

# Learning from experience

This month, up-and-coming business people will have the chance to learn from experienced entrepreneurs thanks to *The Sunday Business Post* and the Entrepreneur Experience. Below, we meet some of those taking part, write Colette Sexton and Leanna Byrne



**H**indsight is 20/20 vision, and during this year's Entrepreneur Experience, emerging entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to learn from the experience of established business people who know just what they face.

The *Sunday Business Post* is linking up with the Entrepreneur Experience as the event's official media partner.

The event takes place on March 27 and 28 in Ballymaloe, Shanagarry, Co Cork. It will involve 24 experienced entrepreneurs providing advice and guidance to 24 up-and-coming business people.

During the 24-hour event, emerging entrepreneurs will take part in one-to-one sessions with their more seasoned counterparts.

They will also benefit from deep analysis, group sessions, pitching and plenary sessions.

The start-ups will be divided into three groups. The Ideas Group will have entrepreneurs who have a new idea or action plan, and require a "sanity check" to ensure they are going about things the correct way.

The eight start-ups in the Investor Ready Group will have an opportunity to pitch for investment to an audience of seasoned entrepreneurs and investors.

The Scaling Group will be for entrepreneurs running established businesses that employ five to ten people and want to grow. This group will learn how to create, access and capture new opportunities.

Here, we look at 12 companies taking part in the Scaling and Investor Ready groups at this year's Entrepreneur Experience:

## 4Impacts Intelligent Solutions

**Little Island, Co Cork**

**Group: scaling**  
Co-founded by Irish rugby player Donnacha O'Callaghan, 4Impacts is a digital media and data analytics company focused on digital out-of-home (OOH) advertising and related mobile technologies.

The company runs its own public and private digital OOH media networks through 50 retail advertising totems and a health service network with 250 screens in doctors' surgeries and health centres nationwide.

The data derived from both retail and healthcare environments is designed to drive the innovation of a data analytics platform, and expedite the commercial value of the technology, while also attracting early revenue from media sales.

Regulatory changes and restrictions in healthcare advertising have emphasised the need for pharmaceutical and healthcare companies to educate patients on available treatments at a point of influence on visits to their doctors.

4Impacts' digital OOH network aims to provide a physical link and edu-

cational channel to its clients' target markets (patients) and key influencers (medical professionals).

In parallel, audience data from mobile and connected devices creates an enormous opportunity for digital OOH to create a new revenue stream to augment their media sales. The company describes this location data as a "new marketing currency".

4Impacts' data analytics service is expected to sell to digital OOH operators worldwide, providing them for the first time with a revenue stream from screen networks.

The company is the only Irish digital OOH operator to offer interaction and feedback to advertising companies, enabling audience measurement and campaign return on investment.

## Aisling Maher

**Adare, Co Limerick**

**Group: investor ready**  
Irish designer Aisling Maher started her fashion business making hats, headpieces and fashion accessories in 2010.

Having spent six years in architecture and studying millinery in the London College of Fashion, Maher drew on her skillsets in both areas to create an inspiring collection of pieces.

The brand has since undergone significant year-on-year growth. It has an annual turnover of €332,000 and employs four people.

Maher's collections can be found in boutiques in Ireland, Britain and the US, where her high-profile clients include actress Catherine Zeta-Jones.

She has won numerous awards, including Fashion Focus Milliner of the Year, and best young entrepreneur in the established category of the Limerick finals of Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur.

## Asystec

**Raheen Business Park, Limerick**

**Group: scaling**  
Data governance, management and intelligence solution provider Asystec designs solutions to allow companies to manage, secure, identify and drive additional value from their key data assets.

The company provides end-to-end solutions for customers, including a mixture of independent solutions from



**The data is designed to drive the innovation of a data analytics platform**

a number of vendors and its own services. Co-owned by Brendan McPhillips, it helps customers derive insights from new and existing data streams, so they can differentiate themselves in their respective markets.

According to the company, these insights can help customers to compete more effectively, to better understand their markets, to drive down costs and sell these insights for new monetary streams.

Asystec gives customers a low-risk option, allowing them to use its expertise and tools through assessments, workshops and six-to-eight week analytics engagements designed to assess their needs.

The company also advises on platforms, infrastructure, security and data governance tools to ensure that these data assets are handled appropriately and securely.

In January 2014, Asystec opened a new 5,000 square foot executive briefing centre in Limerick, where it hosts management briefings for customers and "deep dive" technical briefings from multiple vendors.

The company plans to open a data analytics centre of excellence alongside the briefing centre.

## CareZapp

**Penrose Wharf, Cork**

**Group: investor ready**

Ageing populations worldwide have left the existing care systems in many countries unable to meet the demand for additional services over longer lifespans.

The home is care's new frontier, but there is a gap in connectedness between the various stakeholders. This forces people into expensive and often inappropriate care options.

CareZapp is a mobile app and platform that supports caregiving at home. It connects family, the care community and technology.

Following a number of successful trials, the company has secured its first enterprise deal with the potential to drive 10,000 users in the coming 12 to 18 months. This is expected to generate annualised recurring revenues of more than €200,000 thereafter.

CareZapp has now opened a funding round to raise €775,000 through convertible notes by May this year, of which €550,000 would come from angel and early-stage investors, and €225,000 from Enterprise Ireland.

This investment will be used to accelerate product development for existing customers, increase marketing activities to grow user acquisitions and drive partnership development.

Previously, the company raised €55,000 from bootstrapping, the Bank of Ireland accelerator and Enterprise Ireland Competitive Start Funding.

CareZapp was founded by Andrew Macfarlane, Ed Lenox, Ron Finegan and Carl Flynn.

## CheckVentory Innovation

**Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin**

**Group: investor ready**

Adrian Walsh established CheckVentory Innovation to develop a risk management platform for the operational and governance needs of the capital asset finance industry.

As Walsh sees it, every high-value inventory business is looking for ways to reduce its costs, risks and inefficiencies.

He identified a gap in capital asset finance when he was working as managing director of Fiat Spa.

CheckVentory automates existing stock checking processes by enabling dealers to self-audit simply, securely and accurately.

Walsh is targeting automotive distributors at the outset, along with the



Frank Holt of Specialisterne



Adrian Walsh of CheckVentory



Joseph Dulgan of Heyday



Brendan McPhillips of Asystec



Donagh Quigley of Handmade Soap

banks they work with to fund vehicle inventory for their dealer network.

Walsh developed the CheckVentory business model in 2014 using "lean methodologies", and built Version 1.0 having listened to customer engagement and feedback.

An enterprise version of CheckVentory hit the market last December, netting Walsh his first two multinational customers.

The move brought to €50 million the value of the assets that are managed on the CheckVentory platform. Three additional clients are currently undertaking active CheckVentory trials, and Walsh said there were more in the pipeline.

Walsh has taken part in Enterprise Ireland's New Frontiers programme, securing Competitive Start funding from the state body and qualifying as a high potential start-up.

## ChemiSal Safety

**Castletroy Park Commercial Campus, Limerick**

**Group: investor ready**

ChemiSal Safety designs, builds and installs safety and storage handling systems for hazardous materials.

Established by Noel Conolin, its products and services are designed to ensure clients are in compliance with relevant legislation and standards.

This includes corporate safety standards, chemical agents regulations, and ATEX regulations.

The system can also be used for FDA and Irish Medicines Board requirements, ISO 140001, EPA regulations and insurance requirements.

The company has reported 30 per cent growth per annum. It recently won

its first export order in a competitive tender for a British government contract, and Conolin plans to open his first European office this year.

The company does not have a website, with Conolin instead opting to generate business in the industrial, utilities and public buildings sector through word-of-mouth.

## EazyCity

**Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork**

**Group: scaling**

EazyCity offers people arriving to a new city to work or study, services relating to accommodation, employment, study and social activities.

Founded in 2004 by business partners Enrico Zoppi and Julia Lynes, the idea came about when Zoppi moved to Ireland and used an agency in Italy to organise his trip.

He thought that the same service should be available in Ireland to help people who want to move here for work or study.

The company initially offered short-term, flexible accommodation services as a stopgap measure for people when they first arrive in a new city. This helps people to find their way around the city, and to decide which area they want to live in.

The service has since expanded to include educational courses, translation services, job search assistance and – more recently – assistance opening a business in the new country.

The company identifies a keen customer-focus and flexibility as key values. Headquartered in Cork, it opened a Dublin office in 2008. A London office followed in 2011.

Now it is franchising the business,

and three offices are expected to open in Italy by June of this year.

Its revenue streams are split 50-50 between direct business and referral partners, such as language schools and large multinationals (IT sector companies in Cork, in particular).

EazyCity was named the Grand Prix Digital Marketing 2014 winner at the first Cork Digital Marketing Awards, organised by the Cork Chamber, last year.

Lynes said that there are a lot of events on in Cork, but that the Entrepreneur Experience "stood out" as it seemed "very focused".

"We're not a fresh start-up, we're nearly 11 years in business," Lynes said. "Right now, we're at a bit of a crossroads in terms of where we want to go. There's a lot going on with our company at the moment."

She said she is hoping to bounce some ideas off the mentors to get some "perspective and clarity". She is also hoping to get the company more investor-ready based on what she will learn at the Entrepreneur Experience.

"There are a few ideas that we'd like to pursue that would need investment," she said.

"There's 20 of us employed full-time in the company now, and it's taking us from that to the next big leap," she said, adding that she's hoping to speak to people who have experience in scaling.

## The Handmade Soap Company

**Slane, Co Meath**

**Group: scaling**

The Handmade Soap Company designs and manufactures a range of 100 per cent natural bath and body products. The products, which are handmade in Ireland, are free from sodium lauryl sulfate, parabens and petrochemicals, and are not tested on animals.

The range includes shaving creams, bath salts, lip balms, moustache wax and some items targeted at gardeners.

Founded in 2010 by Donagh Quigley and Gemma McGowan, The Handmade Soap Company is growing at 30 per cent a year.

It sells through shops and hotels, and has a 50/50 split between Irish and overseas markets.

In Ireland, key stockists include House of Fraser, Avoca, Kilkenny, and Carraig Donn.

High-profile overseas stockists include Harvey Nichols, Wholefoods and Urban Outfitters.

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