

## How to use WeChat to sell into China

**Brian Goff and Felim Meade set up Emerald Green Baby to sell infant formula into China. When they set up a digital store on WeChat, everything changed.**

### What is Emerald Green Baby?

[Emerald Green Baby](#) is an Irish company started five years ago to sell products online into the Chinese market. The online market in China is the largest in the world and we began by selling Irish infant formula. We developed a store to learn about the logistics of getting product from Ireland to China and we used it as a learning process.

We then set up a store on WeChat about 18 months ago. WeChat is the main way Chinese people communicate. It has over one billion active users. You can do everything on it from communicating, buying and selling, booking a taxi or even scheduling a hospital appointment. The average Chinese person spends about three hours a day on WeChat and it allowed us to build our following and communicate with our customers. We diversified from just infant formula to selling other health and beauty products.

### How important was WeChat early on?

We learned so much from this about how to sell to China, how they communicate, and the use of bloggers and the importance of them to Chinese consumers. We were approached by the EU SME centre in Beijing and they liked what we had done with the WeChat store and they asked us to help other Irish SMEs in this area. We're now working with several state agencies and companies in Finland, Estonia, Holland, and Switzerland, as well as Ireland, to help them sell their products into China.

### Did you have a strong understanding of the Chinese market before you began?

We had no understanding of the market – we just saw an opportunity. We used the knowledge we had on how popular Irish formula is in China and applied that to other similar products as well as the infant formula. We started by selling into Hong Kong initially to learn more about the eastern consumer and then went into China.

### Why focus on China?

My partner and I always had an interest in the online market and we all know that traditional retail is

shrinking because of the dominance of online. China came about because we both had a strong interest in the country. We had contacts in the food industry which meant we were able to source the formula and sell it into Hong Kong, which then led into China, and we used that as the catalyst to sell more products. Especially now in light of Brexit, we think companies should look at markets like China for the opportunity.

### **What advice would you give someone looking to export into China?**

The Chinese people are very like the Irish in that they like to get to know those they are doing business with. If you go to China and make a deal at the first meeting, it's a bad deal. Get to know the people you do business with. You need to decide on the tried and trusted solution that you are going to provide in order for it to work. You've got to fully commit to the project.

### **Who inspires you?**

The people who inspire me the most are the small business owners. The people who can raise their family, educate their kids and run a business all at once are the real heroes. Supporting local business is so important because you'll really miss them when they are gone.

### **If you were to start all over, what would you do differently?**

I would've hired a company like us if we existed. But in saying that we wouldn't have had as much fun or got to visit China as often as we did. But we made mistakes along the way and having someone to advise us like would've really helped.