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THE **HAI** HARDWARE **JOURNAL**

THE VOICE OF THE IRISH HARDWARE INDUSTRY

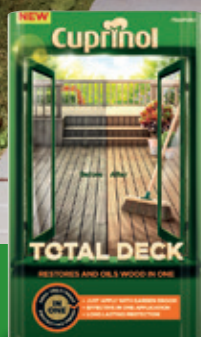


ACE WINS
—INSIGHTS FROM THE SUCCESSFUL US RETAILER

ALSO INSIDE: ASSESSING IMPACT OF BUILDING CONTROL REGULATIONS

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American retailer provides insights on his group's impressive expansion.

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DEAR READER,

The Building Control Regulations have come into legal effect but their full day to day impact remains to be seen. As part of our continuing series on this topic, in this month's edition (p.20), we seek further clarification on specific issues from the Department of the Environment and a legal expert. More on this topic next month...

Our featured store (p. 23), Garveys Builders Merchants, is a resilient regional hardware business that has weathered the difficulties of the last few years and is now looking to prepare for what will hopefully be a period of recovery in the next few years.

The vital role that the HAI Hardware Show plays in generating new business, networking opportunities and innovative ideas is underlined by comments from some of the leading businesses in the sector. See what they have to say on page 17.

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DISCOUNT FATIGUE

Never has the discount, and its power to spur purchases or cause customers to wait for something better, been more on display than now. But as retailers try to out-do each other to drive traffic and sales, are they endangering their margins?

Discounting is spreading everyone too thin, according to Joseph Wallace, owner of Wallaces Homevalue Hardware, Wellingtonbridge, Wexford. Joseph credits too much competition in the market place as the main reason for the discounting occurring at the moment.

"Smaller companies take bigger hits in trying to remain competitive from the practice and, with the market the way it is at the moment, are likely to be squeezed out of the market altogether." In order to combat discounting, Joseph says that there will have to be an improvement in the market.

"I think that's the only real thing that will make a difference to the discount culture and, unfortunately, it could be a while before there are significant developments in that area. It's an endless cycle at the moment, where retailers hands are tied."

In terms of his store, Joseph says that they are aiming to be as efficient as possible, and focusing on lines that are not price-sensitive. Discounting is devaluing the products that are supplied says

David Andrews, Mullingar Hardware Stores, Westmeath. "Customers have prices in their heads as a result of discounting and they won't buy unless they feel that they're getting value from a product. So, even if there is value attached to the product, if the customer doesn't perceive it then they will look for a lower price."

David believes the current discounting trend may not end before it brings about the closure of businesses.

"It's likely that there will be more businesses shut down before others will start to bring their prices back up." John Burke, Burkes Hardware & DIY, Wicklow states. He believes that there is too much discounting in general.

"People are looking for market share at any cost at the moment." While this might be good for customers in the short term, John believes in the long run it could mean there are less retailers to shop with and less choice for the customer.

Fixed costs and margins are what they are, John points out, and discounting below the line is not going to be sustainable for an extended period.

"The concept of the 'deal' is not so special anymore," says Jim Copeland,

CEO Hardware Association Ireland.

"It has become the norm. If the deal is the norm, it just trains the consumer to never buy at full price."

That can come at a cost to retailers, who often have to sacrifice their margins and profitability to be competitive on price, Jim notes. Most retailers would agree that, offering constant promotions in line with what other retailers are doing, will cut into the company's profits, he says.

Customers will pay attention to a discount if a retailer offers a specific deal, for example, a promo code to redeem a loyalty club offer, 'the top four specials this month' without mentioning a discount. Specific time-bound offers, like the success of 'Fiver Friday', all have a resonance with today's customers.

But there is a danger you can drive your customer to exhaustion in trying to make sure you blitz them on percentage off discounts.

One thing is certain, Jim concludes, unlimited, continuous discounting will have serious consequences for businesses if they lose focus on their bottom line.

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AVERAGE OF 16,000 HOUSES A YEAR NEEDED IN TOWNS/CITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

A new report published by the Government's advisory body on housing, the Housing Agency, has projected the level of housing needed across the Republic in the next five years. The expert report forecasts a minimum required supply of 79,660 residential units in urban areas to support the population between 2014 and 2018, an average equivalent of 15,932. The per annum requirement across the country ranges from 9,526 units in 2014 to 20,853 units in 2018. Of total supply over the five-year period, 47 per cent (37,581 units) is required across the Dublin Region, averaging 7,500 units per year. The figures show there is an immediate supply requirement of 5,663 units in 2014, which rises to a per annum requirement of 8,970 units in 2018. There is a marked requirement for units in areas such as Swords (1,448 units between 2014-2018) and Balbriggan (925 units between 2014-2015). Outside of Dublin, the study identifies varying requirements across the other cities. In Cork City and suburbs it suggests a rise to a per annum requirement of 1,469 units by 2018. There are close parallels in identified requirements in Galway and Limerick. Both cities will experience a shortfall in housing requirements in 2015 and require a total of 2,316 and 2,635 units respectively over the subsequent 4 years to 2018. Based on projected population growth, Waterford will have a supply requirement from 2017 (total of 739 units to 2018). Kilkenny has an immediate supply shortfall, which extends to a yearly average figure of 156 units between 2014-2018. Elsewhere, trends highlight that some areas are adequately catered for, while other areas are not. There are pronounced requirements in settlements such as Drogheda Town (1,284 units) and Dundalk (1,088 units) over the next 5 years. Athlone has an identified requirement of 492 units over the same period,



Ennis, a requirement of 534 units, while Edenderry in Offaly has a requirement of 292 units. In Kerry, Killarney is the only settlement with an immediate requirement, an average of 64 units per annum are required between 2014-2018. This total outstrips identified requirements in places such as Enniscorthy and Tramore. The study also considered household sizes into the future in the Dublin region and found that over the next four years, 57 per cent of new households will be one or two persons and a further 18 per cent will be three-person households. Three quarters of all households over the period to 2018 will be for three people or less. Mr John O'Connor, CEO of the Housing Agency, said the principal purpose of the research was to determine the level of projected housing supply required in urban settlements over the next 5 years and in doing so, to identify the areas where housing pressures may arise. "The study focuses on housing supply requirements. These are based on

projections of natural growth and migration. The projected figures set out a minimum requirement for each year," Mr O'Connor said. He also said that "over half of the housing supply is required for one and two-person households. We need to look at all the housing needs in the country across the lifecycle from student accommodation, people renting at the early stages of their career, family households and older people." The assessment of 272 urban settlements was done by Future Analytics Consulting on behalf of the Housing Agency, to forecast future housing supply requirements in the Republic of Ireland's principal urban settlements for the period 2014 to 2018, inclusive. The 272 urban settlements modelled were defined on the basis of having a resident population of 1,000 persons or more, as per the latest census. Collectively these settlements account for approximately two-thirds of the national population. The full report is available at www.housing.ie



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Raymond Matts,
Ambius Scent Designer

SCENT CAN DRIVE SALES

Irish businesses can drive revenue levels by up to 17.5 per cent by harnessing the power of smell, through premium scent marketing. According to a study by Holland America Cruise Line, in trials, consumer spending increased by 17.5 per cent in locations using Ambius premium scenting. A global expert in premium scenting, Ambius' Irish customers include five-star hotels, car showrooms, supermarkets, beauty salons and funeral homes, spread throughout the country from Dublin to Cork, and from Kerry to Galway. Hotels that use premium scenting create a more memorable customer experience, achieve higher occupancy rates and better feedback on TripAdvisor, according to Ambius Scent Designer, Raymond Matts, who visited Dublin recently. He states: "Gyms boost their membership and reputation and differentiate themselves from the competition by using their own fragrances. In the retail environment, customers stay in shops for longer, and are more likely to make a purchase and return again. Premium scenting increases brand awareness, demonstrates innovation and makes businesses stand out. "Out of our five senses, smell is the sense we rely on most. However, most marketing campaigns are built around creating visual appeal. Recognising that the power of scent plays such a big role in our lives, it makes sense to incorporate this into a brand's marketing strategy. This is now a key element of what is known as ambient marketing."

Matts has designed some of the world's most iconic fragrances, including Abercrombie's perfume and cologne, Clinique Happy, Tommy Girl, White Diamonds and Cerruti 1881. He has now turned his talents to working with Ambius to provide a host of benefits for clients across the corporate, hospitality, leisure and retail sectors. Dermot Gallagher, Volkswagen Brand Manager at MSL Park Motors said: "Premium scenting adds to the overall atmosphere in our showroom. When a customer walks into a car dealership we want them to feel welcome and Ambius scenting does just that. Ambius scenting makes the dealership an attractive place to visit, and the more visitors we attract, the more cars we can sell." Lorraine Carey, MD, Colours Hair Salon, Rochestown, Co. Cork said: "Customers get the feelgood factor when they walk in the door. It gives the feeling of being in a spa and a sense of wellbeing to customers." Ambius provides premium scenting and interior landscaping for almost any environment, from boutique hotels to shopping centres; offices and international corporate headquarters; hospitals, schools and even cruise ships. Ambius' vision is to enhance the workplace by engaging all the five senses to create harmonious environments that are more creative and productive. For more information, contact Ken Dwyer, Rentokil Initial at 087 411 4411 or email: ken.dwyer@rentokil.com

FIREBIRD WINS SEAI ENERGY AWARD

Firebird Solid Fuel Heat Exchanger has won the Highly Commended - Best Innovation Product category at the SEAI Energy Awards 2014 which took place on the March 12/13 at the RDS, Dublin. The award was presented to Nicola Barry, from Firebird, by SEAI Chairman Jim Gannon.

Firebird has been developing and manufacturing heating products in the Muscraí Gaeltacht in Cork for 34 years. The company prides itself on efficient products for the domestic and light commercial market. Solid fuel heating appliances are now popular again. However, heating installers have found them difficult to integrate with modern pressurised heating systems. Firebird says its Solid Fuel Heat Exchanger is an ingenious and simple solution to their problems. A suitably qualified Solid Fuel Heating Engineer can now safely and easily integrate a solid fuel boiler into a pressurised heating system, according to Firebird. The heat exchanger simplifies compliance with building regulations. Nicola Barry of Firebird Heating Solutions comments: "The heat exchanger conveniently avoids replacement of domestic hot water tanks, assists where distances between the stove and hot water tank are too far and also where pipework is awkward to get to the hot press. The Firebird Solid Fuel Heat Exchanger is the latest addition to this Irish company's catalogue of products which includes high-efficiency condensing oil-fired boilers, range cookers, renewable biomass and solar thermal products. For full details on all the products, see www.firebird.ie



REPAK RECYCLING AWARDS 2014 RECYCLING RECOGNITION

The 12th annual Repak Recycling Week Awards will take place this October to coincide with Repak Recycling Week. Repak are calling on the hardware sector to participate in this year's awards. Repak would like to give the hardware sector the opportunity to showcase its achievements within packaging prevention, reuse and recycling. The objective of the Repak Awards is to promote and encourage best practice in packaging prevention, reuse and recycling among industry, local authorities, recovery operators and young people. Repak says this is a chance for your company to gain public recognition for your achievements in the area of packaging waste management. To enter, contact Bob Cullen at bob.cullen@repak.ie or 01 4619222 regarding your application. Closing date for entries is Friday, May 2.

JOINTING MIX BRUSHES ASIDE WEEDS

Joint It is a new paving and kerbing jointing mix, from Joint-It Ltd, a company based in Craughwell, Co. Galway. According to the company, the product is a labour-saving, innovative and cost-effective pavement jointing mortar for weed resistant patios and driveways.

The product can be simply brushed in, rain or shine, Joint It says. The company says the product is:

- up to 20 times faster than traditional pointing;
- cement-free, so there's no mixing required; and,
- non-staining.

Joint It is supplied in 12.5kg and 20kg tubs and is available in a range of colours – neutral-buff; grey, dark grey and jet black. Manufactured in Ireland by Joint It, orders are delivered within three to four days, the company states.

Joint It Ltd specialises in the production and distribution of jointing mortars for the domestic and commercial paving industry. Joint-It Ltd products are based on 25 years of personal experience, research and development in paving solutions.

KOTA LAUNCHES

Produced by Balcas, KOTA, a new prefinished moulding system, is launching 'full throttle' in major stores. The Cerfis coating is patented and unique to Balcas in Europe. Balcas says it produces a smooth ready-painted gloss finish. It is complemented by a fix-and-fill system of adhesives and caulks to produce what is described as "the first true system" for installing prefinished mouldings and door linings. KOTA is available from major selected merchant outlets in Ireland.

60 SECOND INTERVIEW RUAIRI O'TOOLE



Ruari is Managing Director of J. O'Toole & Sons (Galway) Ltd. He is the second generation of a family-run business. A graduate of business studies, Ruairi attended Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology.

- 1 ARE YOU AN OPTIMIST?**
A REALISTIC OPTIMIST.
- 2 BUSINESS LEADER YOU MOST ADMIRE?**
JEFF BEZOS.
- 3 BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED IN BUSINESS?**
CUSTOMER SERVICE IS YOUR LIFEBLOOD.
- 4 BEST BUSINESS BOOK YOU'VE READ?**
THE FOUR HOUR WORK WEEK.
- 5 ADVICE TO ENTREPRENEURS STARTING OUT?**
THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS.
- 6 WHO OR WHAT HAS HELPED YOU MOST?**
MY FATHER.
- 7 WHAT TYPE OF PHONE DO YOU HAVE?**
IPHONE.
- 8 TABLET OR LAPTOP?**
TABLET.
- 9 FAVOURITE PASTIME?**
FOOTBALL, RUGBY, GAA.
- 10 FAVOURITE MOVIE?**
ANY JAMES BOND.
- 11 FAVOURITE PART OF THE WORLD (OTHER THAN IRELAND)?**
ITALY.
- 12 GREATEST REGRET?**
NOT LEARNING TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT.



DIY sales in Germany showed year on year decrease in 2013, while US sector looks promising for 2014.

MIXED INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN DIY

With combined gross sales of €18.06bn in the 2013 financial year, DIY retailers in Germany remained 2.9 per cent below the previous year's result. These figures were announced by the BHB, a German industry association, at the International Hardware Fair in Cologne. The decline comes to 2.6 per cent after adjustment. Without the sales figures of the Praktiker Group, which was declared insolvent in 2013, the minus amounts to 0.7 per cent. According to the association, severe sales losses resulting from bad weather at the beginning of the year, especially in the garden sector, combined with the effects of Praktiker's bankruptcy, definitely left their mark on the full year's

earnings. (Source: DIY International)

Meanwhile in the US, February sales of new single-family houses reached 440,000 at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, down 3.3 per cent from January and down 1.1 per cent from February 2013. On the other hand, construction spending in the U.S. in February was estimated at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of \$945.7bn, 0.1 per cent above January's rate of \$944.6 billion. The February figure is 8.7 per cent above the same month a year ago. During the first two months of this year, construction spending amounted to \$128bn, up 8.9 per cent over the same period in 2013. According to a study carried out by the credit card company, American Express, the U.S. DIY market has a promising future this year. Approximately 16 per cent of Americans surveyed are planning a move in 2014 or are thinking about renovating their homes. American Express explains that 73 per cent of them would like to spend an average of \$4,000 per project. This is the largest increase since the recession from 2010. According to the study, the amount of Americans practicing DIY has increased. Overall, 72 per cent of respondents want to do home improvement projects themselves (compared to 66 per cent in 2010. (Source: Hardlines)

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The collage consists of five vertically stacked images. The top image is a word cloud featuring various product names such as 'MORTAR PLASTICISER', 'WATERPROOFING', 'STREETScape', 'LEVELLING', 'FIBRESCREED', 'MORTAR TUBS', 'DUSTPROOFER', 'WOOD PRESERVATIVES', 'ADHESIVES', 'SEALANTS', 'GROUTS', 'PRIMERS', 'CEMENTS', 'FIBRES', 'GLUES', 'STABILISERS', 'HARDENERS', 'QUICKSETS', 'DAMP PROOFERS', 'POLYSEALS', 'WOOD STAINS', 'FLOOR REPAIR', 'TILE GROUT', 'CONCRETE FIBRES', 'MORTAR PLASTICISER', 'WATER REPELLENT', 'EPOXY FLOOR REPAIR', 'LINE MARKING', 'RESIN', 'DPM', 'SILICONE', 'ADHESIVE', 'TILING', 'WALL', 'GROUT', 'ADHESIVES', 'CONCRETE FIBRES', 'FIRE CEMENT', 'MOLD RELEASE', 'STREETScape', 'PATH & PATIO SEALER', 'FROSTPROOFER', 'TILE GROUT', 'WATERPROOFING', 'QUICKSET', 'LEVELLING', 'WOOD PRESERVATIVES', 'FLOORING ADHESIVE', 'ALGICIDE', 'ADHESIVES', 'STABILISER', 'RAPID HARDENER', 'SAND STABILISER', 'NARROW JOINT GROUT', 'MULTIGROUT', 'WOOD STAINS', 'FIBRESCREED', 'MORTAR TUBS', 'DUSTPROOFER', 'WOOD PRESERVATIVES', 'ADHESIVES', 'SEALANTS', 'GROUTS', 'PRIMERS', 'CEMENTS', 'FIBRES', 'GLUES', 'STABILISERS', 'HARDENERS', 'QUICKSETS', 'DAMP PROOFERS', 'POLYSEALS', 'WOOD STAINS', 'FLOOR REPAIR', 'TILE GROUT', 'CONCRETE FIBRES', 'MORTAR PLASTICISER', 'WATER REPELLENT', 'EPOXY FLOOR REPAIR', 'LINE MARKING', 'RESIN', 'DPM', 'SILICONE', 'ADHESIVE', 'TILING', 'WALL', 'GROUT', 'ADHESIVES', 'CONCRETE FIBRES', 'FIRE CEMENT', 'MOLD RELEASE', 'STREETScape', 'PATH & PATIO SEALER', 'FROSTPROOFER', 'TILE GROUT', 'WATERPROOFING', 'QUICKSET', 'LEVELLING', 'WOOD PRESERVATIVES', 'FLOORING ADHESIVE', 'ALGICIDE', 'ADHESIVES', 'STABILISER', 'RAPID HARDENER', 'SAND STABILISER', 'NARROW JOINT GROUT', 'MULTIGROUT', 'WOOD STAINS'. The second image shows a large industrial building with 'LARSEN' on the roof. The third image shows a conveyor belt with bags of 'ULTIMATE STREETScape' and 'FIBRESCREED'. The fourth image shows the exterior of a Larsen building. The bottom image shows shelves in a store stocked with various Larsen products in bags and buckets.

RISE IN VISITORS TO SEAI ENERGY SHOW

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) annual two-day business to business event, The Energy Show 2014, saw a 10 per cent increase in visitor numbers with more than 3,500 people attending, according to the organisers. The show, which took place at the RDS in Dublin in mid-March, hosted up to 200 exhibitors along with multiple networking events, an extensive electric vehicle showcase, seminars, live retrofit demonstrations and a new smart tech demo area of energy innovations.

Metac Training took the 'Product of the Show' award for its accredited energy-related training programme service while Climote was crowned the Product of the Future award for

its Connect Wind to Hot Water product. Other category winners were; Philips Ireland's LUMA LED Lantern for Best Energy Efficient Product while Nutech Renewables picked up the Best Renewable Product for its solar enhanced heating system.

SEAI's, Tom Halpin, Head of Information said: "We had an excellent turnout at the Energy Show over the two days showing the massive level of business interest in the energy sector. Many of the new events at the show featured smart technology innovations proving that this is indeed an exciting time within the energy space with many enterprise opportunities for sustainable energy providers."

Best Energy Efficient Product		
Winner:	Philips Ireland	Philips LUMA LED Lantern
Commended:	Harold Engineering	Roberts Gordon Radiant Tube Heating Systems
Commended:	Baxi Potterton Myson	Myson Touch Room Stat
Commended:	LED Group	Robus Emerald LED Lamp
Best Innovation		
Highly Commended:	Stelrad Radiators	Stelrad Radical Radiator
Highly Commended:	Firebird Heating Solutions	Solid Fuel Heat Exchanger
Commended:	Watt Less Ltd	Watt Less Auditing App
Best Services Provider		
Winner:	Metac Training	Accredited energy-related training programmes
Commended:	Saint Gobain	Saint Gobain Technical Academy
Commended:	Activation Energy	Efficiency Smart for Demand Side Unit
Best Renewable Product		
Winner:	Nutech Renewables	Solar Enhanced Heating System
Highly Commended:	Baxi Potterton Myson	Megaflo ECO Solaready Cylinder
Product of the Future		
Winner:	Climote	Climote Connect Wind to Hot Water
Runner-up:	Patina Lighting	LUDO Intelligently delivering light where needed
Overall Product of the Show		
	Metac Training	Accredited energy related training programmes

Energy Show Product of the Show Awards 2014



CHIANTI HINGED QUADRANT ARRIVES

Flair have announced the arrival of the Hinged Quadrant Shower Door.

KINGFISHER ON TRACK FOR GROWTH AGAIN

Kingfisher, the leading multinational DIY retailer, saw sales growth of 5.2 per cent to £11.12bn in the 2013/2014 financial year (to February 1, 2014), and of 0.7 per cent in like-for-like and constant currency terms. Trading profit rose by 3.5 per cent to £805m. In France, the British group recorded sales of £4.423bn, an increase of 5.5 per cent; the like-for-like result was 1.2 per cent less. The Castorama format, with a plus of 2.3 per cent, made better progress than Brico Dépôt with plus 1.0 per cent.

Sales in Great Britain and Ireland grew by one per cent to £4.363bn and were 1.1 per cent up like-for-like.

Growth was for the most part down to the Screwfix line, which saw expansion of 17.6 per cent. In comparison B&Q, the main channel of distribution, grew by 0.4 per cent.

Kingfisher's other national companies also report positive year-end results. The Polish stores announced sales of £1.109bn, or an increase of 3.9 per cent. Sales in Russia went up by 9.2 per cent for a total of £453m. In Spain, the 16.4 per cent increase to £284m is the result of four new openings. The former Bricostore outlets in Romania made a contribution of £72m, while there was a plus of 8.0 per cent in China for a total of £421m.

The British Kingfisher Group says it would like to acquire the French franchise group Mr Bricolage. Kingfisher is currently in negotiations with the two principal shareholders. The British side wants to buy 41.9 per cent of the share capital of Mr. Bricolage from the ANPF company, which belongs to the franchisees, and 26.2 per cent from the Tabur family, making a combined total of 68.1 per cent. Later on, Kingfisher intends to acquire all the widely spread shareholdings as well. The value of the company as a whole, taking debt into account, is put at € 275m. Shares are to be priced at €15 each. (Source: DIY International)



FORTESSA ROLL-OUT

Over the course of the last number of months, Laydex has been implementing the roll-out of its Fortessa range of door handles, stainless steel hinges and locks. Fortessa's Italian-design delivers what Laydex describes as "a contemporary, modern yet timeless look on interior doors".



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GROWTH QUICKENS TO SHARPEST SINCE JANUARY 2006 – ULSTER BANK PMI

The end of the first quarter of 2014 saw an acceleration in the rate of growth in Irish construction activity, while new orders increased at the fastest pace so far this year. Improving workloads led companies to up their rate of job creation and sentiment remained elevated. Meanwhile, the rate of cost inflation quickened to the fastest in three months. The Ulster Bank Construction Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) – a seasonally adjusted index designed to track changes in total construction activity – rose to 60.2 in March from 56.2 in the previous month, to signal a seventh successive monthly increase in construction activity. Moreover, the rate of expansion accelerated to the sharpest since January 2006. Where activity increased, index panellists mainly linked this to growth of new orders, while improvements in the housing and commercial sectors were highlighted. Both the housing and commercial sectors saw stronger rises in activity than in February during March, with rates of expansion at three-month highs in each case. Meanwhile, the rate of decline in civil engineering activity slowed for the second month running and was the weakest since last November. New order growth quickened in March

as panellists reported greater success in securing tenders. New business has risen continuously since last July, with the latest increase the fastest in three months. Strong optimism regarding the future prospects for activity was recorded again in March, with sentiment remaining only just below December's record high. Panellists cited general market optimism and predicted a continued rise in new orders would lead activity to expand.

	Feb'14	Mar'14
Total Activity	56.2	60.2
Housing Activity	57.5	59.9
Commercial Activity	55.5	61.3
Civil Engineering Activity	40.9	44.1

Index readings above 50 signal an increase in activity on the previous month and reading below 50 signal a decrease. All indexes given above and displayed in the charts are seasonally adjusted. Source: Markit

RENTOKIL UNVEILS 'PESTAUSTRANT'

To celebrate its pest control heritage and 80 years' experience in providing professional pest control services throughout Ireland, Rentokil will unveil Ireland's first 'Pop-Up Pestaurant' at the Rentokil Initial Welly Run on the 11 May 2014. At the one-day event in Killarney, Co Kerry, Rentokil will be serving up an array of exotic cuisine including edible insects such as salted weaver ants, BBQ mole crickets and chocolate-dipped worms to celebrate the hard work that goes into keeping Irish pests under control. Today, Rentokil says it is the largest and most trusted provider of pest control services in Ireland. Food at the Pestaurant will be free to all, and a number of Rentokil experts will be on-hand to discuss the food being served, answer any pest-related questions from members of the public and pass on their top tips for avoiding

pest problems. Although Europe is the only continent that doesn't eat insects, edible insects have recently been identified by a number of different bodies, including the UN's Food & Agriculture Organisation, as a potentially valuable source of food for the world's rapidly growing population. Many insects are rich in protein, zinc, calcium and iron, whilst also being low in fat. They also have a high 'feed conversion rate', meaning that they can be farmed using relatively little land, water and energy compared to livestock. Michael O' Mahoney, MD Rentokil Initial Ireland, said: "The Pestaurant is all about celebrating the hard work that goes into keeping Ireland's pests under control. Common Irish pests like wasps, mice, rats, bed bugs, cockroaches, fleas and pigeons can become problems for anyone, and can

affect both commercial and residential properties. Much like the rest of us, they are focused on looking for food and shelter. Once they find a good supply of food and an environment where they feel safe, then they will happily set-up home indefinitely. The Pestaurant is here to raise awareness of common pest issues and demonstrates our commitment to keeping up the heat on Ireland's pests." All of the edible insects and grubs are properly sourced and are nut-free and gluten free. However, some insects have been known to provide reactions among those who are allergic to shellfish and crustaceans, so we would recommend you do not try them if you suffer from this allergy. Rentokil's Pop-Up Pestaurant will be open on Sunday, May 11, 2014 at Muckcross Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry.

MULTI-CLEAN 7 IDEAL FOR HOUSE AND GARDEN

Multi-Clean7 is an all-purpose foam spray cleaner that is ideal for industrial and domestic use, according to distributors Contech Building Products. Introduced last September, Multi-Clean7 has proven popular with customers, Contech report, and is fast becoming one of the company's leading products as it is particularly good to use on glass, mirror, tiles, shower doors, carpets and upholstery. It will even clean the inside of your car, Contech says. The "next generation penetrating oil", GT7, has been on the market for several years. It is not just a penetrating oil, it is an excellent moisture repellent, contact spray, lubricant, cleaner, protector and, due to its cold shock effect, is excellent at eroding rust, Contech states. Both products are available in a twin-pack special offer promotion for a limited time.



Elmer Kerr shares his tips on enhancing turnover and profit. Elmer is Sales & Marketing Director of PMM, Ireland's leading merchandising & retail marketing consultants. Elmer is currently leading The Beacon Initiative, a retailer development programme in County Cork. You can contact Elmer at 071 911 8811 or by email: elmer@pmms.ie

ELMER'S ESSENTIALS RETAILING TIPS

HUMBLE PIE

A large store was selling its homemade apple pies at €4.95 each! A very proud store manager was quick to point out the good price they were getting. I asked him to remove all the pies, dice them each in to SIX portions and place them beside the coffee/tea station priced at €1.75 each, with a dab of fresh cream and a strawberry in a portion pack. They still sold out their apple pies and they got €10.50 instead of €4.95 for each pie. It's the way you package & present good value that increases your profit margins!

COLD HANDS – HOT DEALS

The same manager had a huge consignment of builders' gloves on pegs priced at €2.25 a pair. They had sold three pairs in the previous week. Again, we asked him if he would put them in a wire dump bin in a prominent place in-store with header board message 'Cold Hands – Hot Deals - Gloves Only €2.25 – While Stocks Last'. Ok, you want to know.....how many pairs sold and how long did it take?.....Two days and 46 pairs!

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THE HARDWARE SHOW 2015

HOME - GARDEN - BUILD - DIY



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The Hardware Show 2015 is an event organised by the industry for the industry. Its organisation is being driven by an influential and informed trade show committee, which has already begun planning on making THE HARDWARE SHOW 2015 an unmissable event for both merchants and suppliers.

BOOK YOUR STAND

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THE OFFICIAL SHOW OF
HARDWARE ASSOCIATION IRELAND

Hardware Association Ireland has reported suppliers are expected to put an emphasis on innovation on their stands at Hardware Show 2015

INNOVATION WILL DOMINATE AT HARDWARE SHOW 2015

THE HARDWARE
SHOW 2015
HOME • GARDEN • BUILD • DIY

Some of the most respected names in the Irish hardware industry have been proclaiming the benefits of taking part in the show, either as a visitor or an exhibitor.

The biennial show is the sector's largest networking, learning and promotional platform. It is a showcase for innovation and new product launches and, a perfect opportunity to meet new and existing customers.

Kieran Burke, Purchasing Director, Grafton Merchanting (ROI) believes that the Hardware Show is crucial to keeping him, his colleagues and the industry informed of what's happening in the market place and as such, he invests substantial amounts of resources into the show. "We will have up to 50 senior national, regional and branch managers attending and working at the show – that's how highly rated it is by us."

Topline Group CEO, Hugh O'Donnell shared his top tips for getting the most of the show stating: "Make sure to plan in advance the correct manpower required to actually facilitate the visitors that will attend the stand. In terms of stock, don't bring the kitchen sink, just be sure that you limit it to predominantly the most innovative products so they're clearly visible to visitors." His concluding advice is to devise a unique draw to the stand. He suggests a 'show only offer' or "something unique that visitors can only get at the show".

Commenting on the show as a platform to boost key relations for



The HAI committee working on plans for the Hardware Show 2015.

companies, Paul Thompson, Joint CEO, United Hardware said: "The Hardware Show is a prime opportunity for our members to meet and interact with suppliers and so it is essential that all suppliers attend and show our members that support. It is vital to our members, and is also one of the key methods of identifying and securing new products and new profits in the market." With over 50% of stand space already booked, some of the major industry brands have already confirmed their space including: Amalgamated Hardware, Ames True Temper, Aquasource Distributors, Bostik Industries, Arc Building Products, Blackspur, Canada Distributors, CCEC, Contech, Crown Paints, Donal Lynch Hardware, Dosco, DS Supplies, Dulux, Ecocem, Fleetwood, IITC, Interact Software, Irish Cement, Irish Wire Products, John Dargan & Sons, John Murphy Castlereagh, John Stafford

& Sons, JBKey, Kilsaran, Laydex, Mercer Agencies, Rawlplug, Rhino Distributors, RNH Software Solutions, Ronseal, Tegral, True Temper, Tuck Fasteners, Tucks O'Brien, United Hardware, Varian IS & Co Ltd, and many more.

There will be four key streams to the show – home, garden, build and DIY. There will be no better place to find out about the latest products and services on the market for each of these sectors than at the HAI's official show. Indeed, the HAI's success in convincing the government to introduce a Home Renovation Tax Incentive Scheme has given an added boost to all participants in the sector and by extension to the show. The Hardware Show 2015 is an event organised by the Industry for the industry. Its organisation is being driven by an influential and informed trade show committee, which has already begun planning on making the Hardware Show an unmissable event for both merchants and suppliers. The show also coincides with Hardware Associations Ireland's premier social event, the HAI President's Ball.

This is a great opportunity to meet and greet old friends and new, in an informal, social setting, and it is always a very enjoyable occasion for everyone associated with the industry and their partners, both merchants and suppliers.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Hardware Association Ireland

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SUPPLIERS SUPPORT FOR HAI

Companies that supply builder's merchants have been under-represented in HAI membership in recent years. HAI believes that if we are to achieve our aims to be the voice of the whole industry, it has to attract the widest range of merchants, and suppliers, as members.

Our suppliers supply very different product categories reflecting both the breadth and depth of our growing industry, and this should be reflected in our membership and universal appeal of the services we are introducing.

HAI is dedicated to supporting and representing the Irish manufacturer-supplier-merchant-contractor route to market. We fulfil a unique and vital role in connecting merchants with their suppliers in a commercial and non-commercial environment, where appropriate, which strengthens relationships, deepens understanding

and reinforces best practice.

Supplier members are encouraged to display the HAI logo within all their business activities and marketing material, both print and digital, which helps to confirm their status as a supportive and reputable company in the eyes of their customers, our members.

As a supplier member, you have the opportunity to provide training for retail members as part of the HAI training programme. It will establish your company as industry experts in your chosen field.

HAI's retail members say that they prefer to buy from suppliers and manufacturers who support their association. Being a supplier member of HAI and part of this community promotes and gives fellow members and the trade sector, a positive impression of your company and brand. Companies are encouraged to submit press releases for inclusion in HAI's official and only trade

publication, *The Hardware Journal*.

This will help visibility of your company brand, new products and company events. The message from Hardware Association Ireland is clear. It will be asking its retail members to support those companies who, in turn, support the work carried out by HAI. On a daily basis, HAI's office recommends supplier member companies and their products to fellow retail members who make inquiries both by phone and online. Suppliers who are members of HAI and use the HAI logo will have a unique opportunity to interact with members, their customers, outside the normal trading channels, and give them another route to the sector's customer base. It also helps supplier members to keep up-to-date with all the retail challenges faced by the merchants around the country, and seek to help solve some of these issues. Membership information is available from Jim Copeland at +353 1 298 0969.

MAKING THE SMART DECISION ON SAFETY

In the past, HAI has assisted members with their health and safety compliance collectively and, when appropriate, individually. It is pleased to continue in this regard and has identified a helpful and practical tool to health and safety law in the work place that applies to all businesses regardless of size.

Until now, some of us in the hardware sector have understandably struggled with the requirement to prepare a safety statement in terms of cost, time and competence. Now you can do so easily and free of charge at

www.besmart.ie, which is an easy-to-use, online tool developed by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). We all know it makes good business sense to effectively manage health and safety. Can you afford to have an accident in your workplace? A workplace accident can have a

disproportionate impact on small businesses compared to larger organisations. Small businesses often rely on one or two key employees and the impact following the loss of a key employee due to prolonged absence after a workplace accident can be devastating. This is on top of potential additional costs in the form of higher insurance premiums or compensation

payments. Preparing a written safety statement involves identifying what may cause harm in the workplace which are known as hazards, assessing the risk of harm occurring, and putting measures in place to prevent harm.

While it may sound complicated, it is actually straightforward. Besmart

is written in plain English and it guides you through a four-step process, starting with searching for your business type, and ending with your safety statement, which you can

print, download and edit as needs be. All you have to do is work through a series of questions with 'yes' or 'no'. Your information is confidential to you and because it's online you can use it at a time and location that suits you. In addition, Besmart has a 'Learn More' section, which is a comprehensive library of information, checklists, videos and guidance that will help you, as a business owner or manager, to understand what you need to do to protect your workers and your business. The benefits of using this service include: reductions in accident and incidents in the workplace; simplified management of health and safety; free guidance and support; reduced absenteeism and cost; and improved staff morale. Some 19,000 small businesses in Ireland have already taken advantage of this free resource. Start now to improve your health and safety standards and reduce your costs at www.besmart.ie. Further information is available from Jim Copeland +353 1 2980969.



LAUNCH OF 'RESOURCE EFFICIENCY GUIDE' TO HELP BUSINESS' SAVE MONEY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND ADD PROFIT

New guidelines to help businesses reduce their costs, wastage and environmental footprint have been launched by Green Business in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency. Green Business' *Resource Efficiency Guide*, which was officially launched recently in Dublin, provides businesses, especially SMEs, with invaluable information, guidance and tips needed to save tens of thousands of euro each year by reducing energy, water and waste bills. According to James Hogan, Programme Manager with Green Business: "This is the essential bible for retailers of all types and sizes. Now, more than ever, retailers should be aware of how their level of resources and wastage is affecting, not just the environment but, their bottom line. No one can afford to literally see money go down the drain and the *Resource Efficiency Guide* shows how significant savings can be achieved merely by making small changes. For example, a hot water tap left running unnecessarily for 10 minutes every hour of a working day will cost €6,000 per annum."

Recently, Green Business, working with a SuperValu store in Dublin, saved €27,500 per year for the company's electricity costs simply by switching to LED lighting. HAI's Jim Copeland recommends this innovative and helpful guide and the use of the very practical checklists that are contained within. "This will allow business owners in our sector to do their own 'DIY' investigation, to identify and quantify their large energy users and wastage costs, and to address these issues by going to the market with detailed information to seek a better deal," says Jim. Also, Jim says, for retailers this could be a good time to put some extra green in your bottom line.

The sector can benefit from the rise in customer demand for eco-conscious products, whether they're for the kitchen, the bathroom, the garden or the garage. A recent survey from the US, *The 2014 Gibbs & Soell Sense & Sensibility Study: Perspectives on Corporate Sustainability Among US Adults*, found that 58 per cent of participants are more concerned with access to renewable-energy sources than just five years ago.



Pictured at the launch of the Retail Efficiency Guide were: Louis Copeland, Louis Copeland & Sons; Shane Colgan, EPA; James Hogan, Green Business; and Senator Feargal Quinn.

Choice is also important: 69 per cent of respondents want more choices when it comes to energy-related products for their home, according to 'US Homeowners on Clean Energy: A National Survey'.

Several factors play into the decision to purchase green products. Some consumers want to reduce the environmental impact on the earth; for others, health concerns take priority. As always, some consumers simply look at the price tag and the economic benefits.

The survey says: "Although 76 per cent of women are more likely to purchase an environmentally conscious company's products or services, only 48 per cent of women feel well-informed about sustainability issues in general." Homeowners want products that are affordable and will save them money in the long run. Make sure that you're offering items that appeal to everyone, from the dedicated, environmentally conscious customer to the bottom-line-focused shopper.

There are a series of energy management seminars scheduled for May 2014. For further information contact HAI +353 1 298 0969 and the 'Resource Efficiency Guide' is available in hardcopy or as a download from www.greenbusiness.ie

BUILDING FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES FOR SMES

In Budget 2014, the Government announced that Skillnets is receiving additional funding from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to design and deliver a pilot initiative to help business owners improve their capabilities in relation to presenting their business case when seeking to raise finance for their firm. Skillnets has now launched *Building Financial Capabilities for SMEs* which is a subsidised two-day training programme. It includes two one-

to-one mentoring sessions with qualified advisors and is available to soletraders, small business owners and the key business staff of SMEs for the subsidised price of €250 per person. HAI believes this bespoke programme will greatly benefit companies within the hardware sector as it is a unique offering not currently available anywhere else. There has been strong support for the programme from both the banks and small business stakeholders as

they both agree that there is a gap in the knowledge and capabilities of business owners when they apply for credit.

There will be programmes running in every county in Ireland between now and the end of the year.

Further information is available from HAI +353 1 298 0969.

The programme schedule for the coming months can be found at the following link:

www.managementworks.ie/events



HOW WILL NEW REGULATIONS IMPACT ON TRADING?

Although the Building Control Regulations came into effect on March 1st, the full effects they will have on day to day business over the counters at hardware stores and builders merchants around the country remain to be seen. In our continuing series on the regulations in this edition, we pose a key trading question to the Dept of the Environment. Conor Taaffe, Managing Director, Homebond, outlines some of the practical implications and a legal expert offers clarification on the legal aspect of the new framework.

We hope that their comments will, if not provide definitive answers, at least help you more clearly define the key areas of concern.

The HAI Hardware Journal spoke to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government about a retail scenario that could arise under the new Regulations

Where a customer comes into a Builders Merchants looking for, say, a product, Brand A, which has been signed off by the architect as the material to be used and that brand of the product is not stocked by the store, can the customer purchase an equivalent product by a different brand/manufacturer or must it be the brand specified by the architect?

OTC REALITY

According to a spokesperson for the Dept: "The position is that, generally speaking, a designer may specify either a particular material

or product as an element of the design or alternatively may specify a performance requirement. Where a performance requirement is specified, a choice of type of product or material is normally available to the owner/builder and the integrity of the design is maintained once the performance requirement is met. Where a particular product or material is specified any deviation may not be consistent with the design and would require the approval of the designer in order to protect the integrity of the design. Failure to consult the designer on such changes means that the owner/builder may become liable for that element of the design. Substitution of design elements has had serious consequences for projects in the industry in recent years. The new requirement for certified design on all significant work is intended to address this.

"Builders merchants should be aware that the industry has now entered a new era of certified design in the domestic market in particular where they are serving homeowners who may not themselves have any competence in construction matters. Another important implication of the new regulatory approach is that it will introduce greater diligence in relation to product marking, certification and performance verification (the new building control regulations work hand in hand with the Construction Product Regulations in this regard) so requests to see the paper work for product lines generally will be in greater demand than heretofore. The Department will be happy to advise and assist industry stakeholders on these matters wherever necessary."

(continued on page 22)



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The HAI Hardware Journal will be continuing its coverage of the Building Control Regulations in future editions. If HAI Members have any specific questions or concerns they would like to see addressed, please email your queries, under the subject heading 'BCR' to the Editor at Bernard@ifpmmedia.com

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Conor Taaffe, Managing Director, Homebond, outlines some of the practical implications of the new regulations from the builder's merchant's perspective: "All construction products will now be specified in more detail to meet the requirements of the regulations. This means that the builder, or whoever buys the products, will have to notify the hardware merchant about the specific item required. Builders merchants are now going to get much more detailed questions at the counter and will be expected to have much more knowledge."

In practical terms, at inspection stage on a construction project, the Assigned Certifier will be checking that the construction products used are those specified in the drawings. So what problems could arise? "Some products have visible identifiers such as structural timber, which is stamped, or roof trusses, which are tagged by the manufacturer. Therefore, if the Assigned Certifier doesn't see a stamp on the structural timber, or a tag on a roof truss, then that Assigned Certifier will go back to the builder who in turn will go to the merchant for proof that the product meets the requirements of the regulations. This means that the merchant will have to consult with the supplier or manufacturer to obtain the appropriate information and provide it to the builder."

In addition, many products don't have visible markings. Here too, the builder's merchant must be able to prove that the product being sold meets the regulations' requirements: "Taking wall ties as just one example, the builders merchant will be requested by the builder to provide a Declaration of Performance for the ties which originates from the manufacturer/supplier. This Declaration of Performance is a separate piece of

paper which should accompany the wall ties when the builder's merchant purchases them from the supplier. To ensure that the Declaration of Performance and the product are clearly linked at the point of sale, it is good practice to include the product's bar code on the customer invoice." He concludes: "To sum up, the builder's merchant is selling the product and, if the Assigned Certifier has an issue with the product, that issue will be brought back to the builder's merchant by the builder. The builder's merchant will then have to get back to his supplier and prove to the builder and/or the Assigned Certifier's satisfaction that the product meets the relevant requirements."

It should be noted that the requirement for a Certificate of Compliance does not apply to an extension to a dwelling involving a total floor area of 40 square metres or less. However, there is still an obligation on the owner and builder to comply with the Building Regulations 1997 - 2014 (governing design and construction) and the Construction Products Regulation 305/2011 (governing construction products used).

The Certificate of Compliance (Design) and Certificate of Compliance (Completion) only apply where a Commencement Notice is lodged on or after 1st March 2014 [arising from the procedural obligations set out in the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014].

LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

Mary Liz Mahony, Associate at Arthur Cox Solicitors provides a legal perspective. A key development, according to Mary Liz is in relation to the "Builder": "The regulations require the Builder to build in accordance with the design and the Builder must certify that it has done so in Part A of the Completion Certificate... In order

for the Builder to execute Part A of the Completion Certificate, he must be satisfied that the works have been built in accordance with the design. In this regard, he may require ancillary certificates from his subcontractors confirming that their portion of the works have been built in compliance with the design. For example, if a main contractor has engaged a specialist mech elec sub-contractor for the works, the main contractor may not be in a position to stand over the mech elec work. In that instance, the mech elec sub-contractor would provide an ancillary certificate."

This is important for the builders merchant as the customers are likely to be very alive to the specific requirements of the design in relation to product specification.

Mary Liz adds: "Any differences in trading will be subtle. In broad terms, merchants and builders providers should be alive to developments in terms of innovative quality products and materials, and should stay informed on the preferences of architects and engineers."

STAY INFORMED

Keep up with the latest information on products and materials and be alive to architect and engineer preferences.

BE PREPARED FOR MORE DETAILED CUSTOMER ENQUIRIES

The Dept of the Environment says you can expect increased demand for product marking, certification and performance verification (the new building control regulations work hand in hand with the Construction Product Regulations in this regard)



Garveys Builders Merchants, a part of the Grafton Merchanting Group, has been in business in Roscommon town for over 25 years. The HAI Hardware Journal visited the store on Lanesboro Road on the outskirts of the town to talk to Garveys Branch Manager, Marion Cunningham about the resilience the business has shown through the downturn and its plans for the recovery

ROSCOMMONCHAMPION

Garveys' customer base encompasses Roscommon town itself and a wide catchment area around it. Like many hardware businesses, the domestic consumer has been important to Garveys in the last few years, Marion says.

"The domestic consumer has been, and will continue to be, a mainstay of the business. We're finding that people in the area are doing a lot of refurbishing and DIY and there's been a steady demand in our plumbing and homeware sections.

"People are investing in areas that will help them make savings, such as fuels and energy. Insulation, for instance, is seen as worthwhile and, ultimately, an investment that will pay for itself over time." Garveys prides itself on its responsiveness to customers needs and, last year, opened a dedicated Plumbing Centre. "Grafton have been particularly helpful with advice and support in designing the Plumbing Centre and it's proven very popular, consolidating the trend we'd seen."

FINANCE FOUNDATION

As is the case with many business leaders in hardware and retailing in general, Marion's background is in finance. A Chartered Accountant, she worked for three years with Arthur Anderson in the 1990s, then one of the top five accountancy firms. Having worked in both London and Dublin, Marion, a native of Newbridge, Co. Galway, had a yearning to get back to the West and in 1999, she joined Garveys. In 2005, when Sean Garvey sold the business to the Grafton Group, Marion was appointed Branch Manager. While her grounding in finance provided a solid foundation, she found the new role gave her a fresh perspective on the business.

"In the finance area, your main focus is on the numbers. As a manager, you have to take in the big picture and see the overall business. It's very much about relationships – with the customers, the suppliers and

the staff." Good judgement based on a depth of local knowledge and local involvement is also a key factor in making the Lanesboro store tick. "We're very much embedded in the community here. Our staff live in the catchment area and we get involved in suitable sponsorships when the opportunity arises. For instance, we're sponsors of the Roscommon Ploughing Championships which were held recently. Staying close to the local community is important to us and it means that we know our customers and they know us."

TESTING TIME

The last six years have been a testing period for Garveys, the hardware sector and the economy as a whole and, while it certainly wouldn't have been something Marion would have wished for, it has meant that she and her team have examined and re-examined every aspect of the store operations to maximise cost-



Pictured at the presentation of the Connacht/ Ulster Builders Merchant Award to Garveys at the Octabuild Awards 2013 were: Paddy Kelly, President, HAI; Marion Cunningham, Garveys Builders Providers; and Jim Loughran, Octabuild Chairman.



Anthony Mullarky receives the Grafton Group Employee of the month award for November 2013. Pictured at the presentation are: Brendan Sammon, Anthony Mullarky and Marion Cunningham.

effectiveness and sales performance. "The transition period after the sale was as seamless as could be expected. We suffered from the downturn as much as anyone, but we have managed to retain many of the staff from Sean Garvey's time. That level of experience and the can-do attitude of staff, old and new, has been vital to weathering the challenges of the last few years. In Garveys, we don't clock off; the team are all eager to go the extra mile." And Marion means that literally. Doors and floors specialist, Brian, will drive to the customer's house, in some cases up to 25 to 30 miles, to work out measurements and dimensions. Similarly, the store's bathroom specialist, Siobhan is happy to visit a client's home to ensure that the design details match with the overall look and style of the home. "We have a team of 14 and that type of enthusiasm is typical of the people who work in Garveys. It's a cornerstone of the business and vital to our success. "People buy from people. Whether it's guidance on what type of flue to buy, or the right slate for a roof, our customers expect realistic, accurate advice they can depend on. Our staff are constantly updated on innovations and developments in products and material. "You have to get the whole package

right – supply, price and service – and, along with managing each of these factors, it is crucial to keep your margin. Even in the current economic climate. I'm aware of the pressure staff here are under. And it's the same everywhere. Customers are always looking for a better price. And while you want to make the sale, you also have to realise there's a level at which it is not worth selling. Sales training is vital in getting this message across." Garveys retailing excellence has been recognised recently within the Grafton Group and on a national level. The Lanesboro store won the award for Best Customer Service in the northwest region in the Grafton Group last year. In the 2013 Octabuild Awards, Garveys won the Connacht/ Ulster Builders Merchant Award. "We were up against some really big stores for that award and the standard of competition was very high," Marion comments.

TRAINING FOR RETAIL FITNESS

She praises the low key but highly effective support provided by the 'mothership' throughout recent years. "Access to the buying power of the group is a real advantage and ensures that whatever a customer wants, we can, within reason, provide it. As an example, recently we had a

customer looking for an unusual type of moss cleaner, which we didn't have in stock but were able to source quickly through our in-house support services."

"We're strongly committed to training here. We organise training ourselves across a range of key areas including health and safety and customer service. We do a lot of work with suppliers on areas like product knowledge. And we regularly participate in the group's training courses including our 'You are the Difference' programme which has made a real contribution to staff motivation and performance." Getting through the challenges and adversities of the last few years has helped develop a strong team spirit among the staff. Typical of this was the way the store's team handled a flood event in 2006: "The flooding went right through the shop and was about two feet deep. We had to close the yard for a day. It simply wasn't safe to open.

"But the staff here were fantastic and, thanks to their efforts, we opened the following day. We had to serve customers at the front entrance and everyone was wearing wellingtons and jackets (there was no heating) but we were open for business. Many of our staff here would be from farming backgrounds and they brought in

A GOOD 'FIT'

Kieran Burke, Commercial Director of Grafton Merchanting in the Republic of Ireland comments "Garveys of Roscommon was one of many acquisitions within the Irish builders merchants sector made by Grafton over the last 20 years. A key element of our acquisition strategy is the 'fit'. By this we mean the overall ethos and reputation of the business. From the very outset, it was clear to us that Garveys shared many of the attributes that we promote. It is customer-focused, community-based and hardworking. "Throughout the very challenging period of the last six years, Marion and her team have outperformed their regional peers by maintaining their focus on the customer. This has been quite rightly recognised in the awards they have received, both internally within Grafton, and externally via Octobuild. "

tractors and equipment to help pump the water out of the shop. After a big clean up, the store was pretty much back to normal in ten days."

LOOKING AHEAD

While there's plenty of hard work still to be done, the future is looking good for Garveys, Marion believes: "We've just opened a dedicated civil engineering department which will sell everything from manhole covers to girders. Again, the Grafton support is really helpful in this regard as we are partnering with another group brand, Davies, which has a lot of experience in civil engineering and we're getting the benefit of its back up and advice. "In addition, at the end of the month, we've got a group of new departments opening up including a steel division, a tool hire service with Sam Hire and a landscaping centre for all paving/stone and decking requirements. We're planning more innovations like this as the right opportunities arise. While we're only at the start of the recovery, we're optimistic about what lies ahead."



The staff of Garveys Builders Merchants.

HARDWARE OUTLOOK

The HAI Hardware Journal sought the Garveys Branch Manager's views on a range of topical issues

ON THE HOME RENOVATION SCHEME:

"So far there's been a modest response to the Home Renovation Scheme. It will take time to bed in, but I think it's long-term impact will be positive."

ON THE BUILDING CONTROL REGULATIONS:

"This will probably impact more on the builders themselves. From the point of view of the hardware retailer, I think it will take time for its effects to become clear. It should lead to a situation where only the best quality materials and products are specified and that should be positive for the quality and sustainability of building. Better quality products tend to be better margin products as well so, hopefully, this will be good for builders merchants."

ON BEING A WOMAN IN A TRADITIONALLY MALE DOMINATED BUSINESS:

"It's never been an issue. I've always been treated equally at all stages of my career, both in my finance role and now as a branch manager. Having said that I still occasionally get calls transferred to me as manager and when they hear a female voice they say they were actually looking for the MANAGER!"

ON A SECTOR WITH POTENTIAL:

"People are keen to find ways to make savings these days and the plumbing product categories, from insulation to piping, are highly cost-effective from the customer's perspective. Customers are concerned about taking care of their loved ones, particularly those that are a little more vulnerable such as children and the elderly, and heating, running water, energy efficiency and environmental friendliness are all vital in this regard. Plumbing is an area where we can really add value for our customers in ways that will add to their quality of life and which they'll genuinely appreciate."

In 2011, IBEC estimated that absenteeism in Irish workplaces cost employers €1.5 billion. That averaged down to approximately €818 per employee, writes Tom Smyth

ABSENTEE EMPLOYEES

For an employer, payment of sick pay will obviously be a major cost factor. However, even without this, employee absence can lead to organisational impacts and costs such as lost leads or sales, replacement costs at overtime rate and stress/pressure on remaining members of the team. While an employer cannot control all employee absences, having a properly structured absence management policy, that is actively managed and utilised, can help ensure that the costs and effects of any absence are minimised.

In terms of an absence policy, your contract of employment or employee manual should contain your policy on employee illness or absence. At minimum it should address the following:

When should an employee call in sick?

Depending on the shift start time, by when should an employee report their absence. Within an hour of their start time is a generally accepted figure but each employer can choose their own time once it is realistic and achievable.

How they should contact the employer?

Can a parent or spouse ring in on an employee's behalf? Do you regard a text message as an acceptable

means of reporting an absence? We would recommend a personal call only but, again, each employer must choose their own accepted means of communication.

Who they should contact?

Can they ring an office, a line manager or must they ring the owner?

ACCEPTABLE ONGOING CONTACT REQUIREMENTS

Depending on the length of an absence, how often would an employer expect a person to contact them to keep them updated on their status? Daily, Weekly, monthly

REQUIREMENT FOR A MEDICAL CERTIFICATE

(initial, ongoing & possible return)
Generally, an initial medical certificate is required for absences in excess of 3 days (on the fourth morning) and for longer absences on a weekly/monthly basis thereafter. Again, there is flexibility for an employer to set their own agenda here provided at all times the requirements can be defined as 'reasonable'.

RIGHT TO REFER TO COMPANY DOCTOR

You should, in your terms and conditions of employment, reserve the right to send an employee to a company doctor, at a cost to the company, for any absence. Absences

can be for any number of physical or psychological reasons and work issues can be referenced at times. See further notes on the company doctor below.

SICK PAY

There is no statutory legal entitlement to Sick Pay. Many employers however, through Union agreements, or via their own terms and conditions of employment, provide sick pay to employees. If such pay is given, it is important that the limits and terms of payment are summarised for absolute clarity. How much is paid annually, what employees qualify for the payment and who keeps any social welfare payments are just some considerations.

Outside of these minimum requirements, a company could also benefit from the following related considerations:

Company Doctor – Have one to hand

Employers can often feel frustrated when they receive a medical certificate if the contents seem at odds with other information. For example, if an employee is refused time off and a subsequent medical certificate happens to coincide with the exact dates of the denied leave. If the employer knows a GP

or occupational doctor who has a common sense approach to certifying staff it is often a useful step to refer an employee to them for a second opinion. There is a cost to this, and we do not recommend it is a widespread practice, but in certain circumstances having a company doctor available is of great assistance to the recovery and return to work of an employee.

Return to Work Meetings

It is recommended that you get into the habit of meeting with an employee returning from illness for a quick, recorded conversation. If you start to build up a portfolio of 'return to work' notes, then it means that no absence is going unrecorded.

Over time, employers can be amazed to discover the true statistics of an employee's absence. We would recommend preparing a simple questionnaire to be used and filed every time an employee returns that logs the dates, length and reasons for the absence.

From our informal research with clients, most say it has helped reduce the levels of 'Monday Morningitis' and other such short-term sick leave as the employees know they cannot simply return to work without some form of questioning.

If any HAI members would like to avail of our free assistance in preparing a return to work questionnaire, please contact our office.

LONG TERM ABSENCES

An employer can determine that an employee has frustrated the contract of employment if they are satisfied that the employee will not be in a position to uphold their commitment to complete a role and hours of work for the employer.

It is important to understand that this can only be determined by the employer after they have been seen to have acted in a reasonable manner and considered several factors. Firstly, the employer should consider the role of the employee and its importance to the running of the business. They should then look at the length of time they have given the employee to recover from an illness or injury thus far. They must also consider the advice of a medical expert(s) as to a prognosis for full recovery (if achievable). They should consider alternative roles or accommodations that could be made to the workplace to facilitate the return of the employee.

Each absence will be different and should only be considered on its own merits. Please seek proper advice from your HR advisor before terminating the employment of an employee on long term sick leave.

If you have any queries on short term or long term absences and how best to engage with employees, please feel free to call our offices on +353 21 4634154.



TOM SMYTH

Tom Smyth is Managing Director of Tom Smyth & Associates, a HR consultancy, established in 1991, that gives Irish employers practical advice on HR, industrial relations and employment law issues.

BITBUZZ APPOINTS MUNSTER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Bitbuzz, the leading wi-fi provider, has announced the appointment of Darragh O'Sullivan as Business Development Manager for Munster. Darragh's new role will involve helping the company further expand its customer and business base throughout Munster, and the West of Ireland. Darragh's most recent role was with Living Social as a Market Consultant. Prior to that, he worked with Groupon in the same role. Darragh previously worked in the financial sector for a number of years as an Insurance and Investments Manager with Bank of Ireland Life and was a successful Mortgage Brokerage with Blue Sky Mortgages in Limerick City. From these previous roles, Darragh has developed a keen insight into the Munster marketplace. He brings a vast amount of experience to this role, with diversifying roles in insurance, investment business and e-commerce industry working for both Blue Chip and Multi-National corporations. Darragh holds a Higher Certificate in Business Studies and Computer Applications from the Limerick Institute of Technology.

**NEW
2014**



3 New colourvibe Colours

The Johnstone's Colour Vibe range of paint was launched back in 2011 in order to meet a growing consumer need for a range of fashionable, on trend colours suitable for Feature Walls.

Launched in direct competition with Dulux and Crown Feature Wall paints but with no price premium over the standard Vinyl Matt prices Colour Vibe has proved a hit with consumers and stockists alike with sales increasing 97% year on year in 2013!

Johnstone's Colour Vibe has always had colour at it's heart and here at PPG we constantly review the colour trends and have identified 3 new colours to add to the range.

The new colours are set to launch in February and a new look colour card will also be available to support the launch.

Ask your account manager for more details.



Dark Angel

The sexy and sophisticated deep purple has been a firm favourite with consumers which has made it 2013's best seller!



Fiery Sunset

Number 2 in sales only behind Dark Angel, Fiery Sunset's striking look features heavily in 2014 trends.



Fuchsia Fantasy

This bright and vibrant pink is set to stay



Miami Mint

Vibrant, fun and so on trend this shade is the next big seller for 2014



Vintage Denim

Sophisticated and stylish blue that is making the crossover from fashion to interiors



Golden Ochre

A modern twist on an old classic, this muted shade of ochre is sure to impress.

**NEW
2014**

**NEW
2014**

**NEW
2014**



ACE WINS

American retailer on his group's impressive expansion

John Venhuizen has played a key role in the aggressive expansion of Ace Hardware in the US. John shares his insights on the US hardware business in an exclusive interview with *The HAI Hardware Journal*

***The HAI Hardware Journal:* How are Ace retailers investing in growth and adapting in the face of strong competition?**

John Venhuizen: Most of our Ace owners have weathered their share of economic and competitive storms. These are savvy business owners who don't think in terms of quarters – but rather quarter centuries. They know that success over the long haul requires continued investment – a steady march – regardless of what's in today's headlines.

HAI: Can you explain the thinking behind Ace's "2020 Vision"?

JV: 20/20 Vision – our longterm strategy, is based on four core pillars:

- (i) Invest in the Brand – we plan to build a deeper and wider moat and double our national advertising spend on or before the year 2020;
- (ii) Fulfill the Promise – brands are promises made to consumers. At Ace we plan to invest to ensure we are promise keepers. We strive to be the best, most helpful hardware stores on the planet;

- (iii) Enrich the Assortment – our intention is to offer merchandise in our stores (or wherever consumers choose to purchase) that is high quality, local, differentiated and relevant to consumers. Craftsman, Clark & Kensington, Monster Cable and Valspar are a few examples that have been quite successful;
- (iv) Be The Supply place – we launched a new brand called The Supply Place...powered by Ace. The objective is to take an increasing share of local business-to-business

John Venhuizen is President and Chief Executive Officer of Ace Hardware Corporation. John, 43, is a 21-year veteran of Ace. In 2004, as Director of Business Development John led the implementation of Ace's aggressive growth strategy. In 2006, Venhuizen was promoted to Vice President of Business Development. In 2010, as Executive Vice President, he oversaw Ace's supply chain, IT, international activities and strategy. He currently serves as a Director on a number of boards including Ace International Holdings and Ace Retail Holdings. A graduate of Trinity Christian College, he holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration with a marketing concentration. John resides in Chicago's western suburbs.

revenue. Those first core pillars are about developing better stores, but we are also aggressively pursuing more stores through accelerated store growth. We opened 197 new stores across the globe in 2013 which brings our worldwide store count to 4,829.

HAI: I see from a comment you made recently that new stores are selling \$132 per foot today versus \$99 in sales per foot in 2007. Can you talk about what has driven this upturn?

JV: Our passion at Ace is to continuously improve the retail store model. The 30 per cent improvement in new store performance is a good sign that our labour has not been in vain. Corporately, we are well aware that merely shipping ever increasing amounts of product into the back door of locally-owned hardware stores is not enough in today's fiercely competitive global market. We must also leverage scale on our services and operating methods to ensure local owners can efficiently operate and make money selling product out of the front door. Local store level economics are everything!

HAI: The trend of small box stores – such as Ace – is gaining popularity and loyalty among consumers, and consumers are supporting companies that cater to local



For 90 years, Ace Hardware has been known as the place with the helpful hardware folks in thousands of neighborhoods across the US, providing customers with a more personal kind of 'helpful'. In 2013, Ace ranked "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Home Improvement Retail Stores, Seven Years in a Row" according to J.D. Power. With more than 4,800 hardware stores locally owned and operated across the globe, Ace is the largest hardware cooperative in the industry. Headquartered in Oak Brook, Ill., Ace and its subsidiaries currently operate 14 distribution centers in the US and also have distribution capabilities in Shanghai, China; Panama City, Panama; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Its retailers' stores are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and approximately 60 countries. For more information on Ace, visit www.acehardware.com.

interests, point to a strong future for your retailers. Can you give us your thoughts on how consumers perceive your member retailers locally and how your national brand impacts at local level?

JV: The combination of a globally trusted brand with locally embraced owners is a powerful weapon. We are betting the farm on it. We believe local ownership is competitive differentiator. The 'shop local' phenomenon is wonderful for our owners and we heartily embrace it. We feel fortunate to have local owners who do not view their consumers as just 'customers' but as neighbours – which is what they are. And I find it inspiring how the local Ace owners continue to support and engage in their local communities. It's a 'profit with a purpose' model that has served us well.

HAI: You recently spoke about how small business success drives big business success. Could we have your perspective on how successful small businesses act as the

backbone of the U.S. economy or indeed any economy?

JV: Big, almost always leads to bureaucracy and bureaucracy suffocates people. Small, on the other hand, almost always leads to informality and informality liberates people. This, in my view, is why small business is so critical to world economies. Yes, it can be messy and disruptive, but it inevitably leads to innovation, inventiveness and growth – which is precisely what ailing economies need. I'm so proud of our local Ace owners for their continued entrepreneurialism. I find it to be a model others should seek to emulate.

HAI: Can you tell us about Ace Hardware's commitment to customer service and the importance of commitment throughout the organisation?

JV: Helpfulness is our weapon in the world. Regardless of where technology or the digital revolution takes us – we believe quite strongly

that personal relationships will always still matter. And we are fanatically committed to out-serving our competitors. My experience leads me to believe that when we at the corporation serve our owners well, they in turn are unshackled to then serve their neighbors well. It's a formula that has worked well for us.

HAI: Ace Hardware has launched a scaled-down version of itself in nearly 400 locations, the new format, designed for 5,000 square feet or less, stocks more than 11,000 of the retailer's most popular and profitable products, can you tell us how this new format is performing?

JV: We have about 20 pilot stores currently. We are learning a great deal and have already implemented some of the merchandising productivity benefits into our core format which is generating incremental gross profit per square foot. But we are not yet in roll-out mode. We believe we have more to learn before we'd contemplate or endorse a full scale roll-out.

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Joseph Blair of Hortitrends provides a round-up of the latest news from the gardening sector



Some of the 110,762 visitors to Bloom last year enjoying the event.

GLANBIA COUNTRYLIFE GARDEN CENTRES WIN AT ANNUAL GARDEN RETAIL AWARDS

The annual Garden Retail Awards took place recently at Bord Bia headquarters in Dublin. They reward excellence in garden retail as well with grower and landscape excellence. "The Bord Bia garden centre accreditation scheme is a key part of our strategy to continuously improve the standards in our garden centres. Being part of the scheme allows us to work with experts in Bord Bia," according to James Byrne, Retail Marketing Manager, Glanbia Countrylife

"It also allows us to share best practice with other garden centres to improve standards across the industry," James continues. He also

highlighted the benefits for staff in participating in the awards. "Since we joined the scheme in 2010 we have seen major staff improvements year-on-year. Our staff learn as they implement the changes needed. We're delighted for all of our staff as it's an award for their dedication to excellence in garden retail, especially at Castlecomer who have won DIY Garden Centre of the Year for the fourth year in a row." In total, 10 of the group's stores received a three or four star rating. Also collecting awards for hardware garden retail were four Dairygold Co-op Superstores who all received 3-star certificates of excellence.

MAKE YOUR GARDEN RETAIL PROFITS 'BLOOM'

The countdown to Bloom has started with a recent 'Mothers Day Ticket Promotion' to its 17,000 Club Bloom members. Bloom generates €5.5m in sales during its five days, with the average adult spending €75 during that period. Attendance was 110,762 in 2013, with 75 per cent of those in the key female plant buyer demographic. Garden centre plant buyers will tell you that layout and presentation are all targeted at female customers. The core garden centre will be keenly linked into its sales activities and promotions in the run-up to, and during, the event. I advise that each and every member of your garden staff attend the show to enthuse them about 'garden retail' and also to observe first hand what the public will be excited about in 2014/15. This year's show will run from Thursday, May 29, to Monday, June 2, 2014.

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN — GOOD FOR YOUR BUSINESS

We are in the midst of the annual 'National Spring Clean', which takes place from April 1 – 30, 2014. It is Ireland's largest anti-litter initiative organised by An Taisce, and funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. What's in it for your business is displaying your community and environmental credentials to a wide audience. Over 500,000 volunteers (customers) participated in clean-ups throughout the country last April. Taking part in the National Spring Clean is very straightforward and could be as simple as incentivising staff to volunteer or loaning/sponsoring tools or bags to help with the clean-up. Make their byline your byline for business and reap the community loyalty dividends. If you see this as a one-off opportunity then you and your business are missing the point. The more you put into the community the more you will get out.

KILSARAN LAUNCHES DIARMUID GAVIN PAVING RANGE

Following a €30m investment in new paving production facilities in 2009, Kilsaran International has announced a collaboration with Irish celebrity garden designer, Diarmuid Gavin, to design and produce a high-end bespoke range of contemporary paving products and accessories. The extensive range comprises paving flags, kerb edgings and accessories and is aimed at both homeowners and commercial landscapers looking for aesthetic, design-led paving schemes. Combining over 50 years of Kilsaran expertise with Diarmuid's unique, trademark style, the collection will be available in a range of designer colours and finishes. Speaking about the new range, Diarmuid said: "I

am excited about developing a product range which both reflects current outdoor trends and adds some totally new ideas into the mix. Our aim is to excite the consumer with the new potential of paving." With a new plant range on the cards, Diarmuid is proving that celebrity gardeners may bring in different types of customers. Think about what type of celebrity gardener would appeal to your base of customers. Is it Diarmuid Gavin, Gerry Daly, Marie Staunton or others? Ask your customers that question via a competition for Bloom tickets. With this information you can then research what style of gardening each of these are promoting and provide a range of products to match.

SUPERNEMOS UP FOR 2014 AWARD

One of the few Irish products listed in Ireland's five star Garden Centres is Supernemos. Nemos topped the list of nominations for the Green Awards being shortlisted for the Supply Chain Management Award and the Product of the Year Award. Dr Abdul Al-Amidi has been short-listed for this year's Green Leader Award. His biopesticide invention called SuperNemos simplifies plant and crop protection in the garden. It's a product that will appeal to those involved in Grow it Yourself (GIY) activities. More at nemos.ie

€1M INVESTMENT AT JOHNSTOWN GARDEN CENTRE

The centre has recently completed a major investment that includes an extensive new restaurant and an increase in shop floor space to 40,000 sq. ft. The investment also means the creation of 15 new jobs. Online sales are continuing to grow for the business, which was one of the early adopters of garden retail e-commerce. Centre Director Jim Clarke explained that their online investment has increased sales but also provided creator insight into customer buying habits. "Some 50 per cent of customers now research their product online before visiting us. The online store allows customers to browse at their leisure regardless of the weather."



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THE HERB GARDEN LAUNCHES NEW RANGE OF IRISH ORGANIC SEEDS

One of Ireland's few certified organic herb producers, The Herb Garden is delighted to announce the launch of a new range of Irish Certified Organic herb seeds. The new range will include a diverse range of rare and unusual species and will target both novices and experts. The announcement coincides with an investment in the company's online presence and ecommerce offer. To learn more visit www.theherbgarden.ie



Arboretum has invested in a complete rebrand both instore and online.

MAJOR REBRAND FOR ARBORETUM

Following the recent expansion of its restaurant, Arboretum has made a major investment to upgrade across the plant and lifestyle areas. The investment also includes a complete rebrand both in-store and online at www.arboretum.ie

What these major independent stores have realised is that investing in both the food and e-commerce spaces is akin to taking out a clever insurance policy against the Irish weather.

IMPROVE YOUR GARDEN DESIGN CREDENTIALS

A new online Irish garden design company has launched a bespoke and white-label garden design service. They claim to make professional and affordable garden design available to everyone for the first time. The service is going initially with the Horkans Group. Garden centres will be able to offer a professional garden design service, while its 'DesignLite' service starting at €149 will enable customers to get their garden professionally designed online, directly by its design team.

Terry McEneaney, Design Director, DesignLite, points out that garden design opens significant e-commerce and sales after care opportunities for all. Another option you might consider is seeking out your local 'Garden & Landscape Designers Association' (GLDA) member and doing a deal to get a weekly design clinic going. Look at building a long-term relationship that allows the designer to get paid for what they do and allows you to improve your design credentials with customers.

RECOVERY IN CUT FLOWERS AND INDOOR PLANTS CATEGORIES

Arjan Van Veen of Aquaflor Flowers Direct, a wholesale importer and distributor, is reporting a definite improvement in sales among the florist sector, especially in the larger urban areas. In 2006, cut flowers began to show a slow decline. That decline is now in sustainable growth, which is a sign that people are feeling good enough to carry out impulse buys. Arjan advises: "Remember if you carry a line of cut flower bunches then please don't put them near a breezy front door where they will begin to look in a sorry state quickly. They are a reflection of your overall plant offering so, wherever they are, make sure they are fres and in pristine condition."

FIANN Ó NUALLÁIN TO PUBLISH 'THE HOLISTIC GARDENER: FIRST AID FROM THE GARDEN'

A handy guide to quick and effective first aid treatments for commonly occurring accidents and complaints, derived from garden, pantry and under-sink sources. From a thorn prick to heatstroke, from chapped hands to heart attack, from pesticide poisoning to wasp stings – all of these can be treated on-site with what you grow. The resources are on your doorstep – the plant beside you as you work or relax in the garden can be the answer to hives, aches or watery eyes. It is written by a professional gardener with a lifetime of experience of accidents that can happen in the garden and of how to cure or respond to them using plants and items at hand in the garden. The book is available in May, and is available for pre-order at www.mercierpress.ie



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WOODCARE INDUSTRY HAS BOLD NEW TRENDS

Bold colour statements are becoming increasingly popular with consumers, according to many top retailers and suppliers. *The HAI Hardware Journal* looks at some of the leading companies in the woodcare market and gets their thoughts on the current trends and highlights the latest product news

While natural wood colours and finishes are still important, there has been an increasingly noticeable divergence toward brighter colours in the last year according to retailers and suppliers.

"Natural wood colours are always popular in terms of woodcare products, and there has been a move towards brighter tones and pastels too," says Kevin Whelan, Marketing Controller, Crown Paints Ireland Ltd. "There is a growing idea of making the garden into an external room, providing the weather is good." Kevin anticipates that the demand for more adventurous colour trends will continue in 2014. He does say however, that at the premium end of the market there is a slight leaning towards highly translucent woodstains. Recently, customers have been moving towards products that have increased longevity, says Kevin. In 2014, he expects shed and fence treatment to be another big seller as it is an annual project for many people. In terms of the Crown brand, Kevin explains that the biggest sellers are its Sadolin Classic and Sadolin Extra Woodstains. Sadolin Classic caters for all exterior wood such as decking, sheds and fences while Sadolin Extra provides durability and protection for windows, doors and conservatories. The trend for a more expansive

colour range can be seen in Sadolin Superdec, a recent addition to the Crown brand, which comes in over 300 finishes in opaque or solid colour. Superdec also provides up to eight years protection of wood, catering to the growing consumer trend of requiring less maintenance.

"Consumers are familiar with the usual wood tones, but many don't realise that we also offer many other inspirational shades – and choosing these colours in no way compromises the performance of the products.

"It would be great to see more colour used in 2014, as it brings so much to the overall visual impact and experience of the garden."

DYNAMIC COLOUR



Maria Flood, Brand Manager, Dulux, says that woodcare has been moving away from natural colours and traditional treatments to more dynamic use of colour.

"In 2013, there was a noticeable shift in focus from traditional wood protection to trends of more exciting colour for the garden. As we move further into 2014, consumers will become more confident in their colour choices. Our Cuprinol range has 73 different colours, so there is no shortage of what people can do."

With the rise in popularity of trends such as upcycling (reusing items and updating them or adding colour etc.), Maria says you should expect to see a riot of colour on these repurposed items of furniture. "Favourites this season are 'Raspberry Sorbet with Emerald Stone' and 'Mediterranean Glaze with Dazzling Yellow'."

The bestselling of the Dulux brands is the Cuprinol Garden Shades range, with Timbercare and general decking products being the other top sellers. "We expect 2014 to have an upsurge in bolder shades of colour, combined with smaller pack sizes to allow people to contrast and harmonise their garden wood colours. The range has a rich colour and four years' weather protection."

Dulux has a new product launching in its woodcare category this year, Cuprinol Total Deck. It is an easy

and efficient way of cleaning wood decking while also giving them extra protection, Maria explains. "The only product you need is Total Deck and a garden broom and you can easily treat a deck on a sunny morning and be eating your barbecue on it in the evening."

GOOD WEATHER A KEY DRIVER

Jean Dunne, Marketing and Administration Executive at Excellence Ltd, also reveals that coloured exterior finishes are very popular with consumers and anticipates that the rest of 2014 will continue in the same vein. Talking about 2013, Jean says that while outdoor woodcare fared well due to the good weather, the interior woodcare market continued to suffer to an extent due to the wide availability of pre-finished woods. "Our best-selling products can vary year-to-year depending on the weather conditions, but generally, our best sellers would be our decking oils and stains, and exterior finishes and oils." Excellence has recently added Rustins Antiquax to its woodcare range. Ian Slater, National Sales Manager with Rustins says the company is excited to add such a prestigious brand of woodcare products to its range. The range features tin sizes of 100ml and furniture care products such as creams, wax and leather care. In terms of exterior wood trends, Everbuild Building Products has launched a Hardwood Furniture Oil, which can be used to restore and protect garden tables and chairs. The company launched a brand new



range of wood stains and varnishes to the building and DIY market in February 2012 and, according to Everbuild, the range has proven to be a success in the marketplace. Looking ahead to this year, Everbuild hopes that a hot summer will lead to increased use of products designed to protect wood, specifically leading to growth in sales of Creocote, an oil-based wood treatment for exterior timbers and Fence Mate, a solvent-free fence and shed treatment. The company has also seen a marked increase in the number of people who are investing in floor varnishes as wooden floors are increasingly chosen over carpets, as they are easier to manage. Everbuild has seen an increased need to expand its colour range as customers are developing tastes for varied finishes. It has also expanded the size range of its product tins to suit the needs of individual jobs. The company anticipates that, as people introduce more wood into their home in the form of flooring, furniture and fixings, its woodcare range will need to continually grow to meet the demands of customers as they look beyond standard wood stains.

HIGH PERFORMANCE

"Last year, we saw an increase in customers looking for locally manufactured wood treatments with proven performance," says Brendan Devenney, Area Sales Manager Larsen

Building Products. "Customers have a continued focus on high performance, and we expect this trend to continue into 2014."

Value for money is also important for customers, according to Brendan, but this is in combination with high-performance products. Larsen recently launched its new Lardec Wood Stain and Fenceshield ranges recently, and colour selectors are available in stores to help promote these products to customers. Other products in the woodcare range will also be updated with new packaging shortly. The company's top selling product is Larsen Wood Preservative, with accompanying product range, Lardec Wood Stains, offer value and performance with easy-to-apply formulations, according to Brendan. "We were up 20 per cent on these woodcare products last year and we are looking at 10 to 15 per cent this year, based on steady wood preserver sales and the ever-increasing consumer demand for good, oil-based wood stains and protectors."

LONGER MAINTENANCE CYCLES

Following a particularly bad winter, Kieran Noonan, Territory Manager, PPG says people are now looking forward to the coming months and the improved weather that will come with them. "Customers increasingly





require products that will offer longer maintenance cycles due to the worsening weather conditions over winter," says Kieran.

PPG has a range of three premium products with their own specific qualities and attributes: Classic Matt Woodstain; Satin Woodstain; and Quick Dry Woodstain. This range is well-suited to the need for longer protection, responding to customer demand, with each offering at least five years' weather protection.

"Our woodstains range can be used for exterior joinery, as well as interior joinery, offering UV resistance and a protective microporous finish. Quick Dry Satin Woodstain, in particular, lends itself to interior jobs with its low odour and quick-dry qualities."

In the growing demand for more colourful solutions, PPG provides all three products in 12 ready-mixed colours, with the option of using state-of-the-art tinting machines to produce thousands of different colours. The company is soon to launch new packaging for these products, designed to target customers from the front of the pack and ensure that they are fully aware of the products key points from a glance.

BOLD STATEMENTS

Ronseal adopts a similar mantra in relation to colour trends, stating that being bold with colours but limited with application is proving popular in the market right now. New takes on design are popular, such as the addition of bright colours to single elements of wood and furniture like individual chair legs. The company also says that white was an important colour in 2013, with sweet powder tones

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being especially trendy, particularly opaque high-gloss paints and softer, translucent white washes on top of pale timber. Bold colour statements and the mixing of daring colours and finishes to achieve the latest effect, were especially important in the market during 2013, says Ronseal. Recycled and reclaimed wood also featured prominently. For 2014, Ronseal anticipates that there will be a surge in warmer wood tones for interiors, such as teak, oak and walnut, in flooring and furniture throughout homes. The anticipation is that the sugar tones will give way to pastel shades. Ronseal suggests that to make a statement, customers should mix matt and gloss surfaces on a piece of furniture, something particularly on-trend with painted woods. The top selling products of the Ronseal range are its Interior

Wax; Diamond Hard Floor Varnish; Interior Varnish; and Cupboard Paint. Ronseal is also releasing its new Ronseal Precision Finish Power Sprayer. The sprayer has three settings to control the flow of the liquid for accuracy, control and speed. The fan nozzle saves time and is shaped to create the best spray pattern possible with even distribution and pressure. It has enough power to spray up to 40 fence panels from one set of batteries. With customers moving towards bolder colour choices, the re-use or appropriation of old wooden furniture, upcycling and the general focus on creative use of colours, the woodcare market is moving to meet that demand. While these are the current trends, there is still a tried and true loyalty to traditional wood colours too, which have remained popular in the market, according to Ronseal.

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ROOFING, CLADDING AND INSULATION

The roofing, cladding and insulation sector of the hardware industry has experienced varied growth in the last year according to retailers and suppliers. With growth largely centralised in Dublin, there is optimism that 2014 will yield more growth in the sector as a result of public works.



There was growth in the industrial maintenance sector last year, according to Andrew D'Arcy, Contech Building Products. He explains: "There was a significant increase in the amount of our Roof7 products sold for repair purposes. Towards the end of 2013 many people were building extensions and working on other small builds in Ireland which played a role in increased sales."

In terms of 2014, Andrew predicts that, with the current shortage of housing in Ireland, it is likely there will be an increase in the amount of new houses being built. While he says that sales will never return to the heights of the Celtic Tiger era, they are heading in the right direction. "Consumer confidence is growing at the moment too, so we expect

the growing trends of extensions and small builds to continue in 2014." Contech currently supplies its range of Tec7 products to builders merchants and DIY stores in Ireland. Tec7 is the company's brand leader and, according to Andrew, the Roof7 range is fast becoming one of the company's most recognisable products due to the confidence consumers have in the Tec7 brand.

"Roof7 is made up of a unique blend of bitumen, butyl rubber and glass fibre which guarantees to remain flexible for 20 years. The consumer trusts the Tec7 brand, and given



the increase of work on roofing at the moment, they are turning to the Roof7 range."

ISOVER has recently launched a new mineral wool insulation for the roofing market says Valarie Dent, Marketing Manager, ISOVER Ireland. ISOVER G3 Touch mineral wool insulation is designed to suit insulation needs of all applications. Its thermal performance is from 0.043 to 0.032. The product is made



from natural recycled materials and offers a great environmental choice for residential homes and commercial buildings according to Valerie.

An environmental focus is important to the company, explains Valerie. The wool has been awarded the Eurofins Air Comfort Gold in Europe. According to Valerie, ISOVER are a company catering to the roofing market with helping the environment in mind, creating thermal and acoustic insulation solutions to produce energy efficient constructions.

The market is currently in showing a small upward movement in patches according to Declan Murphy, Roofing Division Manager, Laydex. "This should be looked at with caution as there is a lot of movement in terms of repair works due to recent storm damages. In general however, there does seem to be a more positive outlook."

For Laydex, Declan says that 2013 was a steady year, the trend was a more vibrant public sector with more projects involving schools and health. Insulated roof panels of metal composition were the leading products for this market according to Declan.

In terms of 2014, Declan anticipates a positive upsurge in the market, based on tax relief on residential extensions and renovations, and school refurbishment works commencing. "We have a number of extension projects on our books already for smaller flat roofs

projects," explains Declan.

Felt roofs are important in the market at the moment, where old roofs have reached the end of their life cycle. This has led to a large number of enquiries for re-roofing according to Declan. As a result of this Pluvitec Plura R re-roof felt membrane is one of the most popular and best-selling products that Laydex provides.

Alkorplan 35176 1.5mm reinforced PVC single-ply membrane is another top seller for the company, along with Pluvitec felts and specific Pluvitec re-roofing felt.

The company recently became the exclusive distribution agents of Resitrix in Ireland, a single-ply, water proofing membrane range. Laydex has also recently began distribution of Tremco illbruck's range of liquid waterproofing systems, in particular the Reproma CR 360 system. The product is a highly elastic membrane with up to 25 years guarantee. It is 100 per cent waterproof and UV protected and does not require a primer before application on most surfaces.

The roofing market is unevenly distributed in Ireland, according to Tadhg Donohoe, National Sales Director, Tegral, with the east coast of the country enjoying a rise in recent months while the west coast is still going down. "Job creation is largely focused on the east coast and the greater Dublin area. There's also a housing shortage so there's more building going on too. In comparison,

the west coast is seeing a decline in work, and with an over abundant supply of housing there's actually residential property being demolished."

Public sector spending last year had a noticable effect on the roofing market, with non-residential buildings, public building and schools undergoing works as a result of greater Government expenditure, helped the market.

"The public sector is one of the few growth areas that we have seen outside of Dublin."

In terms of 2014, Tadhg predicts continued single digit growth in the greater Dublin area should be expected and that other urban city centres such as Cork, Limerick and Galway are likely to have modest growth.

Outside residential properties, Tadhg says that there does appear to be a loosening of spending on Government funded works and would hope for some level of growth.

"We're cautiously optimistic for the market. On the agricultural side we'd also expect to see some growth and there is an expectation that pending grants for the farmers under forty that there will be some incentive. However, we wouldn't expect to see any changes until later in the year in this respect."

Branded products have enjoyed a recovery from the slight increase in the general building according to Tadhg. Thrutone fibre cement is Tegral's lead selling brand, followed by Supercem. The Rivendale brand has recently begun to experience some growth too.

"Branded materials have started to improve, in the last 18 months in particular."

Tegral is soon relaunching a cladding product called Cedral and is optimistic that it will perform well in the greater Dublin area. The company says the brand has already been well-received in mainland Europe. Though there has been a focused growth in the Dublin region specifically in the last year according to many voices within the industry, works on small builds suggests growing confidence in customers. Together with an increased public sector spending, those in the roofing, insulation and cladding sector are optimistic that there will be some growth in the market in 2014.



DIGITAL MARKETING WITH SALES INTENT

Many businesses today place a greater emphasis on 'sales' with less focus on things that are more abstract or difficult to measure like 'brand', important as it may ultimately be, writes John Coburn, Praxisnow

Enter the 'digital' marketing era. Because everything 'digital' can be measured and reported on, every euro spent can be traced to a resulting sale or step in the sales process.

For example, if a visitor (buyer) arrived onto your website by clicking a Google search result, and went on to buy

something, either via a telephone call or online if you were e-Commerce enabled, that sale can now be traced back to the point of first contact. From the moment that person searched on Google, the actual search query they used, the page they clicked through to, what they did on that page (if anything), where they went on your website after that, and what ultimately triggered their decision to make a purchase from you – all these things are tracked and connected to help you sell more effectively by refining what happened at each step.

If you can visualise this at scale, you begin to realise just how much more effective your selling process can become. By zoning in on the specific processes that resulted in actual sales, you can achieve scale through

replication, which is how digital marketing works. Not all activities succeed 'out of the box', but the ones that do are the ones you focus future investment on to achieve scale. It is not just one big bang. Furthermore, future sales over time to that same individual or company can be connected together to form customer profiles that will help you sell increasingly more relevant products to them. Sound interesting?

INEXPENSIVE

It is not expensive to do and getting it done well starts with a clear vision of why you are doing it, where you are starting from (ground zero perhaps) and a roadmap of how you will get there including budgets, timeframes,



Colourful displays at Gings Homevalue, Portlaoise which are backed up by an innovative digital campaign.

about what 'digital' is capable of. The programme will bring the company to a point where it can decide whether or not to pursue digital marketing further towards the development of a plan (a digital strategy). From there, the company can decide whether or not to implement it.

PROGRAMME

Details of the programme will be released in the coming weeks, but it will start with an initial introductory presentation. This will be on the world of digital and how it applies to the Hardware Industry in Ireland. It will be relevant to all members and will focus discussion on specific digital channels including websites, email, social media etc. and how they can be harnessed to produce sales.

Wherever you are on the experience curve with 'digital', if you are willing to make the effort to find out more, you should contact Jim Copeland, Hardware Association Ireland, to register your interest and attend this special presentation.

Aimed at business owners, the presentation will:

- (1) Give businesses a flavour for what digital marketing is all about in

layman's terms and how it directly translates to increased sales when done right; and,

- (2) Introduce a special new, group-based initiative, which HAI and PraxisNow have put together to help fast-track members who want to take their digital marketing further, one step at a time. These businesses will learn about digital marketing in greater depth and, should they choose to, they will be mentored in the development of a digital plan for their businesses. For those who want to go even further, the programme will offer assistance with implementing the plans they have developed.

This ideally will lead to the development of complimentary working groups of companies who could embark on the journey together as a cohort from which learning and experiences can be shared. Some Hardware Association Ireland members have already made great strides in this digital marketing area. Helen Ging, Gings Homevalue, Port Laois, for example, has managed their digital marketing from its outset. Although technically the company's website www.gings.ie is a brochure site, used as an online presence to

resources, measurement methods and reporting. All in all, this is an initiative where your return on investment is measured in sales growth and/or its effect on your cost of sale.

In association with Hardware Association Ireland, I am planning a 'Digital Marketing with Sales Intent' programme, designed to take those businesses in the Irish hardware industry at retail and supplier level, large or small, who are willing to take the trouble to find out more

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A social media strategy needs to be proactively managed and constantly adapted

JOHN COBURN

John founded Praxisnow in 2005. Originally an electronics engineer, he has more than 25 years business experience, much of which is international. He has mentored or trained more than 3,000 companies in Ireland and the UK in digital marketing execution. John is a panel member of Enterprise Ireland's Internet Marketing Unit and is a Business Advisor on Enterprise Ireland's International Selling Programme for leading exporting companies. He is the author of two books - Selling High Value Software and Components of Internet Marketing Strategy and is a regular speaker at both public and private business events throughout Ireland. John is an advisor to several Irish exporting companies and is a specialist in international SEO and digital market development.

convey information, it has worked well and given them an added dimension.

"You do need to give it time and attention, it needs to be proactively managed and constantly adapted," says Helen. "More and more of my customers are coming through our Facebook business page, which I feel is a more immediate platform to do a promotion or a special offer, especially for the under 40's." Helen also manages

www.kitchendresser.net, a full e-commerce site and a perfect partner for Gings as it allows them to provide a greater assortment of cookware, kitchen and bakeware etc., all of which can be delivered easily by post. Paul and Helen's daughter Kelly, has opened www.kellylou.com to complement her innovative cake café in Gings' family store. She serves fresh fancy bakes on site and offers a wide variety of cakes to order by telephone, text, email and Facebook message. Helen's advice is to "get a teenager, who is a family member, neighbour or local to help you. They just get all that social marketing has to offer and are not hampered by fear of

the unknown".

Since 2009, Audrey O'Beirne and Derek Doyle of DS Supplies Ltd, www.dssupplies.com have been attending courses run by John Coburn of Praxisnow on 'search engine optimisation' (SEO) and keeping abreast of the best practices for online content and Google's behaviour. "Google actively looks for new content from the web and websites approximately every six weeks and, therefore, this new content determines your rank and or position on Google. No content or management of your website and/or digital marketing means that you will not be visible when potential customers are searching for products or services," says Derek. Derek also indicates the importance of accepting this as a process and that it takes time to get the results you are looking for. This is especially true if you are looking after it yourself. DS Supplies Ltd now has many of its products appearing on the first page of Google without a pay per click advertising cost and they receive enquiries for its Trojan branded products from the UK and USA.

FACEBOOK RULES SOCIAL MEDIA SECTOR

Facebook continues to dominate Irish social media use, according to new figures from global web-tracking firm Statcounter.

The figures, which reflect 51 million Irish web views, show that Facebook commands 60 per cent of all Irish social media traffic, far ahead of Twitter and Tumblr, which both

measured around 10 per cent. The next biggest social networks are Stumble Upon (8.5 per cent), Pinterest (5.5 per cent), reddit (3.3 per cent) and YouTube (1 per cent). The most recent Ipsos MRBI social media quarterly survey suggests that there are two million Facebook users in Ireland. The survey, www.ipsosmrbi.com/

www.ipsosmrbi.com/social-networking-quarterly-survey.html, conducted among adults over 15, also says that there are around 770,000 Irish Twitter users and 750,000 LinkedIn users here. Meanwhile, the survey says that WhatsApp has around 850,000 Irish users, with around 600,000 Snapchat accounts here.

ANOTHER SIDE OF... Michael Ryan

GIVING BACK

Michael Ryan, sales assistant at Centenary Thurles Stores, Thurles, is also well known outside of the trade for his extensive work with the Irish Stammering Association

Michael Ryan works in Centenary Thurles Stores, Thurles, as a sales assistant specialising in helping customers with plumbing, bathrooms, flooring, doors and key cutting. He has had a stammer all his life, something which he struggled with for a long time. However, he has come out the other side and now dedicates a great amount of his time to helping others with similar experiences to his.

"There's no cure, and some days can be harder than others depending on the amount of stress you have experienced or if you're tired," says Michael. "I'm a very social person, and very chatty, and having the stammer was problematic for my confidence when I was younger."

The discovery of the Maguire programme in 2004, a method which teaches breathing techniques, and also helps psychologically, was a major turning-point in Michael's life.

"I became involved as a teacher with the programme and subsequently, I got involved with the Irish Stammering Association (ISA)."

The ISA provides support groups and information. It raises awareness of stammering and has established a National Stammering Awareness Day, which takes place in October each year. The association work on developing policy and works towards early intervention measures for children. "It's a means of connecting

people who suffer from a stammer with a source of information on stammering. We don't provide a course or a technique but we do provide support groups all around the country. It's all about building confidence. "The most fulfilling part of what I do at the ISA is knowing that I am able to help by connecting people. I can highlight my own personal story and maybe help someone to get through their own troubles and difficulties."

Michael frequently takes part in interviews to raise awareness, and In one 24-hour stretch in 2007, he drove around Ireland and took part in interviews in local radio stations all around the country as he went, raising money for charity, finishing up with an interview with Ryan Tubridy on RTE, raising the profile of the ISA nationally. Outside of his work with the ISA and his job at the Centenary Thurles Stores, Michael has also been heavily involved in local politics, currently serving on Templemore Town Council as a Town Councillor and previously serving as Mayor of Templemore. Michael is also a keen musician, and has played keyboards and sang with bands for many years.

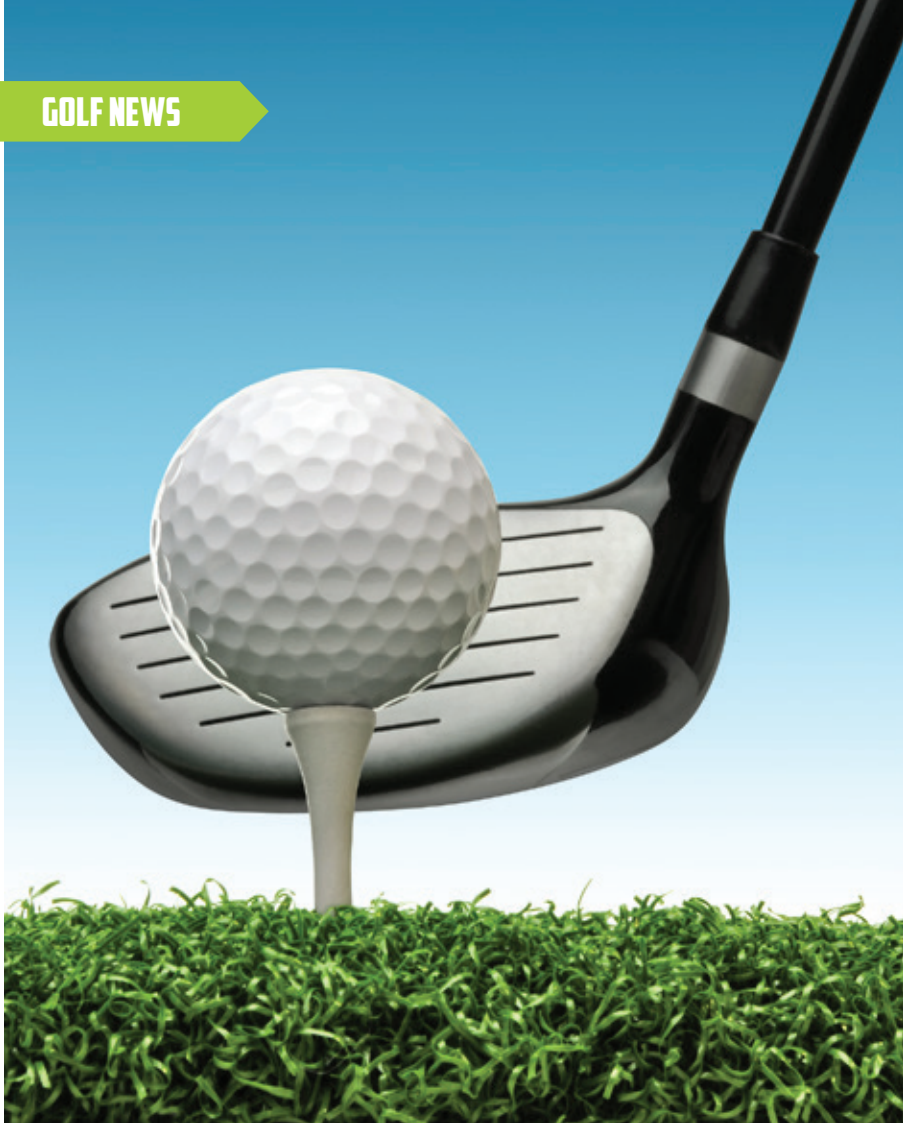
"One of the big things about playing with a band is that it gives you confidence. It's the reason we encourage children to get involved in music and theatre in the ISA. Before I used to just stand and hide behind everyone else, but now, I can talk to the crowd and be an entertainer."



Michael with his family after becoming Mayor of Templemore.



Michael with some of his colleagues at Centenary Stores Thurles.



OVERSEAS TRIP REMINDER

The 2014 Hardware Association Ireland overseas trip is to the heart of the lovely Catalonia region of Spain staying at the 4* TRYP Costa Dorada Port Cambrils Hotel.

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HAIGS 2014 OUTING

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DENIS BURKE MEMORIAL CUP

Venue: Ballykisteen Golf Club, Limerick Junction
Date: Friday, 30th May
Sponsor: BOSTIK / EVODE

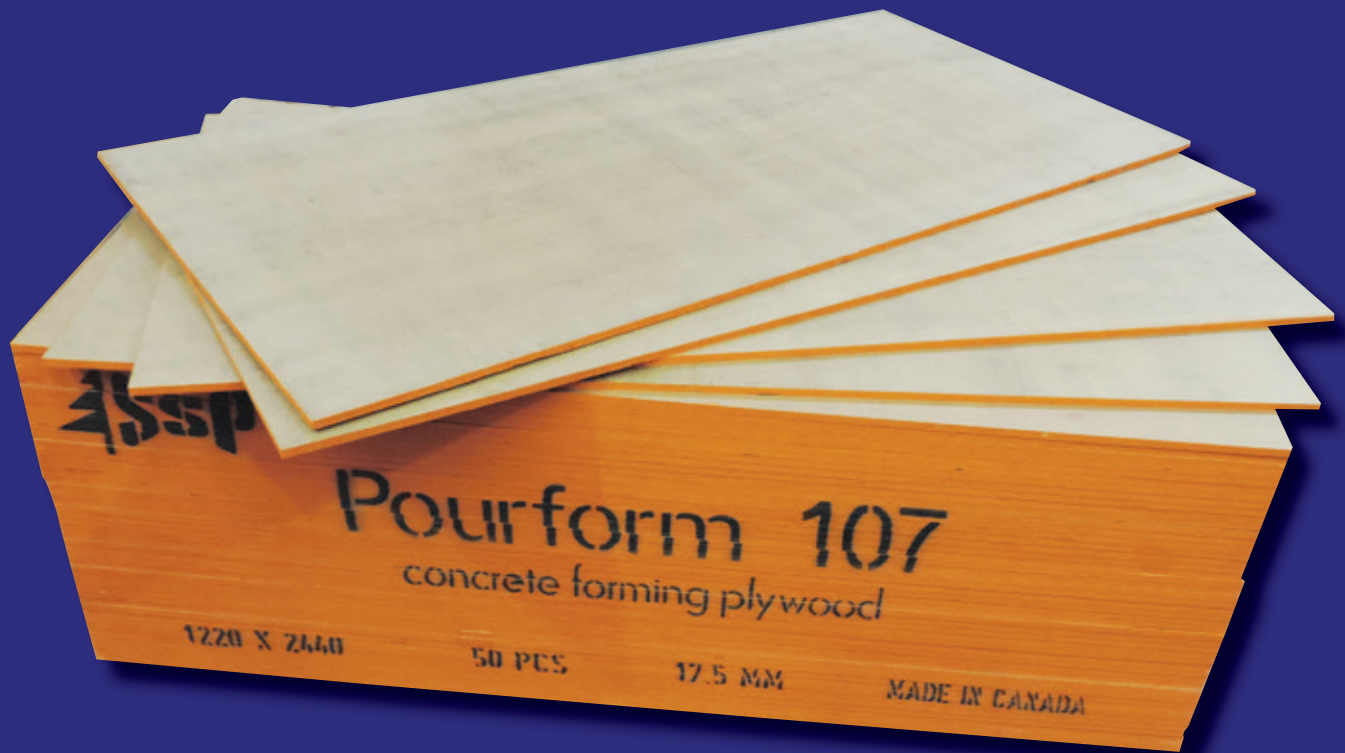
CAPTAIN JIM COPELAND'S PRIZE

Venue: Lucan Golf Club
Date: Friday 27th June
Sponsor: IRISH ABRASIVES

HAIGS PRESIDENT JIM CUDDY'S PRIZE

Venue: Carton House Golf Club
Date: Friday 29th August
Sponsor: TUCKS O'BRIEN

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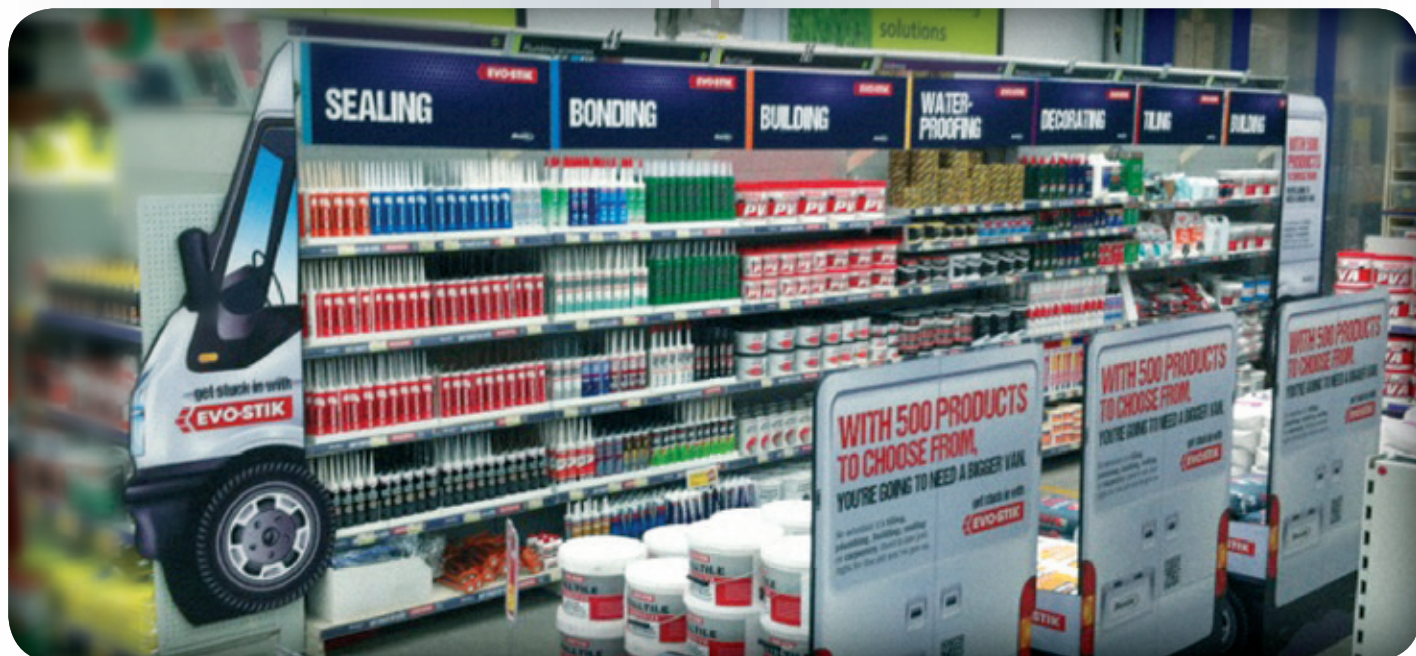


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