

Teckro CEO Gary Hughes' appetite for disruption

Teckro co-founder and CEO Gary Hughes reveals how the Limerick company is transforming clinical trials for the world's leading pharmaceutical and emerging biotech firms.

[Teckro](#) has been in the news lately after it emerged the company had made five significant appointments to its leadership team as it executes aggressive go-to-market and product strategies.

In many ways what we are witnessing is a masterclass in how an Irish innovation company is scaling up at a rapid pace, perhaps creating a template for many more to follow.

Hiring these seasoned leaders is imperative for the fast-growth company as the number of trials on Teckro has more than tripled over the past couple of years. Today, more than active 11,800 study sites use Teckro in all major countries around the world. Equally important, user adoption of Teckro is high, with more than 90pc of registered users active on the platform which incorporates machine learning technology.

The strategic hires include: ICON veteran Prof Brendan Buckley as chief medical officer; Veeva Systems veterans Kelly Brown as chief marketing officer and Sandra Blaser as vice-president of customer success; Aer Lingus veteran Anita Callan as vice-president of product; and Munich Re former head of digital operations Neil Flanagan as vice-president of engineering.

The hires follow Teckro's Series C funding announcement in February, featuring investment from major US venture capital firms, including Founders Fund, Bill Maris' Section 32, Borealis Ventures, Northpond Ventures and Sands Capital Ventures. To date, Teckro has raised \$43m, with the latest round of \$25m earmarked for scale-up activities to accelerate growth and meet increased demand from leading pharmaceutical and emerging biotech companies looking to simplify and modernise clinical trials with Teckro.

Fire in their bellies

For the founders of Teckro, this is the latest in a series of business adventures.

"There are three of us who founded Teckro – myself, my brother, Nigel, and Jacek Skrzypiec. Teckro is the second company we started. The first company was in 2001, called Firecrest Clinical, which was an investigator portal and one of the first site-facing solutions in the market. In 2011, ICON, a global clinical research organisation, purchased Firecrest. All three of us stayed on for a couple of years after the acquisition."

But necessity is the mother of invention and the founders spotted their moment. “Given the breadth of the ICON business, we got more insight into the scope of the issues facing drug development. In 2015, the three of us started Teckro with the goal to make clinical research simpler and more accessible for everyone involved in clinical trials – study teams in the pharmaceutical companies, third party study monitors, and site staff such as doctors and nurses. Today, Teckro manages more than 100 clinical trials and is already used by more than active 11,800 study sites around the world. The demand we are seeing for Teckro reflects the real need for simplification.”

This machine is on

Teckro isn't exactly a life sciences firm, it isn't just a tech firm, it isn't just a clinical trials company, it is a blend of all three but probably has more in common with Google or Microsoft.

“Teckro uses machine learning to digitise traditional paper-based processes, enabling real-time oversight and support for every patient interaction,” Hughes explained.

“We put an emphasis on a simple, intuitive design, enabling clinical study staff to easily access Teckro through any web-responsive device or their mobile phone. As a result, we see very high adoption rates of Teckro.”

The company has succeeded in raising \$43m to date. Asked to sum up the current funding environment and what it is about Teckro's proposition and timing that has made it attractive for investment, Hughes explained: “There is money to be invested for businesses like Teckro with innovative products targeting large markets with significant revenue potential.

“Teckro has funding from major US venture capital firms: Founders Fund, Bill Maris' Section 32, Borealis Ventures, Northpond Ventures and Sands Capital Ventures. Our success in raising funding is because of the market potential to disruption traditional clinical trial processes. With the latest funding, we are scaling our business to meet a growing demand and reach more customers.”

In terms of scaling an international business from Ireland, Hughes said it is the ideal location to scale from.

“We have two offices in Ireland: Dublin is our Engineering Hub of Excellence and our global headquarters is in Limerick. From an engineering and technical standpoint, there is a lot of talent in the country. This is good news for us as we build out our product development functions in Dublin, where we can get well qualified people who bring experience and best practices they gained from other technology companies. As a globally-facing economy, Ireland is an excellent place to do business, and you can see that by the increasing number of multinationals locating here.

The five senior hires represent significant domain experience. Asked what impact this will have on

the company's growth trajectory, Hughes said: "The leaders we just announced bring domain expertise to scale all parts of our business so we can move quickly to seize the massive market opportunity in front of us. They are coming from established, public companies, and they all have both the experience and best practices we need in our growth phase. With their leadership, we will optimise our structure and process for scale, and they will hire the best people to get the job done.

In terms of how he would advise other scaling firms to go about recruiting senior experienced people, he concluded: "My advice to other entrepreneurs is to hire people you trust and who buy into your vision for the company. Then give them the autonomy and authority to scale their respective functions."

Written by John Kennedy

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Pictured above: Teckro CEO Gary Hughes. Image: Sean Curtain/True Media