



Brian and Rachel Nolan, founders of Nobó



Carl Flynn, left, Ed Lenox, Ron Finegan and Andrew Macfarlane of the CareZapp team
Conor McCabe Photography



Aisling Maher, designer of hats, headpieces and fashion accessories



Garrett Mullooly and Enda Keane of Treemetrics



Julia Lynes and Enrico Zoppi of EazyCity

Heyday Integrated Circuits

Valbonne, France

Group: investor ready
Joseph Duigan established Heyday Integrated Circuits in November 2013 with the aim of bridging the power gap.

The company develops integrated circuits for the power management and power conversion market, with a focus on the high-voltage space. Heyday's staff are experienced in integrated circuit design and development, power systems development and applications design.

A fabless integrated circuit development company, it engages with foundries and packaging companies around the world.

Its target customers are original equipment manufacturers in the pow-

er converter space and semiconductor companies.

Based on its proprietary intellectual property, Heyday maintains that its products have disruptive potential within the power and management market.

They dropped seamlessly into existing sockets, improving performance at a reasonable price, the company said.

Nobó

Dublin 2
Group: investor ready

After a year of strong growth, Nobó ice cream will soon hit supermarket shelves in the Middle East.

Founded by Rachel and Brian Nolan, the start-up's "Frozen Goodness" alternative to dairy ice cream launched in Ireland in December 2013.

The product is stocked in more than 300 stores around the country, including SuperValu outlets.

Donncha O'Callaghan of 4Impacts

Frozen Goodness is the world's only alternative to ice cream made from a combination of plant-based ingredients – coconut milk and avocado. Naturally free from dairy and gluten, it was the first dairy-free ice-cream to reach the market.

The company stocks five flavours, including chocolate and toasted almond, passionfruit and mango, vanilla and coconut, Irish salted caramel and fresh lemon.

Nobó will now export to the United Arab Emirates, with sales expected to start in the next week.

Co-owner Brian Nolan, said the move to export was the company's first amid plans to ramp up sales to Britain and other overseas markets this year.

At this year's Entrepreneur Experience, Nolan hopes to get to grips with how to grow the business organically. "We're at a really interesting – and scary in many senses – stage, where we had a really positive first year," he said.

"We're at a stage where we have to grow the business and make sure we make the right decisions. On a day-to-day basis, we are faced with hugely important decisions which will shape the business as we grow."

He added: "The challenge is trying to grow sustainably and to make sure that you have the capacity to get that growth in line with your own manufacturing capacity. You don't want to kill yourself early as well."

"There's so many great opportunities coming across our desk this first year and we're trying to tread the right path."

Nolan said being exposed to experienced entrepreneurs will give him the opportunity to draw from their talent. Colum O'Sullivan, co-founder of food company Cully and Sully, is one entrepreneur Nolan said he would like to work with.

"Cully and Sully would obviously be one of the most renowned Irish food brands in the last 15 years," said Nolan. "So hearing [its] story from Colum O'Sullivan's and what kind of lessons he's learned would be hugely beneficial."

Nobó was one of more than 10,000

products to make it on to a list of Britain and Ireland's Top 50 Foods at last September's UK Great Taste Awards. The range secured a central listing with SuperValu shortly after.

Specialisterne Ireland

Citywest, Dublin
Group: scaling

A specialist recruiter, Specialisterne Ireland works with candidates who are on the autistic spectrum, particularly those with Asperger's Syndrome.

It also provides ongoing personal and occupational support for candidates who are in employment.

The company was co-founded by Peter Brabazon and Frank Holt, who both have sons with Asperger's. Its offices are located in Sap's Dublin headquarters and in Belfast's Skains Centre.

The majority of Specialisterne's candidates are employed as IT workers, who work for companies including Sap, Liberty, Frontline, Intel Kerry Group and Microsoft.

The company is leading a project with partners from Austria, Spain, Hungary, Belgium and Ireland, to obtain Erasmus+ funding.

Its candidate assessment process is refined continually by Masters-qualified staff with plans in play to find overseas buyers for the system.

According to Specialisterne, 85 per cent of people with autism are unemployed or are in positions beneath their intellectual abilities.

Treemetrics

Mahon, Co Cork
Group: scaling

Set up in 2005 by Enda Keane, software company Treemetrics has developed a web-based satellite mapping application for the forestry industry.

The company's technology replaces 19th century methods of measuring forests and trees by using three-dimensional cameras, sensors and satellites to allow for better measurement, monitoring and management of forest resources.

'During the weekend, there's a lot of soul baring'

During the Entrepreneur Experience, there is a "passion in the room that is not replicated anywhere else", according to Michael O'Connor, chief executive of CorkBIC.

The seasoned business people involved in the programme took great satisfaction from helping the emerging entrepreneurs taking part, O'Connor added, while the emerging entrepreneurs benefited from the expertise of their more experienced counterparts.

The Entrepreneur Experience was set up in 2011 by CorkBIC, as a private sector led organisation, to identify and build knowledge-intensive companies based on promising technology and capable, innovative people.

"Our job at CorkBIC is to grow the next generation of companies, what we're doing over 24 hours has very high impact," he said, adding that the event "transforms the individual".

"The initial idea was to devel-

op a heavy duty coaching programme between experienced entrepreneurs who are time poor, and emerging entrepreneurs who wish to focus on the critical decisions and mindset issues that they need to address as part of their development," he said.

O'Connor said there was a strong alumni associated with the Entrepreneur Experience, adding that the majority of seasoned entrepreneurs return to the event the next year or the year after.

He said that the entrepreneurs, many of whom have been in their fields for ten to 20 years, enjoyed the re-engagement they experienced during the event.

"Seasoned entrepreneurs want to help the emerging entrepreneurs and to prevent them making the mistakes they made so they can yield better outcomes," he said.

"During the weekend, there's a lot of soul baring, talking directly and honestly. What is said in the

room stays in the room," he said.

Each year, a public notice for applications sent out and applicants are interviewed by the organisers of the Entrepreneur Experience.

"The primary criteria for selecting emerging entrepreneurs is based on where we can make an impact."

"We're not selecting the best necessarily, but we're selecting where we can make an impact," O'Connor said, adding "it's not about just making contacts with high-level individuals, it's about buying into the process and having one's mindset changed."

O'Connor said each seasoned entrepreneur was paired with an emerging entrepreneur and these relationships could last months or years.

"There's a heavy duty matching process based on mindsets and needs, not necessarily on industry," he said, adding that it's "quite different to conventional matching

and that's why it works."

O'Connor said there had been many success stories after the Entrepreneur Experience. Paul Prendergast, founder of Inhance Technology, attended the event and O'Connor said that it gave him the "focus and confidence to aim higher than his current plans".

He said Prendergast had then focused on the US market and within 15 months had increased employee numbers from 12 to 40.

About 92 companies have taken part in the Entrepreneur Experience to date. Of that number, 26 have been named as high potential start-ups by Enterprise Ireland.

Around €17 million has been raised by 40 of the companies that have previously attended the event, according to O'Connor. He added, however, that the event was just one reason why the start-ups succeeded.

– Colette Sexton

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