

May/June 2020

THE HARDWARE JOURNAL

The Official Magazine of Hardware Association Ireland

FACING A NEW NORMAL

HAI recovery plan outlined.

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message from the CEO

The last few weeks have seen unprecedented changes in how we live and do business. And now all the strategic challenges facing us are prised through COVID-19.

When looking for precedents that resemble it, they are few on the ground. In part it may resemble 9/11 - wreaking havoc, flooring consumer confidence and needing a huge cash injection to right the economy.

While none of us has a crystal ball - one thing we do know is that until a viable vaccine is available, we will have to adjust to it. And we do not know when that will be.

Having said that - one change that looks likely is the growth of e-commerce. This may be the tipping point that sparks the beginnings of e-commerce as a significant % of the sector. With so many working and often buying from home and most businesses operating on a remote basis a likely legacy will be an increasing number of consumers and businesses choosing to buy online/remotely. Businesses who have the foresight to establish a core competence in the area will win. We have a number of plans in place to help members over the short, medium, and longer term. In the short term we have the renowned Greg Fry and his team to answer questions on scaling up e-commerce platforms and social media. There are also several good videos on the Hardware Education Hub. In the next few weeks we will have webinars ready to go. Later we will have courses in web design and e-commerce agility. Another likelihood is the increasing role of government. With the scale of the problems confronting the country and the big debt mountain that is accruing it is likely that government will be much more involved in our daily lives and our businesses (whether we like it or not). Let's hope that they have the will to create and foster the atmosphere for business to flourish. We recently published our recommendations for re-building our economy, the HAI Recovery Plan 2020. Forwarded to members and politicians from all parties it has four main focus areas

- Re-instating the Home Renovation Incentive Scheme for Renovations
- A similar scheme for Energy re-fitting
- Stimulating Homebuilding and
- Upskilling and re-skilling the sector.

A challenge will be to hold consumer confidence, and nothing undermines this confidence more than unemployment, and fear of unemployment. The best way to face it down is not to let it happen. Each of these recommendations will get our people back to work and employ thousands.

We cover in this issue recent consumer research by Amárach that underlines the importance of the hardware /DIY shop to consumers.

They are at the top of the list of shops they want opened. Key to managing the COVID-19 challenge will be the importance of having the right numbers to assess its impact. HAI will continue to underpin the Business Index and ask participants to continue to contribute. At the beginning of this crisis the HAI gave a shout out to members to contribute PPE etc. That was answered by several members - many thanks to all. We feature a selection of these good works in the Journal. Unsurprisingly there was much frustration with the close/open debate in the sector. Clarity eventually emerged when Minister Humphreys went on radio. At time of going to press the Taoiseach has announced the introduction of a phased re-opening of hardware stores and builders merchants with strict social distancing measures in place from May 18th. Alan Hegarty has a very interesting article on the profitability and productivity of merchants in the UK. SEAL are giving details of their on-line courses - worthwhile ideas in cutting costs. Continuing with our serialised consumer research report Aoife delves into the reasons for energy refits and products - spoiler alert - it's warmer homes, not the environment. Steve Collinge, insightful as always, provides a compelling overview of where we may be going. Also in this edition, we look into the success that is Irish Wire Products, Brendan O'Reilly from TJ O'Mahony talks about his career path and Sean McLoughney shares tips for getting the best out of The Hardware Show 2021. Also in the Business Support section we have timely advice from various experts. Overcoming the challenges that face the sector in the next few months will require leadership and teamwork, courage, and hard work. This industry has the proven resolve and the scale, spread and potential to emerge as an important business sector.

Martin Markey
Chief Executive Officer - HAI



FRONT COVER:
Facing the New Normal.
HAI recovery plan outlined.



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ISSN 2009-5481

Published by: **Hardware Association Ireland**

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Printers: GPS Colour Graphics Ltd, Belfast.

Distribution: MMS Mailing Services, Dublin.

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:

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DULUX ACADEMY LAUNCHED

Planning, preparation and consultation are all part of the decorating cycle. Consumers are now eager for help from afar as they are lost in social media platforms, dreaming of transformations and changes. They are acutely aware of every corner of their home and areas that need some attention or spaces that need uplifting. Lots of consumers are already actively redecorating, emptying the shed of previously purchased paints. Questions of possibilities fill the air and the power of paint appears to be in demand.

The Dulux Academy was created in part to help empower paint retailers and their teams to deliver expert leadership in service when it comes to paint. The academy has been championing the world of colour, unlocking the science behind the notation systems to ensure the best in specification for personal projects related to a home or to larger scale commercial operations.

Dulux created a custom-built space on their site in Cork where they are in tandem manufacturing their paint, to ensure that they have a bespoke space to play with their products, to test, to apply and to teach teams about preparation, systems, problem solving and beyond!

Dulux are here to help your teams with queries and with continued support for training even if this needs to be a remote option for the moment. The exterior season is upon us and the need for help is here and so the Dulux team is here to help and guide you with any queries you may have.



They are committed to ensuring that the consumer gets quality advice and reassurance on their personal projects, queries or problem solving requirements. The Dulux team have been in constant dialogue with consumers helping them with their Cuprinol makeovers, their Weathershield preparation queries or generally questions on paint they have had in their shed or garage.



Dulux will continue to celebrate colour and showcase their portfolio even though it may be from a distance. Call them to talk to their Dulux Technical Experts on **021-4220222**. They are also on Facebook and Instagram if that is your connection of choice @DuluxIrl.

DuluxAcademyIreland@akzonobel.com - drop them a line and they will give you a call.



Dulux are also operating virtually when it comes to colour days for retail stores. While it may not be possible to be physically present in stores, the Dulux colour team will help by operating online connecting to your social audiences and helping your customers with their paint related queries or requests for help on Facebook. The team is also available for any colour specifications that you need for projects for your customers.

Dulux is continuing to add colour to people's lives from afar through social postings manned by the Academy team, bringing some top tips and live projects and just simple pieces of help to the arena.

TOPLINE GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following the recent retirement of outgoing Chairman, Jack Keenan, the Board of Directors of Topline Group has announced the appointment of Michael Doyle to the position.

Michael was instrumental in the establishment of the Topline Group in the mid-1970's, identifying both a need and a demand for like-minded independent Hardware/Builders Merchants to pool their purchasing requirements to secure more competitive prices. He has served on the Group's Board since that time, contributing to the Group's development, successful growth and prudent management.

A Carlow native, Michael joined 'Doyles of the Shamrock' in 1969, a business established in 1884 by his grandfather. At the time, it employed 10 people and consisted of a bar, grocery and hardware store. Under Michael's stewardship, the business developed into one of Ireland's best known and most respected Hardware/Builders Merchants, operating from two locations, Carlow and Tullow. Over the years, Topline Doyles has been formally recognised on many occasions, including receiving the Octabuild 'Overall Merchant of the Year' accolade on two separate occasions, while Michael himself was the recipient of the Octabuild 'Lifetime Achievement Award' in 2013 in recognition of his contribution to and impact on the Irish merchandising sector.



Michael P Doyle - Topline Group Chairman.

Conor O'Dwyer is appointed to the newly-created position of Head of Group Operations. In this new role, Conor will assume overall responsibility for all Group buying, central warehouse operations and member operations support.

Conor joined Topline Group in 2010 as Retail Project Manager, having previously worked for Halfords and Reebok. He was appointed Buying Operations Manager in 2015 and Head of Operations Support in 2017. Group CEO, Hugh O'Donnell, commented on Conor's appointment: "Both our Board and I are delighted to promote Conor to this important position. Since joining our business in 2010, he has consistently proven himself to be an effective, highly-driven, action-orientated professional who is popular with and respected by our members. I personally look forward to working even more closely with him to drive improvements in our operating model and business proposition".



Conor O'Dwyer - Topline Head of Group Operations.

Lorcan Carr is appointed Manager, Heavy Buying, reporting to Conor O'Dwyer, with responsibility for all purchasing decisions relating to building materials and heavy hardware.

Lorcan joined Topline Group in 2017, having previously worked with Grafton Merchandising and Liffey Providers.

Group CEO, Hugh O'Donnell, commented on Lorcan's appointment: "I am delighted to appoint Lorcan to such an important role within our business. Over the past two and a half years, he has built strong, effective working relationships with many Topline members through the delivery of high-quality operational support, largely focused on the heavy-end of their businesses. I look forward to him making an equally-effective contribution in his new role."



Lorcan Carr - Topline Heavy Buying Manager.

INSTANTOR® SANBRA FYFFE MAKE NEW APPOINTMENTS IN THE WEST

Sanbra Fyffe Ltd, the makers of Instantor® & market leaders in the supply of plumbing & heating products, are delighted to announce a new appointment to their team. Sean McEvilly will be a familiar face to many in the West, a customer focussed dedicated sales professional, Sean has many years plumbing & heating experience. For the last four years Ashley Molloy has overseen this area and will work closely with Sean over the coming weeks to ensure a smooth transition. After the transfer of customers to Sean, Ashley will take up a new position as Sales Manager in Sanbra Fyffe's sister company, Herron & Son Ltd, a leading agricultural hardware distributor based in Sligo (Distributors of the Hansen, Horizont and Workman brands).

Commenting on the new appointment, Martin Murphy, Director of Sanbra Fyffe said "We are delighted to welcome Sean to the Sanbra Group and in particular to Sanbra Fyffe, he brings a wealth of industry experience and we look forward to working with him. Ashley has been a valued member of the Sanbra Fyffe team and now we wish him the best of luck in his new management role."



Sean McEvilly and Ashley Molloy.

T: Sean McEvilly on 087 161 5587

E: Sean.McEvilly@instantor.ie

T: Ashley Molloy on 087 286 9043 E: Ashley@herron.ie

T: Sanbra Fyffe on 01 842 6255

E: sales@instantor.ie

INTACT IQ BENEFITS TRADE CUSTOMERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As the scale and nature of the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic continues to evolve, business owners are looking to their business software to manage and mitigate the situation as it unfolds.

Some are even looking to emerge stronger with new business models and revenue streams to suit the 'new norm' post crisis.

Fresh from their recent implementation of new merchant business management software, Intact iQ, Gordon Rothwell, Managing Director of James Hargreaves Plumbing Depot UK maintains.

"Our decision to go-live with Intact iQ in early March proved to be a godsend. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic there has never been a greater need to be able to pinpoint your margin earned, net of rebates and supplier price support, in order to guide the decision as to which branches can continue to trade and which ones are costing us money".

With 65 branches and a network of 350 users in the UK, Gordon continues by saying "As and when we emerge from this crisis, there will be many changes required to the way that we work and I am delighted to say that we have in place a business software system that will allow us to make rapid adjustments that reflect the required changes to our operation."

How you respond to COVID-19 is key to maintaining confidence and continuity in your business and its operations. Understanding how our industry is changing, and how to adapt will help you on the road to recovery. Having the right systems in place to adjust to the emerging behaviours and new industry norms shaping our landscape is vital.

To find out more about Intact and how it can empower you to deal with, and respond to, the current crisis, visit www.intactsoftware.com or contact one of our sales team on 042-9331742

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SOMETHING OLD AND SOMETHING NEW

When designing the TJ O'Mahony flagship store in late 2018, Dennis O'Connor, Managing Director of Home Project Centre Ltd, looked to times past for some inspiration, in doing so he looked at the vehicles that merchants would have used in the sixties and seventies to deliver goods to their customers. His research led him to the loveable and reliable Bedford TK, a machine of which anyone over the age of forty would have fond memories.

These machines in their day delivered cattle, Guinness, geese and building materials the length and breadth of the country. Curious to see if there were any Bedford's on line, Dennis was surprised with what he found.

As fate would have it the search led him to a garage less than 100 yards from TJ O'Mahony's sister branch at Kilshane Cross in Dublin.

This was late on a Friday night, and Monday couldn't come quick enough to see if the Bedford was still in the garage.

After toing and froing and more importantly with promises and assurance that the Bedford was going to a good home, a deal was struck by the side of the Bedford, like so many deals had been struck before at marts up and down the country beside

Bedford trucks.

Some minor mechanical work had to be carried out and a consultation with a traditional sign writer to ensure the style of signwriting was in keeping with the style that would have been used in the seventies. The Bedford TK was back on the road!

Dennis O'Connor himself took the Bedford South, deep South, in September 2019.

The journey was from TJ O'Mahony's newly redesigned flagship store in Ballymount to Dun an Oir in Dingle, where a customer was diligently waiting for a delivery of Trex composite Decking.

The trip took seven hours, not all the fault of Bedford's maximum speed of 38 mph, but more to do with the amount of time Dennis was stopped by Bedford enthusiasts from Dublin to Dingle wanting their pictures taken with this old favourite.



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THE PAW HANDS FREE DOOR OPENER

Ceco Equipment in Mayo is pleased to announce the introduction of their new product, The PAW Hands Free Door Opener. In response to the spread of COVID-19, Ceco have devised The PAW Hands Free Door Opener to help curb the spread of germs, bacteria and viruses. This is a foot operated device which can be fitted to doors allowing users to pass through without touching handles. Made from stainless steel, the device can be fitted to latching and non latching doors in approx. five minutes. As businesses /schools /colleges etc. prepare to reopen in the coming weeks they are faced with making their premises as safe as possible for both customers and employees. The Hands Free Door Opener offers a simple and economical solution to eliminate opening doors by hand, and therefore help reduce the potential for spreading bacteria /viruses. There will be many challenges and new ways to do things in the future as the country moves through the stages of exiting lockdown. The hands free door opener is an important device which will aid in this transition. Suitable for shops, bars, restaurants, hotels, schools, universities, hospitals, offices, doctor's surgeries; in fact anywhere a person passes through a door. Ceco Equipment Ltd. have been manufacturing and supplying businesses throughout Ireland and worldwide with recycling and reduction equipment for over 20 years. They can be contacted at **094 938 2988, 086 8077701** or email **info@cecobalers.com**



SAVE ON YOUR ENERGY COSTS

COMSAVE

Comsave Ireland have detailed here three ways businesses can cut their energy costs during COVID-19.

1. Supply suspension scheme.
2. Actual meter reads.
3. Cost comparison of all networks - Comsave will provide free of charge to HAI members.

The COVID-19 Supply Suspension Scheme is part of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities' (CRU) response to the unique circumstances presented by COVID-19. The scheme aims to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in managing the costs associated with their energy supply when temporarily closed, as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. It is available from 1st May 2020 until 31st July 2020. During this time, the business will remain a customer of their supplier but once they avail of the scheme they will not be charged energy or fixed network charges for the duration that the scheme is in place. The process is similar for each provider and customers are required to have their MPRN number and a bill to hand when they are filling out the form. Alternatively, they can contact Comsave directly, details below, who will assist in the application process.

Energia: www.energia.ie/business/sss
Bord Gais: www.bordgaisenergy.ie/business/supply-suspension
Electric Ireland: www.electricireland.ie/business/covid-19-supply-suspension-scheme
Airtricity: www.sseairtricity.com/ie/business/covid-19
Pinergy: <https://pinergy.ie/customer-info/sme>

The second energy saving advice Comsave give is to send actual meter reads to ESB networks. The providers estimate usage and bill according to your last meter read. This means even though businesses could have had no usage they would be charged the estimated figure. If customers send a picture of their meter read with the MPRN number (this is their meter identifier) to **reading@esb.ie**, the provider will charge actual usage and credit back any incorrect charges. Customers are advised to make sure to keep a copy of the email for proof. Finally Comsave will provide, free of charge to HAI members, their cost comparison service. If members send them a bill for their electricity and gas accounts Comsave will review the bills for savings and compare to the different rates in the market. Energy prices are at a low currently due to COVID-19 and the oil market issues.

For further information please contact Paul Kavanagh, Sales Manager, Email **paul@comsave.ie**, Landline **+353(0)1-4372305**, Mobile **+353 (0)86-7815888**, Comsave Ireland **www.comsave.ie**.

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We have successfully grown from being a single brand - **Snickers Workwear** - to the owner and representative of a family of 12 highly regarded brands in the Building, Construction, DIY, Industrial, Manufacturing and Service sectors.

Hultafors Group Ireland has always embraced a positive attitude to innovation and change. That is now being tested yet again. We are confident that we can continue to support your business and our joint customers/end users to stay at the forefront of safety, functionality and comfort in their daily working and professional lives.

David Macken
 Managing Director - Hultafors Group Ireland.

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	Safety Footwear		Ambulance and Emergency

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THE HARDWARE SECTOR LENDS A HELPING HAND

As the global COVID-19 crisis continues to impact the planet both commercially and socially, it is heartening to see businesses in the hardware and building materials sector come forward in support of our medical and healthcare personnel by donating essential supplies and other products. Here's a selection of businesses involved in those commendable activities.

PORTWEST STEP UP WITH TIMELY DONATION

Portwest's directors made the decision to donate the remaining stock of relevant PPE within the business to hospitals, nursing homes and county councils who are co-ordinating the emergency COVID-19 response at community level around the country. There was over €100,000 worth of PPE donated in total to these very worthy causes. Despite the huge commercial demand for these products, they really wanted to see them going to frontline healthcare workers and those putting their lives at risk on a daily basis to help protect us all. These images show a Portwest van being unloaded outside Mayo General Hospital.



ABC ABRASIVES SUPPORTS BEAUMONT HOSPITAL IN PPE SHORTAGE

"Today we contributed to our friends and heroes in Beaumont hospital some well-deserved hampers and thousands of PPE gloves. Help support our frontline HSE staff."



ORIGO SHOWS THEIR SUPPORT

"To show our support to the amazing HSE staff during this difficult time, we have donated all of our stock of protective equipment to help protect and keep them safe."



GENERAL HARDWARE SUPPLIES DONATES MATERIALS TO LISTOWEL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

"We were delighted to provide Listowel Community Hospital with PPE safety gear free of charge today. We'd like to commend them on all the work being done on the frontline and also all those doing likewise. Stay safe, stay apart."



TEGRAL SAYS 'THANK YOU!' TO ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Due to the cancellation of an event as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions Tegral were left with ten luxury hampers worth €100 each, which the team went on to donate to 10 nominated essential workers through a recent Facebook campaign. The hampers went to healthcare workers (including nurses, midwives and paramedics), and to supermarket staff, who were all nominated by their friends and family through Facebook.



QUINN BUILDING PRODUCTS SUPPORT THE FRONTLINE



"Throughout Quinn Building Products and Quinn Packaging, we have donated all of our PPE stocks to various departments and wards in both South West Acute Hospital in Fermanagh and Cavan General Hospital and a number of local care providers. This includes face masks, safety glasses, white overalls and gloves. Quinn Packaging have also donated plastic PET sheet to Magherafelt based Bloc Blinds for use in the manufacture of disposable face shields. The company hope to be able to produce 22,000 face shields per day which will provide vital direct splash face protection to those bravely working on the front line against COVID-19. Thank you and best wishes to all those healthcare workers and support staff working so hard to beat this virus."

ETAG THANKS FRONTLINE WORKERS

"We recently donated masks and other PPE products to a local hospital. We would like to thank all our frontline workers' for their dedication."



FOR ALL THE LATEST INFORMATION ON HOW IRELAND IS RESPONDING TO CASES OF COVID-19 SEE WWW.GOV.IE

DICKIES HELPS TRADES' PEOPLE STAY COOL

Dickies Workwear is launching a new collection of clothing featuring fabric technology that helps keep the wearer from overheating in warm temperatures. The Temp-iQ range is launching with a new t-shirt style, which is made with fabric that traps cool air inside the yarn while wicking away sweat. In this way, the wearer stays comfortable as the cool air is kept next to their skin while they're working in warmer temperatures. To help protect skin from the sun's rays, the t-shirt offers UPF (Ultraviolet Protection Factor) 45+. UPF is similar to the sun protection factor used for sunscreens. "Our Temp-iQ t-shirt is an ideal option to keep trades people feeling cool and comfortable while working hard this summer by using fabric technology that reacts to their body temperature and sweat," said James Whitaker, Marketing Director. "We're constantly on the look-out for new ways to innovate and



expand our range to meet the demands of trades' people and are looking forward to launching further items in the Temp-iQ range to help the wearer stay comfortable regardless of their working environment." Designed in a two-tone style, the Temp-iQ t-shirt is available in 10 colour-ways, making it easy to customise and to co-ordinate with other items from Dickies' range of workwear. Also launching in Summer 2020 are two Temp-iQ hi-vis tops – a polo and t-shirt version, both available in orange and yellow. For more information, please visit www.dickiesworkwear.com

NSAI PUBLISH RETAIL PROTECTION GUIDE



The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) has recently published a 'Retail Protection and Improvement Guide' to help retailers manage business continuity during the COVID-19 emergency. The document outlines preventative measures businesses can take to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus and addresses risks to both workers and the public. It specifies requirements to implement, maintain and improve a retailer's ability to protect against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from COVID-19 related disruptions when they arise. In conjunction with the retail guide and a similar manufacturing guide also issued recently, the NSAI has set up a helpline to offer advice to members of the business community on the necessary steps to take. Commenting on the publication of the Report, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys TD said, "Retailers and retail workers across the country have already taken significant steps to safeguard against the spread of COVID-19. Indeed, the retail sector has been at the forefront in implementing the public health measures that are

required in the fight against the virus and I want to commend retailers, large and small, their employees and their suppliers, and all those within the extended supply-chain on their efforts to date. I would urge them to continue that work. The best way to ensure that retailers can keep operating is to rigorously implement the public health guidelines on physical distancing and minimise the risk of spreading infection. Similarly, I would encourage all employees to make themselves aware of the expert advice and strictly adhere to it." The NSAI guidance document and dedicated helpline is a significant resource for retailers, suppliers/distributors and their employees, both those essential retail outlets that remain open to the public and those retailers who can offer online ordering, and delivery services within the public health guidelines that have been issued. View the Guide here www.nsa.ie/covid-19retailprotection, and for support in relation to improving your COVID-19 related prevention and recovery measures in your retail business, contact the NSAI helpline. Call on +353 1 807 3800, or email COVID-19-support@nsai.ie

KILL PLUS HAS THE ANSWER

Sharp Distributor's Kill Plus anti-viral is the perfect answer to quick disinfecting and sanitising your hands. It is designed to provide rapid disinfection and biological cleanliness to hands and its skin kind formula contains glycerine to moisturise and protect your skin. It should be highlighted to customers and noted generally that a virus and bacteria are different. Unlike bacteria, a virus needs a host, so it's most important to use Kill Plus Anti-Viral when shopping, driving and in work situations etc. Always continue to observe good hand hygiene practice and regularly wash hands with soap. The high performance formulation coats the skin with an anti-virucidal layer that continues providing protection after the initial application. Kill Plus requires no water, it is simply to use, just spray the sanitizer on to hands, rub it all over and let it air dry. This product works effectively as it has a unique blend of anti-virucidal and antibacterial ingredients and moisturiser. The key advantages of Kill Plus are, it's Anti-Viral, Non-flammable, it is safe and has added glycerine moisturiser, it is fragrance free with a pH value of 5.5+/-0.5.

This formula has been tested to the following European Standards:

EN 14476 Anti-Viral,
EN 12054 Anti-Bacterial,
EN 1650 Fungicidal and Yeastcidal
EN 1500 Hygienic Efficacy

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A GREAT RESOURCE FOR YOUR ONLINE JOURNEY

IE Domain Registry, home of .ie, the preferred online address for businesses in Ireland, produces a range of content aimed at helping SMEs with their online journey. They have a series of e-books which are a great resource when building your online presence along with an active blog. Below is a selection of recently produced content.

E-book: Choosing a domain name

A domain name is your address on the internet and a crucial part of your online business. Not only is it your online address, but it also reflects who you are as a business and a brand. This e-book takes you through the process of choosing your domain name. It outlines why it is important to secure the domain name that best fits and describes your business. At the end, you should have all the tools to brainstorm domain names and know how to register one.



E-book: How to get an accurate website quote

This e-book guides you through the questions you need to ask to get the best website for your business at the right cost. It outlines, step-by-step, the information that you need the web developer to know about your business.

A website tender template and cost outline is also included for the web developer to complete. This means that when you receive quotes, you will be able to compare information and decide which one best meets your needs.

Blog: Top 10 tools to work smarter and grow faster

Businesses can benefit enormously from the range of online tools available, boosting efficiency and productivity. A recent blog selected some of the best options and created a list of the top 10 tools to work smarter and grow faster. The key benefits and features of each is outlined.

For more information go to www.iedr.ie

SEAI LAUNCH ONLINE ENERGY ACADEMY

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has launched a free online training resource to help businesses reduce their energy costs. SEAI online training is free, quick and easy and can be completed by employees from home. The SEAI Energy Academy can help to lower energy bills by as much as 10%, and potentially even more, by educating businesses and employees on changing energy use behaviours and effective energy management. With the increasing societal focus on climate change, and the launch of the Government's 2019 Climate Action Plan, many businesses are seeking to play their part in reducing their climate impact. The SEAI Energy Academy is an ideal starting point and allows employees to upskill on energy efficiency and avail of tailored online training that can lead to important business cost savings.

The SEAI Energy Academy offers practical step-by-step energy training tailored to specific business needs. The online modules and courses are quick and easy to complete and cover topics such as: Energy and Climate Change; Business Energy Efficiency; Lighting; Heating; Refrigeration Electric Vehicles; Electricity Bill Analysis; Behavioural Change; and Home Energy Efficiency. Further modules are planned for the SEAI Energy Academy which will make it a vital business energy resource into the future, and will be added throughout the year.

On completing a course, learners will receive a Certificate of Completion from SEAI which demonstrates a company's commitment to educating staff about energy. These courses are also a great way of engaging, upskilling and retaining staff.

The SEAI Energy Academy is now available on www.seai.ie/energyacademy



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Designer and founder of Liadain Aiken Knitwear

liadainaiken.ie

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IE Domain Registry

CORE TECH DELIVERING SOLUTIONS THAT EMPOWER RETAILERS

The challenges we all face running retail businesses in this changed environment can seem daunting. But our economy and our customers are yearning for answers to the "what does our new normal look like?" question.

We all have a few choices but one of them is to adapt. Irish entrepreneurs are especially adept at adapting to challenges and with the right strategic partner CORE TECH believe it is possible to create a "new trading normal" to enable our shared survival through what could be, a prolonged period of business disruption. Without a vaccine, customers may not be comfortable visiting stores and shopping/purchasing in the normal way. So, CORE TECH has accepted this challenge and have rapidly accelerated their R&D roadmap to provide modules that are paperless, contactless, mobile enabled and driven by YOUR data model.

Core's focus is to help retailers navigate this new environment of trading by:

Creating new platforms for selling – improve the buying experience for customers (E-Commerce & Customer Loyalty)

Utilising mobile apps to increase productivity so your people can focus on serving your customers (Sales order App/ Proof of delivery App/Stock Take & Cycle Counting App)

Empowering retail business to use their own data to make better, faster decisions in realtime (CORE Data Analytics with AI/ML & Dashboards/Reports for Managers)

Enabling retail businesses to reduce paper (Mobile/ Contactless Payments/Laser/Dig Signatures)

Encouraging retail businesses to understand their customers choices better in this difficult trading period (Loyalty/Gift Cards /Promotions).

This period of disruption will continue to challenge all of us, but what will define all of us, as businesses, as teams and as individuals, is how we respond to these challenges together. CORE TECH is fully committed to helping customers both existing and new to navigate this changing world so please feel free to reach out for a free consultation and let the CORE TECH team see if they can help.

Email stuart.mcdonnell@coretechnology.ie

KASP FURTHER STRENGTHENS ITS COMBINATION PADLOCKS RANGE

Designed and manufactured to the high standards people have come to expect from Kasp, its range of premium quality combination locks is set to be further strengthened with two exciting new additions. Specifically designed for convenience and optimum weather protection, the new Series 114 Marine Combination Padlock (30mm/40mm) is a high quality three or four dial marine combination padlock, suitable for a multitude of outdoor security uses. The new Series 116 Disc Combination Padlock 70mm is a precision manufactured four dial combination padlock, ideal for medium security applications including sheds, garages, gates and shutters.

The Kasp Series 114 Marine Combination Padlock is available in 30mm and 40mm widths, this premium weather resistant combination padlock is easy to use and maintain. Featuring a resettable combination for added convenience and security, its mirrored chromed solid brass body and stainless steel shackle provide superior corrosion resistance, whilst rust-free internal components offer an extra level of resistance against corrosion. A high quality combination padlock, the new Kasp Series 114 Marine Combination Padlock provides a durable, weatherproof option for a number of outdoor applications.

The new Series 116 Disc Combination Padlock 70mm combines superior quality with a closed disc shackle design for increased security against shackle attack. A resettable combination provides added convenience and a four digit code offers extra security. A hardened steel shackle also gives that extra protection against hacksaw and cropping attacks and a unique powder coated body ensures maximum resistance against corrosion.

Tina Skinner, Marketing Director, comments: "Demand for combination padlocks is increasing and we believe that the new additions to the Kasp range will provide customers with the opportunity to maximise sales by offering additional price competitive options. Both products are also available in eye-catching Kasp blister pack formats for greater impact in-store, with features and benefits clearly highlighted to provide easy product selection."

For more information call **+44 1758 704704**, or visit www.kaspsecurity.co.uk



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As a leading privately-owned global logistics business with owned offices and warehouses across the USA, UK, Asia and Ireland, we have been importing critical personal protective equipment (PPE) for those responding to Coronavirus.

WE DELIVER

End to end procurement and logistics support:

- Sourcing – Qualified & known suppliers of PPE products (Masks, Gloves, Goggles, Gowns, Wipes)
- Shipping – different modes (Air, Sea, Rail) & routing solutions that cater for all pricing & transit levels
- Staggered shipments – on large orders to ensure product is processed & shipped before full order is completed
- Marine Insurance
- Currency / Payment assistance
- In house customs clearance & guidance on relief
- Next day delivery throughout 32 counties

A YEAR IN OUR WORLD

- 25 MILLION KG'S OF AIRFREIGHT
- 300,000 CUBIC METRES OF LCL
- 85,000 DOMESTIC VEHICLE LOADS
- 350,000 COLLECTIONS & DELIVERIES
- 845,000 TRIPS TO/FROM EUROPE
- 60,000 FCL VIA OCEAN

GUIDANCE ON PESTICIDE USE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Irish Water, working in partnership with a range of organisations involved in the National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group (NPDWAG), including Hardware Association Ireland, is providing advice and guidance to all users of pesticides including the farming community, greens keepers and grounds keepers and domestic users, to ensure that best practice measures to protect drinking waters are always followed. Farmers and other landholders dealing with the challenge of tackling rushes should note that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) has developed new guidance on the sustainable management of rushes. The new approach is based on the concepts of containment or suppression, and aims to minimise the use of pesticides. More information on this can be obtained from your local farm advisor or on www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/waterprotection.

Irish Water working in partnership with the National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group would like to remind farmers and professional users of pesticides of the need to follow best practice in the application of pesticides, particularly near lakes and rivers used as drinking water sources.

If pesticides have to be used, the basic steps in reducing risks are:

- Choose the right pesticide product (Note that products containing MCPA are NOT approved for use in weed-wipers)
- Read and follow the product label
- Determine the right amount to purchase and use
- Don't spray if rain or strong wind is forecast in the next 48 hours
- Make sure you are aware of the location of all nearby water courses
- Comply with any buffer zone specified on the product label to protect the aquatic environment. Mark out the specified buffer zone from the edge of the river or lake or other water course
- Never fill a sprayer directly from a water course or carry out mixing, loading or other handling operations beside a water course
- Avoid spills, stay well back from open drains and rinse empty containers three times into the sprayer.
- Store and dispose of pesticides and their containers properly.

A recently produced video on the correct use of MCPA can be viewed on Irish Water's YouTube channel.

Information leaflets on pesticide use are also available to download from the Teagasc website at www.teagasc.ie/environment/water-quality/farming-for-water-quality-assap/improving-my-water-quality/protecting-drinking-water-from-pesticides/

BALLYMOTE LIGHTS UP TOWN

Businesses and home owners in Ballymote, Co. Sligo were encouraged by their Christmas lights committee to switch on their front window lights from 8.00pm - 11.30pm each evening during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was designed to try and give some cheer and brighten up the town at night for those people out walking. Fairy/Christmas lights were particularly encouraged. Local Hardware Association Ireland member, Padraic Rogers, Topline Rogers, was very supportive of the initiative and kindly supplied the images.



GUARANTEED IRISH ANNOUNCE A SUSTAINABLE GREEN SUPPLY CHAIN



L-R: Paddy Kelly Managing Director, Tegral Building Products Ltd., Brian Dolan Managing Director, Saint-Gobain/Gyproc, Patrick Atkinson CEO, Chadwicks Group, Brid O'Connell CEO, Guaranteed Irish, Patrick Lucey Senior Quantity Surveyor, Glasgoven Contracts Ltd, Kathryn Meghan CEO, Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland.

The Irish Construction sector is driving towards a sustainable future with a specification list of Irish products and services. Guaranteed Irish, in collaboration with their construction members, have recently announced a call to all Irish construction and supply members to join the 'Guaranteed Irish Green List'. This 'Green List' will be the first of its kind in Ireland to be produced and will offer Architects, Engineers and Quantity surveyors a resource of locally produced materials that can be specified when building a house, school, hospital or any building in Ireland. It was initially aimed at reducing the carbon footprint and supporting local businesses but in the wake of COVID-19, it has become even more important. The list will include all the elements of the supply chain required for a building that can be sourced locally and reduce the carbon footprint while supporting jobs and businesses here in Ireland. The idea is supported by the RIAI, Engineers Ireland, CIF and the Construction, Manufacturing, Design and Hardware Industry. The idea pioneers a sustainable specification listing of

Guaranteed Irish products and services as the construction sector returns to work post COVID-19 and has been welcomed by industry leaders. Guaranteed Irish has put a call out to all businesses this week to participate. Leading global construction firms Kingspan, Tegral, IPL, Tretford, Glennons, Wavin and SISK have already engaged and many more have been invited to participate. Guaranteed Irish construction members see the importance of a standardised specification list of sustainable construction and interiors listing for Ireland. These companies operate in Ireland, protect jobs, and support communities. The project will act as a showcase for what can be achieved in the Construction Industry when adapting a "sustainable and circular economy" mindset. The CEO of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) Kathryn Meghan said, "The benefit of having such a specification listing available to Irish architects and engineers will profile the Construction Industry in Ireland as one which demonstrates its commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and promotes sustainability as the construction sector returns to work post COVID-19."

BURG-WÄCHTER OFFERS COMMUNITY SECURITY KITS

Burg-Wächter has recently announced it is amending its unique outreach scheme that offers support to community causes. While the Burg-Wächter Secure Communities Scheme is suspending its cash awards due to the current situation with COVID-19, it is continuing to offer community support. Spokesperson Mark Pearson explains: "Our scheme supports community events and activities. In the current situation, these types of projects can no longer go ahead. However, we know that many communities now need to secure community property, equipment and outdoor areas. So we intend to continue to offer Community Security Kits in Ireland and the UK through the scheme for the foreseeable future." Applications for the amended scheme can be made through the website www.burg-wachter.co.uk/community. Communities can apply for up to £150/€150 worth of product. The emphasis is being placed on supporting as many applications as possible within an overall limit of up to ten kits per month. The amended Secure Communities Scheme will run for as long as it is possible, based on external factors, or until the original awards are reinstated. Mark Pearson said: "Burg-Wächter launched the Secure Communities Scheme in November last year. Since then it has supported 10 community projects as varied as music

festivals, agricultural shows, bonfire night fundraisers, bike maintenance training schemes and a cross section of youth projects. We have been delighted to help these projects bring some amazing and effective ideas to life, in aid of local communities. Going forward we are doing what we can to maintain our support to local communities without compromising the health, safety and security of anyone involved." Burg-Wächter is known for its safes and post-boxes alongside an extensive range of locking products. Mark Pearson explains: "Burg-Wächter regularly receives requests for products to support charitable and community causes; anything from quality padlocks, cash & key boxes to technology driven security such as wifi-cameras and smart alarms. The Secure Communities Scheme enables us to formalise and scale up our charitable and community support, so that it reaches a wider audience." For more information or case studies on community projects that have received support from the Secure Communities Scheme, please contact Peter Walsh, ASM Ireland South, peter_walsh@burg.biz or **083 1306689**.



8TH GLOBAL DIY SUMMIT 2020 POSTPONED



Following the rapid escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak around the world, and especially in Europe, the organisers have taken the decision to postpone the 8th Global DIY-Summit 2020.

Further information about the new date will be available in the near future. The guidance of various health and safety organisations and the organisers commitment to ensuring the wellbeing of their community has necessitated this shift. They considered input from many of their sponsors, attendees and speakers, as well as the impact of widespread corporate travel restrictions during the first quarter of 2020 across the home improvement industry. By holding the Global DIY-Summit at a later date, organisers will be in a better position to deliver their event at full capacity, offering delegates and partners the high value that they aim to achieve at each of their events. Organisers are working hard to transition their sponsors, attendees and speakers to the new dates, and they expect the next Global DIY-Summit to be the best event they have ever held. They have started their outreach to all sponsors, attendees and speakers with information about the next steps.

Any questions or further information can be sought by emailing info@diysummit.org.

PROMMT HELPING HARDWARE BUSINESSES

Hardware Association Ireland members can save 25% with Prommt, formerly known as Pay2Sender. Prommt is a safe, cashless and contact-free payments system widely used by hardware stores and builders providers in Ireland and the UK. Prommt is a powerful payment request platform that allows merchants to send secure, personalised payment links to customers via email and text message. The system offers a wide range of clever features and has the potential to completely transform the way you handle remote payments. Recently, Prommt has been instrumental in helping its hardware clients to continue trading through COVID-19 restrictions. Liam Phelan Grange Builders Providers said "We had been using Prommt, as a way to minimise risky over-the-phone payments, long before the Coronavirus emergency. When the restrictions came in, we were instantly able to eliminate cash on delivery (COD) payments and face-to-face transactions with a simple, secure online alternative we already had in place. I anticipate that when we fully return to normal trading, COD will be gone for good." Hardware Association Ireland has just agreed an exclusive discount for members that could save you up to 25% with Prommt. If you take an annual plan, you'll get twelve months for the price of nine.

To find out more click visit www.prommt.com/request-demo-hai



Safe, cashless & contact-free payments for hardware stores.

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Sensor - Touch-Free operation

FEATURES:

- High quality Stainless steel with option of personalised corporate logo. - No installation required. - Battery operated. (x 6 D batteries that last circa 100000 doses).
Small footprint with dimensions ; 300mm dia base x 120mm dia top x 1060mm High (inc spout).

BENEFITS:

Sensor touch free operating means

- Increased hygiene. - Additional speed for high traffic areas - Dosage Control: - approx. 50% less gel used compared to non calibrated/ manual devices.
(500 uses per day = saving pays for device in 2 months).

12 litre capacity ensuring - reduced maintenance labour - better value sanitiser gel purchasing.

12 month warranty guaranteed when use Safe Hands anti-bacterial moisturising gel. Supplied in 10 litre cans with own nozzle.

PACKAGES:

- 1) Safe Hands Sanitiser Station (S1764) **€349**
- 2) Safe Hands 10ltr Sanitiser Gel (S1733) **€80**
- 3) **Sanitiser Deal** (S1795) Buy Safe Hands Sanitiser Station + 2 x10 litre Safe Hands gel **€299 + (€80 per 10 litre x2) = €459**

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HAI Recovery Plan 2020

Hardware Association Ireland (HAI) represents more than 400 employers in the industry. The sector has a turnover of €2.4 billion (CRO), pays wages in excess of €800 million and is a significant contributor to the public purse. It directly employs 26,000 people and it underpins the jobs of a further 147,000 builders and tradespeople. HAI's recommendations represent a window of opportunity to trigger growth throughout the country. We believe that these recommendations will spark economic activity, mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, and help us meet our carbon-reduction targets. This sector has huge scope, scale, and potential.

Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) scheme for Renovations

HAI strongly encourages the re-introduction of the scheme. We suggest that the scheme has a lifespan of three years from July 2020 (or end of universal lock-down period). Statistics from the Revenue show that the scheme has been highly successful. During the period of the previous HRI scheme 147,369 projects were completed on 94,179 properties. Almost €2.5 billion flowed into the economy, with €105 million claimed in tax credits. (Source: Revenue Commissioners). HAI also suggests that the minimum qualifying spend is €3,000 to encourage those with smaller homes, and also to increase the ceiling to €50,000 as an incentive for homeowners to pursue additional home improvement projects. Evidence to-date suggests that the HRI scheme has acted as a strong encouragement for otherwise latent home improvement works, thereby making the scheme effectively cost neutral for the exchequer. HAI requests that the tax credit be made claimable in the same year as work is completed, with 100% of the claim credited the following tax year (originally spread over the following two fiscal years). This would provide an extra incentive and ensure money is more efficiently circulated back into the economy. HAI recommends that a flat tax rate of 30% is used to claim credits - this would make it more equitable. In the previous HRI scheme, it was based on income tax paid, it disproportionately incentivised higher earners and areas with a concentration of higher earners.

HAI Recommendations:

- Re-introduce and extend the HRI scheme by 36 months.
- Lower the floor of the scheme and increase the ceiling.
- Incentivise with a flat tax rate.
- Claim tax credit in same year as work completed and claim credited following year.

All independent consumer insight research⁽¹⁾ conducted over the last number of years underlines a strong appetite for home improvements amongst Irish householders. Irish consumers also have a considerable amount of savings, largely in low interest deposit accounts. HAI recommends the Home Renovation Incentive Scheme as the business model to deliver the strategy because:

It works - it has a proven track record

It is a core competence of key government agencies

It is fast and effective - it lets money flow, and flow immediately throughout the economy, and throughout the country

It will help restore consumer confidence and encourage sensible and local spending

It will grow employment.

Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) scheme - for Energy Retrofitting of Homes

Again HAI recommends the Home Renovation Incentive Scheme as the business model to deliver the strategy outlined below.

There is a groundswell in public opinion towards becoming more eco-friendly as evidenced by the most recent Eurobarometer Poll⁽²⁾. Results of the poll evidence that while concern about the environment and climate change has grown throughout the EU - 35% of EU citizens consider it to an important issue - this figure rises to 50% in Ireland. Consumer research conducted by HAI shows that householders have a considerable appetite for energy efficiency improvements to their home.

Previously Ireland set a target of 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. However current forecasts suggest that only a 1% reduction will be delivered⁽³⁾. 80% of our homes have a C rating or less. We use 7% more energy than the EU average and 58% more carbon. We require a breakthrough on this. The plan to retrofit 500,000 homes will be enabled by the strategy detailed below. HAI members will be key delivery partners in the implementation of this strategy.

In other areas of environmental protection Ireland has an enviable track record - as evidenced by the success of the WEEE scheme, where Ireland is one of the best performers in Europe. HAI welcomes the recent report of the Climate Action and Tax Strategy Group and its focus on taxation stimulus to encourage retrofitting.

HAI Recommendations:

- Reduce VAT to 9% on all carbon saving products such as Heat Pumps, Insulation, Wood burning stoves (all products as per Energy Saving Credits - Better Energy Homes).

- Introduce a value-based incentive scheme for retrofitting with similar incentives to the HRI scheme. At present most incentives are weighted towards deep retrofitting. Even with current grants the financial outlay for many householders is prohibitive. According to the Property Price Register the average selling price of a second-hand house in many parts of the country is less than €200,000. Currently the Deep Retrofit Grant programme has the aim of an A rated home. This requires an investment by the homeowner of an estimated €30,000. Adjust the grant system such that it will encourage medium-level retrofitting. Target properties with a BER rating of B3 or less. Works to be conducted only by a qualifying contractor who is registered for the scheme and who can demonstrate tax compliance and VAT registration.
- Previously SEAI granted works were practically excluded from the Home Renovation Incentive. To overcome this, we suggest that if an individual receives an SEAI grant then the total qualifying expenditure (grant + tax exemption) will be reduced by the amount equal to the grant amount - allowing for co-existence with SEAI grants and avoiding duplication of funding. e.g. If a household spends €10,000 - The grant may account for €5,000 and the household can claim tax relief on the other €5,000.
- Introduce measurements (KPIs) and targets for retrofitting activity at local government level.
- HAI fully endorses St. Vincent de Paul's recommendation to "Ensure sufficient funding is available to allow Local Authorities to complete the energy retrofitting of social housing stock and set a target of upgrading all existing stock in the next four years. Cost: allocate €50 million for energy upgrades in 2020".

If ever there was a time for this it is now.

This will help restore confidence, inject cash into the economy and create thousands of sustainable green jobs.

It will enhance our energy security by decreasing our dependence on imported fuel.

It will decrease our carbon footprint.

Stimulate Housebuilding and Renovation of Property

Residential housing remains heavily under supplied and new house build activity subdued. Most builders and economists estimate that we need at least 35,000 new homes to clear the backlog. In 2019, 21,500 new homes were build, this year the target was for 24,000. With the cessation of construction due to COVID-19 in most likelihood this target will not be met. The general election underpinned housing as a pivotal area and one of very significant concern to the electorate. The recent Eurobarometer results show housing to be, by far of greater concern in Ireland than 26 of the 28 EU states. Only Luxembourg is more concerned about housing than us. We welcome the Rebuilding Ireland plan and its ambitious targets;

however, we feel the sector needs additional stimulation to encourage new builds and reduce the number of vacant dwellings.

HAI Recommendations:

- Introduce a Derelict Property Renovation scheme (similar to Home Renovation Incentive scheme) for property owners.
- Continue with the Help to Buy Incentive Scheme.
- Introduce a Tax incentivised savings scheme for first time purchasers based on the SSIA model.
- Typically banks make exceptions in terms of deposits/income in 20% of cases of mortgage applications. Usually this is used up by Quarter 3. Increase to 33% to the end of 2021.

Upskilling the sector and re-skilling new employees.

It is essential that the industry can respond to changing demands. Up to the onset of COVID-19 there was a shortage of skilled workers in the sector. With so many people out of work there is a potential pool of new workers. A cohort of those currently out of work are unlikely to return to their previous careers, at least in the short to medium term. Some will need to be re-skilled to adapt to the needs of the economy.

- We support the recommendations in the Construction Industry Federation's report 'Demand for Skills in Construction'⁽⁴⁾. Despite the positive outlook for construction over the medium to long term, a skills shortage could threaten to derail this. In particular, HAI advocates the establishment of a Construction Skills Forum, to monitor progress and address barriers in the education and training system which are impeding the delivery of the required skilled employees.

HAI believes that the recommendations detailed above are a coherent and right response to the challenges and opportunities that we face. They are both appropriate and pro-social with a particular relevance for much-needed regeneration throughout the country.

(1) Core Research- Household Attitudes to Renovating and Energy Efficiency Nov 19

(2) Eurobarometer Spring 2019

(3) Extract from Speech by Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment Richard Bruton T.D McGill Summer School July 2019

(4) Demand for Skills in Construction CIF/DKM Economic Consultants

New Copper Press fittings from Sanbra Fyffe

Designed for 1/2", 3/4" and 1" Irish copper pipe.

Sanbra Fyffe has been supplying and supporting the Irish plumbing trade for over 80 years with their extensive product range including Instantor Compression Fittings, the Instantor Press System (for Pex-Al-Pex) and more recently Instantor Metric Copper Press Fittings, all the while delivering on their promise of reliability and absolute quality. Their original 'Irish Instantor' compression fitting remains the first choice for many Irish plumbers.

Sanbra Fyffe has listened to the Irish Mechanical & Electrical contractors call for Copper Press fittings for Irish pipe. The answer is Instantor Copper Press fittings, offering a high-quality modern solution with flame-free jointing for faster and safer installation in five simple steps - Cut, Calibrate, Check, Mark and Press.

Instantor Copper Press gives installers many other game-changing advantages over conventional jointing connections; specifically in cost, time and reliability.

Cost and Time

'Flame-free jointing' connections eliminate the requirements for a flame-based Health and Safety risk assessment, a Hot Works Permit or a fire watch. The need for fire and fumes suppression equipment and flammability gas and Hot Works tools is also redundant. Instantor Copper Press is quick to install, which means significant savings in labourer costs and time:

- No welding or soldering is required
- It's a quick and simple installation in five steps: Cut, Calibrate, Check, Mark and Press
- Repairs can be made quickly and installed on a 'live system' saving system downtime
- There is no requirement to flush/cleanse as no jointing compound or flux is used to complete the joint. Note: a flush may be required for other dust/debris.
- Instantor Copper Press eliminates the need for expensive and heavy equipment such as threading machines and welding bottles, which can be difficult and time-consuming to transport.

Reliability - Peace of Mind

The '3-Point Press' connection uses a newly developed 'VI' profile press in cooperation with REMS for use with the Instantor Copper Press fittings. There is one mechanical press either side of the bead and one hydraulic press on the O-ring, which gives a sound and secure joint every time.

A 'Leak-Before-Press' feature allows you to quickly identify if a press connection is incomplete or unpressed altogether. The O-ring has four reduced sections allowing water to pass when unpressed. It's a uniform process which reduces the risk of any potential leaks.

Approval and Training

Instantor Copper Press fittings have WRAS and KIWA approval and have been designed and manufactured to IS EN 1254-7 (DC) so are perfectly suitable for potable water installations. Sanbra Fyffe are happy to facilitate on-site training for installers new to Copper Press.



Systems and Operating Conditions

The Instantor Copper Press system is optimised to work in a variety of systems and operating conditions.

The fittings contain a Black EDPM O-ring, which is designed for use in hot and cold water applications, heating systems (non-solar applications), chilled water and oil-free compressed air systems. Instantor Copper Press has been designed to be used with Hard(R290) or Half Hard(R250) copper tube conforming with I.S. EN1057:2006. Operating conditions are 16 Bar @ 30°C and 10 Bar @ 95°C and with a maximum permitted temperature of 110°C.

Minimum spacing between fittings is recommended as follows:
15mm / 1/2" - 10mm space
22mm / 3/4" - 20mm space
28mm / 1" - 20mm space

Sanbra Fyffe has partnered with REMS to develop a unique jaw for the Irish market to use with Irish copper tube. The selected jaw is a 'VI' profile, which is used in conjunction with the REMS mini-press tool. 'VI' will be 'imprinted' on the completed press joint for identification purposes.

Instantor Copper Press key features

- Brand new Irish Imperial 'VI' profile jaw
- Also available in metric using 'M' profile jaw
- Flame-free jointing. No hot works permit required. Flame-free installation makes for a safer job and shortened project times.
- Quick and simple to install. Faster than traditional solder methods saves on time and material costs
- WRAS approved. Instantor Copper Press fittings are WRAS approved. Approval #1903373 & #2003301
- EPDM O-Rings with Leak-Before-Press feature designed to identify un-pressed joints during system testing
- Operating Pressure/temperatures - 16bar @ 30°C, 10bar @ 95°C. Max 110°C, Min -25°C
- Aesthetically pleasing finish. Flux and heat-free.

For more information contact, Sanbra Fyffe Ltd, Instantor Works, Santry Avenue, Dublin 9, D09 K160. T: +353 (0)1 842 6255
E: sales@instantor.ie www.instantor.ie



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What we can learn from the changing UK merchant market

Alan Hegarty is MD at the Ardale Group which owns three Builders Merchants in Dublin, as well as a wholesale business including such brands as Basta. In assessing the productivity and performance of their business, Alan compared it with Builders Merchants in the UK. He shares some of his findings in this article.

In Ireland the merchanting sector is quite fragmented, many are owner operated and they file abridged accounts. Therefore the information available is quite limited. We widened our search to the UK, where there are a number of multi branch groups, many of them remaining in family ownership. Owing to their sizes, they file full accounts, which we can use for analysis.

There has been considerable consolidation in the UK market over the past few years, resulting in larger groups. Of the 23 merchants analysed, the smallest branch number was five, with the largest number being 60 depots. We excluded the largest operators such as Travis Perkins and Grafton.

We analysed the 23 merchants in various areas;

Gross Margin:

Overall Gross Margin varied from 16% to 41%, with an average earned of 31%. Further analysis of this pointed toward a diversification of sorts on the offering toward higher margin areas. The two highest margin merchants operated skip hire and plant hire. Plant Hire is an interesting diversification and add on for existing branches. It can operate as an up-sell to the existing customer base. An analysis of two listed Plant Hire operators, HSS and Speedy Hire, show them making 54.9%, and 55.2% respectively as gross margin. Interestingly their EBITDA margins are quite high at 20.22% and 25.8% respectively. A number of the merchants operate timber importing and distribution businesses, with gross margins in excess of 30%.

Other routes to improving gross margin include specialist kitchen displays, specialist plumbing counters, and civils depots.

Kitchen displays are an area that Steve Collinge, a regular

contributor to *The Hardware Journal*, is encouraging to maintain footfall in branches. An interesting angle along the lines of Howdens in the UK is to have a kitchen offering to the small builder. Firms such as U Form can facilitate this in a relatively capital light investment. There are also kitchen flat pack offerings that are popular in the UK. Howdens have a gross margin in excess of 62%.

Plumbing and Heating is seen as a complementary area for expansion of an existing locations' turnover. We will look at this further later.

Toward the lower end of the margin scale at 16.06% to 23.22%, the merchants were more focussed on the heavier side of business, with a strong aggregate business. One had a strong brick distribution business. All bar one was concentrating efforts to diversify into higher margin areas.

Average Branch Turnover:

There was huge variance in average branch turnovers across the entire list. Average branch turnover across the 23 merchants is £5.55m.

Builders Depot has five branches with an average turnover of a very impressive £19.4m in each. The branches are strategically located throughout London.

Overall the most common average branch turnover range is £5m-£7.3m.

There are a number of merchants that operate branches at lower turnover levels, from £1.6m to £3.4m. These generally are more specialised offerings such as HPS with an average depot turnover of £1.6m. They operate a specialist heating and plumbing offering.

Depot Turnover is an interesting area that we have discussed extensively internally against that of a general merchant. Is there a turnover level that is required to make a general merchant marketable to a third party purchaser?



We would feel that a minimum turnover of €4m-5m is required to make a general merchant attractive to a third party purchaser. At a lower turnover, the operation is more suited to an owner operator, and purchases of merchants of this size are infrequent. The dominant purchasers in the market place currently are groups, who will require the ability to generate a certain turnover and profit to justify head office time allocation, applying systems etc. A logical move maybe for the smaller merchants to move towards a more specialist offering in the future.

Turnover Per Staff Member/Average Staff Numbers:

Overall in the study, the average turnover per staff employed was £216,273. There was quite a wide variance from the lowest at £147,419 at Nicolls & Clarke to £313,279 at HPS, the heating and plumbing merchant. Overall the average staff number per depot was 25. There was a large variance from the lowest being five at HPS to an average per depot of 44 at MP Moran. This points towards Heating and Plumbing being a strong upsell for Merchants, generating on average, sales in excess of those currently generated per existing employee. Gross Margins are also in excess of 31% at HPS. Wolseley (part of Ferguson Plc) is generating a Gross Margin of over 29% across their 551 depots in the UK.

We are aware of merchants in Ireland who have generated new sales through a specialist counter of over €1m-€2m per annum per branch.

Stock:

The overall average stock turn was 7.23 times. There is a wide variance in stock turn overall, with the higher stock turn numbers existing in heavier side merchants, with stock turns of 12-15 times. At our company we are constantly discussing how much stock we should be holding to maximise sales, but minimise cash tied up in working capital. An interesting method of analysis for the 23 merchants in the UK is stock as a percentage of annual depot sales. The average figure is 11%. The majority of the merchants are nearer 8-9%.



Debtors:

The average debtors per branch is €656,082. The average debtors figure as a percentage of depot sales is 12.8%. Obviously the lower this figure, the better the working capital management of the branch will be.

There is a lot to be learnt from the handling of debtors in the UK. The accepted system is a lot more structured. If your account is 30 or 60 days, you pay within 30 or 60 days, unlike Ireland, where we are constantly being pleaded to extend. I remember building in the UK in the early 2000's. We had an Architect working on several projects for us, and they were being paid decent fees. One day I received a legal letter regarding overdue fees. I rang them, and said we are all working together, this is a partnership etc. He politely told me that his terms were clear in his engagement letter, and the fees agreed, he had done the work, so he expected payment as per the agreed timelines. All seems fair to me. Needless to say, we complied going forward! So, if we apply this to our customers. We are asked to price in most cases. We give a good price to secure the sale. The customer is assessed for credit worthiness, and ability to pay, we make a call on credit terms. We have priced the sale on the basis of a timely sale. In some, not all cases, payment is delayed for what could be a low margin or competitive sale. We are told, they are awaiting a cert, or payment, or are in dispute etc.





But most likely all labour has been paid. So we become a bank to this customer, but cannot or do not charge him for this overdraft. Should we as a collective be enforcing terms more stringently, or should we be outlining in our pricing, that if this is not paid within the agreed time, an interest amount should apply or the price adjusted upward?

Other Observations on the UK market

There has been a lot of consolidation in the UK merchant space over the past number of years, with Cairngorm Capital buying out a number of operations, such as Parkers, Chandlers and Grant & Stone. Huws Gray have also been on the acquisition trail and MKM were also recently enough bought out by Bain Capital. What we are seeing in the UK is the smaller independent merchants being brought into larger groups, to reduce the cost base, and increase buying power. Merchants are looking to add to their offering through adding more value added services and margin increase areas such as kitchens and plumbing. There is a real drive in the UK towards on-line spend. Considerable money is chasing this area. Ireland is definitely behind this curve.

On-Line Offering Growth

There has been considerable conversation about the potential of on-line, and the growth of on-line. From a merchant perspective, we see the growth potential of it, but take up and conversion is slow currently. It is generally reported that on-line sales in the DIY sector in Europe average circa 7% and growing substantially every year, circa 25% growth per annum. The big upside to trading on-line is the product is paid for when ordered, so the complete debtor function is removed from the cycle. A number of the larger UK offerings such as Travis Perkins with ToolStation and Kingfisher with Screwfix, are placing the future of their groups growth potential on their hybrid on-line offerings. We are at first hand seeing the growth of Screwfix on the ground here in Ireland. This follows a few years of testing the market. The operation is simple: offer a limited range, and make the offering really compelling. Mash that with a hybrid of existing stores and on-line. This makes it easy for the customer to review the product and pricing, and then decide, does he buy on-line or in-store via



click and collect or collect in store. There are considerable costs in enabling your existing system to provide live stock levels, and to sync that with your on-line offering. The costs of entry are considerable. On top of this the UK has seen considerable growth in such pure on-line offerings as www.ManoMano.co.uk and www.cmstores.com.

ManoMano originates in France, but also has a strong UK offering. ManoMano have considerable Private Equity Funding, and have a stated aim to get to annual sales of €1 billion PA. They have thus far raised \$344m in funding for their rapid expansion. 2019 sales grew 50% to €600m. They operate in France, Spain, Italy, Germany and the UK. CMStores is an interesting offering. They also have raised considerable Private Equity, and have refined their offering into specialist websites for roofing, drainage, and Insulation. They have also developed a website direct to the builder, www.cmtrade.co.uk. This is the first time that we have come across a merchant openly offering rebates to customers. They are openly advertising cmtrade in the housebuilding and construction related magazines in the UK. Turnover is estimated to currently be running at £60m per annum. Another on-line company is www.victoriaplum.com, a successful pure play on-line bathroom and sanitary ware operation. Turnover for 2019 was £64m, with a Gross Margin of 38.9%. In October 2019, the company was sold to Private Equity. The Private Equity cannot be wrong. We therefore envisage that there will be a considerable move in Ireland toward on-line in the medium term.



Alan Hegarty, Managing Director at the Ardale Group.



IWP is standing strong

When THJ met Paddy Mulvihill, Managing Director of Irish Wire Products (IWP) for our May/June issue's Supplier Profile, COVID-19 had yet to hit Ireland. So this profile presents a snapshot of the business before the outbreak, as IWP looked ahead to what the hardware sector expected to be a promising 2020.

Today, as IWP, together with the entire industry, tackles unprecedented challenges, Paddy Mulvihill offers this message: "The hardware industry in Ireland has vastly changed over my years in the sector. But now, more than ever, we must work together to serve our customers and the general public. This is an uncertain and worrying time for the people of Ireland, but by supporting each other, we will overcome this challenge and can look forward to a bright future for the industry." Paddy and IWP speak from long experience. In its 85 years of operations, the company has weathered storms and emerged stronger and more resilient.

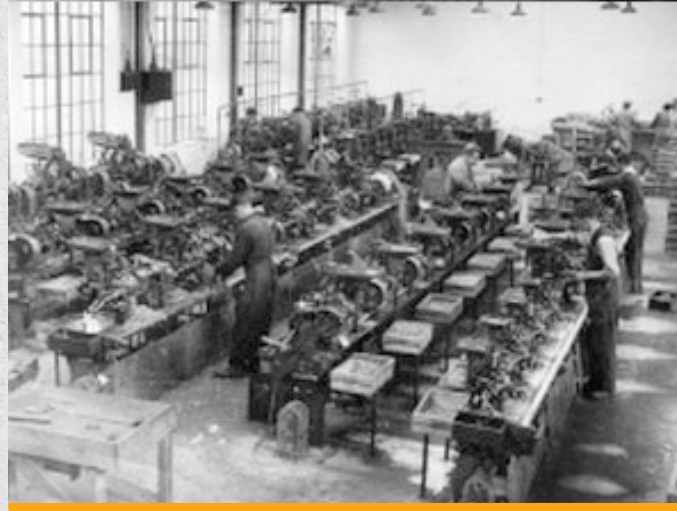
Tradition and progress

IWP is a long-established family-run business in Limerick City dating back to 1935. Originally a manufacturer of wire and nails, IWP became one of the city's foremost employers at its historic site on the Dock Road, from where it continues to operate. Paddy Mulvihill joined as manager in 1986, going on to purchase the business in 2001. Since then, IWP has grown into a major supplier for builders' providers across Ireland. "In recent decades, business shifted away from manufacture and towards import from multiple producers around the world. IWP is now a leading importer of building and DIY products, distributing to hardware stores

and builders' merchants nationwide," explains Paddy. "And we've started producing a range for the agricultural sector at Dock Road, keeping our manufacturing heritage alive."

Survival and Success

IWP are no strangers to challenges. The post-2008 collapse of the construction industry hit the entire sector hard, but IWP learned and adapted and came out of that period as a more robust, diversified business ready for future tests. This success further contributed to the trust their suppliers and customers have in them. Joining the company in 2000, Business Development Manager Shane O'Riordan has experienced sweeping changes in the industry and seen how IWP has transformed to stay at the forefront. "Massive focus is now on store layout ensuring every space is maximised. Our priority is to ensure our product ranges are the correct fit for our customers, and for their customers. Market research and end user feedback are a daily activity these days, something unheard of when I first started." IWP have introduced new products, enabling expansion of the customer base and improved choice for existing customers. Many of these products are sourced as a result of customer feedback according to Shane.



Manufacturing at the IWP site dates back over 85 years.

"Because our customer service representatives spend a lot of time travelling across Ireland and interacting with potential and existing customers, we constantly engage with them."

New products and plans

When THJ spoke to Shane, he was anticipating a dynamic year for the wholesalers, as IWP look at adding new ranges and building on their current offering. This product portfolio will continue to be enhanced in line with the company aim of developing quality brands.

Additions in the last year include Stiff Knot fencing products from J Silva Moreria, flexible rail fencing from Centaur, Armorgard secure tool storage solutions and a full line-up of builders' metalwork, all complementing IWP's current ranges and customer base.

"We see an ongoing demand for quality products that save time, deliver value for money and offer solutions to daily issues."

Traditional brands such as Spax screws are constantly introducing new ranges and offerings, such as their array of construction screws.

And, as sole importers of Ramboard into Ireland, IWP have redefined the floor protection category.



Paddy Mulvihill with members of Limerick GAA.

IWP will be educating staff and customers to the benefits of these new products through demo days, advertising and marketing.

Manufacturing has also returned to Dock Road, when IWP added Agri-Master to their product offering in 2015. Agri-Master is the brand name under which IWP produce a line of animal mineral buckets for the agriculture sector, all approved by the Department of Agriculture and currently in the process of achieving UFAS accreditation. Agri-Master products are a good fit with IWP's existing agriculture offerings - fencing and sprayers - for agri-merchants and agri-focused hardware stores.

"You have to evolve"

Innovation has been a key part of IWP's development. The company is continually monitoring industry changes and striving to adopt anything that enhances efficiency and performance across all areas of the business. Marketing Manager Louise Mulvihill sums up the company vision. "Innovation is something we work on with our suppliers and customers, as innovation across the industry benefits everyone. You have to evolve."

In-house operations have been transformed, using technology that streamlines every process, from tracking stock levels to final delivery. These investments in IT and smarter working enable better customer care. From any location in Ireland, IWP customer representatives can access these systems and get up to date information at a touch. In a constantly changing market environment, the need for immediate data is critical.

Aided by these innovations, the team in Limerick can ensure that all customers, large and small, get the personal touch and expert care they require. Because it all comes down to people and building relationships.

It's personal

Paddy has always regarded his staff as his greatest asset. The business has thrived due to the passion and



IWP have been a proud supporter and sponsor of the Limerick Senior Football Championship.

commitment of a team made up of 40 employees in Limerick and customer representatives across Ireland. "Our staff have been and will always be integral to the success of our business. We have been extremely lucky over the years to retain quality people and this allows us to consistently provide the best service for our customers across Ireland."

As the business has evolved, so too has its workforce. Many specialists have been recruited for their specific product knowledge, to provide the highest levels of expertise and advice.

This knowledge base, in combination with a tight-knit management team made up of Noel Stapleton, Joseph Teefy, Shane O'Riordan, Louise Mulvihill and James Kennelly, are what sets IWP apart and enables it to flourish. Maintaining family involvement is also hugely important to Paddy. While all of the Mulvihill clan have worked in the business at some point, Paddy's daughter Louise has been an integral part of IWP since she joined full time in 2008. As she explains, IWP's marketing efforts rely on creating relationships with every one of their customers, made possible through constant interaction.

"Our greatest marketing tools are our staff and our product. Many of our team have years of experience and personal relationships with their customers. This allows us to recognise the needs of each customer and ensure those needs are always met. The personal touch is key."

IWP makes the most of opportunities to meet new and existing customers year-round through stands at major trade shows such as The Hardware Show, buying group supplier events, and end-user events such as The Fit Out Show and in-store demos. Shows also facilitate market research to gauge reaction from potential users and sellers.

On the move

Combining their own delivery service and third-party couriers, IWP delivery operations ensure that all orders are



IWP frequently exhibit at The Hardware Trade Show.

dispatched as promptly as possible and provide excellent standards of service. Because the company looks after a wide-ranging customer base throughout Ireland, the IWP fleet of cars and trucks are constantly upgraded, to maximise cost savings and minimise energy consumption.

Thanks to easy access to all major routes from Dock Road, delivery operations are never delayed. Just 2km from the M7/N18 interchange, the location is also ideal for customers in Limerick City and beyond visiting both the warehouse and showrooms.

A community landmark

With an enduring presence as an important local employer, based in a well-known site at the heart of the city's manufacturing heritage, IWP has deep roots in Limerick City.

The company is a regular presence on the sports pages, as the main sponsor of the Limerick Senior Football Championship for the last seven years.

Football is close to Mulvihill's heart; Paddy is former manager of the Limerick Senior Team. "Limerick GAA has been extremely important to our family's life. To be in a position to give back and be associated with Limerick GAA through our sponsorship is a privilege and something we are very proud of."

A loyal Kerryman, Paddy also continues to support Kerry GAA through fundraising events.

A positive focus

IWP started 2020 with a confident outlook and is staying the course. As a flexible business with a loyal and committed staff, IWP has continually overcome challenges in the industry and has shifted to suit its market. Always innovating and expanding, IWP has laid good foundations to thrive in coming years under its tight-knit and experienced management. Today, the team can draw on a wealth of know-how, commitment and resources - good qualities to sustain this family business through current challenges and beyond.

Monsoon Launch their 'best in class' industry solution

Monsoon Consulting are proud to announce the launch of "Apex" a new, innovative, and leading B2B accelerator solution designed specifically for the hardware and DIY industry.

With over 15 years of experience working with organisations such as Heat Merchants, Topline and Woodies, Monsoon Consulting are now excited to launch their new market-leading "Apex" B2B accelerator solution.

Combining the power of Magento's "Commerce Cloud" platform and supported by Enterprise Ireland, Apex will provide a best in class industry solution to help get businesses online & trading quickly and successfully.

With an attractive suite of features pre-built and ready to use, along with a rapid deployment window, Apex aims to help get businesses online within six to eight weeks.

Commenting on the release of Apex, Monsoon Consulting CEO, Bharat Sharma said, "For many years we have been at the forefront of B2B eCommerce and have immersed ourselves in all the features businesses both need and demand to run their online operation. We recognised that it can be a daunting and expensive investment to enter the world of B2B eCommerce and transform one's business from a traditional process to a more digitally focused one. Apex addresses this. With express go-to-market capabilities, flexible commercial & investment options and a wealth of pre-built features, Apex promises to elevate your business online quickly and easily". www.monsoonconsulting.com/apex

COVID-19 Support

Monsoon Consulting has been taking proactive steps to help organisations respond to the current crisis so that their businesses can re-distribute their efforts and operations to service customers and companies online.

Five key take-aways

1. Think long term - The current climate is giving merchants a real need to appraise their online strategy. Whilst there is an urgent need to act now, the decisions should consider and incorporate the anticipated future trends for eCommerce, including customer demand for contactless home delivery and click & collect.
2. Ownership - Make sure someone in your organisation takes ownership of any new eCommerce venture. Much like a new store or branch, the eCommerce site will be best run when someone owns it internally and works to agreed KPIs.
3. Simplicity - It's easy to be overwhelmed with the technology and terminology. However, keep things simple initially and take comfort in the fact that you can scale and grow the technology in line with your business and objectives.

4. Transformation - A website isn't just about online sales. It's a new way of transforming your business and communicating with your clients, customers, suppliers and employees. eCommerce platforms, such as Magento Commerce, provide a full suite of services for business intelligence, CRM, product information, sales and marketing performance and content management.
5. Scalability - If your site is being overwhelmed by new and sustained demand, there are a number of solutions that can help from virtual queuing software to mitigate web traffic peaks to proven resilient infrastructure & hosting solutions.

Client References

Monsoon have successfully launched a new B2B eCommerce site for Heat Merchants (www.heatmerchants.ie). This solution has allowed Heat Merchants to present a full digital display of all products in the company's catalogue facilitating a new business model for real-time B2B ordering for their network of suppliers and business customers.

For Topline (www.topline.ie), Monsoon Consulting created an online platform combining B2B eCommerce and intelligent Communications to support the business model operated by the Topline Support Centre for its nationwide network of members.



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Streamlined B2B Order Process



Enhanced B2B Requisition Lists



Targeted Customer Notifications



Expandable Multi-Level Mega Menu



Customer (User) Segmented Solution



Advanced B2B Company Users



Increased Admin Panel Security



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The New Normal

Steve Collinge, MD at Insight Retail Group, talks about the New Normal and what the potential impact of COVID-19 could be for the home improvement industry.

The question is probably no longer when will we return to normality, but more importantly, what will 'normal' actually look like?

At the time of writing, the Taoiseach has recently announced the introduction of a phased reopening process of businesses and the economy, including the reopening of hardware retailers and builders merchants (with strict social distancing in place) from May 18th. Ireland is now looking ahead to following what will soon be a well-trodden path of other European countries. With the increasing likelihood that we will not return to life as we remember it, will the 'New Normal' be a good or a very difficult place for the Home Improvement industry?

Like so many others, our industry has been put through a stress-test that only four months ago, would have seemed impossible. Who could possibly have envisaged, prepared for or expected to deal with the challenges that have impacted on the Home Improvement and construction industries.

When the list of 'Essential Retail Outlets' was published by the Taoiseach on 27th March 2020, unlike European countries such as Italy, The Netherlands, Poland and Portugal, Hardware stores and Builders Merchants were not on the list and were immediately forced to close. The statement clarified that 'Hardware stores, builder's merchants and stores that provide hardware products necessary for home and business maintenance' were only allowed to offer 'emergency call-out or delivery services'.

Following the announcement, businesses were immediately forced to revisit their business models and dependent on their size, their financial reserves and their online presence, they reacted in different ways.

A Peak in Demand

At a time when merchants and retail outlets were forced to close their physical stores, it was ironic and almost perverse that consumers, now socially isolating at home, suddenly found a new love for the Home Improvement and Gardening tasks that they'd been putting off for years. The combination of the warm and sunny pre-Easter weather (that many retailers could only dream of), plus loads of spare time, led to a peak in demand for Home Improvement and gardening products that hadn't been seen for decades.

In the UK, where retailers were also allowed to maintain their online services, you could almost hear the supply chains creaking under the unprecedented demand. B&Q and Wickes were forced to add waiting times to their websites and at one point over the Easter weekend, the time just to access www.DIY.com was over an hour and shoppers were told that more than 300,000 people were ahead of them in the queue! B&Q were also quick to introduce a new service - 'contact-free' Click+Collect in their store car parks, to ensure customers could collect items in a safe and secure way, avoiding any unnecessary contact. However, on one occasion on Easter

Monday, the police had to be called to manage over 400 cars who were queueing to get into the B&Q Warehouse in Nottingham.



Consumers so used to next day and even same day delivery flocked to social media to complain how long they had been waiting for DIY stores to deliver their orders. One customer complaining about Homebase wrote on Twitter 'I received an email this morning saying that my order I placed in March won't be delivered until the end of May - how do I cancel and get my money back please'.

In Ireland, B&Q and Screwfix closed their stores, suspended their click'n'collect and home delivery services, whilst Woodies maintained a 'very limited' range of products for home delivery, stating that delivery may take up to 14 days.

The New Normal

In his Easter message, the Taoiseach said "We will re-awaken the sleeping giant that is our economy, our people will go back to work and our businesses will re-open, and taking what we've learned, we will build a better society at the end of this - a great society for a great people."

However, some commentators have not been quite so positive and have said that life post COVID-19 will never be quite the same again.

There is still so much that we simply don't know. But what we can be certain of at this stage, is that the return to normal can't happen immediately. It certainly won't happen on a single day, or when life returns to how we remember it, or on the day that we're allowed once again to leave the safety of our homes and meet others. Unfortunately, the 'new normal', post pandemic is likely to see us shift seamlessly from a health crisis to an economic and probably a social crisis that will take many, many years to resolve. In reality, until there is an effective vaccine, normal life simply can't return to how it once was.

For our industry, it's widely hoped and believed that construction will be one of the first sectors to be re-started. Not only is it critical to the infrastructure of the country, but cranes moving in the Dublin skyline and houses being built once again, will be a welcome sight to a population, forced to remain at home for many weeks.

For retailers and merchants, the events of the last month have proved that investing in your online service is no longer an option, it is absolutely essential. In a very short period, consumers and the Trade have become more accustomed to using online in a way that maybe they hadn't before. The new normal for retailing will undoubtedly involve a greater focus and an acceleration of online usage, not only driven by people not wanting to travel to stores in the way they used to, but because the successful businesses will be making online so quick, easy and simple for everyone.

For consumers, it's difficult to say whether there will be any lasting impact from our new-found love of DIY and Gardening. Whether new Do It Yourself skills have been learnt whilst we've all been at home and whether these will now be passed down to the next generation is probably too much to hope for at this stage.

But whatever the New Normal is outside, our homes and gardens have become an increasingly important sanctuary for us all. They now play a different role in our lives, a place where we can feel safe and where, let's face it, we're all likely to be spending far more time in the future. If this leads to us investing the money in our homes and gardens that previously we would have spent on holidays that we can no longer take, on restaurants and cinemas that we can no longer visit or a new car or train fares that we no longer need, then the Home Improvement industry has a bright future and will recover faster than almost any other.



Steve Collinge is an international speaker, influencer, retail commentator and is Managing Director of Insight Retail Group Ltd and executive editor of Insight DIY.

You can follow Steve on LinkedIn and on Twitter @InsightDIYSteve.

Open it and they will come?

With the Government recently releasing its Roadmap for Reopening Society & Business, Amárach Research asked a representative sample of 1,600 adults on May 1st 2020 to tell us all which venues or destinations they would like to open first, and whether they would feel comfortable or safe in them in terms of social distancing.

A number of countries that have opened various outlets as the worst of coronavirus emergency has passed are finding that customers are not showing up in anything like the same numbers as before.

This tells us that fear is the biggest obstacle to recovery in retail and consumer markets right now: and not a lack of income or even job losses. At least not yet.

The Amárach survey asked people to select the top five venues or destinations that they would like the Government to prioritise as part of the reopening roadmap. For each of the five they chose, they were then asked to say how comfortable or safe they would feel in each venue (e.g.: from a social distancing perspective) if it were to open tomorrow.

The questions were:

- The Government will have to prioritise the opening of some venues and destinations over others as COVID-19 restrictions are eased. If you could only open five of the following ahead of the others, which would you, choose in order of preference: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th?
- If each of the five venues or destinations you selected (from previous question) were open tomorrow, how comfortable would you be visiting/shopping/going to that venue or destination in terms of social distancing etc.? Choose a score on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is 'extremely uncomfortable' and 7 is 'extremely comfortable' for each venue.

The research shows there is a conflict between 'priority' vs 'safety' that creates four different categories of venues in the minds of the Irish consumer:

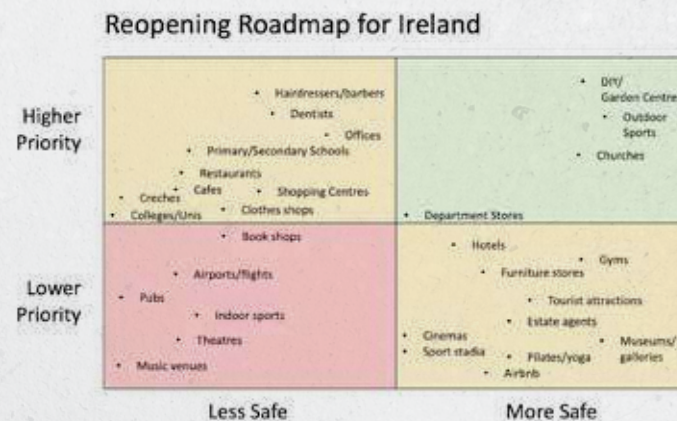
Important and safe: these are destinations that make it into the top five for many people, and where they would feel quite safe if they were open soon. They include DIY and garden centres, local outdoor sports facilities such as football pitches, and churches.

Important but less safe: these are also among the most popular to open soon, but people would be more anxious going there. They include hairdressers, restaurants, schools and shopping centres.

Less important and safe: these did not make it into the top five for most people, but for those who do want them open they say they will feel quite safe there. Included are gyms, hotels, Pilates/yoga classes, and cinemas.

Less important and less safe: finally, these are the destinations or venues that fewer people picked as part of their top five, but even those who did pick them confess to some anxiety about going there soon. They include pubs, airports and music venues.

This chart provides a visual comparison of the different outlets in terms of priority vs safety:



The table below shows all the venues/destinations ranked by priority and % choosing it as one of their top five; then ranked by 'safety' measured by the second question and the average safety score (higher score means safer/more comfortable from social distancing perspective):

Reopening Roadmap: Priority vs Safety	Priority Rank	% Top 5 Priority	Safety Rank	Average Safety Score
DIY/gardening stores	1	65%	2	4.96
Dentists	2	42%	17	4.47
Hairdressers/barbers	3	40%	19	4.40
Offices/other workplaces	4	33%	15	4.57
Primary/secondary schools	5	30%	26	4.15
Local sports outdoor facilities (pitches etc)	6	28%	1	5.20
Churches/places of worship	7	24%	5	4.80
Restaurants	8	21%	22	4.31
Cafes	9	21%	23	4.26
Creches	10	19%	29	3.84
Shopping centres	11	19%	18	4.47
Clothes shops	12	17%	20	4.39
Department stores	13	17%	12	4.64
Colleges/universities	14	14%	27	4.13
Book shops	15	13%	20	4.38
Hotels	16	10%	9	4.65
Gyms	17	9%	4	4.85
Furniture stores	18	9%	7	4.75
Airports/regular flights	19	9%	25	4.21
Pubs	20	8%	28	4.10
Tourist attractions (buildings/visitor centres)	21	7%	6	4.76
Estate agents	22	6%	10	4.65
Museums/galleries	23	5%	3	4.88
Local sports indoor facilities (squash courts etc)	24	5%	21	4.36
Cinemas	25	4%	11	4.65
Sports stadia (e.g.: Croke Park, Aviva)	26	3%	14	4.60
Pilates/yoga classes	27	3%	8	4.72
Airbnb accommodation	28	3%	9	4.49
Music venues	29	1%	30	3.09
Theatres	30	1%	24	4.26
Other		6%		4.93

Source: Amárach Research, May 2020

The 'other' category includes golf courses, beaches, fertility clinics and many other retailers and services (including plumbers and electricians to come to peoples' homes for repairs etc.). Overall the research is telling us that many businesses will have to work hard to convince customers that it is safe to come in; but those who do it well will reap the reward of a lot of pent up demand among Irish consumers as restrictions are eased in the weeks and months ahead.

For more details about these findings contact Amárach at: info@amarach.com

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7 in 10 Irish Homeowners make energy efficiency changes to home

In the final part of our look into consumers thoughts on DIY we explore how homeowners have made efforts to, or plan to improve energy efficiency.

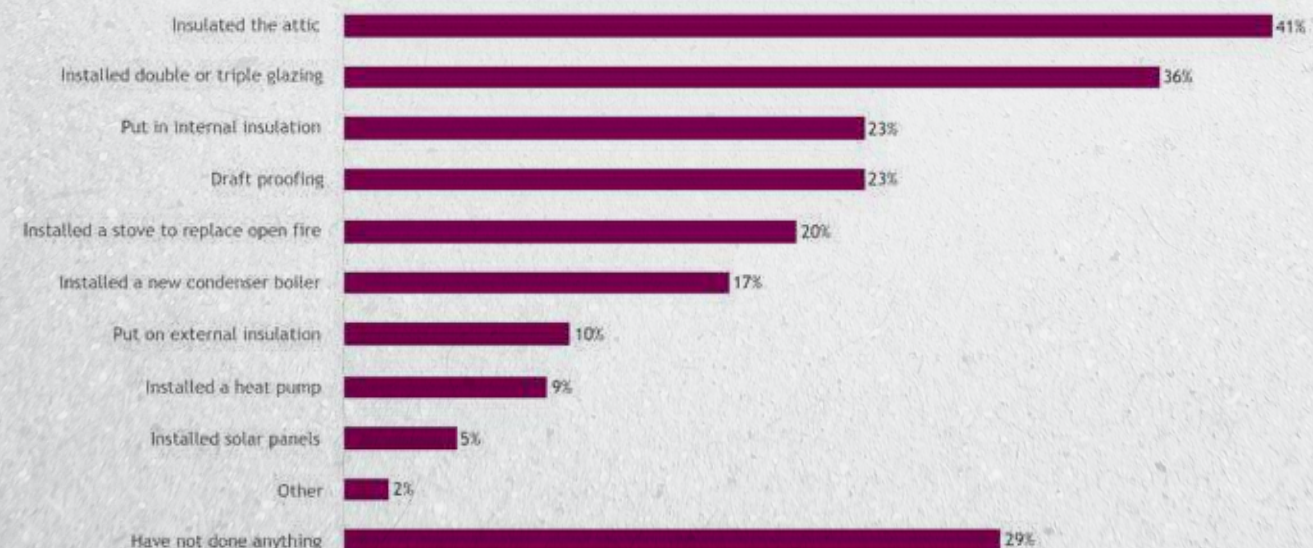
Energy Efficiency works

Attic insulation (41%) and double-glazing windows (36%) are currently the most popular forms of energy efficiency improvements.

However, 3 in 10 (29%) respondents have not made any effort to improve energy efficiency in their home.

Q: Since moving into your home, which of the following things have you done to improve the energy efficiency?

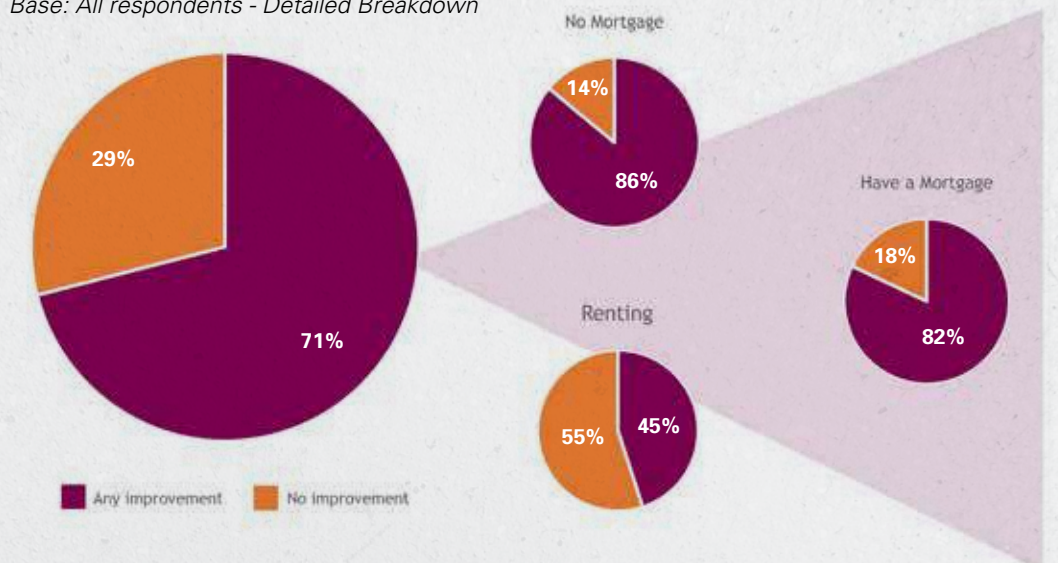
Base: All respondents



While 7 in 10 Irish adults have made efforts to improve energy efficiency in their home, less than half of renters have done so. However, as our research has identified, renters are investing less on home improvement works in general.

Q: Since moving into your home, which of the following things have you done to improve energy efficiency?

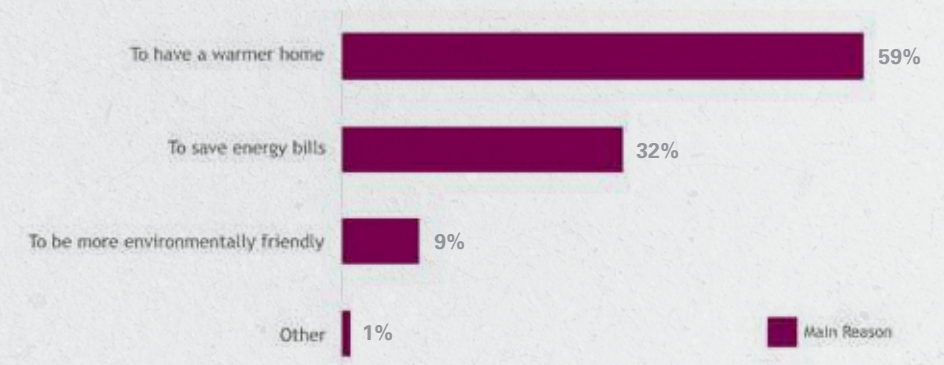
Base: All respondents - Detailed Breakdown



Of those who did complete energy efficiency home improvement works, 59% did it to have a warmer home and 32% to save on energy bills, while only 9% were motivated to be more environmentally friendly.

Q: What was the main reason for making these improvements?

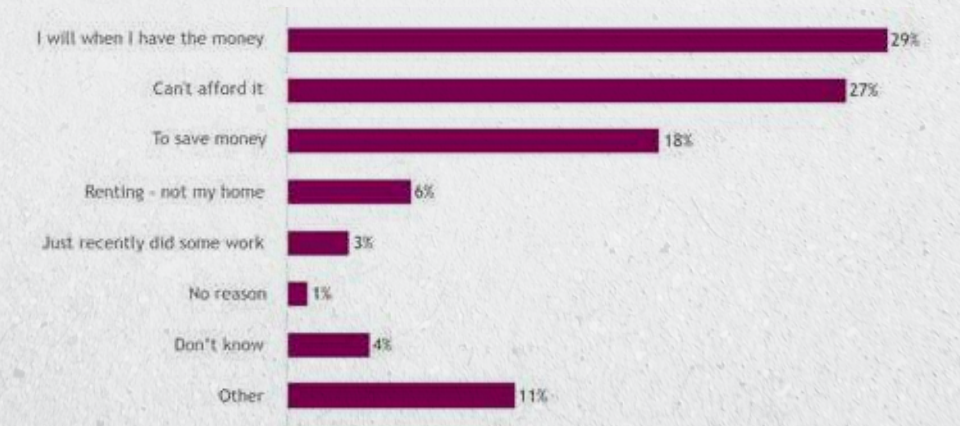
Base: All respondents who made energy efficient improvements to their home



The perceived cost of making energy efficiency improvements to homes remains the biggest barrier. This demonstrates both a need and an opportunity to educate consumers on the grants available to them.

Q: Why are you not considering making energy efficiency improvements?

Base: All respondents



"To make it energy efficient I would need to go for the newer model which involves lot of additional cost. Cannot afford at the moment will definitely consider."

"Too costly at moment"

A great time to start your planning for The Hardware show 2021

In the current COVID-19 environment the focus for businesses has been the health and safety of people. Companies are looking at ways to support workforces as they come to terms with their new ways of working and working from home. Over the coming months the Government and industry leaders will look at how to get businesses back operating in a safe way. Many companies have put together a task force with the objective of putting a strategy together for dealing with this unprecedented crisis. Part of the strategy will be formulating a business plan for moving forward.

Next year's Hardware Show in February will be one element of many companies' business plans for 2021. Now would be a good time to encourage your team to focus on how they can showcase your business and achieve the maximum benefit from the show.

Here are some tips for your team:

- Explain your vision for the show and what success will look like. Agree on the main purpose for exhibiting; is it about leads, a new product launch or to showcase an important product. Ensure everyone is engaged and fully understands why this event is important to the business and your customers. Involve people, as early as possible, who will be representing the company at the show and ask them for their ideas and suggestions for ensuring a successful event. They will be your brand ambassadors
- Think about how you can leverage some positive PR. Enter the Innovation Awards so that you can place a new product in front of some key industry decision makers. Submit editorial for *The Hardware Journal* or put an advertisement in the Hardware Show Guide. Start to outline your social media campaign for the lead up to the show
- Compile a list of people who you would like to invite to the show. Decide what products you want them to see and what is the purpose of their visit to your stand. The show is an excellent opportunity to showcase your range of products to key customers and potential new customers
- Create three checklists for the show. The first list should include all the tasks that must be completed in the planning stage. Then you need a checklist for the event itself and importantly a final checklist for post-show. Involve your team in building these checklists so that every detail is covered
- Organise a preshow meeting to ensure everyone is fully engaged and ready for two days that will have a significant impact on your business. Emphasise the purpose of the show, describe what success will look like and outline everyone's role and responsibility. Inject real energy into the team. It is a good idea to run through your onsite checklist each morning. Also, ensure your stand is picture perfect and ready to support your brand

- Once the show is over then it is time to start making those phone calls and set up as many meetings as possible. Ensure you have a robust post show plan ready so that everyone can leverage on the positivity that you created during the show. The leads generated are hot so capitalise immediately. Send out a thank you note to your invited guests and use social media to stay connected. Those of you who availed of the lead retrieval device and scanned everyone's badges that visited your stand can start to connect with these people. This is when all your hard work starts to pay dividends
- Celebrate the success of the Hardware Show with your team, it's a team effort.

The Hardware Show runs on 21st and 22nd February 2021, but it is more than these two days. The success of the show for you is based on what you do before, during and after the show. Plan for success.

Sean McLoughney founder of LearningCurve, is a sought-after talent support specialist, author and speaker. He provides Talent Support for organisations that drives Improved Performance by utilising the latest in learning thinking and technology.

For more you can contact Sean at Sean@learningcurve.ie



Sean McLoughney at The Hardware Show 2021 Launch in The Citywest Hotel in February.

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*2000 attendees at The Hardware Show 2019

thehardwareshow.ie

Careers in Hardware

Since the launch of www.hardwarejobs.ie, Ireland's first and only hardware industry-specific job board website, HAI has been highly active in promoting long-term career opportunities in the hardware industry to students, school leavers and jobseekers alike. Going by feedback from visitors at careers fairs like Ireland Skills Live and from career guidance counsellors the interest in the sector is higher than ever.

For this issue of *The Hardware Journal* we spoke to TJ O'Mahony's Ballymount branch manager, Brendan O'Reilly, about his career development to date, and what he sees in a good employee. Please see interview with Brendan below.

What were the main 'career decision' milestones in your life so far?

I was always ambitious in my approach to each role I've had throughout my career in TJ O'Mahony (TJOM) – from being in the yard progressing through to the sales side of things, helping colleagues to develop too is one of the most rewarding sides of my job.

The most rewarding achievement for me has to be moving through the ranks in TJOM from the bottom through different departments of the company.

I completed a Bachelors Degree in Business Management in IT Tallaght at night between 2008-2011. I always believed in my ability to go into management hence why I chose this course – this was really important for my career and gave me the tools to step up when needed.

Who are the people who most influenced your career decision?

My father would have laid the groundwork for the person I have become, teaching me that hard work does pay off and to work to your strengths and eventually you will be rewarded. I have been very fortunate to work for such a great company in TJOM where they always look to promote from within before they search externally – I think this is an important aspect to have and to be able to offer any future candidates who are looking for new challenges that we are a company that can help achieve this through progression within.

Describe a typical working day.

A typical day for myself would be in the office before 7am, go through figures and targets that we have set. I have set up a

group of reports that come through daily, weekly and monthly so the first couple of hours is to go through these and analyse where we are in terms of results and what we need to do to achieve these. I find I work best under pressure and love the challenges that managing Ballymount gives me.

What are your main tasks and responsibilities?

My main role is to make sure all aspects of the company are working in the tandem and all pulling in the same direction. We have a trade and retail counter, an external sales team complete with back sales office and a very busy yard which I have to ensure are all working well together.

What are the main challenges?

I find the biggest challenges to overcome other than managing rosters is sourcing product at the minute – the effects the Coronavirus is having on all industries, not just ours, making it tougher and more stressful to complete orders and keep customers happy. I have regular meetings with my main suppliers and get a good feedback of how everyone else is finding things out in the marketplace.

What advice would you have for someone considering this job?

We are very open minded when recruiting and try to make it a relaxed environment for all interviewees. We look for people that fit the company more so than the role in particular. Having a bubbly personality helps. A basic product knowledge is an advantage but not always essential. We then set out a career path for all new employees through our newly established Academy.

For more information or to start advertising your vacancies with Hardware Jobs visit www.hardwarejobs.ie or contact Aoife at aoife@hardwareassociation.ie.



Brendan O'Reilly, Branch Manager at TJ O'Mahony Ballymount.



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COVID-19 and Insurance

Many businesses are asking their insurer if they are insured for loss of profit following closure due to the coronavirus outbreak. Like everything related to this terrible virus, there is no straightforward answer.

Equally, as many businesses are closed, what cover are insurers providing to closed businesses where there is no trading risk? Insurers are being asked if they will allow for this by allowing a return premium for the duration of the closure, again there is no straightforward response.

Firstly, I will address the issue of business interruption or loss of profit following closure due to the viral outbreak. Business interruption cover is designed to keep a business alive following closure due to damage by an insured peril e.g. fire or flood. Insurance companies will be prudent and will limit their exposure by being clear in their policy wordings, this pandemic was not foreseen and therefore it was not the intention of any policy to cover such catastrophic losses.

Insurance companies sell a variety of products and many of these are tailored to meet the type of business they are insuring whether that is an office, a surgery or a shop. As a result the wordings in the various policy types vary. Some insurance companies offer cover for forced closure following outbreak of an infectious or notifiable disease, however there are very few policies that cover this current outbreak. Please be aware of the following;

- Some policies cover closure following outbreak of a notifiable disease on the premises or within a certain radius but diseases covered are listed and COVID-19 is not one of them
- When cover is in force, it is usually subject to a monetary inner limit i.e. there is a cap on what the insurer will pay which can be low or a limit on the period of time the insurer will pay for, maybe three months.
- Many policies do not offer any cover at all
- Many insurers will grant some form of cover but a client must specifically request that cover before the insurer will grant it
- A very small number of policies appear to cover this outbreak and these policies will be tested

Best advice? Talk to your broker or insurer and ascertain if your business interruption policy provides any sort of cover for loss of earnings while your business is closed.

The second issue is the level of cover being provided while your business is closed. Most property policies have an unoccupancy clause which restricts cover while the premises is unoccupied for a stated period of time.

Many insurers are waiving this warranty for the duration of the crisis and are offering full cover. Again, ask your broker or insurer what cover you have while the business is closed and what warranties are applicable. It is very important that you are compliant with any policy conditions so your cover remains in force.

Lastly, when your business is closed you don't have employees working or customers entering the premises. Therefore there is a reduced liability exposure and most insurers are taking a sympathetic view of this.

You should ask your insurer if they will suspend the liability sections of your policy. They may do so and allow return premium for the period of the closure when the business reopens.

However, if you are carrying deliveries or selling on line, you will still need your employers and public/products liability insurance in place. You should only request a suspension of the cover if you are completely closed for business, but make sure cover for your liability as a property owner or occupier remains in force.

John Bourke ACII
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The COVID-19 pandemic: A role for the Irish Government in protecting the €15bn underwritten by the Commercial Credit Insurance Sector

While the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Irish economy have been extensively analysed and documented in recent weeks, one area which is pivotal in facilitating trade and maintaining supply chains in the hardware & construction sectors has not received as much recognition : the important role of commercial credit insurance.

At present almost €15bn of trade is underwritten by the main insurers in the Irish market, that equates to over €50bn in annual turnover. Credit insurance assists the flow of goods & services into and on the island of Ireland and will play a greater role in the months ahead if we are to emerge from a recession quickly. We have a very strong, professional credit insurance commercial sector in Ireland and policy holders are receiving the very best in service from their insurers and brokers (like Credit Risk Brokers). Recently two of the main underwriters have taken steps to support their clients by extending policy reporting deadlines on overdue debts. This will better allow insured businesses to work with their customers to get payments in while remaining fully covered in the event of default.

The importance of a stable credit insurance market has now been recognised by the EU Commission and they have recently issued guidelines to EU members. In mid- April, first to take action on foot of this notice was the German government who approved a support package with an initial guarantee of €5bn (up to a possible €30bn), they committed to underwrite the first €500m in claims relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Danish are introducing a similar mechanism while the Dutch & UK are reviewing a submission from their local insurers.

If Irish ministers better understood commercial trade credit insurance in Ireland, they would surely include a support package for the main credit insurers in a simple, non-invasive manner that would allow them to maintain current levels of underwritten Irish trade. Credit insurers know Irish trade better than anyone. If they had government support, similar to the positive initiatives in other countries, our recovery would certainly be faster.

Most notably, if there continues to be no government guarantee given to the Irish credit insurers a German exporter could sell to an Irish buyer on credit terms and they would be insured as

previously, only now guaranteed by the German government. An Irish insured supplier trying to sell on credit to the same buyer could have cover reduced or withdrawn. The Irish company cannot compete and ultimately, the Irish economy cannot compete. Against this background, it is appropriate that our leaders take measures to incentivise and support the credit insurers to continue to play their role in continuing to support economic activity in Ireland. As Ireland's only specialist broker that dedicates 100% of our activity to trade credit, we have approached Government Ministers in recent weeks, asking that they engage with us so that they might gain an understanding of the significance of trade credit stability. Three of the main insurers in Ireland are also in contact with the government and we understand they have made a combined approach appealing for support. We were delighted to receive a formal response from the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys T.D., advising that they are actively monitoring the market for credit insurance in Ireland and, specifically, how COVID-19 has impacted that market. We will provide an update as soon we receive any news.

Trade credit insurance protects companies supplying goods & services against the risk of non-payment by their clients as well as governing the levels of credit extended to an Irish business from both domestic & foreign suppliers. It is imperative that we raise awareness of how credit insurance will be integral to our economic survival, recovery and growth post COVID-19. If you are interested in enquiring about a credit insurance policy, please contact us. If you have a policy already & might appreciate our specialist support, we at Credit Risk Brokers would be delighted to hear from you also.

Stay safe and well!

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This professional service includes tailoring a policy to your specific needs, meeting cost expectations and levels of cover with a simplified process that doesn't interfere with your day-to-day business.

So, how would you like to:

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- Reduce your administrative burden
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- Improve cashflow and profitability
- Grow and trade with confidence

For more information or to avail of this service contact Jim at jim@hardwareassociation.ie or call 01 2980969.



Communicating and unboxing the future

Communications Consultant Paul Allen, Managing Director of Public Relations firm Paul Allen & Associates, gives advice on how communications can help in the COVID-19 Recovery.



PAUL ALLEN
Paul Allen & Associates

As our focus turns to getting back to business amid the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions, we must be ever mindful of the role communications and the media can play in our rebound to recovery. Each and every business has a story to tell. Times of great challenge and crisis are times when we must all look at new ways of doing things and keep looking out for new opportunities. Surrounding our world is media, online or TV. There are endless topics that can be exploited and backed into every business that should be seen.

This is especially true when it comes to communications and the media. All businesses, including those in the hardware sector, are being forced to improve their communications with customers, suppliers and media. Many have captured smart thinking loyalty programmes to win favour with the customer. However, in a similar manner, consideration should be given to engaging with the media which is all around you. Furthermore, by setting up your own podcasts or presentations on Instagram, you can quickly capture the attention of traditional media, who are always looking out for smart thinking professionals in this sector. This means taking a look at how your business currently communicates, from social media platforms to interactions with customers and presence in the media. There are plenty of canny YouTube tutorials available to you to improve skills similar to the ones you share with customers when learning about DIY techniques. However, while we are staring into a new era of modern methods, the old principles of good communications haven't changed and still apply. Fancy new power tools are released each year, but the old reliable measuring tape is still king of the toolbox.

The Message is Key:

Messaging is a critical element of professional and effective communications. A good message is something that highlights a unique strength of your business, be it customer service, price or quality.

Messaging is only successful if the messages are repeated often, and the message only beings to sink in once you are sick and tired of saying it over and over again.

Hardware businesses will need to take a look at what differentiates them from their competitors, and spend some time deciding how to get it across. This is where communications gets interesting.

Using Your Message:

Once you have a strong message, the next thing to do is think about how to use it, and where to use it. The most important interaction your business will have with a client or customer will always be the face-to-face one.

A customer may not remember what made them walk into your shop over any other, but they will remember their experience of being there. They will remember the person they talked to and how they were treated.

Big is nice, but small is beautiful. Communications isn't just about big pieces in the national newspapers or online; it's also about what your staff say to customers and the expertise, knowledge and helpfulness on display.

In terms of media, think local first. Local newspapers and radio have a much greater connection with their readers than national ones. If you have a news story such as a business anniversary or opening a new store, pick up the phone and talk to the local radio station or newspaper and let them know. Don't be afraid that they won't run the piece, as those who don't ask, don't get.

Social Media:

In a world with dwindling newspaper sales and declining respect for traditional media, added to new and emerging forms of entertainment such as YouTube, podcasts and Netflix, social media is the ever-widening field of battle for communicators. With social media, no matter what platform you are using, you must make your content entertaining while conveying your message. For example, a great way of demonstrating your expertise is recording 'How To' videos, product comparisons or funny content about life in a hardware store.

People will follow certain brands on social media for various reasons, be it handy information, entertainment, humour or because they like the characters. It is crucial to engage with your followers and analyse what they like and what gets greater views and reach.

Professional Support:

While many PR professionals may indeed be a dab hand with a circular saw, if we need advice we will probably ask the expert at the local hardware store. Likewise, if you feel like you need assistance with communications its always good to get advice from a communications professional who knows what they're talking about. Many of us have made a mess of a DIY bathroom job because they didn't get advice or listen to an expert, so listen to the experts as it will be well worth your while.

If any HAI members require assistance with PR, communications or social media, please contact us on **01-676-9575** or email **paul@paapr.com**.

Preparing for the 'New Normal' in Business

At JPA Brenson Lawlor we are advising clients to plan for recovery now, not later. Below, we have set out our Top Ten Tips for HAI members that you could act on now.



IAN LAWLOR
JPA Brenson Lawlor

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, we have looked internationally to understand what is coming down the track in terms of infection and lock-down. The approach should be the same for business. Business owners need to begin to put plans in place for the recovery, it may be slow, but it will happen.

Our Top Ten Tips are:

1. Plan for the safety and wellbeing of staff and customers

Keep talking to your staff and follow the up to date HSE / Government advice. Prepare for the safety measures that need to be put in place for your customers. This is likely to include physical distancing, reduced access to stores and even something as simple as doing business while talking through face masks. Make sure you identify and implement your physical safeguarding measures and discuss these with your staff before re-opening begins.

2. Prepare for increased demand

Hardware businesses have suffered a shocking fall-off in business and all stores have had to make cuts. But do not cut back so far that when reopening you cannot deal with increased demand. This is important. Watch your stock and use your years of experience to get the balance right.

3. Communicate with your suppliers

Be open and frank with suppliers. We are all in this together. Agree payment arrangements and terms for stock that you have not yet paid for, ask what is fair for your business and theirs alike. Successful business relationships are based on trust. You may need more stock and support from your suppliers to meet a potential surge in demand, so you need your suppliers to have trust in you and support your business.

4. Understand new supply channels

Consumer behaviours and habits have probably changed for the foreseeable future. We never thought we would all be buying so many products on-line. There is no reason why this is going to change. Review your on-line presence, how can you make this better and benefit from the new consumer buying patterns. Dark clouds can have silver linings. This may be the push you needed to get your business online or E-commerce enabled. Hardware Association Ireland and your Local Enterprise Offices have information and advice to help businesses improve their online presence.

5. Assess your financial and operational risk

Your business has been through a massive financial shock. This is the time you need to complete a full financial assessment of

the business taking into account;

- Preparing detailed financial and cash flow projections
- Understanding stock levels, re-order requirements and working capital
- Monitoring cost escalation as you return to business
- Understanding contracts and completing contract renegotiation
- Covenant testing on your loan facilities

6. Benefit from Government Supports

JPA Brenson Lawlor and Hardware Association Ireland have prepared a comprehensive list of the various Government supports available to HAI members. Make sure you are availing of all the supports for which you are entitled. Even the smallest things can make a difference. For example, Revenue has recently introduced temporary changes to the Small Gifts Exemption whereby the annual tax free gift of €500 can be split, whereas previously it was one gift only per annum, this is to facilitate employers to reward staff now in a tax efficient manner.

7. Build resilience and prepare for the 'new normal'

We are accountants so we can't predict the future but using common sense it looks like businesses will have to adapt to what is being called the 'new normal'. So, be prepared to challenge yourself, your business and your staff. What was in the past doesn't have to be in the future.

8. Talk to Revenue

Many businesses have deferred PAYE and VAT payments for a number of months. These amounts add up. If you are not an SME you need to formally apply to the Revenue to advise them of non-payment of taxes. These monies will need to be paid over eventually, make sure you put robust plans in place to deal with this. Again, take advice.

9. One BIG positive

Some economists are hoping for a sharp V shaped recovery. Others are talking about a slower U shape pick up. But all economists agree that there will be a recovery, fast or slow. The country still needs a massive infrastructure built and HAI members are the frontline in helping that happen. If you can remain resilient for the next short few months the turn will be worth waiting for.

10. Your own mental health

Like anyone in business you have been to hell and back in just a matter of weeks. This is definitely not good for any of us. If you find the strain too much make sure to talk to someone. Talking and sharing, does help.

The Hardware Education Hub

New and potential employees want to be assured that employers will not only provide them with engaging roles, but that they will invest in a culture of continuous development to support their personal career ambitions. HAI is on hand to help with its flexible online training solution - **The Hardware Education Hub**.

www.hardware-educationhub.ie

THE HARDWARE EDUCATION HUB

Available to HAI members and HAI classroom training attendees, The Hardware Education Hub comprises a growing catalogue of e-learning modules, tailored to and curated for the Hardware industry including New Employee Induction, Social Media Fundamentals and Microsoft Office.

Available Courses:

Commercial Skills

- Essential Telephone Skills
- Successful Selling
- NEW: FREE Practical Guide to Remote Working

Cyber Awareness

- Introduction to GDPR
- Cyber Security
- Social Media Awareness



Personal Skills

- Conflict Handling
- Assertiveness

Cost per module:

HAI Members Rate €30

Non-Members Rate €42

"The other modules are really good and the examples Greg uses are perfect for the industry. it's good that I can do it online because it's so busy in the office."

Lynsey Power, Hultafors Group

Social Media Fundamentals



- Website Audit
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google – Adwords and Analytics
- LinkedIn
- Video Channels

Cost per Social Media Fundamentals module:

HAI Members Rate €10

Non-Members Rate €15

All modules are delivered via an interactive learning management system where employers and employees can monitor progress, and a certificate is provided on completion.

Want access to the Hardware Education Hub? Email aoife@hardwareassociation.ie or call 01 2980969.

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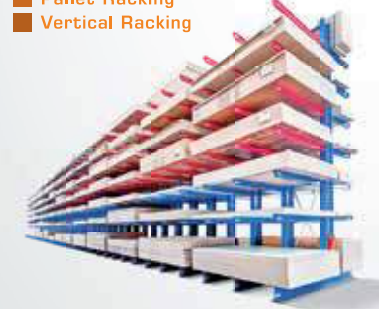
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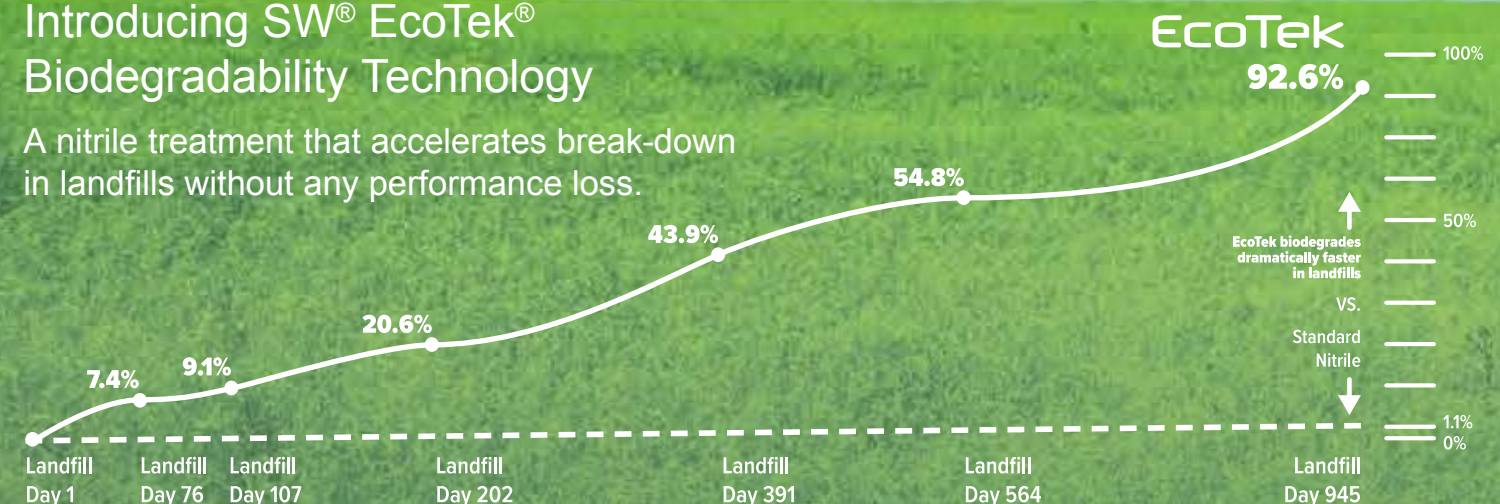


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