

What is GirlCrew?

Having started out as a journalist with *The Irish Times*, Paula Newenham created GirlCrew, a support and advice platform for women all over the world.

I studied law in Ireland and the United States, before completing a master's degree in journalism. I began my career as a general news reporter with *The Irish Times* mostly covering the courts but it got depressing after a while as there were never really any positive stories. When I made the move to business reporting, I wanted to write about more positive things, so I focussed on technology, startups, innovation and entrepreneurship. Interviewing entrepreneurs every day made me realise I wanted to start my own business. [GirlCrew](#) was the perfect opportunity to do so.

We're all about supporting women. Our principle guideline as a company is one of respect, and that feeds into our community and the support we offer each other. This can be something small like people just chatting through problems online. Or something bigger like helping each other find suitable housing, find a job that's good for them, or helping them to settle into a new city. We'd like to build on this principle and become a community for women all over the world. We want no woman to ever feel alone. No matter where they are, they can join us and chat to other women for support. Even if we haven't launched in their city, they can do this.

Unlike other social networking sites, GirlCrew immediately connects women with others in their city for nights out, hikes, brunches, holidays and more. It also has in-built careers, entrepreneurship, and personal interest groups, where women can share knowledge and advice on everything from getting a pay rise to restaurant recommendations and make-up tips.

We initially funded it ourselves. My co-founders Elva Carri, Aine Mulloy and I all kept our full-time jobs and worked on GirlCrew on the side. We later raised funding from private investors in Ireland, the UK and the US, as well as Enterprise Ireland. We were also part of Enterprise Ireland's high potential start-up programme.

We are not truly global yet, but we plan to be. The United States is our main focus at present. However, we are also looking further afield. We have demand for GirlCrew everywhere, and a waiting list of more than 100 cities worldwide where women have requested GirlCrew. We plan to make it really easy for women to find information, tips or recommendations on anything, and to meet other women in their area for friendship and activities.

We do lots of social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. We have also run ads across all these platforms. The most successful method of marketing for us has been media coverage. We entered lots of competitions as a company, from pitch competitions to startup competitions. This helped raise our profile and get us more media coverage. As part of our launch, we opened a pop-up shop in Dublin’s Temple Bar. We had four days of events in the pop-up shop, which we call the GirlCrew Hootenanny.

None of us knew how to code, and we had no experience in hiring or managing software engineers. We got an amazing technical advisor on board, who was able to guide us through everything. Without our tech advisor, we wouldn’t have known if the developers we were interviewing were bluffing, and we might have made some more costly decisions.

If you were to do it all over again, what would you do differently?

I wouldn’t outsource development. GirlCrew’s lead developer is in-house now. However, we initially outsourced the development and it was a disaster. We ended up having to start over from scratch, which hugely delayed the launch of our app. It also cost us a good bit of time and money.

Who inspires you?

Oisin Kim, the co-founder and CEO of online doctor service Webdoctor. He is our technical advisor and has been a huge help to us with everything relating to the development of the GirlCrew app. He is also a huge help with business generally, as he runs his own company. I’m also inspired by Jayne Ronayne - the co-founder and CEO of corporate alumni platform Talivest. She is a bit further down the startup road than we are and has been a huge help. She was able to advise us on everything from term sheets to boards, fundraising and hiring.