

Cork entrepreneur built wellbeing brand from **GROUND** up

A leading player in the premium spa business in Ireland, Peigin Crowley turned the challenges of the pandemic to her advantage by creating her [GROUND](#) wellbeing brand.

Peigin Crowley has been a leading light in the spa business in Ireland and was responsible for bringing the Elemis brand into the Irish market in establishments such as Inchydoney, Hayfield Manor and Killarney Park.

In 2013 she branched into designing spas and the customer journey including thermal offerings from pool to sauna design.

Having developed award winning spas from Adare Manor to The Merrion, she was fortunate to have worked with the best in the business, including The Cliff House Hotel, The Montenotte and The Old Head of Kinsale.

“My passion has always centered around treatment and creating the true spa experience where the guest surrenders into the power of touch and invites relaxation in. This evolved into developing product lines to support treatment in collaboration with partners to deliver The Well at Cliff, Moss of the ISLES and MINK, Dublin.

“It was always a pipe dream to develop my own wellbeing brand – one designed to my own brief, budget and preferred therapeutic scents. 2020 catapulted me straight into it,” said Crowley.

A grounded approach

When the pandemic hit Crowley was engaged in the design of spas for two new hotels builds both of which were immediately paused in March 2020 and remain on hold.

It was a terrifying time seeing all project work drop off.

“Producing private label product, massage oils etc had come to a halt too as all spas and hotels were closed. Suddenly there was space and time in my diary for the first time in years.

“I knew that it was my chance to do my own wellbeing brand. It was so different having the freedom to design and produce my own product line **GROUND**, blending oils for wellness but this time for clients to use in their own homes not in Spas. It was a chance to step into the retail online arena for the first time, helping bring spa and ritual home using oils and balms made from 100pc natural ingredients.

“I wanted to create a brand that focuses on rebuilding our ‘at home’ relationship, that helps bring us back to ourselves, and reminds us of what really matters, especially during these unsettling times. Our calming, restorative products, and grounding rituals; created for men, women, and children, encourage us to tóg go bog é; to take it softly; to mind ourselves, and to mind those that we love. Our four families of products are designed to be gifted and shared, to ourselves, to supporting family and friends, and to those that impact our daily lives.”

Bricks to clicks

Crowley said her Local Enterprise Office (LEO) for Cork South played an instrumental role and her mentor Denis Casey helped to streamline her business to focus on online.

“I was at the juncture of costing us the fit out an artisan shop unit or going hell for leather online. Through running scenarios in my income and expenditure, Denis helped me evaluate the return on ‘clicks before bricks’ and with that the new platform will launch 1 May.

“Securing [Brown Thomas](#) as our exclusive launch partner was key. Launched in the middle of the second lockdown, sales soared as online sales were the only channel to distribute.”

Another key element was understanding the value of having a solid social media platform and the company went from zero to 5,600 followers in five months.

“Building solid content including [introductory brand videos](#) was invaluable to getting our brand message across.”

Crowley said she made good use of resources such as the Trading Online Voucher and the Business Continuity Voucher as well as the Credit Guarantee Scheme. It cost about €80,000 to launch the brand to market with continuous self-investment and the online channel will go live on 1 May with an investment of €25,000.

“June will see the hospitality sector re-open with GROUND living in the treatment menu of some of Ireland’s most beautiful Spas including Fota Island, Ashford Castle and The K Club.

“The massage rituals will offer grounding treatments created to celebrate the importance of taking space for sacred moments to mind yourself, to reconnect to source and replenish.

“Created after a very simple realisation during 2020, that we needed to slow down and mind ourselves more. The power of touch combined with aromatherapy oils help to restore our inner strength – when the intention is combined with massage and therapeutic scent, it becomes imprinted in our hearts and memory, a return to self.

“Inclusive at its core, GROUND treatments can be adapted to look after guests with compromised health, offering rituals to soothe and restore clients living with and beyond cancer.”

Crowley said she made astute use of social media platforms like LinkedIn to track down other business founders who had turned bricks and mortar businesses into online success stories.

“After tracking down Coffee Angel founder Karl Purdy on LinkedIn, he very kindly gave me his time on a call detailing how best to navigate the tech jargon and where the pitfalls existed. He recommended his website development company Minicorp saying they were more than excellent from the start and continue to be instrumental in the growth of his online business.

“Once introduced to the expert team at Minicorp I understood why. Led by Brian Kenny and his team of experts - I was fast tracked through the journey, the cost, the design and most importantly the growth mindset behind future proofing the site. Brian is unique in his razor sharp ability to understand brand messaging from an end consumer perspective, tech intelligence to deliver the online platform capability, while being ever mindful of the commercial reality that small business is reliant on cashflow.”

Crowley believes the online journey has offered up many key lessons. “I am fascinated by organic reach versus paid advertising and the different customers generated.

“I love understanding the conversion rates and metrics. Testing different scenarios online.

“Continuous content creation is crucial. Building the critical path to launch, setting out a marketing template for each quarter while underpinning with current, relevant content is key. Understanding how SEO works and applying all principles is paramount. The greatest lesson is trust; engaging the right expertise to manage and lead you.”

Launching her new online brand in May is just the start.

“Beyond the product and shop function of the website, I am looking to create an educational platform for selfcare complete with online resources for people to look after themselves and gift others wellness. I will be setting up individual and corporate memberships so people can focus on minding themselves whether they are working from home or raising a family.”

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