

May/June 2016

# THE HARDWARE JOURNAL

The Official Magazine of Hardware Association Ireland

## TALK TO JOE

The Hardware  
Conference 2016  
hears Irish coach's high  
performance insights



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ASSOCIATION  
IRELAND



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# A message from the CEO

**I feel vindicated as I write the introduction to this edition of *The Hardware Journal* as the hard work, Saturday mornings, waking in the middle of the night and hand-written table settings, not to mention the almighty adrenalin rush that was the inaugural Hardware Conference on the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> April, paid off. If you were there, can you spot yourself in the photos? If you weren't, I hope you'll consider attending next time round based on what you'll read and may have heard from your colleagues. And yes, we will be doing it all over again...Read all about it on pages 25-28. No sooner had we caught a breath but we were head long into training and confirming the finer details of The Hardware Show next March. Read about what we have planned for the biggest and best show yet on page 33.**

One of the many recurring themes within the responses to our Conference survey was that it was a great Networking event and Networking was the number one benefit acknowledged by the majority who attended. It's clear that this has been missing in the sector for some time, the opportunity to meet each other again in informal and convivial surroundings but with a dual purpose, to inform and to educate. HAI looks forward to providing more opportunities to do this over the next number of months and years through new events and improving existing ones. In this issue we asked one of our newest members, Kellys on the North Strand in Dublin, to tell us about their experience as

members of HAI over the past 12 months. No marketing material is as powerful as word of mouth or a recommendation by one of your colleagues in the same sector.

As we continue to focus on hardware and builders merchants and placing them at the heart of the Association, we will be calling for them to be more involved in the running of the Association in the next edition. Over the last 18 months I've been told several times that we need more retailers and merchants sitting on the Board. Look out for the July/August edition to read more about the role and commitment of being a HAI Board member.

Already one of our most popular and beneficial member services takes pride of place on page 36. Through negotiation with AIB Merchant Services, HAI is delighted to promote special merchant rates negotiated on your behalf. Already members are telling us that the savings by switching onto these rates is significant so please get in touch with us and tell us what other member offers we can develop that will make a difference to your bottom line. Call Jim on 01 298 0969.

Annemarie Harte  
Chief Executive Officer – HAI



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# RESULTS FOR FIRST QUARTER 2016

A total of 153 branches, an increase of three since the last collection in Q4 2015, throughout the country take part in the monthly business index and since the third quarter of 2015 we have been collecting the results quarterly.

Total member revenue for Q1 2016 shows a 13% increase on the same period last year. The sector Q1 year on year rise is largely consistent across all member firms. Sector Revenue showed a month on month increase during Q1. January was up 15% on December; February up 9% on January; and March up 4% on February. The monthly moving average increase for Q1 was 10% and is also largely consistent across the sector.

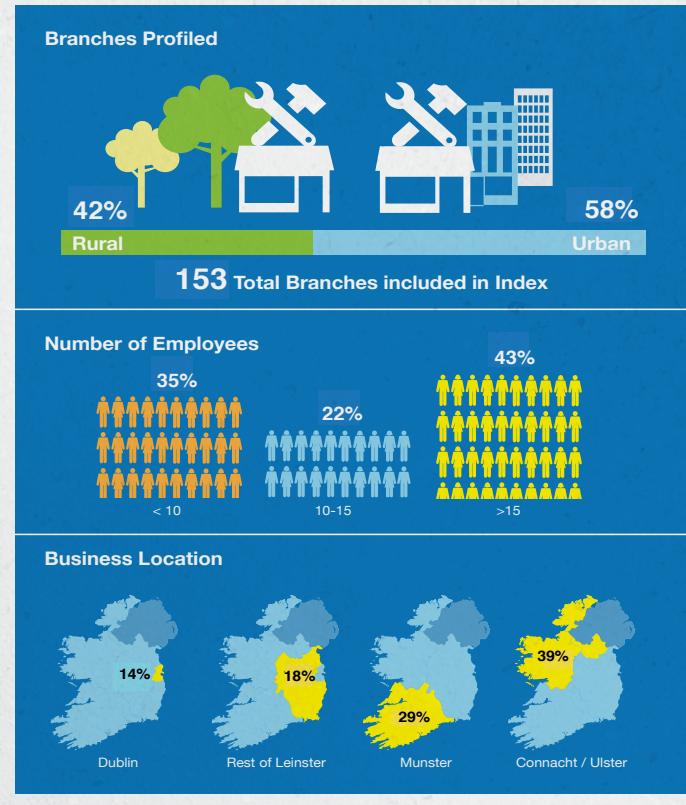
The 2015 Index confirms that Q3 accounted for the highest percentage of members' revenue in 2015. As in 2014, September and October were the highest grossing months last year. Q3 was consistently the highest grossing period for members in 2015. The Index presentation of overall monthly revenues confirms that September was the month where revenue most exceeded the 2015 monthly average. The top grossing individual revenue months in 2015 are mostly within Q3.

## How to get involved

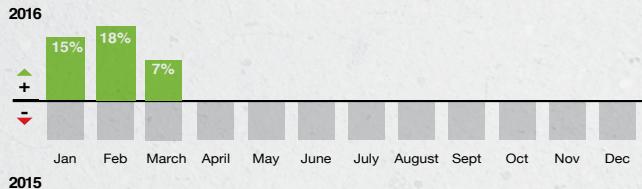
All raw data is kept confidential and never revealed to HAI. If you agree to participate in the monthly business index, you will receive an email from Behaviours and Attitudes, our research partner, once a quarter (usually at the start of the second week), asking for several pieces of information that will form the benchmark survey:

- Number of employees;
- Location of business;
- What type of area your business operates in, i.e. to get an urban/rural split;
- Annual sales turnover (less VAT) for your business for 2015 broken down by month;
- Sales turnover per month for 2016.

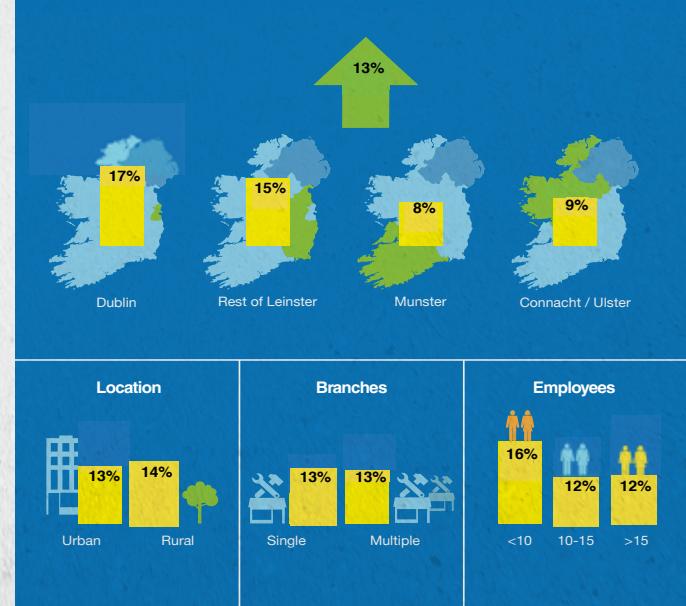
Once this benchmark is complete you will only be asked for one piece of information each quarter thereafter, sales turnover per month for the quarter. Once collated the results will be shared with you as soon as possible. Please contact Jim on 01 298 0968 for more information and to participate.



Monthly Business Index: % change in revenue from 2015 to 2016



Monthly Business Index: YTD 2016 vs YTD 2015



Source: B&A 2016. Data collection from 153 HAI Member Branches.



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## DWELLING UNITS APPROVAL UP 95.3% IN FINAL QUARTER OF 2015

In the final quarter of 2015, planning permissions were granted for 4,017 dwelling units, compared with 2,057 units for the same period in 2014, an increase of 95.3%.

**The fourth quarter figures also show that: of the total permissions for dwelling units granted in the fourth quarter, 2,754 were houses and 1,263 were apartments (1,905 houses and 152 apartments in 2014). This represents an increase of 45% in the number of houses and a significant increase in the number of apartment units (by 731% from a relatively low base) compared to the same quarter in 2014.**

Total floor area planned was 1,468,000m<sup>2</sup>. Of this, 40.9% was for new dwellings, 46.8% for other new constructions and 12.3% for extensions. The total floor areas planned increased by 94.7% in comparison with the same quarter in 2014 (754,000m<sup>2</sup> in Q4, 2014). One-off houses accounted for 33.15% (913) of all new houses granted planning permission in this quarter.

### Planning Permissions Analysis of Quarters 1 to 4, 2015

Region & County	2014 1st. 3 Qtrs				2015 1st. 3 Qtrs				% + -	
	New Construction		Extension	Total	New Construction		Extension	Total		
	Dwell	Other			Dwell	Other				
Dublin	417	244	155	817	861	655	192	1708	109	
Dublin City	133	34	55	222	286	391	71	748	237	
DL/Rathdown	90	61	34	187	120	5	38	163	-13	
Fingal	149	54	32	235	248	188	45	481	105	
South Dublin	48	93	34	172	207	71	38	316	84	
Border	134	91	111	335	197	212	100	509	52	
Cavan	13	20	28	60	30	54	23	107	78	
Donegal	47	16	25	90	59	34	26	119	32	
Leitrim	2	0	4	6	7	1	7	15	150	
Louth	28	7	28	62	45	10	22	77	24	
Monaghan	29	39	14	82	43	100	15	158	93	
Sligo	15	7	12	34	13	13	7	33	-3	
Mid East	178	135	60	373	280	151	120	551	48	
Kildare	56	13	22	90	75	26	43	144	60	
Meath	90	45	25	161	138	89	60	287	78	
Wicklow	33	78	12	122	67	36	17	120	-2	
Midlands	56	84	45	186	97	53	53	203	9	
Laois	12	38	10	60	32	11	21	64	7	
Longford	5	4	12	20	11	7	14	32	60	
Offaly	23	21	10	55	20	8	9	37	-33	
Westmeath	17	22	12	50	34	27	9	70	40	
Mid West	95	99	58	253	115	115	101	331	31	
Clare	31	18	14	59	43	39	30	112	90	
Limerick City	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	-100	
Limerick	43	61	24	128	55	48	56	159	24	
Tipperary North	19	20	18	58	17	28	15	60	3	
South East	141	154	115	408	170	265	115	550	35	
Carlow	12	19	9	39	25	28	8	61	56	
Kilkenny	29	21	25	77	34	53	25	112	45	
Tipperary South	20	33	13	66	16	50	26	92	39	
Waterford City	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Waterford	25	35	23	83	25	62	30	117	41	
Wexford	57	43	44	144	70	72	26	168	17	
South West	208	192	135	535	291	274	147	712	33	
Cork City	10	27	14	50	14	4	18	36	-28	
Cork	145	142	91	378	216	220	100	536	42	
Kerry	53	23	33	108	61	50	29	140	30	
West	138	65	74	277	136	93	67	296	7	
Galway City	10	9	6	25	14	19	7	40	60	
Galway	66	20	27	112	71	50	30	151	35	
Mayo	39	16	33	88	38	20	19	77	-13	
Roscommon	23	21	8	52	13	4	11	28	-46	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,366</b>	<b>1,064</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>3,184</b>	<b>2,147</b>	<b>1,818</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>4,860</b>	<b>52.6</b>	

With thanks to [Colin Kelly](#) of Fingal for compiling the data.

Source: C.S.O.

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## CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS ACT BECOMES A REALITY

HAI has welcomed the signing of the Construction Contracts Act by, now former, Minister for Business and Employment, Ged Nash, on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

The signing gives legal effect to the provisions of the Construction Contracts Act that aim to regularise cashflow for construction companies and reduce costs by providing for rapid resolution of disputes. Minister Nash stated: "The changes to the way applicable construction contracts will now be drawn up will guarantee payment to sub-contractors at regular intervals during the life of a contract, and in addition, the legislation provides for a statutory adjudication service which entitles parties involved in a payment dispute to seek to resolve the matter through adjudication. This will take place in a short time period – the Act envisages 28 days."

It is intended that the Code of Practice relating to the conduct of adjudications will be published shortly.

Annemarie Harte, Chief Executive Officer, HAI, commented: "This Act will benefit the entire construction industry supply chain, including the builders merchant and hardware sector, by bringing greater certainty to cashflow and streamlining the dispute resolution process. This Act will assist companies in budgeting and investing, thereby encouraging greater growth and competitiveness. I would like to thank the Minister, on behalf of the builders merchant and hardware sector in particular, for making this vital piece of legislation a reality."

The Construction Contracts Act provides, subject to some exceptions, new minimum contractual provisions concerning payment arrangements between the parties to a construction contract. Where payment disputes do arise between the parties to a construction contract, either party will have the right to refer the payment dispute for adjudication, which will be concluded within a set timeframe. Where the parties cannot agree on an adjudicator, the Chairperson of the Ministerial Panel of Adjudicators will appoint an adjudicator from that Panel to the dispute. This follows on from the appointment of Dr Nael Bunni as Chairperson of the Panel of Adjudicators last July, and the subsequent appointment of a Panel of Adjudicators in December.



## COLOURTREND LAUNCHES €3 MILLION REBRANDING

Premium Irish-owned paint brand, Colourtrend, has unveiled a new €3 million rebrand, one of the largest rebranding investments by an Irish-owned private family business. The rebrand positions the company for major growth as an Irish premium paint in a marketplace which Colourtrend believe is dominated by multinational, impersonal paint brands. The new look has been informed by the 63-year heritage behind the Irish brand, bringing a contemporary feel to the logo and livery as well as a comprehensive advertising campaign, with a voice-over by Fiona Shaw. The TV adverts have been filmed by renowned cinematographer Cian de Buitléar.

At the launch Fiona Shaw, one of Ireland's most famous actresses, said she was delighted to support the brand in its campaign. "I am taken with the Colourtrend story and heritage, a dramatic story of emigration, and then return, to establish an Irish business that wanted not just to put poetry in paint but to put Ireland in paint too. I liked the idea of the story being on the paint cans and of the advert using the landscape and colours of Ireland set to poetry to convey the messages."

## BRETT MARTIN OFFERS ANTHRACITE GREY IN RAIN WATER RANGES

Brett Martin Plumbing and Drainage is now offering the Anthracite Grey colour option within both the Deepstyle 115mm PVC Gutter and Downpipe System and Cascade Cast Iron Style Rainwater and Soil System ranges, as a direct result of the growing market trend for this colour on windows and doors on both new build and renovation projects. Specifically developed to create an exact colour match to the true RAL 7016 Anthracite Grey, Brett Martin says its new colour option is the best Anthracite Grey colour tone on the market and perfectly complements other building accessories.



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Celebrating excellence in builders merchanting at the Octabuild Builders Merchants Awards Northern Ireland 2016: Stephen Field, JP Corry, Castlereagh; Raymond Harkin, Murdock Builders Merchants, Derry; Tadhg Donohoe, Chairman, Octabuild; Neil McGeown, JP Corry, Springfield Road; Minister Jonathan Bell, MLA; Paul McConnell, JP Corry, Bangor; David Brown, Haldane Fisher, Coleraine; Colm Campbell, Newry Building Supplies Ltd; and Darren Mawhinney, Haldane Fisher, Conlig.

### TOP BUILDERS MERCHANTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND HONOURED

The overall winner in the recent Octabuild Builders Merchant Awards Northern Ireland 2016 was Haldane Fisher, Coleraine.

Other builders merchants to win awards were; JP Corry branches in Springfield Road, Belfast, Castlereagh and Bangor; Murdock Builders Merchants, Derry; Newry Building Supplies; NG Bell, Ballywalter; and Haldane Fisher, Conlig.

The awards were presented on Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup> by Jonathan Bell MLA, Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in the Hilton Belfast Hotel before an audience of almost 200 people representing the merchant and building industry.

The building material manufacturers who organised the awards as Octabuild are: Gyproc, Dulux Paints, Glennon Brothers, Kingspan Insulation, Sanbra Fyffe, Tegral, Irish Cement and Wavin. This is the fourth Octabuild Builders Merchant Awards in Northern Ireland.

The awards judge, independent retail expert James Burke, was lavish in his praise of the high standard he found among all the builders merchants visited. He described the winners as exceptionally well-run businesses. He said that since the last awards in 2014 there was a stronger focus on sales growth structures and a greater focus on using digital media. In introducing the awards, the Octabuild chairman Tadhg Donohoe said: "Merchants who enter the Octabuild Builders Merchants Awards show that they have confidence in their ability to operate well-managed businesses and provide a quality customer service."

#### The winners

The overall winner, Haldane Fisher in Coleraine, is one of 10 branches in Northern Ireland of the family-owned Haldane Fisher group. The Coleraine branch has been in operation since 2009 and currently employs 11 people. The judge complimented its energised sales process and very structured and results-orientated team.

### FLEETWOOD PREDICTS COLOURFUL YEAR FOR EXTERIOR PAINT

Fleetwood Paints has revealed the top five most popular colours in exterior paint for the start of 2016 giving a strong indication as to where the market may lead in the next six months. Sales of Weather Clad colours in 2015 rose rapidly from the previous year with more customers choosing deeper shades than ever before, according to the company.

'Original Magnolia' takes the top spot despite only being introduced by Fleetwood to the market in 2015. A more refined tone than standard magnolia, it proved to be a huge hit with the public and trade.

In close second place is the popular favourite 'Powerscourt' with 'Barleycove' climbing to third indicating a steady move in buying trends towards grey and tan colours.

"Irish customers are growing more confident in the choice of colours they are using for their houses,



Two of the top five selling colours in the Weather Clad range in action. Left house walls: Powerscourt. Right house walls: Original Magnolia.

both inside and out," says Alex Doyle, Fleetwood's commercial manager. "Where bright colours were always popular on doors and trim we're now seeing those choices move onto exterior walls in a big way. Weather Clad colours are available in 2.5L, 5L, 10L and 17.5L sizes.

The top five selling colours in the Weather Clad range for 2016 to date are: Original Magnolia; Powerscourt; Barleycove; Truly Taupe; and, Westport.

## NEW SAFETY SHOES FROM SOLID GEAR

Solid Gear says its new Griffin and Falcon safety shoes are durable, lightweight and exceptionally comfortable. These shoes come with the new oil- and slip-resistant Vibram TPU outsole, the company reports, offering outstanding grip even at very low temperatures. "In addition, premium full-grain impregnated leather combines with Cordura Ripstop fabric to ensure great water repellence while remaining breathable," a Solid Gear spokesperson adds. "Look out, too, for Toe Guard's new Phantom, Sprinter, Jump and Icon ranges which have just launched."

## CUPRINOL PROMISES LESS MESS

Cuprinol says its latest addition, 'Less Mess Fence Care', helps get the job done quickly. May means a 'garden refresh' after the Irish winter to bring out the best in decking, wooden sheds, fencing and furniture, and this summer sees the arrival of the latest addition to the Cuprinol family - Cuprinol Less Mess Fence Care. Cuprinol Less Mess Fence Care has a gel-based formula, designed to reduce drip and mess and ultimately minimise any 'clean up' required afterwards. According to Cuprinol, special pigments ensure a rich, even coverage in just one quick-drying coat which does not splatter and drip.

A Cuprinol spokesperson comments: "Less Mess Fence Care gives people a value-for-money solution without sacrificing ease of application and is suitable for fences, sheds and other rough-sawn garden wood." The range is available in five natural shades including Autumn Gold, Autumn Red, Rich Oak, Rustic Brown and Woodland Green, all available in 5L and 9L value tins. Cuprinol Garden Shades has also introduced two new shades for 2016: the colour of the year hues, Honey Mango and Dazzling Yellow join the popular Cuprinol Garden Shades collection, which offers 79 shades across Ready Mix and Colour Mixing.

Cuprinol Less Mess Fence Care has a gel-based formula.



## LOWE RUST PAINT - NEW RANGE OF COLOURS AND SIZES

'Lowe Metal & Machinery Paint' has been re-branded as Lowe Rust Paint. The cleaner and crisper livery is designed to appeal to the DIY'er as well as the tradesman. In addition to being an ideal paint for metal and machinery, the company says, it is actually the perfect paint for rust prevention on gates, railings, pieces of machinery, car chassis etc. The new range of colours and sizes means that the shopper now has more choice of finish "while still getting the trusted Lowe formula which has been number one in rust prevention in Ireland for over 40 years."

Lowe Rust Paint product range



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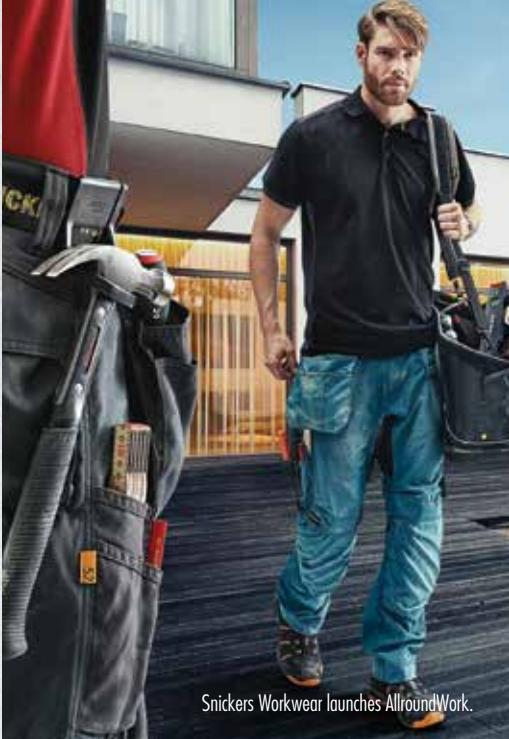
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Snickers Workwear launches AllroundWork.

## SNICKERS WORKWEAR LAUNCHES ALLROUNDWORK AND LITEWORK

Almost 10 years after Snickers Workwear revolutionised the industry with the launch of its three-series work trousers, the company last autumn launched a brand new concept with the product families, RuffWork and FlexiWork. These ranges were an instant success, Snickers says, and will now be completed with AllRoundWork and LiteWork. "The family concept has been well received by both retailers and professional users," says David Macken, Sales Manager/MD at Snickers Workwear Ireland. "Categorising our advanced workwear into four well-defined product families, based on the function of each garment, makes it easier for our partners and users to see and understand our entire assortment. The launch of AllRoundWork and LiteWork completes the concept."

## HAI WINS AWARD FOR SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

HAI has won Bronze at the recent APMC (Association of Promotional Marketing Consultants) annual Promotional Marketing Awards for its successful social media campaign to extend the Home Renovation Incentive scheme beyond end of December 2015. The campaign, targeted at influencers and Government, ran exclusively on social media in the run up to Budget 2016 last September. The annual APMC Promotional Marketing Awards have, over the last 23 years, helped to raise standards in sales promotion and promotional marketing. Just as importantly, they publicise the contribution which promotional marketing makes in helping a broad spectrum of companies achieve their marketing objectives. The APMC Star Awards provide the opportunity for promotions to be compared and judged by a panel of expert judges. HAI won Bronze in the Business to Business & Trade and Salesforce category.

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## HAI PRESIDENT HUGH O'DONNELL'S PRIZE WINNERS - 29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2016

Held at Carlow Golf Club and kindly sponsored by Crown Paints

### OVERALL

		Pts.	H/Cap
1st	Laurence Kelly	37	(24)
2nd	William Dixon	36	(24)
3rd	Bryan Beasley	32	(21)

### CLASS 1

		Pts.	H/Cap
1st	Tony Anderson	32	(8)
2nd	Jim Cuddy	30	(12)

### CLASS 2

		Pts.	H/Cap
1st	PJ Gunn	30	BB9 (16)
2nd	Tom O'Connor	30	(18)

### CLASS 3

		Pts.	H/Cap
1st	Dermot McFeely	32	(28)
2nd	Michael O'Donohoe	31	(28)



HAI President Hugh O'Donnell with Kathleen Lynch, winner of the Ladies' Prize.

LADIES – (12 holes played)		Pts.	H/Cap
1st	Kathleen Lynch	19	(16)
2nd	Marian Kelly	18	(30)
3rd	Josephine Glennon	17	(22)

New members, Ladies and Gents are especially welcome and please contact William Dixon for more details, **086 0708761**.

There is still limited availability on the HAI Golf Society overseas trip to Portugal on October 17th - 24th for availability contact **Frank McKeon 086 2508374**



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TIMbag packaging.

## TIMCO'S PACKAGING SOLUTION

TIMco has developed TIMbag packaging that clearly labels the product, its relevant sizes as well as the quantity and barcode. The packaging helps the retailer manage stock and the end user select the right product while also providing durable product storage. To support the launch of new products and bolster the sales of existing products, TIMco has also developed stands to better merchandise products. e stands, erected by TIMco's merchandising support team, have strong branding and use graphics to help sell the product by providing visual references to the key uses and features such as the size, type of head or thread of the product as well as how the product can be best used.



Garden Colours, a new multi-surface solid colour woodstain from Sadolin.

## SADOLIN GARDEN COLOURS

Sadolin has launched Garden Colours, a new multi-surface solid colour woodstain that can be used on all surfaces in the garden. Offering up to seven years' protection, Sadolin says it is the perfect choice to provide long-lasting durable colour. This versatile product will allow consumers to colour co-ordinate their garden area taking into account a variety of surfaces from garden wood to decking, stone and terracotta, even plastic and metal.

## CROWN LIVING COLOURS

Crown has launched Living Colours a new range of convenient emulsions for interior walls and ceilings. Living Colours is a specially selected range of shades, Crown says, designed for modern living from the subtle neutrals of Just Devine to the fresh and vibrant Spring Leaf. The 15 shades are available in soft, elegant matt, as well as tough, durable mid-sheen finishes, all in a 10-litre pack.



Crown has launched 'Living Colours' a new range of emulsions for interior walls and ceilings.



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## HAI IS DELIGHTED TO WELCOME ITS NEWEST MEMBERS

### Ballymount Hardware

2/3 Lower Ballymount Road,  
Walkinstown Roundabout, D 12

**Ph:** 01 4501389

**Contact:** Sean O`Byrne Jnr

**Business:** General Hardware, DIY &  
Garden Store

### Boru Stoves Ltd

Boru House, Templemore Road,  
Thurles, Co. Tipperary

**Ph:** 0504 59033

**Contact:** Dermot Fitzgerald

**Business:** Manufacturer and  
distributor of stoves and parts

### FF Group Tool Industries

64 Marlton Park, Marlton Road,  
Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow

**Ph:** 0404 66943

**Contact:** Les Ashley

**Business:** Hand tool and  
accessories supplier

### Kellys of Fantane

Fantane, Borrisoleigh, Thurles,  
Co. Tipperary

**Ph:** 0504 52118

**Contact:** Lorraine Fanning

**Business:** Suppliers of aggregates,  
readymix concrete, concrete blocks,  
and block paving

### Jefferson Professional Tools & Equipment

Drumagardner Road, Kilrea, Derry,  
Co. Derry

**Ph:** 028 295 40300

**Contact:** Aileen McKenna

**Business:** Manufacturer of  
professional tools and equipment

### Midland Hardware

Main Street, Rathdowney, Co. Laois

**Ph:** 0505 46177

**Contact:** David Ryan

**Business:** Builders merchant/  
hardware and DIY

## WE NEED YOU... AND WE WANT YOU TO NEED US TOO!

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- Lobbying and representative services to Government – we campaign on your behalf so you can get on with running your business.
- Educational opportunities – dedicated courses, tutorials and online learning to upskill and develop you and your colleagues
- Keep up to date with the industry through our website, bi-monthly magazine **The Hardware Journal**, monthly email newsletters, **LinkedIn** page, **Twitter** feed and events.
- Regular surveys and intelligence about the industry – we are the only providers of hardware specific trends and developments including our monthly business index, wage survey and business confidence monitor.
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or at [jim@hardwareassociation.ie](mailto:jim@hardwareassociation.ie)

# Implications of a 'Brexit'

There has been a lot of speculation about the implications of a possible British exit from the EU in the run-up to the upcoming vote in the UK on the issue on June 23rd. The intensity of speculation here stems mainly from the close economic ties between our two states. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs Joint Economic Study – 'Evaluating the value of the economic relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland', Ireland and Britain trade over €1 billion worth of goods and services every week, with 55% of Irish exports in the timber and construction sectors going to the UK. Hence, there are concerns regarding the implications of a Brexit on trade with the UK. More than one-third of Irish imports come from the UK and any barriers to trade would increase prices of UK imports to Ireland. If the UK leaves, there may be a situation where we will have to implement EU customs controls on everything coming from the UK. Currently, suppliers can receive shipments efficiently from distribution centres in the UK.

## Customs

However, after Brexit, if, for example, the container had to pass through customs in Dundalk en-route to Dublin, customs would need to check what, if any, duty was applicable on each of the products in the container. This would add administrative and time constraints onto shipments. In relation to trade between Ireland and Northern Ireland, the expected impact of Brexit is likely to be more significant for Northern Irish exporters to Ireland.

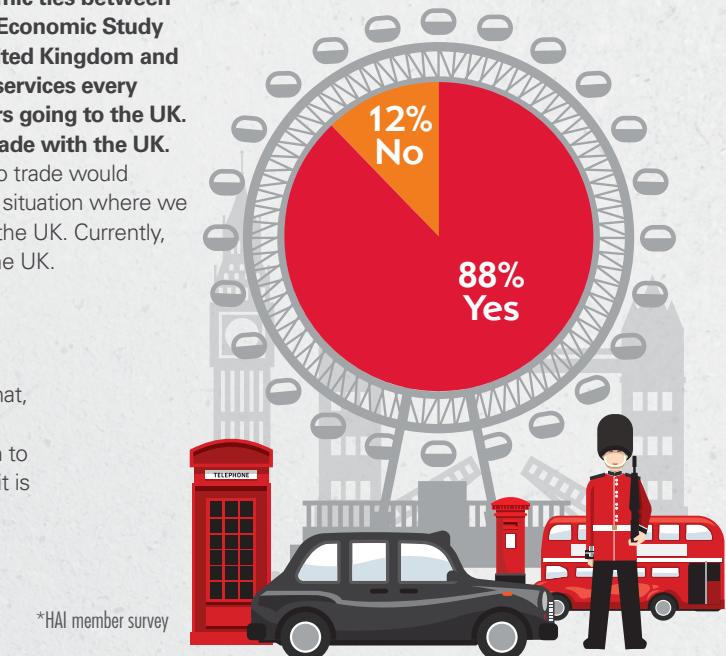
## Energy

Secondly, the two countries' energy markets are deeply entwined, with Ireland importing 89% of its oil products and 93% of its gas from its nearest neighbour. The energy networks themselves are also closely linked: there is a single all-Ireland electricity market, which functions via a North-South electricity interconnection, and the Irish electricity and gas grids are bound to the British grids through separate interconnectors. These links improve security of supply but also reduce energy prices in Ireland because British wholesale electricity prices are lower than here.

## SDEA FAVOURS 'REMAIN' VOTE

Business sentiment in the hardware sector in the UK is leaning toward remaining in the EU, based on the response to a recent survey of Shop and Display Equipment Association (SDEA) members. It revealed that over three quarters of respondents felt that remaining in the EU would be the best result for their businesses: 80% voted in favour of remaining in the EU, while only 12% voiced a desire to leave and 8% were undecided. When asked what result would be in the best interests of the UK economy with regard to the forthcoming EU referendum there was a slight shift in opinion: 76% of SDEA members voted for remaining in, 12% of companies indicated that leaving the EU would be better for the UK economy and a further 12% remained undecided. "The comments received from our members clearly indicate the significant amount of business they conduct with companies in the EU, both importing and exporting," reported SDEA Director Lawrence Cutler. He continued: "Our members clearly value these partnerships and the business they bring."

**Do you think Brexit will affect your business?\***



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A great deal of investment and hard work went in to developing the site.

# Murdock Builder's Merchants expands in Dublin

**The opening of Murdock Builder's Merchants in Ballymount, in conjunction with the success of the group's Balbriggan branch (now 10 years in business), further strengthens the group presence in Dublin. It's also an expression of the group's confidence in the medium- to long-term potential of builders merchanting in the capital. Stephen McDonnell, Sales Manager, at the new branch and Gary Craven, Group Sales Manager (ROI), spoke to *The Hardware Journal* recently to report on the setting up of the new branch and how it has fared in its opening seven months.**

Gary and his team began scouting for sites in the Ballymount area in 2014 before identifying a suitable, two-acre site late that year. "The site has a lot of strengths. While it doesn't look particularly large-scale when you see it from the road, once you drive into the yard, the scope and scale of the premises become obvious. Ballymount is also an area where a lot of well-known building materials and building supply companies are located. All in all, it's as close to an ideal site as you could expect."

## Investment and hard work

Physical work on the site began in May 2015 and included the development of storage facilities including a warehouse. "A great deal of investment and hard work went in to developing the site, including re-surfacing of the yard, new security fencing and a purpose-built shop and office area. The core structure was essentially a shell and required significant investment in steel, in roofing and in partitioning systems."

While that infrastructural work was progressing through the summer, Gary and Stephen set about recruiting the team that would staff the new business. Gary comments: "We're very proud of the workforce we have here at Ballymount, with a core of experienced people providing guidance and mentorship to a very talented and enthusiastic team. We have a highly experienced shop manager, and key staff have extensive experience and knowledge in building materials sales."

Training of the new recruits included participation in an induction programme, devised and delivered by Murdock's HR department. Training was intensive and, where appropriate, new recruits were given the opportunity to 'shadow' experienced Murdock employees in other branches, particularly in Balbriggan.

## A learning year

By the beginning of last winter, all the crucial elements were in readiness for the new store to open, and on the first Monday of November, it opened its doors. Stephen explains: "This year is very much a learning year for us here at the Ballymount branch. We're monitoring the performance carefully and will look to target our investment in people and equipment based on the results we achieve this year. We've been delighted with the reaction to date. While it's early days, we would have to say that the amount of footfall so far has exceeded our expectations and we've opened a large number of new customer accounts. Obviously, we will have to see how the first full year works out, but, so far, it's been very encouraging and all the indications are positive."

The Ballymount store has been very proactive in marketing throughout 2016. Stephen continues: "We believe that word of mouth is one of the most effective ways of increasing awareness, but we have also invested in online promotion and we've advertised consistently with FM104 since November. We have a mobile van featuring a large mobile billboard displaying our name and location travelling around the area for two days a week. We're also constantly looking at product promotion ideas. For instance, through the summer, we're doing a special price offer where we're selling paving slabs at €15 per square metre."

Ballymount also has two experienced sales representatives on the road, pro-actively seeking new business.

### Interior emphasises flexibility

The store interior is instantly recognisable as a Murdock's branch with high profile branding and signage. Stephen comments: "Our layout and design follows the Murdock format and we aim to provide a friendly atmosphere in the shop, with a good-humoured and professional approach.

"We have a very open floor design which is indicative of the flexible mindset of our entire team. Regardless of job title, everyone sees themselves as salespeople and there's a genuine willingness to help customers and each other. When customers leave the store, we want them to be saying, 'I'll go back there'."

He continues: "Everything has been designed to make the customer's visit as convenient and fast as possible. We know that what the customer wants is to get in and get out as quickly as possible. Our yard team are crucial in achieving this. They are

## THREE DECADES OF GROWTH

Murdock Builder's Merchants was originally established in 1982 with the setting up of Newry Building Supplies Ltd on the Rathfriland Road in Newry. After a brief period at this location, Newry Building Supplies transferred to a bigger more central location in the Greenbank Industrial Estate in Newry where it remains today.

Murdock Builder's Merchants growth over the last 30 years has been a combination of organic growth and acquisition.

The group has 11 builders merchants branches as well as two timber sites in Ireland, North and South, with plans for continued growth. Cranwood Industries, based in a purpose-built facility in Warrenpoint Co. Down, is one of its specialist timber sites and offers a full range of machined timber products, from standard skirting and architrave moulds to customised window boards, stair parts and door sets. Murdock Builder's Merchants also designs and manufactures roof trusses at its Newry-based operation.



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Gary Craven, Group Sales Manager (ROI), Murdock Builder's Merchants, and Stephen McDonnell, Sales Manager, Murdock Builder's Merchants, Ballymount.



all highly-organised and 100% customer-orientated. We load the material on the customer's vehicle before the customer goes to the trade counter to get the docket. While the material's being loaded the customer has a chance to see associated products that may be required. The customer doesn't pay for the goods until they're all loaded."

Typical of the store's dedication to customer convenience is its investment in a dedicated fleet of three trucks: a 26-tonne, an 18-tonne and a 7-tonne, which aim to handle all delivery requirements, big or small.

In order to provide top class customer service, you have to have good people working in the business, Gary notes. "We've got a great team in place and we provide a strong platform of training support to help them to continually set new standards in customer service. Training is vital to ensure that the staff is fully informed on new product developments and regulatory issues. We have a range of training initiatives including monthly training for key sales staff. We liaise with suppliers to organise specific product-related training and we organise regular refresher programmes for experienced staff and introductory programmes for new staff."

The Ballymount store has also looked to get involved in supporting local amenities and charity events. For example, Murdock staff, along with key customers, recently attended a fundraising business lunch for St Mary's College, Rathmines, at the Shelbourne Hotel where guest speakers included Brian O'Driscoll and Gordon D'Arcy. Looking ahead to the next few years, both Gary and Stephen are optimistic, not just about the future of the Ballymount store, but also on the prospects for builders merchants and the construction industry as a whole. Gary adds: "There are a lot of positive developments out there in the market at the moment. We're seeing evidence of larger scale contracts, and opportunities are opening up in relation to projects such as schools and health centres. There's real potential for sustainable growth in the market but what would really give the sector some impetus would be some realistic assistance from Government to develop the social housing and first-time buyer sectors."

## BALBRIGGAN PAVES THE WAY

The Murdock name is already well-established in north county Dublin, through its Balbriggan store, which established the group name in the city and, ultimately, paved the way for the Ballymount initiative. Gary Craven recalls: "The Balbriggan store opened in May 2006 and, for a while, business was very straightforward, the orders were just pouring in. Of course, with the downturn, all that stopped abruptly. We realised that we would have to do things differently if we were going to survive. "We focused on customers in the small to medium-sized business segment of the market, the companies who were doing the bread and butter work. Another factor that was vital in helping us get through those years was the group commitment to providing top-quality customer service. It's one of the key principles of our approach to the business and it stood us in good stead over the last 10 years."



TIMco seeks to design products that will benefit end-users and increase sales for all the businesses involved.

**TIMco originally supplied the Irish market via smaller wholesalers from the UK, however as the recession strengthened some relationships became difficult to maintain and they parted company from their main distributor in 2012. A number of UK fixings companies had already entered the Irish market and a decision had to be made as to whether the company should find a new partner or create TIMco Ireland. On looking at other wholesalers in Ireland, they found that the majority of them had trade counters and supplied end users direct. This did not fit well with TIMco's business model, which is to support the retailer and builders' provider, so they decided that TIMco Ireland should be born and the offices opened in 2013.**

John comments: "We love what we do and it gives the team at TIMco a thrill to see exciting new products that have been cleverly designed, carefully manufactured and beautifully packaged hitting retail shelves for the first time. There's also no denying that part of the pleasure is in the knowledge that the products have been fully tested, will bring benefits to the end-user and lead to increased sales for all the businesses involved."

# Quality is paramount for TIMco

CEO Annemarie Harte visited John Mackin, General Manager of TIMco Ireland, one of HAI's newer supplier members, in Monaghan recently. With fixings and fastener merchants across the country displaying a greater range of innovative quality products than ever before, John gave Annemarie an overview of TIMco's launch on the Irish market and what lies ahead for the company, as well as outlining how getting the right products to the shelves at the right price may not be as easy as it seems.

### The 'R' word

Did the recession, still at its height in 2012, impact the fledgling TIMco Ireland? John says it didn't. His first impression of Ireland, having moved from his native Scotland, at that point was that the nation was reeling with the media reminding people constantly that Ireland was in difficulties.

From the outset, he took a very long-term view. He studied demographics, future EU legislation on farming and even intended foreign investment in Ireland. He could see that, in the long term, Ireland would require more housing, more schools and more infrastructure. John believed that the country needed a positive spark. Had he decided Ireland was not worth investing in, then TIMco would be buying into the notion of the continued recession, he believed. He ignored the press, presented the benefits of TIMco and always focused on the positive stories. John says that this approach went down well with buyers who heard everyone else talking about the big 'R' while he spoke about future growth.

He comments: "In the last 24 months, we have seen confidence grow massively. While this is very much welcomed, we are also



"We love what we do and it gives the team at TIMco a thrill to see exciting new products that have been cleverly designed, carefully manufactured and beautifully packaged hitting retail shelves for the first time"  
– John Mackin.

aware of the implications of coming out of a long and sustained recession for business cashflow as retailers and providers seek to provide a credit stream to customers. So, ironically, as we exit the recession we are experiencing more requests to extend credit terms. This does concern us in the short to medium term as we believe some businesses may not be able to facilitate a normal trading environment."

So far, though, so good for TIMco. The last 24 months have been the strongest yet for the company. The business is growing rapidly with turnover increases of more than 29% to £20.7m in 2014/15 and growth in turnover of 18% for 2013/14. John has confidence in the market, investing in 34,000 sq. feet of new warehousing and increasing TIMco's product range by 13% to offer more than 5,000 product lines.

## Operating globally

Operating in a global marketplace has many advantages including access to raw materials and skilled labour as well as exposure to innovative products and designs that can be manufactured and used at home. As globalisation continues, supply chains are becoming more complex to control. They require the latest technology to manage an ever-expanding network of partners around the world and, with the constant uncertainties of shifting market forces, competitive pressures and unexpected disruptions, there is plenty that can go wrong.

John says: "An example would be in the manufacturing of a simple wood screw. The first stage is to increase the ductility of the material through a heat treatment known as annealing. From there, the wire is drawn to reduce the diameter to the required specification. The wire is then cut to the correct length, a head and recess is stamped and a thread is rolled onto the body. Thereafter, the screws are heat-treated to increase its hardness and strength.

"The product is then plated before being vigorously tested in quality control before being packaged and transported to the UK for onward distribution to customers. This process normally takes up to 90 days but can be fast-tracked to take 45 days depending on global demand for certain products.

"The final hurdle is perhaps the highest as no product is shipped until it has been signed off by our own UK-based quality control team. Once signed off and approved, product is distributed to fulfil local Irish demand within 24 hours. If any products fail our QC, they go back to the drawing board and the supply chain starts again until the product is right."

So what plans are in place for the next 12 months? The business model of not supplying end users and providing support to retailers has proven successful and very transparent; this is TIMco's building block of the future. They plan to invest heavily going forward and will in the fourth quarter bring an additional 700 new product lines to the market in Ireland. John says that this will provide growth for 2017 and beyond.



John Mackin, General Manager, TIMco Ireland.

## Undervalued

I ask if there's any particular reason TIMco is located in Monaghan. John comments: "It provided everything we required. We felt, and still feel, that Monaghan as a town is under-valued and under-sold. It provides an excellent pool of very talented people; office and warehousing space is readily available and infrastructure is excellent. Fibre high-speed broadband is available coupled with easy access to the roads network and road tolls are not playing a significant part in our daily costs as a business. Monaghan is very much TIMco Ireland's home, we purchase as much as we can in and around the town and try to give back to our community."

If you have a story to tell as a supplier or manufacturer in the Irish market, please contact Annemarie on 01 298 0969 or [annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie](mailto:annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie) for more information.



# Hardware Conference 2016

The Hardware Conference 2016 was a huge success, with HAI members from all around the country flocking to the Lyrath Estate Hotel, Kilkenny to hear a line up of insightful and inspirational speakers, network with colleagues from all sectors of the hardware industry and try their luck at the Casino tables on opening night!

## Opening day

The inaugural Hardware Conference in the elegant surroundings of the Lyrath Hotel, Kilkenny kicked off on the afternoon of Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, with three well-attended break-out sessions for those who could get away early from their businesses:

- an update on timber regulations;
- a Technology Clinic hosted by Intact Software; and,
- a legal update given by a regular contributor to *The Hardware Journal*, Siobhan Kenny.

These presentations kicked off the Conference with practical, no-nonsense advice on specific relevant topics. A couple of the sessions were still buzzing after 6pm and needed reminding that the pre-dinner drinks reception was starting in an hour, should they wish to relax before the evening of food, drink, entertainment and networking began.

By 7.15pm the lobby of the Lyrath was awash with delegates enjoying drinks and chatting like they hadn't seen each other in some time and, indeed, in many instances, they hadn't! It was clear from the start that the opportunity to network was going to be one of the biggest benefits for anyone attending.

At the dinner, delegates were formally welcomed by HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell. After tucking into a four-course meal, they made their way back to the lobby for the evening's entertainment. With \$1,000 gifted to each delegate, the 'gamblers' (particularly, it was noted, the accountants!) took up their positions adjacent to the roulette and blackjack tables, while a musical duo played in the background into the small hours. The latest bed-time 'officially' recorded was 4.30am – a sure sign that the conference had got off to a successful and immensely enjoyable start. Although, it did raise some doubts as to whether everyone would make Thursday's 9am start!



# The Hardware Conference



## Selling, surviving and prospering in today's hardware industry

Thursday's information-packed schedule opened at 9am with a welcome from Hugh O'Donnell, who provided a guide to the day ahead and introduced the speaker line-up. The panel of expert speakers provided a comprehensive and informative overview of the key challenges facing the industry in an engrossing and highly informative day.

### Economic reality check

Tony Foley, Senior Lecturer and Head of the Economics, Finance and Entrepreneurship group, DCU, was the first guest speaker and if there were any delegates feeling the effects of the night before, his sobering assessment of the state of the Irish economy would have blown the cobwebs away.

He began by acknowledging the achievements of the last few years, commenting: "The Irish economy has recovered from the dismal position and performance of 2008 to 2013 but there are significant risk factors. A negative scenario would see lower growth which would put increased pressure on the public finances which would require corrective action to meet EU fiscal rules. The promise held out by those who were successful in the recent General Election of a significantly fairer economy and society (however that is defined) and substantially improved public services, will require more resources than is likely to be available

from the fiscal space over the next few years."

Future economic management will be challenging as raised expectations will be difficult or impossible to meet, he concluded.

### Google insights on online trends

In a dual presentation, James O'Dwyer, Senior Retail Consultant, Home Retail Team, and Stephen Baker, Manager, Home Retail Team, both with Google, outlined the most significant trends emerging online that builders merchants and hardware/DIY retailers should be paying attention to. They noted that device accessibility is driving growth. According to their statistics, in Ireland, we own 3.2 devices per person on average. Deeper engagement is the new normal, they said. From a builders merchant and hardware retailing perspective, they noted increasing online interest in matters relating to the home including: 31% year-on-year (y-o-y) growth in searches relating to home improvement and DIY; and 23% y-o-y growth in garden-related searches. There are four key paths to purchase for home and hardware retailers now: online and offline media channels and online and offline purchase channels (i.e., digital and bricks-and-mortar purchase channels). The Google representatives reported that only 5% of retailers have executed an omni-channel strategy and 70% have no omni-channel strategy or are at the very beginning of execution.

To view the presentations and much more, log on to the The Hardware Education Hub at [hardware-educationhub.ie](http://hardware-educationhub.ie)

Head Coach of the Irish rugby team Joe Schmidt and HAI President Hugh O'Donnell.



## THE JOE SHOW

**A warm welcome greeted Joe Schmidt, Head Coach of the Ireland rugby team and the morning's keynote speaker at the conference. His topic, unsurprisingly, was managing high performing teams.**

He said it's important to get the right people from the start and that recruitment is vital: "If you can get an environment where people are self-led, where they are self-motivated, I think your ability to manage them is made so much more easy."

Individual team members can be fantastic motivators of themselves and others. Having individuals like that in a team, he said, creates a positive, committed working environment that breeds confidence and commitment.

He also said that it's important that a team leader has an energetic presence: "I know that if I don't turn up every day with a passion and excitement about what I'm doing, it's very difficult for me to ask that of others."

In rugby, he said, passion, commitment and energy are essential: "Playing rugby you do things you don't normally do. If a gigantic Number 8 walked in to this conference right now, there wouldn't be a big queue of hands going up to volunteer to tackle him! In ordinary life, you're not going to do the kind of things that are part and parcel of the game of rugby. That's why passion and motivation are so important in the game and in all aspects of life."

## The difference

Alf Dunbar, creator and founder of the You Are The Difference Sales Training Programme, gave an energetic presentation, exhorting delegates to take on their online competition by providing excellence in customer service. Alf stressed the importance of delivering excellent face-to-face customer service and shared the principles of his training programme as well as giving everyone at the conference a free copy of his book Just Looking, Thanks - the straightforward guide to creating brilliant customer service.

He told delegates what he considered to be a fundamental principle of selling: "People buy people first and the product second."

Customer service is all about treating others as you would like to be treated yourself and it hinges on the ability to provide a service or product in the way it has been promised."

In developing a positive attitude among sales staff, Alf said it is vital to bear in mind that the team will always follow the manager's lead.

## Where to now for housing?

After lunch, Hubert Fitzpatrick, Director, Construction Industry Federation looked at construction and housing trends, asking 'where to from now?' He outlined the constraints on the housing market. In the first instance, Ireland, he said, was no longer one housing market, but a series of contrasting markets. Replacement cost is higher than market values in some areas. On top of this, there are uncertainties and difficulties for purchasers obtaining adequate mortgage approval. Development finance is expensive and difficult to secure while there is limited availability of ready-to-go development land with adequate services and planning.



Stephen Baker, Manager, Home Retail Team, Google.

Government has responded with new apartment guidelines to reduce construction cost in cities, the waiver of S48 development levies for certain schemes and the activation of capital, including the establishment of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) of €74 billion. Other options are under consideration, he said, including the possibility of tweaking Central Bank policy, the replacement of S48 development levies by property tax and the adjustment of the VAT rate from 13.5% to a temporary rate of 9%, similar to the adjustment for the tourism sector.

## Inside the customer's head

Ken Hughes, Consumer and Shopper Behaviouralist, provided humorous and informative insights into the psychology of the consumer in a presentation that was an enlightening mix of stand-up comedy and evidence-based insights into customer behaviour. His main theme was how to bring shopper 'centricity' to life in builders merchant and DIY stores.

Ken asked merchants to ask themselves just how shopper centric they were? Does store layout take into account the shopper's needs, the shopper's journey through the store, the shopper's convenience. How much do store displays feed into the shopper's imagination and aspirations? He illustrated the effectiveness of this strategy by showing imagery of contrasting displays aimed at selling summer garden and barbecue products: one a dull display of shelved products; and, the other, a fully accessorised garden barbecue scene that feeds the shopper's imagination of a perfect summer barbecue and drives the urge to buy the products that will help realise some approximation of that vision.

**The afternoon was brought to a fitting close when HAI Past President and Tegral Managing Director, Paddy Kelly interviewed distinguished international industry leader, Peter Hindle, MBE, General Delegate, Saint-Gobain UK, Ireland & South Africa**

The conversation ranged across the four decades of Peter's career, covering his varying roles culminating in his time as a key senior executive at Saint-Gobain. In late 2013, Peter was appointed to the World Green Building Council Advisory Board, representing Compagnie de Saint-Gobain and he told the Conference that he sees the environment and sustainability as key factors that will shape the future of our Industry.

At the end of the interview, he responded to a number of questions from the floor, including a query about his experience of receiving an MBE from the Queen. He recounted his memories of the day, including his encounter with another honoree, who turned out to be one of his teenage heroes, Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant.

## What the conference delegates thought

### OVERALL RESPONSES

100% delegate satisfaction rating.

**Networking** was repeatedly mentioned as the most valuable aspect of the conference.

Registration process, conference venue and organisational arrangements – high satisfaction levels.

97% would register for a future Conference.

94% would recommend a future Conference.

### COMMENTS FROM DELEGATES

One of the most professional events I was ever at, excellently run

The event was excellent and very professional from start to finish

Have the dinner after the presentations

Very well run, worthwhile to attend

### General Performance of #haiconf

283

Tweets

240,797

Timeline Deliveries

56

Contributors



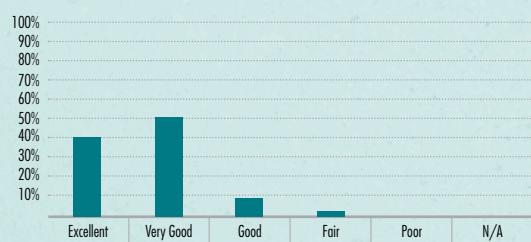
62,709

Reach

#### Satisfaction with Conference



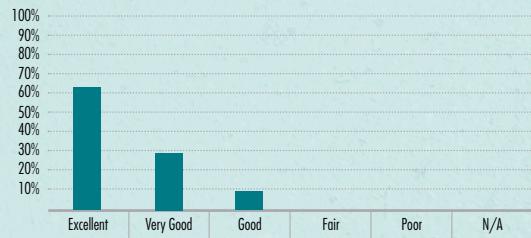
#### Relevance of Conference contents



#### Organisation of event



#### Effectiveness as networking opportunity



#### Use of Sli.do, the audience interaction tool

There were 157 active users

Attendees asked 34 questions, which got 26 likes

89% of questions were asked anonymously



"Our ambition, ultimately, is to become the largest buying and marketing hardware group for builders merchants by choice" – Patrick Cassidy, United Hardware CEO.

# Winning ways

## CEO tips United Hardware as retail champions

Just seven months after taking charge at United Hardware, CEO Patrick Cassidy, spoke exclusively to *The Hardware Journal* about the group's five-year business strategy, the performance of the 15 new stores added to the group over the last 18 months and his plans for Homevalue and Arro.

***The Hardware Journal:* Could you tell readers of *The Hardware Journal* a little about your own early retailing background?**

**Patrick Cassidy:** Retail is very much in the blood through my family connection to Cassidy's Department Store. From a very young age, I saw a future in retail and began my apprenticeship working with a local newsagent. My jobs in a McDonald's restaurant, and later a Maxol service station, supported me through my college years. From college, I went on to join Dunnes Stores, working my way up from packing boxes to managerial roles in Ireland and the UK.

***You pioneered Ireland's first DIY superstore at Woodies, could you recall some of the key challenges involved?***

I was lucky to be a key part of a select team that went on to radically change the DIY market in Ireland. We identified an opportunity to significantly ramp up our offering for the DIY segment, catering to a new base of retail customers. The biggest challenge we faced was in shifting our offering from trade customers to retail customers. It was a different model and required a greater focus on areas of the business such as marketing, store standards and customer service. What's interesting is that the format we agreed on back in 1992 is still very much intact today.



The United Hardware CEO believes it is vitally important to stay in touch with the realities of retailing.

## What appealed to you about taking the helm at United Hardware?

I have always had great respect for United Hardware, its brands and its members. The brands have been around for 50 years; they have a great pedigree, and I would have always considered them to be big hitters in the hardware sector. I'm a big rugby fan and for me, joining United Hardware was like taking over as manager of a top flight rugby club. I also had strong personal links to the industry and this was an opportunity to bring me back to my roots; back to where it all began, but with a new outlook, and greater personal capabilities. The scale of the possibilities that lay ahead as CEO of United Hardware was what really tipped the scales for me. I could immediately see growth and development opportunities and I knew I had the skills needed to bring them to fruition. For instance, there is a very real opportunity for us to up-weight the Arro and Homevalue focus online with a view to providing exciting new growth opportunities for our members.

## What are your targets for United Hardware in the next 3-5 years?

As a membership organisation it is critical that our business strategy reflects the wants, needs and expectations of our membership, so we commissioned a member survey, the findings of which ultimately formed the basis of a new business strategy, developed by Chief Operations Officer David Farrell and myself, which will guide the group over the next five years, ensuring that we are best placed to capitalise on market opportunities.

Our ambition, ultimately, is to become the largest buying and marketing hardware group for builders merchants by choice. We feel we have the best offering in the market but we're now focused on growing the scale of the business so that we can provide an even greater offering to our members.

## Could you talk about your plans for Homevalue and Arro specifically?

We're keenly focused on developing our two retail brands, Homevalue and Arro. Both brands are synonymous with a high-quality, value proposition in the hardware, homeware and garden retailing categories across Ireland. However, we do feel that they are under-leveraged and there is a great opportunity to further

utilise the brands to enhance store recognition and stimulate better brand loyalty, while preserving the rich heritage of our local merchants.

Our plan is to grow our network to over 130 stores in 2016 by adding 10 new Homevalue and Arro stores. The rationale is simple; the bigger we become, the more attractive the terms we offer our members will become.

To complement this initiative, we have a dedicated plan in place to support existing members in expanding their businesses and this is something which is generating considerable traction at the moment.

## Part of your leadership mission at United Hardware is to strengthen its business functions. Could you detail some of your recent initiatives in this regard?

Starting with partner relations, we began by acknowledging the absolute importance of having strong relationships with all of our stakeholders including suppliers and other partners, while recognising our primary commitment to our membership as being at the core of what we do.

We've appointed dedicated relationship managers whose sole responsibility is looking after the needs of over 100 retailers across the country.

As part of a radical ramping up of our marketing efforts, we have expanded the marketing team and appointed an enthusiastic Head of Marketing, Emer O'Donnell.

Alongside the targeted improvement in our online footprint through the introduction of a new website, we've also upped the ante with regards to advertising and our customers can expect to see a lot more promotions in the future. Marketing is an area that members believe is key to securing greater market share and we're already receiving very positive feedback about some of our newly introduced initiatives.

Throughout the business, we're targeting operational efficiencies which will help to ensure that we're performing to our full capabilities and best positioned for the future. For example, we've introduced new and improved IT solutions which are rapidly changing how we operate; these changes are benefitting United Hardware at head office and the entire membership at store level. We have also recently appointed a new Head of Shared Services and Business Advancement who has been tasked with overseeing the introduction of newly identified efficiency enhancement opportunities.

Finally, we're keen to enhance the capabilities of each and every

Cassidy's commitment: "The bigger we become, the more attractive the terms we offer our members will become."



member and as part of that objective we've introduced a number of member training programmes.

#### As CEO, how do you keep in touch with what's happening over the counter at individual stores?

All relevant information from our on-the-road teams of relationship managers and specialist merchandising supports is constantly relayed back to me but I have also made a commitment to visit each of the membership's 120 stores and have already been up, down and across the country fulfilling that promise. It's vitally important to meet members at the coalface in order to stay in touch with what is happening on the ground and the realities of retailing.

An intranet service is currently being introduced for members and staff alike, which will be another platform for members to communicate with us and each other.

The extended team and myself also host regular buying meetings and regional cluster meetings to ensure that our fingers are on the pulse when it comes to the wants, needs and expectations of the membership. We recently hosted our Annual Trade Show in the Citywest Hotel which keeps getting bigger every year. This year's event brought the membership together with close to 100 key suppliers and gave them access to a number of really interesting presentations from the likes of Annemarie Harte from Hardware Association Ireland.

#### How have the 15 stores opened during the past 18 months bedded in?

Overall we're very happy with last year's integrations. Our relationship managers and merchandising supports are regularly visiting each of our new members to ensure that they are best positioned to maximise market opportunities. A number of new members already have plans to expand their operations as they feel the time is right and they know the group will be there to support them.

#### United Hardware's stated primary objective is to enhance the purchasing power of your group's independent hardware retailers across the country. How will your new strategy strengthen that purchasing power?

The first thing to say is that we already have a very effective buying function. Even though the membership is not bound to buy from United Hardware, we achieved double digit sales growth in 2015, which we see as a very strong vote of confidence in the team here in Magna House.

Our direct sourcing strategy is a prime example of how we are improving our buying function. Our buying team now spends more time abroad than ever in an effort to find the very best products at the very best prices, which allows us to provide even greater margin opportunities for our members. Case in point is our new PowerPlus range, sourced directly from China and exclusive to United Hardware, providing a top end product range at a truly market leading price point. In addition, we're in the process of consolidating our supplier base to make sure that we get the very best buying terms from each of our partners.



#### Can you give some details on your senior executive team?

My first move, when I joined United Hardware, was to appoint David Farrell as Chief Operating Officer. David was already the group's Commercial Manager and it was clear to me that he had all the skills, and more, needed to make the next step; he now has responsibility for buying, distribution and marketing. We also recently promoted David Geoghegan to Group Financial Officer. David has a deep knowledge of the United Hardware business and the wider industry and he will be key to the rollout of the new strategy.

In addition to our leadership team, we've also recruited strongly in areas such as marketing, merchandising, buying, and operations support, and all of these new recruits and appointees will play important roles in driving forward the United Hardware business. Our membership recognises that the time to invest and expand is now, hence the increase in headcount.

#### How would you characterise customer confidence and demand currently?

It's fair to say that the market is most buoyant in Leinster and as you go further out it slows somewhat. We would have concerns about the slow rate of residential housing developments across Ireland. That said, we are looking at strong economic growth, an increase in disposable income and continued decline in unemployment numbers so the majority of our members are optimistic about the future. We're big fans of the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) Scheme and would urge the Government to extend its duration beyond the current cut-off point and to do more to promote it publicly.

#### Looking at the product offering in the hardware sector as a whole, how are the major product categories performing?

Gardening is performing exceptionally well at the moment with everything from BBQs to lawnmowers flying off the shelves. Our DIY ranges are also performing strongly. The heavier hardware categories are slower as a result of housing development issues.

## TIME OUT

### HOW THE UNITED HARDWARE CEO UNWINDS

- **Favourite (or least favourite!) DIY project:** Painting is my kryptonite! Always hire a professional I say.
- **Last book read:** Trevor Brennan's Autobiography, *Trevor Brennan: Heart and Soul*
- **Favourite movie:** The Outlaw Josey Wales
- **Favourite TV series:** House of Cards
- **Favourite holiday:** Saint Lucia, Caribbean
- **iTunes or Spotify:** iTunes

# THE PREMIER HARDWARE SHOW IN 2017

5 – 6 MARCH 2017

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THE  
**HARDWARE**  
SHOW 2017

HOME - GARDEN - BUILD - DIY

The Official Show of  
**HAI**  
HARDWARE  
ASSOCIATION  
IRELAND

# THE HARDWARE SHOW 2017

Home - Garden - Build - DIY

It's clear that the 2017 Hardware Show has already struck a chord with many of the country's top manufacturers and distributors as exhibition stand space sold to date is ahead of where it was at the same time in 2014 for the 2015 show.

**A new venue with improved layout and much more space for creative presentation combined with added value opportunities offered by the organisers are set to make this Show the biggest and best yet.**

The target is to increase exhibitors by 20% on the 2015 number, which was just over 150 exhibitors. If the objective of 200 exhibitors is achieved, it will further enhance what is already set to be an exciting and informative exhibition experience for the hardware and builders merchants visiting the Show. A Show of this scale will require exhibitors to be much more interactive with visitors and, as part of the show's improved format, we will have a dedicated demonstration zone catering for the following areas:

- Building Materials (heavy-end) – items for insulation, walls, airtightness etc;
- Paint/Décor;
- DIY/Hardware – items such as power tools; and,
- Plumbing/Bathrooms – items such as heat pumps.

The demonstration zone will not be about selling product to the visitor but, instead, will focus on educating the zone visitors on product application and best practice, in order to ensure that they leave being able to talk confidently about the application of products they are selling. In these days of more products being sold online without visits to premises or speaking to real people, hardware and builders merchants can effectively counter this threat by assisting and supporting their customers through their expertise and knowledge of product. This increases customer retention and will inevitably help to stave off external threats to the business.

## Promoting apprenticeships

This Show will also feature apprentices where possible. According to Solas, the further education and training authority responsible for the development of apprenticeships in Ireland, just seven people signed up last year for an apprenticeship to become a plasterer. Supply will not meet demand when construction activity returns to a normalised level and everyone working in the sector bears some responsibility to promote apprenticeships to school leavers, both as an alternative to our traditional sense of what third level education means and as an attractive proposition in its own right.

## Sponsorship opportunities

Another feature of this Show for exhibitors is that there are new opportunities, as well as existing ones, to sponsor specific aspects of the Show including:



- Event title sponsor;
- Event app – NEW!
- Innovation awards;
- Shuttle bus – NEW!
- Visitor e-zines – NEW!

## Event Title Sponsor

This sponsorship opportunity incorporates:

- branding pre-Show and onsite across related marketing material, Show website, e-zines, catalogue, signage at the Show;
- sponsor's logo adjacent to Show logo;
- dedicated complimentary information stand (4m x 3m);
- banner on event website;
- PR opportunities pre-Show and onsite;
- inclusion in delegate bag supplied to visitors at Show;
- logo print on all entrance tickets;
- branding on all directional signage; and,
- logo at the registration desk, as well as branded welcome carpets at registration.

## Event App

The mobile event application gives companies the opportunity to connect with attendees in a unique and personal way. As the sponsor of this new opportunity at the Hardware Show, all your event information is in the hands of the attendees in the custom-branded, comprehensive mobile app – anytime, anywhere with real-time updates provided at Show time.

There are different ways to generate new revenue streams with the event app. Tapping into sponsorship opportunities through the application gives you, as a sponsor, a trackable way to reach attendees and increase ROI. A win-win situation for every key stakeholder.

## Visitor E-zine

There will be a number of visitor e-zines forwarded prior to the Hardware Show and sponsorship of this activity gives an exhibiting company the chance to reach out to visitors ahead of the event. Editorial can be in the form of a company profile and can be linked back to websites etc. The sponsor can pick their preferred slot from the E-zine schedule on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact Margaret Andreucetti for more details about these opportunities on 01 846 0020 or 086 055 4181 and visit [www.thehardwareshow.ie](http://www.thehardwareshow.ie)



James Cunnane, Managing Director, Topline Kellys.

# Topline Kellys celebrates one year as a member

Topline Kellys is based on the North Strand, ideally located in the heart of Dublin's city centre. One year ago they joined Hardware Association Ireland having never been a member in the past. Jim Copeland, Head of Member Relations, recently spoke to Manager Rachel Reddin as they reached their first full year as members of HAI, to find out what membership has added to their business.

## Jim Copeland: What prompted you to join?

**Rachel Reddin:** We were already subscribers to HAI's magazine, *The Hardware Journal*, which we have found to be both relevant and topical. In April 2015, you contacted us to request a meeting to discuss our joining the Association. Based on the positive content of that meeting, we decided we would sign up for the remainder of that year and decide the following year if we felt the benefits of membership were worth it. Needless to say, we are more than happy to continue our relationship with HAI.

## What services have you availed of?

Thus far, we have attended the credit seminar, the inaugural Conference, and the last HAI trade show. Having found the credit seminar to be of an excellent standard we decided to put another two members of our staff through this training event, and we intend to send our counter sales staff to the customer service training events.

## I see you recently attended our inaugural Conference, what did you think of the event?

We were very impressed by the inaugural Conference. In particular, the lecture series was excellent and of great benefit to hardware retailers. Every topic was focused and relevant to our business, and we left with a number of new areas of interest and concern to research further. Ongoing threats that I am sure most hardware retailers are familiar with, such as the rise of online selling and the

damage poor customer service can do to your business, were addressed succinctly by industry experts, all of whom offered some very good ideas, information and solutions to keep abreast of these threats. The talk by Joe Schmidt was fantastic! And furthermore, the two days presented an excellent networking opportunity and a chance to chat with people from every aspect of our industry.

## Would you recommend another merchant to join?

Absolutely. HAI functions as a vital line of communication within the Irish hardware industry. The training seminars are designed solely for our industry. The Association advocates with success on behalf of the hardware industry to the Irish government, stresses the importance of social media engagement with our customers and offers training and information accordingly. It provides current information on market trends, business and building regulations, construction product regulations etc. which is a highly valuable resource. Both the *Journal* and the Show are informative and beneficial to our business.

## What are the top three 'value-adds' that HAI can offer its members?

I would place the training seminars at the top of this list. I am a firm believer in the importance of continued training for all staff members and it is of great benefit to have access to hardware-centric training seminars. Following that I rate the market intelligence highly, in particular the business index. And, lastly, the *Journal* itself – within every issue I find at least one area of interest for further research.



# Calm and collected?

## GETTING YOUR MONEY IN FULL AND ON TIME

Declan Flood, aka The Credit Coach, on credit control and the importance of collecting all the money you are owed in full and on time.

**The reality is that you need a simple collection process in your business to make this happen. If you have followed the advice given on Credit Terms in the last edition, that is a great starting point. Now you and your customers know exactly when payment should be made, so the next stage is to make sure that happens.**

### Allocating responsibility

The first requirement is that you have at least one person in your business that is responsible for the collection of monies due. Making statements like 'everyone is responsible' will mean that no one is responsible! Of course, I would say they should be trained and professional, but the most important thing here is that they enjoy the job of collecting and are allowed sufficient time to follow up and make the calls. This is where most hardware businesses fall down.

You should have a few weekly and monthly reports that are reviewed by senior management, with a view to supporting the credit controller and providing the required resources.

There are a million reports that could be generated, my style is to keep it simple, so a measure like – how much extra should be in my bank account, if all customers were paying to terms – is a great place to start; I have a simple spreadsheet that will calculate this number for you and I am happy to send it to you, simply email me on [declan@thecreditcoach.ie](mailto:declan@thecreditcoach.ie) with the words 'How much extra should be in my bank account?' and I'll attach it and send it back to you. This is a great way to monitor progress over time. It will also help you to set cash collection targets, which really should be done every month.

### Ten crucial steps

In addition to the above, I recommend the following collection steps:

- Make sure the payment due date is clear on your invoices and statements;
- Automate payment receipts as much as you can, setting up direct debits and accepting credit card payments can really help;

- For your larger customers, contact them around a week before the due date, to make sure everything is in order and payment will be made as agreed;
- Start following up on unpaid balances on the first working day of every month, whether you choose the phone, emails or text messaging is up to you, but you should have some system for sending out reminders;
- A clear step-by-step approach for all your customers must be documented, agreed and implemented;
- As well as focusing on the higher balances, you need to develop your action plan to deal with high-risk accounts at an earlier stage;
- Follow up on broken promises quickly; failure to do this will send out a signal that getting paid isn't really important to you, and, if that happens, you will be put on the bottom of their priority list;
- Have a clear rule, based on each customer, when you have to stop future orders on credit until payment is received;
- Set out when you will pass a debt to a third party for collection, if promises are constantly made and broken; and,
- Ask for help. There is so much help available to you and all you have to do is ask. At this stage, you know I am happy to point you in the right direction if there is anything you need to know.

**Declan Flood: "You should have a few weekly and monthly reports that are reviewed by senior management"**



# Member Offers & Discounts

## RISE IN USAGE SHOWS VALUE OF CARD PAYMENT SERVICES

Recent statistics underline the value of HAI's member offers in relation to payment card services which include competitive transaction rates with full PCI compliance support.

Recent statistics from Visa Europe show that there has been a 12% increase in the annual spending on Irish Visa cards with the figure reaching €31.7 billion over a 12-month period. As a result, transactions with a Visa card – Debit, Credit or Prepaid – now account for more than €1 in every €3 of Irish consumer spending. This is due to the continued shift from cash and cheque usage as consumers opt for the convenience and security of Visa card payments. Similarly, retailers continue to benefit from accepting cards as they seek to grow their businesses. The total number of transactions on Irish Visa cards – debit, credit and prepaid – increased by approximately 16% over the 12-month period to 584 million transactions.

According to Visa Europe, the average transaction value for the 12-month period fell 4% as consumers became more comfortable with paying by card for everyday low value transactions. Visa Europe highlighted the increased popularity of contactless payments in Ireland as an example of the shift to electronic payments, with over one million contactless transactions now being made per week as its usage continues to soar.

The contactless payment limit on Visa cards has increased from €15 to €30 since 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2015. E-commerce's popularity with Irish consumers has also continued to soar as online consumer spending with Irish Visa cards – debit, credit and prepaid – over the twelve-month period rose to approximately €6.5 billion, a 17% rise compared to the same period a year prior. As a result, e-commerce accounts for 21% of spending with Visa cards as more Irish retailers adopt an omni-channel approach to ensure that they are able to cater for customers 24/7 (See panel for details of exclusive offer to HAI members on card terminal and transaction rates).

Source: [www.visa.ie/about-us/press-releases/irish-annual-spending-on-visa-cards-debit-credit-and-prepaid-rises-12-to-eu31-7-billion-1318282?returnUrl=/about-us/press-releases/index](http://www.visa.ie/about-us/press-releases/irish-annual-spending-on-visa-cards-debit-credit-and-prepaid-rises-12-to-eu31-7-billion-1318282?returnUrl=/about-us/press-releases/index)

## CASH COSTS YOU WHY CARD PAYMENTS ARE BETTER FOR YOUR BUSINESS.

- Cash isn't free.
- Cash costs you more than you realise in security, handling and other charges.
- Cash and cheque charges are going up; card processing costs are coming down.
- Card transactions are screened in real time to protect you and your customers from fraud.
- You can't afford not to take cards.

## HAI'S SPECIAL OFFER ON MERCHANT SERVICES



Merchant Services

HAI negotiate special offers and discounts on standard business services so you don't have to. We can do this because of the strength of our membership numbers. HAI has recently completed a deal with AIB Merchant Services offering payment card services which includes competitive transaction rates with full PCI compliance support. In addition to this, AIB will offer €5 off the monthly rental of your selected terminal option, further reducing the costs to your business.

AIB Merchant Services offer you an affordable end-to-end solution to support your business ( see Figure 1 for details of rates). This includes:

- high speed transaction processing;
- dedicated and fully-serviced merchant helpdesk;
- next day settlement to your nominated bank account;
- PCI, compliance and risk support;
- award-winning service and product innovation; and,
- revolutionary innovative EPOS solution reducing costs and driving efficiency for your business

They would be delighted to discuss their capabilities and services in more detail with Hardware Association Ireland members. They are confident that they can support you in delivering market-leading payment services and solutions to your customers.

Figure 1.

Card Type	Rate	Card Type	Rate
Visa Credit Consumer <sup>†</sup>	0.59%	Mastercard Debit	0.18% +2c
Visa Commercial <sup>††</sup>	1.65%	Visa Business Debit	0.55%
MasterCard Credit Consumer <sup>* ***</sup>	0.59%	MasterCard Business Debit	0.55%
MasterCard Credit Commercial <sup>**</sup>	1.65%		
Visa Consumer Debit	0.18% +2c	Surcharge Rates	
Maestro	0.18% +2c	International <sup>***</sup>	0.75%

<sup>†</sup>Visa International Consumer Debit Card(s) will be charged at the Visa Consumer Credit Card Rate.

<sup>††</sup>Visa International Non Consumer Debit Card(s) will be charged at the Visa Non Consumer Credit Card Rate.

<sup>\*</sup>MasterCard International Consumer Debit Card(s) will be charged at the MasterCard Consumer Credit Card Rate.

<sup>\*\*</sup>MasterCard International Non Consumer Debit Card(s) will be charged at the MasterCard Non Consumer Credit Card Rate.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>International Maestro Card(s) will be charged at the MasterCard Consumer Credit Card Rate.

Rates are subject to continued review based on member feedback.

You must be a member of Hardware Association Ireland to avail of these rates.

Contact: Jim Copeland on **087 667 1361** or [jim@hardwareassociation.ie](mailto:jim@hardwareassociation.ie) for further information.



# Whatever your business objective...

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Contact:  
Toyota Material Handling Ireland at Toyota Ireland, Killeen Road, Dublin 12. Tel: 01 4190200.



# Timber sector continues to flourish

Timber production in Ireland is a thriving business and we also continue to import significant quantities.

**The Coford All-Ireland Roundwood Production Forecast** was released in March of this year and states that wood production from our forests is set to more than double in the future. Keeping in line with the last forecast, the roundwood supply will increase significantly over the next two decades with almost all of the increase coming from privately-owned forests. The forecast net realisable volume from our forests will increase from c. 3.95 million cubic metres (m<sup>3</sup>) in 2016 to 7.87 million m<sup>3</sup> by 2035.

When compared with the previous forecast over the common reporting period 2016-2028, there are relatively small differences in total volume – 66.33 million m<sup>3</sup> compared with the previous forecast estimate of 66.04 million m<sup>3</sup> along.

Of course, Ireland also continues to import significant quantities of timber and the result is that customers in Irish hardware and builders merchants have plenty of choice between the best of indigenous and imported timber.

## Steico stakes a claim to innovation

Steico, one of Europe's leading manufacturers of engineered timber floor joists, is now offering a bespoke, enhanced floor and roof joist designed especially for the smaller developer and renovator. The product, Steico Trade Joist, is available in Ireland through suppliers Wood Concepts.

Described as a simpler engineered timber floor solution for projects from house building to renovation, the complete Steico floor kit offers superior floor performance which will be virtually noise-free with proper fitting, according to the manufacturer.

All Steico joist products feature Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification and Chain of Custody together with full European Technical Approval.

Eddie Kelly, CEO, Grafton Merchanting ROI, has been impressed by Steico's new product. "At Grafton Merchanting we have recognised the benefits of Steico Trade Joists, they are lightweight and easy to cut and offer consistent quality as a BBA approved product. With housebuilding starting to recover, builders are looking for ways to build more efficiently, and to offer their customers better levels of comfort in their homes, and the Steico Trade Joist fits this requirement very well," said Mr Kelly.

Following a period of staff training, the Steico Trade Joists are now available from Chadwicks and Heiton Buckley branches as well as Cork Builders Providers, Telfords, Eddies Hardware, Market Hardware and Barretts of Ballinasloe.



The Steico Trade Joist is available in Ireland through suppliers, Wood Concepts.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TIMBER REGULATION

**This EU regulation has been in force since March 2013 and it places certain obligations on operators and traders who deal in both Irish and international timber and timber products.**

It applies to organisations/individuals who are buyers or sellers of (either or both) international or EU/Irish timber or timber products subsequent to that timber's or timber products' first placement on the EU/Irish market, excluding retail customers who are purchasing for their own personal use with no onward trade or further use as part of a commercial activity.

Traders are obliged to be able to identify:

- whom the timber or timber product has been bought from; and/or,
- to whom they have supplied/sold timber or timber products.

Traders are obliged to keep this information for at least five years and to provide it to the competent authority, if so requested. Under the European Union (Timber and Timber Products) (Placing on the Market) Regulations 2014 it is an offence for a trader to fail to comply with these provisions.

The responsibility to comply with the EUTR rests with the trader.

Further information and modalities associated with EUTR requirements and obligations is available on HAI's E-Learning Platform, [www.hardware-educationhub.ie](http://www.hardware-educationhub.ie).

Please contact Amanda Creane on **01 298 0969** or [amanda@hardwareassociation.ie](mailto:amanda@hardwareassociation.ie) to receive access to the platform.

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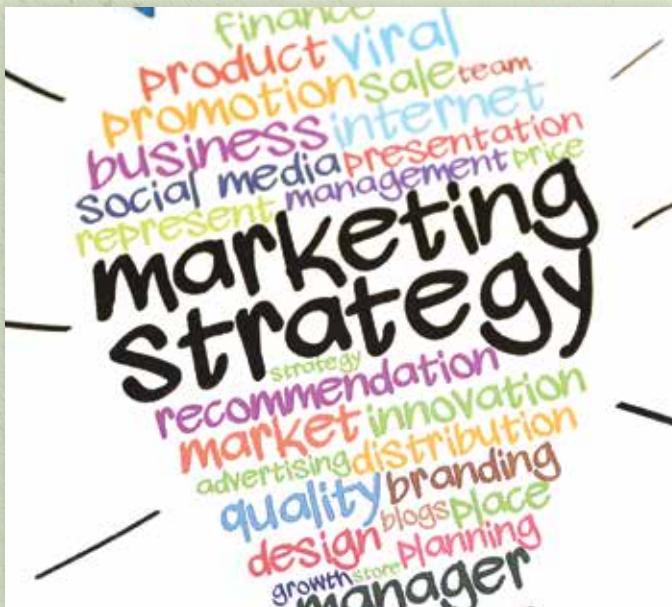
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Merchandising has a key role to play in maximising your sales

# Time to bin the bins?

The hardware sector is one of the most innovative in the building and construction industry with new features, improvements and innovations reaching the market each week. Despite this, many merchants still use outdated techniques when displaying their products in store. **John Mackin**, general manager of TIMco in Ireland, takes a closer look at the latest innovations and what merchants can do to maximise their merchandising.

Customers entering a builders merchant or hardware store are often confronted with a sensory overload of differing products, smells and auditory announcements, as well as a barrage of visual media from signage to packaging and display advertisements. So what can be done to ensure customers are not overloaded and can easily find the products they are after?

## Typical shopping trip

In a typical 20-minute shopping trip, research suggests that customers only read between eight and 10 written messages and that in the majority of cases, products are purchased by recognised colours, packaging or imagery.

The research also suggests that customers are inefficient in the way they move around the store, and on average spend only 20-30% of their time actually acquiring their desired products. The remaining time is spent either looking at or browsing other items and this is when they are most susceptible to display media influences. These influences can lead to impulse shopping, which in turn accounts for around 40% of sales.

The challenge for retailers is how best to display the hundreds of individual products. One method that is still widely used is the product 'pick n mix' bin system. A broad range of products from low value nuts, bolts and washers through to more expensive or specialist anchors are simply placed in the bins for customers to literally pick and mix those that they need.

Although the system may be beneficial to product sales reps who can simply top up the bins if they're looking a little low, it's proving to be an increasingly unworkable option for merchants due to issues with stock management, product migration or leakage, to name a few. Once products have been tipped into the bins they lose their traceability, making it nearly impossible to investigate any quality

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Current studies show that unplanned purchases make up between 46% and 70% of total purchases; visual displays and merchandising play a key role in this as they facilitate the customer's shopping experience.

Put simply, when customers can shop easily sales are impacted positively; if a store is cluttered and messy, sales will significantly drop. By providing a pleasant shopping experience customers will show loyalty and repeat shopping will occur.

**When customers can shop easily sales are impacted positively; if a store is cluttered and messy, sales will significantly drop.**

Merchandising incorporates a lot more than attractive displays; it is the effective use of products, display fixtures, space, colour, lighting and signage to encourage customers to buy. It has the potential to not only increase sales, but also increase shop floor productivity by improving organisation and allowing more customers to 'self-serve'.

Visual displays can be described as a 'silent salesperson', which when used effectively will propagate sales through visual appeal. Seasonal merchandising is a major factor in the hardware industry when it comes to targeting DIY customers.



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**Bins hold high levels of stock, which in turn ties up cashflow and restricts the opportunity to invest in new products or other high turnover items.**

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control or product coding issues. This can compromise merchants if they are required to provide the relevant Declaration of Performance Certificates or more product detail regarding a product's specification.

### Stock control issues

The bin system's main criticism is that it offers poor stock control as buying loose items does not allow for barcodes and the benefits that such systems offer in automating stock controls. Additionally, bins hold high levels of stock, which in turn ties up cashflow and restricts the opportunity to invest in new products or other high turnover items.

There are also issues with product migration, where discarded products are returned to the wrong bin, causing issues for other buyers. Let's not forget that products purchased 'loose' need packaging to transport them and also safe and secure storage when not being used. Research suggests that popular and clearly displayed items can even be used to help draw customers into new or less popular areas of the shop, a useful tactic when considering that on average only 25% of the store is 'shopped' by a customer.

Just as the products offered have innovated, now is the time for merchants to look at new ways to manage stock as well as sell and merchandise products. The first action, however, has to be to make the bold move and start by binning the bins.

# Growth ingrained in wood and laminate flooring for foreseeable future

The global wood and laminate flooring market is expected to reach US\$92.64 billion by 2020, according to a recent study by Grand View Research. Increasing demand in the new construction and home improvement sectors is expected to be the key driving force for the wood and laminate flooring market over the forecast period, while the volatile prices of wood and other raw materials and the increasing costs of production are expected to challenge growth in the sector.

**Concern over environmental impact has considerably affected the market as governments across the world have employed strict laws and regulations against deforestation creating the need to import raw materials which, in turn, affects manufacturers' profits.**

Engineered wooden floors have increased in popularity over the last number of years due to their favourable cost, exclusiveness and dimensional stability. Solid wood is also in demand despite the fact that installation and finishing increases the total time and cost requirements.

In regard to the Irish market, recent statistics have reported a 95% rise in planning applications granted for new dwellings in 2015 compared to 2014. In terms of square footage, the total for planning permission granted on new home dwellings equates to nearly three million square feet, an increase of 57% on 2014. These statistics, coupled with close to 30% of an increase in home completions in the first two months of 2016 point to a robust flooring market (source Department of Environment, based on ESB connections).

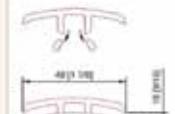
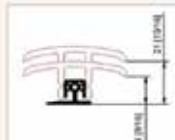
## Laminate-specific brochure

Whiteriver Group has seen positive sales growth for its flooring ranges in the first quarter of 2016, according to Whiteriver Sales Director, Iain Wogan. He attributes this success to good service along with product training and marketing material. Whiteriver has also published the first laminate-specific brochure to be put on the market place.

"Display layout continues to be very important in creating an environment that makes it easy for consumers to make their choices. With many stores now looking at revamping and upgrading their stores, Whiteriver can offer its marketing experience to maximise your store's display potential with bespoke designs," said Mr Wogan.

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Laminate floors have again performed very well with an increased demand for high quality 10mm/12mm laminates in grades AC4 and AC5. Whiteriver Group has responded to this demand with increased ranges following growing demand for white and grey tones. Whiteriver plans to continue investing in its business and its new website will provide customers with added information and product images. The company also plans to release a new upgraded engineered brochure in June 2016.

#### Canada focuses on customer choice

Canada Flooring seeks to give retail partners a complete range of flooring to ensure that the customer's need for choice can be satisfied. The company is conscious that consumers are moving away from the basic laminates and are happy to trade up when offered good value and good advice. "We are also seeing real wood winning

back market share, particularly in living areas. The warmth and natural feel of wood is preferred in the main living space," said Charles Hamilton, MD of Canada Flooring.

Canada understands that the homeowner wants options, with choices ranging from their Premium Primo natural oiled 10" wide plank floors to an alternative laminate offering.

Diversity in price is a key area of focus for the brand as Canada realises that consumers may not always have a high price bracket but respect that they want quality with an exclusive look. Therefore, their retail partners can offer an alternative wood or laminate with the same trending style and finish.

"Our industry has evolved significantly over the last few years. Trends are changing much more quickly. The homeowner has researched the latest look and wants to see the very latest designs in our Canada Flooring Centres," Mr Hamilton concluded.

# The name's Bond SikaBond

**SikaBond® Installation Kit is a complete wood floor bonding kit to fit up to 20m<sup>2</sup> of wood flooring.**

The kit contains: 10 x 600ml sausages, bulk gun, 2 x reusable pre-cut nozzles. To permanently fix solid wood flooring up to 160mm in width to any bitumen free substrate.



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BUILDING TRUST





### The new 'neutral'

Interior design trendsetters have been praising grey as the 'new neutral' as it doesn't overpower other colours which makes it as versatile to work with as natural and beige tones. Grey wood flooring brings out the grain in flooring and the style has become increasingly popular. DS Supplies Ltd has added two grey laminates to its range of Trojan V-Groove AC3 Class laminate flooring, Titanium and Toscana. This laminate flooring is 8mm thick and the overall plank width is 142mm. It comes with a licensed Uniclic locking system which makes it quick and easy to install.

The AC3 Class rating means it is suitable for living areas with intensive use and for commercial areas with light use. The product has a 15-year warranty and the laminate flooring is EU Timber Regulated (EUTR) meaning that under this regulation, any illegally harvested timber or products derived from such timber is prohibited from the EU market. The regulation applies to wood and wood products being placed for the first time on the EU market. "The Trojan V-Groove laminate flooring is resistant to stains and household chemicals, and is impact resistant and non-abrasive. It can also be easily maintained with our Trojan Magi Mop and Spray Cleaner," a company spokesperson said.

The company also has a floor gloss available which can be applied with a cloth in a thin layer and allowed to dry, it claims, to give an outstanding shine with no buffing required.

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## Clean up with new Everbuild product

Everbuild, a Sika company, has launched its new product, SikaBond Wood and Laminate Floor Cleaner, a ready-to-use floor cleaner which aims to keep wood and laminate floor in top condition. "As a spray cleaner this product is suitable for use on laminate, wood, ceramic, polished stone and vinyl floors and is ready to use with no need for dilution in just three easy steps," a company spokesperson said.

"Simply sweep the area, spray SikaBond Wood and Laminate Floor Cleaner directly onto the floor and wipe with a mop or cloth to leave behind a clean and smear free finish."

This product is available in one-litre spray bottles, with the company stating that the fast acting, acid-free formula of SikaBond Wood and Laminate Floor Cleaner is safe and effective and won't damage treated wood or glued joints.



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## Larsen sticks to product promises

Larsen SLC 1550 flex is a renovation product which claims to be fast-drying with a high bond strength and low shrinkage, allowing application of up to 50mm over a wide variety of common surfaces. The company states that every bag contains millions of reinforcing microfibres and, therefore, it can be used on almost any floor with confidence. The product claims to be self-levelling and can also be used on timber floors.

The company recently held a product training day to showcase the types of common materials the product can be used on, how deeply it can be applied and how simple it is to use.



## BIG INCREASES IN PLANNED FLOORING

According to planning permission statistics, in the fourth quarter of 2015, the total floor area planned was 1,468,000m<sup>2</sup>. Of this, 40.9% was for new dwellings, 46.8% was for other new constructions and 12.3% was for extensions. The total floor areas planned increased by 94.7% in comparison with the same quarter in 2014 (754,000m<sup>2</sup> in Q4 2014). In the period Jan-Dec 2015, a total of 4,861,000m<sup>2</sup> of floor area planned was granted permission, representing an overall increase of 53% on the same period in 2014.

(Source: Tegral)



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# No paws in spending on pets

With a pet population estimated at more than one million there are ample opportunities for pet food and pet care retailers in the Irish market. Euromonitor estimates that in 2015 sales in the dog food market were worth €85 million, cat food would reach €48 million and the 'other' pet category (birds, rabbits, guinea pigs) was predicted to come in at €7 million. This translates to more than €2.5 million spent per week on pet food in Ireland in 2015 ([www.euromonitor.com](http://www.euromonitor.com)).

**Research has shown that 98% of dog owners give their dogs treats and 42% are doing so on a daily basis. Brand loyalty is also evident, with up to 73% of pet owners saying they would not purchase an alternative product. ([www.shelflife.ie/putting-pets-first/#ixzz46w4fNbxe/Neilsen](http://www.shelflife.ie/putting-pets-first/#ixzz46w4fNbxe/Neilsen))**

## Premium pets

The strongest performing categories are expected to stay the same with economy and premium dog food remaining in demand. Due to the economic crisis, many families have turned to cost-effective dog food, while, at the other end of the spectrum, a growing number of consumers are turning to premium brands as pet humanisation continues to be a growing influence.

One study by James A Serpell on *How Social Trends Influence Pet Ownership* ([http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_consumer/information\\_sources/docs/28102013-5-james\\_serpell\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/information_sources/docs/28102013-5-james_serpell_en.pdf)), speculates that people are using non-human social support to compensate for a breakdown in traditional social support systems due to urbanisation.

## Opportunities for Irish private label?

Quantitative easing within the Eurozone could create an advantageous situation for Irish manufacturers and retailers of private label pet food for other pets such as rabbits, reptiles, birds and guinea pigs. According to Euromonitor, this is due to the fact that UK imported goods are becoming more expensive to Irish retailers and therefore to Irish consumers as well.

## Leading pet suppliers

An example of an Irish pet food supplier that is benefitting from the growth in demand is Channelle Pet, a supplier of pet accessories, pet food and pet health products. Channelle Pet says it offers a high quality range that extends to over 5,000 products from leading brands such as Trixie, Flexi, Kong, Armitage and many more. The company's pet food range is constantly expanding and now includes key brands such as Royal Canin, Burns, Gain Feeds, Prince Grain Free Range and Nestlé Purina.

Channelle Pet employs almost 400 staff in Ireland in its headquarters located in Loughrea, Co Galway. Through its parent company, Channelle Pharmaceuticals, it also provides a range of flea, tick and worm control products for dogs and cats from key brands like Exitel Fleatix and Troscan. The company has a 24-hour delivery service and a dedicated customer service team including on-the-road sales representatives countrywide along with an in-house sales team processing orders and addressing customer queries.



Channelle Pet provides a range of flea, tick and worm control products for dogs and cats such as Exitel and Fleatix.

## Part of the family?

Pets are now seen as family members and companions especially among older people and family units, and their health and happiness is important to their owners. With 20% of Irish households owning at least one dog, and 14% having at least one cat, there is a clear market for other areas such as accessories, pet care and grooming. ([www.fedaf.org/](http://www.fedaf.org/))

All the indications are that the opportunities for growth and the demand for products reflecting the importance of our pets is increasing in Irish society.

## IRELAND'S PET POPULATION



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- 9<sup>th</sup> June**  
Health and Safety Authority Seminar – Managing Vehicle Related Risk in the Workplace.  
Sheraton Athlone Hotel
- 8<sup>th</sup> June**  
Solid Fuel Awareness Training, MetacTraining. Mountrath, Co. Laois
- 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> June**  
Global DIY Summit. Waterfront Congress Centre, Stockholm
- 16<sup>th</sup> June**  
HAI Social Media Bootcamp for Hardware Retailers and Merchants DayTwo.  
Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
- 24<sup>th</sup> June**  
HAI Golf Society. Captain Hugh Taylor's Prize sponsored by Irish Abrasives.  
Old Conna Golf Club, Bray, Co. Wicklow
- 5<sup>th</sup> July**  
HAI National Council Meeting  
Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
- 5<sup>th</sup> July**  
HAI Executive Committee Meeting.  
Louis Fitzgerald Hotel
- 5<sup>th</sup> July**  
HAI AGM.  
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Venue to be confirmed
- 29<sup>th</sup> September**  
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# Digital Digest



Name: **Stella Cooke**  
Position: **Owner**  
Company: **Ted Johnsons**  
Website: **[www.tedjohnsons.ie](http://www.tedjohnsons.ie)**



**Q1. What was your main objective in developing a social presence for Ted Johnsons ?**

Advertising is changing rapidly and it is no longer enough to just have a basic presence on Social Media while concentrating on other forms of advertisements.

People's lives are busy and most of their time is now spent on social media. That has now extended rapidly from teenagers right through to adults. Watch the waiting room of a doctor's surgery. Very seldom do you see someone reading a magazine and almost everyone is catching up on their phones.

For Ted Johnsons we need to be first when people google for a new purchase, for opening hours, for directions. The phone book is no longer used, the Sat Nav takes a back seat and most people start their shopping in the comfort of their own homes or at their lunch break at their desks.

A picture tells a thousand words and Social Media is so effective at getting a perception across to a broad spectrum of ages and genders.

**Q2. How do you feel that the use of Social Media Compliments Key Marketing Activities?**

The more that your name & message is heard, the more you will be first on the tip of someone's lips or thoughts when they need to purchase.

Word of mouth and roadside signage can draw the attention of potential new customers but social media is always at their fingertips. How often do we say, I've read about/heard about them somewhere and then you go straight to your phone or computer to look them up.

If you listen to the radio and repeatedly hear an advert it sticks in your mind but when you eventually want to source a particular product while the name of the company is in your mind, you will make your enquiries on social media.

**Q3. How do you plan to develop your use of platforms in the future?**

- Keep up to date with regular analysis of our SEO Reports.
- Keeping the information fresh and up to date and changing as required to reflect seasonal tastes.
- Enhance the use of videos and practical advice for our customers and potential customers.
- Put up a video tour of our premises to show that we are not just an online shop and we have so much more available.

**Q4. What advice do you have for hardware retailers and merchants who are starting to embrace social media?**

- Set realistic goal that are achievable. Create time in the diaries of the stakeholders for the project and give it the time it deserves – treating as if it was a new branch opening.
- Employ the services of a Digital Marketing University student
- Keep the site up to date, be first to be seen to react consistent and know your target markets.
- Give information to the customers i.e. tips or practical advice and "how to's" by using blogs.
- Engage the potential customer and interact with them by providing a way to communicate with you.
- Be humorous as these types of postings get liked and shared more quickly.

**Q5. Given the entry of Screwfix.ie into the Irish market and their recent advertisement campaign, do you see it as a threat to hardware businesses in Ireland**

Screwfix have an excellent marketing strategy and in my opinion will gather market share at the expense of existing domestic players. They will attract the general DIY person that can shop from his/her work desk during the week in preparation for the weekend work. However, if you are supplying to the local industry and you have bricks and mortar as well as an online presence you will continue to attract this customer over Screwfix as the customer can call in, look and feel and can source all of their products under one roof.

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