



Membership  
magazine of the IoD  
in Northern Ireland

# IoD

# DirectorNI

August / September 2022

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## Our Committee



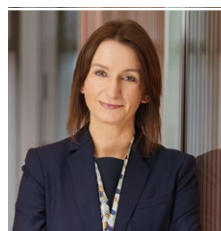
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# IoD announces Patrick Kielty as Annual Dinner returns

**P**atrick Kielty will join the line up at the Institute of Directors Northern Ireland (IoD NI) Annual Dinner as the event returns for the first time in three years following the coronavirus pandemic

The County Down-born comedian will provide the after dinner entertainment at the leading business organisation's gala evening taking place at the Culloden Estate and Spa on 29th September.

Around 400 delegates are expected at the event, supported by headline sponsor Bank of Ireland which will also hear from Huw Pill, Chief Economist at the Bank of England and Dr Jayne Brady MBE, Head of Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Gordon Milligan, IoD NI Chairman, commented:

"After a break of more than three years, it gives me great pleasure to announce plans for the return of our Annual Dinner, for so long among the most hotly anticipated occasions on the business social calendar.

"The event offers a great opportunity to meet together, discuss best practice and contemporary business issues while also enjoying a social gathering in a relaxed atmosphere.

"I look forward to joining with colleagues from the IoD and across the business community once again for a large scale event and with Patrick Kielty providing the entertainment, I am sure we are in for a memorable evening.

Patrick, who began his stand-up career three decades ago, rose to become one of the UK and Ireland's best-loved comedians.

Currently on tour with his 'Borderline' show, this year also sees the release of his first feature film Ballywalter, in which he stars alongside IFTA nominated Seána Kerslake.

In recent years, he has made a number of documentaries including

My Dad and The Peace Deal and Me, which was nominated for a BAFTA.

Huw joined the Bank of England as Chief Economist last year and has held a number of senior roles at international institutions including Goldman Sachs and the European Central Bank.

**“ The Annual Dinner provides a fantastic opportunity for leaders from across Northern Ireland to meet together and learn from our common experiences. ”**

Head of the NI Civil Service since 2021, Jayne is a Fellow of the IoD and was awarded the MBE for services to economy. Previous roles have included Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner and Partner at Kernal Capital.

Paul Magee, Director, Corporate Banking NI, Bank of Ireland added:

"After the enforced break due to the coronavirus pandemic, we are delighted to see the return of the IoD Annual Dinner which we have supported for many years.

"As businesses continue to face a multitude of challenges, events such as the Annual Dinner provide a fantastic opportunity for leaders from across Northern Ireland to meet together and learn from our common experiences.



"Once again, a tremendous lineup of speakers has been assembled and we very much look forward to joining with clients, IoD members, and others for what I'm sure will be another insightful and enjoyable evening."

The event, open to both members and non-members, is also supported by associated sponsors Arthur Cox and the Open University. For more information or to book a table, please visit [www.iod.com](http://www.iod.com) or email [Chelsea.Brennan@iod.com](mailto:Chelsea.Brennan@iod.com).



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## Disclaimer:

Articles are published in Director NI as a contribution to discussions about business issues. They represent the personal views of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the Institute of Directors' policy.



## Marketing your brand and products to IoD members

Director NI magazine reaches many of Northern Ireland's most influential business leaders.

A bi-monthly magazine, it is circulated to 1,000 local members of the Institute of Directors (IoD), and offers regular insights into current business and governance.

To advertise in Director NI magazine and to find out more about advertorials, sponsored features and other commercial opportunities, please email

**[Chelsea.Brennan@iod.com](mailto:Chelsea.Brennan@iod.com)**



# Planning for your long-term financial future has never been more important



Joe Robinson,  
Senior Financial  
Planning Director,  
Investec Wealth &  
Investment

**R**etirement used to be reassuringly predictable. On your 60th or 65th birthday you left employment and had to buy an annuity with the money in your pension pot. Today, everything is different.

With the introduction of pension freedoms, we don't have to cash in our pensions at set ages and can take our money any way we choose. We're also living healthier and more active lives meaning we can now decide when, how, and even if, we retire. But, with this freedom also comes responsibility, and for some, uncertainty.

## Knowing when to retire.

In retirement, timing is everything. Financially and emotionally, choosing the right moment to retire can make all the difference to enjoying your best years.

## Life's big retirement questions.

What's the best way to take an income in retirement? How much money will I need? Is now a good time to retire? Many of us don't have a clear plan for our retirement years and often underestimate how much money we'll need. Investec can help bring focus and clarity to these questions so you make the right choices for your future.

## Retirement shouldn't be taxing.

When you've worked for years to build your pension and savings, and have retirement in your sights, the last thing you want to do is pay more tax than you need to. For many people, there's no escaping some tax in retirement. But, by utilising the allowances and reliefs available, it's possible to significantly reduce tax charges on your retirement income.

## It pays to get advice.

The earlier you plan, the better your retirement will be.

However vague your retirement goals, it's never too early to be planning ahead. Investec can help you build a robust and flexible retirement plan that will consider your future expenditure, the impact of inflation and that will make best use of tax allowances

A retirement plan which takes into account any gifts you want to make during your lifetime, or inheritance you want to pass on to the next generation. A plan which gives you the flexibility to cope with unexpected events and one that they'll regularly review to help ensure you're still on track.

## Know where life can take you.

Investec's role is to help you navigate life's journey, to achieve financial freedom faster, unlock more opportunities and bring you

**“ Many of us don't have a clear plan for our retirement years and often underestimate how much money we'll need. ”**

the peace of mind of knowing where your money and life can take you.

Based on Bedford Street, Investec's Belfast office has been supporting clients with their wealth management needs in Northern Ireland for many years.

*Joe Robinson from the Investec Belfast office has been helping people in the local area with their planning and investment needs for over a decade. If you'd like to have an informal conversation or have any questions about retirement planning, please get in touch. T: 028 9032 1002*



# Driving environmental leadership



Reflecting on continued efforts to build a sustainable future for construction, Henry Brothers Managing Director David Henry and CSR Director Ian Henry spoke to Director NI about the company's Journey to Net Zero and the importance of working to make a difference.

**A**s a leading construction company, Henry Brothers has a long history of fostering sustainability, and earlier this year it made its most significant commitment to protecting the environment yet when it announced its Journey to Net Zero strategy.

The plan outlined a bold vision to cut emissions in half by 2030 and reduce its total greenhouse gasses by 2% a year for the next nine years.

Driven by its core values of integrity, dependability, high-quality construction, and innovation, Henry Brothers is dedicated to setting the standard for sustainability in the construction sector and building on its award-winning eco-friendly foundations.

David Henry said:  
"It is estimated the construction industry accounts for 40% of total UK emissions, and while, as an industry collective we are making progress to decrease this, businesses have a responsibility to change our behaviour and make a real, tangible difference.

"At Henry Brothers, sustainability has been at the heart of our business for over two decades and we are committed to using innovative solutions to ensure our operations do not have an adverse impact on the planet.

"The structures we are building will still be in place long into the future, and it is important that they are suitable for the next generation and beyond."

## Working Together

The targets that have been set are ambitious, but both David and Ian believe they can be achieved by working in partnership with staff, suppliers, subcontractors and clients.

Ian Henry said:  
"Our Carbon Literacy Training Programme, which is the first of its kind in Northern Ireland, has led to an average saving of 5-15% per person.

"Coupled with seven years of our Research and Development Programme with Queens University and our Sustainability Professionals Forum, it is clear that we are taking strides to influence clients, lead design teams, and educate the workforce to become resilient yet progressive when it comes to sustainability."

## Building for the Future

For Henry Brothers, sustainability is more than box ticking exercise.

Ian continued:  
"We have a growing portfolio of environmentally beneficial properties, and the success of these will stand as a blueprint for the future, showcasing our ability to create sustainable, cost-effective builds that meet the clients' needs."

"Most recently, we handed over our first net-zero emissions building – a forest nursery school for Staffordshire University which utilises roof mounted solar panels, earth tube passive cooling systems, and air source heat pump heating.

"Staffordshire University's net-zero facility champions alternative construction and should help drive change, not only within Henry Brothers but in the wider construction industry."





**“ Our Carbon Literacy Training Programme, which is the first of its kind in Northern Ireland, has led to an average saving of 5-15% per person. ”**

Henry Brothers is also constructing a £9m sustainable pavilion at Loughborough University, designed as the first Passivhaus development on the campus and helping the university decarbonise its estate.

David concluded:  
“A high bar has been set, but we will continue to drive environmental leadership by identifying new solutions and sharing best practice with our stakeholders.

“The road ahead might present its challenges, but there is a great opportunity for the industry to work together and make a significant change.”

*To find out more, please visit [www.henrybrothers.co.uk](http://www.henrybrothers.co.uk)*



**HENRY BROTHERS**

Altogether Stronger



# Accountancy has transformed

## Are we doing enough to support incoming talent?



Ross Boyd,  
Director,  
RB Chartered  
Accountants  
Belfast

**W**e are in the age of the fourth industrial revolution, a digital transformation that is disrupting existing industry structures. What does this paradigm shift mean for the future of accountancy in Northern Ireland and beyond, and are we doing enough to support incoming talent?

Despite some belief that automation could make the profession obsolete, it is my opinion that emerging technologies like cloud-based data management, process automation and advanced analytics will actually empower accountants. The recently introduced Making Tax Digital for VAT regulation, for example, offers numerous benefits to businesses across Northern Ireland by increasing the visibility of their performance, streamlining a vital business process, and providing an opportunity to gather intelligence on competitor pricing.

Digital transformation has radically changed the playing field and the age-old perception of accountants as compliance people is no longer accurate. There is an increasing demand for STEM skills in the industry and to succeed, today's accountant must have a rich and varied skillset that includes digital literacy and public speaking.

Indeed, the industry itself has evolved beyond compliance to provide a suite of business advisory services. We would recommend that practices offer bespoke advice encompassing everything from strategy to corporate finance, to help

local businesses to increase their wealth and navigate future growth.

I have always been an early adopter of emerging technologies, including Xero software, and it is my fundamental belief that embracing new technology is critical to successful accounting, allowing professionals to use their unique skills to transform insights extracted from high-quality data into effective outputs.

Soft skills are incredibly important for today's accountant, as the role is essentially an advisory one. Good communication is paramount, and the most successful accountants have an elevated level of emotional intelligence and an ability to foster strong connections. Professionals must be able to partner with a client, to act as a trusted advisor and to tell the story behind the numbers.

Accountants must also be adaptable. The industry is changing rapidly, and we are now able to collaborate with clients and colleagues in real time. As such, we need to maintain an agile mindset and be able to react quickly to curve balls.

Teamwork and leadership skills are also vital as accountants no longer work in silos. Today, the profession is collaborative, particularly in larger offices. Automation of many administrative tasks also means that professionals have more time to devote to strategic decision-making, meaning that those with the strongest commercial acumen will inevitably succeed.

To support the next generation of accounting talent, firms must assign mentors and invest in continued professional development. They should also embrace a 'digital first' approach and ensure that staff are trained to use the latest accounting software.

With Generation Z having entered the workforce, we now have five generations in the accounting profession. This vast breadth of skill

**“ Emerging technologies like cloud-based data management, process automation and advanced analytics will actually empower accountants ”**

and perspective means that the traditional career path may not be as relevant to younger employees, many of whom might be prepared to take sideways or even backwards steps to enhance their development.

To attract, retain and nurture the best incoming account talent, firms must create a corporate culture that provides frequent feedback and fosters career progression that could, for many, be non-linear.

*For more expert business advice, contact Ross or a member of the RB+ team on: [hello@rossboyd.co.uk](mailto:hello@rossboyd.co.uk)*





# Corporate partnership initiative launched by Positive Life

**P**ositive Life, Northern Ireland's only charity dedicated to supporting people impacted by HIV.

launched a new corporate partnership initiative at an event at the Europa Hotel, Belfast in May.

Known as the 'Northern Ireland Buyers Club', the project will see Positive Life collaborating with business leaders, supportive organisations, and philanthropic individuals to support its long-term strategic ambitions. The organisation has its sights set on achieving ambitious new targets, namely the reduction of HIV stigma levels in Northern Ireland, and through the launch of the Club will now be in a position to commission new research, projects, and a

focused education campaign.

Over 100 invited guests heard from founding members of the Northern Ireland Buyers Club including Mark Regan, CEO of Kingsbridge Healthcare Group and Ciaran Moynagh, Partner at Phoenix Law, as well as the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Kate Nicholl and the Chief Executive of Positive Life, Jacquie Richardson.

Since its formation Positive Life has always been ambitious to create real change and deliver the best possible outcomes for people who are impacted by HIV. The Northern Ireland Buyers Club will scale up this ambition by delivering real lasting social change.

The launch sees Positive Life re-thinking its approach to awareness raising by embedding collaboration with the business world. Additionally, looking beyond traditional funding sources, the club will help Positive Life diversify its income stream and enhance its long-term financial sustainability post-pandemic. Spearheaded by Chief Executive, Jacquie Richardson, the Buyers Club will see Positive Life engaging in a rolling engagement campaign to rapidly grow membership and deliver lasting social impact.

To find out more about the Northern Ireland Buyers Club visit [www.positivelife.org.uk/TheNIBuyersClub](http://www.positivelife.org.uk/TheNIBuyersClub). To discuss membership opportunities, contact [TheNIBuyersClub@positivelife.org.uk](mailto:TheNIBuyersClub@positivelife.org.uk) or call 07429 562429.



# Modern Slavery

What do we mean and why is this even relevant?



Michelle McGinley,  
Director of Legal &  
Policy, EEFNI

**T**he word 'slavery' tends to conjure up images of cotton pickers back in the 1700's but the reality is modern slavery is a very different thing.

Modern slavery tends to pass under the radar and is difficult to spot. There can also be a disbelief that it exists in Western Society or that it is someone else's problem, one not relevant to your business. The truth is that slavery does exist in the modern world and businesses can play a key role in helping to eliminate it.

Indeed, consumers/customers are becoming more socially conscious and want to do business with those that do the right thing. The growing importance of ESG (Environment, Social and Governance issues) at Board Level also brings modern slavery back into the spotlight. How does your business ensure that the people you deal with - not only in your own workforce but in your supply chain - have good workplace conditions? How can you ensure that modern slavery is not taking place in your supply chain? The reputational costs of getting it wrong can be huge.

Modern Slavery Act 2015 also places a legal obligation on large businesses (i.e. those with an annual turnover over £36 Million) to publicly state the steps they take to tackle modern slavery within their business and supply chain. Section 54 (Transparency in Supply Chains Statement of MSA) requires any UK business to have a Modern Slavery Statement displayed in a prominent place on their website and to update that statement

annually. These statements must be approved at Board level and signed at Director level (or equivalent).

**“ To make a real difference it will be important that the tone from the top takes seriously the risk of modern slavery and has a real desire to address this risk. ”**

Currently there is no prescribed content or time limit in which to make the statement, and there is no criminal enforcement. However, the Home Office Statutory Guidance recommends the Statement is published within 6 months of the financial year end and covers 6 key principles:

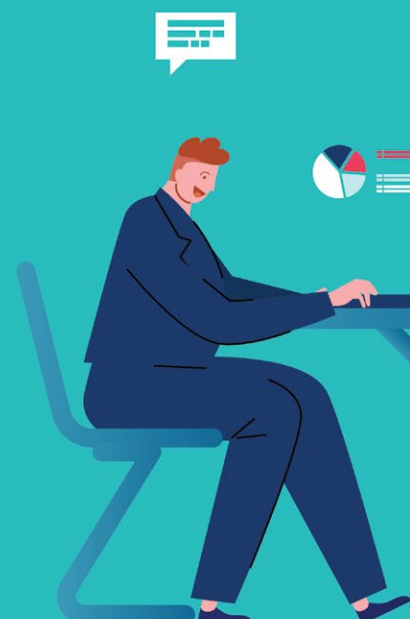
- 1) **Organisation structure and supply chains**
- 2) **Policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking**
- 3) **Due diligence processes**
- 4) **Risk assessment and management**
- 5) **Key performance indicators to measure effectiveness of steps being taken**
- 6) **Training on modern slavery and trafficking**

Last year, in a bid to improve transparency the Home Office launched a Central Registry where businesses can voluntarily publish their statement. In May 2022, the Queen's Speech announced changes to MSA that include making the above content compulsory, requiring publication on the Central Registry

in addition to introducing civil penalties for those that fail to do so.

But MSA statements are sometimes ripe for style over substance using boilerplate content. To be a leader mere compliance with the law is not enough. Leading Organisations will see past a compliance-based approach and try to understand / address the issues. Their statements will:

- **Be clear and easy to read**
- **Be proactive and forward looking**
- **Have plan to meet its commitments and set KPIs**
- **Measure the success against those KPIs**
- **Base decisions using KPIs and results**
- **Identify emerging issues and have a long-term strategy.**





At present, there is a softer approach to tackling modern slavery with the hope that these requirements will have a waterfall effect on smaller business. Larger businesses vetting smaller ones to check if there is any evidence of modern slavery in that supply chain.

If the larger business decides not to use a particular provider, or even country, because of the risk of modern slavery then this could provide a very strong incentive for the provider or country to change its practices.

To make a real difference it will be important that the tone from

the top takes seriously the risk of modern slavery and has a real desire to address this risk.

*Michelle McGinley is a dual Qualified Solicitor (NI & ROI) and the Director of Legal & Policy for EEFNI, an organisation that exclusively represents / advises businesses on HR & employment matters.*





# The future of distance learning is “Open”

Lisa Nappin,  
Head of Business  
Enterprise, The  
Open University



Dr Lynsey Quinn,  
Senior Manager  
for Skills and  
Partnerships, The  
Open University  
in Ireland

**N**ationally organisations face a range of challenges that will require the need for workforces to reskill and upskill.

Nationally organisations face a range of challenges that will require the need for workforces to reskill and upskill. Recent research carried out by The Open University via “The Business Barometer” (2022), which explores the skills landscape across sectors and the four nations, has highlighted some significant findings. 83% of respondents in Northern Ireland agreed that their organisation is currently facing skills shortages, an increase from 69% in last years’ report. In addition, 75% of organisations highlighted that the impact of skills shortages is causing increased work pressure for colleagues. As a result, over 60% of the organisations surveyed plan to increase investment in staff training over the next year.

The report also highlighted the full impact of Brexit, the war in Ukraine and rising business costs, all of which has fed into the skills shortage. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to major disruption of the labour market coupled with a number of societal trends such as automation and demographic change. The increasing importance of sustainability and

greener economies will further impact on both the availability of type and range of jobs. A highly skilled workforce will be essential for the future prosperity of local communities, through flexible, far-reaching and diverse lifelong educational opportunities.

The Open University was created over 50 years ago to open up education to all. Through the power of learning we aim to transform lives and communities, opening a world of possibilities for everyone. A global leader in higher education, we support learners in the UK, Ireland and across the world, using the power of technology and our world-class expertise in supported distance learning. Our approach adds “real value” to skills development including developing digital literacy and confidence, helping learners to apply their digital skills in the context of teaching and learning, whilst meeting a diverse range of learning styles and pace. Pedagogy is at the heart of our online learning.

The Open University is unique as the only University that operates across the UK and Ireland, with offices in Dublin and Belfast, as well as Edinburgh, Cardiff and Milton Keynes. As a result, we are strategically positioned to leverage a flexible, distance learning approach to support individualised and diverse pathways for learning, in a practical and tangible way. This allows us to flex our scale to meet the requirements of local communities and employers. How? As an academic institution with a close eye on the future of work we have built strong partnerships with Government bodies, nationally based employers, small businesses, world leading University partners through our FutureLearn initiative.

As leaders in distance learning we provide flexible learning opportunities for people to upskill

and retrain within the workplace, to develop their confidence and capabilities to enable personal and professional development. This includes supporting with employee and personal development and executive development (including short online courses / customised learning) across key employability and higher-level professional and business skills for the emerging workforce and the economy.

**“ Our business school is ranked in the top 1% of business schools globally, accredited by three leading international quality benchmarks. ”**

Through our modular based approach, from introductory up to post graduate level, we offer over 300 modules, to help close specific skills gaps in a very accessible and affordable way across key subject areas in the short, medium and longer term. Of particular interest is our practice-based, internationally focused Masters of Business Administration (MBA) offered by The Open University Business School. Our business school is ranked in the top 1% of business schools globally, accredited by three leading international quality benchmarks. This indicates the quality and qualification impact of our leadership and management offering.

The Open University is non-selective in most of our undergraduate admissions, enabling students from many different backgrounds

to achieve the highest standards of academic and professional excellence. At The Open University digital does not mean impersonal as every learner has access to a tutor and specialist support forums and access to a digital library 24 hours a day.

In Northern Ireland we consistently top the university student satisfaction table in the National Student Survey (2021) at 91%. Our students are popular with employers who value their drive, commitment and resilience. We have a reputation for being inclusive with a friendly approach and being easy to do business with.

At The Open University we recognise that the way people are learning is changing including the intensity of study for a qualification, either to accelerate or spread out their learning module by module, including those people wanting to study short courses that meet shorter-term needs or interests.

The global pandemic has increased interest levels in short, online learning solutions that address

specific skills gaps. Skills demands are changing and will continue to change because of the need to retrain, reskill or redeploy.

One example of short, online learning solutions is The Open University's microcredentials. A microcredential is a shorter and more focused type of university-level online learning experience. Microcredentials are delivered at degree and postgraduate level and usually take around ten to twelve weeks to complete. Academic credit gained from a microcredential in the future may be used towards further study.

Microcredentials are becoming more popular in education and industry due to their focused and flexible delivery. At The Open University our microcredentials are hosted on our FutureLearn platform, the largest Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform in Europe. Microcredentials are the next step in The Open University's mission to make education accessible to all.

We currently offer a wide range of microcredentials in key areas such as leadership and management;

sustainability and computing and digital technologies, many of which are industry recognised. Whether you are based locally, nationally, or further afield our qualifications hold global currency. Our key message to you is that one of the many benefits of collaborating with The Open University is our ability to make learning accessible to all, by adding value through agile, and borderless learning via innovative delivery platforms to best suit individual organisational requirements.

We look forward to developing new innovative partnerships, continuing to work with businesses to support the development of our workforces, through high quality on-line learning, and applying that learning to work and life.



**The Open  
University**



# Taking my professional development to the next level

## IOD Academy



Roger Henderson  
CDir, Network  
Assets Director,  
NIE Networks

**I've been in a senior leadership role for some time but have become more acutely aware of just how rapidly governance is evolving. This was something that was reinforced quite recently while undertaking the IoD's Chartered Director qualification.**

I am of the strong belief that professional development at all levels is incredibly important, and when considering how best to take my own professional development forward, the comprehensive structure of the Chartered Director course along with the robust assessment methods implemented stood out to me as key elements - ultimately prompting me to enrol.

The changing face of governance and what it could mean for our organisations is something that all leaders should be aware of, and it is also hugely important to understand how vital forward-thinking strategy and leadership is, especially in times of so much uncertainty.

For leaders seeking to develop their knowledge and understanding of these key areas, courses such as the Chartered Director programme are invaluable.

I would say that achieving Chartered Director status has enabled me to develop further in my role as Director as I was provided with a more in-depth perspective into the various responsibilities and skills required to become more successful at executive level.

This has allowed me to gain a better understanding not only of the requirements of my role, but how to fulfil them both effectively and efficiently.

For me personally, developing a routine and taking a methodical approach to the course made the whole process of gaining the qualification that bit easier and I would recommend finding an approach that works best for you - as this will allow you to maintain momentum and take time to enjoy the learning process.

The IoD Chartered Director qualification represents an industry leading option for directors who, by demonstrating a strong commitment to bettering their own skills and the performance of their organisations can take their leadership to the next level.

I would certainly recommend the programme for both aspiring and practising directors.

About the Chartered Director qualification: The Chartered Director programme is internationally recognised comprises three stages. The first is the Certificate in Company Direction, followed by the Diploma in Company Direction, before the final stage, the Chartered Director Qualification.

Further information can be found at [www.iod.com/professional-development/chartered-director-programme/](http://www.iod.com/professional-development/chartered-director-programme/)

### 2023 Course Dates

All our modules will take place at The Merchant Hotel, Belfast



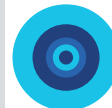
12 - 13 September 2023

**Role of the Director and Board** - 2 days



17 - 19 October 2023

**Finance for Non-Finance Directors** - 3 days



7 - 9 November 2023

**Strategy for Directors** - 3 days



29 - 30 November 2023

**Leadership for Directors** - 2 days

*If you are interested in starting your journey to becoming an IoD Chartered Director, please get in touch with [heather.white@iod.com](mailto:heather.white@iod.com)*



# Meet the Chartered Director

**Debra Lilley CDir is VP Delivery, Growth & Excellence at Inoapps, a business transformation company and Oracle services partner. She achieved Chartered Director in 2007.**

I joined the board of the UK Oracle User Group, a not-for-profit membership organisation in 2003. I don't think I realised the legal implications especially as we had a staff of about 20 and substantial assets in a building we owned. Realising I needed to quickly learn I attended the Role of a Director training and heard about the Diploma. With the help of a government grant I enrolled in the Diploma, which I gained in 2005 and two years later achieved Chartered Director.

I had the privilege of doing the diploma in Northern Ireland where it was held as a single cohort, and that helped me gain even more value as we learnt so much about each other's organisations. At first, I felt a fraud. My day job was as a principal consultant at Fujitsu and my UKOUG board role was as a volunteer. However, I soon found I still had much to contribute, and scale is relative. Many of the projects I was responsible for were valued higher than some of the companies in my cohort. Several of my

cohort colleagues were entrepreneurs who had built successful companies from scratch and were taking part to ensure they knew how to scale beyond anything they had first considered or to understand what to look for in someone they would employ to take their place.

I became a real ambassador for governance, ensured during my time in the various roles in the User Group that principles of sound governance were front and centre. As a small organisation the financial, legal and employment advice from my IoD membership was invaluable on many occasions. A few years back I was honoured to be appointed president of Deptherapy, a mental health support organization for veterans, and again governance key. Much of what we do is grant-funded and that is another kind of responsibility. Very recently I have joined the board of ODTUG, a global Oracle user group.

My IT professional career also took off, and in many ways the confidence in my own abilities that I gained from the diploma was significant. In 2014, I went to a start-up organisation Certus, run by two entrepreneurs and what I gained from IoD, alongside my industry skills, helped them grow the company. The company was acquired



by Accenture, where I had the opportunity to grow skills even further, until I joined Inoapps late last year.

I feel I have come full circle. Inoapps was started in 2006 by Andy Bird, who has grown the company to 500 people across the United States, United Kingdom, Europe and Asia-Pacific, and projected \$100 million in revenue for 2021. He has ambitious growth plans, and my role is to ensure the delivery side of the organisation can support the growth the company is on track to achieve. I have the opportunity to take my industry skills, combined with what I learnt from the IoD and my cohort especially, to make a real difference.



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# Inaugural Director Summit told 'organisations must be ready to listen to employees'

**“Organisations must be ready not only to take action but to listen to employees”, Diversity and Inclusion**

**ambassador Paul Gillen has told the inaugural IoD Directors Summit, sponsored by Schroders Personal Wealth.**

Paul, Employment Partner at Lewis Silkin made his comments as part of a panel session titled 'Closing the Skills Gap' which focused on how diversity and inclusion in the workforce can help organisations address critical skills gaps and improve productivity and long-term business success.

As Diversity and Inclusion ambassador for the IoD, Paul helps to ensure it continues to be an open and fair organisation that offers a warm welcome and equal opportunities for all directors to connect and improve.

The panel discussed how businesses can incorporate Diversity and Inclusion into the structure of their organisations for the benefit of all, with Paul noting that companies “should be honest about where they are on their Diversity and Inclusion journey” and that in terms of resources and support, “equity is more important than equality.”

The IoD Directors Summit also provided business leaders with an insight into Northern Ireland's political landscape, current challenges related to recruitment and talent, and what a post-Covid workplace may look like.

Kirsty McManus, National Director, IoD NI, commented:

“We were very pleased to welcome leaders from many of Northern Ireland's leading business organisations to our Directors Summit event.

“It was wonderful to come together as a community and to gain such a variety of expert insights from our talented speakers and panellists.



L-R, Paul Gillen, Partner Lewis Silkin; Clodagh Rice, BBC; Martin McKay, CEO & Founder, Texthelp; Marcelo Rodrigues, Regional Head of Partnerships & Business Development, Schroders Personal Wealth; Gráinne Walsh, Director, Stratagem; Dr Scott King, Co-Founder & Director, Pinnacle Growth Group; Caroline Van Der Feltz, HR Director, Danske Bank & Kirsty McManus, National Director, IoD Northern Ireland & Wales



**“ Companies  
should be honest  
about where  
they are on their  
Diversity and  
Inclusion journey ”**

“I would like to thank everyone who joined us for our very first event, and I hope that those in attendance today will utilise what they have learned today to improve their own policies and practice.”

Marcelo Rodrigues, Regional Head of Partnerships and Business Development, Schroders Personal Wealth added:

“On behalf of Schroders Personal Wealth, I would like to congratulate the IoD for what has been a very insightful and worthwhile morning.

“We are delighted to lend our support to events such as the Directors Summit and to play our part in facilitating learning and development opportunities for members of Northern Ireland’s business community.”

*For further details on the IoD including a calendar of upcoming events, visit [www.iod.com/ni](http://www.iod.com/ni).*





# How not to lose £1m in your business



Adrian McCourt,  
Managing Director,  
Lockview Business  
Solutions

**I reckon I previously wasted circa £1m of hard-earned profit in my business. Not a proud fact but a compelling one to encourage you to read this article, so you don't end up in the same situation. One question, do you really know what your sales team are doing, and when and how they are doing it?**

I'd scaled a very profitable business from start up to £10m turnover and at the start understanding what was going on in the business was easy. From a sales perspective I knew where the reps were, how many calls, meeting, proposals and sales were being completed, where exactly the opportunity sat in the sales process and the exact reason when a prospect placed their business elsewhere. However, as the business grew, I quite often felt like I was holding the tail of a dragon whilst it

swung around, breathed fire and tried to get away. As managers were introduced to the business, they reported the sales information back on Excel sheets on a weekly and monthly basis but it didn't give the live data I needed to make good business decisions.

The Sales Team's performance was measured purely on closed sales and whilst the top performers were wildly rewarded, those who were continually not making quota didn't last with the business. Huge mistake. I lost some of the most productive members of my sales team. They were making more calls, sitting more appointments, and presenting more proposals than anyone else in the business but I just didn't know this and that was my failing. I didn't have the live information that would have informed me of how to help them with a little sales training.

What rubbed further salt into my wounds is that my valuable data, which was on Excel, left with the rep and went along with them, to a competitor. If you are not able to view, at the click of a button, what your sales team's activity levels are and compare them across the team, you are at risk too!

**“ Do you really know what your sales team are doing, and when and how they are doing it? ”**

So, what is my recommendation so you don't make the same mistake? Simple, implement a CRM system (Customer Relationship Management).

There are many on the market and some which the basic versions are free. I personally use HubSpot and I started using the free version for email marketing and managing my database of potential customers.

These platforms integrate with the likes of Outlook and your mobile phone so it saves time and gives a single source of data across all of your business.



Everyone can then see what is happening on every prospect and account. I have now expanded what I use on the platform and below are some of the most common features use that I use – for free:

- Email marketing - like Mail Chimp but all in one place
- Outlook integration - automatic sync of emails and you can see when your emails are opened and how many times
- Quote builder - build professional quotes and see when your prospects open them
- Website integration - see who is visiting your website and what pages they are visiting
- Sales reporting - Compare reps activity levels, closed sales, time to close etc
- Templates - send personalised emails in 3 clicks and monitor the best performing scripts
- Pipeline management tools - deal board with pipeline and full reporting charts
- Free meeting scheduler - prospects can directly book appointments in your diary
- Task management - recorded action against every opportunity with a "next step"
- Live chat software - chat to prospects who visit your site
- Document Library - store brochures etc centrally and send with a couple of clicks

If you would like to discuss sales process, performance, or systems in your business, you can book a slot in Adrian McCourt's diary at [www.lockview.co.uk](http://www.lockview.co.uk)



## Marketing your brand and products to IoD members

Director NI magazine reaches many of Northern Ireland's most influential business leaders.

A bi-monthly magazine, it is circulated to 1,000 local members of the Institute of Directors (IoD), and offers regular insights into current business and governance.

To advertise in Director NI magazine and to find out more about advertorials, sponsored features and other commercial opportunities, please email [Chelsea.Brennan@iod.com](mailto:Chelsea.Brennan@iod.com)





# Our Members

**A**s a member of the UK's leading business network, our members have access to a wide range of support and services.

In every edition we introduce you to some of our members through these profiles and encourage you to network and join in with our IoD Northern Ireland Community.

To have your profile featured contact: [chelsea.brennan@iod.com](mailto:chelsea.brennan@iod.com)

## MEMBER PROFILE

### Aideen Duggan Keenan Recruitment

Aideen Duggan is the Founder and Director of Keenan Recruitment based in Arthur House, Belfast. A multi award winning recruitment and employment agency that supplies temporary and/or permanent professionals into the private, public and third sectors across Northern Ireland.

Focusing on the health, logistics, finance, insurance and admin sectors, Keenan Recruitment pride themselves on adopting a diverse and holistic approach to placing the right candidate in the right job. Well-being is important to Aideen and as such a financial well-being package was rolled out over 4 years ago to support the Keenan community. Temporary workers can avail of a free of charge and confidential financial health check and professional



advice is given to aid with mortgage applications, pensions, budgeting, debt management plans and savings. This has proven very popular with newly qualified professionals.

Keenan Recruitment is a proud charity partner of NSPCC Northern Ireland and regularly takes part in fundraising activities.

Aideen is delighted to join the Institute of Directors to expand upon her network and with an interest in good governance and strong leadership, is looking forward to learning from other members.





#### MEMBER PROFILE

### Alan Campbell

#### SONI Ltd

Alan Campbell was appointed as Managing Director of SONI Ltd in June 2021, following 9 months in the role in an interim capacity. Alan was appointed to the SONI Board in December 2020.

He joined SONI in July 2017, as Head of Grid Infrastructure Projects and Connections, from ESB where he was responsible for managing its 400MW Coolkeeragh Power Station in the North West. Alan graduated from Queen's University Belfast with a First Class Honours degree in Mechanical Engineering and began his career at AstraZeneca in England before joining ESB. Alan has more than 20 years' experience working in the electricity industry.

#### MEMBER PROFILE

### Andrea Irvine

#### Belfast International Airport

Andrea Irvine is currently the Finance Manager for Belfast International Airport (BIA) and has been a valued member of the Senior Management Team for almost 10 years.

A highly motivated Finance professional contributing daily to the operational, commercial, and strategic direction of the business. She is results focused, delivering financial support and direction alongside business insights and analytics. She has managed the implementation of new systems and processes to create efficiencies and is an effective leader and

communicator with a strong, team focused management style.

Throughout her time at BIA she has established lasting relationships with both internal and external stakeholders which are key to the success of the business.

Andrea believes that working in the Aviation industry is dynamic and interesting and enjoys the fact that every day is different. The last two years have been a significant challenge due to the impact of the COVID19 pandemic on the travel industry and the implications for the Airport activities. The Team at BIA have had to react quickly and adapt to the ever-changing travel restrictions and safety requirements and Andrea continues to be a key player as BIA navigates their way through the post COVID19 recovery.



#### MEMBER PROFILE

### Jamie Watts

#### Amplifi Solutions

Jamie is Commercial Director for Amplifi Solutions. With a strong background in professional services, including 8 years within asset based lending, Jamie has a passion for building lasting relationships within the SME community.

Having built a wide base of clients across Scotland during his time at Bibby Financial Services and Aldermore Bank, Jamie relocated to Northern Ireland in 2017 where he grew a new office for a boutique finance recruitment business to service the local market. Jamie

joined Amplifi Solutions in June 2019 with a view to growing the client base across the UK. This has led to a permanent office in Scotland as well as strong growth across the wider GB market. His role includes managing Amplifi's commercial partners, new product implementation and commercial strategy.

With significant growth in year-on-year revenues in each of the last 3 years, the business has become a market leader in the UK.

Jamie joins the IoD with a view to growing his professional network and learning from the experience of his co-members.





## MEMBER PROFILE

**Ross Boyd****RB+ Chartered Accountants**

An entrepreneur, fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland, and a member of the Institute of Directors, Ross brings over 25 years' experience in consulting and formed the business in 2010.

As a founder of RB+ Chartered Accountants, he had a clear vision of how to grow small and medium businesses and provide strategic independent advice to clients. For the past 20 years, Ross has been working globally, on a significant number of international projects, and with multinational clients. Today, however, his focus is on technology, tax and audit for the UK and Irish markets.

Whilst RB+ Chartered Accountants offers a range of tailored services, Ross personally focuses on two key areas: business strategy and financial analysis. The rapid growth of the company since its inception in 2010 is evidence of Ross' expertise in these areas.



## MEMBER PROFILE

**Terry Waugh****Action Renewables**

As Chief Executive of Action Renewables, Terry is responsible for the company's overall strategic direction. This includes managing the charity and charitable activities, and the business development side of the charity. A large part of his work involves ensuring good governance, sound management and responsible leadership.

Terry has worked for Action Renewables for 19 years and prior to that, since 1982 he worked for NIE Transmission and Distribution business, latterly as Customer Relations Manager. In his studies, Terry gained a Bachelors Degree in Business and Finance and a Master of Business Administration. Between 2007 and 2019 Terry was a non-Exec Director of Northern Ireland Environment Link, including as Chairman.



## MEMBER PROFILE

**Simon Fitzpatrick****Coca-Cola HBC Ireland & Northern Ireland**

Simon joined Coca Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland in 2002 and since then has held several key commercial positions culminating as Customer Director in 2017. During his tenure as Customer Director, Simon led Coca-Cola HBC to the No 1 position on the Island of Ireland for commercial excellence and customer experience in the beverage industry for the first time.

Simon spent one year outside CCHBC as Director of Sales and Marketing for the Irish Football Association where he created the first commercial strategy for football in Northern Ireland.

Simon is a member of Coca-Cola HBC's leadership team and since March 2020 has been Sales Director leading over 350 people where is responsible for driving sustainable sales growth for the business.



## MEMBER PROFILE

**Neil McLeese****Ernst & Young LLP**

Neil is Managing Director of BeyondHR which is a progressive, independently owned advisory firm that helps organisations recruit,

manage and safeguard their staff. Since 2014 he has had responsibility for the company's strategy and growth plans across the UK and Ireland. Prior to joining BeyondHR he was HR Manager for the Irish division of a World leading building distribution company. In his spare time Neil is a keen golfer and enjoys spending time on the North Antrim coast with his family.



# → IoD NI Member Benefits



## Events Programme:

We continue to run a hybrid programme of virtual and face to face events.

More info on our programme can be found at <https://www.iod.com/events/>

## Ongoing consultation with Government:

We work closely with Government to share the views of our members and encourage necessary support for the economy.

Guided by evidence submitted by the IoD community, measures including tax breaks, grants, wage support and insolvency protection have been introduced.

## Non-Executive roles:

Did you know that IoD membership gives you access to the latest non-executive director-level jobs from publicly listed, investor-backed, private and family companies, start-ups and charities?

In association with Nurole we're helping IoD members to find their next board-level role or their next board-level hire.

## DirectorNI Magazine:

Interested in sharing member news or providing a thought leadership article for our local directorNI magazine? Please email [Chelsea.brennan@iod.com](mailto:Chelsea.brennan@iod.com)

## LinkedIn Group:

Please join the members only LinkedIn group. Contact [aoife.mccreesh@iod.com](mailto:aoife.mccreesh@iod.com) for more details.

## Pall Mall and IoD premises:

Our iconic building at 116 Pall Mall is open to members and has a wide range of options for client meetings, entertaining and co-working.

We also have local member hubs for use by members including Ulster Museum and Mallusk Enterprise Park.

## Professional development:

We have a varied suite of training programmes, designed and delivered by directors to support our members in becoming highly skilled and informed directors.

There is a recognised pathway to help you achieve Chartered Director status. Alternatively you can attend individual modules that are most relevant to your director development requirements.

Get in touch with [heather.white@iod.com](mailto:heather.white@iod.com) for more information.





# Values at work



Michael Scott,  
Michael Scott  
Consulting Ltd

**A** s a strategic tool, Company Values are not to make Executives feel good about themselves, but rather to help when times are really tough.

I probably first heard the term values used in a business context back in the mid noughties. True to say that when asked at that time what values meant to me, I referred to my formative years and how I was brought up. I wasn't a values guru then nor do I profess to be one now, but I have used the principles of employing the values of a company as a strategic measure and to guide how business conducts itself.

Some will see values as a management gimmick. These individuals are usually the ones who need to understand the benefit of values the most. I would say the benefit of an organisation investing in a values culture is not simply for businesses to feel good about themselves.

Values I would suggest work best for an organisation when something or someone is going wrong not when everything or everyone is working well. There also needs to be ownership for the company values at the highest level.

**“ There also needs to be ownership for the company values at the highest level. ”**

Over many years I have seen some colleagues explain how busy they are or how many projects they have delivered. Suffice to say that some of what they are saying may be, in part, true. However, there is usually an interesting twist when I've sometimes asked “how” projects have been delivered.

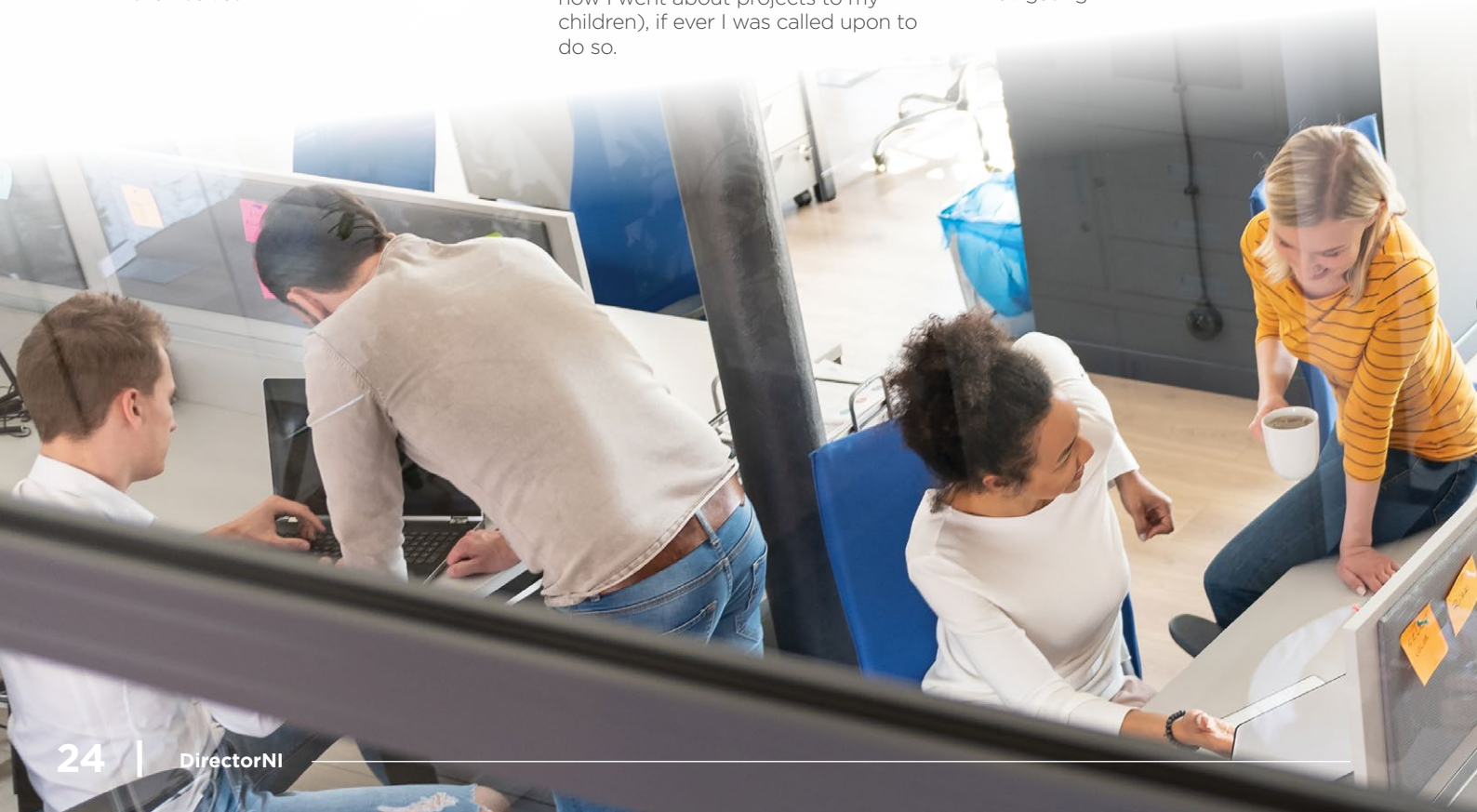
It seems that many, including myself if I'm being honest, have had to admit that the way I have gone about planning and delivery of outcomes wasn't always the way I would have liked (or indeed, have liked to explain how I went about projects to my children), if ever I was called upon to do so.

I think the “how” in line with the company values should be a litmus test for us all as senior leaders. Interestingly, when I reflect on the variety of people I have worked with, and I have been extremely lucky to have worked with many dedicated and talented individuals, it is probably the values those people held true, and shared with myself, that were the defining take away for my own career advancement.

A company's values should be optimised to instil, build upon and harness the company's culture.

I have seen the values being brought to the attention of a few “rotten eggs” (not many) over the years to illustrate how they have (or rather have not) conducted themselves appropriately. The reality has been quite stark for some but even for the odd individual, reminding someone about the company values, has been somewhat of “a lightbulb moment” regarding lacklustre performance.

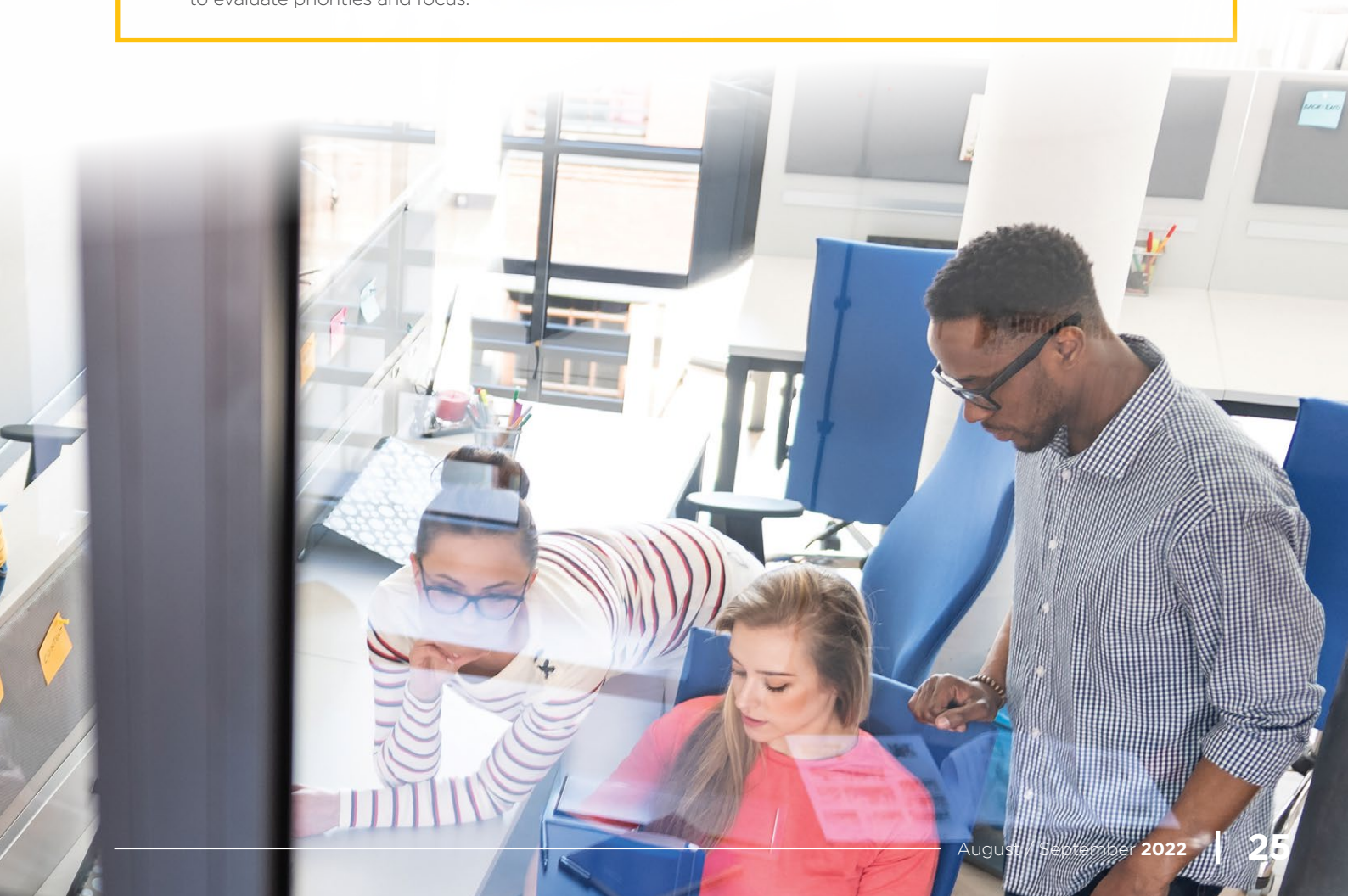
People are fundamentally decent and hard working. I fervently believe that individuals and teams want to do a good job and to be appropriately fulfilled in their jobs. A company's values just help to guide us when we all, inevitably at times, step off or wobble on the corporate path we are navigating.



# 10 tips for Senior Leaders

1. **Understand the Shareholder's needs:**  
Understand strategy to balance Shareholder/Business & Customer needs
2. **Think "Big Picture":**  
Be prepared to let some things go (even those things close to our heart)
3. **Decisions should be based on the strategic needs of the business:** Not based on Departmental or a "strong" Director / Managers needs
4. **Focus on the priorities:**  
Ensure management hit deadlines and revisit the priorities to ensure we are not chasing futile or redundant targets. Blue Time for managers should be set aside each week (even for one hour) to evaluate priorities and focus.
5. **Be able to identify the Executive Team in any organisation:**  
Or at least individuals holding a senior position should not be a surprise to anyone outside the organisation. Working calmly and with a purpose (not frantic) is essential
6. **Be Decisive, Engaging & Proactive**  
Avoid a "scatter-gun management" approach
7. **Be aware that we are being watched**  
By staff, customers, stakeholder both inside and outside the work setting
8. **Avoid "passing the buck"**  
Own a problem or at least know who does own it within the organisation
9. **Surprises should only occur from external "out of the blue" occurrences**  
Should something go wrong, ensure appropriate managers / Board are made aware
10. **Work is important, but should not define us**  
Email curfew at nights / weekend (except for critical events) and don't pay lip service to Work-Life-Balance. Avoid rewarding a "hanging around the office" culture!

*You can contact Michael Scott Consulting Ltd on 07973896787 or [scottmpg1969@hotmail.com](mailto:scottmpg1969@hotmail.com)*





# Work life balance



Alan Branagh,  
Founder, The  
Insight Factory

**“Work-life balance may become an antiquated term soon. Framing our work, life, interests, family, friends, and everything else we do in ‘My Lifestyle’ is a far more realistic way to view it.” Jim Collins (2020)**

I tend to agree, especially when it comes to business leaders where both are so intertwined that it's almost impossible to separate the two. Add to that the fact that life and work are simply not linear, so finding that level of flexibility to achieve any kind of equilibrium can be elusive.

It doesn't stop us trying though and what works for one won't work for another, so I'm just going to keep it simple and share a few pointers that I use (and advocate) to work towards reaching that hallowed ground.

## Find the “Why”

This has become somewhat of a mantra for me as an executive performance coach. Only

once you identify why you are here, your personal vision, can you begin to look at and understand how to integrate the other areas of your life – business, relationships, health and wellbeing, wealth – and consider what you want to achieve. Are you here to make money or make a difference? Do you want to go out in a blaze of glory, or leave a legacy? Do you want to build a family and relationships or go it alone?

## Lead and delegate

Build the right team, formulate and communicate the vision, then delegate. As Jim Collins says (yes him again!) it's all about “getting the right people on the bus, in the right seats and the wrong people off the bus”. Develop them so that you can build an enduring business whether you're physically there or not.

## Start saying “No” – have a “stop doing” list

You've established your vision and got a plan (albeit necessarily flexible), now you're good to go. Stay committed. If the task, request or new business opportunity doesn't fit within that “vision” – don't undertake it, stop doing it.

**“There also needs to be ownership for the company values at the highest level.”**

## Schedule your personal “downtime”

You do it for your business, now do it in your personal life. Take “time out” for your partner, your children, friends and yourself. My passion is Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) on either flat water or surf. Come rain or shine, whatever the circumstances, you'll find me out there.

Make “time out” a regular occurrence, with others if possible, then it's a positive habit that's harder to change.

## Join a business peer group network

Don't continually try and re-invent the wheel when you could simply benefit from the experience of others who “walk in your shoes.” Find a trusted group and facilitator, a sounding board that asks the challenging questions and builds trusted business relationships. Take the candour, the fun, be accountable and honest, enjoy the support and be brave.

Peer groups and one-to-one coaching will become your personal board of directors-people you will grow to deeply respect and don't want to disappoint. Perhaps strong in their views, they'll be non-judgmental and compassionate, asking questions, drawing analogies, making dispassionate observations, giving focused feedback and helping you attain self-knowledge.

Just “be in the room” working on your business and yourself to gain perspective, overcome the obstacles to maximum performance and regularly renew and reinforce the belief in yourself and your vision.

Greater Decisions > Greater Thinking > Greater Performance





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For more information and to book,  
call **028 9536 7111**  
or email [thevenuecollective@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:thevenuecollective@ulster.ac.uk)

# Member News

## Focus on client innovation and competitiveness prompts £4 million investment by Hutchinson Engineering

Hutchinson Engineering has bolstered its award-winning business with a £4million investment in state-of-the-art laser cutting machines and an automated storage facility at its headquarters in Kilrea.

This latest development, which represents the company's largest capital investment to date, substantially increases the company's capacity and fuels its vision to becoming the leading provider of engineering solutions in Ireland.

The company is led by the Hutchinson brothers Mark, CEO and Richard who is Commercial Director. Speaking of the positive impact the investment brings for customers, Mark commented:

"This major investment is partly in response to the growing number of enquiries we are receiving from clients seeking to nearshore their supply chains in materials handling, agriculture, coach building and road transport. The markets they operate in have seen immense volatility over the last few years due to Covid, increased fuel and shipping costs and carbon reduction targets. Our clients are adapting to this changing market landscape and our latest investment means that we can build long-term



partnerships to help keep their businesses ahead of the curve.

This new automation significantly improves cutting speeds and allows us to hold more material on-site, therefore reducing lead times and improving our turnaround. This means we can bring an improved end-to-end service to clients, helping them to innovate, launch new products quicker and maintain their competitive advantage.

Sustainability has always been a core focus of the business and this latest development significantly reduces the carbon footprint of our operations thanks to the reduction in energy required to run the machines as well as fuel saving on forklifts".

Invest Northern Ireland has offered Hutchinson Engineering a Productive Investment Capital Grant (PICG) towards the cost of the capital purchase. It has also supported the company on its growth trajectory with help towards skills development, job creation and trade acceleration.

Grainne McVeigh, Invest NI's Director of Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering, said: "The Productive Investment Capital Grant has helped many businesses make that important commitment to invest in their future. It has given Hutchinson Engineering the ability and confidence to continue investment in innovation. By purchasing the new laser cutting machinery, the company has increased capacity to meet customer demand, and will contribute to wider economic growth."

Hutchinson Engineering was also supported in this latest investment by Danske Bank and by Lister Machine Tools, both having enjoyed longstanding relationships with Hutchinson. Representatives from both organisations joined with Invest NI at Hutchinson HQ recently to officially launch the new machinery.

*To find out more about this latest development for the Kilrea organisation, visit [hutchinson-engineering.co.uk/news](http://hutchinson-engineering.co.uk/news)*



## Brennan & Co NI acquires Operating Room Systems Limited

**Around one million people will take part in Elmer's Big Belfast Trail this summer – and local businesses are being offered a number of remaining sponsor places for this mass participation event in Belfast.**

The free, family-friendly trails – which is being Brennan & Co NI, based in Carrowreagh Business Park and part of The Brennan & Co Group has acquired Operating Room Systems Limited. This acquisition marks a major strategic development for Brennan & Co NI.

Alan Sproule, Managing Director of Brennan & Co NI added "This acquisition will give Brennan & Co

NI and indeed the wider Brennan & Co Group a fantastic opportunity to complement and expand its existing business. In addition to our existing products we will now have the ability to focus on both a broad surgical, and clinical portfolio but with particular emphasis on innovative technologies within the area of minimally invasive surgery. The coming together of Brennan & Co NI and Operating Room Systems will allow us to support the Healthcare market with a compelling portfolio of surgical solutions offering continued advancement in patient care.

From 1st April 2022, Operating Room Systems Limited will begin trading as Brennan & Co NI.

For over 12 years, Operating Room Systems has established a reputation as a trusted supplier of innovative surgical devices from internationally recognised manufacturers. The team at Operating Room Systems are vastly experienced and knowledgeable having built what stands today, as an organisation which is widely recognised across the surgical sector, both in Ireland and GB.



Operating Room Systems Commercial Director, Scott Hamilton commented - "The integration of our two companies at this juncture, marks a pivotal moment in the upscaling of our surgical technology provision across the marketplace here. We are delighted to join Brennan & Co as the two companies have a seamless alignment in our professional commitment to patients from within the communities in which we live and work; but also to our customers, the committed teams of theatre staff and surgeons who work so hard within the healthcare sector.

## Pinnacle Growth Group appoints Judith Neill as General Manager

**Pinnacle Growth Group has announced the appointment of Judith Neill to the position of General Manager with the company. The business, which was established in 2018, provides growth support to private and public sector organisations in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and GB. The firm is led by Co-Founders Robert McConnell and Dr Scott King.**

Judith joined the company in 2021 as Head of Business Growth

and has now been appointed as General Manager. Judith will ensure that Pinnacle Growth Group continue to go above and beyond whilst providing the honest and straightforward advice their clients' expect.

Commenting on the appointment, Robert McConnell, Pinnacle Growth Group, Director said;

"Pinnacle Growth Group is delighted to announce the appointment of Judith to the position of General Manager. Enabling business growth is at the centre of what we do, which makes it essential to have a professional team supporting clients to realise their full potential. This new role is an indication of our company ambition and focus on providing excellence to all sectors to enable businesses to thrive and expand, across the island of Ireland, North and South, the UK and globally.

Judith brings over 20 years of experience in business across



multiple sectors. Her strong drive, passion for the team and her determination to succeed and deliver for clients will play a key role in the continued growth of Pinnacle Growth Group."

Since its creation Pinnacle Growth Group has secured over £15m in support for their clients, enabled the creation of over 500 jobs and supported their clients' to secure millions in new business.

customers, the committed teams of theatre staff and surgeons who work so hard within the healthcare sector.



# Bennett Freehill is setting market leading standards in sustainable building design

**B**ennett Freehill, one of Northern Ireland's foremost Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Consultancy firms, is celebrating two years in business.

During the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, Managing Partner Cormac Freehill acquired Bennett Robertson Design which was originally established in 1999. Under Cormac's leadership the business has undergone a significant transformation and today provides a quality, client focused and professional Mechanical, Electrical and Sustainability Engineering Service to clients locally and throughout NI, GB and ROI.

"Whilst the business has thrived and grown over the last two years it hasn't been without challenges," said Cormac. "From the business acquisition, rebranding and reforming, to moving the technical delivery into the digital working environment, developing new client services such as Passivhaus design, BREEAM and commissioning management and strengthening the team with highly skilled people - all while managing COVID-19, Brexit and changing regulations."

Bennett Freehill strives to be at the forefront with innovative and practical mechanical, electrical and sustainable solutions and is providing the best low energy designs and environmental and energy efficiency benefits for clients such as DAERA, Education Authority, UK Atomic Energy Agency, Norbrook, Terex, Atlantic University Galway and Derry and Strabane District Council, to provide habitable comfortable, energy efficient buildings for end-users.

Their designs are setting market leading standards and the multi-award winning South West College Erne Campus in Enniskillen, on which



Bennett Freehill was Mechanical and Electrical Consultants and Passivhaus Advisors, is testament to the company's distinctive capability to design and implement cutting edge sustainable solutions.

Opened in 2021 the £34m Erne Campus is already being used as an exemplar in sustainable design. The campus is the world's first educational, and currently the largest, Passivhaus Premium rated building. It is the first UK building to achieve both Passivhaus Premium status and BREEAM outstanding accreditations. The college was awarded a Queens Anniversary Prize and has been recognised as one of 26 UN Centres of Excellence for High Performance Buildings around the world.

The company has strengthened the team as part of their drive towards technical excellence, an employee-focused culture, strategic growth and Nearly zero-emission building (NZEB) focus.

"Our people are key to the business' sustainability and success. The team comprises the most technically accomplished talent in the industry

and our management team brings their multinational consultancy experience and corporate confidence to our local practice," Cormac continued. "Key to our company vision is a focus on our people and what we enjoy doing, and with interesting clients, ensuring our business and team works at their best."

Chartered Engineer Aaron McCarthy, who joined the business as Associate Director, was announced as Partner bringing his wealth of experience in building physics, mechanical engineering and project management.

"It's an exciting time for Bennett Freehill," said Cormac. "We are working on pioneering projects with a construction value of +£250m for professional design teams and contractors, and with our significant experience in delivering sustainable energy buildings we have plans for expansion in GB and ROI."

For more information on Bennett Freehill please visit [bennettfreehill.com](http://bennettfreehill.com).



# Coca-Cola HBC and YouthAction NI partner to empower young people to unlock their potential

**Coca-Cola HBC joined forces with YouthAction Northern Ireland to launch this year's #YouthEmpowered programme which will support 2,000 young people from across Northern Ireland into employment or training.**

Now in its sixth year, the programme, aimed at primarily at young women and marginalised young people, has reached over 5,500 young people across the island of Ireland to date. The partnership brings together business and the voluntary sector in support of the government's ambitions to drive economic recovery and support young people in their journey to employment.

#YouthEmpowered 2022, includes regional skills days, a digital hub, train the trainer workshops, funding for YouthAction's GET SET programme and grants for young women to access education.

This year, there are six new grants available to YouthAction member groups to support young women's learning needs through training, qualifications, employability skills to support their employment prospects.

Past participants of the scheme shared their experience of how #YouthEmpowered provided them with the tools to develop skills, whilst supporting them in the challenges they faced.

**Cori's Story** - Cori first got involved with YouthAction as she lacked

confidence and found it difficult to make friends. Today Cori is a fully qualified Technical Theatre Assistant and spoke about how YouthAction helped her on her journey to employment:

"After graduation, I struggled to find a job as I had no paid work experience on my CV, mainly because of Covid. YouthAction gave me the break I needed - through the paid work placement scheme which has led to me securing a full-time job in Technical Theatre - my dream job!"

"My hope now is to support other young people like myself, especially young women the way I was supported by YouthAction - to have hope, aspirations, confidence and to gain the skills and experience so that they can also land their dream job."

Speaking at the launch of #YouthEmpowered 2022, Coca-Cola HBC Sales Director, Simon Fitzpatrick said:

"Empowering young people to access training and supports to assist their path to employment is a long-term commitment for all of us in Coca-Cola HBC. Over the past 6 years we have invested in excess of £250,000 in youth development. In 2022 we are keen to support those young people, particularly young women, who were significantly impacted by the COVID pandemic.

"As a business we are stepping up to help them in their journey to employment. Our partnership with YouthAction has enabled our team to use their skills and experience to support some fantastic young people

through training and mentoring. The funding we have dedicated to the programme will also contribute to further education and learning opportunities, which is key to improving employability."

Dr Martin McMullan Director of YouthAction said:

"We are delighted to partner with Coca-Cola HBC as a leading business to give young people access to the tools to help them realise their potential.

"#YouthEmpowered offers some of the most marginalised young people the opportunity to upskill and to access support that can help them plan a pathway to employment, building confidence and ultimately setting them up for a better future."

Minister for Economy Gordon Lyons gave his support for the scheme;

"I welcome the continued partnership between Coca-Cola HBC and Youth Action NI and the opportunities that this presents for young people and those seeking to improve their opportunities for employment.

The programme offers a range of focussed and targeted activities to build confidence for young people and to help them build relationships with potential employers."

*For details on any of the initiatives supported by #YouthEmpowered visit the #YouthEmpowered Digital Hub at [www.youthaction.org/youth-empowered](http://www.youthaction.org/youth-empowered) or contact Youth Action NI.*



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