

What will Digital Banking look like in 5 years' time?

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Welcome to the Summer edition of the Sync NI magazine



Foreword

Seamus Cushley

Director, EMEA Blockchain, FinTech & Digital at PwC

As Bob Dylan sang in 1964, *'the times they are a-changin'*. Today, we're facing a time of change not yet experienced by mankind. We're at the beginning of what many regard as Industrial Revolution 4, or what is also known as the third wave of the internet; a time when disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, blockchain and robotics will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another.

In and of itself, technology is not innovative; it's what we do with it that is the innovative part. Since the beginning of time, people have had needs, wants, frustrations. While these have largely remained constant, over the years, change has been driven by the technology that has addressed these needs.

Take the fact that humans have always had the need to travel from A to B. The technology that enables them to do this has changed significantly over time (horse and carriage, car, plane). The core human need remains, but the technology will continue to evolve - hyperloop? Teleportation?

In the very near future your business, no matter how small or large, will be a digital business. If you're a shop owner, musician, publisher or car manufacturer, you're fully aware of the impact and speed of digital disruption.

The good news for us is that there are certain things only humans can do, and this human-only work is our future. Anything that can not be digitised, automated or performed by machines will be the differentiator in a successful business. For us, the challenge is to think differently. Much of our education and thinking has been framed by the needs of the industrial age, but we need to challenge our

default thinking to fully realise the potential of technology.

If your profession is based on knowledge retention, process handling or knowledge insight, it will be performed in part or totally by machines, as technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Blockchain and Internet Of Things increasingly play a greater role in everyday life. And the time when machines will surpass humans in certain tasks is not far off.

Yet in a world where technology is steadily taking over tasks that were once thought of distinctly human, we all have an opportunity, a responsibility, to tackle the challenges being presented by the future. And that's where the digital and the human collide. Because digital is a human thing and human skills will be the most crucial. Humans will still be needed to rethink the possible, to challenge the technology, to solve important problems. And the sort of people that are needed are people who are creative, empathetic, curious and adaptive.

Digital is about meeting the numerous challenges, known and unknown, that we are going to face in the future. It all comes down to people and values. We need to shape a future that works for all of us by putting people first and empowering them.

'We can only see a short distance ahead, but we can see plenty there that needs to be done' - Alan Turing.

Are you ready?

Seamus Cushley

Director, EMEA Blockchain, FinTech & Digital at PwC

SYNC NI
magazine

About Sync NI

Sync NI is proud to be Ireland's technology and business home.

The Sync NI website and magazine brings readers the latest tech and business news, views, jobs and events across Ireland.

Content & Editorial

Susan Cleland
General Manager
Phone: 028 90820944
Email: susan@syncni.com

Niall Coleman
Resident Journalist
Phone: 028 90820944
Email: niallc@syncni.com

Marketing & Advertising

Caoimhe Caldwell
Phone: 028 90820944
Email: caoimhe@syncni.com

Conall Keenan
Phone: 028 90820944
Email: conall@syncni.com

Subscriptions

Email: team@syncni.com
Online: www.syncni.com/subscribe

General Enquiries

Sync NI
Rochester Building
28 Adelaide street
Belfast
BT28GD
Phone: 028 90820944
Email: team@syncni.com
Online: www.syncni.com

Print Partners



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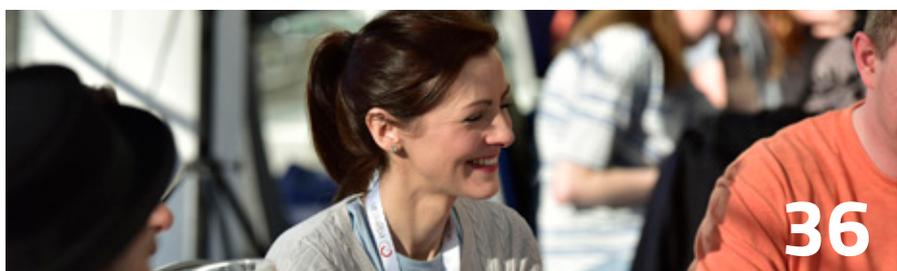
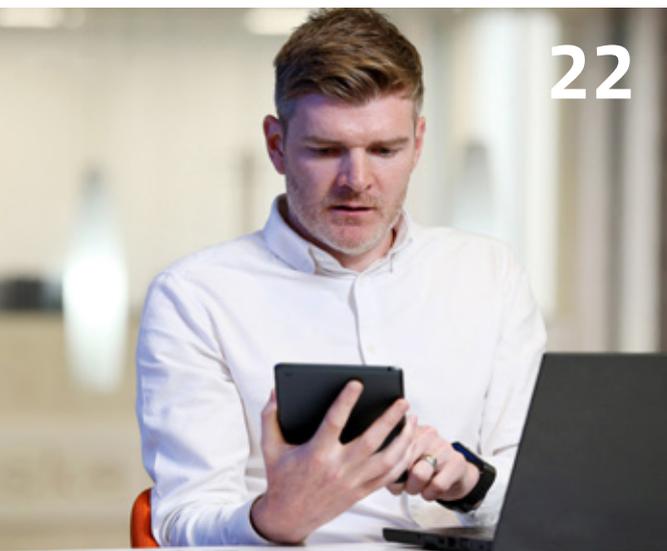
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Upcoming technology and business events





Ormeau Baths officially opens its doors

It's official – Ormeau Baths has opened its doors to the public as Belfast's latest collaborative co-working space for entrepreneurs and start-up businesses.

Located at the historic site of the former Ormeau Road Bath House, the premises offer a fashionable hub for Northern Ireland's growing tech community. Driven by the energy of entrepreneurs Jon Bradford, Mark Dowds, Aaron Taylor and Steve Pette, the project has secured endorsement across Northern Ireland's digital diaspora.

Start-up freelancer management platform Kalo was confirmed as the site's first tenant, as the San Francisco-

based freelancer collaboration app will become the first business to call the Ormeau Baths home.

The company will be joined by Barclays, as it plans to launch a business incubator at the re-developed building.

Barclays Eagle Lab at Ormeau Baths will provide mentoring and workshops to Northern Ireland's entrepreneur and start-up sector.

The Ormeau Baths have also announced a partnership with start-up investment fund Techstart NI.

Let's meet the entrepreneurs behind the Ormeau Baths.



Jon Bradford

Having launched the first bootcamp accelerator outside of the US in 2009, Jon has established himself as one of the most experienced early-stage investors in Europe. His role in launching 12 other accelerators has rightfully earned him the titles of “Godfather of European Accelerators”.

As co-founder of F6S, the world’s largest social media network for entrepreneurs, and cofounder of Tech.eu, Europe’s premier tech news site, Jon was recently honoured by his peers by being inducted into Europa’s “Hall of Fame” – Europe’s highest award for successful start-ups.

Mark Dowds

After 17 years spent across Canada and the United States, Mark Dowds has returned to Belfast. As cofounder and Chief Strategy Officer at Trov Inc, one of the world’s fastest-growing Insurtech companies, Mark has played a role in creating the success behind several start-ups, including the Bank of Coders, ServiceCloud and CreationStep.

Aside from this, Mark has run one of Canada’s most successful incubators, laying down the foundations for the now thriving tech scene in Toronto. Also an early-stage investor, Mark has invested in companies such as Uber and Twilio.



Steve Pette

As a founder of the member-led collaborative working space Central Working, Steve has picked up a number of awards, including the 2016 Coronet Award for UK Innovation in the co-working sector.

Steve served as head of Service Development for Virgin Atlantic, where he was responsible for its Business Lounges globally – as well as its business class experience, both on the ground and in the air. After leaving Virgin Atlantic he moved to the US as part of the founding team behind Virgin America as Director of Customer Experience.

Aaron Taylor

Currently serving as Managing Partner at venture development company Frankly, Aaron Taylor has built companies across the US and Europe as an experienced entrepreneur. Previous ventures founded by Aaron include NY-based venture capital-backed ad tech platform that has scaled over 3 million daily users (not to mention the ICONS Festival and I.M. Creative).

Aaron is heavily involved in Belfast’s tech community, co founding and running one of the UK’s most successful tech meetups, Friday Night Mashup.





The more things change, the more they stay the same

have been to many meetings and events in the last three weeks where the talk has been dominated by one thing above all others. You might expect it would be either politics or terror attacks given how much they've dominated the news agendas in recent times - but, no.

Whilst the astonishing political machinations in Westminster and Stormont are certainly top of mind for many of us, what seems to be of more concern to local business leaders and those who really run things 'up the hill' is the future workforce. More specifically the skills and talents that will be needed by employers in the very near future and whether or not we are doing what is needed to nurture and develop those skills.

It seems that on this matter at least, there's a consensus. We're not. A big part of the challenge is that we simply don't know what skills and talents will be needed, as it seems that 65% of primary school children today will work in jobs that don't even exist yet.

What we do know is that many of the lower-skilled jobs we have today may not be around in 10/15/20 years. Or rather, they won't be carried out by humans. A 2016 report by Deloitte, "Transformers: How machines are changing every sector of the UK economy", predicts that there are as many as 30 million jobs at risk of automation in the next 20-30 years. It suggests the wholesale and retail, transportation and storage and health and social care sectors are likely to take



Gillian McKee

Business in the Community, Deputy Managing Director

Gillian has strategic responsibility for our Business Engagement programmes. Having worked with Business in the Community since 1998 in a series of Communications and Marketing roles, latterly heading up the Marketing function, in July 2016, she moved to take on new responsibilities as part of an organisational restructure. She now leads on the range of programmes Business in the Community offers for business engagement across the key areas of Environment, Workplace, Community and Education and Jobs, ensuring a holistic, sustainable and integrated offer is available that meets the needs of business and addresses key issues affecting society.

the biggest hit with almost 5 million jobs at risk between them.

It isn't all bad news, though. What is being hailed as the fourth industrial revolution will certainly mean significant change to the career opportunities open to future generations, but it seems likely that although low-paid, low-skilled jobs will go, they will be replaced with higher paid, more highly-skilled roles, which will boost the economy through extra pay. That being the case however, we do need to ensure our future workforce can develop the skills to avail of those more highly skilled jobs.

At Business In The Community, we have recently carried out a piece of work around analysing the "digital revolution" and some of the unintended consequences it may bring. The resulting report – Brave New World – outlines four key business priorities for responsible business in a digital age. What we are really keen to get across to businesses is that these priorities are generic to pretty much any sector. This is not about the tech or digital sector at all.

Regardless of what type of company you are, you will have customers, employers, products/services and

a supply chain. The landscape for each of those stakeholders and their relationship with you will change in the coming years, whether you want it or not, and you need to be prepared to deal with those changes in a responsible way.

This is possibly easier said than done when we can't predict with any great degree of certainty what those changes will look like, but we do know they will be rapid, transformational and will bring as many opportunities as they do challenges. One change that we can predict with some certainty is an ageing workforce, as we have more people living longer and therefore staying in work for longer.

Already we have five generations in our workplaces and this can bring its own cultural and communication challenges.

Equally, it brings plenty of opportunities for progressive employers to encourage the sharing of skills and experience between generations, so we may see things like reverse mentoring happening, where a younger mentor shares their digital skills and knowledge with an older worker. This is an approach that employers like BT are finding very beneficial and it seems that

in the process, the younger workers can benefit from the life experience and 'softer skills' that older employees tend to have, and which is one of the biggest skills gaps among today's graduates.

We know in terms of demographics that females will continue to account for a little over 50% of the population and, by extension, the workforce. Whether or not they will actually increase as a proportion of the CEOs of companies in the future remains to be seen. Let's hope so. I think of all the shocking stats and facts I have heard in the last few weeks, right up there at the top is the fact that there are more CEOs named John leading FTSE firms than there are females, by a ratio of 17:7!

To my mind, if there's one change that really needs to happen, it's to have leadership in business be more reflective of our population's diversity and demographics. Sadly, I suspect we may be saying the same thing in 20 years' time, regardless of how much the digital revolution has changed other aspects of our working lives.

Follow [Gillian McKee](#)

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 An illustration for the article 'Tara's Locket'. It features a dark, stylized landscape at night. On the left, a lighthouse with a glowing light beam shines across the scene. In the center, a young girl with brown hair, wearing a red jacket and blue pants, stands looking towards the viewer. Above her, a large, glowing orange locket with a crescent moon and a star is suspended. The title 'TARA'S LOCKET' is written in large, white, stylized letters across the top right. The background includes dark trees, a cave entrance, and a small boat on the water in the distance.

TARA'S LOCKET

Big Motive create virtual reality experience for children

We've spent the last eighteen months working towards the creation of a virtual reality (VR) experience for children, culminating in the release of Tara's Locket. It's been a fascinating journey and, despite all the hype around VR, it's been one on which there are still very few signposts, especially when your audience is children.

Right back at the beginning, we had an idea that mobile VR, specifically Google's Cardboard viewer, might be a medium on which the worlds of children's books could be brought to life.

The magic of a picture book is the way in which the illustrations create more than just a backdrop for the words. The pictures set the tone and mood, and often through incidental details, make the story feel deeper and the world more real. If a child could step into these worlds and explore, suddenly the opportunities for story and character development could genuinely support, rather than replace, the original book.

Alongside the potential of VR, the Google Cardboard format itself seems perfect for this audience. It's homespun, customisable, do-it-yourself ethos isn't so far removed from cereal-box spaceships and tinfoil robot costumes of childhood.

From page to world

In our early discussions with publishers and authors of children's books, it quickly became clear that they wanted more than just a simple retelling of an existing story. The opportunity to expand on the world, characters and themes in the story resonates most with creators. It's also critical that the transition from page to virtual world in no way compromises the illustrations.

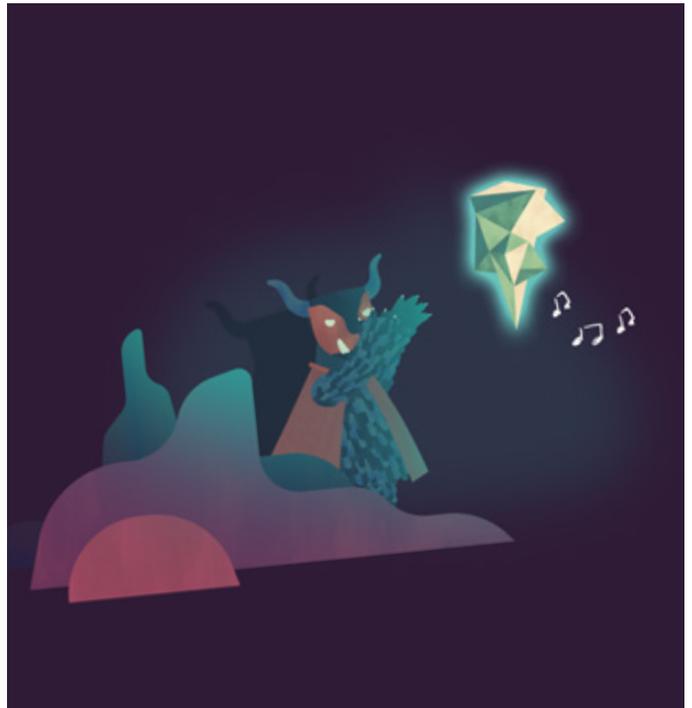
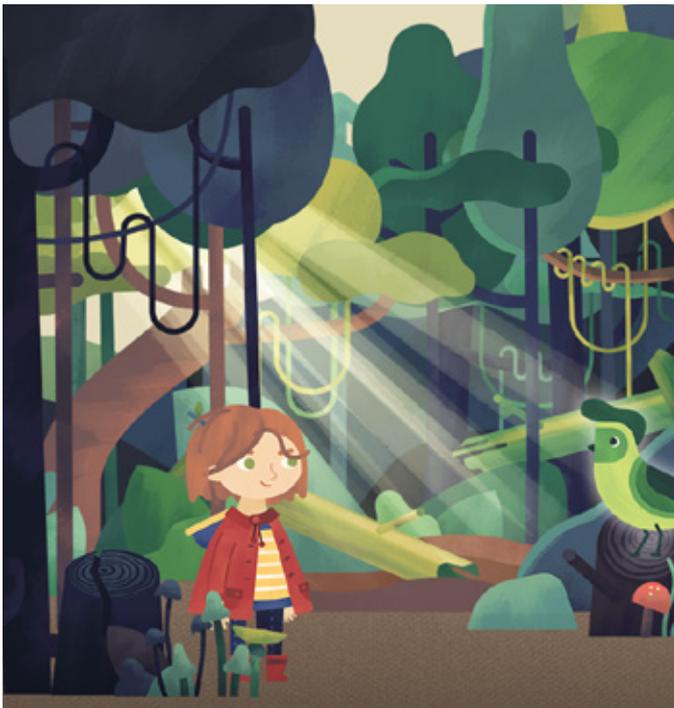
Given the wide variety of styles and media used to illustrate picture books, we knew we needed to develop an approach that could accommodate this variation. Bringing a world bound by two dimensions to life as a completely immersive, three-dimensional environment is a real challenge, and, authors were very quick to tell us, must be handled in way that protects the integrity of the original artwork.

Initially we planned to create the VR experience from a

first person perspective (in which we experience the story through Tara's eyes) however after discussing this approach with publishers and IP owners it became clear that this would undermine the connection between the central character and the user - if we can't see Tara, it's much harder to relate to her story. In light of this we reimagined the experience so that the

Firstly, it became clear that setting up the virtual environments so that the user could explore without requiring them to navigate through the virtual space, greatly simplified the whole user experience. Only high-end VR systems such as Vive map users' spatial movement and location in the real world to that of the virtual world, so conventional Mobile VR experiences

bad, the visuals seem to stutter and can leave you feeling nauseous. A side benefit of focus on optimisation is a smaller app which downloads faster and eats up much less storage space. On phones already crowded with photos, videos, games, more photos and some more photos, a lean app is more easily downloaded and less likely to be deleted.



user joins Tara within her story and becomes part of the narrative through interaction with her and the other protagonists.

Our team settled on Unity as the best tool in which to create Tara's story (it ships with base level VR capabilities as standard), and experimented with texture mapping, image projection and other modelling techniques to bring original artwork through to VR environments.

Ultimately, the team combined many complex technical processes to achieve a successful end result (including occlusion culling and optimisation of off-the-shelf drawcalls and tris), yet it was some of the simplest insights that made the most difference.

tend to use game-like controls to let users move around. This introduces a layer of complexity to the user experience (UX) which we were keen to avoid, and can also disorientate some users ("How come my eyes see that I'm moving but I know that I'm standing still?").

So, we designed Tara's world so that it could be explored simply by looking around and designed the interactions so that they're triggered by the user's 'area of attention'.

Secondly, we doubled-down on optimising everything so that there's little or no 'lag' in the visuals. Lag, in the context of VR, describes the gap between what the user sees and where they are looking - when lag is

A new way to tell stories

As we moved through early prototyping and testing it became increasingly clear that the narrative and storytelling conventions from books, films and even games aren't always successful in VR. We tested Tara's Locket continuously, even very primitive character sketches were shown to our test panel of (ruthless) kids. Without testing we would have missed out on so many insights, which have been crucial in making a success of the finished product.

We found younger users in particular find it hard to resist the impulse to look around and explore the world into which they suddenly find themselves transported. There's no guarantee that they'll notice, or care, about a story

playing out in one particular part of the scene. In addition to this we found that 'lean back' moments, during which there's no means of interacting beyond simply spectating, feel really long in VR experiences. It seems that the passive attention spans of users young and old are even shorter when they're in VR.

So, in Tara's Locket, we've created environments in which the user can subtly move the story forward at their own pace and as a result of simple interactions. Connecting these interactions to the user's exploration of the world then rewards them for the activity in which they're already instinctively engaged. Further testing helped highlight and then balance out some usability issues by bringing through visual hints to draw the user toward the next interaction point.

Changing the pace and nature of the VR environments also helps to provide room for narrative progression. We developed a series of interludes - almost like limbo spaces - between each main environment and, alongside providing an 'orientation' period, we found that these answer another thorny VR storytelling challenge: how to best use text in a VR experience.

The written word in picture books is, of course, a central component, and for younger readers its value lies in the opportunity it provides to become familiar with the shape and form of letters and words. Conscious also of the fact that our users want to interact and not just watch, we created the interludes around flowing sentences that reveal themselves as the user follows the text, and guides them to the conclusion.

For users too young to read the words this 'flowing sentence' model is useful in reinforcing some very simple literacy fundamentals, such as reading from left to right.

As a rule of thumb, VR is best when it



relies on the least amount of text, but it can work to enhance the experience when used sparingly to change the pace and progress of the narrative.

Making Tara's Locket provided the Big Motive team with so many opportunities to learn as we delved into a completely new medium, along with the illustrator Priya Mistry, StoryFX and Scoredraw Music who partnered with us to bring to life the landscapes and characters of Urah (Tara's island).

The pick-up-and-play nature of mobile VR (Google Cardboard) turned out to be the right platform for the audience. It delivers the all-important 'wonder moment', those few seconds of magic when you feel transported to a completely new place. It's also just as easy to put down as it is to pick up, something that parents put high up on their list of priorities - 'full' VR with its trailing cables, strapped-on visors and

headphones isn't a good fit for busy families already concerned about the hours kids spend on screen time.

The storytelling potential for VR as a format has been the greatest point of validation for us. Introducing a medium as new as VR to one as old as picture books brought with it no guarantee of success, but there is a natural, unforced connection. Almost more so than there is with the conventional extension of children's books through games. Where games necessitate the prioritisation of challenge over story, VR can summon the world from the pages of a book, allowing the story to unfold as the child sets off to explore.

Tara's Locket was created with assistance from NI Screen and Invest NI.

Follow **Big Motive**



@big_motive

STARTUP SPOTLIGHT

ALT Animation



ALT Animation, it's all in the name or rather the names of its founders - Andrea, Lee and Tim. Sync NI recently sat down with the team, over coffee at Root & Branch, to chat about the changing face of Northern Ireland's animation industry, current projects and all things alternative...

Firstly, what has brought you to this stage in your careers?

Andrea: Together we have over 30 years' experience in the creative industries, during which we have produced a wide range of animated content and successfully secured production finance from sources all around the world. As animation professionals we felt now was the right time to channel this experience and set up our own boutique animation studio.

How would you define ALT Animation's business model?

Tim: Our business model is one that is based on a Lean and Agile framework. We are positioning ourselves as a boutique animation studio, where we are equipped to tap into the immense potential of both the corporate and non-corporate sectors. Our goal is to deliver high quality motion graphics and animation content for a global audience. In the future, we would also like to develop our own intellectual property.

What particular changes have you seen take place within Northern Ireland's animation industry?

Tim: Whenever we were starting out in our careers, animation was considered a somewhat "alternative choice" and one where you were faced with having to move away to find work, but over recent years there has been an increasing demand for the delivery of animation courses in NI, and this has led to more highly-skilled jobs.

Ulster University's degree in animation, the innovative programmes run by NI Screen, production funding, industry tax reliefs, the increased access to Irish studios, and Ireland's global reputation as a go-to-place for animation all combine to reflect the importance of animation and its role in enriching society and our economy. Plus, social media has added a new dimension to the industry, and continues to widen the scope of our work.

Lee: Furthermore, the island of Ireland is renowned for producing some of the world's greatest creative minds and when you see the mammoth shift Game of Thrones, for instance, has brought about, and the opportunities that now exist for those in the creative industry that didn't exist previously, then you realise the breadth of positive change that has already occurred.

You place a strong emphasis on the importance of collaboration and lending support

Andrea: N.I.'s animation industry is achieving global recognition; this can be attributed to the strong sense of community that exists here and the fact that we like to work together. On top of this, the level of practical support NI Screen provides is magnificent, we cannot thank them enough!

Can you reveal any juicy details about current projects, and what's in store for NI audiences?

Lee: Yes, we can reveal we are working on a project with Colin Murray. It is a short animation series where we will feature some top sporting heroes, including the likes of Jimmy White! It can be described as a behind-the-curtain series of pub anecdotes. (We'll be sure to keep you posted on further details).

And finally, how are you settling in at Ormeau Baths?

Tim: It is a fantastic co-working space. Our current studio complements our agile methodology. To be part of a movement that is driving the startup community here in Northern Ireland is monumental for us.

Follow ALT Animation



@ALTAnimation

Q&A with Square's Sarah Friar



Originally from Strabane, Northern Ireland, Sarah Friar now lives and works in San Francisco where she is Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at Square. Founded in 2009 by Twitter founder Jack Dorsey, Square helps business owners to accept credit and debit card payments, as well as providing other tools and resources to help them start, run and grow their business.

We recently had the opportunity to chat with Sarah about Square, championing women in the workplace and much more during the launch of the Ormeau Baths.

Companies like Square have championed equality and diversity and thrived. What would you say to companies who are falling behind in terms of embracing equality and diversity?

It has to start at the top - that's where the tone is set. We care deeply about diversity and inclusion at Square. For that to resonate and feel authentic with all of Square, we need real buy-in at the executive level, lip-service isn't enough we all have to live it. We're fortunate to have an executive team that places a high priority on culture, and a lot of this starts with our CEO Jack Dorsey and his ability to prioritise and instill a strong sense of culture. Our mission "Economic Empowerment" is actually stamped on the wall.

What's incredible about Square is that 45% of our executives are women. I'm proud to work alongside other strong female leaders, including our lead for the UK, Sarah Harvey, for example. What's interesting is that this didn't happen as a result of a major initiative or push around diversity. Rather we thought it was good business. By reflecting our customers, we believe we can build better products that imbue more empathy into the challenges they face every day.

Internally, we strive for transparency, unpinning a belief that great ideas can come from anywhere. Innovation is not just an engineering value, it should be felt in everything we do. We also hold ourselves deeply accountable; we measure employee satisfaction and sense of belonging each quarter, and share those results with the entire company.

We hold a bi-weekly Town Square (yes we're a company of puns) where no topic is off limits. It's not all sunshine and rainbows - some of those conversations are raw but it's up to everyone to be honest, stay accountable and care if we want to build a company and a movement we are proud of.

You gained a Masters from Oxford University, worked in finance for Goldman Sachs and quite literally have taken Silicon Valley by storm, with achievements that include becoming CFO of Square and taking them public, and also becoming the first independent board member of messaging platform Slack. How do you feel your roots have shaped who, and where, you are today?

My roots have absolutely made me who I am today. I grew up in Sion Mills (a tiny village) during the height of The Troubles, surrounded by bombings and shootings. However, I was incredibly lucky to have a family that showed me the importance of giving to others above all else.

My mother was the district nurse and then the school nurse, and my dad was the personnel manager at the local mill: their lives revolved, and still revolve, around helping others. This instilled in me to this day, the importance of putting people first. If you truly put others first, it just keeps coming back to you in spades. I apply this at Square where my job as a leader is to build a strong team that will carry our organisation forward.

What do you miss most about Northern Ireland (besides your family)?

I've now lived in California for nearly as long as I lived in Northern Ireland. That's so strange to think about for me. Although I have built my life here in San Francisco, Northern Ireland still feels like 'home' in my heart. In fact when I say "I'm going home" I find everyone knows instinctively that I mean Northern Ireland.

I miss my best friends - even after all these years the girls, and now women, I met when I was in primary school and grammar school are still some of the people I feel most at home with. I miss the down to earth nature of the Northern Irish - no pretense. I miss the stories and the jokes; it's just not the American way. And of course I miss having my family close by, to stop in for a "cup of tea and a wee bun" as my mum would say.

Guilty pleasure: soda bread or Tayto cheese and onion crisp sandwich?

I never was a cheese and onion crisp fan - salt and vinegar all the way. But bread products...that's a different matter. I just visited St. George's market in Belfast. Best experience meeting two brand new Square sellers; FlaxFox and Bout Ye! Belfast. Second best experience, the ginger wheaten bread.

What did you want to be growing up? What advice would you give to your sixteen, twenty one and twenty five year old self?

When I was growing up I was keen to pursue a career in engineering. My girlfriends and I at school loved science and tech - I would take my mum's vacuum cleaner apart and try and put it back together for fun.

There was always one piece left that I wasn't sure what to do with! That's led me on a diverse career path from an internship on a goldmine in Ghana, to working with McKinsey in South Africa, to business school at Stanford in the USA, investment banking, and then into

technology companies like Salesforce and Square. I would give the same advice to myself at 16, 21 and 25 I think - which is be curious, ask questions, and don't take no for an answer. There's so much to discover out there - the job I do today didn't exist when I was 16, 21 or 25, so it is also important to keep an open mind about what the future might hold! I'd also look back and tell myself to be be unafraid to jump when things feel stale or you're not thriving. I spent too long waiting for a start-up!

What is the best piece of (business) advice you have been given? What piece of business advice would you give to somebody who wants to work in a startup? What business advice did you wish you had been given?

Here are a few things that have helped me through the years. The most important first step, regardless of industry, is to do something you love. If you don't get that right, everything else will be much harder. That doesn't mean there is one job out there for you, rather think about the characteristics of what gives you energy and sparks creativity. For example, I love to travel, I love interacting with people, and I really enjoy analyzing problems, the more mathematical the better. There's no single job that checks those boxes, rather there are types of careers, and types of companies that will enable me to mold a job into a passion.

Once you find something you're passionate about, it's very important to be in control of your career. I also recommend looking for ways to create "spikes" - better to have one or two things you're A+ at, rather than 10 things you're a B at. It's also really important to be front footed in pursuing mentors and look for people that aren't just like you.

Be persistent - they're probably very busy, so you need to be creative in looking for ways to fit into their schedule. And then after you meet with them, it's also important to follow

up. And not just say thank you, but close the loop. Thank them for what they said, tell them what you then did differently, and tell them what the outcome was. You want to them to know that the time they spend with you is meaningful. Also ask how you can help them - you will be surprised! And it's a great way to make them want to spend more time with you.

How did Square's Code Camp programme come about?

One of the big focuses for me is to do what I can to inspire young women to pursue a career in STEM - that's science, technology, engineering and maths. And one thing I have noted is that sadly there just aren't a lot of opportunities for women who want to learn how to code. And for the record, if anyone says women aren't interested in the field, that's ridiculous.

My 12 year old daughter is transfixed by what she can create when she brings code and art together. We have to work on making the field more accessible and supportive for women. We're really proud of Code Camp. We launched it five years ago in San Francisco - it really stemmed from a bunch of passionate Squares saying we want to start making a difference. It got momentum so last year we took it to New York, and this year it's in Atlanta for the first time. It's now in its eighth iteration, so it's certainly successful and growing and the Code Camp cohorts are building their own ongoing vibrant community of support.

Does Square have any plans to launch similar programmes around People Of Colour or the LGBT+ community?

Code Camp is specifically aimed at empowering the next generation of self-identified women in tech, which is inclusive of women of color and the LGBTQ community. We have other, unique internal and external initiatives to support different communities and demographics, including people of colour, the LGBTQ community, women

in engineering, veterans, and more.

Do you think the tech sector has become less sexist? What advice would you give to somebody who is facing sexism at work?

It's terrible, but there are massive systemic biases, and not just in tech, in every industry. Do I think it's less sexist - frankly not really. There's a lot of work to do, and as a society, we either care about it and we're going to change it, or we pay it lip service but don't actually care. Through my career I have worked in the finance and technology industries - both industries where women are traditionally under-represented and continue to be so. At Square we've invested in things like conducting unconscious bias training for everyone at the organization.

This is critical because fixing bias starts with awareness - knowing where you might be making assumptions, using language, allowing preconceptions that will create an inaccurate view on someone's abilities and output. One of the best pieces of advice I received from a female mentor was to find a career where the outcomes were more quantitative in how they could be measured. This helps to remove some of the systemic or perception biases that can create unfair barriers for women.

Finally, if you are in a bad situation look for allies. Not just women, but lots of men have really helped me in my career. The key is to flag to them that you don't just want mentorship. Rather you want and need advocacy. They need to speak out when you are not in the room, or when obvious sexist outcomes are occurring.

Square launched in the UK in March of this year. How do you think Brexit is going to impact Square's business in the U.K? How does doing business in the U.K and U.S differ?

We were so excited to launch in the UK. There's a thriving entrepreneurial scene

with 5.5 million SMEs, and half of them don't accept cards. At its heart Square wants to help those businesses to start taking card payments so they don't miss out on sales, and can compete on a more level playing field with bigger, more established businesses. And we were able to launch Square in the UK with what was by far our biggest product launch in a new country to date. Brexit it or not, small businesses will remain a key driver of the UK economy. And when Square sellers start, run and grow, we grow.

There are a few things that are important as we enter new markets. One is to maintain the culture and the brand that's made us so successful in the U.S. At the same time, every market is a little different and you have to allow them to be different. Which means we have to allow our country managers the flexibility to do what they see is right to really grow their market. I'm really pleased that we have a strong leader in the UK in my colleague Sarah Harvey. But I'm also excited that I now have another great reason to come over here more often to visit the team.

You're a mother of two, CFO of Square, independent board member at Slack, board member at education charity Spark, and you still have family back home here in Northern Ireland too. How do you fit it all in?

It's not easy. Back to People First - I have an amazing partner in my husband. He also runs his own business, but we really do share the family tasks. Yes, sometimes I have spreadsheets to organize us at home too. I also have an amazing support network around me from extended family to our awesome nanny!

Overall, I try to think about it as work/life integration. I've realised over time that trying to manage them as separate things doesn't get you the best outcome. So yes, I do book kids dental appointments on the way to investor meetings. That said, you should also

draw boundaries where you need them. For example, in the mornings, between 6:30-7:30am, that is my time with my kids. I'm firm about not allowing any distractions. And I make sure that times reserved for major school and family events are held as definitively as a Board meeting.

What do you do to relax?

You need to know what makes you happy! For me, exercising every morning clears my mind and lowers stress. And I'm learning to meditate. Emphasis on the "learning" - it's been sporadic so far! I also love to read - the more Irish and tear-jerking the better. This year I decided to do a book club with both of my kids. It was such a joy and a gift - creating really interesting discussions on deep topics - race, homelessness, artificial intelligence, social media - and I find their views give me new ways to think about things and spur interesting creative outcomes.

Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

In a world that moves as fast as tech it is hard to predict quite what our business will look like in five years. Work-wise, I suspect that in five years we'll have a well-established global business - so I'm excited about the international side of Square and how that will play out.

I hope that the work we are doing to attract more women and underrepresented minorities into our company and into the tech industry as a whole will be having a positive impact, as that's something I care deeply about, and personally, I'll be a mum to two teenagers by then, so goodness knows what life will be like!

We'd like to extend a huge thank you to Sarah for taking the time to chat with us. To keep up with Sarah, follow her on Twitter below.

Follow Sarah Friar

 @thefriley

Ulster University

set to revolutionise global data analytics research with £4m investment



Ulster University VC, Professor Paddy Nixon; Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan, UU; Professor Liam Maguire, UU, John Healy, Allstate; Peter Devine, UU and Greg McDaid, Fujitsu.

Ulster University has cemented its reputation as a global leader in data analytics research with the opening of Northern Ireland's first data analytics institute.

Bringing together businesses, government and advanced research expertise, Ulster University's new Cognitive Analytics Research Lab will build upon the University's existing internationally renowned research expertise in data analytics.

With 90 per cent of the data in the world today being created in the last two years, data analytics research and the development of cognitive applications to support rapid decision making has never been more important. The global potential is vast across multiple domain areas including, but not restricted to:

- ▶ health and medical research
- ▶ financial technology
- ▶ international finance
- ▶ advanced manufacturing
- ▶ energy
- ▶ media
- ▶ government policy and decisions

Headquartered at Ulster University's Magee campus with offices in Belfast campus, the Cognitive Analytics Lab will harness the full potential of over £30 million already recently invested by the

University into data analytics related research projects.

Cognitive Analytics – combining Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics

Data Analytics has evolved over the years from Descriptive (what has happened) to Prescriptive (what action could be taken). The next big paradigm shift will be towards Cognitive Analytics which will exploit the massive advances in High Performance Computing by combining advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques with data analytics approaches.

A cognitive system can create competitive advantage to business, providing real-time answers with the ability to search through massive amounts of information and making sense of context, and computing the most likely answer. The benefits are considerable; opening up opportunities to mine untapped data sources, provide highly personalised services, improve service consistency and quality, and enhance and amplify knowledge sharing.

World-leading Cognitive Analytics Centre

Ulster has a long and proud history of expertise in Data Analytics both in terms of machine learning algorithms

and the application of analytical techniques across a diverse range of domains. With over 60 academic staff already working in this area, CARL will consolidate this expertise into one centre and grow over the next 5 years to become a world-leading centre of excellence in Cognitive Analytics attracting international experts in the world-leading research.

Ulster University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paddy Nixon, said: "The Cognitive Analytics Research Lab, conceived and built from the ground up through collaborative consultation with our industry and civic stakeholders across Northern Ireland, will consolidate the internationally renowned expertise already evident throughout the University.

"Through the lab, we can ensure that we maximise our industry partnerships and academic collaborations to deliver even greater economic and societal impact with pioneering solutions. Importantly, one of our key priorities will be to ensure that the lab leverages the potential of open government data, enabling our research to inform public policy and transform the lives of our citizens".

Visit online **Ulster University CARL**

 ulster.ac.uk/CARL

Belfast leading the race to commercialise Blockchain

Blockchain is increasingly entering the lexicon of international digital solutions, but most people don't know that Belfast is leading the race to commercialise its potential applications.

PwC in Northern Ireland is the global centre for PwC specialists who exploit and commercialise Blockchain. Sorcha McNamee, a computing science undergrad from Ulster University is spending her placement year with PwC's Blockchain team.

And Sorcha is certainly earning her keep, having received an award at the UU Annual Award for Innovation in Industrial Placement 2017.

Sorcha admits she was lucky to get into the Blockchain team in her placement year: "It's a great team of experts, led by Seamus Cushley, so I was fortunate to get a placement on the team at precisely the time when the technology

is being hyped to revolutionise global markets across countless industries. PwC is exploring its potential in various industries beyond Financial Services, and working on programmes that range from Government to Health and Education to Construction".

Blockchain technology is highly resistant to malicious tampering, thus offering significant security advantages to governments, banks and the financial services sector. But a recent report into the potential of Financial Technology (FinTech) says that Blockchain is coming out of the lab to become embedded in delivery solutions. More than half of UK FinTech leaders surveyed plan to adopt Blockchain solutions by the end of 2018, predicting that Blockchain will be used in a number of key areas including

digital identity, payment infrastructure and funds transfer.

Moving from lab to application, says Sorcha, was perfect timing for her placement. "I'm part of the Digital



Sorcha McNamee,
Placement student
with PwC's
Blockchain team

Engineering team, where we focus on strategy, from design to execution, and we're building Blockchain products for some of the biggest global firms. We concentrate on strategy - separating hype from reality - to understand if, and how, Blockchain will impact



business". All of that, she says, led to her exploring Blockchain technology itself. "Once I understood the fundamentals, from where it could be used to the value it could bring to clients, I've been focusing on testing from an engineering perspective, and the Blockchain Go-To-Market content".

However, her placement year has gone well beyond engineering. Together with a small team, she helped drive out the creation of PwC's Design Think proposition. That's a concept intended to enable teams to improve the way they work. It involves imagining a world where people feel inspired to solve problems creatively, feel safe to experiment and feel confident to put human needs first.

Sorcha says that ideas fail when the problem to be solved isn't understood. "A new way of thinking is the first step to a new way of working. I've progressed from supporting client workshops, to leading workshops for PwC's new starts. My most memorable experience was with a global banking client. The buzz and enthusiasm of the client leaving the room really highlighted the success of the workshop".

She's also been involved with PwC's Hive Hackers which supports primary school teachers in coding workshops. The goal is to not only to benefit the children by giving them a head start with code, but to support teachers to be

comfortable with teaching, as coding is increasingly integrated into the curriculum. This all has led to Sorcha receiving a UU Annual Award for Innovation in Industrial Placement 2017. This award is presented by the Ulster University to recognise "that some of our students during their period out in industry can have a significant impact upon the organisation they are placed with". The awards are given for the innovation of development processes or the application and integration of new technologies – an area where Sorcha has been significantly involved during her PwC year.

So, was it a worthwhile placement? "I set myself a goal for my placement year to take myself out of my comfort zone and to get every opportunity to improve my skills. I have definitely achieved this, and grown my confidence. I've spoken at NI Testers about my journey into testing, and at an IT3Sixty event to an audience of teachers discussing my placement and the importance PwC places on supporting schools in developing NI's future Tech Leaders".

And what about the future? "Working in PwC has given me the added benefit of realising that I would eventually like to end up in a role where I can lead a team, as well as being involved in a variety of work that assures I can continue to extend my skill-set. I've loved it here, learned a lot, made great friends and have a clear career goal at PwC. What's not to like?"



Tech Connect Live 2017

the largest gathering of business and technology stakeholders in Ireland

TechConnect Live, Ireland's largest technology event, was hosted in Dublin on the 31st of May 2017. The event provided a unique forum for technology companies, startups, investors and the largest Irish and global end users of technology and services, to facilitate investment, innovation, collaboration and fostering of new commercial relationships.

TechConnect Live featured a powerful keynote talk from leading Irish and global speakers, start-up pitches and network opportunities that were tied together by 100 exhibitor pavilions and more than 20 conferences on fintech, HealthTech, startups, investment & funding, data, cloud computing and much more.





Delegates attended from:
LinkedIn Facebook Google



Barry Magee, Client Analytics & Data Transformation Leader



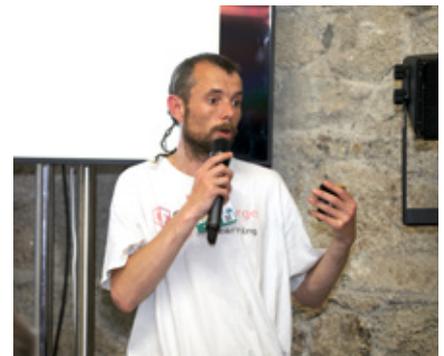
5,000 delegates
320 speakers
200 exhibitors



Gary Stewart, Director, Wayra UK, Telefónica Open Future (UK)



Caroline Geohegan, MD, CG Business Consulting



Daithi Coombes, Software Developer, Coder Forge



Charlie Sherdian, Director, Internet of Things (IoT) Systems & Intel Labs Europe



Amanda Roche Kelly, MD, JUST EAT Ireland



What will digital banking look like in 5 years' time?

Five years ago Danske Bank became one of the first local banks to enter into the world of mobile banking with the launch of its mobile banking app.

While it was novel back then, in the intervening years the world of payments and online banking has evolved and the use of contactless payments and smartphone apps for banking has become commonplace.

But Kris Thompson, Digital Channels Manager at Danske Bank, says the next 18 months will see some of the biggest changes the sector has ever seen, which will change the foundations of the way we pay and the way we bank.

"Since we launched our app in September 2011, the rise of the smartphone and the banking industry's response to that trend has completely changed how our customers interact with the bank digitally. And the pace of change is faster than ever," he said.

The changes Danske Bank customers will notice will be partly driven by the bank's ongoing investment in improving its service and product offer. But other changes will be driven by new regulations that will affect the whole of the banking sector.

Through a combination of legislation driven from the European Banking Authority (PSD2) and the Competition & Market Authority (CMA), the banking landscape will in effect become more open. Greater exposure of information will help customers make informed decisions on what bank is most suitable for them.

Improved access to accounts where customers can give third-party providers (not necessarily a bank) access to their banking information will mean customers can use one app that aggregates all their bank account details in one place and can initiate payments. "With more open banking there comes huge opportunities to improve our customers' digital banking experience", says Kris Thompson.

"Under CMA, for example, we have made information available that will enable customers to compare accounts with other banks – from product information to numbers of branches. This information is being used in a range of ways by third parties, including fintech companies and comparison sites," he explains.

"Other elements, such as making customers' transaction histories available to them at account closure and introducing alerts to advise customers when they are approaching overdraft limits are being developed."

While these changes are driven by industry wide regulations, Danske Bank is also working on a number of other enhancements for customers. The bank is currently piloting a video conferencing service that, in select branches, will allow customers to have a face to face conversation with a mortgage adviser in a different location.

This idea, like most of Danske Bank's digital enhancements, is to give customers greater accessibility to services and to improve their experience. If the pilot proves

successful, it could be extended to include other meeting types.

Another response to customer demand came recently when Danske Bank introduced Apple Pay. Danske has long provided contactless cards for customers and successfully spearheaded the Northern Ireland launch of PAYM – the peer-to-peer payment service that works with only a mobile number and verification.

"Increasingly, people are using their smartphones for everything. There was a clear demand from customers for us to introduce Apple Pay, which we have responded to", says Thompson.

The bank is also at the forefront of an industry wide solution known as the Future Clearing Model – digital cheque imaging that will speed up the processing of cheques by removing the need for banks to send paper cheques to one another, reducing manual processing. This is a key theme throughout Danske Bank, with the use of robotics in its back end services, and exploring the use Artificial Intelligence to support staff in dealing with customers, speed up processing and give customers an improved, faster and secure service.

Another digital service that's particularly relevant in the summer months is the ability for customers to manage their cards through their apps. Danske customers can block cards themselves if lost and reorder them if damaged. If customers want to block their cards for online transactions they can switch them on and off as they wish.

They also have the ability to limit where the card can be used – through Geoblocking customers can choose which continents they want their card to work within, blocking those that the customer doesn't plan to visit – helping them protect themselves around holiday time.

As well as adding new services, Danske

is currently building a new responsive website, and investing in expanding its online sales offering to additional products.

"When the mobile app was designed, PC and Laptop was the main place you went to bank online" says Kris Thompson. "The complete shift in our customer base to mobile meant that we had to re-engineer the customer experience. This is now true of our web presence which has to give that same positive experience across all device types".

One of the biggest changes driven by the new regulations will be the requirement of banks to operate on a far more collaborative basis than ever before – collaboration that aims to ensure customers are the industry's focus.

Kris Thompson says this new era of open banking is something that Danske Bank is embracing and seeking out opportunities from. For example, it is trialling interaction with third-party fintech providers that will help it to meet customer needs in new ways.

"Over the next 18 months we are looking to see where we can add value using third-party providers, particularly those who provide services we don't currently offer that have potential to improve the customer experience. We recently announced the first of these partnerships by integrating Compare NI into our service, enabling customers to get insurance quotes," he says.

"We are in a competitive industry, but we believe that the more responsive we are to what customers want and need, the more innovation we show in our product and service offering, the more satisfied and engaged our customers will become with Danske Bank".

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Not on our watch

BT Chief Security Officer shares cyber safety tips

Late June marks two months since operating systems were targeted by a worldwide cyber-attack. With over 230,000 machines affected across 150 countries, the 'WannaCry' ransomware was aptly named by the hacker group who created it: computers running on Microsoft Windows faced maliciously encrypted data and hefty ransom demands to be paid via the Bitcoin crypto currency.

The attack began on May 12th 2017, and within 24 hours WannaCry was reported to have infected companies and countries worldwide. The cyber casualties included Spain's leading telecommunications firm, Telefonica, as well as industry leaders FedEx, Deutsche Bahn and, most alarmingly, several Trusts within the National Health Service. Headlines across the world highlighted the corporations affected, as industry experts scrambled to develop combative patches to halt the spread of the infection.

Those observing this global ransomware attack, working both inside and outside the field of cyber security may indeed be forgiven for asking the question of the day: "where did so many companies go wrong, and how did companies like BT

get it so right?"

In a world where cybercrime is becoming increasingly prevalent, that very question has become more difficult to answer. As the complexity of cyber-attacks and malware have developed over recent years, an overarching concept of 'how to keep safe online' has seemingly become impossible to determine. In a bid to answer that question, Sync NI were lucky to connect with Les Anderson, Vice President of Cyber and Chief Security Officer at BT. Les successfully led the organisation through the attack; a testament to both the corporation's unquestionable prowess in the field of cyber security and his own leadership skills, focus and knowledge.

With 27 years' experience as a technologist and programme manager with GCHQ, the UK government's central intelligence, security and defense agency, any organisation secured with the experience of Les Anderson would not present itself as an easy target to cyber attackers and ransomware. Prior to Anderson's time in GCHQ, he performed an integral role within the Ministry of Defense over the course of 10 years, where he developed pioneering IT security capabilities and managed large scale defence procurements as part of its research agency, based in Malvern, Worcestershire.

Much has been made of the impact of 'legacy' systems (particularly Windows 7 operating systems and below) upon the effectiveness of the WannaCry ransomware attack. Anderson argues that the incident was broadly a result of what he refers to as "a lack of standard end-to-end technology life-cycle hygiene", amongst other factors. "It's what you'd expect really," he continues, highlighting the typical custom of older systems to become neglected, both in terms of effective patching and "keeping up with remediation". However, to suggest that the incident can be easily explained would be naive.

Anderson argues that in many cases, the organic growth of a company's IT estate over many years has frequently resulted in security compromises, encouraged by a lack of consideration for practices of management control and asset inventories, not knowing what has entered and what has been taken out of the IT estate - combined with an insufficient knowledge of patching status. "If it was easy, it would be easy. This is complex stuff... it's not as if companies are being slothful or lacking in common sense. Some company's' IT estates are enormously complex and multilayered".

Describing the typical company's estate as a classic system of peaks and troughs, Anderson gives us some understanding of the complexity of the cybersecurity task facing large corporations: "Fundamentally, companies haven't been on top of their game, not actually knowing what is in their estate, what's connected to what. Sometimes in complex organisations that may have undergone reorganization, the previous managements of their estates may go missing, or become corrupted - or, may not have even been done at all".

Anderson is quick, however, to dismiss the idea that only businesses should be responsible for robust and efficient security: "How often have we heard

government warnings?" he asks, drawing attention to the numerous advertising campaigns on television and on the streets. "It's all in the hands of the citizens themselves - to ensure that the services and the systems they are using to access the internet and associated services are patched and updated. So, responsibility lies not only

"If it was easy, it would be easy. This is complex stuff... it's not as if companies are being slothful or lacking in common sense. Some company's' IT estates are enormously complex and multilayered"

with the companies, but the end service user as well. That's simple things like making sure our laptops and desktop computers at home are equipped with antivirus technology, and making sure that we don't visit sites that we don't know much about that may be infested with malware". He claims that "everyone needs to work in tandem" to make it more difficult for the perpetrators, "whether that be the nation state or cyber-criminals", including working with government and law enforcement agencies. "Working together and working actively is the key to exercising sufficient cyber approach".

Listening to Anderson articulate the complexities of large IT estates - the complex webs of peaks and troughs, wrought with missing and corrupted information - it is clear that he speaks from a position of great responsibility within BT. The current Chief Security Officer shed some light on what inspired him to pursue a career with the company: "One of the main things that attracted me to BT was that they were serious about cyber security and about security generally. I knew this because I worked with them previously in my roles in government", says Anderson.

Protecting the integrity and reputation of BT forms a paramount role in the job of Les Anderson: "Security is only

as effective as its ability to articulate the risk areas, then having done that, for the IT organisation to take those risks as something they want to mitigate aggressively, putting skills and resources into those remediation areas in order to close risks". According to the cyber chief, the key to successful online security relies upon teamwork,

communication and coordinated preemptive action, "right from the very genesis of an idea - that's the philosophy we signed up to". Anderson reminds us to secure services from the outset, as opposed to forgetting about it and "rushing to fix it later". To an industry outsider, the popularisation of cloud storage and operating systems suggest a move

"Working together and working actively is the key to exercising sufficient cyber approach"

toward more stable and secure methods of online practice. When asked if the industry's move towards the cloud would decrease the likelihood of ransomware attacks in the future, Anderson replies with an emphatic "No, not on its own!". According to Anderson, whilst the journey to the Cloud should help in that it would dilute a reliance upon legacy IT systems, Cloud services can also incentivise companies (often at a lower cost), encouraging their movement towards - "better designed, better secured" systems.

However, as is usually the case in cyber security - if it was easy, it would be easy. "There's complexity and uniqueness to some of its structures. Certainly, better security is one aspect, but it's not the only consideration!"

"These attacks have always been around, and I think they always will be," says Anderson. "Nobody wants their services taken offline - you lose credibility, you lose confidence. Look at the case of the NHS, Wannacry - for some of the IT to be turned off - customers of the NHS were denied service at the point of need".

Anderson makes a point that hits home - when malicious cyber-attacks can extend to our National Health Service, greater action must be taken. As for the attackers "they in all likelihood have never gained any money from it, seeing as their bitcoins are probably under a great level of scrutiny. All these people have got is a badge of honour, if anything. The people who came out worse were Joe and Jane Citizen, who were in this case denied health services at the point of need".

Cyber Security isn't all antivirus software and tech work, insists Anderson. For a truly combative cyber security network, great consideration must be taken in the process of recruitment and training. "It's not all about software and technology... although that, of course, plays an important role. Yes, we are well funded and resourced - I manage a team which sits currently at around 500. Citadel, our budget, is great. But, at the end of the day, when I recruit my cybernauts, it's an insatiable curiosity I look for. It's the ability to ask 'why?' all the time. I'm looking for someone who is a hunter-gatherer, someone who can be proactive and preemptive, so if they see something slightly unusual, they can pick that up and run with it. I can put them on courses; I can train them up - but really, if they don't have that overt curiosity, that's just it".

However, in the midst of such tech jargon and complex terms, plain language is a must. "We have accountants, economists, and press too - you need people who can break through the geek language, and get to the bottom line!". Anderson claims when it comes to defense and security at BT, the company is prepared to put their money where their mouth is.

Throughout all of Anderson's points, what he strives to make clear is that in a company like BT, cyber security is exercised in a multi-layered, team-lead and highly coordinated approach. "You put it this way," says Anderson, "you have an incident, whether it's WannaCry ransomware or malware. We set up what we refer to as a STAG (Security Threat Analysis Group). This group includes many functions, including press, legal and cyber personnel.

You need a holistic approach to do this stuff properly - it's about communication as an organisation, and with customers". Closing our discussion with one final tip to service users, Anderson says "work on the basis that you are already compromised, and have playbooks ready for likely scenarios".

4 tips to keep your computer safe

- ▶ Check you have the patch applied and running correctly across your global IT estate.
- ▶ Work closely with your AV vendors and Microsoft to ensure you have the latest virus protection available.
- ▶ Discover whether you have been infected, limit the spread as far as possible then neutralise to avoid the malware detonating.
- ▶ Isolate and roll-back. Contain the affected machines, clean them, then restore the data.

7 reasons why BT stayed safe

- ▶ An organisation (from the board level down) that understands the importance of Cyber Security and the investment necessary to deal with the risks, combined with an agile governance structure that can take decisive action at the pace of the incident.
- ▶ Regular refresh and upgrade of the IT estate (including Windows XP), based on cyber risk assessment regarding the need and urgency.
- ▶ Centrally managed patching and control: they have total understanding of their assets and can manage accordingly.
- ▶ A cohesive global response: within 1 hour of the malware becoming a global phenomenon they were utilising their Security Incident Management Process to understand how vulnerable we were and what additional action needed to be taken.
- ▶ Layered protection with up to date antivirus and better policies around email, which enabled BT to be better prepared by blocking executables on the email proxy (reducing risk of phishing, which is likely the point of entry for this malware)
- ▶ Control and authentication of end point devices attaching to our networks, such as our corporate desktops and USB devices. And the encryption of data at rest.
- ▶ Connection to and partnering with a diverse array of industry & government bodies for sharing of Intel and best practice.

STARTUP SPOTLIGHT

Whitepot Studios

gaming for success

The global gaming industry has experienced an entrepreneurial boom in recent years with the market expected to grow from \$101.1bn in 2016 to an estimated \$128.5 billion by the end of 2020 making this a significant era of opportunity, particularly for the UK games industry.

As of June 2017, the UK is home to a total of 2,141 active game companies, operating at varying sizes across the entire spectrum of games technologies – from PC, console and mobile to the rapidly-evolving sectors, most notably AR and VR.

One of these companies is Northern Ireland's own Whitepot Studios, which was founded in 2016 by Queen's University Belfast graduates Adam Whiteside and Vicky Potts.

Established as a games development and creative media studio, Whitepot Studios specialises in the production of Android, iOS and PC games using Unity as their primary development tool. Now one year into their business venture, Adam and Vicky are participants in the 2017 round of the coveted Entrepreneurial Spark accelerator. Coinciding with their place on the programme, Adam and Vicky have just released their flagship game, Tubocity, which is fast earning praise amongst avid gamers.

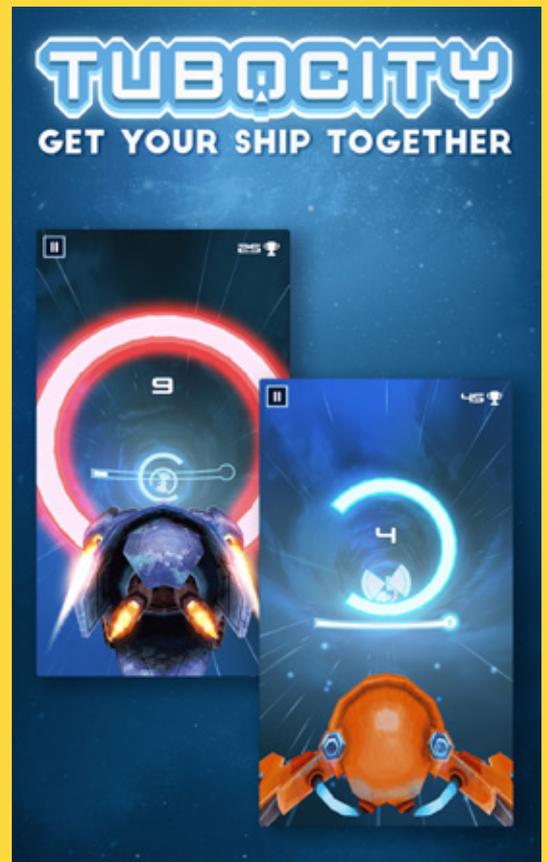
Powered by the strapline "get your ship together", Tubocity is a sci-fi themed arcade runner where players aboard a spaceship and fly through the tube at the speed of light, avoiding obstacles by jumping and swiping in what is the ultimate test of reflexes. Using iOS,



Facebook and Google Play, players can compete with their friends and try for the global high score.

The game is also equipped with easy touch controls, Apple Game Centre and Google Play Games functionality. Retro gamers are also guaranteed a healthy dose of nostalgia with touches of Wipeout and Tempest featured throughout. Available on iOS and Android, Tubocity is available (almost) globally and has already been downloaded in 35 countries since its release.

So, if you're a keen gamer seeking your next adventure, or are new to the scene, download Tubocity for free – it's addictively good!





Changing lives with data

By Dr Austin Tanney,

Head of Life Science & Healthcare,
Analytics Engines

It's not often I get to write for a primarily Northern Irish audience, so I'm going to take advantage of this as much as possible...

Does everyone remember when we had a government? It was great wasn't it?

This is not a political article. Well, not really.

More precisely, this is a political article, but not about party politics. Back when we had a government, and the UK had a government and before the advent of Brexit. Back when the plot of this world seemed somewhat believable. In those glorious days our government released its draft Programme for Government. I read this document with a great deal of enthusiasm, for I honestly felt that it made sense. Our Assembly seemed to have put out something genuinely impressive that expressed a vision for the future of our society.

A shared vision for progress and inclusion that we can all get on board with. Anyone who knows me on a personal level is undoubtedly expecting this to turn sarcastic at any moment, but believe it or not I am 100% serious.

The Programme for Government (PfG) is excellent. The local council plans that have been developed since then have also been excellent and really focus on how they will try to use the same indicators. The PfG introduced the concept of Outcomes Based Accountability to Northern Ireland.

This is a framework used in many countries now and steps beyond measuring the things we do and starts to focus on the value and impact of the things we do. Its focusing less on the what we do and moving to the "So what?". To me as a scientist and a data nerd, this is excellent news.

The idea that Northern Ireland is considering moving towards data-driven decisions is fantastic. The fact that our healthcare system is moving towards outcomes-based accountability is even better. This means focussing on the outcomes with a view to improving the problems that we see here of health inequality: we will build a better society not by shortening the waiting times in A&E but by fundamentally improving the health and well-being of everyone.

I truly believe this will be a data-driven thing, and here in Northern

Ireland we are pretty good with data. Just this week, Northern Ireland was announced as being rated as number 10 in the Global Open Data Index. This is an awesome achievement and highlights the great job that Open Data NI have done. We've done some really interesting analytics work using data from Open Data NI that has generated a lot of excitement about the value and significance of Open Data.

I believe that using data better will improve peoples' lives, and that this is especially true in healthcare. The potential is huge and I'm proud to see the passion and enthusiasm around this, from both my colleagues in healthcare and Analytics Engines.

Analytics Engines run the Big Data Belfast event every year, and this year data for healthcare will be a key theme. If you want to hear me and others talking about this, please come along and if there are areas you are particularly interested in hearing about, please feel free to get in touch and let us know.

Visit online **Big Data Belfast**

 bigdatabelfast.com



Continu

agrees partnership to protect Northern Ireland's power

Backup power specialist installs innovative power protection system at SONI

Backup power specialist Continu has partnered with SONI, the electricity system operator for Northern Ireland to ensure it has an uninterrupted supply of power through state-of-the-art equipment.

For several years, SONI, which is responsible for the secure and reliable operation of the electricity system in NI, has trusted Continu to ensure its critical systems remain uninterrupted in the event of power failure.

Now the organisation has invested in the Galaxy VM, an innovative and highly efficient Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) system, provided by Continu through its exclusive partnership with global energy management company Schneider Electric.

Tom Hall, Managing Director, Continu, explains: "Given that SONI is responsible for the operation of NI's electricity grid, protecting its power supply is clearly essential. A power failure, even temporarily, could have major implications, so having a backup solution is vital. We have been working with SONI on a long-term basis, providing back up and maintenance services to its battery systems and servers. Now, by installing the

Galaxy VM, not only will SONI be provided with emergency power should the mains power fail, it will also benefit from reduced energy costs, as this system has very high efficiency ratings.

"Galaxy VM allows systems to operate at the greatest efficiency without putting data centre loads at risk," Tom said.

Peter Jackson, SONI added: "SONI's job is to provide secure electricity to the people of Northern Ireland as efficiently as possible and, importantly, to avoid costs that would fall to the end customer. For that reason, the Galaxy VM is a cost-effective and innovative solution to backing up our operations.

"Continu has been able to provide us with the ideal solution to safeguard our power supply, allowing us to remain safe in the knowledge our operations are protected".

Specialising in providing clean, stable and Uninterruptible Power Supply, essential to businesses that manage information and processes, Continu supports organisations across a wide range of sectors, from agri-food production to IT, hospitality and education – with a range of sizes, scales and requirements.

P2P lending

what it is, how it has grown and its attractions as an asset class

By Iain Niblock,
CEO of Orca

In little more than a decade, peer-to-peer lending – P2P for short – has moved rapidly from niche upstart activity to the investment mainstream, with a continual and impressive rise in lending and an increasing appeal to financial advisers and their clients.

The Treasury has even created a special tax-favoured vehicle for P2P investment. Yet despite this sanction of respectability, P2P remains, in too many cases, the investment world's best-kept secret. To some it remains novel, untried and potentially risky. What do we know about those managing the lending platforms? Perhaps more pertinently, what do we know about

their lending criteria, underwriting processes and customers, the borrowers?

I'll address those points in a moment. First, what is P2P, how big is it and what makes it a unique and attractive asset class? P2P lending is at the same time the very latest and the oldest form of credit. The latest, because without digital technology and the consequent ability to transact business simultaneously across any distance among large numbers of people, there would be no P2P sector. The oldest, because long before there were banks or finance brokers, people with money to spare lent it to those in need of it, for whatever reason – business or personal.

P2P platforms allow the former to find the latter more efficiently and more rapidly than would have been the case in years gone by. Critically, while replicating the time-hallowed practice of one person lending to another, P2P platforms use contemporary technology to allow such lending without any prior knowledge of the borrower.

This ancient-yet-modern credit model landed in the UK in 2005, with the arrival of the Zopa platform. Since then, the rate of growth has been impressive, to put it mildly. Little more than a decade later, there were 50 P2P platforms and lending grew in the two years 2013-2015 alone from £480 million to £2.4 billion. More recent figures show that from 2014 to 2016, lending grew from £1.25 billion to £3.15 billion. In the Spring of 2017, the year-to-date number was already £1.4 billion, and the cumulative total for the industry since its inception in the UK is £8.9 billion at the time of writing.

These are impressive lending figures. So who are the borrowers? There are three types: consumer, business and property borrowers. The consumer takes the largest share of the lending, in the cumulative all-time total and the figures for both 2016 and the year-to-date, respectively £4.2 billion (46 per cent), £1.4 billion (44 per cent) and £0.63 billion (44 per cent). Next is lending to business, taking £2.9 billion of the cumulative total (33 per cent), £1.13 billion (36 per cent) of the 2016 lending and £0.48 billion (34 per cent) of the year-to-date figure.

Last is property lending, which accounted for £1.84 billion of the cumulative total (20 per cent) and £0.65 billion (20 per cent) and £0.32 billion (22 per cent) of the 2016 and year-to-date figures respectively. Finally, who are the lenders? Currently the "big three" – Funding Circle, RateSetter and pioneer Zopa – account for nearly 70 per cent of the cumulative total.

From the investor viewpoint, P2P lending has a number of attractions. The first is yield. In today's low-return landscape, P2P lending returns on average a very respectable five per cent a year. The second, as I touched on earlier, came with the launch on April 6 2016 of the "Innovative Finance ISA" (IF ISA), a variant on the ever-popular tax-

"The investment world's best-kept secret is fast becoming an open secret"

efficient Individual Savings Account that accepted P2P loans as an asset class eligible for inclusion. A third attraction is the ability of P2P investment to provide genuine diversification for a portfolio. P2P offers the chance to invest across the economic and stock-market cycles, as P2P investments are not listed on any exchange thus are immune from market volatility.

Apart from the generally depressive effect of an economic downturn on the ability of people and businesses to service their loans, P2P lending is uncorrelated with these wider trends. All this addresses in part some of the concerns I noted earlier, those that continue to make some people wary of P2P investment. Its track record over the last decade or more should squash suggestions that it is some sort of novel activity, untested in the white waters of the highly-competitive financial services market. The growth in the lending figures suggest that this is an asset class that has truly come of age.

But what of the anxieties about risk, which are closely connected with the questions as to who runs the platforms and who are the borrowers? First, it is right to acknowledge that there has been a substantial data gap in the industry until very recently. A lack of

credible, robust, independent research, allowing advisers and individual investors to benchmark P2P platforms, has done little to allay concerns about the resilience of the industry and its ability to make good use of investors' money.

The good news is that things are changing, although there is some way to go. An increasingly rich information environment is increasingly making it possible for advisers and their clients to sift the different platforms and select those whose performance fits with the risk appetite of the investor in question.

They can compare historical default rates, total loans made by each platform (the more that has been lent, the more experienced the platform is likely to be) and whether or not a particular platform automatically diversifies investors' risk exposure by breaking their investment into smaller chunks and distributing them among many borrowers. Moreover, services exist which provide qualitative insight to support analysis conducted, helping financial advisers in their due diligence. Compliance and other adviser concerns are similarly addressed in an effort to instil confidence in the selection and recommendation process.

Of course, P2P lending is a relatively-illiquid investment compared with bonds and equities and is not covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. But, as the growth figures show, it is proving increasingly popular with investors seeking yield, diversification and the attractive tax regime of the IF ISA.

The investment world's best-kept secret is fast becoming an open secret, and that has to be good news for investors befitting the P2P profile everywhere.

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Feedback

Here we go again...?



In life, we like to choose what we do and how we do it. Or to put it another way, we don't like other people telling us what to do. But sometimes we have to be told, or have to tell someone else that the choices they are making either don't suit us or don't suit what they're supposed to be doing towards the output of the organisation.

So how do we match the need to sometimes get people to change direction without telling them what to do? Without making choices for them, against their will.

Simple. We give them feedback, of course, and leave them to decide what they should do next. It does sound simple, doesn't it? So why is it so difficult to do in practise? It seems that no matter if we are part of a small start-up writing code for websites, or a huge global organisation implementing IT infrastructure for a state health service - or even building spacecraft destined to orbit the earth for 30 years, the blocks

still apply. Maturity, size and sector are no protection against what is a very human set of problems around feedback. And, to be honest, it's all about fear.

Here are four of the most common errors that we make that result in feedback malfunctions – all of them have their roots in us worrying about something or the other.

Too late. Plucking up the courage to tell someone that we don't like what they're doing is not always easy - there seems to be so much that can go wrong that it often seems preferable to turn a blind eye in the name of 'being grown up about it'. Conversely, we tend not to make the time to tell someone how pleased we were about something that they did although we often put off giving that type of news because we tell ourselves that the recipient probably doesn't need that sort of encouragement, or will be embarrassed.

Either way, when we do get around to giving a negative, we've



often left it so late that we've built up feelings around it and out they come! Worse, because we haven't made the effort to give positives, when they occurred, we can come across as being permanently negative. As with many things, timing is everything; feedback goes stale. There is a point at which it may no longer be useful to say anything at all. For example, I witness you raising your voice in frustration to a client in a meeting. Telling you six weeks later over a pint, is way too late: you won't have any immediate use for the information and I will have been worrying for weeks that you were going to do it again. What a waste of time and energy.

On a recent project in the US for an

aerospace start-up, we found just this sort of tendency to delay feedback, in this particular case, because it was felt that giving feedback would result in making yourself prominent for the wrong reasons. Some early firings (for incompetence) had made everyone nervous about 'making waves'. When we forced the issue by calling a feedback amnesty, much detailed and poignant feedback resulted and, amongst other great results, senior management became much more respected because they had taken the feedback directed at them. And why wouldn't they?

So how can we overcome our nerves around giving someone that negative message? Here are two simple, specific things that many say have helped them. The first is to not hope to do the feedback perfectly, like a polished stage performance. Feedback does not benefit from perfect delivery, in fact, it can make it seem contrived and over-rehearsed. Run it through a couple of times in front of the mirror and then just go for it. You are allowed to stumble over your words, you are allowed to be nervous/embarrassed/fearful.

Secondly, be honest. Tell the person how you feel about giving the feedback, in the first place – as your opener. *I'm nervous about giving you this feedback in case you react badly...*

Apart from 'getting things off your chest' this also comes across as genuine (because it is!). Your honesty will likely be rewarded by them reassuring you that they are indeed up for hearing what you have to say. But there is also an interesting neurological advantage to being open about your feelings. In the last few years functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies have revealed a curious phenomenon around what happens when we experience emotional disturbance and then talk about it. It has been known for many years that the Amygdalae, two almond shaped

pieces of tissue near the centre of our brain, are responsible for producing the chemical messengers that let you know that you are having negative feelings.

However, scientists at UCLA have found that when subjects witnessed emotions in others and then named them out loud, the initial emotional response in the Amygdalae was transferred to another part of the brain, wait for it... the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex (rvLPFC). This tiny bit of our brain, roughly front right, starts working and at the same time the emotion-generating Amygdalae settles down. This seems to give some weight to the old saying *a problem shared is a problem halved*. It does seem that there is now weighty scientific proof that talking about our feelings really does make us feel better.

Too subtle. I have worked, for many years, with a global IT consultancy firm who have a sophisticated appraisal system involving feedback harvested from multiple sources. For a huge consultancy, they take great care to nurture their staff, but in their efforts to not make them feel bad, they often delay and then dilute important, potentially useful feedback. And worse, the most important piece of news almost always gets left out: guess what... the feeling of the person giving the feedback.

How they felt when the recipient of the feedback did the thing which prompted the feedback in the first place. By being too subtle about their negative reaction to what colleagues do, the people giving feedback hide the most valuable element of the message: the impact of the unhelpful behaviour. Despite what we might say to the contrary, most of us do care about what people think of us but we care much, much more about how we make them feel.

Feelings drive everything that we do. If I tell you that something you have done has made my day or has intrigued me,

Weakened feedback

I'm a bit worried.
I'm slightly concerned.
I'm rather disappointed.
I'm kind of bothered.

you'll do it again. If I tell you that what you have just done has annoyed me, you will think hard before doing it again.

Aside from leaving out the feeling, there are several words and phrases that we all use, without thinking, that dilute the messages we have for each other. Using words such as a *bit*, *slightly*, *rather* and *kind of* can give the impression that we're not too bothered about the issue. At best they make our feedback confusing. Leave them out.

Too much. We often bury important messages in unnecessary detail or in other topics. Sometimes we do it because we have waited for the 'official' occasion for feedback that an annual appraisal affords before dumping a whole year's worth of feedback in one go. The feedback avalanche can also happen because no one has had the appetite for raising the tricky topic.

One client, a sixty-strong business in defence electronics, for years employed a highly talented project manager without giving her proper feedback about the effects of her cutting and sarcastic tone, which many colleagues found intolerable. It was only when the Managing Director sought the services of an experienced HR professional that we were hired to help the individual to understand the impact they were having on the engineers. This time it turned out well, but it took many sessions for the person to get over the indignation of never having received feedback or support up to that point. Receiving years worth of feedback in one go made her life extremely difficult

for a while and made it challenging for her to leave behind a reputation for nasty comments, laid down over such a long period of time.

Sometimes the quantity of words derives from the fact that the feedback giver is trying to 'soften the blow'. If these softening bits of cotton wool do indeed work, our message gets so lost as to be of no use. But often, the recipient becomes uncomfortable about the size of the problem that is being mixed in with the waffle. Brevity works as well out loud, as it does in writing. People digest feedback best in small quantities, given openly and often.



Dr. Paul Furey

Dr. Paul Furey is a psychologist working with individuals, teams and organisations translating corporate strategy into sustained commercial (but human!) behaviour. He and his team consult across Europe and the U.S. within a wide variety of sectors including fmcg, banking, aerospace, defence, manufacturing, packaging, hospitality, insurance and I.T.

Too general. Again, often for fear of offending, or because of a wish to show respect, we keep things general so that the other person doesn't feel accused. In the case of positive feedback, being too general, makes our feedback sound hollow because it's not specific enough. I worked with a senior railway engineer many years ago who made a daily practise of going around his entire team (arranged over 3 floors of a building) at 4.30pm every day, repeating exactly the same words to every person: *Thanks very much, smashing job, good night.* Whilst there was no denying that everyone was immensely fond of him, his bland praise became the stuff of jokes. So... *I think you're doing a great job* is made more powerful as: *I've been really pleased about how you've kept the project on track.* *You're so professional* is more compelling as: *I was impressed when you kept your cool with that client – he wasn't being easy.* And *that's an excellent piece of work* will be believed

To be consistently effective:

Say it today
Be specific
Keep it short
Say how you feel

more readily as: *I was impressed by the depth of analysis in your report.*

To be beautifully successful for us both, feedback need be nothing more than a short, specific statement of how I feel

about something that you have done.

Whether that's a positive or a negative... *I was relieved when you answered the technical questions - I would have been out of my depth. I was worried when you raised your voice in front of John, because we can't afford to annoy him.*

Giving feedback to each other is not only a way of exchanging information and helping us to work more effectively together, it's also a way of getting to know each other and building trust between us. But we have to be brave at the beginning. When feedback is in short supply or counter-culture, we have to be prepared to get things moving by opening our mouths. It need be no harder than paying someone a compliment and taking it from there.

Follow **Dr Paul Furey**

 @DrPaulFurey

1 in 5 businesses held to ransom in past 12 months



One-fifth of businesses were held to ransom by cybercriminals in the past 12 months, according to the results of a recent survey commissioned by leading information security company Ward Solutions.

The survey was carried out among 170 senior IT professionals and decision makers throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland just prior to the recent WannaCry attacks, and highlights the scale of the current ransomware issue.

IT security threats are continuing to rise according to the survey, with 57% of organisations noting an increase in the number of security incidents in the past year. Of those who said that their business was held to ransom, 64% said that the amount demanded by cybercriminals was less than €1,000. When it comes to paying ransoms, just 14% say that they would pay the ransom if the value of the data merited it. Almost 48% would not pay, regardless of the value of the data that was held to ransom.

GDPR will place more stringent requirements on companies to alert the authorities and data subjects and implement an established incident management plan in the wake of a data breach, but according to the results of Ward's survey, some companies would not currently fulfil these obligations. 75% say that they would report an incident to the authorities, including the Data Commissioner, but just 53% say that they would report a breach to impacted third parties.

Under GDPR, those unable or unwilling to notify regulators or third parties within 72 hours of becoming aware of a breach could find themselves liable to fines of up to €10 million or 2% of global turnover, depending on which is greater. Despite the growing threats and impending legislative changes, 52% of IT decision makers in Ireland and Northern Ireland say that they

do not believe that their board has sufficient understanding of their current information security situation.

Ward's survey also indicates that companies are becoming more aware of the importance of employee training as part of the overall solution, with almost two thirds (62%) saying that they audit their employees on their awareness of information security best practices.

65% of respondents stated that their cyber security spend will increase in the next 12 months, indicating that companies are responding to the increasing threat level by reinforcing their information security infrastructures.

Pat Larkin, CEO at Ward Solutions, said: "It's clear from the results of our latest survey that cyber-crime has continued to grow and evolve over the past 12 months, leaving Irish and Northern Irish businesses more vulnerable to attack than ever before. Ransomware continues to present a real threat to companies, affecting one in five of those surveyed. It's interesting to see that just 14% of organisations would pay the ransom, while almost half would not pay, regardless of the value of the affected data.

"It's re-assuring to see some organisations responding to the information threat by investing in their security protection, and employee training and auditing. The 'human firewall' is consistently one of your greatest strengths or weaknesses when it comes to protecting your information.

"However, the results indicate that there is still room for improvement when it comes to reporting security incidents to the authorities and affected third parties. This will hamper companies' ability to achieve GDPR compliance, and so organisations need to ensure that they have the systems in place to quickly and effectively react in the wake of a data breach".

OWASP AppSec EU comes to Belfast

OWASP is a nonprofit community organization with 200 chapters in over 100 countries around the world. Their mission is to make software security visible, so that individuals and organizations worldwide can make informed decisions about true software security risks.

The OWASP AppSec conferences represent their largest outreach efforts to advance their mission of spreading security knowledge. This year's conference in Belfast was the biggest AppSec Europe so far and featured great keynotes, talks and trainings.



Key note speaker: Jeremiah Grossman, Founder of White Hat Security





Alastiar Hamilton, Chief Executive, Invest NI

Brian Horan, IRISCERT

Highlights from OWASP AppSec 2017



Shannon Lietz, Security Ops Leader, Intuit



Brian Horan, IRISCERT

BCS Northern Ireland marks 60 years with a Gala Ball

The local branch of BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, was proud to celebrate their 60th Birthday with a Gala Ball on Friday 23rd June. BCS has a long and influential history in the province and it was a pleasure to welcome many past Chairpersons and longtime members.

We were also pleased to see many new and young members, our corporate sponsors, CitiGroup and SopraSteria. Rachel McKane the Chairperson of @BCS_NI was the host for the celebrations.



BCS Chair Rachel McKane, Bob McLaughlin & the winners

It was an especially exciting night for Rose Kane Quinn, BI analyst at Neueda. The selection committee, after reviewing all the nominees, selected Rose as our Northern Ireland Young IT Professional of the Year 2017 (YITPOY). This award was in recognition of several achievements. Most notably, we were impressed with Rose's leadership in winning the OpenDataNI Challenge 2017 under the theme 'Using Open Data for Education'.

Neueda's game, Gaff Game, is an educational resource that teaches students how to use SQL in real-life contexts using open data sets. BCS is committed to improving the skills and IT educations and Rose's innovative approach to helping children learn SQL brilliantly showcases what can be achieved.

Our winner of the IT Professional of the Year, exemplifies all that BCS stands for. Conrad Simpson, Director at Cyphra, has had a long and successful career in the field of IT. Early on in his career he was at the forefront of getting NI business online for the first time.

He started one of the first specialist information security companies here in Northern Ireland. He has been involved in various industry bodies looking to further collaboration and professionalism in the cyber security arena. He has published articles and presented across the UK on topics such as Application Security, UK Government Cyber Security Policy and cloud computing security. In 2012 he established a new cyber security services company in Belfast and he is heavily involved

in driving initiatives to promote cyber security skills. His career and his passion for skills and cyber security are in line with the Institute's aim to make IT good for society.

We are so thankful to all those who have contributed to the computing history in Northern Ireland, particularly through their involvement in BCS and its support of the wider industry - both in delivering training and through government lobbying.

Awards such as Rose's and Conrad's are a fitting example of the vast talent active today across NI that is making us an attractive investment pool for the rest of the IT world.



BCS Chair Rachel McKane & winner Rose Kane Quinn

Books at Sync NI: What we're currently reading



Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't - Simon Sinek

A New York Times bestseller, this latest creation from Simon Sinek lays bare the complex nature of teamwork, using fascinating real-life examples to illustrate how, and why some teams are built for success whilst others are doomed to infighting and failure.

The Inevitable - Kevin Kelly

A gripping exploration of the 12 technological forces that are set to revolutionise the ways in which we work, learn and communicate.

Kelly expertly zooms in on the technological trends already in motion (think VR and AI), whilst providing an optimistic roadmap to anyone who seeks direction on where their business, industry, or life is heading.

Invisible Influence: The Hidden Forces that Shape Behaviour - Jonah Berger

The power and mechanics of social influence – what it is and how it subtly seeps into the facets of everyday life, affecting the decisions we make, right through to our choice of clothing to career moves. A compelling study of the human condition, drawing on the latest research from business and social science, and one that invites us to question the meaning of personal identity.

Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy - Sheryl Sandberg

Sheryl Sandberg opens up to express the grief and isolation she felt in the wake of the death of her husband, Dave Goldberg. A grippingly honest story depicting the fragility of life, demonstrating how we are not born with a fixed amount of resilience but rather it is a muscle that each and every one of us can build.

Social Media Belfast 2017

7th September - Baby Grand, Belfast



Social Media Belfast 2017 will examine ways to build your brand and execute a winning social media strategy. With tips and tricks from local and visiting industry experts, delegates will hear about successful case studies that have achieved effective results.

Social media is a vital asset to any business, public sector organisation or charity and it is important to get the most out of your social media strategy and engage with key stakeholders.

Speakers include:

-  Frederique Hugonnet, Partnership Manager for Ireland, Pinterest
-  Michael Ryan, Head of Social Media, Ryanair
-  John McPoland, Media and Communications Manager, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
-  Davy McDonald, Managing Director, Davy McDonald

Creative

-  Lynda Hurley & Bridin Beckett, Road Safety Strategy Promotion and Outreach, Department for Infrastructure
-  Paul McGarrity, Managing Director, Octave Digital
-  Ciara McGowan, Social Media Manager, Dogs Trust Ireland
-  Elly Hunter, Marketing Director, Tayto

Why attend?

Hear leading successful brands outline their strategies, learn how to manage your reputation online, network with Northern Ireland's communications professionals, pick up tips and tricks from expert speakers and put your questions to the speaker panel.

Visit online **Social Media Belfast**

 socialmediabelfast.agendani.com

Upcoming Events

syncni.com/events



Meetup

GDG - social/lightning talks

WHEN 26th July 2017

WHERE Belfast



Meetup

Cryptoparty: Belfast

WHEN 9th Aug 2017

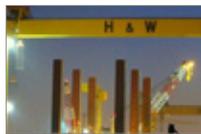
WHERE Farset Labs, Belfast



Creating a business brand

WHEN 11th Aug 2017

WHERE Ballymena



Meetup

DevOps Belfast

WHEN 15th Aug 2017

WHERE Belfast



Ulster Bank Boost

WHEN 16th Aug 2017

WHERE Belfast



Code Co-op: Challenge

WHEN 17th Aug 2017

WHERE Belfast



KS1 - Coding for Literacy

WHEN 18th Aug 2017

WHERE Belfast



Analysing Market Research

WHEN 1st Sep 2017

WHERE Ballymena



Artificial Intelligence & Society

WHEN 5th Sep 2017

WHERE Belfast



Social Media Belfast 2017

WHEN 7th Sep 2017

WHERE Belfast



Managing Business Finance

WHEN 8th Sep 2017

WHERE Ballymena



NI Raspberry Jam

WHEN 9th Sep 2017

WHERE Belfast

Promote your events to Northern Ireland's technology & business community

By featuring on our website and in our magazine, your event will reach tens of thousands of local technology and business professionals.

Email team@syncni.com
or call 02890 820 944
to find out more



Logging Off

it has an unwavering dedication to empowering its customers. In this new era of open banking customers rate service accessibility and online security as major priorities and Danske Bank is meeting its customers' expectations by delivering on these requirements, and more, in real-time.

In a similar light, BT's Les Anderson has provided an in-depth insight into the menacing nature of WannaCry, but more importantly he has expressed the urgent need to equip everyone with the knowledge needed to tighten their online security. Again, it's about empowering people to take ownership of their online security, in order to protect themselves from the darker sides of technology.

The OWASP App Sec conference and Tech Connect Live are two highpoints of 2017 so far and for good reason. We were excited to capture some of the highlights in this edition!

These conferences seek to help businesses navigate technological disruption, but they also serve as a reminder that it is people who bring people together - it is people who encourage and celebrate other people, not machines.

From Analytics Engines' expertise to Orca Money's specialty in peer-to-peer lending, from Big Motive to Tara's Lockett, we recognise how technology plays a part in almost every facet of our daily lives; we can also see that it is people fuelling these innovations, and that is what resonates with us.

Now as Ulster University opens the doors of its new Cognitive Analytics Research Lab, today's generation, and the generations to come, will be equipped with the academic armour needed to help us understand, and adapt to, the immense changes that lie ahead.

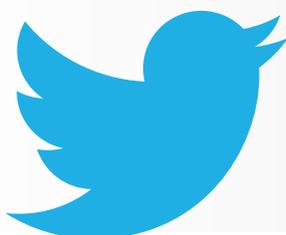
As we have heard from Gillian McKee, Deputy Managing Director of Business in the Community, knowledge is a commodity - so we must shift the focus on how we skill and upskill future generations. Equally, we must encourage the sharing of skills and experience between generations, via sound measures such as reverse mentoring, so that nobody gets left behind.

Yes, the times they are a changing – but change is the law of life.

“Putting people first and empowering them”. Simple yet powerful words - spoken by Seamus Cushley in his foreword - that have steered the direction of this edition of Sync NI Magazine.

As Director of Fintech and Digital at PwC UK, Seamus is well-versed in the enormity of digital disruption, and here he has reassured us that although the inevitable wave of technological change is underway, digital is a human thing. Figuring out how to stay on top of, and ultimately control this disruption lies with us continuously strengthening and applying our innate human qualities: curiosity, empathy, compassion, patience and adaptability.

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