
Sweep revs up car sales for the TikTok generation

Sweep is a new start-up driving a new app for car sales in Ireland. It currently has 32,000 cars from 400 dealerships in Ireland.

“Searching for a car can be a long, repetitive process,” explained [Sweep](#) co-founder Conor O’Boyle.

“There are a number of players in the industry in Ireland who in essence all have the same product, a list view of cars. Sweep is different. Each year, there are over 200,000 cars sold in the Republic of Ireland alone (between new and used). Considering the population, and those that can drive, this is a significant number of cars.”

O’Boyle points out that the car-buying research process is moving almost solely online to begin with, as the new generation of car buyers are coming through.

“Combine this with the majority of internet traffic now being mobile based, it presented an opportunity to do something different within the motor trade. Consumers no longer want to waste time searching for anything, and expect the process to be as easy and seamless as possible. The new generation want to see what is out there, quickly and easily. This is what we are trying to achieve with Sweep.”

Car-buying for the TikTok generation

The idea for Sweep first came about in late 2018 while observing digital trends across e-commerce and media.

O'Boyle says the Snapchat-TikTok-Instagram-Tinder generation were gradually becoming maturing adults.

“We saw the opportunity to give them an automotive browsing and buying experience in line with what they like – clutter-free simplicity and ease of use on mobile apps. The product is resonating well with users, and we have had over 1,000,000 swipes on the app since we launched on 12 December 2019.”

Room to vroom

Sweep's core product is an app based only platform that allows users to shortlist the cars they like, but also get rid of the cars they don't like.

“This means that you won't keep seeing the same cars you didn't like yesterday or last week reappearing in your search criteria. The app shows you one car at a time, you swipe right if you like it which adds it to your favourites. You swipe left if you don't like it and it gets rid of it, you won't see it again. You are creating a shortlist of cars you like, and only seeing cars you haven't seen before every time that you open the app.

“Once you shortlist a car, you can message the dealer via in-app messaging. This is very similar to how Facebook Messenger looks and feels, and is a lot more personal than emails. All communication is directed back into the app, which makes it a lot more seamless for the consumer. We currently have over 35,000 cars from over 400 dealers in the Republic of Ireland listing on the app. For dealers, we provide full transparency on their stats and leads via a dashboard that is tailored for each dealership. Transparency is a key part of our business, particularly in the age we are in where everything is become more data driven.”

The drivers behind Sweep

COO and co-founder O'Boyle spent seven years in the investment industry in Ireland working with an Irish hedge fund (Abbey Capital) for five years followed by a high frequency trader (Virtu Financial) for two years. He took a break from the investment work in 2018 when he was 27 and managed the professional snooker player Ronnie O'Sullivan for a year. He believes all of these experiences, particularly the investment world, showed how technology can enhance workflow and create a lean scalable business.

Prior to starting Sweep, chief product officer Shane Ennis co-founded Noa – the international audio journalism app – and he has accumulated a wealth of experience in taking an idea to market, raising capital and building a talented team. Day to day his focus is on app design, data and next

generation products. Prior to building his own companies, Shane worked at eBay for five years in financial and operational planning in the UK and Germany.

Head of Sales Stephen Farrell has spent his entire life within the motor trade. He sold cars for Bradys Mercedes-Benz & Lewis Motors in Dublin before moving to Australia and working for Audi & a dealer technology platform called Dealer Solutions. When he returned from Australia in July 2015 he worked for CarsIreland, CarBuyersGuide and DoneDeal before joining up with Conor and Shane on Sweep. He is in effect Sweep's industry expert.

Taking a different road

"The start-up ecosystem in Ireland seems good, however it is not something that we have tapped into much as yet," said O'Boyle.

"We raised our seed investment privately, so didn't go down the typical start-up route. There is plenty of help and assistance out there for start-ups even outside of the start-up framework in Ireland. Most people you speak to are more than willing to help out in some way when they hear that you are a start-up.

"Everything won't be easy, and you can't please everyone. So many people will have opinions (some valuable and some not) and you need to take them on board and decide what is important and what is not as a business.

"In the motor industry we are constantly getting requests for certain features to be added and it is very easy as a start-up to fall into the trap of being yes-men and agreeing to do everything. "Bandwidth and resourcing is a huge thing as a start-up and customers appreciate honesty. Don't commit to anything unless you are 100pc sure that you can deliver on it as reputational damage is the worst kind of damage for a start-up."

O'Boyle's advice to fellow founders is not to fear change. "There will always be speedbumps along the way from the very beginning but this is what makes it exciting. Some of the best decisions you can make are when you face a challenge and your back is against the wall. Taking the leap to do something different is often the hardest part of it as there are inevitably sacrifices that you need to make somewhere."

Image at top: From left, Sweep founders Shane Ennis, Stephen Farrell and Conor O'Boyle

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