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06 Locate-a-Locum

Behind the scenes

18 Nuala Murphy

Moment Health CEO on maternal mental health and Lean In Belfast

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Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Sync NI magazine

County Down native and world-renowned pioneer of the portable defibrillator, the late Professor Frank Pantridge once wryly noted that "People can be divided into three groups: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those that wonder what happened."

Against a backdrop of political stalemate at home, discussions on what our post-Brexit border would look like and a revolving door of key administration officials across the pond, we spent the summer talking to a diverse range of local entrepreneurs who were making things happen in their respective industries. All seemed to have pushed fear to one side.

Claire Burn from Rapid-7 and Women Who Code spoke of tackling her fear of computers head-on and emerging out the other side as a cyber-security expert; whilst Jonny Clarke from the hugely successful (and growing) Locate-A-Locum encouraged budding entrepreneurs to follow his lead and just "go for it".

Meanwhile, CloudMigrator365's Darren Mawhinney told us about simply tearing up the exporting rule book that he had helped to co-write some twenty years ago, when he realised that it was no longer fit for purpose – whilst Leona Hill of Edgeways VR explained that she had self-taught herself VR and AR because she could find no AR and VR classes at the time.

Thankfully, this is not the case now with a wealth of different tech-focussed summer programmes laid on by organisations such as PwC, Kainos, Novosco, Almac and the likes of Belfast Met and the Nerve Centre. We were delighted to talk to the participants who happily volunteered to go back to school for a few weeks over the summer and learn in-demand skills.

However, nobody seems to encapsulate an ability to change things more than the unstoppable Nuala Murphy, who founded her company Moment Health out of a desire to make sure expectant and new mothers had the necessary support to address depression and anxiety. Impressive – but even more so when you consider she was at the same time founding and heading up the phenomenon that is Lean In Belfast.

Our cover stars, Olivia Farnam and Lee-Anne Daly, likewise used their first-hand experience as mums to create products that addressed unmet needs. As Elon Musk once commented, "great companies are built on great products", and sometimes, as with many of the companies that Northern Ireland's growing community of female entrepreneurs are founding, personal experience is driving the creation of these products.

Susan Cleland
General Manager, Sync NI



About Sync NI

Sync NI is proud to be the voice of Northern Ireland's vibrant technology and business sector.

The Sync NI website and magazine brings readers the latest tech and business news, views, jobs and events in Belfast and beyond.

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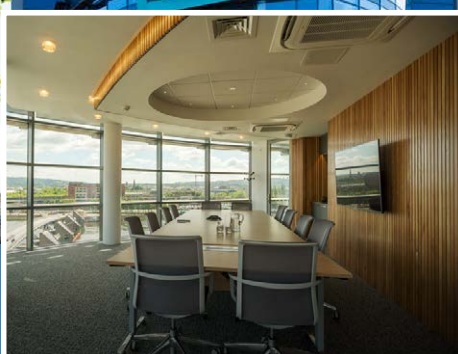
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With apologies

The earliest version of our Summer Edition, page 14 incorrectly described Square's Sarah Friar as Facebook CFO in the article's headline. Sarah Friar is, of course, CFO of Square and not Facebook. The team at Sync NI apologise for any inconvenience caused by this error.

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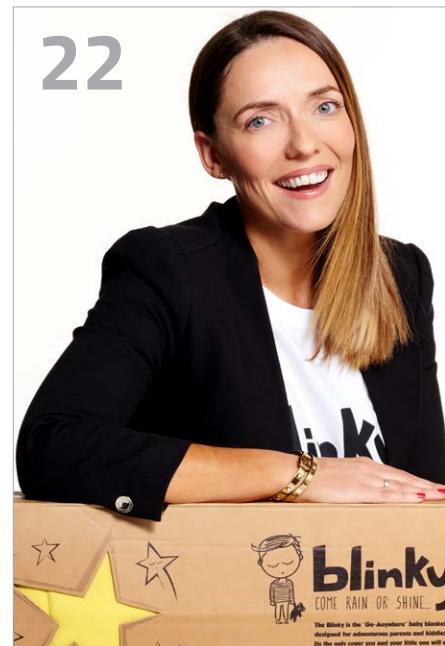
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School's in for Summer

Back in the day, the phrase “school’s out for the summer” meant one thing: school really is out for the summer.

However, this summer season, the Northern Irish capital has played host to a series of summer camps, hosted by some of the leading industry experts in their fields.

As we progress into autumn, many will be looking towards next year in hope of getting a place in one of the city's many prestigious programmes – but which one?

Luckily for our readers, Sync NI have composed a list of Northern Ireland's top summer programmes which aim to prepare the next generation for a future in tech, whether it be in animation or cloud computing.



Novosco's Cloud Camp

Overseeing the this year's Cloud Camp was Novosco CEO, Patrick McAlliskey. "We had thirty students, all aged 16 and 17, and they were all coming to Belfast Met for the week-long activity to get an introduction to computers and networking hardware, and to learn a bit about software development," says Patrick, as he surveyed the busy students.

"The feedback has been fantastic, they've really enjoyed it – they've actually learnt something. Plus, they get to keep the Raspberry Pi! If they wanted to learn more, they could, thanks to that wee computer!"

A free Raspberry Pi wasn't, however, the only benefit offered to participants of the Cloud Camp. Patrick McAlliskey was praising of how the camp allows its students to build strong professional links at an early stage in their careers: "It also builds links – you have ALMAC and Novosco here. We have students here for their work experience, and they could end up coming back! Some of these people could end up being employees, which is great! We are saying to these young people – create the links and the bonds now".

"A lot of companies are coming into Northern Ireland, and investing in tech jobs," says Novosco's Patrick McAlliskey. Not only that, but you have the indigenous companies following a similar trend. We give young people the confidence in that sector, and they will know that there are a range of jobs out there," he continues.

Almac's Jonathan Graham also spoke of his confidence in the new generation of IT specialists: "Most people, when they go for IT studies, assume that it's all about coding and programming, without much variation. This is about letting people know that Northern Ireland is in a great part of the world, and that there are opportunities there. For a small country, we punch well above our weight."

Teaching the keen students was Michael Dawson, Networking Lecturer at Belfast Metropolitan College. Like other professionals leading the CloudCamp, Michael realises the future opportunities that will be granted by technological innovation and cloud computing: "There's been massive changes in cloud computing. The youth of today could get to the point where cloud computing is the done thing.

There are a lot of people who still don't understand the concept of cloud-computing, and the next generation is so lucky, with the opportunities that will arise," says Michael. When it comes to forging a career in technology, the lecturer has one, key piece of advice – learn the basics. "Don't dive in head first. Even the best engineers need to know the basics," he says.

We caught up with Eve Brennan of Belfast Metropolitan College and Megan McKillop of St. Killian's, both aged 17, who praised every aspect of the camp.

"It's been fantastic – we have done so many things that I have never tried before. We did a bit of networking, and we made our own Ethernet cables.

"We were taught python coding in an exercise with LED lights, which was great! The office is so open and bright, it's so nice! Their virtual reality room is also really cool," says Eve, who has plans to study Software Engineering at QUB. Similarly, Megan spoke highly of the Cloud Camp: "I really enjoyed working with the Raspberry Pi – they are really useful for learning coding and electrical components. That was a highlight for me!"



PwC's

Big Data Summer Camp

PwC kicked off with another Big Data Summer Camp this year, taking place in the cities of Belfast, London and Leeds. With plans to expand the programme next year, PwC offer young people the opportunity to participate in a paid, week-long programme in their final year of school or college.

The Big Data Summer Camp aims to equip young people with the opportunity to learn how to capture, interpret and apply Big Data techniques through client challenges, case studies and simulations.

Rebecca McClenaghan of Slemish College praised the summer camp: "Whilst I am not studying Computer Science at A-Level, I have a keen interest in technology and I hope to pursue a career in international business.

"This has been a fantastic opportunity and one where I have learned a great deal from both fellow participants and the tutors. It has been a very hands-on week, and I have particularly enjoyed learning about PwC's forensic technology solutions. It's refreshing to be part of a programme where the theory is brought to life and one that facilitates the learning and exploration of real-life projects."

Pat Beattie, Director within PwC's Data Analytics Practice, welcomed the tech-leaders of the future: "We believe Big Data will generate the biggest opportunities for organisations

to gain a competitive advantage in the coming years - it's extremely important that the sector has the talent to deliver on this. Big Data Summer Camp is a welcome addition to our tech related programs, through which we are helping to develop the tech leaders of the future."

The camp provides young people with the tools to learn practical skills based within big data in a syllabus which builds upon what participants have been taught in school. Pupils are offered a variety of practical exercises in different teams, demonstrating how these technologies are applied by the wide variety.

Conor Stevenson of Belfast High School spoke of the opportunities granted by the initiative: "I study computer science at A-Level so for me this has been an incredible opportunity to learn more about the role of R and the role of Python in data-driven decision making. As there are 20 of us from all different backgrounds, this demonstrates PwC's commitment to our generation. It has also been excellent to hear tutors' personal journeys."

The launch of the Big Data Summer Camp comes as PwC continue their drive to become a technology-enabled firm, with exciting recent announcements including partnerships with the Universities of Leeds and Birmingham to deliver a fully funded Technology Degree Higher Level Apprenticeship that will enable students to obtain a degree in Computer Science through a blended approach to learning.

The Kainos Code Camp



Eamon Compston, CodeCamp programme leader and Kainos Earn As You Learn employee took us through the programme – and the syllabus is certainly impressive.

Mentors like Eamon present themselves as a key channel of support for each student who enters the programme, as they work logically through code as part of an app-building process. "Over the course of CodeCamp, we run several breakout talks on Java, HTML, cyber-security and also VR demonstrations using the likes of HTC Vive. We also have various speakers and career talks, including some from Kainos employees," says Eamon.

According to Eamon, the camp provides students with decent exposure to real-life issues, prompting them to ask themselves important questions about their future direction. "On our Challenge Day we also ordered 65 large pizzas, so you can imagine the excitement! Aside from the technical skills, it's also about the friendships formed within CodeCamp," says Eamon.

However, plentiful pizza isn't the only positive aspect of the camp offered to its students by Kainos. Tech Outreach

Manager Gemma Crothers commented on what has been a significant expansion of the camp, compared to previous years. Around 60 pupils filled Kainos' first CodeCamp – but now it has steeply risen to 200 pupils this year: "It has been fantastic to see the programme expand, and to work closely with more schools and students," says Gemma. "We would especially like to thank Queen's University Belfast for their on-going support and for allowing us to use the Computer Science Lab, providing the students with access to top-notch facilities".

With more and more schools and educational institutions encouraging young people to consider careers in technology, the team at Kainos contend that students are becoming more confident and assertive over their professional life. "We notice some very confident students in that they come along to CodeCamp with a career in mind. Overall, CodeCamp is like a jumpstart for students – they can ask openly, and learn about the different paths to qualifications and really work out what areas of technology interest them most," says Eamon.

Speaking to the students at Kainos

CodeCamp, it is clear why the programme is so popular. "Now that I have created my own app I feel I have done a lot better than what I thought I could do. Technology is such a broad field that you could go into anything – the whole experience has opened up my mind and opened up my possibilities," says Charlotte Leslie.

Brendan Mooney, CEO at Kainos reflected upon the firm's largest CodeCamp to date: "CodeCamp is one of our leading outreach programmes. We bring like-minded young people together to have lots of fun, get to know one another, and learn in a truly innovative way.

"People leave after the two weeks, really understanding technology – and for me, that's what makes CodeCamp special. The programme has really developed over the past five years, going from 60 people to 200 – but I think we're just starting! The ambition is to run CodeCamps in lots of different locations, educating young people across the world about the opportunities that exist within technology. In five years' time we'd like to be doing this for 2000 young people rather than 200!"



The Nerve Centre's Summer Animation School

The Ulidia Resource Centre saw the kicking off of the Nerve Centre's much-anticipated summer animation school, taught by none other than Sesame Street's Joel Simon.

When it comes to animation, there may be none better-placed to talk about the subject than Joel. As with many professionals in varying fields, Joel never planned on doing what he does now: "I planned on becoming a photographer, originally. It was a subject that I loved, and something that I had serious thoughts about forging a career in. As a student in Belgium, I studied photography," says Joel, reflecting on his time before coming to Belfast over 20 years ago.

"When I was on that course, a friendly teacher lent me a Super8 camera – it was awesome, especially at that time. I was fooling around with the camera, and realised that it had an animation function. I messed around with some plasticine, and before I knew it, I had my first film. I was smitten, and that's where my love affair with animation began.

"From that point, I decided to make a career of it – and here I am, at the animation school" says the expert.

"At the minute, they are doing claymation films with software called Stopmotion Studio. A lot of them have found new ways of making films, and they seem to be really getting into it. They are a very creative bunch!" Joel's advice to young people seeking a career in animation is to practice, practice, practice: "Practice animating as much as possible – over time you will

become great, regardless of what your qualifications are!"

Jennifer McAlorum, Creative Media Trainer at the Nerve Centre was tasked with coordinating the animation school, and took a few minutes out from the class to talk to our reporter.

"I coordinated this week, along with Joel Simon – specifically for this age group. We do a lot of primary school stuff, so we thought we had to target more teenagers!" says Jennifer, in a brief period of quiet in the class. "We had a music production week, then we had this animation week. Next year, we hope to run this again, with even more people on the course!"

We couldn't let our visit pass without chatting to some of the lucky students who managed to book a place on the high-demand course. Brothers Lucas and Ethan Yandall of Campbell College praised the school, and swear that they will be back: "the course is awesome, a great opportunity. We have plans to enter the film or media industry, so we feel that this course will really help us get a feel for it. We've always loved animation, and this course has really given us a taste for it! Joel Simon is so talented. We will be back next year!"

Similarly, Emma Noble of Assumption Grammar spoke of her time on the course positively: "I've loved the course, Joel is really good. I don't have much of a background in animation, apart from my moving images A-Level, but it was great to come in and see this. I want to go into production, and all of these skills are transferrable. This was a great course, and I would really recommend it for anyone considering it next year!"



Dear Students...

This time 2 years ago, I had just received my A-Level results, and was completely uncertain about what path to take.

After getting great results, the obvious choice for most people was to go to university. For me, however, I was also running a number of social media pages with a combined following of over 4 million followers, with brand deals coming in left, right and center - I was sitting on a gold mine of opportunities.

(Mostly) out of fear, I ended up going to university. I didn't have the guts to pursue turning my online life into a business, something I had dreamed of for years. In the end, it was the best decision I ever made.

Having spent years dedicating my time to building parody pages, social interaction for me was limited to a screen. University offered me the opportunity to meet a whole range of new people and pushed me to better myself.

Before university, I had difficulty speaking to people - yet within my first month, I stood in front of a room of over 450 people, pitching reasons as to why I should be elected as class rep (a role I was successfully elected to). I went on to be elected into the student council, securing several roles as a brand ambassador, whilst travelling to Germany as part of a study tour, to name but a few of the opportunities.

I immersed myself in societies, and pushed myself into any

By Conall Keenan
Social Media, Sync NI



opportunity I could find, along the way meeting some of the most interesting and motivating people I've ever met. A few months later, I joined the Nigma team (and later HackTheHub) which again pushed my life in another direction. The rate of which I was learning and growing as a person was again given a huge boost. Nigma also provided me with the opportunity to become friends with, and later become business partners, with Conor Graham.

Now, 2 years after my results, I'm a co-founder of an influencer agency, doing the things I was too afraid to pursue 2 years ago. Don't be afraid to hold off on things, it might be the best thing for you. 2 years ago I thought I had given up on my social media journey, but it just wasn't the time for me.

Going to university was the best thing that has ever happened to me - it pushed me to be the person that I always wanted to be. But, that's just my story, and my experience. Everyone's is different. I hope if you got results this summer, you got what you wanted. If not, don't worry - sometimes where you think you need to be can just take a little while to get there.

Regardless of what journey your life takes, I hope you go about it with passion and enjoyment. And remember, what you do isn't anywhere nearly as important as who you do it with.



Know what you'll see before you go to the show

By Emily McDaid
TechWatch Editor (Connect at Catalyst Inc)

"When you buy a ticket for a show or concert, there's no way of knowing what your view will be," said SeatView's founder Graham Little.

Graham set out to change this, launching SeatView earlier this year from its base in Bangor. Having the right production equipment and experience, including 360 degree photo rigs, and heaps of experience making VR videos, his team was able to jump quickly when they came up with the idea for SeatView.

In today's internet-driven world, you can find out virtually anything about a product that you're buying, and ticket sales should be no different – particularly if you're dropping €100 to see Bruce Springsteen.

"Along with my co-founders, Andrew Murray and Stuart Ogg, we've already completed a full trial and API of the Kingspan Stadium where Ulster Rugby play," said Graham.

It makes sense that he'd start with sports stadia, given his background as a sports television presenter. I wondered if the customer would end up paying for this, like the mysterious administration fee that gets slapped on at the end of my Ticketmaster transactions.

Graham assured me, "Venues will cover the capture costs to get the seat views done, and then we'll license the data to the ticket distributors."

Is Ticketmaster your only target customer? Graham said, "No, there are many online ticket sellers such as 24 Hour Tickets, Get Me In, Stub Hub, etc. Ticketmaster has more than 50 per cent of the primary market in the UK, but there are so many secondary resellers."

He explained the scale of the target market: "In 2015, Live Nation's Ticketmaster division sold in excess of half a billion tickets online. One of our USPs is that we're platform agnostic and we can license our database to more than one ticket agency. We'll develop a comprehensive database of stadia and entertainment venues, which coupled with a robust and user-friendly back-office

system, will create a complete saleable package. In Europe right now, this offering would be unique."

Are the SeatViews photos or video? "It's called a Pano Tour – high res images taken from one point, looking in every direction, and then stitched-together. It's what some cruise ships or estate agents offer already, and it gives a much better sense of place than normal single images," Graham said.

How time consuming is it to capture the seat views of a large venue like the SSE Arena? "The SSE Arena in Belfast – an 8,000 seat venue – would take us 4-5 hours to complete with three people working on it. We'd take the views from every 5th seat or every 10th seat."

What are your long-term plans? "Along with the seat views, we can offer sponsorship deals, or special offers for nearby restaurants, that kind of thing. Also there is so much we can do with hospitality and corporate boxes. Venues are struggling to sell them; this can give them a new angle," he said.

What does being an INVENT finalist mean to you? Graham said, "It has helped us focus our attention and complete business plans, which is key. It's helped massively to be forced to answer pertinent questions about our business, posed by experienced businesspeople. The mentor access is great. We're happy to be at this stage – but we want to win it!"

The annual Invent Awards 2017 is the final celebration dinner of the Invent competition from Catalyst Inc and the search for Northern Ireland's next breakthrough invention. The awards will take place on Thursday 5th October 2017. SeatView are one of twelve finalists competing to win the overall competition.

Visit online **Invent**



invent2017.co

Let's aim higher: why N.I. technology companies should export from year one

As an active and passionate exporter, I get frustrated by the lack of export ambition and success shown by local IT companies. Are we willing to accept being a region of a small island off a less small island on the furthest, most western periphery of Europe?

Or, do we aspire to be a highly entrepreneurial and IT savvy region with low costs and high skills, ideally sandwiched between North America and Europe? We have some very successful local IT companies selling products and services in export markets but they are the exception, not the rule.

Twenty years-ago I co-authored the Scottish Enterprise "Export Orientation Manual" that subsequently became the Explorers Export Marketing Programme bible. This manual was a function of its time with solid export advice based on traditional manufacturing exporting best practice. I'm very proud that it informed a generation of exporters who are now in leadership positions. However, the incremental exporting methodology is now woefully outdated in a modern digital economy.

The basic idea was sound: Ready, Aim, Fire. Research and prioritise potential markets, choose a 'friendly' market (for Northern Ireland it is inevitably Rol), get your first sale, move into a slightly more adventurous market (the Netherlands or US), then grow slowly and incrementally. I contend that in a digital world, the correct approach to export growth is: Ready, Fire, Aim. This approach focuses on getting an export ready product, launching it digitally then letting sales tell you where your key markets and priorities should be.

Many of our traditional business mentors in the IT space were at the export coal-face 10-15 years ago, when technology and social media did not exist. At a recent Digital boot-camp I discovered that every start up had been advised to leave exporting until years two or three - I strongly disagree. In my view, we are actively setting companies up to fail and miss their market opportunity. In Belfast, we have some very high-quality IT start-ups, but a real poverty of aspiration - I do not want an IT scene where we build great Belfast businesses, I want to take the Belfast IT scene global.

As with many locally-founded innovative technology businesses, support from Invest NI has been key to our growth internationally, and we are very grateful for this. With an increasing number of successful NI technology companies,

By Darren Mawhinney, Managing Director of CloudMigrator365



it would be great to also see more of a spotlight on our sector particularly at local business events and conferences. Northern Ireland as a whole will benefit if more and more successful digital businesses get involved in Invest NI, through sharing their expertise at exporting events. There are many local tech companies that are making huge waves internationally, and it would be great to do more to celebrate their success and for them to lead the way for our vibrant start-up scene.

In my opinion, there can sometimes be a 'poverty of aspiration' in NI compared to other regions and countries, and this is compounded by local networking events that often champion only local manufacturing companies selling in our nearest markets.

Some events, for example, roll out the same old companies, telling us that it took a decade to crack the Asia Pacific market. For us, it took less than a month! It's important that inspiration comes from a wide range of sectors. I am very proud that in the last two years, our company has sold in 57 countries to some of the largest and most successful companies in the world, we sell while we sleep - so my message is that it can be done, and it can be done cheaply and with little business risk. I believe it is time to say to Northern Ireland's growing tech industry: "let's aim higher and go truly global.....what are you waiting for?"

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Start-up spotlight:

Sync NI meet Podium Apps Co-Founder Ross Porter

After years of developing global brands, 38 year-old Ross Porter decided to throw in the towel and do it for his own business. Along with business partner Kieran Donnelly, Ross Porter launched Podium Apps in early 2015. With over 20 years of industry experience between the pair, a new market was discovered in the need for a new medium of business-to-client interaction. We caught up with Ross Porter, Co-Founder of Podium Apps to talk about the inspiration behind his business, developing apps for household names and what it is like to work in the thriving start-up hub of Belfast.

When it comes to Podium Apps, the clue is in the name. "The reason for the choice behind the name Podium Apps is a simple one," says Ross Porter. "We believe that our apps provide a platform (a podium) for businesses to connect directly with their customer base".

According to Ross, if your customers are mobile, your business should be too. Developing apps across a range of sectors, Podium Apps boast clients across the fields of education, hospitality and retail – and that's not even half of it. What makes this young company so successful? According to Ross, it's all about the fusion of expertise

offered by the firm's growing team: "What sets us aside from other app developer firms is that we have a great fusion of professional business and technical people. Most web / app development companies have technical people who build and sell their products. With Podium Apps, we have a slightly different approach. We have professional sales people who come from the business world that can spot niches within different markets, and then liaise with our technical team to create high quality bespoke apps and services".

In a world where apps are everywhere, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine what qualities combine to create a great app. None are better-placed to contribute to that discussion than Ross, whose firm have developed apps for household names, ranging from Man Shack, to Action Cancer and Rent-a-Merc.

According to the co-founder, the first question a business-owner should ask is if they need an app at all: "We get approached regularly by businesses who just want an app for the sake of having an app. However, there has to be a reason for a customer to download the app in the first place," says Ross. "Do you have repeat business? Is it an information-sourced app? What will it take to get a customer to download your app, and actually keep it? These are all questions to

consider". According to Ross, Podium Apps' ability to stand out from the crowd is based upon their ability to listen to their customers. "If a business really doesn't need an app, we will be the first people to tell them that an app is not suitable for their business."

Of all of Podium Apps' clients, there are a few which stand out as sources of pride to those behind the app-development firm. One notable example is that of New York's Dead Rabbit Bar, which was awarded the prestigious accolade of World's Best Bar, both in 2015 and 2016. A household name in all things alcohol, The Dead Rabbit has emerged as a sanctuary for cocktails, craft beers and vintage whiskeys. "I wanted to create an app for the best bar in the world, and that's exactly what The Dead Rabbit in New York City was," says Ross.

Belfast-born owners Sean Muldoon and Jack McGarry were pleasantly surprised at what Podium Apps could do for them, according to the co-founder: "I showed them a demonstration app based on The Dead Rabbit, and what it could do for them. Being The World's Best Bar, they are inundated with business requests and people offering them business ideas left, right and centre. We agreed to build an app for The Dead Rabbit, and also another app for their new bar venture BlackTail NYC, who recently won Best New Bar in the U.S.A. in July 2017".

However, Podium Apps don't find their only place in the bars of New York. Further afield, Manchester Storm Ice Hockey Team proves to be another noteworthy example of the diverse range of clients who turn to Podium Apps for their services. "Manchester Storm wanted to create an app where they could engage regularly with their fanbase – so, push notifications, events, roster and social media," says Ross. "We created a Flash feature for their fans. At the start of an Ice Hockey match, generally the lights in the area are dimmed as the teams are introduced. We created the flash feature, where the Manchester Storm fans can select the Flash section on the app, and it will Flash their team colours".

According to Porter, this innovative idea didn't go unnoticed, with the co-founder remaining tight-lipped around on-going talks with NHL teams in the USA and Canada. Podium's work with Manchester Storm doesn't come as the company's debut into the sporting industry: Podium Sporting Events promise to construct scorecards, amongst many other features as part of the firm's foray into sports. Not only are Podium expanding into sport; the firm is also setting its sights towards campaign marketing – Podium Campaigns will offer campaign-structured marketing for businesses in Northern Ireland and beyond. When it comes to business at Podium Apps, the sky is the limit. Those behind the firm are setting their sights elsewhere, in the hope of taking the business to new heights. One such example is the firm's very own bespoke ticketing system for concerts, venues and festivals – Podium Ticketing.



Left to right, Sean Muldoon, owner of The Dead Rabbit Bar and Ross Porter, Co-Founder and Director of Podium Apps

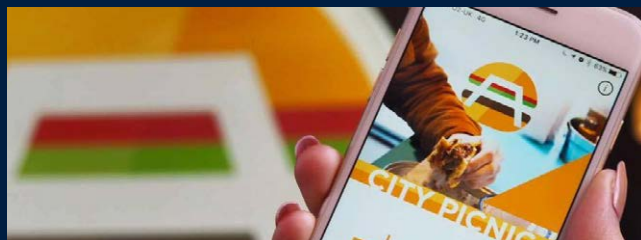
Ross Porter assures our readers that Podium Ticketing will become a regular site in Northern Ireland, and across the world. Likewise, Podium's ordering system is attracting a huge level of interest across a range of sectors: "Our ordering system has been a huge success already, especially in the food sector. Currently, businesses are spending large amounts of money with the like of Just Eat, Hungry House and Deliveroo," says Ross.

"Take-aways and restaurants pay large commissions to receive orders from these companies. Our ordering system is a one-off payment that can be integrated into the app and website for no additional commissions or fees. It is completely bespoke, not like the templated apps that are available from 3rd party app providers," continues the co-founder.

Not only are Podium Apps broadening their horizons into ticketing systems – those behind the firm also have plans to enter the world of motor sport. Speaking about plans to develop an app for Motor Cycling New Zealand, Ross Porter suggests exciting times ahead for the company. "Currently, their licensing system is a piece of paper. If a rider wants to compete in an event, they show the officials the piece of paper and check their helmet before they are allowed to race.

"The downside is that if a rider came off and had concussion, there is nothing stopping that individual going to another local town to get a day pass to race again," says Ross. "We have developed an app that is linked to a database – any individual will have the ability to register. Motor Cycling New Zealand can then acquire the individual details by a code, and it will give them the histories of that individual, letting MNZ know if they are fit to ride and have the approved equipment." In the world of app development, professionals have been plagued by the prevalence of 'phoney developers', operating

Podium Apps: Sync NI selects the top 5

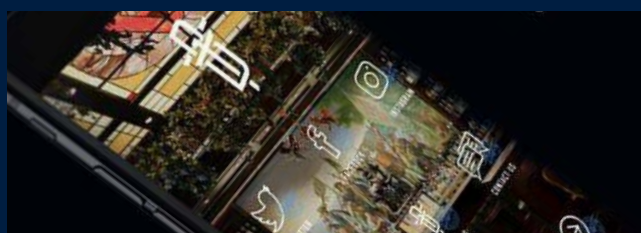


1. The Dead Rabbit Bar, New York City

Officially recognised as the Best Bar in the World both in 2015 and 2016, The Dead Rabbit Grocery and Grog takes its place amongst the most notable of Podium App's clients. Owned and operated by Belfast's own Sean Muldoon and Jack McGarry, the establishment is touted as an "accessible, irresistible, even fiercely romantic" take on the Irish pub model that the world knows so well. The free app boasts a sleek design, whilst still retaining that rugged image fostered by those behind New York's favourite taphouse.

2. City Picnic, Belfast City Centre

Located on the corner of Belfast's Fountain and Castle Street, City Picnic has rapidly been establishing itself as an eatery which offers some of the best burgers in Belfast. With its pure chuck beef and famous chicken marinade, City Picnic is particularly popular amongst Belfast's coeliac population with its gluten-free ingredients. With a built-in loyalty card, this app has proved popular amongst fans of the restaurant – check it out!



3. Blacktail Bar, NYC

From the dynamic duo behind The Dead Rabbit, Blacktail is a rustic taphouse inspired by Prohibition-era Cuba, when New Yorkers in search of booze would flock to the island via seaplanes with black-painted tails – hence the choice of name! Harking back to the export-life in Cuba, the bar offers a seafood-focused menu, live music and award-winning alcohol selections. The app offers a number of functions, including news, menus and an online shop – this one is pretty cool.

4. Manchester Storm Ice Hockey Team

When Podium Apps agreed to build an app for Manchester Storm Ice Hockey team, they set out with the objective of creating an app where they could engage with their fanbase. With the neat 'flash' feature built into the app, Podium Apps did just that. Dark intervals at Manchester Storm matches are now lit by the flashing of the team colours, on-screen. This flash feature has proved immensely popular, and Podium Apps are already in talks with various teams in the NHL. Exciting times lie ahead! For fixtures, rosters, tickets and alerts, download the app for free.

5. Ten Square Hotel, Belfast

When it comes to hotels in Belfast, none have a better location than Ten Square. Only a minute's walk from the Waterfront Hall and City Hall, Ten Square has emerged as a household name in hospitality and tourism. Podium Apps were to release a bespoke app for the hotel, and it certainly is impressive. With a built-in loyalty card and Christmas booking system, fans of the hotel will be sure to download the free app.

their business and products based upon commercialized templates or pre-existing app-generation services. That was the case until fairly recently, when Apple announced that they would clamp down on such developers in the form of rule 4.2.6. which states that "Apps created from a commercialized template or app generation service will be rejected."

Amongst others in the industry, Ross Porter welcomes this decision. "Over recent years, there has been an increase in pop up 3rd party app companies claiming to be app developers and are not. These companies are in fact resellers that use companies that mass produce templated apps at a low cost and then resell them at a higher cost," says Ross. "Moving forward, Apple will only work with accredited app developers. In future, any app created will have to be published in the business name. Businesses will now have their own developer account to have an app published in the Apple Store". Ultimately, the team behind Podium Apps believe that these developments will create a larger space in the market for their products.

With every successful business must come skills, expertise, experience and drive. However, in the experiences of Ross Porter, basing his business in Belfast also goes a long way. "It's an exciting time for Belfast. People from all over the world are looking to invest in Belfast. From the increase in tourism, we now have cruise ships coming into Belfast regularly," says Ross.

"We have an exciting film production industry with leading TV shows i.e. Game of Thrones being filmed locally and films like the new Superman movie. As someone starting out in business you now get a stronger sense of ambition now - anything is possible. If you focus on something and have the belief what you are trying to achieve you can do it." Ross draws attention to the entrepreneurs now owning New York City's Dead Rabbit Bar as an example of Northern Irish success. "They had a vision, they believed in themselves and through a lot of hard work they achieved their vision, and continue to do so."

With a growing list of impressive and diverse clients globally, the future certainly beckons success for Ross Porter and the team at Podium Apps. However, the company's co-founder is thankful for all of the attributes he picked up at home: "Growing up in Northern Ireland, personally, has taught me many things to help me along in business. We come from a culture where we don't take no for an answer! If one door closes, another one will open. This is a core belief that many people from here have," says Ross. "If you expect opportunities to fall into your lap, unfortunately for most that doesn't happen - you have to go out and create the opportunities, and the rest will fall into place!"

8 ways to ascertain your company's competitiveness

By Bob Barbour, Director & Chief Executive
at the Centre for Competitiveness

Technology is changing the world, and this will have a big impact on peoples' lives and businesses.

As we leave the European Union towards an uncertain economic future, Northern Ireland businesses must not lose focus in their ability to be as competitive as any in the emerging competitive marketplace.

These 8 self-examination questions provides leaders with the key ingredients for success and give a high level view of what has been described by the EU Commission, business leaders academia as the Fundamental Concepts of Excellence.

Test yourself - the future of your business depends on how competitive you really are.

The questions to the right form the basis for an organisational self-examination of Competitiveness. Recognized globally as the Fundamental Concepts of Excellence, these concepts represent a Quick Check by which a management team can measure their operational and strategic areas of performance. For the best internal benchmark, these critical success factors should be scored independently by up to 4 people placing an X in the box reflecting their views.

An agreed score should determine the potential areas for improvement.

If you visit the web address to the right you will be able to answer the following questions online.

Score profile: 1= poor 10 = excellent.

1. A key business driver in my organisation is to Continually add value for Customers?

2. A key business driver in my organisation is to Create a sustainable future?

3. A key business driver in my organisation is Developing capability within the organisation?

4. A key business driver in my organisation is Harnessing Creativity & Innovation?

5. A key business driver in my organisation is to lead with Vision, Inspiration & Integrity?

6. A key business driver in my organisation is to Manage with Agility? (Respond rapidly to the market)

7. A key business driver in my organisation is to Succeed through the talent of people?

8. A key business driver in my organisation is to Sustain outstanding results?

The Centre for Competitiveness is a not for profit, independent, membership organisation established by the private sector to actively support organisations through leadership, innovation, productivity improvement and quality excellence.

Visit online



tinyurl.com/syncni-8-ways

A conversation with Analytics Engines' and Queen's University's Roger Woods



For many entrepreneurs, running a business is a lot more than just a 9-5 job; it's a way of life. Indeed, the same can be said for the lives of Northern Ireland's academia.

However, what would it be like to juggle both of those positions at the same time? We were fortunate to chat with Roger Woods, a Professor at Queen's University Belfast as well as co-founder and Chief Scientist, at Analytics Engines, where he shared his experiences and expertise and tells us why that when it comes to a business, the clue is sometimes in the name.

Roger, tell us a bit about how you came to be involved in academia at Queen's University?

"I finished my PhD in 1990 [and] I then went off to California for a job interview. I was born in New York, so I'm an American citizen by birth. With the first Iraq war, my job in the States disappeared... so I went back into academia. Coming from an engineering background a lot of the research I was doing

was practically applied. So, we did a chip design in the mid-90s that was used in the US Olympics in Atlanta, the BBC and Queen's University itself. We also did a chip design with Aerospace firm Shorts, which was an interesting project."

What was your inspiration behind going into business after years in academia?

"I've been used to working with companies, so really, the burning ambition was to take some ideas [and run with them], rather than always handing them over to others! The main point of motivation came when a colleague came from Colorado to study his PhD. When he finished his PhD, he said, "I'm going to form a company". We had some interesting technology, and together we decided that this was the time to do it. So, in 2007, we formed Capna DSP, which was the predecessor of Analytics Engines."

What was the story behind the business name, Capna DSP? In retrospect, how do you feel about that choice?

"One of our co-founders, John McAllister – his family owned land in the Capanagh forest. We decided to take that name, slightly misspelt, with DSP standing for Digital Signal Process. So, it was a typical academic name – we thought it was cute – you don't realise that when people look at it, they think, "what the hell does that mean?", and I think that was one of the earlier lessons that we learnt – you don't do company names like that, which people just aren't going to understand!

The original name may have had an interesting backstory, but people just couldn't get their head wrapped around it. Your business name should invoke to your customers the nature of the business. Sometimes, you have to demonstrate the worth of your technology to customers, and this should, in part, be encapsulated in the name. That was a big learning curve."

Launching a business is certainly a challenging task. What other things did you learn from – and what did you get right from the start?

"We disengaged from the university, making sure our company was separate from it. Some people make the mistake of essentially making their business an offshoot of what they do at the university. I saw the formation of businesses like this, so to some extent I foresaw many of the issues [that this approach] causes. In the initial stages... we secured a contract. This meant that we were able to avoid seeking direct funding – our contract meant that we could employ 2 members of staff, who completed contract work. So, we probably got a lot of things right!"

"The mistake we made is that we decided to develop a tool and then sell it to people. If we had actually sat down with the customers and asked them what they wanted, things would have

gone a bit differently.

When we started off, it was all about acceleration technology, but people didn't really need that – they had more pressing problems, in terms of data integration – if we had seen that problem earlier on and listened to our customers a little more, then we would have specialised in data integration. So, we were too far ahead of our time and we had to readjust. That's what the big learning curve was!"

Juggling running a business with academic work at a University is a momentous task. How do you do it, and do you still feel you will be doing it in years to come?

"People get involved in one project, then move onto something else – and that's especially the case in engineering. In years to come, I would hope that Analytics Engines would be massively successful, and I will have moved onto something else. I juggle my roles with QUB and Analytics Engines quite well – it just takes a lot of time and effort. It isn't just a 40 hour week, and I think a lot of people are in that scenario.

Sometimes, taking a break from business to focus on University can be a nice and a welcome change. I think it's being able to proportion where you are most efficient, and you have to become brutal on that."

Roger, what advice would you give to a person who is considering launching a big data start-up?

"If you want to set up a business in big data, I say go for it – just make damn sure that there is a need for your business in the first place. Make sure you engage with your customers as soon as possible, and validate your own proposals. There's a lot of hot air about big data, and a confusing message – people don't know how to feel about it. Go out and test the water, and if it is viable, do it – and do it quickly!"

Analytics Engines Ltd was

founded in 2008 from the world leading ECIT Institute at Queens University Belfast. It is a global leader in high performance Big Data & Analytics, developing powerful, scalable, click-to-deploy open source analytics platforms that can be optimally tuned to your specific data, software tools and business needs. Headquartered in Belfast, Northern Ireland they work internationally across North America and Europe with a customer base from multinationals to niche specialists.

Visit online **Analytics Engines**

 analyticsengines.com

Big Data Belfast is Northern Ireland's premier data analytics conference and in 2017 will host world leading data analytics experts, providing insights and discoveries from a range of best case examples across private, public and government sectors. This year's overarching theme is "Life less Complicated", focussing the use of data analytics on improving people's lives, through topics such as Health, Smart Cities, GDPR and Data for Good.

The packed agenda will include technology showcases, panel discussions and plenty of time for networking and speaking directly with the experts throughout the day. The conference has a highly respected reputation within the industry and a growing networking community where companies can engage with attendees and create commercial opportunities.

The aim of this event is to drive thought leadership in one of the most exciting and expansive business clusters based in Northern Ireland and improve the presence of Northern Ireland PLC on the global stage.

Visit online **Big Data Belfast**

 bigdatabelfast.com

Maternal Mental Health and entrepreneurship

Sync NI meets Moment Health's Nuala Murphy



When it comes to female entrepreneurship, Belfast is firmly solidifying its place in the world as an example of what can be achieved. According to tech-giant Dell's 2017 Women Entrepreneur Cities Index, Belfast beats leading business hubs across the globe such as Tokyo, Milan and Beijing.

Behind these statistics are stories of women who have created successful businesses - and the story of Nuala Murphy is testament to that fact. We were fortunate to get a chat with the founder of Moment Health and leader of Belfast's ever-growing Lean In chapter, where we talked women's health, and building a successful business in tandem with a social movement.

Tell us about your business, Moment Health. What is the nature of the business, and what was your inspiration behind setting it up?

Moment Health is a technology company focusing on providing early intervention for new and expectant parents suffering from antenatal and post natal depression and associated anxieties.

The inspiration for the business largely came from my own experiences of anxiety during pregnancy. I received the highest quality of personal care from Dr Samina Dornan, but I realised that the early intervention I benefitted from is not the norm. Research shows that through early intervention, there is a 90% chance of a full recovery from mental health issues in pregnancy.

Our approach has the potential to help thousands of new

parents and reduce the impact of antenatal and postnatal mental illness on the NHS. It will also reduce costs for all healthcare providers. At the same time we want to connect all mental health care stakeholders so they can deliver practical and effective support.

Early intervention through our Checker, Tracker, Community and Support resources is key to building your own personal support network.

Becoming a mum or new parent for some is a challenge, and a new way of life that can sometimes become a struggle. In the UK, 20% of women, and 10% of men suffer from depression or anxieties during this time. I was invited recently to a conference at Imperial College London on Perinatal Mental Health, and was very shocked to learn that 75% of 19-24 year-old women are developing mental ill health in pregnancy. At Moment Health we believe in early intervention - so whether you find yourself ill, or you want to keep track of your ongoing mental health, Moment Health acts as a toolkit for you.

Can you talk us through your experience of recently attending the second Lean In Regional Leadership conference in San Francisco?

Started by Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg, LeanIn.Org aims to empower women to achieve their ambitions. The conference is a gathering of the most active and dedicated Regional Leaders and Company Leaders around the world. At the conference we had the opportunity to network with other leaders and the LeanIn.Org Foundation team members, learn new skills and share best practices to grow and engage our circle communities. We were 75 in total, double that of last

year. We had extraordinary inspirational speakers on the first day of the conference held at Stanford University.

Dr. Jen Welter shared her amazing story. She spoke about growing up without a female role model to look up to in the world of football and coaching. Despite this, she followed her dream and played football and coached inside linebackers for Arizona Cardinals, becoming the first female coach in the NFL. Jen spoke to Lean In members about the importance of being true to yourself; finding out what works for you, and how inspiration can be taken from anything in life – big or small.

We also took part in a workshop called “Design Your Life”, delivered by Dave Evans, the New York Times bestselling author, Stanford lecturer, and design thinker. The workshop helped us tackle life’s challenges and build a forward-looking path that is meaningful and fulfilling. Dave led the design of Apple’s first computer mouse – so he certainly talks from experience! He was also one of the founders behind Electronic Arts. Dave’s session was like nothing else I have ever experienced. His enthusiasm was a mile a minute, keeping up was a joy in itself. He had us working hard, tackling our ambitions, questioning our lives and asking us to design three versions of what we could be.

In the afternoon I delivered a session to the leaders on how to build a leadership team. The foundation wanted to showcase the successful growth of Lean In Belfast and our partnership with Allstate NI, as part of our ALLtogetherNI campaign. The key areas of focus were on vulnerability, passion and commitment.

On the second day of the conference, held at Survey Monkey located at One Curiosity Way, we heard from Deborah Greunfeld, Professor of Organisational Behaviour at Stanford University, where we learned about the different forms of power and leadership, and we were

sent away with actionable tips on how to develop our power, using it for good. There were also practical sessions from industry leaders such as SurveyMonkey and LinkedIn to help us build our communities. As if all of this wasn’t enough, next up was a talk from Meghan Rooney. Meghan spoke to us about how to tell your own story, and how to tell the story of your Lean In chapter. She spoke from a place of great experience, given her role as the White House’s first female speechwriter, writing material for POTUS Barack Obama and FLOTUS Michelle Obama, as well as Hillary Clinton. I mean, come on – was this really happening?

The conference was rounded off with a celebratory dinner hosted by Sheryl, where we all got the chance to hang out with each other socially. Sheryl spoke honestly and candidly about the situation in Silicon Valley and across the world – the gender pay gap, equality in the workplace, the sexual harassment cases and the work that still needs done. She is using her voice and influence for good and this is what makes her an absolutely amazing role model to us all.

Something we have all learned from Sheryl is that success is never down to one person. Never. There is always a team, she teaches us the importance of amplifying the work of our team and their collective dedication and she publicly celebrates her team on every occasion. This is true leadership.

What were your personal highlights of this year’s Lean In Regional leadership Conference?

This global movement is growing fast, far and wide. We are now present in 154 countries with more than 33,000 circles, small peer support groups that meet regularly to learn and grow together and 85% of our members attribute a positive change in their lives because of being part of a Lean In circle. The power of peer support was reinforced throughout the conference

and that if you surround yourself with the right people, you can achieve anything. People join Lean In Belfast to see what they can give, and when they lean in, anything is possible; a new job, a new business, a promotion, a pay rise – the list goes on.

On a personal note, it was great to connect with Instagram’s first Chief Operations Officer, Marne Levine – a totally amazing and accomplished woman, dedicated to Lean In’s mission. Marne and I spoke about Instagram’s mental health awareness campaign, #HereForYou and I shared Moment’s mission, naturally I was super excited about that, and I look forward to sharing our story as part of the campaign in the future.

I made the most of my last day and visited Facebook for a breakfast meeting with their Diversity lead followed by a quick trip to Instagram for the obligatory moving picture in the clouds. Before I headed for the airport and my return trip home, I managed to finally meet, Northern Ireland’s very own version of Sheryl Sandberg, Sarah Friar from Sion Mills. Sarah is the CFO at Square, and right hand woman to Jack Dorsey, joint CEO of both Square and Twitter.

I first connected with Sarah a few years ago after reading about her in the Financial Times, highlighting Square’s successful IPO in 2015, which she lead. We had lots to talk about over brunch, and shared many thoughts on how we can help and support more female entrepreneurs in the future... come and hear for yourself at the Ormeau Baths for the inaugural “Ladies Who Launch” event on the 19th September, when I’ll be asking the questions...

Learn more about Lean In Belfast here www.leaninbelfast.com.

Lean In Belfast: one chapter, three stories, three women

Originally launched by Facebook's very own Sheryl Sandberg, Lean In continues to develop itself as an organisation committed to the empowerment of women, in and outside of the workplace. We took time out with three members of Lean In's Belfast chapter to talk about the organisation, peer to peer support and how when it comes to success, we can benefit from helping each other.

S. Gayle Alexander, Marketing Expert

It's August 2017, and nearly a year since I was made redundant - and I have never been busier in my life. Why? Lean In, and more specifically, Lean In Belfast. After joining this group and chapter, I have learnt so much, met some amazingly wonderful and generous people, worked (voluntarily) and gained much more experience in an area of work I have long wanted to transition into.

Thanks to joining Lean In and making new connections, I currently work one day a week gaining valuable experience at award-winning NI start-up company PlotBox, based in Ballymena as a Marketing assistant. Whilst I never thought I would work in the death care industry (does anyone ever envision that in their future?), I can truly say I am thoroughly enjoying it. It really has made me exercise my brain and to think of new perspectives and methods in research, blog writing and general marketing exercises. This is all made much easier with a truly fun and friendly office staff, and the generous Leona and Sean McCallister who let me come into their business to learn from them and their team.

Volunteering with Lean In, I now look after the Belfast and Ireland Websites, newsletters, surveys and email marketing campaigns. I have gained many innovative marketing skills

(research, strategy, pitching, writing tone), discovered several digital and fun tools (Doodle, Canva, Mail Chimp, Survey Monkey, Wix), undertaken vital work experience (website building, SEO, Email marketing) and am well on my way to digital marketing and software accreditation certificates in Google Squared and HubSpot. Nuala was so right in that I wouldn't know myself in a year's time, and I even notice the confidence and glint in my eye coming back.

I have also made the decision to take a couple of years, whilst my two boys are young, to learn as much as possible before attempting to get back into full time gainful working employment. This time will also allow me to explore the possibility and opportunity of working as a freelance VA (Virtual Assistant for those who don't know, like I didn't when it was suggested to me), to create my own business and brand as a Digital Marketer, Market researcher and Geospatial analyst (my original background, think maps!). From this I am hoping to work and promote another new start-up, Gen Women Career winners with the talented Sinead Steenson, coaching women in reaching their Career and life goals - another beautiful synergy to come out of my predicament.

What I can now appreciate and enjoy most, is that coming from such a place of upset, despair and depression I now



feel energised, enthused, eager and my eyes have truly been opened to the big wide world. We can get very closed to new things and comfortable in our wee worlds and convenient nine to five jobs (not that my previous role was ever that). Without this major life event, I maybe wouldn't have had all these opportunities, met so many interesting people or learnt so many skills.

At the end of June, I had the very fortunate opportunity to travel to the British Library to listen to Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and Lean In founder speak with Lean In Belfast founder Nuala Murphy. At this event, I connected with many entrepreneurial women and started to feel that the struggle had been worth it. As Sheryl talked about Post Traumatic Growth and finding resilience, going through the events of last year (and the previous four), I can relate to this and whilst I am on this journey and still treading carefully, I haven't fallen over. Our working lives may be a jungle gym, rather than a career ladder - but I'm wondering if my experience thus far is a circus! Well, I'm certainly enjoying the colour and variety of it!

I don't remember when I actually joined the Belfast Lean In group – I was a silent lurker of the Facebook group for a considerable time before I ever joined any conversations or meetings!

But I remember going alone to the Lean In launch at AllState in January of this year, and being amazed and delighted at seeing so many women in the room. I messaged Nuala Murphy after the event and asked why there wasn't a circle for Women In Tech in Belfast and she encouraged me to start one. I did and it is now the biggest local circle outside of the main chapter group.

I've only been active within the Lean In movement for the last 6 months, but it already has had such a huge impact on me, personally. To be able to see

Victoria McCallum, Women in Tech



so many incredible role models that resemble myself has been revelatory; it's helped increase my confidence in my abilities, and my leadership skills continue to develop through the running of the circle. Being awarded a scholarship by unanimous vote of the Lean In Chapter to attend the Sheryl Sandberg event in London was a huge boost, and I will be eternally grateful for the validation from the Chapter for believing that I was deserving of the opportunity, and to Sheryl for validating my step backwards into the tech industry, as well as telling me anyone can affect positive change from the position they are in, whether that be senior or not.

There are big plans to affect positive change in the local industry through

the Circle by collaborating with other similarly aligned groups. But as with anything, we are starting small. The first focus is on building a social space for women in tech for support, encouragement and to provide role models and monthly socials. For me, after being surrounded by men all day, it's nice to see and meet other women in the industry!

We're currently putting together our strategy for moving forward, which is being determined by the wants and needs of the group. So if anyone wants to get involved – either as a silent lurker or as an active member – please come and join us!



Orla McKeating, Boden Park Coffee Company

I first attended a Lean In Belfast session around a year ago, and was pleasantly surprised with the welcoming reception and the support that each of these inspiring women had for each other.

I previously spent 10 years based in Brussels, Belgium, and worked in fashion around Europe, often in Paris and Amsterdam. I represented cosmetic brands including Givenchy, Dior, Bobby Brown, Mac and L'Oréal, and featured in numerous international magazines including Elle and Vogue Italia.

I was Creative Director for a number of fashion events in Belgium recruiting fashion designers, musicians, make-up & hair artists and models. This was a

real passion, and as challenging as it was rewarding. As a regular at Paris Fashion Week, I thrived in the electric and creative atmosphere, and made some of my proudest memories during this time.

Finding myself settling again in Northern Ireland in 2012 was overwhelming and exciting, but often isolating. Being a single mother and starting a business is not easy, but a struggle all working parents can resonate with. At Lean In I experienced so many successful women who were sharing this struggle, but managing it pretty well!

My Belfast based business, Boden Park Coffee Company, is in its 4th year and is thriving. We are currently the first business of its kind to accept Bitcoin payments and more recently we opened our own roaster, allowing us to source direct trade green beans and

offer a more personal coffee experience at Boden Park Coffee – we are quickly expanding to supplying our coffee to other local businesses.

With the help of Lean In business mentors, I have developed my self-confidence and skills in developing my business knowledge and a clearer direction in reaching my goals.

Last month, I had the honour of being invited to a Fireside Chat with Lean In author Sheryl Sandberg. This was a life-changing experience and had immediate effect on how I lead and motivate my team, my support network in and outside the workplace, and building strength and resilience in my business.

I cannot emphasise enough how Lean In has shifted my mind set on how I can and will achieve my goals to succeed, and how I hope to Lean In to support others down the line.

At the heart of the knowledge economy - supporting innovators and entrepreneurs

According to a new report from Dell, Belfast now ranks among the top 50 cities in the world for female entrepreneurship – ahead of cities such as Tokyo, Shanghai, Milan and Beijing.

Some of these women are part of a global phenomenon as motherhood sparks the very ideas they are turning into successful growing businesses.

Gavin Kennedy Head of Business Banking NI at Bank of Ireland UK says: "Entrepreneurs are a vital force in our local economy – developing new products, growing new businesses, creating jobs and opportunities.

"As a leading business bank we are committed to our role that goes far beyond providing funding. We invest significantly in the right programmes, networks and partnerships that will help to build confidence and support entrepreneurs in achieving their ambitions."

One woman who can testify to that approach is Olivia Farnam whose epiphany came with the crazy amount of 'kit' her three young children needed to get out of the house. She says: "We had covers for our buggy, blankets, waterproofs, sunshades, parasols and snooze shades and, it took us about 40 minutes to get out with all of it and the child.



Olivia Farnam, Founder, The Blinky Company

Lee-Anne Daly, Founder, Orby Swim Ltd

Photos by Khara Pringle
Photographic

"There was a gap in the market for a multi-functional innovative product that allowed parents to keep their children protected but meant carrying less and getting out of the house quicker.

"The Blinky was born. Our "Go-Anywhere" buggy blanket contains a built in rain cover, sun and sleep shade and an air-flo system allowing air to circulate around the child. It's reflective, waterproof and fleece lined. So all you need is the baby, the buggy and the Blinky!"

Bank of Ireland UK is a powerful advocate and supporter of entrepreneurial talent, particularly in Northern Ireland's knowledge economy – the second fastest growing out of the UK regions. Such businesses – knowledge intensive and export oriented – employ 1 in 11 people directly or indirectly and almost 10% of the local economy depends on them.

For nearly ten years, the bank has

championed the tenacity and ambition of innovators through its sponsorship of the Catalyst Inc Invent competition which aims to turn inventions into global businesses.

The highly successful and productive partnership sees Bank of Ireland UK share their expertise and insight into the commercial world as well as making vital connections for those ideas with significant commercial potential – the participating businesses, in turn, are supported as they go into business.

Encouraged by Bank of Ireland UK and with ambitions to grow and scale her business Olivia has reached the final 12 of the Invent 2017 competition. Through the challenging rounds of the competition, Olivia was introduced to the Business Banking team at Bank of Ireland UK and says: "From the outset the bank has wanted to do all that they could to support the business."

That support begins with having the

right products, expertise and services for ambitious business owners, like the bank's Small Business Start Up account with discounted fees and other real tangible benefits that was recently awarded 5 Star Ratings by Moneyfacts, the UK's leading independent provider of financial information.

Important as the bank's full range of business products and services are, Bank of Ireland UK believes in adding real value to its customers, which means giving them access to vital networks and programmes that will help them in bringing their product to market or as a growing business to achieve their ambitions for the company.

Bank of Ireland UK's year round Enterprise Programme provides customers with access to peer to peer knowledge sharing and opportunities to build new and valuable business connections. It includes their bi-annual Enterprise Week and, amongst others,

partnering with the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce & Industry to deliver its Scaling Programme and Connecting for Growth Programme.

Olivia has now just gone into production with The Blinky and is talking to retailers in the UK and Scandinavia about stocking it.

She says: "Developing a business can be a lonely process but through the bank and Invent programme I have met a lot of people – all passionate about their ideas and businesses who have become great friends and mentors – people I can bounce ideas off and support me as I develop the business to the next stage which is so invaluable."

Lee-Anne Daly founded Orby Swim Ltd, a Belfast-based award-winning children's swimwear business in September 2015. A swimming teacher with more than ten years' experience Lee-Anne realized that trainers like her were using the same swimwear and kit that had been used since the 1970s. Lee-Ann says: "I saw a gap in the

market for comfortable swimwear for babies which supports their movement and helps to build their confidence in the water."

Product innovation lay at the heart of developing the Orby Swim collection. Lee-Anne consulted with some of the industry's top names in British and Irish swimming and with professors in Northern Ireland's top Universities to ensure the right fabrics were used and the right designs were created – it was a process of trial and error before finally what they had created was truly innovative and unique.

She says: "Bank of Ireland UK has been fantastic for our business. I took part in and won the Bank of Ireland UK start-up of the year competition in 2015 and used the funds from that to register IP and to get a prototype completed.

The bank provided some of the finance to help me get the first products manufactured and I've opened a Small Business Start-Up account.

"The bank has also opened doors to numerous other opportunities. As part of Enterprise Week I won the chance to trade at the award-winning Spring Picnic Twilight Market held at St. George's Market to help raise our profile and boost sales.

"In terms of next steps we're focused on our marketing. Social media is playing a big role in that and we are also in early discussions with some UK distributors. It's a very exciting time – once we get our swim wear established I've got so many more ideas and so many products I want to develop."

Gavin Kennedy, Head of Business Banking NI at Bank of Ireland UK concludes: "As entrepreneurs work hard at growing their businesses, we will continue to bring all our resources – experience, people, finance, networks and programmes to support our customers in their ambitions."

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Northern Ireland's Top 10 to look out for

Spotlight on Kris Jones

Kris' motivation to study Computer Science was driven by his love for technology and curiosity to find out how things are built and how he could improve them. Early on in his degree he fell in love with programming, especially iOS Development, which encouraged him to push several apps to the App Store. The exposure and kudos he received massively helped boost his career, and was always a positive talking point when talking to anyone in the industry.



His passion in the industry is Product Development, delivering a product that customers need and love really motivates him. This started when he worked at Kainos on several customer facing products, most notably the leading healthcare product Evolve. After valuable time at Kainos Kris moved to Secure Broadcast. This is when he knew Product Development was for him.

20 months after joining Secure Broadcast he was promoted to CTO. This was down to his deep technical and philosophical understanding of the product and, vision for the company (and of course, hard work). For Kris, working at Secure Broadcast is a dream job, they have a fantastic product, an amazing team and two true visionaries driving their product forward, the founder Helen Lennon and Co Founder Damian Purcell.

Paula Heaney

Founder of Skinny Malinkys

Vicky Potts

Co-Founder @ Whitepot Studios

Raymond Dillon

Managing Director @ Proto Software

Adam Flanagan

Founder @ Future Summits

Aaron Gibson

CEO @ Hurree

Kris Jones

CTO @Secure Broadcast

Conor Graham

Co-Founder @ Nigma, HackTheHub, RepMe

Sarah Moore

Founder of In The Deep End

Hannah Fleming

Founder of Hi Baby Blog

Matthew Large

Founder @ glistr ltd

Spotlight on Conor Graham



Conor Graham, a 23 year old entrepreneur, is the founder of Nigma, a student developer community based in Belfast and Dublin, and a co-founder of HackTheHub, an annual hackathon which aims to use tech to bring about change in Northern Ireland, that has gained support from companies such as Google, Deloitte, Amazon and Fujitsu.

Most recently he has left a large consultancy firm to go chase the startup dream with an influencer marketing agency called RepMe, that specialises in influencer marketing, viral marketing and social broadcasting, which works with over 100 content creators with a combined reach of over 5,000,000 followers.



Project Lightning Strikes

as Sync NI Meet with Virgin Media Ireland CEO Tony Hanway

Virgin Media are currently announcing plans that will see Northern Ireland as the latest country to benefit from ultrafast broadband.

For some, the £3bn investment programme known as Project Lightning will come at a good time, as increasing numbers of homes and businesses turn to broadband as a means of work, trade and entertainment.

Sync NI were lucky to catch up with Virgin Media Ireland's CEO, Tony Hanway, where we talked moving careers, changing technologies and the firm's full plans for Project Lightning.

As with many professionals in the telecommunications sector, Tony Hanway first earned his stripes in ICT. Tony started out in Dublin with Gateway Computers, over twenty years ago. Indeed, a lot can change in two decades. Tony fondly recalls his times working across Europe for various firms, all with intertwining themes. "I was a Vice President of AOL UK, and the Managing Director of AOL Europe Operations Ltd. That was during the infancy of the internet and broadband in Europe, so I spearheaded that," says Tony.

Years later, the internet has become a staple part of modern life. It is no surprise that Tony continued spearheading telecoms and broadband: after AOL, Tony joined o2 Ireland, where he adopted a number of roles including CEO of o2 in Ireland, CCO of o2 Germany, and Consumer Director in o2 Czech Republic. "I love travelling, I love working in different cultures. It is character building, it's a real experience. It's challenging as well, even linguistically – Czech is a difficult language to speak, and everyone will tell you that," says Tony. "It's no inconvenience to live in Prague or Munich, they're all

great places – but I'm happy to be home in Ireland. It was never an inconvenience for me, because they were great jobs in great places, and I enjoyed them a lot."

Across the island of Ireland, superfast broadband can often be a rare possession. Ireland is, of course, dominated by rural areas outside of the two main cities. Although this may guarantee great scenery, it also incurs problems when it comes to surfing the web. "We do realise that we are a rural population, in comparison with many of the countries of Western Europe. No commercial enterprise will enter isolated areas, as it simply isn't viable. The costs are high," says Tony.

"We feel that we can connect much more people to the Virgin Media network – but to connect everybody, we need some degree of intervention. We are happy enough to paddle our own canoe when it comes to superfast broadband, but that's not the start and end of it. There's a lot more to do," he continues.

However, consumers across Northern Ireland may not have to wait much longer, according to the CEO. "If you look at the proportionate investment in Northern Ireland, it's highly significant. If you call a spade a spade, broadband has been pretty poor – reports say that the average broadband speed in the North is under 25Mbps. Our lowest tier package is 100Mbps, and in reality most people would be connecting at around 300Mbps. We are saying we are faster, but I don't think people realise how much faster we really are – up to ten times faster than the average!"

When it comes to consumer demands for ultrafast broadband in rural areas, none are best placed to comment than Virgin Media's Tony Hanway. "I get letters sometimes, saying "when on earth is Virgin Media coming to town?". It's a great letter to get, but it can of course get a little bit frustrating – because you can't connect everybody," says Tony.

With Project Lightning, however, there is cause to be optimistic: "This is a feel-good announcement, because we are expanding and connecting even more people. It makes a huge difference when you have decent broadband". Hanway is confident that Project Lightning is only the start of good things in Ireland: "This isn't capped at 350Mb – there is a 1 GB potential here. I'd like to think that this is future-proof for a significant amount of time – this is as future-proof as broadband can get. So, it's ironic – some of the people who waited the longest for decent broadband are now getting the absolute best that we have to offer," he says.

The question is, how do Virgin Media find out where people need them the most? The answer is held in the website's handy "Cable my Street" feature, which allows those in need of faster broadband to register their interest with the company.

"If we get enough interest, we know there is a cluster or concentration that makes it viable for us to go to that area. Over the years, we have connected many, many names. We are always looking for ways to reach out to new segments, and that's just one way to do it," says Hanway.

"Increasingly, people are realising that the demand for fast broadband is insatiable. The average house has ten devices, and if that's just the average, we can assume that that number may in some cases rise to 15, or maybe even 20. You can have five or six TV experiences under one roof, while one

person may have a tablet on their lap, and a phone in their hand at the same time. You need great broadband, you need uncontended bandwidth."

The task behind Project Lightning should not be underestimated: connecting 4 million homes across the country is no easy feat. When it comes to getting the job done, Tony insists that such a task requires cooperation from wider society. "There are a lot of factors and circumstances outside of our control. We need permission from authorities to open roads and pavements, local councils are very important, particularly their engineering departments – and then there's the necessary permission to cross properties and cross streets," says Tony.

"This can't be done in isolation by us. It requires a huge amount of cooperation from local authorities, and I'm happy to say that in most cases, we get that. Politicians would be the first to tell you that their constituents come to them with grievances about their poor quality broadband. We are in a good place now, because politicians are actually pushing to reduce barriers to broadband. It's not always seamless, but everybody knows that we need better broadband. Councils depend on rates, and businesses prospering. So when you think about it, there is more money as a result of that to fund public services. This is a win/win situation for everyone."

With such a large project must come a matching campaign of public awareness – and Richard Branson's firm is a master of its trade. Tony shares with us some of the tactics behind promoting Project Lightning: "We are promoting Project Lightning through a combination of methods. So, we have TV, press, outdoor, and plenty of social media. We depend on a lot of word of mouth as well; word spread fasts in a connected world. Cable My Street is so important for signalling where we go next – people will be seeing a lot more of Virgin Media in the future."

Project Lightning isn't, however, the only announcement that has Virgin Media excited. The firm are of course launching their shiny new V6 entertainment box. The V6 model is the smallest, fastest box released by the firm – but don't be fooled by its small size. "I'm happy to say that the UK is the first country the V6 will be deployed in. It meets peoples' modern day lifestyles – stream more, record more, less delayed reactions. It really is breaking new ground for us," says Tony.

"But, we've always had really good hardware, but with more and more people using the internet, you have to update that with solid and functional hardware. Not only is ultrafast broadband important – great hardware is essential. Let's not forget that people don't really refer to it as broadband these days – they call it Wi-Fi. People now look at it as a virtual product that fills every corner of the house, and that wasn't the case five years ago."

Ultrafast broadband isn't the only positive that Virgin Media are providing its Irish customers with. The firm has a notably successful graduate program, well-known for its large number of applicants. Luckily, the CEO of Virgin Media Ireland gave Sync NI a few tips for young people and graduates seeking a future with the firm. "We are looking for people who are open, versatile, keen to learn, and that they can bring their own knowledge and experiences to the business. We acknowledge that we have a lot to learn from the millennial generation," says Tony.

"Let's face it, a lot of senior management aren't in their twenties, so there's a lot we can learn from younger staff. We can provide people with really great learning experiences, but we hope they can bring their own ingenuity to the table. Virgin stands for energy, passion, innovation and disruption – we look for people who can match those brand attributes. We get a great buzz from an injection of youth."



From fear to mastery: seizing technology with both hands

By Claire Burn,

Belfast Director of Women Who Code

My name is Claire Burn, and I have recently completed a postgraduate Masters degree in cyber-security. I studied Computer Science as an undergraduate degree at Queen's University Belfast, and I currently work for the multi-national cyber-security company, Rapid7.

Nearly all kids want to make a difference in the world - don't they? Whether it's saving a life via medicine, or defending an innocent bystander; everyone can be a hero in their own way, with their own talents. There are so many ways for people to shine in the modern world, but there's just one question that needs to be asked: how are you going to do it?

Truth be told, computers terrified me until I was about 16 - I was scared of breaking them because I didn't know how they worked: and that's when I had the opportunity to take A-Level Computing, which taught me about the inner workings of the machines, and how to code at a very basic level. For my A-Level project, I built a small application for Cochran's driving school in Ballyclare, and this sparked my first

passions for creation and coding. I remember being one of the only girls in my A-Level class; but that didn't put me off.

I wanted to prove that I was just as good as boys at this subject, and I wanted to take the road less-travelled so that I could discover my own way through life. I had literally no idea of the places this would take me; sometimes you just have to take a leap of faith. I enjoyed working with computers, and I knew that the industry was becoming ever more pervasive - from smartphones to smart fridges, and I wanted to be a part of that.

This continued curiosity stood me in good stead to win a place at Queen's University Belfast studying Computer Science; a decision I seized with both hands, which I will never regret. Seeing that there were few women in my class would lead me to become involved with a local voluntary meetup group called Women Who Code, which I worked with as a city lead for 3 years.

I became their Youth Outreach leader, making it clear that I believed education to be a very important aspect of growth within the technology sector.

Now, after 3 years, I am the Belfast Director of Women Who Code, and I head up a team of 5 people. We organize monthly events, coding tutorials and socials for women already within the industry; and code-labs, mentoring and careers guidance for school students. I have also hosted a conference for two years running in Belfast around the Women Techmakers community, which is a Google initiative to tell inspiring and technology and science-focused success stories regarding minorities within the STEM community.

Queen's Computer Science BEng and Cyber Security MSc courses taught me all the techniques and provided me with experiences that I needed to become excited about this field, and to feel that I could really make a difference. It also put me in contact with friends that I will have for the rest of my life; who are also my colleagues, competitors, and work-mates, constantly pushing me to be the best I can be; and I can now say with pride that I am a programmer and cyber security professional.

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The importance of data in healthcare

By Dr Austin Tanney,

Head of Life Science and Healthcare – Analytics Engines

Imagine the scene: a patient walks into their doctor's surgery for their regular scheduled check-up. The reception staff greet the patient by name, and direct them to a pleasant waiting room. Two minutes later, the doctor calls the patient into the office.

After greeting the patient and some perfunctory small talk, they get down to business.

"OK, I've been looking through your data, and mostly everything looks good. You seem to be getting sufficient exercise and sleep, and your nutrition seems to be good. There is just one thing that concerns me very slightly. There have been some new reports in the literature that the proton pump inhibitor you've been taking may have some long term effects. I've also noted that you have a particular genetic variant that means you may be more susceptible to these effects, so let's look at the options."

The doctor and patient then look at the data together, come to a mutual conclusion and the patient leaves with a new prescription and some good dietary advice.

Does this seem similar to your last doctor's appointment?

No. Of course it doesn't. In reality your doctor has very little real data about you, beyond what you tell them. You probably aren't going to the doctor unless you have something actually wrong with you - and they only have 10 minutes, maximum, allocated to you. You've probably had to wait at least 30 minutes past your scheduled appointment and the doctor, who is likely working 60+ hours per week, is constantly aware of the queue of frustrated patients waiting outside his or her door.

The doctor will do their best, but they don't know enough about you. They have no idea what your diet and nutrition is like. They have no idea what your genome could be telling

them about your health risks. They can't possibly keep up to date on all the scientific literature about every drug available and the newest findings about potential issues and contraindications.

None of this is a criticism of your doctor – or my doctor. They are doing the best they can with limited time, limited information and not enough hours in the day to do what they need to do. The issue is data. Too much of it on the one hand, and not enough on the other. Too much in the world in general, and not enough known about you personally. You may have had your genome analysed by 23andMe (or similar), you may track your nutrition on your phone, and your exercise, and your heart rate, etc.

However, your Doctor probably doesn't have access to this. In fairness, even if they did have access, they most likely wouldn't really know what to do with it. It's a lot of information to collate and understand, and you have a 10 minute appointment.

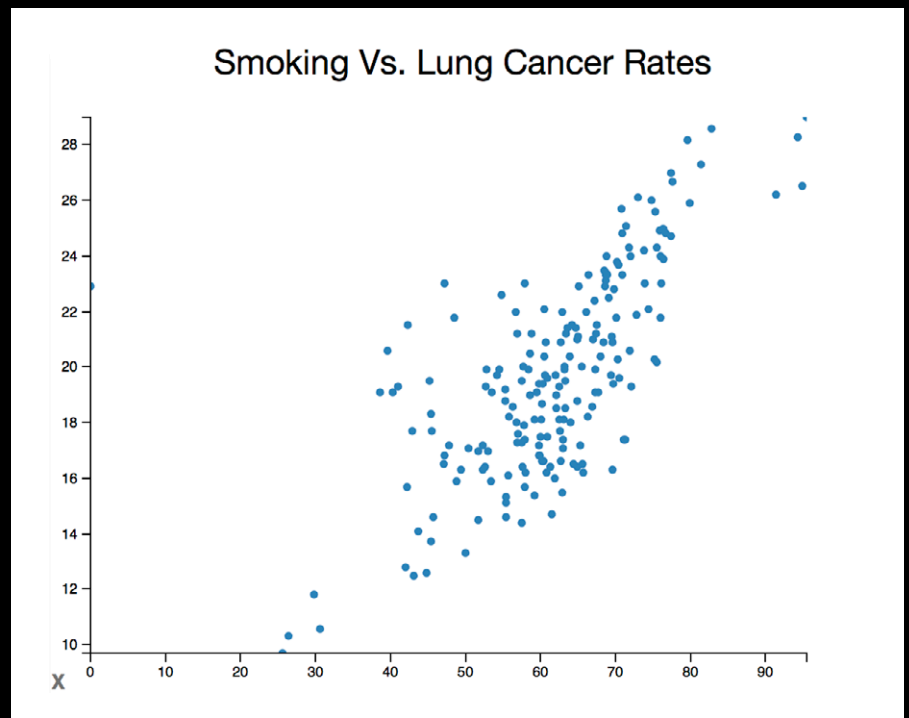
Of course, even if they did have time to collate all this data about you, what does it really mean? If they find out that I have a relatively high fat, low carb diet, I have genetic polymorphisms that mean I am a slow caffeine metaboliser but I drink huge amounts of coffee and I have a genetic predisposition for age-related macular degeneration with an odds ratio of 1.2 – what does any of that mean for me? Well, probably very little in the absence of a population of data to compare it to.

Of course if we collated all this data from everyone, we might start to learn a huge amount. We might learn what the trigger is to turn a genetic predisposition into an actual incidence of a condition. Analytics of healthcare data on a population level has the potential to transform how healthcare is delivered. It has the potential to change how we diagnose and treat disease, sure, but more fundamentally,

it has the potential to prevent disease through deeper understanding of cause and effect.

You know that smoking causes lung cancer, right? How do we know this? Well, this information came out in the 1950's when Drs Hammond and Horn

caused heart disease. It was only upon a meta-analysis of sufficient datasets that it was found that this may not be the case. Up until a few years ago it was general knowledge that dietary cholesterol was bad. Once some large scale analysis was done, guess what? Yes, it turns out that dietary cholesterol



carried out a prospective study and analysed the data. We did some work recently looking at population health in the United States looking at publicly available data. One of the things we looked at correlated smoking rates per state with lung cancer incidence. The correlation is so strong that we don't even need to break this down to an individual level.

We can see an increase in the number of people with lung cancer as the percentage of the population increases. Of course this is not new information, as I said; this was discovered in the 50s. But the key here is what was once a ground-breaking discover, is now something we can see relatively easily from large-scale publicly available data.

Up until a few years ago, it was commonly believed that saturated fat

has minimal effect on blood cholesterol levels.

On the whole, our understanding of nutrition, health and healthcare is based on data. Our knowledge is not complete, far from it, and we still have a great deal to learn. But our knowledge is growing on a daily basis, and as data becomes more freely available, the potential for a revolution in healthcare is, I believe, just around the corner.

At this year's Big Data Belfast conference, we will have speakers and panel sessions focussing on the importance of data in healthcare, where it is impacting now and exploring what the future might hold.

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Start-up spotlight:

Meeting the founders of Groundswell Growth

Despite the fact that Groundswell Growth is in its infancy, the dedicated ecommerce agency is already boasting an impressive number of clients across a range of sectors.

Behind every successful business is a story of relationships, skills and experience – and that is also the case with the team behind this blossoming start-up. We caught up with the co-founders of Groundswell Growth, Richard McKnight and Mark Lilley, to chat about the story behind their business, selling online and how when it comes to ecommerce, the sky is the limit.

Whilst the team at Groundswell Growth is small at present, the industry experience wielded by the company founders present an ecommerce force to be reckoned with. Richard McKnight and Mark Lilley started working together nearly a decade ago, with positions held in export technologies. The pair then moved to Chain Reaction Cycles, where Richard McKnight joined as Digital Marketing Manager, and Mark Lilley proceeded as Head of eCommerce in 2012.

Indeed, the fusion of skills between the pair has been instrumental in the foundation of Groundswell Growth: McKnight's study in Business & IT combined with Lilley's

study of Computer Science was to create a fruitful business relationship between them. "We have worked together for over 8 years, and we have been very close friends to each other for even longer than that," says co-founder McKnight, "we've both been very fortunate to have great jobs within ecommerce, working with great companies".

Mark Lilley highlights the fact that they love what they do, ultimately providing a catalyst for the success behind Groundswell Growth: "We love what we do, and the world is now, of course, digital. Marketing is increasingly becoming more and more about enabling technology and utilising data, and this fortunately fits in very well with our skillsets". After years of gathering industry experience and working in coordination with each other, the founders of Groundswell Growth decided that the time was right to set up an agency that focused on ecommerce growth, digital marketing services and consultancy.

After some time, that decision kicked into practice, and Groundswell Growth came into action. As a dedicated

ecommerce agency, the firm frequently acts as an extension of a company's existing team, aiding them in the acceleration of their online business. "Our skills are as relevant for non-ecommerce businesses, so we also work with a number of clients outside of that sector – especially around Digital Strategy, PPC, and Google Analytics," say the company co-founders. "We focus on areas which have been proven to work – not only at scale within a business with turnover excess of £160M per year, but also within small-to-medium size businesses, given Richard's most recent role as Head of Ecommerce for Kukoon.com"

How exactly do Groundswell Growth's services help a business grow?

According to the duo behind the ecommerce agency, it can be explained by the dual nature of their business: "We view ourselves as a blend between consultancy and agency," says McKnight. "Whilst providing direction, expertise and hands-on delivery, we audit clients' current position, identifying the biggest opportunities for growth, working together to execute that strategy. We layer on services which aim to help to add value, focussing on data and analytical decisions to grow revenue and become a long-term partner as the business grows".

Behind the skills and expertise that define Groundswell Growth lie an efficient and close working relationship between co-founders Richard McKnight and Mark Lilley. "We both have the same mindset – we want to work hard, deliver results and become the best agency in our sector," says Mark.

"Having been client-side for many years, we understand the ability to execute everything that you need to is difficult, regarding solid strategy direction and actually finding the resources. In response to that we have created an agency that can provide

consultancy and direction, whilst establishing the most suitable strategy for growth – but also helping to execute and deliver".

The pair's close working relationship keeps the business pushing forward – a desirable quality in the high-pressure environments which frequently surround start-up firms. "Having a solid relationship allows us to really challenge each other, knowing it's to get the best results for clients and ultimately grow the business. That makes it a bit easier to still have a beer together – even after a 3 hour argument!" laughs Richard.

As Groundswell Growth continues to spread its wings, the firm is setting its sights towards expansion and recruitment. The firm recently welcomed Niall Totten, who previously held the role of UX & Ecommerce Manager at Chain Reaction Cycles.

"Success comes from constantly challenging yourself, and this industry doesn't stand still – so we look for candidates that have ambition and desire to learn, progress and add value within a business. Given that we have two great local universities here in Northern Ireland which we both attended (UUJ & QUB), there is a large graduate talent pool," say the pair, as

they consider desirable qualities of their future workforce.

"We are building the business on delivering results, so we also want to recruit the best individuals who have years of experience in ecommerce, digital and technical job roles – we want to build an agency with the best people on the market to offer the best services to our clients," say the co-founders.

What advice would the founders of Groundswell Growth have for young people considering an alternative path as an entrepreneur? According to Richard and Mark, ambition is key. "Be ambitious, have the confidence to take the step – but ensure that it's a calculated risk. Making sure you have enough financially to keep you going in the early stages is critical and helps to take the pressure off," says Richard.

Mark Lilley advises young entrepreneurs to focus on what they are good at in order to deliver great results. Mark continues, arguing that adding value to your clients will help your business scale, without having to chase the work. "We've always been competitive, whether it was from playing rugby to studying – and we wanted to be the best possible. I think having that competitive edge helps, provided you're a team player as well!"

Top Tips: 5 Pieces of Advice from the founders of Groundswell Growth

1. Focus on what you're good at and deliver results
2. Have the confidence to take the next step, but ensure it's a calculated risk!
3. Constantly learn & push yourself to do better
4. Don't just focus on competition – think about what sets you apart!
5. Surround yourself with ambitious people who you can learn from

CREATIVE CORNER

St George's Market's Flax Fox Designs



Walking through St George's Market on a Sunday afternoon, it is clear to visitors from both home and abroad that Belfast is emerging as a powerhouse for creative talent and independent design.

Amongst the many sights, smells and sounds boasted by the Market, including vintage records, live music and fresh seafood, one stall in particular catches our eye. We are, of course, talking about none other than Flax Fox, Belfast's up-and-coming creator of original prints, 100% linen tea towels, fine bone china mugs, bespoke gift boxes, postcards and tote bags. We caught up with Danielle Morgan, the artist and illustrator behind one of St George's Markets' best-loved businesses.

Looking over some of the products offered by Flax Fox, it is obvious that when it comes to their designs, home is where the heart is. Belfast landmarks rest upon the products, expertly sketched in fine lines by Danielle. To suggest that the idea behind Flax Fox came from the streets of Belfast, however, would be incorrect. It was only when Danielle Morgan travelled to Australia that the company vision began to be set in motion. "Whilst travelling in Australia, I was enthused by the abundance of beautiful, well-designed products and how these resonated with both tourists and locals," says Danielle.

"The fact that this tremendous creativity was so openly celebrated and supported in Australia, and that there was a demand for these products was encouraging to see," says

Danielle. Danielle was to connect with Melbourne-based artist Bridget Farmer in her travels, and a fruitful business partnership found its roots: "This was part of my inspiring trip to Australia, staying with her and seeing how artists lived and worked online and at markets. She returned home for a 2 year period - we both came from different skill sets. We decided to try commercialising our art by producing our designs onto tea towels, and that's where Flax Fox came from".

When Danielle returned home, the idea behind Flax Fox began to blossom. After observing the popularity of such products in Australia, she immediately began to give thought as to how she could 'bridge the gap' between fine art and commercial products. "On returning home, we wanted to build an enterprise that enables us to create original, memorable gifts that capture the essence of Ireland and Northern Ireland through sketching". The rest, they say, is history.

Now with a well-deserved spot at St. George's Market, Danielle Morgan's bespoke designs are gaining popularity across the country. Flax Fox even boast a photograph on their website of Her Majesty the Queen, who stopped by the stall to buy a teatowel on a visit to Belfast's much-loved hub of independent traders at St. George's Market. When Bridget returned to Australia in 2012, Danielle took over Flax Fox on her own.

It is without a doubt that the success behind Flax Fox can be attributed to the commitment, dedication and artistic talent of Danielle Morgan. However, behind every successful business is a strong business mind.

Flax Fox are particularly proud of their website, which offers web-users photographs of their products, as well as a handy shopping-basket and ordering functionality. "Bag of Bees, a Belfast-based web and graphic design company, created the Flax Fox website and working with them has been such a smooth-running process," says Danielle, in one her of breaks from an otherwise busy schedule. "In addition to the website design and online shop, the blog and social media side to our brand holds massive potential – we realise this is where our customers can connect with us and get a true feel for the Flax Fox brand, and what we can offer".

As with any young business, learning experiences come daily for entrepreneurs like Morgan. "We began selling on Etsy, but it didn't work out as some of our designs were stolen from us by a company based in China. It's safe to say we had our first real lesson in intellectual property. We managed to solve the issue, but it has reinforced the importance of developing your own intellectual property," says Morgan.

Morgan's experiences should serve as a reminder to protect your brand and product - no matter how local that brand or product may be.

As with many entrepreneurs and creatives in the digital age, Danielle Morgan spends the vast majority of her time behind a glowing computer screen. "I spend approximately 75% of my time designing on a computer - Photoshop and Illustrator are my lifelines, and they enable me to digitalise my creativity at an incredible pace," says Morgan. "Our manufacturing is outsourced locally, and we also undertake bespoke design work for other businesses, such as the Giant's Causeway and Hillsborough Castle".

When it comes to figures, fees and finances, Danielle Morgan has chosen Square as her preferred payment platform. To Morgan, the service is more than just flashy hardware and a

well-known brand: "Square is a breath of fresh air! The onboarding process was very smooth-running, with fewer steps involved especially compared to other payment platforms. The payment transaction process is significantly quick, which eliminates the frustration of having to wait days on payments coming through.

customer, Morgan enjoys working productively from her own home-based studio, where she spends a considerable amount of time working on sketches and designs. "It is definitely encouraging to see many people embark on self-employment, but I must say it requires a substantial amount of discipline to ensure your personal and

WHAT IS SQUARE? WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **The original inspiration** for Square occurred to Jack Dorsey in 2009, when a friend was unable to complete a \$2,000 sale of his glass faucets and fittings because he could not accept credit cards.
- **The company** markets several software and hardware payments products, including Square Register and Square Reader, and has expanded into small business services such as Square Capital, a financing program, Square Cash, a person-to-person payments service, and Square Payroll.
- **The app** supports manually entering the card details, swiping the card through the audio jack-connected Square Reader, or inserting or tapping the card using the Bluetooth LE-connected Square Chip and Contactless Reader. On the iPad version of the Square Register app, the interface resembles a traditional cash register.
- **The name "Square"** refers to Square's card readers, which are square in shape. The name also refers to the idiomatic term for settling debts: "squaring up." Several other names for the company were considered, including squirrel, stash, and wallet.

On top of this, the hi-tech hardware appeals to our customers. Our customers can see us using this sophisticated technology, and they feel confident that the payment process will be taken care of efficiently," says Danielle.

The mind behind Flax Fox continues to praise Square, as she encourages her team to adopt the popular payment method. "We are currently in the process of getting our entire team at St. George's Market hooked up to Square, and we are looking forward to the coming months where will be using Square to its full capacity. We have only been using Square for a few months, but already we can see the positive impact it is having on business efficiencies!"

For Danielle, maintaining a successful business is heavily based on discipline and dedication. As an Invest NI

professional life do not become blurred. Working from home has taught me how to embrace a military-style attitude; the studio represents a tangible separation. To be able to look after my children, have a fantastic team, a studio, and our stall at St. George's Market every weekend, enables me to appreciate how far we have come, and focus on the future of Flax Fox."

With a growing customer base, a packed out weekend stall and fans including The Queen herself, Flax Fox is certainly one to watch.

Visit Flax Fox at St. George's Market

Friday 6am – 3pm
Saturday 9am – 3pm
Sunday 10am – 4pm

Visit online **Flax Fox Design**
flaxfoxdesigns.com

Seeing it to believe it: behind the headsets with N.I.'s home grown VR firm



Gone are the days when virtual reality was merely a concept; reserved for our wildest dreams, or 1980's sci-fi films. The technology is real, and it is growing.

With huge advancements in the field in recent years, more and more people of all ages are turning towards virtual and augmented reality – and for more reasons than you may think. Virtual reality was to find its initial success in the world of video gaming, with titles such as Outlast and Resident Evil demonstrating that VR-enabled games can be a huge hit.

However, when it comes to Edgeways Virtual Reality, it's more than just a game. We caught up with Leona Hill, Director at Edgeways Immersive Solutions Ltd about the emerging technology, its versatility of use and how she came to pioneer Northern Ireland's first ever virtual reality service provider.

Leona Hill recognised the benefits and profits to be made from virtual reality, long before she took the plunge and set up Edgeways. In what was a premonition for the future, Hill tuned into the fact that virtual and augmented reality can do so much more than render high-definition zombies. "I studied Computer Science at Ulster University, and I loved the course.

It instilled in me a passion for innovative and immersing technologies, and virtual reality really caught my eye," says Leona. "I saw the gap in the market to use virtual and augmented reality in industry, and I decided that I had to go for it. Now was my chance to show the world that VR and AR can be used for a lot more than just gaming!"

What does Leona mean when she says VR and AR can be used for more than just gaming? When she told us that the technology can provide a new dimension to the field of

architecture, we were a little confused. How can wearing a headset in any way assist the process of designing and building a house? You have to see it to believe it. Leona straps the headset onto our reporter, and it all becomes clear. We were greeted to a panoramic view of a sleek and modern living room. "Go on, take a look around," she says. Before we know it, we are walking around the house – a truly surreal experience. "Point the cursor towards the wall, and click," she says. When we comply, the walls change colour. "Now you will understand," says Leona.

"People can experience their house before it is built. The concepts and ideas that these professionals want to see – they don't have to build them to realise they don't like it – so they will save money in the long run. It provides benefits like spatial awareness and customization – it will save you money, and it's a great tool for architects".

The company director continues, saying that VR can make the architectural process a more personal one: "VR can create a more advanced discussion tool, where the architect can take a buyer through the whole process, instead of an exchange of emails back and forth. We are hoping that planners will eventually employ this technology!"

When it comes to augmented reality, however, vast opportunities exist in the field of healthcare training.

"Look at this," says Leona, holding a sheet of paper to her chest. She tells me to point an iPad camera at the sheet, and the results were amazing. "You can have help on the job – from surgical demonstrations to instructing students

on bodily anatomy. It's the next level in healthcare," says Leona, as we are shown a super-realistic human heart where she holds the paper to her chest. "This is great, because you can see what is inside the body, without cutting it open," she laughs, as we study the super-imposed, and now beating heart.

Training is not, however, the only aspect of healthcare which can reap the benefits of virtual and augmented reality technology. That is according to Leona, who shared with us amazing stories about how the technology can interact with sufferers of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. "It helps to stimulate the elderly and combat memory loss. So, we've have people who wanted to show their grandparents their childhood homes", said Leona. "With images and VR mapping techniques, we could effectively recreate that home. We did that, and what it sparked was a very emotional response".

In regards to assisting social interaction for older people in nursing homes, Edgeways VR has a solution. "Going to the seaside for the day, without even leaving the nursing home or hospital. Seeing, and nearly feeling the sounds and sites of the sea, and the ocean. It's extremely useful for experiences like that, and it's a lifeline to our older members of the population who may be housebound or physically limited". Considering virtual reality technology is still in its youth, we wonder in awe at what will be possible for dementia sufferers in the future, thanks to firms like Edgeways VR.

We proceeded onto the next demonstration, which was one of our favourites. "With tourism, VR will help a lot. Let's say a holiday-maker doesn't know where to go, and they have their choices narrowed down to three locations. With VR, we can take people to those destinations, to get a real feel for that place in the world, aiding them in coming to a decision," says Leona,

who sends us to a massive open field in Iceland. The blades of grass and blue sky were superbly rendered, and it really did feel close to the real thing. Not only can virtual reality assist the tourism industry – augmented reality can do the same, according to Hill: "Say you're in a new city, and you don't know where to go. Augmented reality will point you in the right direction!"

With such advanced technology, it is natural that we question how much this could all cost. The answers to that question may surprise you, according to Edgeways Managing Director Leona Hill. "There are a lot of VR headsets out there, ranging from Google Cardboard, right up to HTC Vibe and Oculus Rift – they range in price from £10 to a whopping £800," says Leona.

"The downside with these headsets is that you need a high-powered computer to run it, so you need at least a 1070 graphics card, and a strong computer that can run the software. With room scale VR, you need sensors and clear space, or wall mounts. The cheaper models, including Samsung Gear VR, require a Samsung phone to use, which can push the cost up a bit, whereas with Google cardboard you can plug any phone into it – even though you are limited by some of the apps".

Looking over the prices of some virtual reality devices, they certainly don't come cheap. This is where Edgeways VR comes in. "We try to provide an affordable VR/AR experience. A lot of people think that developing this costs thousands and thousands of pounds – but our VR/AR solutions start at £400. We also provide the hardware – so you don't need to get another company in to help on that basis".

So, what makes Northern Ireland's home-grown virtual reality company so special? According to Leona Hill, it is the personal approach adopted by the firm which gives them the professional edge. "We realise that

every company is different, and what some companies may wish to use VR for may differ completely to other companies," says Leona. "We spend a lot of time getting to know our clients and their requirements, and how virtual and augmented reality can make their workforces more efficient. We spend a lot of time working out how VR can benefit these various groups".

One question we really wanted to ask the virtual reality expert were her thoughts on the technology going too far. Years from now, could we really see a world where nobody wants to leave their house? Will virtual reality headsets become the new scarf? Leona Hill says that when it comes to this innovative technology, everything is fine in moderation.

"The risk of it going too far, where nobody leaves the house or talks to each other, is far outweighed by the benefits it would bring to all of these industries. With the multiplayer platform feature, families will be brought together who are separated by oceans. You can virtually be at your mum's 50th, even if you are in Australia. Of course, there's a worry that AR/VR will seclude people – but people will want to do this together!"

For the team at Edgeways VR, the virtual sky is the limit. Leona is confident that more and more industries will realise what virtual reality can contribute. "One day, we will be an international company. VR can cross oceans, and do anything, anywhere! We want to push Northern Ireland to be to the forefront of VR and AR – there is a lack of these companies throughout Europe, so we really want to put this country on the map! We want studios and premises across Northern Ireland, to provide jobs for young people in what is a growing market," says Leona, concluding our meet-up. "Kids are growing up with the likes of Pokemon Go, and they are expecting to use it in their careers. Let's make it happen!"

LOCATE
A LOCUM

Taking the Plunge:

Meeting Locate-a-Locum CEO Jonny Clarke

"We aren't smarter than anyone else. The only difference is, we took a stab at it. We took the decision to jump ship, and leave our careers," says Jonny Clarke, co-founder of Locate-a-Locum.

Northern Ireland's home-grown pharmacy recruitment platform is taking its market by storm, earning its stripes with a list of award nominations and prizes, as well as a fresh co-working space in Belfast's City Centre.

We sat down with Jonny Clarke, qualified pharmacist and co-founder of Locate-a-Locum to talk about the roots of his idea, and getting one of the recruitment sector's most exciting start-ups off the ground.

As with many entrepreneurs, Jonny Clarke found his expertise in areas outside of the world of business. "I studied pharmacy at Queen's University for four years, then I did a year in pre-reg - so five years total. After that, I came out at the height of the recession with no job," says Jonny, reflective of a time post-graduation when things were a lot different. "So, I did locum work for a while, for a couple of months at least. Then I was lucky to be offered a job in the Royal Hospital in Belfast for around three years."

It was the time Jonny spent looking for work in that period which gave him the inspiration behind his pharmacy recruitment start-up. "I was constantly passing on my business cards to pharmacies. I noticed a habit that they had

- they would keep all the business cards in a drawer," says Jonny. "Instead of my cards simply joining the pile, ready to be shuffled, I thought about setting up my own website with my own professional details on it. I thought that this would work well for some of my friends and colleagues too, and I persuaded them to sign up to it. That is essentially what the business grew out of."

The genius behind the app was inspired by real-life experience, and has developed an impressive number of features over recent months. "Basically, we have created a website and app which connects pharmacies and locums directly. Compare it to the likes of Uber - a pharmacy would register with the site, saying that they need a locum pharmacist to work tomorrow. The website and app automatically smart notifies locums in the area, saying "hey, there's a job in your area tomorrow that needs filled". With one click of a button, the locum applies for a shift, and is connected with the pharmacy."

Although life-experience was to inspire Jonny Clarke's idea behind the business, he was also guided by his own observations of the recruitment sector. "Recruitment agencies work off a middleman model. So if you're looking for work, you go through an agency. If you are hiring, you go through an agency," he says. "We have stripped that away to allow the

two sources to communicate directly with one another. We can do it faster, and we can do it in a more cost-effective way. We cut out the nonsense, we connect one person to another - it's as simple as that."

Determination and talent invariable come into play when discussing the success behind Locate-a-Locum. However, behind every successful business is a strong team and strong support, and with Northern Ireland's budding recruitment firm, that idea is no different. "My co-founder Michael gathered his expertise from the tech sector. So, he helped us develop the vision for the app - the other, non-pharmacy related skills: how do we build this; how do we make it happen? He is a former Head of Design at Radox Laboratories, so his experience really did help to build that."

"Things like Entrepreneurial Spark have been great at getting us into the papers," says Johnny, who is praising of Belfast's renowned incubator program. "We won the Invent Competition's internet category, which was run by Catalyst. E-Spark is great. I took a career break to travel and focus on Locate-a-Locum whilst travelling in Thailand. Michael was still working at the time, so we were working a lot behind the scenes. When we came back, e-Spark really helped us. They ask for nothing in return; it's open and honest, and they are pushing Belfast forward - helping the city solidify its reputation as a renowned start-up hub."

Jonny is keen to stress that such success is not only available to the likes of himself and Michael Budden. The Locate-a-Locum co-founder insists that any entrepreneur with a strong idea and a driven mindset can make it in the world of business. "I would say to young, budding entrepreneurs in Belfast to just go for it. When I was at university, everything seemed to hinge on getting a job post-graduation. Well, I got a job, and I felt unfulfilled," says Jonny. "The reason that I studied pharmacy in the first place is because I liked the business aspects of the subject, and the possibility of owning your own pharmacy years down the line."

But sadly, that's not possible anymore with the likes of Boots and other large retailers. This is a pharmacy-related business that I could actually achieve in setting up. There are a lot of people who say they have a business idea, but they rarely go for it. We say go for it."

With a growing team and an ever-expanding list of clients across the British Isles, the sky certainly appears to be the limit for Locate-a-Locum. Jonny Clarke is hopeful for the business's future: "We think it's going to be massive. Obviously, we focus on pharmacy at the moment, but we would like to expand into different areas. We see massive things for Locate-a-Locum, in a world outside of pharmacies."



Locate-a-Locum create 16 jobs

Locate-a-Locum has created 16 new jobs as part of the company's three-year growth strategy, as it moves towards a "fully online" service through its website and mobile app.

The roles will be in areas of research and development, and marketing roles within the company. The Belfast-based software firm provides a website which helps pharmacies across the UK to find locum pharmacists at short notice to help cover leave or staff illness. Invest NI have provided in excess of £200,000 of funding support.

Its website helps pair hundreds of pharmacists around the UK with over 8,000 pharmacies. Impressively, the company has already secured business with the UK's four largest pharmacy chains; Boots, Well, Rowlands and Lloyds.

Welcoming the jobs announcement, Moira Loughran, Invest Northern Ireland's Eastern Regional Manager said: "Locate-a-Locum has developed impressive software that is making it a key player in the UK's medical recruitment market. In a commitment to growth it is working with Invest NI to support it to create new jobs, invest in R&D and undertake marketing activity to grow business in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland."

"Locate-a-Locum sees innovation as crucial to the growth of its business. With Invest NI R&D support it is developing its business into a 'fully online' resource with improvements to its website and a mobile app," added Moira.



Dear Artificial Intelligence, I love our relationship but I think its moving too fast...

As a tech journalist, investigating and reporting on innovative and emerging technologies provides me with my livelihood. For a writer and technology enthusiast, few could suggest a better, more rewarding vocation.

Compared to this time ten years ago, the sector has become immersed in new terminologies: cloud computing, Internet of Things (IoT) and metadata join a long list of phrases added to the tech dictionary which would have us raising an eyebrow not too long ago. In most cases, advancements in technology are to be embraced – and that is (mostly) the case with artificial intelligence. Does it make me anxious? Yes.

As time goes on and advancements in the field build momentum at an alarming rate, I wonder what my role will be in the future of tech journalism – and I have tech to thank for that. Artificial intelligence is already making waves in newsrooms across the world, and some journalists, myself included, are cautiously looking over their shoulder. Automated reporting systems in the form of chatbots sift through gigantic sets of data to write initial news reports. Those who believe that AI and automation will not impact jobs in the media industry may reconsider that view when they note the massive investments currently being ploughed into AI in the newsroom. Clearly, the next five to ten years will be decisive, and potentially deadly to fellow journalists and wordsmiths like myself.

For now, at least, humans hold an advantage over the journo-

By Niall Coleman

Resident journalist, Sync NI



bots. Yes, it is possible for AI-powered bots to gather data and construct news pieces. However, when it comes to feature articles and opinion pieces, it helps to have a beating heart. Ramesh Menon, summed it up perfectly: "AI and robots will write stories in the future and they will get better at doing it as humans will fine tune it. But the best stories will come from writer-journalists who can put in fine detail, empathy, drama, colour and analysis into their stories". Indeed, for now, writers are hoping that this technology doesn't go too far.

However, it's not all bad news. In reality, robots will be able to take over the routine work that otherwise occupies the vast majority of a journalist's working day – giving us the freedom to investigate, analyse and do what we do. On a Monday morning, we certainly wouldn't complain about having a trusty electronic assistant. Still, the case remains – AI still hasn't got the capability to filter fake from real news; and we all know how much of a problem these so-called 'news sources' are in the modern day age of information.

The reality is, robots are not yet ready to steal my job, and I'm thankful for that. To the industry leaders and pioneers of artificial intelligence, hear my call: slow down, take your time and remember the trusty, human journalists of this world – you may need us yet.



Life in the cloud: A chat with **CloudMigrator365's Darren Mawhinney**

What do we mean by cloud migration? Darren explains it to us the same way he describes it to his mother. "Think of online banking. You can access your bank from any device in the world, doing whatever you need to do."

Everything is held in the cloud, where you can access it at any time. My mum loves online banking – she's done it for 12 years. The cloud is like online banking for your business – all the emails and documents you need available anywhere, and you store it the cloud," says the Managing Director.

"Years ago most companies had server rooms, which were risky – fire damage, flood or vandalism could cause huge data

loss. For us, your information never has to leave the UK if you don't want it to. You don't have to continue to upgrade your servers, and if anything does go wrong, it's Microsoft's problem, not yours. So you know you'll have a top team working on it. We were born in the cloud, and we live in the cloud."

Darren Mawhinney's career has certainly had intertwining themes, and it is these combination of themes which have propelled him to his current position with CloudMigrator365.

"I started my career in export marketing. I was in the first cohort of the Explorers Programme – that was way back in the day! I then spent 6 years bringing blue-chip American

companies into Europe. One of them was Motorola, way back when the internet was only starting," says Darren. "Then I moved into IT, where I was lucky to work with Kainos. I was brought into the company at an exciting time, and I had a great time there. After a few years, I moved to Meridio, which had been spun out of Kainos, helping them get ready for sale.

"From there, I went to NI Water, then consultancy, then working as COO of a company in Manchester. For the last

exporting, Darren Mawhinney insists that businesses can't get started early enough. "Many entrepreneurs in Northern Ireland are discouraged from going global in their early years. If we had sold in just Northern Ireland, our turnover would only have been a little more than £800 last year. In contrast, we sell in 57 companies globally. You have to chase the business; you can't sit in Belfast waiting for it to come to you," says Darren.

"My vision is to build a global business

migrations ones and simple ones for SMEs – simple, secure and cost effective is who and what we are. We are up against large competitors, so for us, our core message is vital."

When it comes to exporting, Darren insists that companies can't do it early enough. "I delivered a Digital Catapult session for cyber security start-ups recently. Talking to these small start-ups, all of their mentors had told them not to export until year two or three. That is so wrong – if you wait till that



In years to come, we see ourselves as being the most successful migration company in the world. When you deliver results, results will come!

Darren Mawhinney, Managing Director at CloudMigrator365

five years I was Strategic Business Development Director of engineering giant Glen Dimplex, working on the Internet of Things. I have always tried to go for the most exciting career that I can!"

Darren quickly realised that when growing a successful Microsoft business, he would benefit greatly from basing operations in Belfast. This city has a very distinct culture: we have our own team-building events and trips – there's a very strong team ethos in Belfast, and a belief that there is no customer in the world outside our reach. From that belief and vision, we grew the business across the world, doubling our business last year. I came to Belfast, found highly-skilled people, flexible office space and great support from Invest NI. It all came together – it's done very well. We had three people last August – now we are up to 10."

When it comes to cloud migration and

in Belfast. We have completed migrations at universities in the US, Canada, the UK, across mainland Europe, the Middle East and Asia Pacific, all with tens of thousands of students each. In the corporate world, we are working with some of the biggest companies in the world – it's fantastic, because we have the aspiration to win big, and the belief that we can make it happen. We want a global business that we can be proud of, and we are quickly getting there."

Indeed, the enormity of the tasks undertaken by the team at CloudMigrator365 should not be underestimated. "Some migrations are very complex, with huge amounts of data and employees across as many as 40 different countries. With most of those, we manage to complete the final migration over a weekend. So everyone comes in on Monday morning, and they are live in the cloud," says Darren. "We can do complex, multi-national

point, you'll miss the market. We set things up to sell while we sleep – that's achieved through having a combination of having a simple product, controlling the risks, and pushing like mad through social media, Google Adwords and speaking to people such as Sync NI Magazine."

Throughout all of the success and genius behind CloudMigrator365, the feeling of excitement is palpable. Mawhinney is determined to propel the firm to global leadership, whilst retaining a human and identifiable face. "When you deal with us, you deal with real people. All of my customers have my email address and my phone number. We have found that in other companies, they try to manage things remotely, and you never see people, or are put through to a call centre."

Follow **CloudMigrator365**

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The Inaugural 4th Industrial Revolution Challenge

Featured photographs are from the first debate in the 4th Industrial Revolution Challenge series delivered by Connect at Catalyst Inc.

'Artificial intelligence: Priceless or Perilous?'

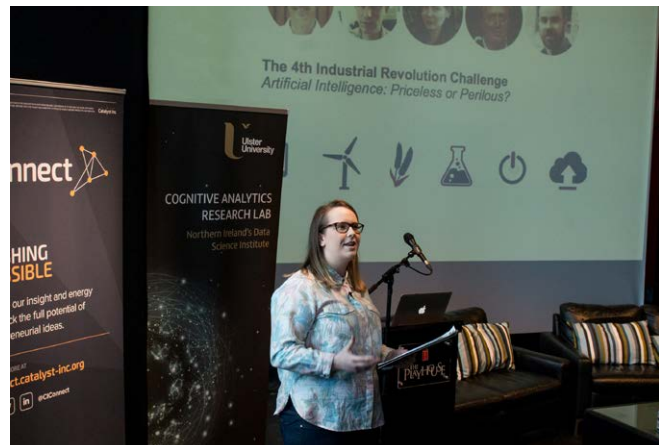
The debate, held 25th May in The Playhouse Derry/Londonderry, focused on Artificial Intelligence and asked if advancements in A.I. were priceless or perilous. Opportunities and challenges were discussed by an expert group of panelists including: Mark Nagurski, MakeMatic, Ciaran Murray, Creative Metrics, Dr. Grainne Watson, Fujitsu, Ben Greene, Analytics Engines and Professor Damien Coyle, Ulster University. Attendees included those from research, business and the startup community.

"The 4th Industrial Revolution Challenge is an annual series of monthly headline debates on how the health, finance, energy, transport, food and government sectors will be disrupted by accelerations in the following platform technologies: IoT, analytics, A.I., 3D printing, robotics, materials, VR, genomics, quantum computing etc. Events will be held month across Belfast and Northern Ireland".

Details at: meetup.com/4th-Industrial-Revolution-Challenge



Dr Grainne Watson (Fujitsu) Ben Greene (Analytics Engines) Mark Nagurski (MakeMatic) 1 Prof. Damien Coyle (Ulster University)



Emer Maguire (4IR Artificial Intelligence host)



Attendees engaging at the 4th Industrial Revolution Challenge



Damien Coyle and Natalie Dayan (Ulster University)



Martine O'Doherty, Fujitsu



Mark Nagurski MakeMatic & Ciaran Murray (Creative Metrics)



Dr Jingling Wang and Dr Xuemei Ding (Intelligent Systems Research Centre, Ulster University)

Upcoming Events

syncni.com/events



meetup

DevOps Belfast Meetup

WHEN 19th Sep 2017

WHERE Belfast



Entrepreneurial Spark

WHEN 20th Sep 2017

WHERE Lombard House, Belfast



meetup

Introduction to Android

WHEN 29th Sep 2017

WHERE Belfast



Invent 2017 Awards Dinner

WHEN 5th October 2017

WHERE Waterfront, Belfast



Professional Sales Skills

WHEN 6th Oct 2017

WHERE Belfast



Negotiation Skills

WHEN 12th Oct 2017

WHERE Belfast



Big Data Belfast Conference

WHEN 19th Oct 2017

WHERE Belfast



Presentation Skills

WHEN 20th Oct 2017

WHERE Belfast



Personal Productivity and Effectiveness

WHEN 23rd Oct 2017

WHERE Belfast



Account Development

WHEN 24-25th Oct 2017

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Drone & Tech Show

WHEN 4th Nov 2017

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meetup

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WHEN 8th Nov 2017

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Phion Therapeutics

Targeted & controlled drug delivery technology



Uleska

Fast, proactive and scalable application of security features



Farm TV

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Evy

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Who will win? Invent Awards | Thurs 5th Oct | Belfast Waterfront
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