

Element Software: mobile makes the difference

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Before setting up Element Software in 2011 with co-founder James Harkin, Dorothy Creaven worked for Google and Abbott Vascular. Based in Galway city, the company started out designing mobile apps for businesses, before moving into the development of its own mobile technology software.

This was a response to one of the biggest challenges she had found among clients, the prevalence of users rarely using downloaded apps. Element Software’s products are designed to improve user engagement and retention, and therefore revenues, especially for the gaming industry.

In 2013 the company won €50,000 from Enterprise Ireland’s Competitive Start Fund, which enabled it to develop the product, and win international gaming companies such as Bwin.party and Betsson. In early 2015, with a staff of eight, it launched Mobile Moments, the gaming industry’s first dedicated mobile CRM platform, designed to combat the player churn for mobile gaming operators.

What’s your business’s elevator pitch?

Our Element Wave platform is aimed at publishers and brands that want to increase mobile usage and revenues. Our products can help improve your mobile usage by 400%, user engagement by 200% and revenues by up to 175%, and we know that from our existing customers.

What do you regard as your business’s greatest achievement?

Creating something out of absolutely nothing. We started out with a couple of computers and a phone, just James and I. We have gone on to become a multi-award-winning mobile technology company with an international client base.

What was the lowest moment?

There isn’t any one that I would pick out. The nature of entrepreneurship is that there are always loads of ups and downs, but I can’t think of any one standout low. What has been hard is always having to micro-manage cashflow on a daily basis. I use a cashflow tool called Pulse App, into which I bash details every month, and which I check on a daily basis to find out who has to be paid, and also when the business is expecting to be paid.

How have you coped with setbacks?

There are always disappointments, such as not getting that sale you were expecting over the line, but I'm a positive person by nature and I accept that setbacks will happen and that, when they do, you learn from them.

If you're falling down in a particular area on a regular basis, you have to ask yourself why, and then do something about it. You also have to have a contingency plan if things don't go the way you hope. I always have a Plan B.

What's your attitude to risk?

I believe in calculated risk. You have to be able to take on risk to grow fast. I think if you see opportunity, you should take it. We bootstrapped for the first three years because we wanted to hold off on investment until we needed it.

The risk there was that having to secure investment would take up time we preferred to spend working on the product. Now we are ready to scale up, and investment will enable that.

Who has inspired or motivated you and why?

My late father was an entrepreneur who also built a business from nothing. It's called AGC Instruments, in Shannon, and he ran it for 30 years. It's still going strong and is now run by my brother, who is also doing a great job. My father was a pioneer, going out to China to sell back in the 1960s. What we learned from him is that hard work pays off.

What do you do, if anything, to switch off from the business?

I'm one of those really annoying early morning people. I get up at 6am and go running, go to the gym or do yoga. I don't think you can work efficiently without working out.

You don't just feel great after exercise, your capacity for decision-making is better and you work much more productively. If I don't get my exercise, I don't feel as 'on'.

What would you do differently if you were starting your business today?

I've made loads of mistakes, but you learn along the way so I wouldn't change them. I'm also lucky that I learned so much during my career before Element Wave.

For example, I was with Google when it was setting up in Dublin, and I was involved in the recruitment of around 1,000 people, so I learned pretty quickly how to find good people. I've an amazing team around me now as a result.

What is the most effective form of marketing for your business?

Conferences. We'll pick three a year and use them to make as many appointments with prospective clients as possible, and build up a pipeline of orders that way. It's the best way for us to promote ourselves.

What lessons have you learned in business that others could apply?

Keep a close eye on cashflow and your balance sheet. Treat your staff really well and ensure there is two-way feedback on that front. Be flexible and enable them to 'work smart', rather than focusing on long hours. I'm a firm believer in working fast.

Finally, if there was one piece of business advice you'd like to give to another business owner, what would that be?

Always be selling. Did I tell you Element Software has just launched a new mobile CRM platform that's going to revolutionise the mobile gaming industry?

Check out [Element Software](#) for more information.