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10 YEARS OF LEADING THE WAY IN DEFINING AND DESIGNING THE WORKPLACE IN IRELAND

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Sync NI magazine



Jackie Henry MBE
Senior Partner at Deloitte NI

In a climate driven by powerful digital forces, disruption, and rapid-fire innovation, every company is now a technology company. Whereas technology was traditionally confined largely to operations and execution, its digital expression now impacts all organisational initiatives, from ideation to delivery. We witness daily how it drives product design, upends venerable business models, and rewires competition. Be Digital or be left behind.

Globalisation is also driving borderless growth across established and emerging markets. Barriers to entry are being lowered, if not demolished. In this climate, new entrants focused on niches, specific functions, and overlooked domains can now make meaningful impacts on a global stage traditionally dominated by the world's biggest players. Never before have so many opportunities existed to differentiate on a global scale.

Over the past several years, Belfast has been able to capitalise on these opportunities and has become a vibrant hub for digital experts. We have the second fastest growing digital sector in the UK, we're competing and partnering with tech giants from all over the world, pushing organisational and technological boundaries to innovate and trial new ideas and shape the future of industry.

Digital DNA, one of Ireland's biggest technology events is a catalyst for bringing these Digital experts together. Northern Ireland is seizing the opportunity. In its 4th year, Digital DNA welcomes dozens

of speakers from some of the world's biggest companies to Northern Ireland with the aim of inspiring over 1,000 local and international delegates to embrace cutting-edge technology and digital solutions. The event aims to inspire and inform entrepreneurs and existing businesses of all sizes to help them respond to the opportunities and threats of Digital. The various talks, workshops and discussions will demonstrate how organisations can harness digital technologies and trends to shape their business strategy and succeed in the marketplace.

We at Deloitte are extremely proud to be headline sponsors of Digital DNA. We now have a technology and digital consulting practice employing over 250 people in Belfast building innovative solutions in Digital, Analytics, Cloud Solutions and Cyber Security. We, thrive on bringing expertise together and therefore fully realise the importance of Digital DNA in bringing leading experts together, inspiring talent, nurturing innovation and seeding the solutions of tomorrow, today.

We hope you'll take the opportunity to attend Digital DNA to look for ways to re-focus, to re-vitalise and to be inspired. We encourage you to look not only for ways to do familiar things differently, but also to do fundamentally different things. Now is the time to seek out new ways to complete. Now is the time to act. Let's build tomorrow, starting today.

Jackie Henry
Senior Partner, Deloitte NI

SYNC NI
magazine

About Sync NI

Sync NI is the leading media outlet for Northern Ireland's Technology and Business Industries.

The Sync NI website and magazine keeps readers informed on the latest technology and business news, jobs, and events from Northern Ireland, and abroad.

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Meet the team



Rob Smyth, Director of Engineering, QA

After graduating with a 1st Class Honors Degree in Computing Science from Ulster University in 2001, Rob moved to the South of England to join technology giant IBM.

Rob spent a very successful 11 years working at the IBM Development Laboratories in Hursley, starting his career as a Developer for WebSphere Message Broker before finding his passion for QA. Rob's QA focus covered Functional, System and Security Testing as an IBM Technical lead, progressing rapidly to QA Manager.

As the IT sector expanded in Northern Ireland in 2012 Rob moved back to take up QA roles with NYSE Euronext and CVS Health. In January 2016 Rob joined HighWire Press as Director of QA, embarking on an exciting challenge building a team of high performing and motivated QA professionals to support product engineering and professional services at HighWire.

For optimum performance, HighWire QA require a mix of manual and automation QA engineers primarily testing on the LAMP technology stack, including



Drupal. Additionally, HighWire is developing user experience capabilities, Web Services and mobile device automated testing. Rob is very excited about the challenge and is proud of the highly professional team put together so far and the future growth across both Development and QA.

Rob has no doubt that the outstanding talent pool in Northern Ireland has the skills and experience to enable him to build a HighWire Press international office that delivers outstanding quality and customer service to meet the needs of the world-leading publishing partners that HighWire Press serves.



After graduating from Loughborough University with an Honors Degree in Mathematics and Education with Qualified Teacher Status in 1998, John taught Mathematics at secondary level education at various schools in Northern Ireland for 2 years before embarking on a career change to information technology.

After successfully completing the Information Technology Rapid Advancement Program in 2001, John started working in London in the financial services sector with First Derivatives as a financial consultant working in production services. In 2005 John joined Citi as part of the early ramp up team for the development of their



John Doherty, Director of Technical Support

Meet the team

Centre of Excellence in Belfast's prestigious Titanic Quarter. Within this fast paced transformation programme, John was key in leading rapid growth and role transition within a new market sector in Northern Ireland. John applied best practice principles in recruiting and retaining local talent and developing a customer centered culture throughout the organization.

In 2012 John joined NYSE Euronext and then in 2015 moved to BT Ireland in senior management roles as part of major technical support global transformation programmes.

John is excited about the challenge and the accountability for implementing best practice and operational efficiencies in supporting HighWires' global customers from the new international office in Belfast.

Rob and John's appointment and the development of the QA and Support functions at HighWire demonstrate the continued long term investment by Accel KKR in HighWire and the mission of Dan Filby, CEO, to lead HighWire to become the industry leader in providing outstanding customer experience and delivering operational excellence.

High Calibre Trainees Selected for HighWire Academy



A group of 18 high calibre trainees were selected to undertake an intensive software engineering training programme at South Eastern Regional College (SERC) following the launch of the HighWire Academy. The HighWire Academy is a challenging five-week training programme focusing on the development of level three ICT and key development skills with a strong focus on Drupal, PHP, open source content management systems and Linux.

From over eighty applications, the 18 successful candidates selected will, on completion of the course, have interviews which may lead to an offer of employment with HighWire Press Ltd.

The Academy, which was officially launched earlier this year by former Employment and Learning Minister, Dr Stephen Farry and former Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister Jonathan Bell has been designed by SERC and HighWire with support from DEL under the Assured Skills initiative.

SERC are delivering the bespoke pre-employment training at their new SPACE campus in Bangor and it was

here where HighWire CEO Dan Filby, recently visited to officially meet the first cohort of students.

Mr Filby congratulated the students on being accepted onto the course and explained: "Through our collaboration with SERC and DEL we want to sustain a pool of high quality talent that can support our business goals. It is not just about creating great HighWire employees, but equipping people with knowhow that can benefit the Northern Ireland business community."

SERC Principal and Chief Executive Ken Webb said: "We are delighted to be

Support and Development Centre here in Belfast. The aim of the academy is to help match the skills of the workforce with the bespoke skills HighWire needs.

This partnership between HighWire, SERC and DEL, is a powerful demonstration of how the further education and private sector can work together for the benefit of the local economy and respond quickly to design a bespoke programme to fill a skills gap.

SERC is committed to working with employers to ensure they have the skilled workforce they need, both now and for the future."

It is not just about creating great HighWire employees, but equipping people with knowhow that can benefit the Northern Ireland business community.

supporting the Department in delivering this bespoke course under the Assured Skills initiative. The HighWire Academy will provide the company with a job ready pool of highly talented graduates to staff their International Technical

Dan Filby continued "As part of HighWire's ongoing investment programme, the Academy is a real opportunity for the best and brightest candidates to become part of the exciting future ahead for the company."

Growing Exports Through Innovation, Technology and Partnerships

William Thompson
Head of Agri, Bank of Ireland UK



Northern Ireland's Year of Food and Drink 2016 provides our local food producers a platform to showcase the quality that we have in the Agri Food sector. It is currently worth £4.5 billion to the Northern Ireland economy with a target to raise this to £7.5 billion by 2020.

Given that the Agri Food accounts for twenty percent of private sector employment and manufacturing exports, it is safe to say that the sector touches every aspect of society from our local producers and farmers through to retailers and consumers.

In acknowledging the export potential of our Agri Food companies we must acknowledge the importance of innovation and technology required to enable our companies to compete on a global stage and strengthen their export capability. With the onset of new Agri technologies such as robotics, sensors, new engineering and processes, agility and openness to change will be key for future success. It may be difficult to imagine a future with sensors enabling real-time traceability and diagnosis of crops, livestock and farm machinery or the use of "agbots" to support harvesting, fruit picking, ploughing, soil maintenance, weeding, planting or irrigation but it may not be as far away as we think.

Through Bank of Ireland UK's partnership with the Northern Ireland Science Park we have witnessed first hand the new inventors, entrepreneurs, scientists and startups with proof-of-concepts and prototypes in Agri Food and technology. From selective breeding approaches to develop insect parasitic nematodes bred to be a safe, effective bio pesticide for the control of crop pest insects, to a natural anti-inflammatory supplement for horses, which can also be used to optimise their general wellbeing and engineering technologies. All will

extend the reach of agriculture into new areas and push the economy forward.

In March, Bank of Ireland UK provided over 45 Northern Ireland dairy farmers with an opportunity to visit the UK Dairy Expo in Carlisle. Attracting a global audience, local farmers were able to experience and learn from farmers across England, Wales, Scotland and further afield. The highlight of the trip was a visit to Ve-Tech Holsteins, the first fully automated dairy farm within the UK.

In addition to keeping close to the future developments we very much continue to ensure support on the ground for the growth within the sector today. In May as part of our bi-annual Enterprise Week our recent Connecting for Growth programme 'Meet the buyer' event in Newry sponsored by Bank of Ireland UK provided local producers with an opportunity to pitch to buyers including Tesco, Avondale Foods and Coca Cola Hellenic. Over 150 participants had access to business advice and networked to explore the potential of doing business together.

On the 18 & 19 June, there will be a mix of fun, food and farming across Northern Ireland 22 participating farms for the annual Bank of Ireland Open Farm Weekend. The programme is an educational, engaging and fun opportunity to learn more about agriculture and food production, and will provide a valuable insight into the supply chain from field to fork. Over 21,000 people visited farms across Northern Ireland in the 2015 initiative and we look forward to similar numbers this June. For full details visit the website below.

Visit online **Open Farm Weekend**



openfarmweekend.com

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ME ET ING

AIMI FORGAN

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER @TASCOMI



► Tell us about your career path.

I have always been creative and had a real passion for design, which led me to study Interior Architecture at Edinburgh Napier University. This was where I had my first taste of technology and computer design. Whilst studying I also had a part time role as a Hairdressing Assistant and after completing my HNC in Interior Architecture, I decided to complete an Apprenticeship in Hairdressing, which developed into a full time role.

However, the passion I felt for technology and design was always in the back of my mind and when the opportunity arose to pursue a career path in this field, I decided to go for it. I studied Web Design and Development at Abertay University, Dundee, where I gained a First Class Honours degree.

► Coming from Scotland, how did you discover Tascomi?

I was unfamiliar with Tascomi until a recruitment agency brought them to my attention. Upon researching the company, I discovered that they were making a difference to local government with their web-based software solutions. At that time, I was working on a project to enhance small community banking issues in Africa and working alongside Local Authorities there, so for me, Tascomi seemed like a very natural progression.

► What does a typical day look like for you?

A typical day for me starts with a big cup of tea! Following that, I carry out a wide variety of tasks every day; whether it's solving customer queries, fixing bugs or working on improvements to our current systems.

► What are some of the challenges you've faced in your role? And why do you think young women are less inclined to enter the technology sector?

I think I am very lucky to work for a company where the only challenges are code-based and not gender-based, with 36% of the Tascomi workforce being female. However, I do feel as though there is still very much a modern stereotype which discourages women from joining the Tech industry and this made me nervous about starting a career in the industry. In spite of these challenges, more and more young women are starting careers in technology, which I think is great - we have to encourage gender diversity across all industries in order to develop and move forward as a society.

► What's the best part of being a 'Woman In Tech'?

For me, one of the best parts is continually surprising people who underestimate me. On top of that, every day I am surrounded by innovative

technology and extremely intelligent people. I get to make a valuable contribution towards building software that enhances other people's lives and creates a path towards a better future for the Local Government sector - How amazing is that?

► You are currently participating in a course with The Mobile Academy Belfast. Can you tell us a little more about it?

The Mobile Academy Belfast is an innovative part-time learning course for professionals in Northern Ireland who want to understand the mobile ecosystem, hatch a new mobile business or product idea, bring mobile know-how into their organisation, or progress their career. Through this course I've been expanding my knowledge on the 'user journey' and how design can be used to enhance the end user experience. I hope that it will enable me to build upon my current contribution to Tascomi's existing products and also future products with new knowledge and a greater understanding.

Read more about Aimi's journey to Software Development at the link below.

Visit online **Tascomi**

 tascomi.com/blog

The Value of Data in Government Workshop @ Digital DNA

8th June, 2016

St. George's Market, Belfast, Studio 2: 14:30 - 15:30



The workshop will be jointly hosted by Rick Hassard, Technical Director at Tascomi Ltd and Joe Januszewski, Data Scientist at the Health and Safety Laboratory.

Tascomi Ltd, an innovative Northern Ireland based Software Development company who create industry-leading, web-based, software solutions for Local Government departments throughout the UK and Ireland, have teamed up with the Health and Safety Laboratory, one of the world's leading providers of health and safety solutions to industry, government and professional bodies, to host an exploratory data workshop at Digital DNA.

The workshop offers Digital DNA delegates with an exciting insight into how data can be effectively utilised within government.

A glimpse into the workshop...

The Data Revolution is here! The total amount of data being captured and stored by industries doubles every 1.2 years. The ever-increasing volume, velocity and variety of data, or 'Big Data' – has been widely embraced by the Private Sector; utilising their data sources in order to maximise the associated benefits for analysis and enhanced decision making.

'The Value of Data in Government' workshop will examine how government bodies can build on the concept of Big Data, and redefine it as 'Valuable Data'; utilising joined up thinking between organisations to make more efficient use of the data available to them.

Pulling from relevant scenarios in both the Private and Public Sectors, the workshop will explore practical examples of how Valuable Data can be utilised within government.

In 2014, The Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) commissioned the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) to undertake a project that would act as a demonstrator of the possibilities and benefits of sharing compliance and risk data across government. The workshop will provide an overview of the project, the outcomes, and examine the recommendations on what could be achieved next.

The workshop will be jointly hosted by Rick Hassard, Technical Director at Tascomi Ltd and Joe Januszewski, Data Scientist at the Health and Safety Laboratory.

Join us in Studio 2 at Digital DNA, from 14:30-15:30, to enhance your appetite for sharing and using data in more intelligent ways and to improve your knowledge on the efficiencies available within government data use, the existing IT barriers associated with government data and a demonstration of the value of data sharing systems.

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Casestudy

Acorn IT Solutions and Sage 50 help Pharmaservices maintain absolute accuracy and prompt turnaround - "a robust and reliable piece of software"



Pharmaservices is a pharmaceutical and OTC import/export company established in April 2015, and is currently operated out of offices in Belfast. We purchase and sell goods throughout Ireland, UK and Europe as well as brokering specific deals between EU and non EU countries.

What challenges were you facing with your current system?

Speed of input was a major drawback on our previous system, it took an unrealistic amount of time to input core data i.e. customer/supplier records and product records. Reporting was also a long winded process, occasionally taking hours to process.

The system did not lend itself to the organisational structure that we had begun to develop and over time as just operating the program became a full time role.

We previously had a full accounts team to manage the software, however in our new business environment

we would initially be undertaking all accounting and administrative roles ourselves. Although very powerful that software was certainly not as intuitive and interactive as this Sage package.

What solution did Acorn IT suggest?

After a lengthy discussion it was suggested that we consider the Sage 50 Accounts package. It has proven to be a robust and reliable piece of software and the only trade-off for us is that this release does not facilitate batch capture.

Acorn IT Solutions were quick to note that an upgrade to Sage 200 Extra would yield batch capture but that it might be preferable to test the water with Sage 50 Accounts initially and upgrade at the point of absolute necessity. This was great advice and we began to draw down the experiences that our business partners and colleagues have had using Sage 50 and develop suitable paper based "work arounds" on batch capture.

As well as informing us of the products available we also took the training and support package provided

by Acorn IT which has proved to be a fantastic investment. The support team are prompt, professional and have had resolve for any and all of my queries from initial point of contact.

How has this benefited your business?

We are now able to operate as quickly as we've always wanted to and we have been able to competently and promptly pick up the core functionality of the package which, at this embryonic stage in our businesses development, is incredibly important to us from both a user and financial point of view.

We are encouraged to be much more proactive in addressing our accounts as they are no longer shrouded in code and multiple menus.

Standard of service supplied from Acorn IT?

The standard of service provided thus far has been excellent, and although I have certainly tested the support staff they have not failed to supply us with resolve to our queries. I couldn't recommend the support services from Acorn enough!

Why Partner with Acorn IT Solutions

Celebrating 14 years in the software Industry, Acorn IT Solutions are recognised as one of the largest fully accredited Sage Business Partners in Ireland & UK, offering



accounting solutions for all types of businesses.

- Improve your business efficiency through effective training on key business applications
- Increased profitability through improving business processes.
- Proven track record of delivering solutions that make your business more effectively

What is Sage 50 Accounts?

Sage 50 Accounts is market-leading accounts software designed to help you manage your finances. Keep track of sales, expenses and profit, and quickly analyse business performance with a range of reports. Sage 50 Accounts gives you the information you need to stay in control and drive your business forward.

Sage 50 Accounts offers the best of both worlds, with the benefits of stable, reliable desktop software and the choice to securely link your data to the cloud, to give you greater flexibility. For more information on Sage 50 and other Sage Solutions email Carol.

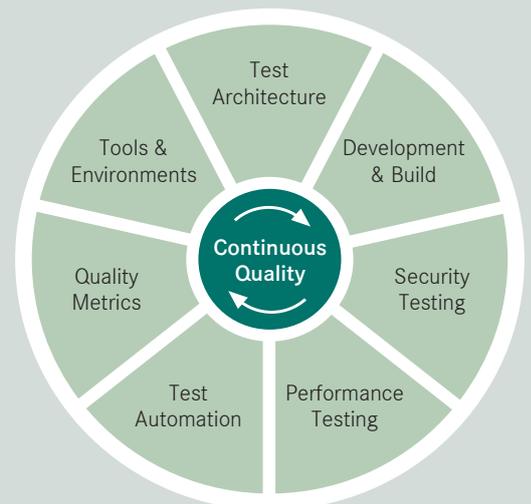
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Giving Northern Ireland the Spotlight it Deserves

By Gareth Quinn, CEO @ Digital DNA

Northern Ireland's leading technology and business conference kicked off at St George's Market in June when over 1,000 delegates, keynote speakers and workshop leaders attended Digital DNA 2016 in the heart of Belfast city centre.

The event, now in its fourth year, aims to inspire and inform entrepreneurs and existing businesses of all sizes to help them respond to the opportunities and threats of Digital. The various talks, workshops and discussions demonstrate how organisations can harness digital technologies and trends to shape their business strategy and succeed in the marketplace.

One of Digital DNA's main goals is to showcase the technology and business talent working and living in Northern Ireland to opinion formers and stakeholders around the world. The Digital DNA team strongly believes that Northern Ireland is home to some of the greatest technology and business thinkers on the planet, in a current and future form. This year's event is a prime example of just how high the flag is

flying for Northern Ireland in the global marketplace right now. Digital DNA 2016 welcomed dozens of speakers from the world's top companies to Belfast, including leading figures from Atlas, Uber, Manchester City Football Club, Harvard Business School, Google and many more.

The fact that companies of this stature are coming to Belfast is a testament to the strength of Northern Ireland's technology and business scene right now, and it's something we as a country should be very proud of.

However, this is just the tip of the iceberg. In 2016, Digital DNA began to internationalise its brand, attracting speakers from across the globe to Northern Ireland while also taking a number of local companies to San Francisco as part of the country's first ever private sector-led trade mission. This is a platform that will be built on in 2017 to continue to showcase the great things about our country to business leaders in international markets.

What has become apparent between speakers flying in and our local businesses flying out is that Northern

Ireland is a fantastic brand in the business and technology space; one that's highly regarded around the world.

Local businesses like Deloitte Digital, MCS Group, Allstate, Innov8, IE Domains Registry and Spiral Hosting are just some of the companies here doing work that's being admired in international markets and this upward trajectory is set to continue apace as Northern Ireland's business community goes from strength to strength.

We, as a country and a business community, need to ensure that we continue to shout about what makes Northern Ireland great. That's what Digital DNA is all about; showcasing the work of our local companies in international markets while using their inspirational stories to help more local businesses grow.

Northern Ireland is on an exciting voyage of discovery and we're in a great place to keep the momentum going over the coming years.

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Banking Innovation being Accelerated by New Access Rules

The words regulation and innovation are not often mentioned in the same sentence. But in the banking world, new regulations around digital banking are actually one of the main driving forces behind some of the biggest developments currently taking place across the industry – an industry which is increasingly going digital.

It is well accepted now that online and mobile will play a major role in the future of banking, whether it is with contactless payments, smartphone apps that are effectively digital wallets, the advance of biometric security measures such as touch ID and voice recognition, or even whole new digital currencies like BitCoin.



Sync NI asked Kris Thompson, Digital Channels Manager at Danske Bank, for his views on the shifting banking landscape and how Danske is adapting to those changes.

▶ Are changes to banking regulations forcing banks to innovate and, if so, how is Danske keeping up with those changes?

I'm not sure forcing is the right term, but certainly the European Banking Authority's new Payment Services Directive 2 (PSD2) has accelerated the plans some banks had regarding the adoption of new standards in banking. These regulations start to come into force in 2017 and the aim is that they will provide consumers with more secure and easy to use financial services. One of the really interesting measures is the stipulation that banks have open Application Programme Interfaces (APIs).

Essentially that means customers will have the option to allow third party providers (which will include other banks) access to their banking information. So, for example, instead of having multiple Banking Apps with varying security log on requirements, customers could use one App that aggregates all of their bank account details in one place, which is a very attractive user experience. A lot of work is being done within Danske to get ahead of these changes and we will be working hard to ensure that we leverage this opportunity to enhance our customer relationships through our highly recommended digital services.

▶ That sounds really useful, why hasn't this been adopted before now?

It really comes down to security concerns. The directive will require banks to rethink their security models and how this can be done from a technical standpoint. The January 2017 deadline to have developed the technical standards is written in stone and this will form the basis of how we want to develop a solution for our customers.

Also, as banks share more of their data, security measures will have to move to the next level and it's likely we'll see some big advances in the use of biometric technology in the next few years. PSD2 acknowledges this evolution with the introduction of a three step verification that's based on something a customer knows, such as a pin code, something they possess, for example a token or card reader, and thirdly, something the user 'is'.

Whether that means retina scans or fingerprint scans or some other form of biometrics I'm not sure. There is no clear winner yet, but we're looking at all the options.

▶ Do you think we'll continue to see a move towards mobile banking?

We certainly expect that trend to continue. We passed 3 million transactions on digital channels for the first time last month, and for the past year more than 80 per cent of those transactions have consistently been done on mobile devices. I think that partly reflects the way in which customers have embraced our App. We don't see that trajectory changing, mobile will continue to be the most dominant form of digital banking with add-ons such as smart watches and other devices enhancing the experience.

▶ Danske Bank has contactless cards but are you looking at some of the new payment technologies that are in the market?

Industry statistics have shown a big rise in contactless payments, with contactless card transactions now accounting for roughly one in 10 card payments. Spending on contactless cards increased threefold in 2015 to almost £8bn and we see it increasing this year. Beyond cards, we are constantly analysing the different technologies that come into the market such as the systems offering smartphone payments to see if adopting them will really make life easier for our customers. For us, it's less about the technology and more about the value to customers.

We know our apps are hitting the mark because our most recent customer satisfaction survey shows a 98% satisfaction rate for them. Paym – the service that allows you to pay friends using just a mobile number – has also been a huge success. There are so many options in the payments technology space we can't back them all, but we are thoroughly evaluating the right medium for our customers.

▶ We have recently seen the launch of a number of "digital only" banks. Does Danske see these as a threat?

We welcome healthy competition! There is probably a place for digital only banks but for the most part they've really only been targeting millennials, the mobile generation. We still favour the multi-bank environment, which combines all that is good about digital banking with a bricks and mortar presence that gives our customers the option of coming into a branch.

Sometimes that is to get face to face advice but for other customers it could be to use one of our ever increasing self-service options. The nature of how people use our branches is changing and we are always adapting to what our customers want. About 50 per cent of our customers in Northern Ireland use digital banking, but equally, half of our customers still require the traditional touchpoints.



My Student Placement with Sync NI

At Sync NI we love insights into local companies, their employees and what it's really like to be a part of their team. This time however things are a bit different, we want to give you an insight into Sync NI. Our year-out placement student Roisin Mooney, shines a light on her role and experience at Sync NI.

My Background

In June 2015, I joined Sync NI for my placement year from university and can't believe how quickly the year has gone in. I am currently studying Business Information Systems at Ulster University, Magee, with my final year commencing this September.

My role at Sync NI was as a Marketing Assistant, helping to deliver Sync NI's business strategy alongside a team of marketers and designers. Before joining Sync NI, my knowledge in the marketing field was fairly basic having only covered it briefly as part of my degree. However as expected, learning the theory about marketing and actually applying in a real business environment are two different things.

My Role

Working very closely with the Sales and Marketing team, my role involved ensuring optimum promotion of clients' content on Sync NI's website and social media, researching and targeting prospective leads for Sync NI membership, carrying out email campaigns, and helping to maintain the website. At the start of the year I was also given the responsibility of driving the Sync NI Jobs Board to generate more activity; it's been a pleasure to watch our figures grow and to liaise with established tech companies in NI.

Alongside these duties, I was actively involved with client meetings and industry related events. These activities helped exercise my communication and interpersonal skills from a business perspective and made me realise the importance of strategies. For instance, I have attended various events over the

past year to help stream live social media coverage, but with the overall objective of helping the team secure high traffic figures, gain brand awareness and generate new leads. As well as securing exclusive interview opportunities for our website and magazine.

With Northern Ireland's ever growing tech scene, there was always something exciting going on that Sync NI was with involved in. I've been lucky enough to attend various tech events and conferences both in Northern Ireland and in the UK, definitely a great perk to my placement! (Not to mention all the freebies).

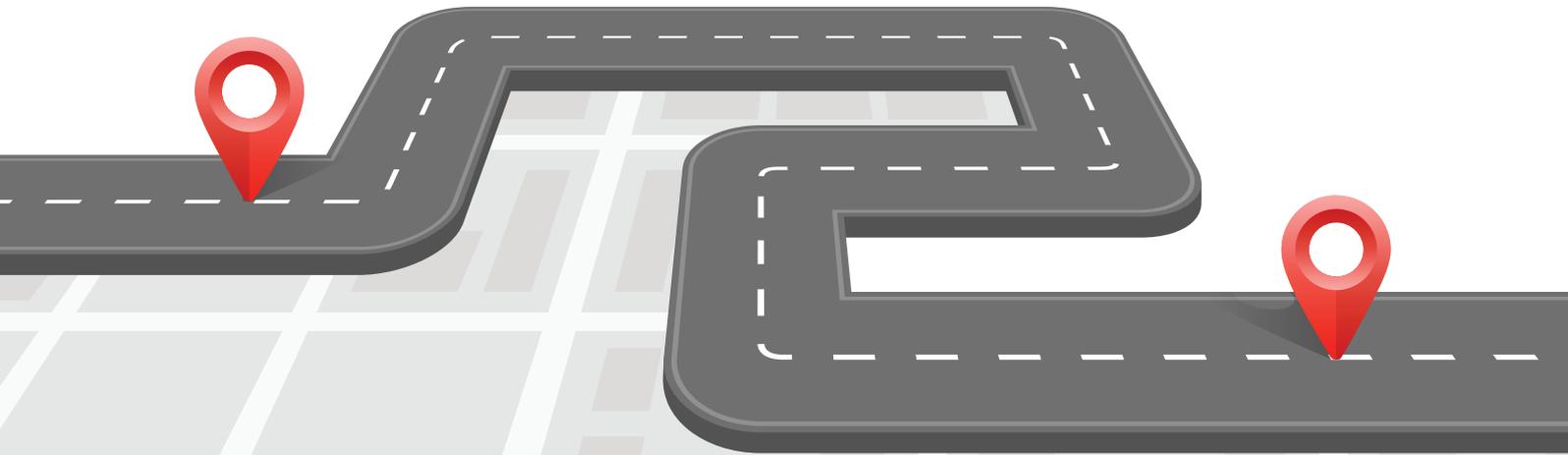
No two days are the same at Sync NI and I've really enjoyed working alongside the team to brainstorm ideas and plan new marketing approaches for both Sync NI and clients. I definitely didn't just make coffee all year!

Career Development

As I am currently studying Business Information Systems, I have always envisaged my future career being in an IT/Business role. However, my time at Sync NI and on the job experience I have gained has really opened up my eyes to the fast-paced and exciting world of marketing. Now that my placement has ended I am keen to keep on learning and I have now signed up to an online digital marketing course that I hope to complete over the summer before returning to university. To wrap things up I want to thank everyone who I have worked with, I know that my experience at Sync NI will be invaluable to my career in the future.

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Catching up with the Team at WPR

WPR is a specialist recruitment consultancy providing services to the IT, Digital, Construction and Engineering sectors with a dedicated team of industry professionals.

We caught up with IT Recruitment Consultant Ciaran Boyle and IT Researcher Dr Samira Sajadi to get an insight into the employability world of IT.

▶ WPR emphasis is on 'Professional', what does this mean for you, Clients and Candidates?

From our perspective, we strive to do things a little different from our competition, this starts with our company ethos of 'employing Consultants with an IT background! Having graduated with a Degree in Computer Science many moons ago and

worked in a number of IT related roles, I feel my background gives me more credibility when speaking to clients and candidates, which in turn reflects WPR's professional approach. Our clients and candidates enjoy engaging with us for advice and assistance when it comes to finding and filling suitable roles.

Samira added that WPR offers a professional career service, for both the client and candidate. We ensure our high quality candidates enjoy our confidentiality and career opportunities by presenting them with options in line with their career goals. It's important for us to connect the right candidate

to the right job that fulfils their next career challenge and personal needs. The Construction & Engineering side of our business also follows the same blueprint with ex-industry professionals offering the same expertise to their clients and candidates.

▶ What trends have you seen in the IT sector in regards to recruitment?

In Northern Ireland there continues to be a high demand for experienced Java, C# and C++ Software Engineers. In recent months the PHP, Python and JavaScript skill-sets have also dominated some of the roles we have worked on for our clients.

Finding top talent is significantly important and certain skill-sets outside of the most common technologies can be more difficult to source for. However NI has a very talented and adaptable workforce and we believe that NI candidates are more than capable of filling these roles if the company gives the candidates the opportunity to transition into a different technology.

QA roles and the more advanced Software Engineer in Test or QA Developer positions are an ever present. While there is still a demand for manual testing with companies the majority have automated their test procedures so we always have ongoing Automated QA vacancies. From an infrastructure perspective we continue to have regular Windows and Linux Systems Admin roles but also a demand for more experienced Architect level positions.

The good news for Northern Ireland is that there is an ever increasing focus on Software Security and Big Data. New companies entering the market are providing an attractive career alternative to the usual sectors we associate with Northern Ireland such as Financial Services. These new companies are specialising in these areas, rather than being an in-house function supporting a different solution or service. We expect these to be areas of further growth with continued career opportunities in the coming months.

With numerous recruitment agencies available it is vital to do the simple things well for our clients and candidates. In terms of our candidate search process, often knowing entrepreneurs and innovative people is a helpful starting point when getting referrals. Traditional methods are being replaced by micro-blogging and social networking as a talent acquisition strategy. Nowadays social media plays a key role in job promotion and leveraging this to the best of our ability helps us reach passive candidates.

▶ If I was a candidate; why would I register with you?

We put the candidate at the heart of what we do. We like to get know our candidates: We listen to their career aspirations, their motivation for a new career and the challenges they look for in a role. This in turn allows us to give career advice rather than a pushy sales approach to filling vacancies.

WPR liaises with various employers, both start-ups and well-established companies in Northern Ireland. Our Recruitment Consultants connect

we also work closely with a lot of smaller companies who prefer to grow organically and have great success in doing so. Be it one vacancy or one hundred we treat our clients the same and strive to find the best possible candidates to help improve their business and grow their workforce.

We have a great working relationship with Invest NI on both sides of the Atlantic. As a result of this we are often the first to hear of new IT companies who have plans to open in Northern

We have a great working relationship with Invest NI on both sides of the Atlantic. As a result of this we are often the first to hear of new IT companies who have plans to open in Northern Ireland.

candidates to the most reputable IT organisations whilst providing candidates with appropriate vacancies based on their career aspirations. Personalities are also key so getting to know our candidates early on in the recruitment process is important to us.

WPR is ethical in the way we carry out our recruitment. Our candidates can be assured of confidentiality as well as full control of the roles they wish to apply to and regular updates or feedback be they successful or not. The recruitment industry often gets a bad name as candidates find their CVs are circulated without prior approval. This is something WPR are proud to distance themselves from and we aim to positively change the attitude of using recruitment agencies.

▶ What companies do you interact with?

As well as some of the recognised names in the Northern Ireland IT market

Ireland. A lot of exploratory work goes on behind the scenes on these projects so by the time we reach out to candidates we are usually fairly certain that those companies have finalised their plans for opening here.

▶ What does the future hold for WPR?

We plan to grow the team which will allow us to broaden our client base even further and potentially look at other geographical locations. Dr Samira Sajadi has recently joined us in an IT Researcher capacity and is already proving to be a valuable asset with her thorough approach to finding suitable candidates for our client vacancies.

We are looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead for the remainder of 2016 and beyond.

Follow WPR



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Xperience IT Solutions set high standards through service excellence

Xperience IT Solutions, an Xperience Group business, has been recognised as a leading Northern Ireland provider of Microsoft cloud solutions.



In January Microsoft appointed Xperience IT Solutions as a Tier-1 Cloud Solution Provider (CSP), recognising its expertise and impact in the cloud technology marketplace.

This achievement is clear recognition of Xperience IT Solutions commitment to excellence in delivering IT solutions that help customers operate more effectively and achieve growth. By participating in the program, Xperience IT Solutions will enhance customer relationships, offering even more

personalised support and expertise across a wide range of Microsoft cloud solutions.

Patrick Leggett, Group Director at Xperience IT Solutions, comments on the achievement, "We work closely with Microsoft to provide our customers with 'best-in-class cloud solutions', backed up by 'best-in-class support'. We continually focus on improving our services and being appointed as a Tier-1 Cloud Solutions Provider (CSP) is recognition of our commitment to delivering cloud solutions to our customers that add real value."

Building a foundation of partnerships

The criteria set, for companies aiming to join CSP, include technical competency across Microsoft cloud product range, customer satisfaction and an established first-line support service. Founded in 1969, Xperience IT Solutions has earned a reputation as a market leader, providing the highest levels of security, reliability and scalability for businesses across Northern Ireland. With high customer ratings, the next natural step was gaining a leading Microsoft Cloud Solution Provider status in Northern

Ireland. Patrick Leggett, Group Director at Xperience IT Solutions commented, "In regards to relationships, Ireland is predominantly an SMB economy, made up of family businesses that are typically third or fourth generation. Therefore, a lot of decisions are based on trust. Once trust is established then ability to deliver comes next."

Delivering excellence

Xperience IT Solutions recently gained additional Microsoft Gold Partner competencies, demonstrating a proven track record of distinction by providing cost effective and personalised IT solutions, along with support for a range of Microsoft products. Consequently, this recent nomination reflects the depth of expertise at optimising, managing and provisioning complex IT estates on customer journey to the cloud.

Patrick Leggett explains, "Over the past 12 months we have migrated more than 60 clients and in excess of 2500 mailboxes onto the Office 365 platform. We are honoured that Northern Ireland businesses continue to put trust in us and we will strive to maintain this recognised position."

The future

As a Tier-1 Cloud Solution Provider, Xperience IT Solutions can offer customers monthly billing on Office 365, direct support on cloud products and services and the ability to scale up and scale down customer requirements on a monthly basis.

Together with Microsoft Gold competencies, the appointment distinguishes Xperience IT Solutions as a trusted and quality expert in providing guidance and technical support in implementing Microsoft cloud solutions. One of the recent customers, Joanne Logan, IT Manager at a Belfast-based law firm Murphy O'Rawe, commented, "It's been really good working with Xperience, they understand our industry, they understand what our clients need and we have every confidence in working with them on our future projects. Certainly an IT partner I can recommend!"

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 A photograph of four people (three women and one man) standing in front of a brick building. Two signs on the building read 'Morrow Communications'. The people are dressed in professional attire. The man on the far right is Peter Morrow, the Managing Director.

Morrow's World is Expanding

Celebrating its 30th year in business, 2016 was already set to be a special year for integrated communications consultancy, Morrow Communications.

As well as unveiling a new brand identity and website, the Holywood based company also recently announced a significant £500,000 investment to expand its services and export potential over the next three years. Sync NI caught up with the firm's Managing Director, Peter Morrow, to find out more.

Hi Peter, tell us more about Morrow Communications.

Morrow Communications has been helping businesses communicate with their audiences - whether that's media, customers, consumers, stakeholders, staff, or all of the above - for the last 30 years. While the communications landscape has dramatically evolved in that time, and with it our services, our core aim to help companies achieve business success has remained steadfast.

What services do you offer?

We offer a full suite of integrated communications services for clients including public relations, digital marketing, event management, video production, on-line learning content, advertising and graphic design. Having

this wide range of capability in-house means we have the expertise and ability to help clients' devise and implement communications programmes that best serve their needs.

Our recent investment and expansion programme reflects this as it is responding to a growing demand for specialist communications services across the UK, Ireland and further afield.

Can you tell us more about this investment and what brought it about?

With the support of Invest Northern Ireland, we were delighted to announce an investment of £500,000 to expand our services and export potential. This will allow us to create at least seven new jobs - bringing the team here up to 30 - and ensure we can respond to a growing need for export support.

Northern Ireland is an exporting region - be it in food and drink, ICT, engineering, business services or wider manufacturing - and this is a reflection of our client base.

We are now seeing increased scope for our integrated approach from the wider Irish and GB markets, and we feel confident that our investment will help us capitalise on these opportunities, positioning us as players on a substantial export market stage and adding to our already strong local market presence.

Morrow Communications rebranded this year, was this part of your growth strategy?

Yes, it seemed natural to revisit our own brand and communications programme as part of this exciting growth phase for the company - and in time for our 30th birthday! We also appointed leading corporate governance and leadership consultant, Joy Allen as non-executive director and chair for a three year term to further support our growth strategy.

As a business owner yourself, what are your views on Northern Ireland's economic outlook?

Companies like ours are typically a good barometer for what is going on in the economy as a whole. Working across the public / private sector and within a wide range of industries, we have witnessed first-hand a returning confidence among our clients and with it, the need for more expert communications support to help them grow. By their nature, Northern Ireland companies can be modest and down play achievement, but key to fostering an environment for growth, is sharing success stories, learnings and innovation - and communications services is a vital tool in creating that environment.

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Physical Cash in the Near Future May Not be an Option for Kids!

In November 2015 Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, made a bold prediction about the death of cash, talking to students during a visit to Trinity College, Dublin:

“ Your Kids will not know what money is! ”

It is unlikely that physical (hard) cash will disappear altogether anytime soon, but it is evident that use of physical money is in decline and due to the rapid rise of digital / E-money and E-payments, it is quickly becoming dematerialised.

MOney COach Limited is a Belfast based early stage Tech start-up founded by teacher and Ulster University Masters student, Judith Gordon. Judith is also a mum of two boys and could see first-hand, that with the increase of digital money; online banking and shopping, young people have less chance to handle and learn about money at home. Realising this she designed MOCO – The MOney COach to help teach children the ‘value of money’ in a fun practical way.

Judith’s research highlighted that financial education for ‘Generation Z’ needs to be practical, relevant and taught from as young an age as possible. MOCO will enable young children to develop good financial handling skills and an understanding of money management in a supportive way.

With a parent app supervising and/or controlling the use of MOCO, not

only allows for the money conversation within the family to remain but also enhances the topic and learning outcomes. MOCO is for children aged 8 to 18. It comes with a MOCO wearable which contains the newest EMV smart chip technology for contactless payments. This no doubt, will become the latest customizable playground ‘must have’. MOCO is the future of children’s banking and so much more. It combines Savings, Financial Education and Safe independent online shopping in one platform, all monitored by the parent. It is the new ‘Digital Money’ for children and teens and has the added bonus of cash back rewards from online purchases.

Judith is very grateful for all the support from the local start-up scene including InvestNI, Ulster University, Santander University Fund, TechstartNI, NISP CONNECT and Flint Studios. She recently won a place on the Entrepreneurial Spark Accelerator powered by Ulster Bank, KPMG and EMC²Corp, in their new Belfast Hatchery.

Judith explains how the journey in a start-up, especially as a Solo-entrepreneur, is full of challenges. Namely, building the right team, securing investment and developing the

product being the major ones.

With direction and encouragement from her Entrepreneurial Spark enabler, Judith is focused on a clear set of goals. With the added benefits of expert partners, mentors, networking and free co-working space - she believes that by being in the Hatchery and collaborating with other likeminded start-ups and entrepreneurs, referred to as ‘chiclets’ will help her achieve success.

MOCO now has an advisory team with many years of combined experience and specialisms in FinTech; Banking and Finance; Payments; Business Development and IT. Judith is also on the look-out for a Lead Developer to join MOCO to help build the working prototype that will be beta tested with families. If you are eager to find out more about MOCO and its launch, register your interest at www.mocomoney.com

LIKE us on www.facebook.com/mocomoney. Don’t forget to enter the competition to **Win an IPAD mini**. Good Luck, from MOCO – your own personal MOney COach.

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Start-up feature

ProfitBees

How it all started

Google, Paypal, LinkedIn, Airbnb or dare I say it, Xero.. all mammoth companies whereby their business mantra is based on 'customer focus' and 'user experience', giving rise to happy success stories and market disruption.

An industry where we have not witnessed the progression of 'customer first', where software is unfit for purpose, to name a few, is within business loans, bookkeeping, reporting, payroll, intelligence or statutory compliance.

Incumbents develop software using outdated methods and build features based on revenue streams, and not user experience. The legacy of this ripples through business, accountants, banks and government. Most finance professionals involved suffer demoralising and counterproductive software. This was the primary driver for the creation of ProfitBees. Common business sense had lost it's way, it was easier to deliver professional service using manual methods versus software.

Our Need

We started as accountants, and built a platform for an endtoend business service, offered to customers at cost leading price. It wasn't too long after, some customers (and the market), told us they don't overly care about this problem, and would prefer our focus as accountants, be on helping them flourish as entrepreneurs & business owners.

Ultimately, this meant they wanted cash for growth and expansion, and not cheaper accounts or tax calculations. Failings within the lending market are widely known and from experience we know about the operational issues involved for accountants and small business in accessing funds from banks. Alternative finance in many

ways, is a market indicator, of a traditional banking mechanism failing. Following feedback, we sliced our software platform in half to focus solely on software for business loan applications. Then we set off to build a marketplace of lenders with an appetite for business. Listening to our customer and solving their problems, helped us develop a unique product/market fit.

What we're doing currently & plans for the future

We are currently designing a common approach for business to apply for business loans with 1 application process accessing multiple lenders. We hope this will increase transparency & competition.

There is no competition in the market, each small business being locked into the first application they engage, with no guarantees offered. We can fully understand; with a process built on sending emails and spreadsheets, why a small business will only do this once, and accountants find it difficult to help. There is no transparency with hidden fees ranging across a swathe of options on offer. Not too mentioned the options themselves, all being a bit complex & daunting for most accountants, never mind business owners.

On behalf of our small business customer, we have been designing solutions with lenders for nearly 2 months. We are battered and bruised, and certainly feel the pain of a small business whole heartedly, but we are getting there, and we have a few success stories coming shortly.

Very soon we will invest into finalising our software ecosystem, launching workflow notification apps for iOS and Android, Xero & QuickBooks integrations, and easy business forecasting tools. ProfitBees hope this brings our industry and the "user experiences" associated with it, in line with today's digital economy standard. This is most important, because it gives small business a cost effective option to engage lenders more conveniently. Fingers crossed this spurs on wealth and job creation for a more sustained economic recovery.

Follow **ProfitBees**

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Events focus

NI Technology Networking & Recruitment Event

17th June - PwC, Waterfront Plaza, Belfast



Visit PwC in their Belfast office's Google Hive on Friday 17 June 2016, for the opportunity to get to know PwC NI's Technology teams and find out more about the innovative work we are doing for clients at a global reach.

Get the low-down on the work PwC's Tech people are passionate about and get answers to any questions you might have and find out how you can join us in 2017 through a:

- Graduate Role
- 11 Month Business Placement
- Summer Internship

Invent Awards

29th September - Waterfront, 2 Lanyon Place, Belfast



INVENT challenges inventors, entrepreneurs, scientists and startups with proof-of-concepts and prototypes in science and technology to discover the commercial potential of their idea.

Entrants compete through rounds of pitching assessed by our independent expert judges to

win a share of the £33,000 prize fund, access to our global network and a place on the NI Tech Mission to California. The winners will be announced at our annual night of invention at the INVENT Awards in front of 600 people including leading technology experts, commercial executives and entrepreneurs on 29th September.

Upcoming events

Business Class Twitter with Samantha Kelly

WHEN 23rd June 2016

WHERE The Point Boardroom, W5, Odyssey Pavilion, 2 Queen's Quay, Belfast

🐦 @thewebbureau

The Investment Process

WHEN 4th October 2016

WHERE Innovation Centre, Northern Ireland Science Park, Belfast

🐦 @nispconnect

Cybercrime Security Forum

WHEN 10th - 11th November 2016

WHERE Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast

🐦 @CyberForumNI



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SYNCNI Logging Off

We thoroughly enjoyed putting together our this edition of our magazine which celebrates Northern Ireland as a digital destination. It's been exciting to read about the high level of activity surrounding digital innovation that is right on our doorstep!

We were delighted to feature Danske Bank again this year following the success of last year's 'Banking with a Digital Edge' feature. In this edition, Danske Bank highlights how new developments in regulations have helped to accelerate banking innovation.

It was intriguing to hear from Kris Thompson that a lot of thought is put into security concerns and technical support in order to enhance the quality of digital banking services to us, the end user.

It is also good to see the likes of Bank of Ireland getting involved with the Agri Food sector in conjunction with NI's Year of Food and Drink. It is important to acknowledge the amount of innovation and technology required for companies to compete on a global scale and that support is available. Through a partnership with NISP, BoI

UK have been exposed to various POC and prototypes within Agri Food and technology.

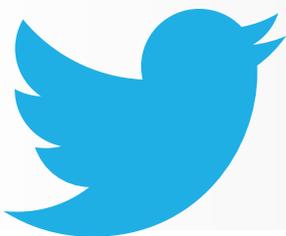
We loved learning more about local Fintech start-up MOCO. Judith Gordon's technology has helped highlight to us that the decline of physical cash, and an increase of digital money is something people tend to overlook. By helping teach the value of money to the next generation we are hopeful MOCO will go far. Remember us when you have lots of pennies in the piggy bank!

ProfitBee's is another FinTech start-up, with the aim of putting the customer first (we're all for that). Focusing on software for business loan applications, we see high potential in this outlet, especially considering the number of businesses that Northern Ireland produces alone. It's exciting to see that both start-ups have been involved with local start up accelerator programmes, getting the support and

investment to get their business off the ground. Woohoo!

Lastly how can we forget Digital DNA? Sync NI has worked alongside Digital DNA from the very beginning, and we have witnessed first-hand the momentum it has gained over the years; it's amazing to see the number of companies that are now getting involved! We'll admit the conference isn't your norm, it aims to be different and be fun. We hope the audience come away inspired, educated and looking forward to 2017. We know we are.

Thank you for reading. Why not grab a nespresso coffee and check out syncni.com for your daily roundup of the latest news, events and job opportunities in the Northern Ireland's Technology & Business industries.



Join the conversation!

Tweet [@syncni](https://twitter.com/syncni) with your tech & business news and you could feature on the Sync NI website! #syncni

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Do any of these complaints apply to you?

- > I was tossing and turning all night thinking of all the things I have to do
- > It cost me half a day waiting in the house for a gas man to call and fix the boiler
- > We need occasional admin help with projects but don't have anyone to call
- > I need a local relocation service to bring staff to Northern Ireland
- > Oh No... My bills are late again because I never opened the mail
- > Yes, those are returns from 6 months ago still sitting in my boot
- > We're losing our best talent to competitors. How can we truly differentiate our employee rewards?

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