

MARCH/APRIL 2015

THE HAI HARDWARE JOURNAL

THE VOICE OF THE IRISH HARDWARE INDUSTRY

HARDWARE SHOW 2015

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ALSO INSIDE:
FIRST VIEW: HAI BUSINESS INDEX

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Conor Lynch outlines three ways the hardware sector can use digital and social media to grow its business.

DEAR READER,

The Hardware Show 2015 was an unqualified success setting a new benchmark for hardware trade shows in Ireland and suggesting that builders merchants and hardware retailers are looking to the rest of the year with a lot of confidence. There's a full report on the show, beginning on page 17. Despite the optimism around in the industry, some nagging threats to growth persist and the scale of fuel smuggling throughout the winter has been a serious issue for HAI members, particularly those in the border counties. The full extent of the problem is outlined on page 24, along with some suggestions to help in, at least, mitigating the problems that smuggling is causing.

On a more positive note, you'll see the introduction of the HAI Business Index on page 4. A total of 23 members, who between them have 89 branches, participated in the compilation of the index, which aims to map significant trends in the sector. The index is part of a growing suite of business tools and services being made available by HAI to its members.

Further on, you'll see our new Business Support Section (pages 25 to 29). Reflecting HAI's expanding range of member services, these articles cover diverse topics, from the implications of the new Companies Act to advice on online success.

Enjoy the issue!

Bernard Potter, Editor

HAI BUSINESS INDEX REPORTS STRONG START TO 2015

A total of 23 members, who between them have 89 branches, completed the first HAI monthly business index of net sales for 2014 and for January 2015. The results of the submitted figures make for interesting reading.

The monthly distribution of members' revenue varied considerably over 2014 with Q1, on average, accounting for only 21% of annual revenue while Q3 accounted for 28%.

Overall July, September and October were the highest grossing months in 2014. The top revenue months in 2014 exhibited variation by both region and size of branch.

Total member revenue in January 2015 showed a 12% year-on-year increase (versus January 2014). This year-on-year rise is apparent across each of the key member groups (region and size of branch) with the increase in relative monthly revenue peaking among larger member branches and those in Munster.

Total member revenue in January 2015 also rose 13.5% on the comparable December 2014 figure, with the increase being most prominent among member firms in Dublin and Munster.

The indications for member revenue from the Benchmark Survey are consistently positive. After an apparently challenging Q1 in 2014, monthly revenue began to stabilise and grow. Year-on-year improvement is clearly evident in the revenue comparisons between January 2014 and January 2015. The rise in monthly member revenue since December 2014 further confirms a sense of positive momentum.

Although we are delighted with the good start, we need more of our merchant members to participate. Please contact HAI on 01 298 0969 or info@hardwareassociation.ie for more information, or, if you are not currently a member of HAI and want to participate in order to see the full results breakdown that participating members see, contact us today.



MINISTER CHANGES RULES FOR MICROFINANCE IRELAND LOANS

The Minister for Business and Employment, Ged Nash TD, has announced a range of changes to the rules governing Microfinance Ireland to allow more entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises avail of its loans. MFI provides loans of up to €25,000 to businesses who employ 10 people or less and who are not able to access credit from traditional sources like banks. A review of Microfinance Ireland (MFI) has been published by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

The review found that:

- in its first two years of operations, MFI received 729 applications for loans, supported 743 jobs in 333 microenterprises and approved loans valued at more than €5 million;
- the majority of loans went to businesses outside Dublin (76%) in line with Government policy; and
- the average loan size was €15,400 and the average size of the company assisted is three or less employees.

BOSTIK ANNOUNCE NEW APPOINTMENTS



Robert Massey.



Peter Morrissey.



Brian Noble.

Robert Massey has been promoted to the position of Managing Director, Bostik, Northern Europe and Ireland. In his new role, Robert retains overall ownership for Ireland, and acquires responsibility for Bostik operations in Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

Robert will bring his wide experience to this extended role in Scandinavia, while maintaining ongoing contact with the Irish business. Peter Morrissey has been appointed Sales Director with Bostik Ireland. Peter has worked with Bostik Ireland for the past six years and, most recently, has carried out the role of National Sales Manager. Peter has over 10 years' experience in the trade having worked in various sales and management positions. Peter will take responsibility for the Bostik sales function, including customer contact and key account operations, within the 26 counties.

Brian Noble has recently joined Bostik (Ire) as Marketing and Business Development Manager. Brian will take responsibility for the marketing, advertising and promotional activities for the Evo Stik and Bostik brands, along with developing the Bostik product portfolio. Brian joins Bostik from the FMCG industry, having worked in various management functions within the Irish distributors for brands such as Gillette blades and razors, Oral B Oral Care, Duracell Batteries, Braun Electrical, Scholl Footcare, Coty, Rennie, Berocca, V05 Haircare and TRESemme haircare.

WEEE IRELAND WANT YOUR WASTE LAMPS AND BATTERIES

WEEE Ireland, the Irish compliance scheme for electrical and waste recycling, is calling on the hardware sector to support their retail recycling campaigns for waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), lighting and batteries in 2015.

The legislation means that from 2016 onwards 45% of WEEE items we purchase each year (by weight comparison) will need to go through an authorised recycling system; this will increase further to 65% from 2019. The scheme has a range of collection container options available to hardware, electrical and home store retailers to assist them in delivering on their obligations, under environmental legislation, to take back WEEE, waste lamps and batteries from customers. As part of this scheme, WEEE Ireland provides storage receptacles to retailers.

In addition to in-store facilities WEEE Ireland also collects electrical waste directly from retailers and ensures that all waste collected by these stores is shipped to correct treatment plants, where the materials are recovered and recycled under licensed conditions.

WEEE Ireland says it works on behalf of retailers to ensure they are registered and provide them with hassle-free solutions, including information and downloads on weeeireland.ie, to help meet their compliance obligations under legislation in Ireland. WEEE Ireland have a particular focus on battery recycling with their ongoing battery recycling campaign 'Spread a Little Sunshine' in partnership with LauraLynn, Ireland's children's hospice. Just one of the initiatives that the battery recycling campaign has helped to support so far is the pilot of LauraLynn@HOME, which saw LauraLynn bring their hospice services into the comfort of the homes of more than 50 families. Hardware, electrical and home stores can support the battery campaign through the take back of batteries in store, via the blue WEEE Ireland battery box.

The new regulations introduced in 2014 also underline the mandatory handover of WEEE from retail and recycling centre collection points, ensuring the recycling feedstock is kept in an authorised treatment loop. It is important that disposal of WEEE material outside of the authorised system is stamped out, according to WEEE Ireland, so that all waste electrical equipment is recycled properly and reported accordingly to help Ireland meet its challenging EU targets.

WEEE Ireland continues to work with enforcement officers and environmental awareness personnel in each local authority area. Unlawful disposal of electrical waste, and batteries can cause harm to human health and the environment and those involved could face legal action, so it is imperative that WEEE waste is only managed through an authorised approved system.

FLEETWOOD PRESENTS MASTERCLASS IN RETAIL SALES

Over recent months Fleetwood Paints has been working with well-known retail trainer, Susan Madden of Retail Training Consultancy Ltd to create a new training programme, which focuses on how to add value for the retailer when selling paint and paint applicators.

The Fleetwood Academy Masterclass is a one-day course for retail sales staff designed to apply best-selling methods and upselling techniques when selling paint and applicators to the Irish consumer.

Retail Training Solutions Ltd, and its founder Susan Madden, have been in business for 21 years and in that time have amassed a great deal of knowledge as to how the Irish retailer can best maximise the value of the sales opportunity of every consumer coming through their door.



Susan Madden of Retail Training Consultancy Ltd.

"In putting together the Fleetwood Academy Masterclass we have sought to combine Susan's vast experience in selling techniques with Fleetwood's unrivalled technical knowledge in both paint and applicators, to create, what we believe, will be a very rewarding experience for the paint retailer," says Steven McQuillan Marketing Manager, Fleetwood Paints. Each training day group is limited to a maximum of 12 people and it is planned to hold one Fleetwood Masterclass per month between now and the end of 2015. If you feel your business would benefit from participation in the Fleetwood Academy Masterclass, please contact your local Area Sales Manager.



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SKILLS MINISTER JOINS JAMIE HEASLIP TO LAUNCH IRELAND'S FIRST ROOFING ACADEMY



Raising the roof at the launch of the Tegral Academy: Ireland Number 8, Jamie Heaslip; Paddy Kelly, Managing Director of Tegral; and Damien English TD, Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation.

Tegral, a market leader in roofing and Ireland's only manufacturer of fibre cement roof slates, recently launched the Tegral Academy, Ireland's first-ever training facility for roofing contractors, which aims to improve the quality of standards and workmanship in Irish roofing.

Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation, Damien English TD, officially launched the Tegral Academy with a helping hand from one of Kildare's famous sons, Ireland and Leinster rugby star, Jamie Heaslip.

Representing an investment of over €250,000, the Tegral Academy features custom-made roof training rigs designed to upskill roofing contractors through practical technique-based demonstrations. The full-day training sessions also cover expert briefings on ICP2 (The Irish Code of Practice for Slating and Tiling) and the new Building Control Amendment Regulations. Due to huge early demand, the training sessions will run twice a week and will give Irish roofers the opportunity to see how roof products are manufactured, how they should be correctly installed and their distinctive features and benefits designed to withstand our unique Irish weather.

Speaking at the launch, Paddy Kelly, Managing Director of Tegral said, "It's a proud day for all of us at Tegral to launch the Tegral Academy, which has been a vision of ours for many years now. At Tegral, we've seen an uplift in sales orders in the last six months, helped in part by Construction 2020, the Irish government's strategy to accelerate growth and renewal in Ireland's construction industry.

"With the Tegral Academy, our ambition is to improve the standards of roofing skills and workmanship in line with this accelerated growth so that our roofing contractors have a competitive edge and as an industry we can fulfill our maximum potential."

Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation,

Damien English TD, said he was proud to launch the Tegral Academy and praised the performance of the local Kildare company after a difficult number of years which have been felt across the entire construction industry: "I commend Paddy Kelly and his talented team here at Tegral for investing back into the heart of its manufacturing base in Athy, and, moreover, for showing real commitment and ambition to help improve standards and expertise in Irish roofing."

Speaking at the launch event, Kildare native and Ireland Number 8, Jamie Heaslip said he was delighted to come home to help launch the Tegral Academy: "When I was growing up, Tegral was widely known and respected for being a major employer in the region and also a sponsor of several local initiatives and sports teams.

"I'm delighted to come here today and show solidarity and support for this fantastic company. I wish Tegral and the whole team here long and continued success."

After completion of their Tegral Academy training, each participant will be included in Tegral's list of recommended contractors which is published on www.tegral.com

JOHNSTONE'S CELEBRATES 125-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

A leading light of the decorating industry, Johnstone's Paints, is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. The prestigious brand has long been at the forefront of high performance paint development and remains a popular choice with professional painters and decorators, and DIYers alike. As a thank you to its customers for their support in reaching its milestone anniversary, the team at Johnstone's has lined up a host of events, promotions and competitions throughout the year for customers to get involved in. Details of upcoming events will be communicated throughout the

year on the Johnstone's website at www.johnstonestrade.com/125, through its Facebook page and through its nationwide network of stockists.

Ben Wilde from Johnstone's says: "We are exceptionally proud of what Johnstone's has achieved in its 125-year history. If what we've achieved proves anything, it's that we will not stand still and will remain at the forefront of developing products and solutions that work for our customers. Here's to the next 125 years!"



TRITON LAUNCHES EXE BAR MIXER

Triton, the leading shower company, has launched the new EXE Bar Mixer to offer installers one new mixer shower with a choice of two different handle options.

The Exe Bar Mixer has been designed to make the installation process simple with the supplied dogleg fittings providing flexibility of the pipe centres between 130mm to 170mm. Triton's Exe Bar Mixer shower is available with one of two handle design options.

The Exe Standard Handle is smooth to turn, while the contemporary design will fit well with most existing bathroom designs, according to Triton. Alternatively, the Exe Lever Handle is suitable for all applications and user abilities, the shower company says. The extended paddle design gives added ease of use and is simple to operate with one finger, providing an inclusive showering environment for those who may require assisted showering.

The Bar Mixer is compatible with all domestic water systems and requires only 0.1 bar minimum supply pressure to operate, making it an ideal choice for low and high pressure systems. For added installation simplicity, Triton's latest mixer shower boasts one screw riser rail brackets with adjustable fixing centres to ensure the unit is compatible with many existing riser rail fixings.

The Bar Mixer thermostatic control ensures the shower delivers a constantly regulated water temperature within +/- 2°C and shuts off automatically if either the cold or hot water supply fails. The unit has also achieved WRAS approval which ensures it meets water regulations. Another safety feature is a maximum temperature limiter with an override button, allowing users to confidently control the shower.



SANTEX EXTERIOR PAINTS – NOW ON TV

Sandtex Exterior Paints is featuring on TV and radio to highlight how the brand has been protecting Irish homes for over 50 years. Kevin Whelan, Sandtex Marketing Manager, said: "The advert carries a strong message about the brand's renowned durability, visually demonstrated through the lighthouse, which is protected with Sandtex masonry paint." The new campaign appears on television in April, supported by a heavyweight radio campaign on national and local stations.



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NEW RULES ON PESTICIDE SALES

Later this year, new rules will apply to pesticide sales in hardware stores.

The Sustainable Use Directive (SUD) (European Directive 2009/128/EC) introduces new requirements surrounding the sale, storage, supply and use of plant protection products (PPPs). Intended to encourage sustainable pesticide use by reducing its risks and impacts on human health, the SUD's impact on the hardware retail sector can be divided into four areas:

- training and registration;
- storage and display;
- advice; and
- record-keeping requirements.

PPPs are categorised as either for professional use or for non-professional/ amateur use. 'Professional use' indicates products that may only be used by professional users, such as farmers and landscapers, who must be registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) from 26th November, 2015.

Amateur use products are products that may be used in a home garden situation by any person. There is no requirement for such users to be registered with DAFM.

Labels indicate whether a product is for professional use or non-professional/amateur use. The status of a product may also be checked at www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/products/

Training and registration

From 26th November 2015, a registered distributor must be available at all times at the point of sale to ensure that adequate information is provided to customers as regards pesticide use and health and environmental risk and safety. In order to register as a pesticide distributor (PD), you must first be appropriately trained.

Training for retailing of professional use products: In order to be eligible to register as a PD (professional use products), you must first successfully complete the FETAC Level 5 Handling and Distribution of Pesticides (Code 5N2466) or equivalent. Once you have done so, you can apply to register as a PD online at www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/

Training for retailing of non-professional/amateur use products: In order to be eligible to register as a PD (amateur /home garden products only), you must first successfully complete the online course for PDs of non-professional/amateur products. This course is now available at www.asis.ie

Upon successfully completing the course, you can apply to register as a PD at www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/

Completion of the non-professional/amateur distribution course does not allow a PD to distribute professional use pesticide products.

Storage and display

All premises storing or distributing PPPs must register with the DAFM before 26th November, 2015. From this date, only a registered premises can be used for storage of pesticides for the purposes of sale or supply and the premises must comply with a standard determined by the DAFM. Details of minimum storage standards are available on www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/

By registering, the owner of the premises commits to ensuring

that the store will comply with these standards. Stores will be inspected on an ongoing basis by officers of the DAFM. If the store is found not to comply with the required standard, the necessary remedial actions will be identified in a compliance notice. These must be undertaken within a specified time limit. If they are not undertaken, the premises will not be included or may be removed from the register and cannot be used as a pesticide store until it has been re-inspected and found to be in compliance.

A maximum of 500 litres of professional use PPPs may be stored in a retail/display area. Volumes of PPPs in excess of this must be stored in a specially constructed pesticide store that fulfils the requirements for the design and construction of pesticide stores as detailed at

www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/

It should also be noted that any PPPs classified as very toxic or toxic may not be stored in an area to which the public has access, i.e., a retail area. A list of such products is also available at www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/products/

Advice

Advice given by a PD is limited to general information regarding the risks posed by pesticides to human health and the environment, on storage requirements and on handling and safe disposal.

NB: Since 26th November 2013, advice or recommendations in relation to product selection or the use of a PPP for any purpose may only be given by a registered pesticide advisor.

Record-keeping

Details of record-keeping requirements for retailers of professional use PPPs can be accessed at

www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/plantprotectionproducts/

NB: Since 1st January 2014, records must be maintained of all sales of professional use PPPs made at retail level. These records must include a herd number or professional user number, where appropriate, and must be maintained for a period of five years from date of sale. Record keeping requirements for retailers of amateur use PPPs is limited to details of records of purchases, i.e. goods in documentation. *The Hardware Journal* will follow up this article will further information in future editions.

The MBE Skillnet is currently co-ordinating training in the handling and distribution of pesticides on a county by county basis. Training will be delivered by HCT Kilkenny, providers approved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

This is a FETAC level 5 course and will be run over two days with some course material to be completed by the trainee in between dates.

Cost per trainee is €200.00 less Skillnet Funding, net cost €170.00 per person. Maximum group size of 12 people only, so placement will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Please contact MBE Skillnet to see when your local training will be organised on 043 66 86000 or by email on info@mbeskillnet.ie

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TIMCO BUILDS TEAM IN IRELAND

TIMco, one of the UK and Ireland's largest independent suppliers of screws and fixings, has appointed two new area sales managers. John Kennedy joins the company as a Regional Sales Manager covering Dublin to Dundalk. He will be responsible for maintaining and developing business in the area, servicing the demand for TIMco's fasteners and fixing products as well as sourcing new business. John joins the company with more than 10 years of experience working with builders' merchants across the region.

Mark Morley also joins the business as Regional Sales Manager covering Galway and the west coast of Ireland.

Having lived and worked in the region for more than 10 years, Mark brings a wealth of experience and contacts within the sector as well as an excellent product knowledge and high levels of customer service.

John Mackin, TIMco Ireland's Business Manager, comments: "We're delighted to welcome John and Mark to the growing TIMco team and I'm pleased to see how quickly they've developed great relationships with new and existing customers. They have fitted in well to the business and seem to very much enjoy being part of our growing success story."

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS IN WATERFORD

The next Taking Care of Business event will take place on Thursday, 30th April, in the Tower Hotel, Waterford. This is a free half-day event specifically designed to help small and start-up businesses understand and benefit from the services provided by many State offices and agencies. The event will include short presentations and opportunities to get information directly from the agencies involved.

When you attend this event, you can:

- meet representatives from a range of State offices and agencies;
- get practical information and advice;
- find out ways to save your business money;
- better understand the key regulations that affect your business; and
- get supports and tools to assist you in your business

To register online, go to www.takingcareofbusiness.ie or you can email info@takingcareofbusiness.ie

TJ O'MAHONY LAUNCHES HALO CENTRE

TJ O'Mahony recently launched its Halo Tile and Bathroom Centre at its Ballymount Cross premises in Dublin. The launch event included a presentation on design, space, light and colour. Celebrity architect Dermot Bannon was a special guest and those who attended had an opportunity to have an insulation and energy consultation with expert Dermot Kearns.



CROWDS FLOCK TO MARKET AT MCKENNA'S HARDWARE

Tony McKenna of McKenna's Hardware in Clane, Co Kildare reports record crowds attended the opening of Clane Farmer's Market in the yard of their premises in Clane recently. He commented: "Such was the turnout that we had to use an overflow car park. Clane Lord Mayor, Mr. Des Marron, did the honours at noon with his usual enthusiasm."

Flanked by the market promoters Jenni Hawkins and Laura Birchall, the cutting of the red ribbon was witnessed by a very large crowd, which had assembled well before noon. Ten traders were on hand, selling fish, bread, cakes, olive oil, craft wares, vegetables and much, much more. Many traders were

sold out well in advance of closing time with several reporting they'll bring extra stock next time.

Tony added: "The general increase in footfall benefitted our own store, with an increase of at least 25% in numbers coming through our doors when compared to previous Saturdays. It augurs well for the future."

Other shops in the town also benefited from the Clane Farmers Market with one store reporting its best Saturday since Christmas 2014, according to Tony. The market is held every Saturday, 10am to 3pm. For more information and photos, check out Clane Farmers Market on Facebook.

Why your business needs a .ie domain and how can you register one?

How do I register a .ie domain for my website or email address?

Registration is simple and straightforward - just follow the 4 simple steps at: www.ie-dr.ie/registrars

- Step 1 Check if the name you want is available (www.ie-dr.ie/available)
- Step 2 Choose an Accredited .ie Registrar* (www.ie-dr.ie/registrars)
- Step 3 Complete the Registrar's application form
- Step 4 Send your Registrar any supporting information they need

*Accredited Registrars are companies who have displayed consistent expertise in domain registration and they will be able to provide you with your registration queries. All .ie websites in Ireland and the only domain name that is valued by the high profile of the local and international Internet communities. A .ie web address offers consumers, businesses and government agencies the benefits of a secure e-business platform. McAfee independently ranked the top five safest domains worldwide by confirming that you are Irish and the Irish community that you want to share with the world.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? THE BENEFITS OF A .IE DOMAIN

The .ie domain name is greatly valued by many businesses that want to communicate an Irish identity internationally and locally. Here we outline how you go about acquiring a .ie domain name for your website. A .ie domain name allows you to put your website online or set up a personalised email address and is the official Internet address for Ireland. It is the only domain name that is guaranteed Irish, according to the IEDR, the independent not-for-profit organisation that manages the .ie domain name.

Why should you get a .ie domain?

All .ie websites have proven that they have a connection to Ireland and a valid claim to the domain name. Confidence comes through traceability and a .ie can help to ensure that anybody who interacts with you online will know exactly who they are dealing with.

The IEDR say that the .ie name is the right choice for Irish businesses. Every .ie domain name is verified to ensure that the people behind it are who they say they are. This means that .ie is one of the safest domains in the world, secure from potential threats such as cybercrime and fraud. The .ie domains are consistently ranked in the top five safest domains worldwide by online security experts McAfee.

Due to the geo-targeting and prioritisation of local search results .ie domains receive higher rankings than .com addresses in Irish-based search engines like Google.ie. If you are doing business in Ireland, it makes sense to let your customers find you easily and quickly.

Protect your brand

Registering a .ie domain can also help to protect your brand. Once you have proven your claim to the domain name and connection with Ireland your .ie domain name will be registered to you and only you. This is unlike .com where anybody can register any domain and chances are that your name has already been registered. According to IEDR, ie domains are readily available and can only be registered by people with a legitimate claim to the name.

How do I register a .ie domain for my website or email address?

Registration involve four steps:

- ensure the name you want is available;
- choose an Accredited .ie Registrar (Accredited Registrars are companies who have displayed consistent expertise in domain registration and they will be able to assist you with your registration queries);
- complete the Registrar's application form; and
- send your Registrar any supporting information they need.

Your application will be checked by the IEDR and once your domain is registered you can start to build your online presence. Many Registrars also provide additional services such as website development and hosting, which will help you get online.

ABOUT THE IEDR

The IE Domain Registry Limited (IEDR) is an independent not-for-profit organisation that manages the .ie country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) namespace (all domain names ending in '.ie') in the public interest of the Irish and global Internet communities. The is not a governing or regulatory body, but provides a public service for the .ie namespace on behalf of the local and international Internet communities. A .ie web address offers consumers, businesses and government agencies the benefits of a secure e-business platform. For more information, visit www.ie-dr.ie or email: registrations@iedr.ie



LAYDEX LAUNCHES FORTESSA DOOR CLOSER

Laydex have just launched the new Fortessa range of door closers in half hour and one hour ratings. The door closers will complement the Fortessa range of door handles and door accessories which, Laydex says, have been a tremendous success with merchants and end users.

Fortessa Door Closers are fixed overhead door closers

suitable for light, medium and heavy applications including student accommodation, flat entrance doors and domestic environments. Laydex says they are CE Marked, Fire Tested to EN 1634, suitable for use on timber fire doors of up to 120 minutes fire resistance and are highly corrosion resistant. As part of the launch, Laydex have a special introductory offer.

KINGFISHER ANNOUNCES B&Q UK AND IRELAND CLOSURES

Kingfisher has announced plans to close 15% "surplus" B&Q UK and Ireland space, about 60 stores over the next two years. The closures are being prioritised based on the most over-spaced catchments in order to retain customers and sales, according to Kingfisher.

New CEO Véronique Laury said it was one of a set of "sharp decisions" that are part of a wider strategy to change "what is essentially a locally managed set of businesses and create instead a single, unified company." The Mandate trade union has written to B&Q Ireland's management and the union's assistant general secretary, Gerry Light, has said its members were "shocked" to hear about the plans, according to thejournal.ie.

Kingfisher, which trades as B&Q and Screwfix in the UK and the Republic, announced it was trying to roll out a "unified" offering across Europe as it unveiled its annual results. The company is yet to announce which sites have been earmarked for closure – or how many staff will lose their jobs. In its preliminary results for the year ended 31st

January 2015, Kingfisher said B&Q UK & Ireland's total sales were up 1.9% to £3,765 million. Sales of outdoor seasonal and building products were up 4%. Sales of indoor products, excluding showroom, were up 2%. Sales of showroom products (kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms) were down 5% driven by the decision to reduce promotional activity. It had been a year of re-energising the business, according to Kingfisher.

Examples of initiatives have included simplifying in-store price messaging, lowering prices and increasing customer transactions with better targeted marketing. B&Q has also been working on driving productivity benefits across the business. B&Q has targeted becoming "a simpler, more efficient business with a lower cost operating model and with stores that are easier for customers to shop." Various initiatives have been introduced including store-friendly deliveries (making it quicker and easier for store staff to replenish stock) and roller checkouts (improving customer experience as well as scanning and database accuracy).



HRI SCHEME CONTINUES TO BOOST TRADE

The latest Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) scheme figures continue to boost trade for urban hardware retailers and merchants with figures from the first two months of 2015 topping over €48 million, bringing the total value of works since the scheme commenced to €348 million. Hardware Association Ireland Chief Executive, Annemarie Harte said: "These figures combined with a very successful Hardware Show in February show continued signs of confidence in an industry brought to its knees since the collapse of the construction industry." She continued: "This sector is bucking the trend and we urgently need to see the scheme take hold in rural areas so we'll be calling on the Minister to extend the scheme in the Budget beyond 31st December 2015, its scheduled termination date." The overwhelming majority of the works are based in Dublin and its environs, recording over 66% of the total value of the works. Cork, Galway and Limerick follow some way behind with a total of 16%, combined, of the works value.

Table 1

General Statistics to 1st March 2015

Number of Works	22,445
Number of Properties	16,907
Value of Works	€348 million
Range of Values	€45 - €3,000,000
Average Value	€15,500
Range of average values	€1,500 (Alarm Systems) - €55,600 (Home Extensions)
% of works under €5,000	31%

Table 2

Top 5 Works by Value

Home Extension	36%
General Repairs & Renovations	22%
Window Replacement	13%
Kitchen Renovations	10%
Bathroom/Shower/En Suite Improvements	3%
Average Value for Top 5	€18,200

Table 3

Top 5 Works by number of jobs

Window Replacement	25%
Kitchen Renovations	19%
General Repairs & Renovations	12%
Home Extensions	10%
"Other" works (unspecified)	6%

Table 4

County Breakdown to 1st March 2015

County	No. of Works	Est. Value of Works
Dublin City	3,473	67,303,056
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	3,168	63,398,881
Fingal	2,189	35,632,947
Cork	2,494	35,383,848
South Dublin	2,090	28,625,130
Kildare	1,164	14,383,262
Galway	887	12,916,495
Wicklow	916	12,133,300
Meath	723	9,879,045
Limerick	683	8,323,597
Tipperary	517	6,664,234
Waterford	397	5,218,835
Donegal/Leitrim/Roscommon	414	5,199,714
Kerry	397	5,191,212
Wexford	383	5,137,400
Carlow/Laois/Offaly	466	5,027,822
Sligo	254	4,574,290
Louth	310	4,132,430
Kilkenny	311	4,112,743
Clare	327	3,991,726
Westmeath	301	3,676,168
Mayo	296	3,654,411
Cavan/Longford/Monaghan	281	3,153,473

THE PRESIDENT'S BALL CELEBRATES RECORD-BREAKING SHOW

The President's Ball took place on the evening of Sunday 15th February, a welcome break between the two days of the Hardware Show. Over 500 guests, including many Past Presidents of the Association (pictured) were entertained by an overseas visitor to the show, Herr Gunther Grun, the President of the German Hardware Association... aka Barry Murphy of Apres Match and *Irish Pictorial Weekly* fame. He kept the audience amused chatting about his experiences of the Irish and their love of 'the scoops'. President Hugh O'Donnell gave his inaugural address, which focused on the future of HAI and he thanked the many sponsors and supporters that had made The Hardware Show 2015 a vibrant and record-breaking event. The Innovation Awards winners were formally presented with cut crystal by the Chairman of the judging panel, Sean Gallagher, who congratulated them for striving to innovate despite difficult business conditions in recent years. The more formal part of the evening was left behind as soon as The Sugar Cubes took to the stage just before midnight and the party got into full swing. For those less inclined to

dance, a jazz group serenaded the guests in the bar until the early hours and, judging by weary faces in the morning, a great time was had by all.



The current President and Past Presidents – Back Row: Jack White, 1999-2000; Eddie Kelly, 2001- 2002; Brendan Maher, 2011-2012; John Murphy, 2009-2010; Paddy Kelly, 2013-2014; Jimmy Donoghue, 1995-1996; and Tom O'Connor, 2005-2006. Front Row: Joseph Maher, 1987-1988; Pat Byrne, 1997-1998; Catherine Shiels, 2007-2008; current HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell, 2015-2016; and Liam Keller, 1977-1978.



WE NEED YOU!



And we want you to need us too...

HAI provides the following benefits to member companies:

- Lobbying and representative services to Government – we campaign on your behalf so you can get on with running your business.
- Promoting the industry through opportunities with the media - we often showcase member companies and use specific member examples to support what we're saying.
- Keep up to date with the industry, your colleagues and competitors through our website, bi-monthly magazine, monthly email newsletters and events.
- Regular surveys and intelligence about the industry – we are the only providers of hardware specific trends and developments.
- We plan to enhance our range of services in the coming months to bring additional value to members.

To find out more about how we can help you, visit www.hardwareassociation.ie or call Jim on 01 298 0969

The Hardware Show, the official show of Hardware Association Ireland, sponsored by Netwatch at Citywest on Sunday and Monday, 15th and 16th February, set a new benchmark for hardware trade shows in Ireland.

THE HARDWARE SHOW 2015 EXCEEDS ALL EXPECTATIONS



With almost 2,000 visitors, over 160 exhibitors, a range of expert speakers and the inaugural Innovation Awards, which showcased the best the market has to offer, the Hardware Show 2015, exceeded all expectations.

This verdict was confirmed by HAI surveys of visitors and exhibitors. Visitors registered a 100% satisfaction rating, marking the show 'very worthwhile' and 'worthwhile'. Exhibitors were delighted too, with a 97% approval rating. The hard facts were reinforced by sentiment on the ground where an air of confidence and excitement was evident, with outstanding creativity, imagination and marketing know-how shown in stand production, as well as in the products and services on display.

One of the highlights of the show was the presentation of the Innovation Awards prizes by the Minister for Business and Employment, Gerald Nash, at lunchtime on Sunday, followed up by a gala presentation at that evening's packed President's Ball by Sean Gallagher, Chairman of the judging panel.

The show also featured presentations from industry experts at the Information Exchange area that covered a wide range of practical and relevant topics from visual merchandising to building a social media campaign for your store. The experts included: James O'Dwyer, Senior Digital Account Manager at Google and Dr Eric Clinton, Director of DCU Centre for Family Business.



A panoramic view of Ireland's biggest hardware show to date.

“Well-organised and easy to get to talk to people.”

Tomas Simonas, Director, Nord Roofs, O’Sullivan Safety

“The best one I’ve been to – a great variety of exhibitors.”

Eden Tool Hire, Edenderry, Co Offaly

“Worth the trip.”

Templemore Hardware and grocery, Co Tipperary

Innovation Awards

Chaired by former *Dragon’s Den* panellist, Sean Gallagher, the Innovation Awards generated a level of tension that was palpable outside the judging room on Sunday, 15th February. Although not a cent was due to change hands, the much coveted opportunity to grab the titles of best in category and overall winner in the Innovation Awards 2015 drew a high-quality group of inventive entries, brimming with enthusiasm and business potential. A couple of weeks earlier, the judges had drawn up a shortlist from a total of 67 entries across the four categories of Home, Garden, DIY and Build. All finalists were alerted that they would be required to present their product in front of six key industry buyers and Sean, on the Sunday morning of the show.

From observations outside the judging room, it was obvious that the process was being taken very seriously by all those involved and the opportunity to present to Sean was a real highlight for participants. A total of 17 companies made it to the final presentation stage and eight walked away with honours – see winners panel for results. A big thank you to all the entrants and to the judges who did a great job in what was a highly competitive field. The certificate was followed up by a formal presentation of crystal by Sean at the President’s Ball.



The judging panel was:

- Sean Gallagher (Chairman);
- David Farrell, Group Commercial Manager, United Hardware Ltd;
- Tom Finn, Commercial Head, Topline;
- Heather Graham, Director, Maurice Graham Ltd;
- Fergus Holohan, Retail Operations Manager, Dairygold Co-Operative Society Ltd; and
- Pat Moore, Category Manager, Grafton Merchanting ROI.

Information Exchange

The Show provided the platform for a new initiative, an Information Exchange, to kick-start the creation of useful, forward-planning sessions for hardware retailers and merchants as signs of confidence return to the sector. The Information Exchange took place over two days, with an identical format each day, to give exhibition visitors a opportunity to attend at their convenience. Six topics were covered each day and each presentation finished with a Q&A session. The expert panel of speakers and their topics were:

- Conor Taaffe on "Homebond Building Control Regulations";
- Roisin Lafferty, Kingston Lafferty Design on "Colour in the Garden";
- Celine Cummins, design consultant on "Visual Merchandising and Store Design";
- Dermot Benn, Risk Management International on "Risk Management –Securing your Property";
- James O'Dwyer, senior account manager, Google on "What SMEs need to consider to successfully compete and grow online";
- Dr Eric Clinton, Dublin City University Centre for Family Business on "Succession in the Family Business – Learnings from long-lived family businesses".

If you missed the show, don't worry, aside from the presentation by Celine Cummins, all the other presentations were recorded and will be made available on the HAI website. You will need to be a member of the Association to view them.



Chairman of the Innovation Award Judges, Sean Gallagher; with the Overall Innovation Award winners, the Keystone Group, represented by Helen & Peter Cowley; and HAI President Hugh O'Donnell.

“Good show...enjoyed the information exchange...took a lot of info from the various speakers.”
Ger Duffy, Painter and Decorator, Dundalk, Co Louth

“A great improvement on last year. I'll be back.”
Enfield Hardware, Co Meath

“Excellent show - bigger and better than before.”

Gravel Hardware and Grocery,
Johnstownbridge, Co Kildare

“Met up with lots of my suppliers and met a few new ones.”

Magees of Ardee, Co Louth



The busy registration desk for the Hardware Show 2015 at Citywest.

Innovation Awards – the winners

The winners of the inaugural Innovation Awards were announced by President of HAI, Hugh O'Donnell and Minister for Business and Employment, Gerald Nash at the Hardware Show 2015. Certificates were presented to the following in their respective categories:

HOME

Category winner – **Danalock Bluetooth Door Lock, Dominic Fleming Electrical**

Highly commended – Zerocal Plant, Aquasource Distributors

GARDEN

Category winner – **Garden Paint, Ronseal**

Highly commended – Decking Rescue Paint, Ronseal

Commended – Easy 77 Lawnmower, Outdoor Living Munster

DIY

Category winner – **Flogenics, Watersave**

Highly commended – Easycare Washable Matt Paint with Stain Repellent Technology, Dulux

Commended – Problem Solving Paints, Fleetwood

BUILD

Category winner – **Keylites Futuretherm Roof Window**

Highly commended – Keystones Hi Therm Lintel

OVERALL WINNER –

KEYLITES FUTURETHERM ROOF WINDOW

"We have just experienced one of the best trade shows in terms of business. Companies visiting TIMco's stand liked what was on offer and many have already made further contact, committing on the day to stock the TIMco branded fixing."

John Mackin, business manager, Timco Screws & Fixings Ireland, Monaghan.

"An excellent event that brought existing and potential customers together to learn about our Margin Mentor Software product."

Colm Smyth, marketing manager, Core Software



These are the 'Dragons' that the 17 brave and innovative hardware companies faced, the HAI Innovation Awards judging panel, with Chairman, Sean Gallagher (third from right).

"As a first-time exhibitor, we will be returning. The show has been excellent for our product launch."

Kevin Smith, Sales, K&S Industrial Supplies Merchants



HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell with Cathal Fleming, Dominic Fleming Electrical, receiving the Category Winner's award for the company's Danalock Bluetooth Door Lock product in the home category; and Minister Gerald Nash.



HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell with Pat Forde, Aquasource Distributors, receiving the Highly Commended award for the company's ZeroCal Plant product in the home category; and Minister Gerald Nash.



HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell with Ger Baker, Outdoor Living Munster Ltd., receiving the Commended award for the company's Easy 77 Lawnmower product in the garden category; and Minister Gerald Nash.



HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell with Peter Cowley, Keystone Group, receiving the Category Winner's award for the Keylite Futuretherm Roof Window and the Highly commended award for the Keystone Hi-Therm Lintel, both in the build category; and Minister Gerald Nash.



HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell with Patrick Byrnes, Niall Harrison & Emma Hayes, Ronseal, receiving the Category Winner's award for Ronseal Garden Paint and the Highly Commended award for Ronseal Decking Rescue Paint, both in the garden category; and Minister Gerald Nash.



HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell with Alex Doyle, Fleetwood Paints, receiving the Commended award for the Fleetwood Problem Solving Paint product in the hardware/DIY category; and Minister Gerald Nash.



HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell with Kevin O'Callaghan, Medentech, and Martin Lane, Watersave Ltd., receiving the Category Winner's award for the Flogenic product in the hardware/DIY category; and Minister Gerald Nash.



HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell with Gareth Watkins, Dulux Paints Ireland Ltd., receiving the Highly Commended award for the Dulux Easycare washable matt paint with stain repellent technology, in the hardware/DIY category; and Minister Gerald Nash.



The Carbon Tax created an incentive that has encouraged fuel smuggling to the degree that it is now a serious threat to legitimate hardware retailers and merchants.

Fuel smuggling presents serious threat to hardware stores

The tax treatment of solid fuel presents a strong incentive to unscrupulous smugglers and illegal trading has now grown to the extent that legitimate hardware businesses feel under serious threat.

Hardware businesses in the South, particularly in counties such as Monaghan and Cavan, are being hit hard by solid fuel smuggling. Heather Graham of Maurice Graham Ltd, Monaghan, commented: "Its impact on our solid fuel business has been severe, substantially reducing our fuel sales. We're just seven miles from the border so the extent of the problem is very visible here."

The core issue in Heather's view is the Carbon Tax, which creates the incentive for cross-border fuel smuggling: "It's an example of politicians implementing changes without any concern for the impact on small businesses. At this stage, it's very difficult to identify an overall solution to the problem but, at the very least, there should be more visible enforcement efforts."

David Brady of J.P. Brady & Son Ltd, Virginia, Co. Cavan, said

that he's seen his fuel sales fall by 30% year on year. "Even taking into account the relatively mild winter, that's a drastic drop-off in sales and it's due in the main to unfair competition from fuel smuggling."

He added: "The Carbon Tax seems to be with us for the foreseeable future but a reduction of the level of the tax in the next Budget would go someway towards reducing the impact of the problems it has created."

Incentivising smuggling

According to John Keogh, CEO of the Solid Fuel Trade Group, an organisation that represents legitimate solid fuel trading businesses, a standard truck carrying 20 tonnes (t) of coal from Northern Ireland to the South without the application of Carbon Tax can save the perpetrator almost €1,200.

When you zone out,
people get hurt.



It's everyone's responsibility to
make sure we're all safe around
vehicles in the workplace.

**STAY ALERT, KEEP YOUR FOCUS.
DON'T GO ON AUTOPilot.**

Visit hsa.ie



Why fuel smuggling is a serious threat

- The border with Northern Ireland is relatively open.
- Solid fuel is very transportable.
- The tax treatment (excise and VAT) is very different in both territories.
- Tax compliance is based on self-assessment.

Let's fight back!

Tell us about your experience with

fuel smuggling, contact

Annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie or

Jim@hardwareassociation.ie

This situation arises as a result of the significant differences in the tax treatment of solid fuel in Northern Ireland and the South:

- VAT in the South on solid fuel is 13.5% - In Northern Ireland it is 5.0%;
- Carbon Tax adds €2.11 (€2.40 incl VAT) to a bag of coal in the South - £0 in Northern Ireland;
- Carbon Tax adds €0.46 (€0.52 incl VAT) to a bale of briquettes in the South - £0 in Northern Ireland; and
- Carbon Tax adds €27.25 (€30.93 incl VAT) per tonne of sod peat in the South - £0 in Northern Ireland.

John Keogh points out that these differences create a powerful incentive for illegal trade in a category of products that are very easily transported.

Scale of problem

To understand the scale of the problem, John provides the example of a standard truck carrying 20t of coal from Northern Ireland to the South without the application of Carbon Tax and the differential in VAT. The perpetrator saves €1,195.61 in Carbon Tax alone. The difference in VAT increases the evasion 'prize' to €2,005.61.

John notes: "That's too tempting for too many. Not alone does the Irish Exchequer lose the tax income, but the legitimate trade can no longer compete. However, that's only part of the problem. There's now an active online forum which explains how consumers can ring a courier company based in Dublin and arrange collection of coal from a coal warehouse in Co.Tyrone. Customers are also encouraged to 'like' the Facebook page, and it now has 7,726 likes. The problem is that many consumers are genuinely unaware that, if they do not personally accompany solid fuel for their own domestic use across the border, they cannot import it without paying Carbon Tax."

Size of the market

The solid fuel market in the South is estimated in volume terms by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to be 410,000t, coal products; 203,000t, peat briquettes; and 700,000t, sod peat.

When Carbon Tax was introduced in the Finance Act 2010, its application to solid fuel was deferred until 'a robust mechanism' could be put in place to protect the market in the South from illegal imports.

At the time, this deferral recognised the potential for illegal imports if a large excise driven difference existed between Northern Ireland and the South. Solid fuel Carbon Tax was eventually activated in two phases between the 2013 and 2014 budgets. It has now been fully implemented since 1st May, 2014.

John Keogh acknowledges that Carbon Tax is going to be around for some time to come, and it is unlikely that there will be changes to the VAT code on solid fuel, but he makes the following recommendations to help address the situation:

- a co-ordinated, multi-disciplinary approach comprising Revenue, HMRC, the Gardai, PSNI and the enforcement teams from the respective Departments of Environments in NI and the South;
- registration of all solid fuel traders, with associated obligations to furnish bi-monthly Carbon Tax returns;
- Revenue needs to carry out a public awareness campaign to clarify the regulations with regard to personal imports;
- Revenue needs to be, and be seen to be, auditing fuel suppliers in order to increase compliance;
- Revenue and HMRC need to obtain records from fuel suppliers based in Northern Ireland, of who they have supplied in the South; and
- fuel transporters (lorries) need to be spot checked on the roads for compliance with carbon tax and VAT legislation.



NEW COMPANIES ACT SET TO BECOME LAW - ARE YOU READY?

When the Companies Act 2014 becomes law, there will be an 18-month transition period, during which the vast majority of companies in Ireland will have to make some changes to ensure compliance.

Siobhan Kenny BA Mod Leg Sci, Hussey Fraser, outlines some of the key implications of the Companies Act 2014.

The Companies Act 2014 has not yet been passed but it is expected that the relevant Minister will commence the operation of the Act in June of this year. However, it has not yet been commenced and, therefore, for the moment there is no need for anybody to do anything except to prepare.

The Companies Act 2014 completely

replaces all existing company law, which at the moment is governed by the Companies Acts 1963 to 2013. At present, companies are subject to a substantial number of rules and regulations as to how they conduct their business – most of those rules come from the vast array of legislation which has been passed since the 'Principal Act' in 1963.

Eliminating some red tape?

One of the main purposes of the 2014 Act is to streamline all of that legislation,

make it easier to find, easier to read and easier to understand. In line with that aim, the drafters have also taken the opportunity to strip away some outdated and unnecessarily complicated corporate structures, all with the aim of eliminating at least an element of red tape, and making it more straightforward for business proprietors to make informed decisions about how they want to conduct their business.

Once the 2014 Act becomes operative, there will be a transition period of 18 months. During that 18-month period



the vast majority of companies registered in Ireland will have to make some changes. It is estimated that 90% of the companies incorporated in Ireland are private companies limited by shares. Each of these companies will have to decide whether it wishes to be a 'CLS' or a 'DAC', and take some relatively straightforward measures to convert.

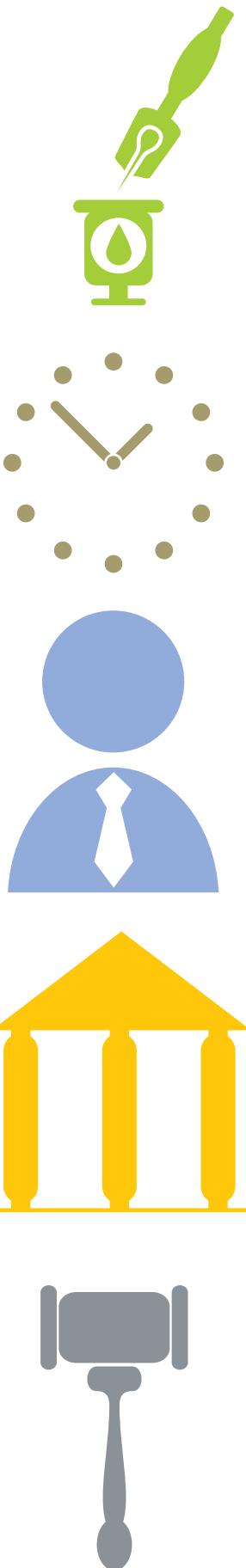
There are pros and cons, as you might expect, but it is anticipated that 90% of all private companies limited by shares will elect to become CLS companies. The main advantage of such an election is that a CLS company will keep the word Ltd in its title, will be authorised to carry on any business – without reference to an objects clause – may be a single shareholder/single director company, and will not need to have an AGM.

DAC companies are companies which are established for a specific or designated purpose, and will continue to have an objects clause, setting out that purpose. Under the legislation, most companies will have the option to be a CLS or a DAC, but for others (a very limited number carrying out defined functions) CLS will not be an option – hence the availability of DAC-type structures.

Be informed on key principles

If a company does nothing, then it will be deemed to have selected to convert the company from its existing position into a CLS company. That may well suit; however, it is important that business owners become aware of the principle terms of this legislation so that they can make informed decisions.

The drafters have also taken the



opportunity to set out a comprehensive list of the duties, which a director owes to his/her company, to its shareholders, and to the third parties, which conduct business with the company. None of these duties are necessarily new but, until now, they have been identified through a series of court cases and judicial interpretations.

The Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement has, for a number of years, made booklets available in which the principal duties of corporate officers are detailed. Now, they are listed and codified in this legislation for the benefit of those who might consider taking on the responsibility of becoming a company director.

The Act is the product of years of research, analysis and careful drafting and is enormous – probably the largest piece of legislation in the history of the State. It will introduce a wide array of changes in the way companies conduct their business. Some of those changes will have immediate impact; for example, in addition to the requirement to convert, substantial changes are introduced to the regulation of transactions between companies and their officers, and there are also changes in the insolvency rules for companies.

Detailed analysis of the Act and what it will mean for individual companies is far beyond the scope of this briefing note, the purpose of which is to draw attention to the fact that the Act has been passed, and to alert business owners and company directors to the fact that change is coming, and that action will be required

In our continuing safety series, compiled in cooperation with the Health and Safety Authority, we look at forklift safety.

USING FORKLIFTS SAFELY

Forklifts account for dozens of injuries at work every year. Because of their size and weight, injuries resulting from forklifts are generally very serious. Accidents involving them are often caused by poor supervision and a lack of training.

For health and safety purposes, a forklift is defined as a powered truck used to carry, lift, stack or tier materials, and the definition includes pallet trucks, rider-operated forklifts, fork trucks, or lift trucks. They can be powered by electric battery or combustion engines.

Forklifts should be examined by a competent person once every 12 months in accordance with S.I. 299 2007 – Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (general application) Regulations 2007. This period

becomes six months if the forklift is used to lift persons.

What does the law require?

If you own, lease, hire or borrow a vehicle for work purposes, you must make sure that it is safe to use and fit for purpose. Under health and safety legislation a vehicle is a place of work, and the law requires that workplaces are maintained in a condition that is safe and without risk to safety and health. Vehicles must be kept safe and fit for purpose and the driver must be able to get in and out of the vehicle safely.

Forklifts are also classed as work equipment. Employers must make sure that drivers are familiar with the vehicle they are driving and that they have been given appropriate instruction, information and training to carry out required pre-checks and to use the vehicle in the correct and safe manner. Employers must also make sure that they have a defect reporting system in



place so that when defects are found they are rectified. Employees should never be required to work in conditions that are unsafe or that do not comply with the law. Employees also have legal duties – to use work equipment in a safe manner in line with procedures developed by their employer.

The above is a brief introduction. For more information on forklift safety, download the forklift safety tip sheet at:

www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Information_Sheets/Forklift_Safety_Tips_Information_Sheet.html

SAFE OPERATION

Here are some key things to remember about the safe operation of forklifts.

This selection of major safety considerations is intended as a guide and is not a comprehensive list. For that, please refer to the website address at the end of the main article.

ALWAYS:

- Wear appropriate personal protective clothing as provided by employer;
- Carry out a pre-shift check of the forklift and report defects immediately to supervisor;
- Look all around before moving off;
- Look in the direction of travel;
- Travel with the forks lowered, but clear of the ground.

Never:

- Operate a forklift unless you are trained, competent and authorised to do so;
- Use a forklift or equipment you know is not working properly;
- Operate controls from outside the cab, unless it is designed so you can do this;
- Stand on or near the controls to reach the load or anything outside the cab.

HAI LAUNCHES HR SUPPORTS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



YOUR HR HEALTHCHECK

As an initial HR healthcheck, Tom Smyth advises that you should ask yourself the following questions (hint: you should be answering yes!):

- Do you retain notes from interviews and recruit fairly based on transparent ratings?
- Do all of your employees have written terms and conditions of employment?
- Do you give a payslip for each employee for each pay transfer?
- Do you correctly calculate the public holiday entitlement for all full and part-time employees for each public holiday?
- Do you properly record the start, finish and break times for all employees each day?
- Have you provided Manual Handling Training for all employees?
- Do you provide holidays and holiday pay to both full-time and part-time employees?
- Do you follow proper, transparent procedures in handling disciplinary matters?
- Do you have a procedure for employees to raise grievances against colleagues or management?
- Do you ensure that all resignations are confirmed in writing?

HAI is developing a range of HR supports for its members in partnership with Tom Smyth & Associates HR Consultancy.

The consultancy has a long and proud tradition of working with, and supporting, retail and hardware operators with employment law, industrial relations and human resources services. The consultancy was established in 1991 and has a client base in all 26 counties of the ROI, along with some in the UK.

Strategic link

Tom commented: "We are delighted to have an opportunity to work more closely with HAI members through a strategic link with the Association.

"Compliance with the raft of employment legislation is something that is obviously critical for all employers to achieve. We will make available to you documents and checklists, along with articles in *The Hardware Journal* to assist you in achieving full-compliance status."

He continued: "To begin with, we are developing a suite of HR templates such as Contracts of Employment and a Handbook, which will be available on the HAI website for members to download and customise to suit their own particular organisation."

In the future, Tom Smyth & Associates will offer advice and guidance to HAI members on such topics as:

- Working Time and Rest Breaks;
- Holidays and Public Holidays;

- Employment of Young Persons;
- Disciplinary/Grievance Procedures;
- Interview and Recruitment;
- Training and Development; and
- Payment of Wages.

Tom Smyth & Associates is happy to take a call from any HAI member for a complementary chat on a HR query or issue they need assistance on.

If the above questions spark any initial queries, please do not hesitate to contact Tom Smyth & Associates on 021 463 4154 for a chat. Tom added: "We look forward to working with the HAI and its members throughout 2015 and are happy to help in any way we can."



TOM SMYTH,
Managing Director,
Tom Smyth & Associates.



A suite of templates covering the key HR issues will be available on the HAI website for members to download and customise to suit their own particular organisation.



THREE STEPS TO ONLINE SUCCESS

Conor Lynch outlines three ways the hardware sector can use digital and social media to grow its business.

Nowadays, consumers are constantly communicating online with each other and researching products and services on their computers or smartphones. Having an active presence on digital and social media means showing people you're open for business 24/7/365.

With so many buzzwords and new applications floating around in the world of digital and social media, it can seem quite daunting to the uninitiated; however, success is possible if you take small steps.

Three ways to increase your online presence and develop an alternative sales channel are as follows:

1

Social media

Social networks have surpassed local media as the most efficient and cost-effective way for businesses to target consumers by demographics, geography and interests. Popular

2

Content marketing

Your digital marketing should include attractive digital content which will be informative, educational and engaging while helping convince consumers to buy from you.

3

eCommerce

Having an online store works for many retailers as more people can access your store from more locations at any time of the day or night.

The experiences of HAI member Joe Connolly from Stakelums Home & Hardware, Thurles, Co Tipperary, show that digital marketing can be effective for hardware retailers: "We are on Facebook with 5,700 fans and we are also on Twitter and on YouTube. We are

considering Instagram and Pinterest too. We have started to promote some of our posts and also the page itself through Facebook Ads. We find that we can engage with our customers easily through Facebook and also that the content we use has a bearing on the effectiveness of the post."

Joe added: "Social networks can be vital in helping you capture potential customers' email addresses, which then can be added to your database so that you can regularly email newsletters to them. It can also be used to help drive traffic to your website, which is your online shopfront. It's all about top of mind awareness."

Websites and social media are crucial for hardware businesses to keep and find new customers. It's all about bricks and clicks as they say!

Conor Lynch is CEO of SocialMedia.ie and won the Irish Internet Association Netvisionary award for the 'Best Use of Social Media' in 2011.

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MARKETING BOOTCAMP FOR
HARDWARE SUPPLIERS**



The HAI has tailored a Digital & Social Marketing Bootcamp specifically for people working in the hardware sector, incorporating hardware case studies with local and international insights from the sector and similar markets. There are two specialist streams, one for retailers and one for suppliers:

1: Bootcamp for retailers and merchants,

14th April and 19th May, Citwest Hotel.

2: Bootcamp for suppliers, 16th April and

21st May, Citwest Hotel.

To book for either event, go to

hardware.social media.ie

or call 01 906 0006.

€300 members, €350 non-members

The paint and paints accessories sector remains as competitive as ever. This year, as some familiar names celebrate landmark anniversaries, most leading suppliers have announced new launches and range extensions.

PAINT SUPPLIERS ADD NEW GLOSS TO SALES

According to Crown, its Trade Clean Extreme Scrubbable Matt is a high performance coating that will stand the test of time. Its high technology formulation provides a surface that is wipeable and offers a scrubbable finish. Marks and stains can be easily removed to ensure an attractive look is in place for the long term.

Crown develops special polymer

A special polymer gives Crown Trade Clean Extreme Scrubbable Matt its tough surface film and built-in stain resistance. These actions leave no burnish marks and appearances are maintained because of the unique qualities of the paint formulation, which gives Crown Trade Clean Extreme Scrubbable Matt a sheen-free finish, Crown states, even after repeated scrubbing with wet or dry cloths. Kevin Whelan, Crown Marketing Controller, said: "Given its impressive credentials it's clear to see why Crown Trade Clean Extreme Scrubbable Matt provides the right paint



A home with a Sandtex exterior.

for the job, which will stand the test of time. "It ensures a wall is not only decorated but is also protected, and delivers a true flat, contemporary chalky matt finish, which can be tinted in a wide choice of colours.

The product is the ideal choice for a wide-range of facilities, including schools, universities and student accommodation, as well as nurseries, offices and hospitals."

In addition to the Scrubbable Matt formulation, Crown Trade Clean Extreme is also available in a durable Acrylic Eggshell. This coating offers all the durability, longevity, soil resistance and 'scrubbability' of Scrubbable Matt, but with a low sheen, acrylic eggshell finish.

Curust extends range

The Lowe Metal and Machinery Paints range from Curust Industries Ltd has recently been extended into 250ml and five litre cans across all colours. In addition, silver has been added as a new colour to the range. The paint is based on the same formula used in the manufacture of Lowe Rust Primer which has a track record in Ireland, in preventing rust stretching back over 40 years. Lowe Metal & Machinery Paint has multiple applications around the home and garden as well as on the farm and at sea. It may be applied by brush or roller and can also be sprayed once thinned.



Douglas Rust Remover gel, part of the Lowe range, available from Curust Industries.

New colours for Dulux's 60th birthday

This year sees Dulux Weathershield celebrate 60 years' protecting Irish homes and it is introducing two new Weathershield colours to help celebrate: Knock na Rí and Atlantic Way. Each colour has been teamed with a complementary colour family making it easy to recommend a

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complete scheme to customers. Atlantic Way marries with Pure Brilliant White for trim, Merlin for plinth and Sweet Bluebird for the door.

Knock na Rí is bound to be an Irish favourite, Dulux says, with its khaki tone working on both urban and country exteriors. It can be teamed with Bitter Chocolate for the plinth, Achill White can be used on sills, and Gunmetal is perfect for the door, to complete the look.

Dulux states that Irish-made Weathershield continues to be the only masonry brand with a formula which is shower-resistant in just 15 minutes, while the advanced durability formula ensures a good paint job stands the test of time and Irish weather.



Knock na Rí, a new Weathershield colour, as seen on the home above, is bound to be an Irish favourite, Dulux says.

Fleetwood aims to help customers

Steven McQuillan of Fleetwood says that people who would normally have employed a decorator to paint their houses are often now doing it themselves. "People who turn to decorating for the first time can find themselves confused by all the different paints, finishes, qualities and accessories. They need help to choose the right products," says Steven. Fleetwood's strategy is to make it easier for customers to quickly identify what exactly is needed, he says. "At the end of the day, people are also looking for good quality paint at reasonable prices – not necessarily the cheapest paint.

They are aware that quality will always win out in the long run."

Possibly the most significant change in the paint industry arises from phase II of European legislation on



A stand displaying some of the extensive Fleetwood range.

VOC levels in paint. The VOC level for solvent-based wall paints has been reduced to 30g/l for low gloss and 100g/l. for higher gloss. The VOC level for solvent-based paints for interior and exterior trim has also dropped to 300g/l. Water-based alternatives to traditional solvent-based products will obviously become more widely available. To meet this challenge, Fleetwood has launched new Advanced Technology, Weather Clad Exterior Gloss and Satin. Formulated with Permacryl technology, the advanced hybrid of acrylic and alkyd make it far more durable than most premium paints. Also, the threat of rain or dew will not slow down or delay a painting project.

Fleetwood spokesman Tom O'Connell explains: "The advanced, quick-dry formulation resists moisture twice as quickly as standard exterior gloss and satin. With superior weather protection you can count on Weather Clad no matter what the forecast and, with up to 10 years' durability, it minimises the need to repaint." The Colour Range can be seen on the new Fleetwood Weather Clad Exterior Colour Card.

To further communicate the new technology to customers, Fleetwood are holding a series of training days at their facility in Virginia, Co Cavan. Training days, which are open to Fleetwood stockists, concentrate on all aspects of paint manufacture from colour matching to sales training and problem solving.



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Fleetwood has also developed a range of specialist hygiene coatings, Bio-Tec, for use in a range of areas where hygiene protection is needed. "Bio-Tec silver ion is the latest in cutting edge technology developed by Fleetwood Paints' chemists in conjunction with their many worldwide material suppliers," according to Tom. The advanced coating has been proven to significantly reduce the spread of disease and infection – from MRSA and *Salmonella* to *E. coli* have been successfully deployed in top-class Irish hospitals. "Bio-Tec has been on the market for six years now," says Tom. "The use of Bio-Tec coating lengthens the maintenance cycle for facilities, a major consideration when pressure is continually being applied to budgets."

Dosco's one-stop shop

The Dosco paint brush is manufactured in a modern production unit in Cork. The company's workforce crafts all Dosco paint brushes to the highest standards, the company says. Every Dosco brush is made with 100% bristle to give maximum performance. The range of paint brushes is vast, the company states, with all requirements covered, from the economy V7 range to the market leading V21 range, and right up to the hand-crafted professional range. All timber-handled paint brushes have the environmentally-friendly FSC wood handle.

Last year, Dosco introduced a new shed and fence range. These

products allow for the application of all wood treatments for timber sheds, timber fences and decks. Applications by both brush and roller are catered for with these new lines.

The Dosco range of rollers is also considerable. There are sets with various combinations of sleeves and accessories as well as rollers with telescopic handles.

Whatever you are painting, walls, ceilings, interiors or exteriors there is a Dosco roller product to help, the company claims. As well as paint brushes and rollers, Dosco stocks a huge range of decorating accessories, such as sandpaper, masking tapes, dustsheets, decorating tools and much more.



Dosco says its workforce craft all Dosco paint brushes to the highest standards.

MX brushes aim to be competitive

Karen Kavanagh of Mark John Ltd says the company developed its MX range of brushes using new paint brush technology to offer leading edge in quality at an extremely competitive price. According to Mark John Ltd, the MX brush range features professional quality, solid, round, tapered polyester blend filaments which facilitate the smoothest application for all paints and with guaranteed no bristle loss.

The MX range works extremely well with water-based paints, Mark John Ltd states. The filaments resist wear, provides superior paint pick-up and release, and they don't absorb water from the paint. Mark John Ltd also offers many other ranges of bristle brushes, rollers, painting tools and accessories.

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Varian adds to accessories

IS Varian carries a comprehensive range of paint accessories within its portfolio. The products' cater for the professional painter, as well as DIY enthusiasts. Varian is adding to the range on a regular basis, the company states. Recent additions include synthetic paint brush sets, a 7" shed, fence and deck roller set plus a 9" masonry roller set.

Alan Walker of IS Varian has a few tips on merchandising of paint accessories: "A thorough tidy up is recommended with possible changes to layouts and products to be considered. Any paint accessories fixture should be clearly divided into sections for brushes, rollers, tools and sundries. This makes the fixtures easier to shop from a consumer perspective. The better selling lines should be given a more prominent position within the fixture."

He continues: "Of considerable importance is the space allocated to impulse or promotional lines, such as extension rollers, roller-and-tray sets or paint brush multi-packs. All of these lines, if placed in prominent locations, have the potential to add significantly to sales at this time of year." Varian will be running regular paint accessory value-added promotions during the 2015 season, he adds.



An 11-piece painting set from IS Varian.

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As economic indicators point to a recovery in the building industry, the roofing products sector has been energised by a range of new technologies and products, while suppliers report signs of increasing demand.

ROOFING PRODUCTS SEE GROWTH IN DEMAND



IKO provides an extensive range of roofing products to the Irish market.

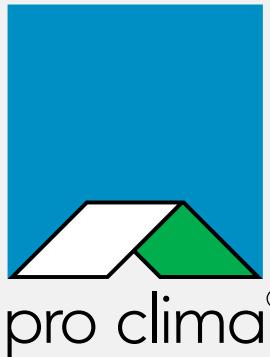
One such product is Rubershield ECO is a BBA/IAB-certified economical breather membrane which combines good performance, ease of application and value for money. Rubershield ECO is designed for use in warm, non-ventilated and cold ventilated roofs.

Next, there's Rubershield ECO Extra, for tiled and slated pitched roofs, a BBA-certified, lightweight breather membrane, incorporating a vapour permeable film. The product resists penetration by liquid water yet allows the passage of water vapour. According to Ray Savage, National Sales Manager, IKO Ltd: "Rubershield ECO Extra will be virtually unaffected by normal conditions found in the roof space and will have a life comparable with that of the roof covering." It is designed for use as a fully supported or unsupported breathable underlay for tiled, slated or metal-roofing systems.

Rubershield PRO is a BBA/IAB-certified, second-generation breather membrane, which conforms to the highest performance and professional standards. Designed as a fully supported or unsupported breathable underlay for tiled, slated or metal-roofing



Rubershield PRO Extra is a next-generation, pitched roof underlay from IKO.



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systems, Rubershield PRO is equally suitable whether draped unsupported over rafters or laid directly over insulation. Ray adds: "It assists in the removal of moisture vapour from within the roof structure, while protecting against wind-driven rain, snow and dust, which may penetrate the main roof waterproofing. It provides a permanent quality breather underlay, which will last the life of the roof construction. It also has excellent UV stability."

Finally, Rubershield PRO Extra is a next-generation, pitched roof underlay that is BBA/IAB-certified. This product adds extra benefits, Ray explains: "PRO Extra's added benefits include outstanding tensile strength and nail tear resistance, and it has printed 'Easy-Cut' grid marking to reduce wastage." IKO says it is ideal for use in warm roofs/cold roofs with ventilated or unventilated void.

Laydex advocates resilient felt

Laydex says it is a market leader in the supply of roofing materials in Ireland. The company sees its roofing offering as very important and growing part of its business. Over the course of the last year the increase in demand for higher performance roofing felts has been quite marked, Laydex notes. The demand has been generated, the company says, by the



Laydex has seen increasing demand for stronger materials, such as its Corotop Strong product, above.

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- Can be used in the wet
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Evercryl is a resin based, fibre re-enforced roof repair compound which is effective on all common roofing surfaces, giving instant roof repairs even in the wet and on wet surfaces. Just one coat of Evercryl can handle almost any roof waterproofing application in just about any weather conditions and can be used on concrete, fibre/cement, roofing felt, mastic, asphalt, existing bituminous roof coatings, rigid PVCu, corrugated iron, metals, slates, brickwork, tiles, lead, copper and zinc.

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Building Products Directive and the requirement for contractual sign-offs by qualified practitioners.

For new builds, the standard of roofing felts has improved because of higher awareness and use of insulation and air tightness which require appropriate air and moisture transfer; Laydex advise that Tyvek Supro and Supro Plus fulfil these requirements. Also, the company has seen increasing demand for stronger materials (such as Corotop Strong) because damage may occur in the installation phase and engineers are more observant now of material damage. Laydex says it is better to use a resilient felt instead of having to return to fix tears and apertures. Laydex launched Resitrix last year and the uptake by professional roofers has been phenomenal, according to the company. Resitrix is a self-adhesive membrane which can be used on just about every roofing substrate like asphalt, GRP, metal and concrete. The user primes the surface and, within 10 minutes, applies Resitrix as the finished top-coat. It is particularly suitable for repairs, where it is not feasible to use a flame.

In the flat roofing market, Laydex supply both Pluvitec and Index Torch On materials which range to -20°C cold flexibility. Torch On Primers and Solar Reflective Paint complete the offering, Laydex says, and these products have been used in commercial and domestic projects all over Ireland.

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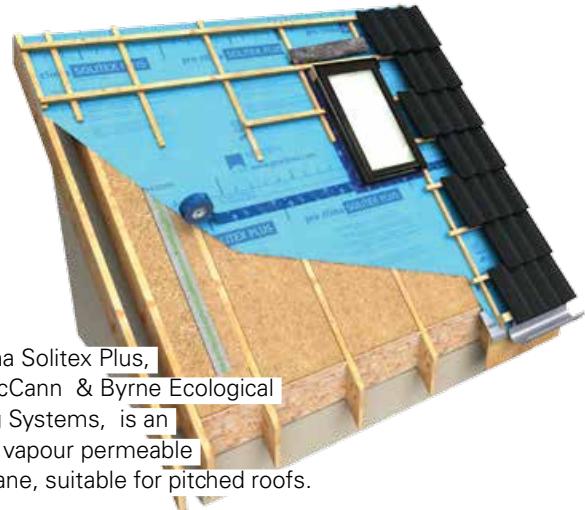
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Airtight and windtight

MacCann and Byrne offers a wide range of products for professionals and DIY people, including roofing products. Its pro clima Solitex Plus product is an airtight, yet diffusion-open, vapour permeable membrane, suitable for pitched roofs. Niall Crosson, Senior Engineer at MacCann & Byrne outlines the key features of Solitex Plus: "Unlike many conventional breather membranes, which use an air-permeable micro-porous technology, Solitex Plus features an integrated reinforcement netting and employs a closed cell vapour permeable layer. This provides a combination of key benefits, including:

- extreme resistance to wood preservatives, wood treatments or natural wood resins;
- extreme resistance to on-site chemicals;
- complete resistance to air penetration;
- extreme nail-tear resistance;
- extreme water-tightness;
- exceptional thermal stability;
- high levels of protection against condensation due to high vapour permeability.

Niall sums up: "As the roofing membrane is the second line of defence for the roof, it is absolutely essential that it provides optimum resistance to wind-driven rain, which we are accustomed to in Ireland, as well as minimising condensation risk. With Solitex Plus, this performance is guaranteed under extreme conditions typically found on



Pro clima Solitex Plus, from McCann & Byrne Ecological Building Systems, is an airtight, vapour permeable membrane, suitable for pitched roofs.

construction sites where roofing membranes need to provide durable protection against intruding dampness, particularly in exposed areas during the building phase." To optimise the windtightness of Solitex Plus, it may be sealed with pro clima Tescon No. 1 tape and ancillary sealing agents which feature pro clima's water resistant solid acrylic glue."

With proven reliability and performance, Solitex Plus has been successfully used on many projects on the Irish market for almost 15 years now. For further assurance the German engineered and produced Solitex Plus roofing membrane has full Irish Agrément Board and British Board of Agrément Approval.

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Everbuild's all-rounder

Sika Everbuild produces a wide range of specialty products for the building and construction industry. The company's Evercryl product is a resin-based, fibre-reinforced roof repair compound which, it says, is effective on all common roofing surfaces, giving instant roof repairs, even in the wet and on wet surfaces.

According to Sika Everbuild, just one coat of the product can handle virtually all roof waterproofing applications in just about any weather conditions. It can be used on an extensive range of materials including concrete, roofing felt, mastic, asphalt and many more.

I-joist innovation from Wood Concepts

Steico, a leading European manufacturer of engineered timber joists, is now offering a bespoke, enhanced floor/roof joist designed especially for the smaller



According to Sika Everbuild, just one coat of its Evercryl product can handle virtually all roof waterproofing applications.

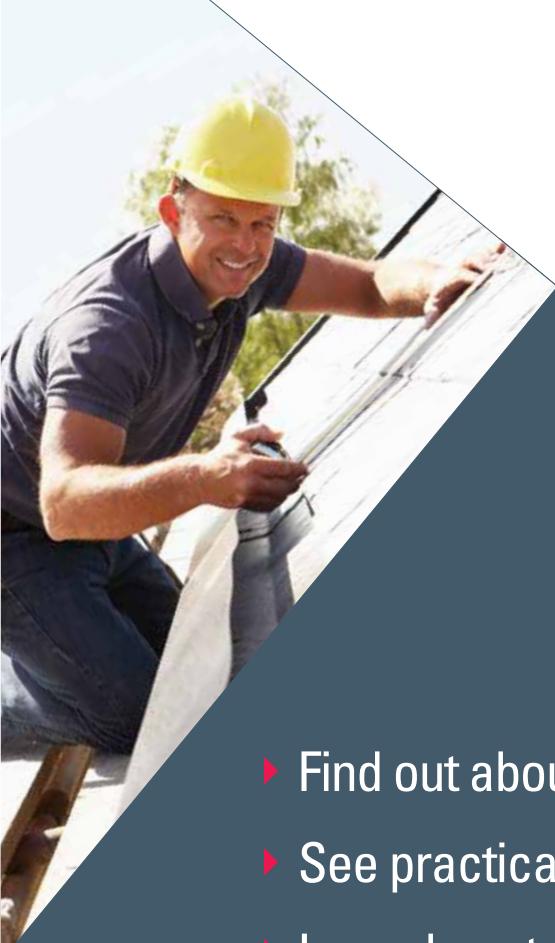


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developer and renovator. The product, Steico tradejoist, is available in Ireland through suppliers, Wood Concepts. It offers what Wood Concepts describes as a simpler engineered timber floor/roof solution for house building, self-build, and home improvement or renovation projects.

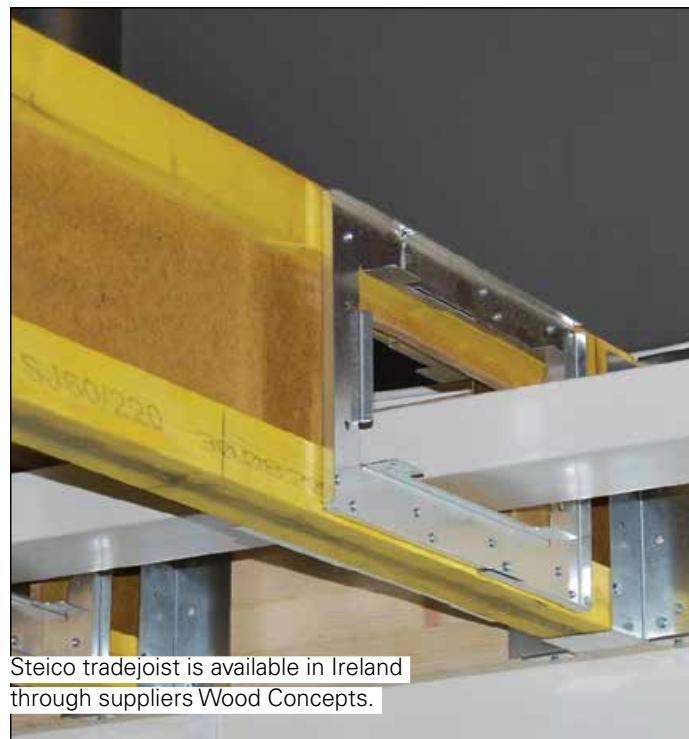
The complete kit, combining tradejoist beams with either weatherdek or new weatherprotect panels and fixing accessories, ensures a superior performance, according to Steico. Wood Concepts says this initiative is a positive move to simplify the I-Joist experience for smaller users and developers, and to open up the supply chain to non-specialist merchant customers.

New Steico tradejoist uses a simplified single specification TJ60/220mm deep I-joist format available 'off the shelf' in three cut lengths 3.6, 4.8 and 6.0m. All the accessory products are provided to complete the project.

According to Steico, key features include:

- spans up to 5m for standard loads;
- solid timber flange for ease of fixing;
- colour-coated for enhanced moisture resistance;
- beams are clearly stamped with usage criteria;
- lightweight and easy to cut; and
- ease of access for all service runs and ducting.

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



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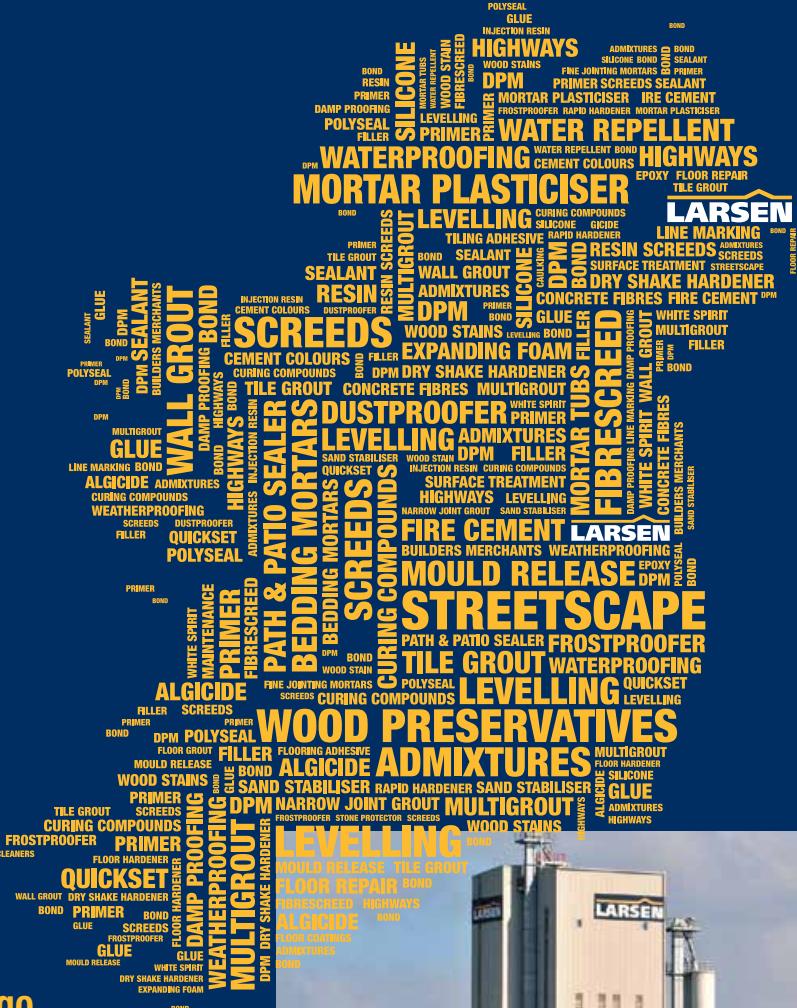
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New product development is a key driver of the adhesives and sealants sector. Spring 2015 sees a busy slate of new launches from the leading companies in the sector.

NEW PRODUCTS SPUR ACTIVITY IN ADHESIVES AND SEALANTS MARKET



The new Bostik Adhesive and Sealant Range.

Bostik has long been associated with adhesive and sealing products sold under the Evo Stik brand on the island of Ireland. Based in Swords, Co Dublin since the 1960s, Bostik specialises in the supply of premium quality construction products to the building professional and DIY trade.

Bostik seeks smarter solutions

With its Evo Stik brand, Bostik says it has carved out the position of market leader in Ireland, and has consistently developed innovative and high-quality product solutions for both the DIY and professional sectors. For more than a century, Bostik says it has focused on developing innovative adhesive solutions that are smarter and more adaptive to the forces that shape our daily lives. The company aims to ensure that track record of innovation continues in 2015 with the recent introduction of its new High Performance Bostik Adhesive and Sealant Range.

This comprehensive range of high performance adhesives, 2-in-1 adhesives and sealants, and sealant products, answers the needs of the construction and decoration professional, according to Bostik. The launch will be supported with significant investment in point of sale, advertising support and trade support, the company states.

"This year will be a very exciting one for Bostik with the launch of our New Bostik Adhesives and Sealant Range," Robert Massey, managing director, Bostik Ireland, predicts. "We feel

the time is right to bring a new, innovative, high-performance range of adhesive and sealant products to the market that perform for both the retailers and the trade. Our new range of adhesives and sealants will outperform the competition and deliver to the retailer and the trade professional."

"We had a fantastic reaction to the introduction of the new Bostik Adhesive and Sealant range at the recent HAI tradeshow in Citywest in February. Our stand was swamped with customers taking the opportunity to see the products, watch how they perform and learn what they can deliver to the trade. The initial orders for the product range were 'off the Richter scale'."

Looking at the year ahead for the adhesives and sealants sector, Robert added: "All the signs are good for 2015. There is a very positive attitude out there and, at Bostik, we are determined to support that positivity, with the launch of new products, which fuel the market, create interest, promote activity and deliver to both the retailer and the trade."

Contech extends Tec7 range

Contech Building Products says its Tec7 has become the number one choice for the trade person and DIY enthusiast because "customers know it gets the job done first time every time".

According to Contech's Andrew D'Arcy: "Because of its overall strength, flexibility, sealing and mounting quality, customers know that Tec7 sticks to almost all building materials, including most plastics, and, with each cartridge containing 310ml of product, they are getting better value compared to most other MS polymers on the market."

Andrew continues: "Customers expect high quality from the Tec7 range of products and the new Plumb7 being introduced in April as part of the range is no exception. This brand new product is a permanent fix to all heating system leaks. One can does 75 litres of water, enough to do a standard three-bedroom home or 10 to 12 radiators. Simple to use, the can will come with an applicator making it easy to pour in to any radiator. If you



Plumb7, a new addition to the Tec7 range from Contech Building Products.



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have an open heating system, no problem, Plumb7 is ideal for use in both open and closed heating systems."

Henkel's task-specific strategy

Thanks to its people, brands and technologies, Henkel Adhesive Technologies says it has become a worldwide leader in bonding, sealing and surface treatments. That global position enables it to fully embrace new trends, foresee new needs and provide the appropriate innovative solutions and sustainable products, the company claims. Henkel's bestselling range of sealants, UniBond, has become 'task specific' this year, which the company says, makes it even easier to identify "the right product for the right job".

Extensive consumer research by Henkel resulted in a focus on key needs of consumers in three main areas of sealing: showers; bathrooms and kitchens; all purpose and outdoor. Shoppers can now go straight to the solution without worrying about silicones, acrylics and polymers, according to Henkel. A company spokesperson commented: "UniBond focuses on making DIY as easy as possible with a truly innovative technology: with the pressurised cartridge there is no need for a cartridge gun and the sealant is much easier to apply."

The UniBond Easy Smooth Sealant proved popular in 2014. Guaranteed by Henkel to last for 35 years, it is ideal for use in bathrooms, kitchens, showers, baths, toilets, sinks and basins and has the added benefit of a formulation that makes it easy to apply and finish.

In 2015, Henkel predicts that the UniBond Triple Protection Anti-Mould Sealant is set to be a best-seller. It has a patented silicone sealant that, as well as being waterproof, repels, kills and prevents mould. This makes it the ideal choice for use in showers, bathrooms, kitchens, baths,



The new UniBond Triple Protection Anti-Mould Sealant.

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CONVENIENCE



FAST CURING



RELIABILITY



Clear Fix, the new, completely clear adhesive from Sika Everbuild.

tiled areas, toilets, worktops, sinks and basins, Henkel says. It is available to buy in both cartridge form and in ready-to-use pressurised pack form, which allows for easy application without need for a cartridge gun.

Visually, the new packs are intended to be clear and informative. Front labels clearly list the main features of each product and a simple tick box on the back of the pack confirms its suitability or otherwise for each of the most common sealant uses. The Henkel spokesperson adds: "This new range transforms UniBond sealants into a true home improvement purchase by meeting the consumers of today's needs to make the job of choosing and using sealants a hassle-free task."

A clear difference from Everbuild

Everbuild Clear Fix is a new, completely clear adhesive that is set to make a clear difference to the market, according to Sika Everbuild. A spokesperson for Sika Everbuild commented:

"Clear Fix is a clear hybrid polymer grab adhesive that has the ability to bond just about everything, in both interior and exterior applications. With added UV stabilisers to ensure the product doesn't yellow over time, Clear Fix is the ideal choice for applications where you may see the colour of the product. Quick curing, resistant to temperature extremes, over paintable and totally water and weather proof, Clear Fix is clearly the best choice adhesive on the market!"

Sika Everbuild says that Clear Fix is a versatile product which can be used in almost every application imaginable - even when immersed under water. The company adds that Clear Fix comes in a completely clear cartridge to illustrate the quality of the product and look great on the shelf.

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GARDENING SECTOR READY FOR SEASON OF GROWTH

With the arrival of spring, Ireland's leading gardening product distributors are busy with the launches of new products and revamped ranges. Here, we look at some of this year's most interesting innovations.

Camsaw Distributors introduced the Weibang range of garden machinery into Ireland in 2010. Camsaw says that over the last number of years Weibang has become a household name, both in the Irish market and internationally, with its products being distributed in over 30 countries worldwide. Weibang has products to suit both the intensive commercial user and the domestic homeowner, according to Camsaw. Camsaw are the exclusive distributors of the Weibang brand in Ireland through the company's dealer network nationwide.

Camsaw's cutting edge

The 2015 range of lawnmowers was launched by Camsaw in January. The range consists of 18 machines in both steel and aluminium decks. The newest machine introduced is the WB536SH AL V, a 21" aluminium deck lawnmower complete with a powerful Honda GXV160 engine, variable speed drive and mulching plug included. This model is designed for the demanding home user and the heavy duty professional user. The best-selling machine in the range is the WB536SKL V 3-in-1, the machine is equipped with a powerful Kohler XT775 engine. Its features include a 3-in-1 cutting system that gives the user the option of mulching collecting and ejecting the grass at the side of the machine. It is also fitted with a variable speed drive to suit the walking speed of every user. The price range includes entry level at €300, demanding home use at €600, and at professional user

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Camsaw are the exclusive distributors of the Weibang brand in Ireland.

level, €1,100. All Weibang lawnmowers come with a two-year warranty as standard. Weibang's slogan is "the professional's choice".

DFE give it 'welly'

Demar ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) wellingtons are now distributed in Ireland by DFE Ltd. The Demar brand was established in 1978 in Poland and has won recognition among demanding clients from Europe and across the globe. The total production of all Demar factories is more than 2.5 million pairs of shoes per year.

Demar has recently introduced an assembly line designed to produce ultra-light 'foam rubber' boots (one third of the regular wellington boot weight) with removable warm linings.

As well as producing footwear for hobbies, farming and the children's sectors, Demar specialise in the following lines of footwear: wellington boots and snow-boots made of TR, PVC and EVA.

According to Cathal Fleming of DFE Ltd: "EVA wellies are new to the Irish market. EVA material itself appears in many different products but never before as a farming/gardening wellington boot."

In addition to the main wellington product line, DFE Ltd are also distributing Demar's EVA clogs. Cathal says: "These clogs are known for their longstanding durability. This line is priced to target a wide market, including gardeners, farmers, holidaymakers and hospitals. Everyone, really! The light weight of the EVA material makes them extremely comfortable. We also offer a PVC version which has an additional foot bed for extra comfort."



Demar EVA wellingtons are now distributed in Ireland by DFE Ltd.



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DS Supplies Ltd launched the Wagner range of plant trollies at the HAI Hardware Show.

Hedging the issue?

DS Supplies Ltd range of GreenFx Artificial Hedging was shortlisted for the 'Innovation Awards' at the recent HAI Hardware Show in Citywest Hotel and Conference Centre. This hedging is suitable for many uses including providing privacy to a home, garden, balcony, cafe or smoking area. It is available in three finishes, Autumn, Emerald and Amazon. Cable ties are also included with hedging. These rolls of hedging are quick and easy to install, all rolls are 1m x 3m in dimension.

The GreenFx Artificial Grass range is available in 4m² and 8m² size rolls in 12mm, 20mm and 30mm pile heights. DS Supplies also stock bigger rolls, which are 50m² and 100m² in 15mm, 20mm, 25mm, 35mm and 40mm pile heights. DS Supplies states that the uses and purposes for this artificial grass are endless from parks to sports grounds, lawns to roundabouts, balconies to playgrounds. It is also suitable for display areas in garden centres. No moving or edge cutting is required and it is suitable for indoor and outdoor use.

Jointing and Butyl tape are also available as part of the GreenFX Artificial Grass range. These tapes are suitable for all landscape situations for both indoor and outdoor use. The jointing tape seams two pieces of artificial grass together and can also be used in conjunction with fixing pins. The butyl tape is a flexible double-sided adhesive sealing tape for concrete and porous surfaces, ideal for jointing and sticking.

DS Supplies Ltd also launched the Wagner range of plant trollies at the HAI Hardware Show. These transport helpers

contain practical types of trollies for indoor and outdoor use. The plant trollies make heavy planters even up to 200kg mobile. Two of the four castors are equipped with brakes which can fix the plant trolley safe at a desired place. The outdoor trolley is perfectly suited for long-term outdoor applications, DS Supplies states and it remains virtually colourfast and dimensionally stable for many years.

Hygeia expands range

Hygeia has been busy in the past few months revamping and expanding its gardening range for spring 2015. The Mosgo Greenremover has been made stronger and has a new consumer-friendly message on pack, the company states. It has announced that it will be advertising on local radio stations nationwide throughout spring. This campaign is intended to drive sales and to support Hygeia's loyal retailers, the company added. According to a company spokesperson: "The area of patio cleaners and moss removal products is a key one to get right in store so we wanted to ensure that not only did we have the best product but that it looks really good on shelf. Mosgo Greenremover has certainly achieved this"

Hytrol has been rebranded Hytrol Path & Drive Weedkiller.

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Greenforce Lawn Weed & Feed, a new product from Hygeia.

The spokesperson continues: "We found that there is a lot of confusion for consumers when they are trying to find the right product for the job. This new name explains to the consumer exactly what the product purpose is. It's a great value product as not only does it kill the weeds to the root but it keeps working throughout the season to keep on killing. Being manufactured in Ireland also gives Hytrol added value when the consumer is making a purchasing decision."

"Our ever popular Greenforce Lawn Feed, Weed and Mosskiller is now available in a 3kg box covering an area of 150sqm. And the range has been expanded with a brand new product Greenforce Lawn Weed & Feed. This liquid feeds and greens the lawn but also will kill common weeds, it's such a convenient 2-in-1 product."

Hygeia, based in the west of Ireland, has revamped quite a few more products and there are lots more to come, the company promises.



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