

30 Irish women entrepreneurs ‘Going for Growth’

We look at 30 Irish women entrepreneurs who are all part of the Going for Growth programme either as participants or serving as entrepreneur leads and advisers.

In recent weeks we reported how a total of [83 women entrepreneurs were selected for the 12th cycle of Going for Growth](#), a programme designed to support entrepreneurs to achieve their growth ambitions. The programme is sponsored by Enterprise Ireland and KPMG.

Between them these [Going for Growth](#) entrepreneurs already have annual sales of over €170m and just under half of them are already exporters. They currently employ almost 2,400 people and have ambitious plans for their future growth.

Many of the entrepreneurs featured here are present and past participants while others, such as Breege O’Donoghue, Elaine Coughlan Susan Spence, Claire McHugh and Deirdre McGlone are seasoned, successful entrepreneurs in their own right who serve as entrepreneur leads and advisers to advise and inspire participants.

We have blended them together to give an overall flavour of the female entrepreneurial talent that already exists and that is also emerging in Ireland. Entrepreneurs and leaders are listed in order of first name:

Adrienne Gormley, Dropbox

https://twitter.com/A_GormleyDublin/status/1225344732940902400

Adrienne Gormley is VP of Global Customer Experience at [Dropbox](#) and head of Dropbox’s Ireland office. At Dropbox, customers are the number one priority and Adrienne’s global team ensures that every experience customers have with Dropbox is a great one as well as advocating for & driving customer excellence across Dropbox. As Site Lead for Dropbox Ireland, Adrienne is focused on building out the Dropbox presence in Ireland, attracting and developing amazing talent and making Dropbox Ireland a great place to work.

Adrienne has worked in tech for over 20 years and joined Dropbox from Google where she led international teams across a range of functions including Sales, Google Maps and Localisation. While at Google, Adrienne also led Google Ireland’s women’s network. Adrienne continues to be deeply committed to diversity, and is an active member across diversity networks and organisations in Ireland. Adrienne’s career has included extensive experience in leadership

positions across operations, sales, internationalisation and localisation in tech.

Áine Denn, Altify

<https://twitter.com/BackforBusiness/status/1082611817438957569>

Áine Denn co-founded Altify, now [Upland Altify](#), in 2005. Upland Altify is the Customer Revenue Optimization (CRO) company, helping businesses generate value and grow revenue. Upland Altify customers include Autodesk, BT, GE, Workday, HP Enterprise, Johnson Controls, United Healthcare and Salesforce.

A key contributor to the direction of the company since its inception, Áine's insight is informed by more than 25 years' experience in enterprise software, business development, operations and customer engagement. Prior to Altify, Áine has served in senior executive positions in public and private companies including The SCO Group, NewworldIQ, Prudential UK, and Accenture. Altify was recently acquired by US technology company Upland Software (UPLD) in a deal worth nearly €76m.

Alison Ritchie, Polar Ice

<https://twitter.com/WMBMagazine/status/782943222163267584>

Alison Ritchie is the managing director of [Polar Ice](#) Ltd., Ireland's leading manufacturer of dry ice products since 1996. Polar Ice is located in Portarlinton, Co Laois. As a serial entrepreneur, Alison established her second business Polar IceTech Ireland Ltd. in 2005, growing the business to become the market leader in Cryogenic Cleaning, and successfully selling the business earlier in 2016

Alison has a Business Degree from DCU. She subsequently trained and qualified as a Financial Accountant (CPA) and a certified Tax Advisor. Alison was awarded the Ulster Bank Business Achievers Award for Women-Led Business in Leinster 2015, named the Women Mean Business Entrepreneur of the Year 2016, awarded Accountant of the Year 2017 and most recently accredited 'Thought Leader – Enterprise Development' at the All-Star Business Awards 2018.

Alison Stroh, Dr Coy's Health Foods

<https://twitter.com/DrCoys/status/1224288707445952512>

Alison Stroh's early career saw her working in both small companies and large corporations, spending over ten years in New York and Germany. While living in Germany, she heard Dr. Johannes Coy, an award-winning German biologist, speak at a health conference and subsequently partnered with him to commercialise his research and inventions. This led to the

development of a chocolate with certified health benefits that would appeal to a mainstream market and to the founding of [Dr Coy's Health Foods](#) in Wicklow. The bars come in a selection of flavours and the unique benefit is that they have lower effects on blood glucose levels compared to chocolate containing sugar, they are high in fibre and vitamin E and are gluten and lactose free. As the business and demand continued to grow, the range also expanded further. Exports have also now commenced to the UK and to further afield places like Bahrain and Malaysia. Alison says that taking part in Going for Growth was very important in motivating her to grow the business further.

"I have been truly inspired by my lead entrepreneur's energy, commitment and passion for the business, as well as her continued support for other female founders," Stroh said.

Anne Cusack, Critical Healthcare

https://twitter.com/acorns_ie/status/1108296850585669632

Dr Anne Cusack is the co-founder and managing director of [Critical Healthcare Limited](#). The company strives to be the first choice for Emergency Medical Professionals. It is an Irish company offering a comprehensive range of emergency medical products and SaaS to the pre-hospital market, & ambulance service providers in Ireland, and more recently, the UK and Europe.

The success of their SaaS offering first led to Critical Healthcare winning a contract with the National Ambulance Service in 2013 to implement Medlogistix across all 102 ambulance stations in Ireland. That was followed by contracts with Dublin Fire Brigade and the Irish Coastguard, but that was just the beginning.

Critical Healthcare employs 22 people throughout Ireland, the UK and Europe, supplying product to over 3,000 ambulances through Medlogistix, our online procurement platform. Anne and her team have won numerous Awards including the SFA Innovation Award 2013 and the IMSTA (Irish Medical and Surgical Trade Association) Best Services Company Award 2014. Most recently, Critical Healthcare has been asked to participate in the Enterprise Ireland Competitiveness Campaign. The business is continuing to grow at over 20% annually and the focus for 2018-2020 is Mainland Europe.

Anne Reilly, PaycheckPlus

<https://twitter.com/RewardStrategy/status/1202717032510304256>

[PaycheckPlus](#) was founded by Anne Reilly in 2005. Headquartered in Drogheda, Co Louth, PaycheckPlus provides Irish and UK Payroll outsourced processing services to clients across a range of sectors. The emphasis of the Payroll Team is to help employers structure their payroll in

the most efficient and cost efficient way while ensuring legislative and compliance requirements in a timely and accurate manner. PaycheckPlus is the recipient of a number of awards including The Global Payroll Provider of the Year 2017. Anne is a former lecturer in Irish payroll and a graduate of the Institute of Directors. She sits on a number of Boards and enjoys speaking and sharing her experience in business with aspiring entrepreneurs.

Breege O'Donoghue, Penneys/Primark

Breege O'Donoghue is a highly experienced former board member of [Primark](#) and her most recent role, until mid-Sep 2016, was Group Director, Business Development and New Markets. She managed, with others, a business through significant growth and expansion from 17 stores to over 320 in 11 markets. She has had an extremely successful executive career across many functions, with considerable experience in European and US markets, significant experience of leadership, diverse teams and complex cross-functional business projects. Breege also has extensive experience as a Non-Executive Director including chair of the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, and chair of Real World Analytics, as well as education at university level. Her awards are many. Among the most recent are – UCD Business – Smurfit Patrons of Excellence 2017, Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur 2016; Iconic Businesswoman of the Decade Women Economic Forum, New Delhi, India 2016; Fashion Retailing Personality of the Year, Draper UK, 2016; Irish Tatler Hall of Fame Award, 2016. Breege recently received a Doctorate of Philosophy (honoris causa), from DIT.

Caroline Keeling, Keelings

<https://twitter.com/UCDALUMNI/status/1198004722147483649>

Caroline Keeling is the CEO of [Keelings](#). Keelings is a 100pc Irish-owned family business which started producing fruits and salads on their farm in the 1930s supplying produce to local Dublin markets. Keelings is focused on growing and sourcing the best fresh produce from around the world. The Company has expanded to its current size with five divisions – Keelings Retail, Keelings

Farm Fresh, Keelings Market, Keelings International and Keelings Solutions. Keelings is headquartered in FoodCentral, Co. Dublin, Ireland but has operations in Ireland, in the UK, Europe and Asia. Keelings employs over 2,000 people.

As well as fresh produce, Keelings has developed produce-specific ERP software solutions, consultancy and management services. Caroline has a BSc (Chem) & MSc in Food Science which she obtained from University College Dublin (UCD). Caroline started her career with Green Isle foods from 1992 – 1994, going on to join Keelings as Technical Manager in 1994. Caroline is an Ambassador for The Women’s Fund for Ireland, a Bord Bia Board Member, Chair of the Horticulture Board of Bord Bia, Chair of Dublin Action Plan for Jobs Implementation Committee, board member of the Ifrah Foundation and a member of the Export Trade Council.

Chupi Sweetman-Durney, Chupi

<https://twitter.com/GoingForGrowth/status/1226166969944150017>

[Chupi](#) started her eponymous jewellery brand as a hobby in her spare room and scaled her company to a multi-million pound business based in Ireland. At 21, Chupi was scouted by Topshop from her first year in college and was the youngest designer to ever work for the company. After a six year career in fast-fashion, Chupi wanted to create something that lasted forever and which celebrated Ireland’s design heritage, and so in April 2013 Chupi the brand was born. It has been a rapid journey from Irish startup to an internationally acclaimed multi award winning brand. Now a growing team of 36 talented individuals create and ship Chupi’s beautiful jewellery to 67 countries around the world from London to New York to Tokyo. The business has evolved through a strong digital strategy, taking the Irish strengths of storytelling to the modern platforms of social media and ecommerce. Chupi was recently awarded the Entrepreneur of the Year Award at the IMAGE Businesswoman of the Year Awards.

Clare Duignan

https://twitter.com/clare_duignan/status/1134365644307226624

Clare Duignan has over 25 years CEO and senior leadership experience, and serves on the boards of both public and private organisations.

As Director of Programmes RTÉ Television and MD RTÉ Radio, she reduced headcount and operating costs while holding audience share, identified new revenue streams and drove a more customer-focused sales policy.

Clare has a strong track record of strategic leadership and a deep understanding of consumer needs and behaviour, marketing and branding and social media. Her experience in recruitment, team leadership and performance management is coupled with a track record in supporting female

leadership and promoting gender balance in the workplace. A qualified Executive and Leadership coach, she mentors female entrepreneurs, and works with ambitious organisations and individuals as they review their strategy and scale for growth.

Clare is an experienced non-executive director, currently serving on the boards of The Irish Times, Fáilte Ireland, The Institute of Banking, Business to Arts, and Women for Election. Clare is a member of the Institute of Directors and received the Diploma in Company Direction (Dip IoD) in July 2013.

Claire McHugh, Axonista

<https://twitter.com/clairemchugh/status/1219723484441579522>

Claire is CEO and co-Founder of [Axonista](#), a video technology company, which helps brands and media companies reach and engage their audiences on digital platforms. Axonista's product Ediflo easily enables shoppable TV, donations and other interactive calls to action. Axonista has offices in Dublin and New York, has customers including QVC, Virgin Media, Sinclair Broadcast Group and the Irish Film Institute.

Prior to founding Axonista, Claire was part of the team that managed and grew the Setanta Sports channels in Ireland and the UK, and previously worked in a number of digital agencies. Claire is an active participant in the global startup community, and an ardent supporter of female entrepreneurship. She has been an ambassador for Going for Growth, a mentor for Techstars, an advisor to Tech Ireland, and is currently a member of the European Innovation Council jury. In 2017 Claire was awarded Image Magazine's Businesswoman of the Year for Digital, Science and Technology.

Colette Twomey, Clonakilty Black Pudding Co

<https://twitter.com/ClonakiltyBP/status/1227166240608747528>

Colette Twomey is chief executive and co-founder with her late husband of what is now known as the [Clonakilty Blackpudding Co.](#) The business has grown from a single butcher's shop to be one of the best known brands in the Irish food business, supplying branded black and white pudding, sausages and rashers to multiples, restaurants and shops throughout Ireland. Clonakilty Blackpudding Co. is currently involved in a major push into the UK market. A finalist in the 2010 Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year, Colette Twomey is the 2011 recipient of the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman of the Year Award, and also the awardee of the 2011 Women Mean Business Entrepreneur of the Year, on the basis of her entrepreneurial spirit, innovation and leadership. Colette is based in West Cork.

Elaine Coughlan, Atlantic Bridge

<https://twitter.com/ClodaghLRice/status/1172503303701377024>

Elaine is a co-founder and General Partner of [Atlantic Bridge](#) Capital a Global Growth Equity Technology Fund with over \$450 million of assets under management, and over \$300m of co-investment from Limited Partners. She is also a co-founder of Summit Bridge Capital which is a China Ireland focused Fund aimed at helping Irish companies scale in China. The team and Fund are backed by China Investment Corp which is the world's 5th largest Sovereign investor with more than \$585bn of capital under management and Irelands Sovereign Wealth Fund NTMA. Summit Bridge is jointly managed by Atlantic Bridge and West Summit Capital and brings extensive networks in China to Irish companies.

She has over 20 year's operational experience as CFO/COO in scaling technology companies with extensive operational and M&A experience. Previously Elaine was a Co-founder and non-executive director of GloNav Inc, a GPS software and hardware business successfully sold to NXP for \$110m in 2008. Prior to Atlantic Bridge Elaine as CFO and or VP Finance took 3 high growth technology companies public on both NASDAQ and LSE. These three successful technology initial public offerings and secondary offerings for Parthus, IONA and Smartforce on NASDAQ raised more than \$1.6bn in capital.

Elaine is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and a qualified Chartered Director. She was named as one of Europe's Top 100 Women in Technology and appointed by the Irish Government to the Board of Enterprise Ireland in 2014.

Eimer Hannon, Hannon Travel

<https://twitter.com/dowthp2p/status/1054781572262608896>

Eimer Hannon got the 'travel bug' early in her working life, when she joined the staff of the national student travel agency USIT, at University College Dublin. Eimer always had the ambition to be in business for herself. She started [Hannon Travel](#) in 1999, offering a highly personalised service in the corporate travel sector. Her commitment to her clients was to provide them with a complete travel service that would support them at all points of their trip. The company has grown to employ close to 30 people, has offices in Navan and Belfast, and is expanding in the UK. Eimer says "Going for Growth gave me the push, confidence and support to follow my dream and grow the business to the next level."

The company continues to strengthen its presence on a global basis, having recently signed a global partnership agreement with Reed and Mackay, enabling them to deliver complete corporate travel management for professionals with exacting needs in over 40 countries worldwide. In 2019 Eimer received the Matheson WMB Female Entrepreneur Award 2019 and Hannon Travel was shortlisted for the award for customer service in the Aviation Industry Awards.

“We have gone from being a small local corporate travel provider to now being international, and we are continuing to grow. Going for Growth helped make this happen,” Hannon said.

Deirdre McGlone, hotelier

Deirdre McGlone is one of the outstanding hoteliers and businesswomen in Ireland. Following her graduation from University of Limerick with a degree in European Studies, Deirdre played a pivotal role in the development of the multi-award-winning [Harvey's Point Hotel, Lough Eske, Donegal](#).

Deirdre is a proud member of the ‘Going for Growth’ women in business community and a Lead Entrepreneur with ACORNS. She is also a member of the Tourism Leaders Group, set up to help shape government policy to 2025 and a board member of Donegal Tourism. A former ‘Donegal Person of the Year’, Deirdre is also President of the Donegal Women in Business Network.

Fidelma McGuirk, Payslip

Fidelma McGuirk is founder and CEO of [Payslip](#), a global payroll platform that automates the management of international payroll.

Payslip enables HR directors to consolidate global payrolls, achieve centralised reporting compliance and data protection, and deliver useful insights and real control to the business. Payslip clients are multi-national employers, growing aggressively in more than five countries.

Prior to Payslip, Fidelma has over 18 years' experience in international business. Having worked in Irish telco Eir in HR, she later led Taxback.com as Director of International Operations and as CEO. Fidelma studied her Bachelors in Business & German and Masters in Business in Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland & University of Regensburg, Germany. Fidelma trained as a certified Data Protection Officer.

Fiona O'Carroll, The Digital Mindset Coach

[Fiona O'Carroll](#) is a senior international executive with a 25-year track record of achievement in a variety of leadership roles including; COO, Chief Digital Officer, VP Marketing, GM in Tech, Retail, Consumer Goods, Education, Media, Computer Gaming sectors. She is a recognised international expert in delivering accelerated revenue growth and transformational change agendas primarily through empowering customers and enhancing brand's relationships with its customers via digital technologies and platforms.

Fiona is a system thinker and strategic doer, with a consistent track record of scaling international

businesses and achieving challenging financial and operational performance metrics. She has wide-ranging functional and general management experience, including P&L responsibility, with blue-chip multi-nationals (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Vivendi Universal, Adobe), domestic market-leaders (INM) and high growth SME's (Gifts Direct, The Irish Store). Fiona has a passion for building and leading high-performance teams through growth stage and transformational change, clearly aligned with company culture and mission.

She has extensive expertise in Strategic Execution, Digital Transformation, Revenue, Generation, Marketing, e-commerce, and Branding Digital Platforms, Brand Development and Customer Experience.

She has an MBA Leadership for Growth – Stanford University; and an MSc Management & BSc Marketing – TCD.

Gillian O'Dowd, Azon Recruitment Group

<https://twitter.com/AzonRecruitment/status/1104059043696513030>

Gillian O'Dowd established [Azon Recruitment](#) in 2014, along with her husband Ronan Colleran, with just two employees and three clients. With offices in Dublin, Limerick, London and Manchester, they now employ 40 staff specialising in multiple industry sectors including accounting and finance, financial services, taxation, legal and construction, and service a wide range of national and international clients.

Having the right staff in their own company is critical to the growth they have experienced. Gillian cites this as a hugely important aspect to how they have successfully developed the business. Today, Azon provides a complete recruitment service covering all the resourcing needs of clients, including executive search, contingent recruitment, project sourcing and contract sourcing. For the future, they are broadening the range of services they offer, and plans are well developed to expand overseas.

“Our priority has always been on knowing and understanding the landscape our clients are working in,” O'Dowd said.

Hannah Wrixon, Get the Shifts

<https://twitter.com/CatrionaLimk/status/1178972596957843456>

Hospitality was an obvious business choice for Hannah. She had previously set up a successful childcare services business and was highly experienced in sourcing professional, quality staff for clients. [Get the Shifts](#) was set up in 2016 to provide pre-screened, quality and experienced temporary staff to clients across the hospitality sector.

With offices in Dublin and Shannon, the business has grown rapidly, and the company now employs eight people full-time as well as providing 1,500 staff 'Superstars' for clients throughout the country. In 2018 the company was named national winner of both the National Enterprise Awards and the All Star Business Award, and in 2019 was winner of the Best Emerging company in the SFA Awards. Network Ireland also named Hannah Businesswoman of the Year 2019.

Hannah says: "I found Going for Growth hugely beneficial in terms of helping me think strategically and really kept me focussed on the business. It was energising and so supportive to be with a group of women who were facing the same issues."

Julie Currid, GoContractor

<https://twitter.com/BackforBusiness/status/1147819811298336769>

In 2012, Julie co-founded Initiafy, now [GoContractor](#). Julie explains exactly how GoContractor helps their clients save time and money; "construction faces the challenge of high volumes of contract staff who all need to be introduced to the site rules, company policies and safety procedures. GoContractor moves this process from the classroom to the cloud offering customers 90% cost savings as well as safer, more compliant sites. Their client base now includes Sisk, AECOM, Roadbridge, ESB, DAA and Dublin Port as well as most of the top construction companies in the US. The product offering has also seen a major revamp in 2019 with user experience for construction workers being placed as the most important element. Today, GoContractor employs 30 people in Dublin and has 15 staff in their New York office.

"When setting up a business, you should focus on perfecting a sales pitch," Currid said. "Everything from acquiring customers, raising capital, PR, marketing and recruitment are all influenced by your ability to sell your company, your product and yourself!"

Larissa Feeney, Accountant Online

<https://twitter.com/AccountancyIRL/status/989625471607496706>

Larissa began her career as a qualified chartered accountant spending a number of years as a sole practitioner, providing accountancy services to a wide range of business clients in her local area. She then went on to set up the award-winning online accountancy firm [Accountant Online](#), based in Letterkenny, Co Donegal. In 2017, she joined forces with Rose Kervick, an accomplished digital entrepreneur and together they opened a second office in Dublin, in order to be closer to the capital's startup technology community.

The company provides a complete range of financial and governance services, from company setup stage through to secretarial, tax, payroll and company filings, ensuring the client's accounts and compliance needs are met. Accountant Online has grown rapidly and the company now

employs 45 staff. Their success has been widely recognised, seeing them selected as winners in the Irish Accountancy Awards 2017 and 2018 and Shortlisted for 2019 Medium Practice of the Year, Best Use of Technology and Accountant of the Year.

“Accountancy services are traditionally offered via high street bricks and mortar offices, but this does not serve online and tech businesses well,” Feeney said. “They need accessibility to professional expertise online.”

Louella Morton, TestReach

https://twitter.com/Louella_Morton/status/1222642750807511040

[TestReach](#) was set up in 2014 by Louella and co-founder Sheena Bailey. The background context was the ever-growing demand world-wide for education and professional qualifications. A unique feature of TestReach is that you can easily ‘turn on’ remote invigilation for any test. With this option TestReach trained invigilators and supervisors monitor exams in real time over the web, via video, audio and remote screen share.

The exam hall environment is effectively re-created online, in a way that can service customers from markets across the world. The company’s main markets are professional bodies, educational/training organisations and corporations, particularly those in highly regulated sectors like financial services, pharma and aviation. Today, they employ 45 people directly with over 400 exam invigilators on their books. For the future, their priorities will be to expand further in the corporate sector and also into the US, where they are currently looking at some expansion options.

“I have benefitted greatly from Going for Growth and from continuing as part of the Going for Growth community,” Morton said. “It gave me a great opportunity to network and establish solid business relationships that I know will support me as we continue to grow the business.”

Mary B. Walsh, Ire Wel Pallets

https://twitter.com/acorns_ie/status/986656429229649921

Mary B. Walsh began her career in banking with AIB in the 1980s, having studied Business and Accountancy in Waterford Institute of Technology and later Accountancy through CIMA. [Ire Wel Pallets](#) is Ireland’s leading pallet and packaging manufacturer, supplying pallets, boxes and crates to specifications for their customers. The company’s customer base includes organisations in the medical devices, pharmaceutical, electronic, food and drinks industries. Mary and Shay are looking forward to celebrating 30 years in business in 2020.

20 years ago, the firm bought a 10-acre site and developed the first purpose-built pallet manufacturing facility in Ireland. Over the past three years €2.5million has been invested into Ire

Wel Pallets, with a further €2m investment to come over the next six months. With customers nationwide throughout the island of Ireland, she believes Ire Wel Pallets' presence in Northern Ireland is a key stepping stone into the UK market. To help achieve their goals, Ire Wel Pallets currently employ a team of 50 staff and are expanding.

“Over the next five years, we want to keep the business growing and begin exporting into mainland UK. We also aim to be the most successful pallet manufacturing company in Europe,” Walsh said.

Milena Jaksic, Platinum Pilates

<https://twitter.com/PlatinumPilates/status/1215181455330041856>

From her early teenage years, health and physical fitness have been at the heart of Milena Jaksic's approach to life. From small beginnings with just one studio, four employees and 400 clients accounting for 400 visits per week, the business has enjoyed impressive growth. Today, [Platinum Pilates](#) has seven studios, 30 employees and over 16,000 clients accounting for 2,500 visits per week. The first Platinum Pilates studio opened in Stillorgan, in Dublin.

Success came fast, as more and more people saw the health and fitness benefits of this type of exercise. The studio teams include Pilates Teachers, Physical Therapists, Physiotherapists, Wellness Coaches and other fitness and health specialists that can explore each client's individual needs to ensure they are on a fitness programme that can give them the best outcomes in terms of their overall health as well as their physical well being. The next step will be to build on the current number of seven studios in Dublin and Wicklow, and explore options to expand further in other areas of high population density, both in Ireland and in the UK.

“I found Going for Growth the best support I have ever had in business, it was a place to go and find like-minded people who were willing to share and encourage,” Jaksic said.

Monica Flood, Olas

Monica Flood established an IT training and consultancy business in 1981. [Olas](#) has developed as one of the premier IT training companies in Ireland and is the sole appointed education partner for SAP. Monica completed the sale of Olas to a French public company, Assima plc. and has retired from the position of CEO to pursue other business and investment interests.

Monica's experience of building a service business and a loyal customer base in a very competitive market provides an important perspective for growth and success. A great supporter of the arts in Ireland, Monica is a Patron of The Model in Sligo, home of the Niland Collection and one of Ireland's leading contemporary arts centres. Monica has recently been appointed as a non-executive Director to the Projects Arts Centre which began in 1966 as a small artist led collective and is now evolving into Ireland's national centre for the contemporary arts.

Oonagh O'Hagan, Meaghers Pharmacy Group

https://twitter.com/clare_duignan/status/832561334889934849

Oonagh O'Hagan is the owner and Managing Director of [Meaghers Pharmacy Group](#). A qualified pharmacist, she was in her late 20s when she bought the landmark Meagher's Pharmacy on Dublin's Baggot Street from Pierce Meagher in 2001. She has since gone on to grow the business to nine pharmacies and a thriving online store <http://www.meaghers.ie/>. She now employs 130 people with further growth planned this year. Meagher's has been named as a Deloitte Best Managed Irish Company for the past five years and has been awarded Gold Status these past two years.

The Meaghers Pharmacy Group has represented Ireland in the European Business Awards and collected the two top business awards at the Irish Pharmacy News awards ceremony, taking away the Business Development of the Year award and the OTC retailer in the same year. Oonagh herself has picked up many business awards and was named as Image Magazine's Entrepreneur of the Year in 2016.

Roisin Lafferty, Kingston Lafferty Design

<https://twitter.com/KingstonLaffert/status/1183750326605635584>

Roisin set up [Kingston Lafferty Design](#) in 2010. Roisin quickly built up the company to become one of the most respected interior architecture and design agencies in Europe. She now has a team of thirteen people working in KLD, based off Baggot Street in Dublin 4, with Roisin taking on the role of creative and managing director. Her main objective is to create spaces that enhance people's lives in a way that is both functional and beautiful.

In 2015, she was awarded the Fit Out Young Designer of the Year as well as picking up the award for Residential Project of the Year in both 2015 and 2016. 2018 saw KLD winning best café at the Restaurant and Bar Design Awards for her design of Pot Bellied Pig. KLD also won Best Fit Out Retail at the Fit Out Awards 2018 for The Vaults Parlour. Róisín was also named Interior Designer of the Year at the Image Interiors and Living Awards 2018. In 2019 Róisín was named the youngest ever President of the Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI). KLD plans to expand further into the UK and the rest of Europe over the next five years.

“All of our jobs are bespoke and unique and we also design individual pieces of furniture which fit the spaces we are designing,” Lafferty said.

Susan Spence, Softco (lead entrepreneur)

<https://twitter.com/susanspence92/status/1140337998002868225>

Susan Spence is co-founder and President of [SoftCo](#), one of Ireland’s most successful software companies. With offices in Ireland, US, UK and Finland, and a million users worldwide, SoftCo is a leading global provider of finance automation solutions that increase productivity, reduce costs and ensure that organisations meet their compliance obligations. SoftCo is a Microsoft Gold Partner, an AWS Advanced Technology Partner, and its customers include Primark, Irish Life, Lloyd’s Bank, Argos, and Bulmers.

Susan is the Irish Tatler Entrepreneur of the Year 2018 and is a former recipient of the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman of the Year and Irish Exporter of the Year awards. On her initiative, SoftCo sponsored the Irish women’s hockey team that won silver in the World Cup in the summer of 2018. SoftCo is a Starting Strong Supporter.

Before co-founding SoftCo, Susan held senior management positions with Hewlett Packard, McDonnell Douglas, and Phillips BV. She is a former non-Executive Director of CIE and member of the Government Enterprise Advisory Group. Susan is a member of the Institute of Directors in Ireland.

Triona MacGiolla Ri, Aró Digital Strategy (lead entrepreneur)

<https://twitter.com/IrishTimesBiz/status/931428454674833409>

[Aró Digital Strategy](#) was set up by Triona Mac Giolla Rí and Alan Rowe in 1996. The business began working with golf clubs and within a year won The Irish Times Business Website of the Year for [golfclubireland.com](#). By 2000, Aró had secured contracts with Jurys Doyle Hotel Group and Bórd Fáilte, establishing themselves as a leading digital agency in the Irish tourism sector.

Today, Aró Digital Strategy works with over 200 luxury hotels in the UK, Ireland and across the world. Aró provides a comprehensive range of digital services to the hospitality sector. They provide luxury hotel website design, a conversion-focused technology platform, expert data analysis and reporting along with digital marketing programs. The predominant reasons that clients choose to work with Aró include the stunning bespoke websites they build, along with an exceptional level of service, but mostly its knowing that they will probably perform better than their competitor set.

“I was privileged to join a group (Going for Growth) of positive, creative and committed women.

The format was very professional in a safe space where each participant could discuss their challenges and developments and gain insights from the peers' experiences," MacGiolla Ri

Vanessa Creaven, Spotlight Oral Care

<https://twitter.com/GoingForGrowth/status/1193896939701653507>

Spotlight Oral Care was designed and formulated by Irish dentists – sisters, Dr Lisa and Dr Vanessa Creaven - with the aim of creating the best oral health products. While Spotlight Oral Care initially began with teeth whitening strips and toothpaste, they now have a variety of products on the market including a new range of toothpastes for specific ailments – sensitive teeth, gums, rebuilding teeth, whitening and oral care. The products are all vegan friendly, are free from toxin ingredients, and have not been tested on animals.

In addition, the toothpaste tubes are made from sugar cane making them the world's first ever 100% recyclable tube, which completely revolutionises the oral care industry. Launched in 2016, Spotlight Oral Care is now for sale in Boots, Tesco, Dunnes Stores and through most pharmacies throughout Ireland. They also export to 15 countries and have recently signed a deal with Target and Ulta Beauty in the United States. They are now looking to raise finance to fund the company's next growth phase and Vanessa is getting ready for frequent visits to New York to assist with their US expansion in February.

"Beginning the cycle (Going for Growth) I expected I would gain a lot of expertise, but I had no idea as to the extent of that expertise, or the friendships I would make along the way," Creaven said.