony King reports that procurement officials, eager to get the best bang for their buck, are welcoming competition from foreign bidders and sub-contractors.

NORDICS PROMISE A WARM WELCOME
Scandinavia is embarking on a major spending spree, aimed at upgrading its transport infrastructure. Sweden is set to spend €62 billion between 2014 and 2025, and Norway, which initially planned to invest €42 billion up to 2019, announced plans this April to jack-up spending by 50% from next year.

Both the Norwegians and the Swedes say that they want more competition for their tenders and need international companies to come on board. “I would say any of our upcoming projects could be an opportunity for Irish companies,” says Camilla Ahston, a procurement strategist at the Swedish Transport Administration. “We have a lot of projects and plenty of money, so this should be attractive for companies.” As well as new build, the country has a backlog of rail maintenance projects and is playing catch-up.

Also in the region, Denmark is to build a 21 km tunnel to Germany (the Femern tunnel), valued at €5.5 billion, offering opportunities for tunnelling companies.

IRISH OPPORTUNITIES
Irish businesses big and small, including Arup, Data Display, ICDS, Ecocem and Mott McDonald, are now targeting Scandinavia and exploring the opportunities. The experience of Ireland’s civil engineering sector is valued, and some have already landed wins. Mott MacDonald is bringing its know-how from Dublin’s Luas to a light rail project in Bergen, Norway, for example. And in February, Arup was awarded a design contract for a lift-swing bridge in Gothenburg, Sweden.
Navigating the Nordic Culture

The Norwegians and Swedes are in mentality and culture fairly similar to the Irish, but there are some notable differences. Businesses are less hierarchical, so you are unlikely to get a quick decision. The boss will want to bed a decision down within the whole organisation. But once a decision is made, everyone is on board and the process is efficient.

The business environment is casual; shirts and ties attract few fans, and people address one another on a first-name basis.

Being late is not acceptable. “Irish companies should understand that if they arrange a meeting for one o’clock, and they are running fifteen minutes late, they need to call and say they are on the way,” advises Karin Angus at Enterprise Ireland’s Stockholm office.

Swedes and Norwegians value off-time. They work efficiently once in the office, but hold family time dear and will eschew weekend work and late nights. “A lot of Norwegians will finish work by 4 o’clock, and it will be earlier on a Friday. They want to go out on their walks in nature, go skiing or just go home with the family,” Angus explains. Don’t assume that you will be able to set up an evening or weekend meeting; it could be do-able, but don’t take it for granted.

This is a great place to work, and the people are fair and open, says Ian MacKenzie of Mott MacDonald. “They are also very programme and delivery-driven, and they expect you to deliver on time and to make sure it is right,” he adds.

Sweden and, more notably, Norway are expensive countries. According to The Economist, a Big Mac costs an average of €3.59 in the euro area, in Norway, it will set you back €5.78 and in Sweden €5.62. A Big Mac in the UK, by comparison, is considerably cheaper at €3.13.

Karin Angus in Enterprise Ireland’s Stockholm office says that the regions and municipalities in Scandinavia are also investing in valuable light rail, tunnelling and roads projects. “Sweden probably has another €60 billion for regional and local transport initiatives,” she explains.

On average, one hundred new people move into the greater Stockholm area every day, and Oslo is also suffering from the growing pains of being among Europe's fastest growing cities. Moving goods in Stockholm is becoming difficult, for example. But transformative infrastructure projects are in the offing. A new motorway is planned (E4 Bypass Stockholm), linking southern and northern Stockholm, with construction to begin in 2014 and to continue for the next 10 years or so.

To reduce the environmental impact, over 18km of the 21km of the motorway link will be in tunnels; the cost will be around 28 billion Swedish Kronor (SEK) or €2.26 billion. The West Link railway (Vasttanken) involves a 6km railway tunnel, which will run under Gothenburg. Construction will start in 2016 and span 10 years, costing 20 billion SEK.

“These are massive projects, and they are saying that they need international suppliers. They need big companies with muscle, as well as smaller companies for subcontracting,” Angus says.

Alhston and other procurement officials are encouraging European companies to bid. “The competition is rather low in our procurement, with three or four tenures for each, which is low by European standards,” she explains. She cites the Spanish company Acciona, which bid 108 million SEK (€12.6 million) for a project. The next closest bid was €3.5 million higher.

Arup recently began working on the Marieholm moveable bridge over the Gota River in Gothenburg, as part of a large infrastructural project called the Marieholm connection. There will be a further three packages, which the company is hoping to work on, including a 500-metre long tunnel, to begin in 2014.

Ireland’s infrastructural development programme during the boom years gave Arup Ireland bucket loads of experience, especially in roads, says senior engineer Claire O’Hara, who oversees Arup’s business development in Scandinavia. “We identified Scandinavia as a region where we had no existing presence, and we identified the potential for favourable market conditions. We looked at large capital investments in particular,” she explains. Arup has built a team in the region over the last three years, based on projects in Denmark. In December, the company opened an office in Copenhagen.

Over the last nine months, Arup has started to explore opportunities in Norway too. “Scandinavia has a reputation for being an open and transparent economy, and that is definitely reflected in their day-to-day business transactions,” says O’Hara. The tendering procedure is lauded for its openness.

The same applies to being paid. “I have never heard of a company not getting paid at the end of the project here. It is all very transparent, and there is no corruption,” says Angus.

MARKET QUIRKS

Potential clients and public authorities have been very welcoming of Arup’s approaches. The biggest difference has been in the method of procurement.

“Traditionally in Sweden and Norway, they procure on a time-rate basis rather than a lump-sum basis, and so that does impact on the market forces and price competition in the market,” says O’Hara. However, they are transitioning to a lump-sum system.

Another difference is that they procure through traditional measures: the designer will design for a public authority and that design will be delivered by a contractor. Sweden, in particular, is trying to transition more to design-and-build packages, and Arup has a great deal of experience working under that arrangement, says O’Hara.

While the opportunities are there, the streets are not paved with gold. However. Expect competition from local companies and German, Dutch, Italian and Spanish players. Also, it can take time to establish, warns Angus, who advises companies to consider hooking up with locals.
“Enterprise Ireland is very happy to help both medium-sized and smaller Irish companies find partners and win deals in the Nordics,” she says. She advises that having a local partner can be of enormous benefit, though it is possible for consultant engineers to go it alone. If you have a long-term strategy for the region, though, eventually you will need to consider setting up an office, she advises.

“Not having an office in the country does impact on you and impede to some extent the amount of market knowledge you have. While you don’t have a permanent presence, you have to work a little bit harder on your business development side,” agrees O’Hara. Staff from Arup Ireland’s Dublin office fly to Sweden regularly, while those in Copenhagen travel by train to Malmo in 30 minutes.

“There is a bit of nepotism going on,” Angus adds. “Because these are relatively small countries, and people know each other, there may be a tendency to give the job to the company you already know does a good job. But some of the projects like the bypass in Stockholm or the Follo Line project in Norway are massive, and they need big companies with lots of expertise.” The Follo Line involves 22 km of new double-track railway line between Oslo and Ski.

OVERSEAS BIDDERS WELCOME
Mott MacDonald set up an office in Bergen, Norway, without a local partner, initially to back its design and construction support for Phase 3 of the city’s light rail system. The company successfully ran against Scandinavian companies and finished ahead of the posse. It was able to offer light rail expertise gained partly through a long association with the Railway Procurement Agency and Dublin’s Luas system. On the back of that work, the company is now a design consultant for the Bergen light rail depot and is pursuing other opportunities with the road and rail authorities.

Mott MacDonald’s man on the ground, Ian MacKenzie, sees Scandinavia holding plenty of opportunities for the company and he certainly feels welcome. “They are quite willing to take people on [from outside Norway]. I think this is the case of need rather than desire. It is a very wealthy country, and they have lots of rail, road and tunnelling projects that they want to get on with.”

Norway is the eighth largest oil exporter globally, and, according to The Economist, the oil sector monopolises the nation’s technical talent, with more than 50,000 engineers currently employed offshore. This leaves gaps to be filled and opportunities to be grasped. “There is potentially a lot of work in the engineering sector for us,” MacKenzie told The Market. “They are short of engineering organisations that can work on road, rail and civil construction projects.” MacKenzie himself racked up ten years’ experience working on the Luas project in Dublin, and a lot of the design and coordination work for Bergen is done in Dublin. “We are getting our name around and our intention is to expand here,” he says.

Camilla Ahston at the Swedish Transport Administration is happy to help companies considering the market. “If they want to set up a meeting: no problem. If they want to meet people from certain projects: no problem. Don’t hesitate to contact us,” she says.

Likewise, Lars Erik Hauer, a director at the Norwegian Public Roads Administration, is welcoming. “Our intention is to construct very large projects with the first ten years, and then the coming 10 to 15 years after that,” he explains. The April announcement by the Norwegian government will see an increase in road construction from 19 billion NOK to an average of 29 billion NOK (£3.8 billion) in the coming years. Fifty per cent of the last dozen large projects in Norway tendered were won by foreign companies. Not everyone is happy, but Norway and Sweden are looking after taxpayers’ funds.

“Some Norwegian construction companies say it is okay for us to compete with foreigners; others don’t like it, of course. But we want as much competition as possible. We want to build more roads for the money we are spending,” says Hauer. “This is an exciting time.”
Online videos are a great way for companies to market themselves to international clients. Here Diarmaid Mac Mathúna of video communication specialists Agtel shares practical tips for companies that want to start making their own marketing videos in-house.

Videos are one of the biggest growth areas in digital marketing these days, and it’s not hard to see why. An engaging video can grab the attention of potential clients and show products and services in their best light. This is particularly important for Irish companies that are exporting because international clients are often unlikely to visit their offices, and a video can help impress them by showing the scale of the business.

The technology needed to make videos is much cheaper and more accessible than it used to be; even smartphones record very good quality pictures these days. But knowing how to use these devices is one thing, actually making a good video is very different and requires a lot of soft skills. Here at Agtel, we apply three key stages to every digital video production, and following them will help ensure that the videos you produce will deliver results:

**PRE-PRODUCTION:**
**PREPARING EFFECTIVELY FOR YOUR VIDEO SHOOT**

It’s much cheaper and easier to fix things on paper than in the edit. That’s why this pre-production stage is absolutely critical. Instead of rushing out with the camera and shooting everything that moves, it’s essential to take a step back and plan the video. Defining the results you want to achieve is key. For example, is this a video that will go on the main page of your website to lead to more inbound queries? Or is it to focus on one specific product or service to increase its direct sales?

Once you’ve defined what you want the video to achieve, it’s important to think about the different people you want it to reach. Try and put yourself in their shoes so that you create a video that will interest them. This will help set the tone and technical level.

If you’re going to be interviewing people for the video, it’s important to pick people who’ll come across well on camera. Then it’s important to help them prepare – but not too much. Over-rehearsed interviewees can come across quite wooden on screen, especially if they’re reading a script, so it’s useful to give people ‘talking points’ instead of longwinded answers to questions.

No matter where your video is going to be viewed, it’s going to need to have some kind of “story” that will keep people watching. What that means is that it needs a beginning, middle and end. The best online videos tell a story that grabs people’s attention, and they tend to be short too. To help crystallise what the finished video will look like, it’s useful to do an outline script with bullet points, listing the key messages you want to communicate and the order you want them to be covered in the video. Once you’ve those key messages listed, you can then set out the associated visuals alongside them.
PRODUCTION:
TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR VIDEOS LOOK AND SOUND GOOD

With a clear idea of what your finished video will look like, the actual shoot itself can be carried out efficiently using your script as a checklist. Arrangements might need to change on the day if things go wrong, but at least you'll have a plan that you can tweak, which is better than no plan at all.

Picking where you're actually going to film is the first big decision you'll need to make. If you're trying to show the size of your manufacturing facility, you'll want to pick a spot high up, overlooking the factory floor if possible. But if your offices aren't as visually impressive as you'd like, then you might be better off filming lots of close-ups of people at work.

Similar considerations come into play when you're picking places to shoot interviews. The factory floor might look impressive, but it could be far too noisy for recording interviews. It's also important from a lighting point of view to avoid filming people with a window behind them because they'll look silhouetted.

An external microphone is a must. The ones that are built into video cameras and smartphones pick up too much noise from the rest of the room. A simple clip-on mic that plugs into your camera will go a long way to improving the sound quality. Always listen with headphones to what is actually being recorded so that you'll know if there are any issues.

POST PRODUCTION:
TAKING THE HASSLE OUT OF EDITING VIDEO

Shorter is usually better when it comes to videos. We usually recommend somewhere between one to three minutes for web videos, depending on the target audience and the results our clients are aiming to achieve. Before you start editing, it's worth thinking about the duration you're aiming for because that will speed the whole process up. Then go looking for the specific shots you need instead of trawling through all the footage and putting down anything that looks like it might be half useful.

Often the editing software that comes with the video camera works well, and even relatively inexpensive packages such as Adobe Premiere Elements or iMovie can deliver great results. Using your original outline script as a guide, do a content cut first, putting all the main interview clips down on the timeline. Cut this raw content down to its bare essentials, using soundbites from the interviews instead of big, long chunks, and be as ruthless as you can to keep the duration down.

Only when you have got your interview content (or a voiceover you've recorded) distilled right down to all your key messages should you start adding the extra visuals you've filmed. Music will also make your video more entertaining. There are lots of websites where production music can be purchased very cheaply.

With your video finished, it's time to get it up on your website or load it onto a laptop that will be used at sales meetings or events. But don't just let the video sit on your website and hope people will stumble across it and watch it. Push it out using social media and drive traffic to it. Videos are great tools for marketing, but to be successful, they need to be watched and a digital promotion campaign is key to that. Make sure you get your video in front of the right people so that those exports grow!

Diarmuid Mac Mathúna is Head of Client Services at Agtel. He has been named one of Ireland’s top business tweeters by the Sunday Independent and can be followed on Twitter at @agtel_diarmuid.
Belgium has quietly, as if from nowhere, crept into position as Europe’s second largest pharmaceutical exporter. In the year 2000, the country’s exports of medicines and vaccines were just €2.5 billion. However, after notching up annual growth rates of 10%, it is now exporting €39 billion worth of pharmaceuticals and has a pharma trade balance of €6 billion. Janssen, Genzyme and GSK Biologicals are among 31 major international players with research and production sites there.

Meanwhile, its neighbour, the Netherlands, exports close to €10 billion in pharmaceuticals every year, hosting companies like MSD, Azko Nobel and Abbott. So taken together, pharmaceutical exports by the Benelux countries eclipse those of even Germany.

The region’s might as a logistics and petrochemical hub is part of the equation. But part of the Belgian success story is also attributable to stimulation policy by Wallonia – the predominantly French-speaking southern region of Belgium. Wallonia’s Marshall Plan, launched in 2006, is a €4.5 billion economic investment strategy, prioritising life sciences. Running from 2006 to 2014, it is named after the US programme for rebuilding European economies after World War II.

Phase one, which generated more than 29,000 jobs in the first three years, placed particular emphasis on research and innovation. The government reduced the tax burden on companies and supported the creation of ‘competitiveness poles’.

The BioWin health cluster has been a key piece in the plan. It funds collaborative projects between academia and industry, aimed at developing new medicines and medical devices. Proximity to researchers is a major attraction for industry – witness Pfizer’s revamped €2 million R&D centre in Louvain-la-Neuve, Wallonia’s university town.

Other investments now in train include UCB’s biotech pilot plant in Braine l’Alleud, which will produce monoclonal antibodies for use in clinical trials, while Janssen Pharmaceutica, part of the Johnson & Johnson group, has established a €49 million distribution centre in La Louviere. And of the €1 billion GSK spends on R&D every year, half is invested in Belgium. GSK Biologicals, which develops and produces vaccines, runs three sites in Wallonia: Rixensart, Wavre and Gembloux.

**STAYING COMPETITIVE**

Of course, like Ireland, Belgium is not immune to competition for investment from emerging economies. Jef De Clercq has been a senior chief engineer in the Dutch and Belgian pharmaceutical sector for 35 years. “The market is moving to the east – to India and China. Even Singapore, which has a well-established industry, is an old story,” he told *The Market*.

However, he believes that where western Europe can continue to attract investment is in R&D and low-volume, high-added-value areas, such as biopharma and monoclonal antibodies. “There will always be demand for very specialised competence in GMP regulation, which is hard to source in Asia,” he adds, “and we can also hope for improvements on existing plants.”

Jeroen Lerno, a Belgium-based industry veteran, who has worked as a consultant to Enterprise Ireland, agrees that there are opportunities for Irish companies, many of which are adept at working in international environments.

“There are Irish companies with a lot of experience in this sector. Their knowledge is very strong, but there are excellent companies in Belgium too.”

**WHERE WESTERN EUROPE CAN CONTINUE TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT IS IN R&D AND LOW-VOLUME, HIGH ADDED-VALUE AREAS, SUCH AS BIOPHARMA AND MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES.**

What can separate Irish companies from their competitors is that the world is their network. Irish companies share information and network effectively, whereas some in the Benelux region are focused on their own locality,” he says.

However, having a local presence can be crucial to winning new contracts, he adds. “If you are not in the neighbourhood, and you do not know the decision-makers who evaluate your project proposal, it’s very difficult to win clients’ trust. You also have to be flexible because meetings can be arranged at short notice.”

Competitiveness is another issue. While some Irish companies might seek to compete with local firms on price, there will often be competitors.
China, India and other high-growth economies are the big new magnets attracting pharmaceutical manufacturing investment. But for the short- to medium-term, the Benelux remains a compelling destination, close to home, for Irish pharma-engineering companies. Gary Finnegan reports from Belgium.
from southern Europe or Asia who can be cheaper still. The key, according to Lerno, is to combine quality and expertise at a good price.

“Irish companies are more expensive than companies from Spain in terms of labour costs, so it only becomes profitable when there are complex projects with a lot of engineering involved,” he explains. “Design, engineering and supervision are highly sought after skills.”

This is the space occupied by Zenith Technologies, an Irish company specialising in automation and control technology for manufacturing processes. “What we do is quite sophisticated, quite niche. It’s very highly regulated and subject to international quality compliance standards,” says Bryan McSwiney, the company’s Operations Excellence Director. “In Belgium itself, there may not be the scale of workforce available locally. That’s part of the reason a lot of Irish engineers are working here now. Ireland has been a little quieter lately, so it’s good for us to go international.”

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

To stay in the game, companies both from Ireland and the Benelux countries must continue to specialise and, in some cases, look to mix local work contracts with international personnel and projects. This demands competence in navigating a multicultural environment.

As the most basic starting point, newcomers to Belgium should be aware of the fault-lines between Flemish-speaking Flanders in the north and French-speaking Wallonia in the south. (For good measure, there is also a German-speaking community in the south-east.)

The PM Group has teams in 25 locations around the world, including Belgium, where it is working on projects like the Genzyme Cell Culture Facility in Geel. “Business is generally done in English, but construction sites can be multicultural with local staff as well as a strong southern and eastern European workforce,” explains CEO Dave Murphy.

For Dornan Engineering, a mechanical, electrical and instrumentation company, around 80% of the team working at the MSD plant in the Netherlands is Irish, while most of the remaining 20% is Dutch. “The language of the contract is English,” says MD Oliver Lonergan, “but you may still need to work with local laws and regulations. We supplement our people with local staff to ensure we work to local standards and take account of any local idiosyncrasies,” he told *The Market*.

Zenith Technologies provides cultural training for its sales and project teams to help them understand the mind-set of the client and know what to expect in different corners of Belgium – a useful exercise given that the firm was at one point working on separate projects in Geel and Wavre, where locals were more likely to speak Dutch or French, respectively. In addition, a number of staff have honed their export selling skills by participating in the International Selling Programme, an intensive international sales training programme, developed by Enterprise Ireland in conjunction with Dublin Institute of Technology.

Currently based in Enterprise Ireland’s Brussels office, Paul Maguire is a Senior Market Advisor for Industrial Products in the Benelux market. “Investments in fresh production capacity for biopharmaceuticals, like UCB’s new biotechnology plant in Braine d’Alleud, have been a major driver of new engineering projects in the medicines and vaccines sector,” he told *The Market*. “For Europe, attracting and keeping these kinds of research-intensive industries will be at the heart of the quest for growth and employment.”

On May 29, the Brussels office will host a dinner for senior pharmaceutical executives, both Irish and Belgian, to highlight the value of what Maguire describes as a ‘Ben-Eire Pharma Platform’, whereby the industry in Ireland and Benelux combine their capability to promote Europe as a source of excellence in engineering and a credible investment alternative to Asia. “Part of it will be about better defining the niches, such as biologics and monoclonal antibodies, where Europe can compete,” he says. “In the high-end pharma sector, the combined experience of Benelux and Ireland can be greater than the sum of its parts.”
Throughout the history of the United States, the main divisions have traditionally been between the North and the South, an economic and political rivalry that we know also produced a civil war.

But there is also an important rivalry between the West Coast and the East Coast, a battle for cultural, academic and scientific supremacy, an ongoing contest to attract the best musicians, artists and chefs.

This rivalry now has a new feature, as the East Coast prepares to compete with the West Coast for the lucrative shipping lines coming from Asia. The reason for this? The expected expansion of the Panama Canal, a project that could end up tipping the balance of power towards one coast over the other.

The expansion, at a cost of more than $5 billion, has the directors of ports on the Gulf of Mexico and the East Coast opening bottles of champagne. They have reason to expect huge profits if they manage to get large cargo ships—which previously had to port on the Pacific Coast because of the Canal’s limitations—to finally sail into their ports.

The Port of Miami, which has already managed to exploit its geographic position and call itself the bridge to the Americas, is preparing to take advantage of this new opportunity and has invested more than $2 billion in infrastructure upgrades.

“My friends, we will be ready to take advantage of the opportunities brought by increased traffic from Asia, as the first stop-over port for containers, both incoming and outgoing,” said the Port of Miami’s director, Bill Johnson, in the port’s annual report.

In a little more than two years, a wider and deeper Panama Canal will give shipping companies less expensive options for shipping to ports on the East Coast. “Full speed ahead,” says Johnson.

For the port, preparations for the canal’s widening have been the most ambitious investment project in its history. Once they are completed, they will allow the port to receive large ships like the so-called ‘Post Panamax’ size ships, which could not fit into the canal and had to stop in California.

As part of the preparations to increase its capacity, the Port of Miami has already started a number of projects that include the construction of a tunnel that will connect the port with the highway, without stopping at a single stoplight. According to port’s sub-director, Juan Kuryla, this direct access should be ready at the beginning of 2014, a year before the expansion of the canal is finished.

Another project is the deepening of the port itself to a depth of 15.2 metres. This will allow it to be the only port south of Virginia to have that kind of depth. In addition, the port is acquiring four ‘Super Post Panamax’ cranes, which will make the transport of major maritime cargo possible. And they are building a special railroad to facilitate moving cargo by rail.

But the positive consequences of the Panama Canal expansion are not limited to Miami. The whole state of Florida is expected to benefit, and estimates from different sources say the state will add more than 30,000 new jobs.

California is prepared to do battle to prevent the loss of large cargo carriers to the Gulf Coast and the East Coast. That’s why it has launched an aggressive campaign titled ‘Beat the Canal,’ so that the whole industry will improve its competitiveness. It is preparing to take on the challenge presented by an enlarged canal and East Coast ports looking to steal business.

“This rivalry now has a new feature, as the East Coast prepares to compete with the West Coast for the lucrative shipping lines coming from Asia.”
Sheryl Sandberg tottered into London, dressed in a shortish black dress with skyscraper black heels to match her jet-black hair. Facebook's chief operating officer (COO), on a visit to promote her feminist book, Lean In, and check up on the social-media giant's London office, is widely hailed as the most powerful woman in global technology and she certainly looks the part.

Many think the formidable 43-year-old is headed for a career in American politics after her stellar rise from US Treasury aide in her twenties during the Clinton administration, to top executive at Google, and then Facebook COO, overseeing last year's $100bn stock market float.

The controversy she has provoked with Lean In, in which she argues passionately that women must work much harder to overcome inequality in the workplace, has underscored how Sandberg has an appeal that goes far beyond the tech world.

But Sandberg, who is close to President Barack Obama, is adamant that politics is not calling. “I love my job — I’m staying,” she maintains, sitting in Facebook’s Covent Garden offices in central London. Her insistence that she is “not running for office” does not entirely rule out a Cabinet job if one were to crop up in future, of course.

Politics is on her mind given the death of Margaret Thatcher, and Sandberg says it is a useful reminder of how far women still have to go to win true equality.

When Mrs Thatcher was elected in 1979, she was the first female head of government of a major Western country. Yet, more than 30 years later, only 17 nations around the world have female leaders, notes Sandberg. There remains a severe lack of women in the lower ranks too as just one-fifth of politicians in parliaments are female.

It is hard to believe that if Thatcher were Sandberg’s age now that she would have dressed quite like the Facebook boss, but there is a similar willingness to speak out and risk unpopularity.

“I’m arguing in Lean In for pretty deep societal change,” says Sandberg, dismissing the hostile reaction her book has received, especially from some women.
The Facebook COO’s theory is that working mothers have to “lean into” their career and do virtually whatever it takes in the office — even though men aren’t expected to juggle their work-life balance in the same extreme way.

“Every time someone is about to call their daughter bossy, I want them to say they’ve got good executive leadership skills,” she says.

Some critics claim that it is easier for Sandberg to have it all as a working mother as she is a multi-millionaire who can afford a lot of childcare and other support. But the fact that Lean In has generated so much debate — on both sides of the Atlantic — since its publication a month ago suggests she has touched a nerve.

She is self-deprecating enough to say she was “surprised” at the scale of the reaction. “If you’re me, why would they read it?” she says — a reference to the fact she was not an established writer.

The main reason why Sandberg matters is that she is the right-hand woman of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, and they run what remains the world’s biggest social-networking website, with one billion users. That’s no mean achievement in itself considering how other sites such as Myspace and Bebo have fallen as fast as they rose.

To the doubters who suggest that Facebook’s influence is waning, she counters that 59 per cent of its one billion users come back every day. That compares to 2008, when Sandberg joined and Facebook had only 70 million users, and a lower proportion, 50 per cent, visited every day.

Europe remains a key market, where engagement levels are even higher, with 63 per cent coming back every day.

“We are growing and expanding and investing in this country and in this market,” says Sandberg, noting that Facebook’s staff across Europe number more than 1,000.

Things are a little easier now that the company has recovered from last May’s troubled stock-market float when the share price halved.

While the shares have not recovered all their ground, Wall Street likes the fact mobile revenues have surged, representing 23 per cent of turnover in the last quarter against zero a year earlier. American smartphone users spend one minute in four looking at Facebook, according to one recent study.

Even so, it is hard to stay relevant in this fast-changing market. Facebook Home — an app that makes Facebook the homepage on Android phones — has met a lukewarm response since it became available in April, and it won’t be available on Apple.

Sandberg, who has a habit of crossing her arms tightly as she listens to questions, insisted that the reaction to Facebook Home has been “very positive” from users who have actually tried it. “People are always sceptical about products that they haven’t used,” said Sandberg, offering a politician’s answer.
If you need an office in the US, you might do worse than consider Philadelphia – a big cheese in the life science and med tech sectors and a burgeoning hub for IT. On a recent visit, Cian Molloy checked out some of the agencies and supports available to companies locating in the region.
Since the 1670s, Philadelphia, at the mouth of the River Delaware, has been a major port of entry for Irish emigrants entering the American continent. Now, the City of Brotherly Love, and its surrounding counties, are again holding out their arms and are actively encouraging Irish entrepreneurs to choose this region as the centre for their US operations.

The Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce has an affiliate not-for-profit company, Select Greater Philadelphia, which will assist potential incoming companies with detailed information about the 11-county area and will also provide a one-stop connection to numerous resources such as real estate brokerages, accountancy and legal services and industry-specific network organisations.

Encompassing parts of three different states, northern Delaware, southern New Jersey and southeastern Pennsylvania, this was a region with an economy rooted in manufacturing and engineering industries, but Greater Philadelphia is now leveraging the value of its 95 universities to put a greater emphasis on the development of high-tech industries, particularly pharmaceuticals and life-sciences. There is also a burgeoning IT sector in Philly, and some tout the region as a competitive alternative to Silicon Valley.

“We are at the heart of the commercial corridor that runs down the east coast from New York to Washington,” says Dean Miller, CEO of the Philadelphia Alliance for Capital and Technology, which connects emerging companies with venture capital investors, US business advisors and established technology-focused corporations. “We are where the customers are – that is a big advantage: sometimes a new IT product developed in Silicon Valley only succeeds in the Valley, but if something works for customers here, it will work anywhere.”

Philadelphia is relatively easy to get to from Ireland. US Airways operates daily flights to and from Dublin, all year round, and to and from Shannon during the peak summer travelling season. It is possible to go over and back in one day, with enough time for a series of face-to-face meetings: the morning flight from Dublin gets into PHL at 1.50pm and the return overnight flight leaves at 9pm, getting into Dublin at 8.45am the next day. The flight time is six minutes longer than the journey to and from New York, but it makes economic sense. The cost of living in Philadelphia is 30% lower than in the Big Apple, so there are savings to be made on recruitment and office rental costs.

**IRISH SETTLERS**

It was by happy accident that Belfast-based Bluechip Technologies chose Philadelphia as the headquarters for its expansion into the US market with its Guardian Mobile Personal Security (MPS) solution.

“It’s since turned out to be a great location for us, because of this organisation, Select Greater Philadelphia, who set up a set of meetings with local companies that might be interested in what we are doing,” the firm’s Dublin-based CEO Henry Woods told The Market. "Alice Solomon at Select found me seven companies that she thought I should talk to and five of them are now our customers.

“At the moment, 90% of our business is in the UK, about 7% in the Republic and 3% in mainland Europe, but we would expect our US business to become 60% or more of our income – it’s such a large market.

“We sell our GuardianMPS solution, which runs on any mobile phone, on a subscription, with alarm monitoring outsourced to AvantGuard, which is based in Utah. That woke me up to the ease of doing business with the east coast – the time difference is only five hours. With Utah the difference is seven hours. With the Philadelphia location, the American and Irish offices can talk to one another while both are within normal working hours. If your American head office is on the west coast, you would be talking to them at midnight.”

Another new arrival, the Galway-based SMS and voicemail business communications company, Security (MPS) solution.

**Greater Philadelphia is now leveraging the value of its 95 universities to put a greater emphasis on the development of high-tech industries, particularly pharmaceuticals and life-sciences.**

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**Market study visit to Pennsylvania Life Science Cluster**

Enterprise Ireland is coordinating a first-time ‘Exploring New Markets’ visit to the Pennsylvania Life Science Cluster on June 17 to 21, 2013. In conjunction with the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and its economic development arms, this visit will aim to open doors and inform companies about the pharmaceutical and medical device companies in the cluster. MD&M East will be the key event for the device companies taking part.

For further information,
E: eddie.goodwin@enterprise-ireland.com
T: +1 617 2351606.
solution provider Webtext recently established a virtual office in Norristown, 20 miles north of Philadelphia and, although the company has no US employees or contractors, it is winning significant business from this address.

“The Enterprise Ireland office in New York suggested a number of people that I might talk to about setting up in the US,” says Webtext CEO AJ Cahill. “We chose Maguire Hegarty, an accountancy firm established by two Irishmen, and they were able to tell us what we needed to do, how it needed to be done and what help they could give in doing it. Ten days later we had an American company up and running and ready to trade.

“It’s crucial to have a registered American-based entity to bill customers,” Cahill adds. “Otherwise, as a foreign entity, you won’t be paid in full. You will be subject to an automatic 30% withholding tax and good luck trying to get your money back from the IRS.”

“It can be a disaster trying to open your first account in the US, if you just try it by walking into a branch,” says Paul Maguire of Maguire Hegarty. “But if you use pre-existing relationships, like the one that exists between Ulster Bank and Citizens Bank, the process can be quite simple.

“Once you have a registered presence in the US, you don’t need to be registered with social services. A corporate entity only needs an independent tax identification number (ITIN), then customers will be more ready to do business with you, and VCs will be more likely to invest in you.

“That said, the due-diligence process in the US can delay VC funding by six to nine months, so you may be better off getting investor funding for your US expansion on your side of the Atlantic rather than over here,” he told The Market.

“There are some government supports available. The bottom line is that your enterprise has to create jobs. There are grants available at Economic Development Zone level, at county level and at state level. Select Greater Philadelphia is very good at identifying what is available and letting you know what to apply for.”

**INCUBATORS**

There are also incubators to be found across the region, for example, at the University City Science Centre or at SeedPhilly, which is located in Old City, a district noted for the number of IT start-ups based there. SeedPhilly founder Brad Denenberg says that by providing emerging companies with support and mentoring, his clients are a less risky prospect for venture capitalists. Plus, his organisation has a pre-existing network of VC investors interested at looking at new IT prospects.

If you have a good business idea, another business accelerator operator, DreamIT Ventures, will offer mentoring plus legal and accountancy services and up to $25,000 seed funding in return for a 6% passive equity stake in your company.

It should be remembered, however, that Philadelphia and Pennsylvania have a strong heritage of Quakerism, from which self-reliance is regarded as a valuable virtue. Bob Moul who is CEO of the smartphone technology company Artisan is a fan of the bootstrapping model (whereby you fund your growth out of your existing revenue). “Forgoing VC funding may mean missing out on some opportunities,” he says, “but you hold on to more of your own company.”

One of Philadelphia’s best known e-commerce entrepreneurs, Darren Hill, co-founder of WebLinc, says his firm has deliberately avoided outside investment in favour of bootstrapping: “When you invite the VCs in, the nature of the company changes. There is a new focus on getting the company to where it can be sold again, as an IPO or at a new round of fundraising. Bootstrapping allows you to stay true to your original goals.”

Philadelphiaans are also fond of saying that their Quaker heritage makes them modest, and, as a result, they aren’t as good as they could be at promoting themselves. But when you hear that, make them smile by telling them that Irish Quakers were among the first to arrive there, and you never heard of an Irish Quaker boasting about their modesty.
With software and services a huge play in Australia right now, Donal Nugent gets the low-down on this market from Irish companies already selling down under.

AUSSIE RULES FOR IRISH IT AND TECHNOLOGY PROVIDERS
Affluent, English-speaking and, contrary to first appearances, highly urbanised, Australia boasts strong historical links with Ireland and a marked affinity in culture and outlook. After 21 years of continued growth, the self-styled ‘lucky country’ also shows every sign of continuing its good economic fortune with a financial sector largely unaffected by the global downturn and a sophisticated services sector, comprising some 70 per cent of GDP, buoyant on continuing strong demand for its natural resources.

“THE INSTALLED VALUE OF IRISH SOFTWARE IN THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY EXCEEDS $1BN, AND, WITH AUSTRALIA PREDICTED TO SPEND CLOSE TO $64BN (€50BN) ON ICT IN 2013, THERE ARE CLEAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER GROWTH.”

Regina O’Keeffe, Enterprise Ireland’s Australia & New Zealand Market Adviser for Software & Services.

“The installed value of Irish software in the Australian economy exceeds $1bn, and, with Australia predicted to spend close to $64bn (€50bn) on ICT in 2013, there are clear opportunities for further growth.”

Irish technology companies are well regarded for the sophistication of their offering, and companies with reference sales in the UK, continental Europe and US particularly so. “Many sectors in Australia would see themselves as 12-18 months behind their European counterparts in their uptake of new technologies, and this presents an opportunity for Irish companies who have proved themselves as market leaders,” she says. With this in mind, “Australia should be the third market software and services companies look at. Distance shouldn’t be a reason for ignoring the opportunity here”, she adds.

A time difference that puts it just beyond the reach of ordinary office hours and the logistical hurdles of exporting manufactured goods competitively were long-standing impediments. But, over the last five years, a new generation of Irish software and services companies has made promising inroads, particularly in the areas of financial services, telecoms and e-health.

“Software and service companies have significant opportunities in the Australian economy right now, and Irish companies are well positioned to tap into this,” explains Regina O’Keeffe, Enterprise Ireland’s Australia & New Zealand Market Adviser for Software & Services.

“The installed value of Irish software in the Australian economy exceeds $1bn, and, with Australia predicted to spend close to $64bn (€50bn) on ICT in 2013, there are clear opportunities for further growth.”

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INCIDENT CONTROL ROOM

Years of experience helping large organisations prepare their crisis management strategies led David McCarthy to see that the biggest issue isn’t generally what people should do – careful contingency planning usually maps that out – rather it is ensuring people have access to the right information just when they need it. McCarthy created Incident Control Room, an app-based software service, to address this need. The business was set up in 2011, and, to date, it employs 12 people, predominantly in Cork, where it is headquartered. The route to market has been through partners and resellers and, “two years on, we are pretty much represented from San Francisco to Sydney”, McCarthy explains. The company entered the Australian market on a full-time basis in Q1 this year. “Australians, in general, are big technology adopters. Their government is investing in fourth generation internet connectivity, and the majority will have iPhones and iPads,” he told The Market.

“From a growth perspective, we believe it will become a key market for us. Leveraging the boom, we would hope to see double-digit growth for the next 24 months there.”

David McCarthy
CEO, Incident Control Room

Having recently returned from a two-week visit, McCarthy stresses the need for putting time and effort in getting a distributor up to speed both on the specifics of your product and the philosophy of your company. “We believe in getting the reseller to become a super-user of our system, building their knowledge base by providing sales and marketing...
material and giving them the support they need. We would have invested three-to-four months in this process.”

He agrees that Australian business culture can take a little adapting to for those who expect something along the US model, but the surprises are largely positive. “In the US, you tend to get quite a bit of interaction as you make your presentation. In Australia, you find they will sit back and want to understand and digest the value proposition. It’s a very methodical approach and, once you understand that, you modify accordingly.”

With 2013 the first year of a sustained presence in Australia, McCarthy says the soundings so far are very positive. “From a growth perspective, we believe it will become a key market for us. Leveraging the boom, we would hope to see double-digit growth for the next 24 months there.”

CLAIMVANTAGE
Set up in 2006, and with offices in Ireland and the US, ClaimVantage is a suite of cloud-based software products designed to automate and integrate insurance claims processing, helping companies to streamline the process from intake to payment processing. Building on extensive knowledge of the US health insurance market, the company is today heading for €3m in annual revenues, with key clients in the US, Canada and Ireland.

The opportunity to expand into Australia came about organically, chief executive Leo Corcoran explains. “The industry has eight or nine key trade events annually, which are recognised as opportunities for networking beyond the US. Through people I knew, the opportunity to expand to Australia emerged.”

The company’s first experiences confirmed that Australians like their business partners to be close to them. “We first went to Australia about three years ago and were part of two bidding proposals. They liked our product and acknowledged it was where the future needed to go, but our lack of a local presence and support meant we lost out.”

Accordingly. “We evolved the product to the point where we could offer an Australian version of it,” he says.

Plugging into the Australian mindset is relatively straightforward for Irish people, Corcoran believes. “They are very direct and, if they like what you do, they will tell you.” While its health insurance market is not huge, it is well-funded and far less fragmented than, for example, that of the US.

Although many companies arrive at Australia through their activities in Asia, Corcoran firmly believes the reverse is also possible. “I would see Australia as a bridgehead into Asia. Australians are very comfortable with Asia. They travel and do a lot of business there, and I see that as an easy way into some interesting markets there.”

He adds that it’s not a particularly expensive market to enter. “The kind of investment you need to make to start here isn’t huge. A trip to Australia for a week and a half might cost €10,000, so it is far from the days when you needed millions to buy into the market. We can provide product demonstrations to clients in Australia virtually through our offices in Portland, Maine. When you prepare in advance, you can do a lot of things very cost effectively.”

Experience has confirmed that a small company, with the right product, will be taken seriously. “It’s then down to the question of how you de-risk the offering. Our way has been to partner with very large companies who underwrite our implementation with our customers. It took us a while to get to that point in Australia, but we’re there now.”
INFORMATION MOSAIC

Information Mosaic was founded in Dublin in 1997 and offers a range of post-trade software services in the areas of custody, wealth management, investment banking and investor services. “Our solutions were designed from the beginning to be multi-regional and multi-sectoral,” explains Deirdre Jennings, head of business development for Australia and New Zealand.

The company has enjoyed significant growth in Asian markets since 2008 when it took the decision to establish a base in Singapore and a software development centre in Delhi, India. Initial interaction with the Australian market was through the Singapore office, and, as the opportunity to work with local clients became more pronounced, the company took the decision last year to establish an office in Melbourne, headed up by Jennings.

While Sydney is the heart of the nation’s financial services sector, many financial institutions will have their post-trade operations in Melbourne, making it a more natural fit for the company.

“What you’ll find is that both Melbourne and Sydney are very networked business communities, with a strong social aspect. You quickly see that you are missing out on that extended network if you’re not there on the ground. Introductions happen through dinner and lunch, over drinks or at a sports event, and you won’t have access to these if you are flying in and out to meetings,” she told The Market.

For Irish people, adapting to Australian business culture largely requires an ear for the local nuances. However, those who take the step to Australia via Asia may find the experience briefly disorienting. “Asia, I would say, is a quite easy place to open doors in – you can come in and have a meeting, and they will give you a chance straight away. In Australia, it helps if you are introduced through someone who is established in the market. Enterprise Ireland has been invaluable in facilitating these types of ‘softer’ introductions,” Jennings says.

For further information, contact Regina O’Keeffe, E: regina.okeefe@enterprise-ireland.com T: +61 (2) 92738515

Australia fair

– The world’s 13th largest economy, Australia has the fifth highest per capita income and the second highest human development index globally.

– Of the world’s nine major banks rated AA or above by S&P, Australia is home to four.

– The Australian funds management industry is the fourth largest in the world, and the largest in the Asia-Pacific region.

– The overall telecoms services market exceeded €30bn in 2011 and is expected to double by 2020.

– Since 2005, the National E-Health Transition Authority has been leading the development of a national e-health platform.
MedinIreland, Ireland’s largest biennial medical technology event, takes place this year in October. Now is the time to be doing your homework if you want to get the most out of it, Claire O’Connell discovers.

MADE FOR MEDTECH
**Visitors at MedinIreland**
Among the 250+ visitors at MedinIreland 2011 were:
- 3M Healthcare UK
- Arstasis, Inc.
- B. Braun Vascular Systems
- Baxter Healthcare Ltd
- Biotronik AG
- Cleveland Clinic USA
- Coloplast
- Covidien
- Ecolab Europe GmbH
- Grupo Taper S.A.
- HemoLab B.V.
- JenaValve Technology GmbH
- Medtronic
- Mercy Health
- Mitsubishi Corporation
- NHS UK
- Pioneer Medical Devices AG
- Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics Manufacturing Ltd
- Sorin Group
- Terumo Corporation

If you have an interest in medical technology in Ireland, October 23, 2013, should be burning a hole in your calendar. The largest medical technology and healthcare event in Ireland, MedinIreland takes place every two years and acts as a magnet for various interests, including the exhibiting medical technology companies of course, their international customers and also potential distributors, strategic partners, clinicians and investors. In 2011 it attracted more than 800 delegates, who descended on the Convention Centre in Dublin for a day, and many Irish companies hosted site visits on their own turf during that week too.

Enterprise Ireland invites international ‘guests’ to come over and meet with client companies, explains Rosemary Durcan, Programme Manager for MedinIreland. “The main reason we host an event like this is to profile the Irish medical technologies and healthcare sector to an international audience, and we bring that audience to Ireland as opposed to Irish companies having to individually go out to the international audience. It’s also an important networking event for Irish companies, international thought leaders and decision-makers in the sector. And ultimately, it’s about building new business.”

This year, the target is to invite 300 guests from across the 30 countries where Enterprise Ireland has offices, and the list of invitees is shaped by what the Irish companies need, explains Durcan. “When companies register, we ask them for a ‘wish list’ of targeted potential new business and strategic partners, and the more specific that list is the better,” she says.

International guests can set up meetings with companies on the day, and delegates can also go to seminars and discussions and dedicated networking events. It’s a good idea to bring a number of staff members, so someone can always stay on the stand while others attend one-to-one meetings and different events, notes Durcan.

Companies pay a registration fee of €3,500 towards the costs of bringing the international guests over, explains Durcan, but overall the event can bring substantial business into Ireland over the following weeks, months and even years.

“Within the first two years there’s typically about €20 million of sales done from the event, but there’s a much larger pipeline that is carried through too,” she says. “2011 was the biggest pipeline we have seen to date from MedinIreland; we expect it to be more than €50 million.”

“Through the 2011 event, we finalised commercial discussions on a number of projects and progressed a multi-million book of business from it.”
With just over four months to go before the next MedinIreland convention, now is the time to think about what you want to get from this year’s event and start arranging meetings and schedules. Claire O’Connell asks 2011 delegates to pass on some tips.

Top tips for getting the most from MedinIreland

1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK BEFOREHAND
   “Get as many people as you can over. You have to do your homework beforehand, and then you will do business,” says Michael Lawler, Director of Design & Business Development at Carlow-based VascoCare, which has designed and developed a patient-positioning system to reduce the development of pressure sores.

   “It’s a very good opportunity [for us] to bring people into the country and show the distributors what we do. In 2011, we brought people over from Poland, Denmark, Hong Kong and America to see our site, and we spent some time getting to know them. We are still working with these distributors today, and, this year, I would hope to bring even more to Med in Ireland.”

2. PRE-ARRANGE YOUR MEETINGS
   Ger O’Carroll, Director of the Sligo-based medical device engineering company Arrotek, also emphasises the need to arrange meetings in advance of the day. “In order for you to maximise what you could get from the show, I would invest some time in finding out who is being brought in and what matches they may be for you as a supplier or as a person looking for customers,” he says. “Arrange as many one-to-one meetings as you can, rather than relying on footfall and people just happening to see your stand.”

   Arrotek works with clients from start-ups to multinationals; its main markets are the UK, Nordic region and Germany. In 2011, the company hosted site visits at its design and manufacturing facility in Collooney, as well as exhibiting on the day itself, explains O’Carroll. “We definitely increased business on the back of it, both through galvanising relationships with existing customers and through the opportunity to create new contacts.”

3. UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIPS YOU WANT TO BUILD, AND GIVE THEM TIME
   Before you meet with potential leads, such as new distributors, think about the kind of relationship you want to build with them. That’s the advice of Séan Bay, Sales Director with Glanta, which exhibited its SureWash system for hand-hygiene training at Med in Ireland in 2011. Today, SureWash is installed at sites around the world, and the company is looking to expand its offering to beyond the healthcare setting.

   In 2011, Glanta had recently spun out from Trinity College Dublin, and the company developed useful contacts from the convention. “You need to understand the relationship that you want to build over a period of time,” says Bay. “And don’t be driven to think you have to sign this thing by the end of Med in Ireland week. It’s more about getting to know people so they want to do business with you, and it will build over the weeks, months and in some cases years.”

4. BRING THE VISITORS TO YOUR SITE
   Words and videos can convey your company’s message, but bringing potential leads to your site can offer a ‘360’ perspective and really help to strengthen the relationship with a potential lead. That’s according to Maura Leahy, Marketing Manager with Creganna-Tactx Medical, Ireland’s largest medical device company, which designs and manufactures technology for the minimally invasive sector.

   The company has been involved with MedinIreland since it first started and continues to exhibit at each event and bring guests to its own facilities in Parkmore, Galway.

   At MedinIreland 2011 Creganna-Tactx Medical hosted a total of 54 unique customer meetings, and, of those, 28 also participated in a site-visit in Galway, notes Leahy. “When a potential prospect comes onsite and tours the facility, it marks a pivotal point in advancing the business relationship. Nothing will strengthen the bond further between companies than this first-hand experience.”

   She also drives home the need to do the homework in advance, in terms of getting information about who is coming and what they need. Already Creganna-Tactx Medical has put weeks into identifying the guests they would like to meet this October.

   “Like anything in business, we wouldn’t keep participating in MedinIreland if there wasn’t a value in doing so,” says Leahy. “Through the 2011 event, we finalised commercial discussions on a number of projects and progressed a multi-million book of business from it. So there are significant, tangible contributions from this event to individual company revenues, the wider economy and general employment.”

For further information about MedinIreland 2013, contact rosemary.durcan@enterprise-ireland.com, Tel +353 (1) 7272654
Gadgetry

Through the everyday use of digital devices, people are accumulating mountains of personal multimedia, but how do we share it and keep it safe? Ian Campbell looks at some options.

If you wanted to share or backup pictures or documents a decade ago, you would slip a CD-ROM into the optical drive of your computer and burn a copy. But just as the shiny CD did away with the floppy disk, new media has encroached on optical discs, not least because manufacturers – Mac and PC – have stopped putting optical drives into laptops as standard.

Now we are encouraged to share and store online – or in the cloud, as the industry likes to say – with services like WeTransfer and YouSendIt. You can backup files to hosted services like Mozy or Dropbox (which is also great for sharing files), and no surprise that Apple, Google and Microsoft are also in on the game. They all encourage us to sign up for a limited amount of free space on the assumption that we’ll need more and pay for it.

Sometimes, however, you still need physical media. If you’re a photographer on location with pictures too big to upload, or you have files you want to share with someone at a meeting, portable storage is ideal. And the sheer volume of electronic data we accumulate everyday with smartphones and tablets has created demand for more mobile forms of storage. The good news is that there is plenty to choose from – some more suited to particular tasks than others.

All the devices here connect with the 3.0 iteration of the USB plug, the latest version of the universal serial bus that is 10 times faster than its 2.0 predecessor. That means less time hanging around waiting for data to be transferred. They are all bus-powered, which means you don’t need a plug and power source to get them going or charge them up: they work off the host device. Only the Seagate comes with a wall charger; for the LaCie and G-Drive, they are available as optional accessories.

LaCie
Rugged

€210 (120GB)

SSD (Solid State Drives) are more robust and longer lasting than hard drives – no moving parts – making them much more suitable for lugging around. As the name suggests, this LaCie has a ruggedised chassis to make it even more accident proof. Though prices are falling fast, the downside with SSD is still the cost.

This entry-level model gives you a 120GB for €210. For the same money, you could get a 2TB external disk drive and still have plenty of change.

But if protecting your data is the priority over capacity, then SSD is the way to go. The argument will become even more compelling as the cost of SSD continues to fall – they were already a third cheaper than they were three years ago.
Lexar JumpDrive

Triton USB

€90 (64GB)

USB flash drives, typically sold as keys or memory sticks, have been steadily improving their capacity. Using flash memory, they are slower than SSD but what you lose in performance you gain in convenience. These handy little accessories are the real successor to the floppy disc and CD ROM. This 64GB key is expensive because it’s tougher and more resilient than typical keys. If you need the capacity to carry more content, it makes sense to ensure it has better than average build quality to protect it.

DataLocker

Sentry

€84 (16GB)

Billed as the USB key with intelligence, it uses a hardware encryption system to ensure its contents never fall into someone else’s hands. Nearly 20 million USB keys disappear worldwide, either lost or stolen, so the DataLocker pitch is to make sure content is kept secure. When you first plug it in, you choose an eight-word password (and a hint, in case you forget it) that must be re-entered each time it’s used – military-grade encryption, apparently.

A tad smaller than a typical USB key, it’s also wonderfully robust, with a hard resin coating that is dirt and water-resistant. Not cheap – €84 for the 16GB version – but well worth the money if you have to walk around with confidential data.

G-Drive

€195 (500GB)

Out of the box, it’s ready to plug-and-play with the Apple operating system, complete with a FireWire plug for faster connection speeds. Though it can be reformatted to work with Windows, there is no doubt that it’s the Apple allegiance that makes the G-Drive so appealing to video production crews. But the main attraction is that it offers a killer combination of robust design and generous storage capacity – the one we tested here is 500GB, but they go all the way up to 1TB if you have €500 to spend.

You pay a premium for a build quality that inspires confidence. The hard disk drive is encased in aluminium, with an integrated heat sink for more efficient cooling. The leather wallet, which adds an extra layer of style, is a nice finishing touch. A very classy piece of kit, and, because it’s Mac friendly, it’s also a good candidate to be the external backup drive for Time Machine, the Apple recovery system.

Seagate

Wireless Plus

€210 (1TB)

The ‘Plus’ in the name is a clue to what initially appears to be an overpriced 1TB external drive. Broadcasting its own WiFi network, it essentially doubles as a router, connecting to your device directly and then to a WiFi hotspot. You can also plug it into a USB and treat it as any other external drive. Powered by its own battery, it’s a perfect travel companion, letting you back up or access multimedia files on the hoof.

Mobile credibility is further bolstered by apps for Android and iOS that let you manage your media files from your smartphone. Up to eight devices can access it at the same time within a range of up to 150ft, turning it into a kind of mini media server for wirelessly streaming content to Windows and Mac devices.
THE TEMPTING GAME

We’re all salesmen now, says Daniel Pink, whose 18-minute lecture on the science of motivation is one of the 20 most-viewed talks of all time in the influential TED Talks series.

“Life is all about pitching,” he writes in *To Sell Is Human* (at the time of writing, the No. 1 bestseller in business books on amazon.com). “The problem is that we’re not very good at it.”

Pink started thinking about his universal sales theory when he went through a fortnight’s worth of emails, calls, meetings, trips, tweets and lunches and discovered that “the picture that stared back was a surprise: I am a salesman”.

He was not pitching his books all that time, but a lot of the time he was in the tempting business: convincing an editor to drop a silly idea; an airline gate agent to switch him to an aisle seat; even persuading his kid to take a shower after baseball practice.

Pink starts his story by meeting the last of the Fuller Brush salesmen who were once ubiquitous in a suburban America, where mom was at home baking apple pie. Fuller has gone bankrupt. Avon has changed its selling model. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* has stopped printing the books that used to be the signature of ambition in every upwardly-mobile home. But Pink points out that sales entrepreneurship has never died.

Instead it has gone online: craft makers now sell over $400 million on Etsy. eBay provides a market for importers and exporters. There are other examples: the beloved stalls outside secondhand bookshops are gone, but Abebooks and Biblio have taken their place. “Kickstarter surpassed the US National Endowment for the Arts as the largest backer of arts projects in the United States [in 2012],” writes Pink.

There’s a market out there, and if you want to harness it, while you don’t have to be a salesman, you do have to have very particular sales skills. But Pink doesn’t advise that you become a *Glengarry Glen Ross* shark in a sharkskin suit. He has multiple examples of how humans often prefer to be community-minded, selfless and other-directed – as was the case with the Kenyan buses called *matatu*.

Apparently, kind and soft-natured Kenyans turn into speed demons when they get behind the wheel of a bus, so a safety initiative was trialled. On buses with even-numbered licence plates nothing was done, but on
those with odd numbers, a notice went up: “Hey, if he’s driving recklessly, will you arrive? BE AWAKE, BE STEADY, SPEAK UP!” The effect was greater than the bus company expected: on the buses with notices, insurance claims for serious accidents fell by more than 50 per cent.

There is similar evidence of concern for others as a motivator in western hospitals, Pink says. Signs telling medics to wash their hands so they themselves won’t catch infections have little effect. But those telling the doctors and nurses to wash their hands so their patients won’t catch infections have been found to improve hand hygiene.

Pink advises using this approach intelligently; treat everyone you deal with as if they’re your grandmother, he says.

The heart of the book is his chapter on pitching. Particularly powerful, he says, is the one-word type, where a single word is tied to your brand in the customers’ minds - like MasterCard’s ‘Priceless’.

A question can also be devastatingly revealing: Ronald Reagan unseated Jimmy Carter with his ‘Are you better off now than you were four years ago?’ when he ran for the US presidency in 1980.

Rhymes that turn into earworms, like the famous Burma Shave billboards on Route 66, and Haribo’s ‘Kids and grown-ups love it so – the happy world of Haribo’ are impossible to forget.

Alternatively, he suggests using Pixar-style (the animation studio that made Toy Story and a bunch of other animation hits) story format that goes ‘Once upon a time ... or Every day ... One day ... Because of that ... Until finally ...’

To Sell Is Human is attractive, enticing, full of juicy morsels of selling wisdom, and a thoroughly good buy. Daniel Pink certainly sold his thesis to this reader.

This book is the product of two years of research into more than 100 global companies that have a track record of outperforming their peers.

Sales Growth, by Thomas Baumgartner, Homayoun Hatami, Jon Vander Ark and Mark Benioff, has a more formal and traditional approach to the sales question. This book is the product of two years of research into more than 100 global companies that have a track record of outperforming their peers. The focus is on large companies, averaging $31bn revenues, $47bn market capitalisation and 86,000 employees, “because,” they write “the bigger you are, the harder it is to outgrow your competitors, and the harder it is to do it again and again”.

They concentrated on 10 sectors ranging from consumer goods through to financial services, pharmaceuticals, the high-tech sector, travel and more. The first result: they advise that you should look 10 quarters ahead: “for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today”. The writers give the example of Hyundai, which saw rocky times ahead for car sales when the 2008 financial crisis unfolded. The company responded by launching the Hyundai Assurance Programme: buyers could return their car in the year after purchase with no penalty if they involuntarily lost their job or income. This was such a success that Hyundai augmented it with an offer covering three months of payments while the customer looked for work.

The advice is technical and thoroughly sensible. Sell like a local in emerging markets, they say; power growth through digital sales.

Interviews with senior executives provide cutting edge advice. Reading this, you are looking over the shoulder of the bosses of Google, BMW, Coca-Cola and their cohort.

Coca-Cola describes recruiting young athletes training for the Olympics. “The Olympic values of camaraderie, teamwork and healthy competition excite our sales team”, and BMW uses mystery shoppers. Caterpillar keeps as close as possible to a ‘handshake’ model of commerce. In addition, the company uses an iPad app to show customers product information through videos and to gather information about them for follow-up.

A nicely structured book worth reading, its subtitle, Five Proven Strategies from the World’s Sales Leaders does what it promises.

Working the Cloud, a handy guide to making the internet work for you and your business.

To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Persuading, Convincing, and Influencing Others by Daniel Pink, published by Canongate

Sales Growth: Five Proven Strategies from the World’s Sales Leaders by Thomas Baumgartner et al, published by John Wiley & Sons

Working the Cloud: The ultimate Guide to Making the Internet Work for You & Your Business by Kate Russell, Crimson Publishing
Compiled by Enterprise Ireland's Information Centre team.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Enterprise Ireland’s Market Research Centre hosts Ireland’s most comprehensive collection of business information and is staffed by specialists who can aid quick and effective searches. The team can help clients of Enterprise Ireland find information on markets, products, companies and management.

The centre subscribes to a wide range of databases, including:
- Datamonitor Profiles
- Euromonitor Passports & Sectors
- Espicom
- Frost & Sullivan

Here is just a sample of the types of research and reports to which the centre has access.

ICT/SOFTWARE

The Top 10 Strategic Technology Trends for 2013
Gartner
February 2013
This year’s annual list of the top 10 strategic technology trends that have the potential to affect individuals, businesses and IT organisations from Gartner reflects the increasing impact of the nexus of forces: mobile, social, cloud and information.

Prepare I&O for the ‘Internet Of Things’ – Five Key Dynamics That Will Help You Capture the Opportunity for Your Organisation
Forrester
April 2013
‘Internet of Things’ solutions enabled by machine-to-machine technologies like RFID tags, GPS systems, and ZigBee sensors are gaining momentum as multiple forces align to drive adoption to the next level. This report focuses on five key dynamics that infrastructure and operations (I&O) executives should know about IoT developments and how to prepare infrastructure and employees to capture the opportunity.

Predictions for 2013: Cloud Computing – We’ll Finally Get Real About Cloud
Forrester
February 2013
There is one clear takeaway regarding the cloud computing market: enterprise use has arrived. For this research, Forrester asked all the contributors to its cloud playbook to weigh in with their cloud predictions for 2013, then it voted for the top 10. This report outlines what Forrester expects to happen when enterprise gets real about cloud in 2013.

The Gotchas and Gotchas of Selecting and Deploying a Video Platform: Lessons Learned from Client Reference Interviews
Forrester
April 2013
Deploying a video publishing platform can be as simple as a credit card transaction, if you are just looking for a software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution with turnkey functionality. However, many organisations need the platform integrated with their content management systems and need it configured to play nicely with their network. For most organisations not in the media industry and without in-house video expertise, implementing and operating a video platform can be tricky, particularly when it comes to live streaming. This report, based on interviews with 35 client references in charge of their firm’s video platform, points out common pitfalls and offers best practices for video platform selection and deployment success.

Global Analysis of the Smartphones Market – Who’s Winning the Necessary Regional Battles?
Frost & Sullivan
April 2013
This study discusses the major market dynamics and technology trends that are shaping the smartphone industry. The research explores market drivers and restraints, strategic recommendations for vendors, market forecasts and competitive analyses for manufacturers and operating systems. The total market is also segmented, with analysis is provided by region, including Africa/Middle East, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America.

FOOD, RETAIL AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS

US Online Retail Forecast 2012 To 2017
Forrester
March 2013
This report predicts that US online retail sales will reach $262 billion in 2013 – a rise of 13% on 2012 figures – and representing 8% of the total retail pie. Moreover, Forrester predicts that eCommerce will grow at a compound annual growth rate of 9% between 2012 and 2017. This growth will be abetted by traditional stores’ investments in web businesses to support a multichannel strategy, the blistering pace of mobile device adoption and the fact that consumers are more comfortable with purchasing online.

European Online Retail Forecast, 2012 To 2017
Forrester
March 2013
By 2017, Europeans will spend more than €131 billion online on retail products, and online retail growth will continue to outpace offline growth, according to this research from Forrester. However, while most countries will see double-digit growth, some countries, particularly in Northern Europe, will see growth rates slow as online sales in categories like music and movies approach saturation. eBusiness executives in that latter group of countries must become more aggressive in developing strategies to secure growth, identifying new sources of competitive advantage and differentiation to serve increasingly web-savvy shoppers in a very crowded market.

Emergence of S-Commerce and its Impact on Consumer Goods Industries
Euromonitor
April 2013
This briefing draws on Euromonitor International’s industry and consumer demographic data and combines this with additional research on social media usage to draw conclusions about the impact of social media on FMCG brands. A wide range of categories are covered, including alcoholic drinks, beauty and personal care, apparel, consumer appliances, consumer electronics, packaged food, hot drinks retailing and pet care.

Emerging Food and Drinks Market – The CIVETS
Datamonitor
April 2013
This report measures and analyses the opportunities provided by specific consumer markets within the six CIVETS frontier economies: Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa. The
categories covered are alcoholic drinks, dairy, bakery and cereals, soft drinks, savoury snacks and confectionery. It also provides individual country-level profiles, with each nation assessed in terms of its level of maturity, attractiveness and potential appeal to new entrants.

**UK Cooking Sauces and Food Seasonings**

*Key Note*

*April 2013*

This Key Note market update examines the cooking sauces and food seasonings industry in the UK. The industry comprises two sectors: cooking sauces and food seasonings. The former can be further divided according to type of sauce, and it accounts for the majority of the market. In 2012, the total market grew by 2%. Enterprise Ireland’s Information Centre also has a wide range of Key Note briefing reports available for other sectors in the UK market, including OTC pharma, toiletries, digital communication and sports sponsorship.

**Beauty and Personal Care 2013 Edition**

*Euromonitor*

*March 2013*

This research tracks 80 national markets across 12 beauty and personal care categories and their respective segments. The updated briefing provides the latest insights into how the beauty industry performed during 2012 and identifies key prospects through to 2017.

**CLEANTECH, LIFE SCIENCE, CONSTRUCTION AND INDUSTRIAL**

**ICT Deployment in European Public Hospitals**

*Frost & Sullivan*

*February 2013*

The role of information and communication technology (ICT) in healthcare systems is growing as technology is increasingly being used to help increase efficiency and reduce costs. Despite budget restraints and slower technology uptake than in the private sector, this trend also is occurring in European public hospitals, as they move towards becoming digitalised institutions. This research service explores the spectrum of ICT applications used in European public hospitals, their benefits for industry participants and the industry outlook to 2018.

**Healthcare Construction Market – UK 2013-2017**

*AMA Research*

*April 2013*

The research product reviews the future of the main procurement routes and construction programmes in the healthcare sector and their future under the new NHS structure. It focuses on PFI and Private Finance 2 (PF2); LIFT and Express LIFT; the Hub Initiative in Scotland; ProCure21/ProCure21+; Designed for Life; Building for Wales (P21 in Wales) and Frameworks Scotland.

**Feed-in Tariffs Database for Europe**

*Datamonitor*

*January 2013*

This database contains the various feed-in renewables support mechanisms in the 10 most developed European feed-in tariff (FiT) markets, and provides details on their eligibility criteria, policy update periods, country-level system caps and so on. The database also elaborates on the sub-segments of fuel types and the combinations of FiT applicable to these.

**Wind Power and European Network Integration**

*Datamonitor*

*March 2013*

The report examines how the pressures caused by wind integration are forcing changes on the European electricity network and highlights the changes that will be required in both transmission and generation.

**Overview of the In-vitro Diagnostics Market in India**

*Frost & Sullivan*

*January 2013*

This research service provides a detailed analysis of the in-vitro diagnostics market in India. It quantifies the market size, provides insight into the disease burden of India and examines market dynamics from 2011 to 2018. It also provides an in-depth analysis of the competitive environment as well as each of the in-vitro diagnostic market segments, market drivers, restraints, industry challenges, technology trends and regulatory scenarios.

**Innovation and Efficiency Priorities for the Big 5 European Water Utility Markets**

*Frost & Sullivan*

*December 2012*

Static water utility infrastructure is increasingly unable to cope with future demands. This ‘mega-trends’ analysis outlines the innovations in management structures and technologies that have helped to offset the challenges affecting water utility markets in the ‘big five’ European markets (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom). The base year for the analysis is 2012, and the forecast period is up to 2020.

**Top Ten Companies in Telemedicine Technologies**

*BCC*

*January 2013*

The scope of this report is focused on a select 10 companies in telemedicine and the key areas in the field that are driving industry growth and allowing these companies to succeed. These areas include home healthcare services, monitoring services, medical devices and communications solutions.

**West Africa Data Centre Market**

*Frost & Sullivan*

*February 2013*

This report focuses on data centre markets in Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. It includes an analysis of key market developments and trends and explores the market in terms of revenues, demand and competition. It also investigates the introduction of new offerings in the three countries. The base year is 2011, and the forecast period is from 2012 to 2017.

**MEMS Devices in Global Medical Markets**

*BCC*

*February 2013*

This report provides an overview of the use of microelectromechanical systems (MEMS) in global medical markets. It explores global market trends, with historical data from 2010, 2011, and 2012, and projections of compound annual growth rates (CAGR) through to 2017. In addition, it analyses the market definition and technology growth; market dynamics, including drivers, restraints, opportunities and challenges; the market segmentation by product and key players in the industry.
An update on customs compliance, trade regulations and negotiations

EU and Morocco start negotiations for closer trade ties

The EU and Morocco have started the first round of negotiations for an EU-Morocco Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA).

The European Commission got the green light to launch negotiations towards DCFTAs with Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia in December 2011, as part of the EU’s response to political changes across the Arab world. Morocco is the first of the four countries to come to the negotiating table, following preparatory discussions last year and an announcement by President Barroso and Moroccan Prime Minister Benkirane, launching negotiations on 1 March, 2013.

The DCFTA is intended be an important step towards gradually integrating the Moroccan economy into the EU single market. It is aimed at ’deepening’ the integration by bringing Moroccan trade-related requirements, industrial standards, technical regulations and animal and plant health measures closer to EU legislation and covering a range of areas that are fundamental to a modern, transparent and predictable trade and investment regime.

An existing association agreement between the EU and Morocco has, since 2000, guaranteed tariff-free trade for many products. However, the new agreement is expected to address a host of areas not yet covered, such as services and public procurement, as well as to bring about better protection for investments and secure new commitments on competition and intellectual property rights.

In addition to making the existing free trade provisions more effective, the negotiators will also be looking to simplify customs procedures and reduce trade barriers caused by incompatible or unnecessarily burdensome industrial standards and food safety requirements. Meanwhile, a sustainable development chapter will aim to ensure that trade liberalisation does not negatively affect environmental or social standards.

Some 71% of Irish SMEs yet to start preparations for SEPA

According to a survey from ISME, the Irish Small & Medium Enterprises Association, just one in four SMEs are aware of the potential impact of SEPA (Single European Payments Area) on their business, while 64% have not received any information on the issue.

Speaking at the survey launch, ISME CEO, Mark Fielding said: “SEPA is an important change in the national payments system and will affect small and medium businesses in varying degrees, depending on their method of receipts and payments. It is incumbent on banks to inform their customers in time to allow them to prepare for this change.”

With less than nine months to implementation, a lack of preparation for SEPA will place some businesses at risk of delays, or even failure, in making and receiving payments to and from suppliers, staff and customers, according to ISME.

“Businesses will have to either modify existing IT platforms or develop new ones. It is critical that IT systems providers – either internal or external suppliers – are involved at the outset,” the organisation said.

“It is imperative that they talk to their bank about matters such as the SEPA payment services that they will be offering, payment file formats, facilities for conversion of existing NSC/BBAN account information to BIC/IBAN and managing their overall timetable for SEPA migration.”

Fielding called on the banks to be more proactive in their promotion of SEPA and assist individual businesses by making available the support to identify appropriate strategies to implement necessary changes to ensure that the SME sector is prepared for the transition.

Taxation trends in the EU – 2013 edition now available

Eurostat’s 2013 edition of ‘Taxation trends in the European Union: Data for the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway’ is now available online from the Europa website. The newly published edition gives an overview of the tax system in each of the 29 countries covered, the revenue trends and the main recent policy changes. Detailed tables allow comparison between the individual countries for different tax categories.

The full report contains a statistical annex, which presents the main data by country and for the EU as a whole. The report can be downloaded free of charge from Eurostat’s Taxation Trends webpage. Meanwhile, the printed version, which will be available at the end of May 2013, can be ordered free of charge via the EU Bookshop.

Information on export duties and regulation is available in the ‘Export’ section of Enterprise Ireland’s website.
Tackling stress for business travellers

Research by the travel managers Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) has shown that lost luggage and no internet connection present the greatest areas of stress for business travellers.

Based on the responses of 6,000 business travellers from nine global companies, the study found that business travellers were most stressed by losing time during their journey, with the highest triggers of stress being lost or delayed luggage, poor internet connection, flying economy on a long-haul flight and flight delays.

The study also highlighted how different segments of business travellers perceive travel stress. For example, travel stress increases with age and travel frequency; women report higher stress levels than men and senior executives report higher stress levels than travellers at other levels of an organisation.

Now, in a second part of the study, CWT has developed an algorithm-based tool, which measures the financial impact of lost productivity incurred through trip-related stress. For example, the possible lost time for a company taking an average of 5,000 trips per year represents US$ 3.3 million. “We have discovered that we can help our clients control and impact, on average, 32% of this portion of lost time and productivity,” commented Vincent Lebunetel, head of CWT Solutions Group, Europe, Middle East and Africa. “By creating policies that are centred on people – their profiles, needs and their reactions to different stress triggers – companies can help travellers focus on the fundamental reason for their trip: doing business,” Lebunetel continued. “We encourage companies to view business travel as a strategic means to grow and compete effectively in the marketplace, while at the same time recognising that it has an impact on a company’s most important asset – its employees.”

New service improvements from Aer Lingus

Aer Lingus has launched a new evening check-in service at Dublin airport, allowing passengers on early morning flights to check in their baggage the evening beforehand. Travellers on flights departing between 06:00 and 08:00 can now check in luggage between 16:00 and 20:00 the day beforehand, allowing them to go straight to security screening on arrival at the airport. Early morning departures from Dublin that will qualify for the new service include those to Paris and London.

Aer Lingus also recently announced a deal with Heathrow Express to allow online rail bookings as part of flight itineraries. Fares are the normal £34 return standard class (£17 single) or £52 Business First return (£26 one way), the same as purchased at the station on the day.

Separately, Aer Lingus and United Airlines have announced an expanded codeshare agreement. Aer Lingus will codeshare on United’s year-round non-stop service between Dublin and Washington/Dulles and seasonal non-stop service between Shannon and Chicago/O’Hare, which will operate between June 7 and August 27, 2013. United has also recently expanded codesharing with Aer Lingus to include selected Aer Lingus-operated flights between Shannon and London Heathrow as well as between Dublin and Manchester and Dublin and Birmingham. Customers will benefit from seamless ticketing and baggage transfer and improved lounge access.

Meanwhile, since April, Aer Lingus flights to New York’s JFK airport have been arriving at and departing from JetBlue’s Terminal 5. Aer Lingus has its own dedicated areas within the terminal, allowing for easy check-in.

Free British Airways first class upgrade

BA is offering passengers who book an eligible, fully-flexible, published, Club World return flight in J class the opportunity to upgrade at no extra cost to First, one-way, for outward travel dates up to 31 August, 2013. Inbound travel for all classes must be completed by 8 September, 2013. The upgrade offer is also available on eligible British Airways and American Airlines transatlantic routes with a first class cabin. See www.britishairways.com

easyJet to launch flights to Norway and Moscow

The British low-cost carrier easyJet is to commence daily flights between London Gatwick and Bergen from May 25. Separately, easyJet has launched a twice daily, non-stop service from Gatwick to Moscow and a four-times-weekly service from Manchester to the Russian capital, flying on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays.
The capital (and largest city) of the Czech Republic, Prague has been the political, cultural and economic centre of central Europe for many hundreds of years. The city itself is home to 1.3 million people, although its larger urban zone brings that figure up to 2 million. From the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s, Prague has become one of the world’s most popular tourist destinations.

It also scores as one of the top three cities in Central and Eastern Europe for liveability, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, and a street (Na Prikope) in New Town is the most expensive in all of central Europe.

FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE CITY:
Vaclav Havel Airport is one of the busiest in central and eastern Europe. The airport is located 20km from the city centre. Travel options include (in order of financial outlay) public transport bus, Airport Express bus, Cedaz bus (owned by a taxi company), various shuttles and taxi operators.

SLEEP:
1st Choice: Alchymist Nosticova Palace, Nosticova 1, stands elegantly on a cobbled lane just off Kampa Island.

It is ideal for visitors who plan to stay longer than two/three days, as rooms have kitchenettes. www.nosticova.com

2nd Choice: Hotel Josef, Rybna 20, is truly a hip designer hotel. Think flashy interiors, interesting fabrics and glass (yes, glass) bathrooms. Add to these, the location – bang in the city’s historic, picture-perfect centre, and you have a smart place for both business and leisure. www.hoteljosef.com

EAT:
Lunch: Bakeshop Praha, Kozi 1, is something else entirely – a California-inspired eatery that effortlessly blends traditional breads (such as Prague sourdough bread and bagels) with typically atmospheric American goodies such as muffins, cookies and pumpkin pie. Perfect for anything from a quick snack to a leisurely lunch. www.bakeshop.cz

Dinner: Italian restaurant Aromi, Manesova 1442/78, Vinohrady, is far off the tourist radar screens, which means those in the know (and those who favour excellent Italian food expertly cooked and presented) will have a fine time of it. A fairly priced wine list complements everything. www.aromi.cz

DO IF YOU HAVE A FEW HOURS TO SPARE:
Tour: If you haven’t enough time for a tour of the city’s wondrous Disney-like castle, then at least have a wander through the public streets of the Castle District. Surprising highlights include the extraordinary St Vitus Cathedral and the Toy Museum.

Museum: The iconic Art Nouveau works of Alphonse Mucha is gathered in the Mucha Museum, Kaunicky Palace, Panska 7. Featured in the collection are lithographs, pastels, charcoal sketchings, paintings and photographs. Open 10am-6pm daily. www.mucha.cz

Architecture: Prague is renowned for its mix of architectural gems, including Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical, Art Nouveau, Cubist and Communist, but one of the most unusual (and talked about/visited) is the Dancing House, Rasinovo Nabrezi 80. Designed by the acclaimed architect Frank Gehry, this building (known locally as Fred and Ginger) looks as if it has had one too many sherries!
Enterprise Ireland International Network

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<th>TELEPHONE</th>
<th>FACSIMILE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>+(353 1) 727 2000</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>The Plaza, East Point Business Park, Dublin 3, Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>+(31 20) 676 3141</td>
<td>+(31 20) 671 6895</td>
<td>World Trade Center, Strawinskylaan 1351, 1077 XX Amsterdam, Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>+(32 2) 673 9886</td>
<td>+(32 2) 672 1066</td>
<td>Park View, Chaussée d’Etterbeek, 180 Etterbeeksesteenweg, Bruxelles 1040, Brussels, Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>+(44 20) 7438 8700</td>
<td>+(44 20) 7438 8749</td>
<td>2nd Floor, Shaftesbury House, 151 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8AL, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>+(33 1) 5343 1200</td>
<td>+(33 1) 4742 8476</td>
<td>33 rue de Miromesnil, 75008 Paris, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>+(46 8) 469 21 60</td>
<td>+(46 8) 661 75 95</td>
<td>Box 5737, Sibyllegatan 49, 114 87 Stockholm, Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany, Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>+(36 1) 301 4950</td>
<td>+(36 1) 301 4955</td>
<td>Bank Centre, Szabadság tér 7, Budapest 1054, Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Düsseldorf</td>
<td>+(49 211) 470 590</td>
<td>+(49 211) 470 5932</td>
<td>Derendorfer Allee 6, 40476 Düsseldorf, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>+(7495) 937 5943</td>
<td>+(7495) 680 5362</td>
<td>c/o Commercial Section, Embassy of Ireland, Okhohtsels Perekul 5, Moscow, Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>+(420) 257 199 621</td>
<td>+(420) 257 532 224</td>
<td>Trizte 13, 118 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>+(48 22) 583 1200</td>
<td>+(48 22) 646 5015</td>
<td>Ulica Mysia 5, 00-496 Warsaw, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe, Middle East and Africa</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>+(971 4) 329 8384</td>
<td>+(971 4) 329 8372</td>
<td>4th Floor, Number One Sheikh Zayed Road, PO Box 115425 Dubai, United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>+(276 0300) 218</td>
<td>+(27) 117834383</td>
<td>82 Maude Street, Sandton, 2196 Johannesburg, South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>+(34 91) 436 4088</td>
<td>+(34 91) 435 6803</td>
<td>Casa de Irlanda, Paseo de la Castellana 46 – 3, 28046 Madrid, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>+(39 02) 8809991</td>
<td>+(39 02) 8809243</td>
<td>Via de Amicis, S3-20123 Milano, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riyadh</td>
<td>+(966 1) 488 1383</td>
<td>+(966 1) 488 1094</td>
<td>c/o Embassy of Ireland, PO Box 94349, Riyadh 11693, Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Americas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>+(1 617) 292 3001</td>
<td>+(1 617) 292 3002</td>
<td>535 Boylston St, 5th Floor, Boston, 02116 MA, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>+(1 212) 371 6300</td>
<td>+(1 212) 371 6398</td>
<td>Ireland House, 345 Park Avenue, 177 Floor, New York, NY 10154-0037, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>São Paulo</td>
<td>+(55 11) 3555 4800</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Rua Haddock Lobo, 1421 – Conj 51, Cerqueira César, São Paulo, 01414-003, SP, Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silicon Valley</td>
<td>+(650) 294 4061</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>800W, El Camino Real, Suite 420, Mountain View, CA 94040, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>+(1 416) 934 5033</td>
<td>+(1 416) 928 6881</td>
<td>2 Bloor Street W, Suite 1501, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3E2, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>+(86 10) 8448 8080</td>
<td>+(86 10) 8448 4282</td>
<td>Commercial Section, Embassy of Ireland, C612A Office Building, Beijing Lufthansa Ctr., No. 50 Liangmajiao Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100125, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>+(852) 2845 1118</td>
<td>+(852) 2845 9240</td>
<td>Room 504 (S/F), Tower 2 Lippo Centre, 89 Queensway, Admiralty, Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>+(91 11) 424 03 178</td>
<td>+(91 11) 424 03 177</td>
<td>Commercial Section, Embassy of Ireland, 230 Jor Bagh, New Delhi 110 003, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>+(82 2) 755 4767</td>
<td>+(82 2) 757 3969</td>
<td>Ireland House, 13th Floor Leema B/D, 146-1 Susong-Dong, Jongro-Ku, Seoul 110-755, Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>+(86 21) 6279 7088</td>
<td>+(86 21) 6279 7066</td>
<td>Commercial Section, Consulate General of Ireland, Suite 700A, Shanghai Centre, 1376 Najing Road West, Shanghai 200040, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>+(65) 6733 2180</td>
<td>+(65) 6733 0281</td>
<td>Ireland House, 541 Orchard Road #08-00, List Towers, Singapore 238881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>+(61 2) 927 38514</td>
<td>+(61 2) 928 49859</td>
<td>Level 26, 1 Market Street, Sydney 2000, NSW, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>+(81 3) 3263 0611</td>
<td>+(81 3) 3263 0614</td>
<td>Ireland House, 2-10-7 Kojimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 102-0083, Japan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For any other markets not mentioned, contact Market Development Dublin.
For further contact information, visit www.enterprise-ireland.com/contact