

# Lessons in Resilience and Success

A Snapshot of Multi-Generational Family Businesses in Fingal

May 2016



**CFB**  
Centre for  
Family Business



Dublin Rural  
**LEADER**

**Comhairle Contae  
Fine Gall**  
Fingal County  
Council



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil  
Local Enterprise Office



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# Foreword from Fingal County Council





### May 2016

Family businesses are often defined and characterised as small businesses. Yet they are more complex and have particular characteristics which set them apart from other business models. These features include ownership structures, succession and business continuity, management capacity, taxation, inheritance and prospects for internationalisation.

Anecdotally, we know there are many generations of family businesses operating successfully within Fingal. While the success stories of many of these firms are well known locally, more can be done to understand the economic landscape within which family businesses operate within the County.

To learn more about family businesses and how policy makers can support them, Fingal County Council entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013 with DCU Centre for Family Business. This partnership provides a specialist resource for family businesses, policy makers, influencers and other stakeholders to help address the unique challenges and opportunities they face.

We welcome this report on 12 Fingal-based Family Businesses from Dr. Eric Clinton and his team in DCU Business School. We expect it will stimulate and encourage further analysis, debate and positive action in understanding and supporting the growth of family businesses within Fingal.

Ed Hearne  
 Director of Economic, Enterprise  
 and Tourism Development in  
 Fingal County Council

# Foreword from DCU Centre for Family Business



### May 2016

The DCU Centre for Family Business is delighted to launch *Lessons in Resilience and Success:*

*A Snapshot of Multi-Generational Family Businesses in Fingal, Dublin.* As the title suggests, this report is testament to the success and resilience of these multi-generational family businesses. Their economic and social contribution as evidenced from their turnover, employee numbers, developments, and exports is invaluable.

These businesses are hubs for investment, growth and opportunity, as showcased by the numerous impressive endeavours found throughout our report. They are embedded in their communities and bolster the local Fingal economy by employing and supplying locally, engaging in philanthropic efforts and promoting their locality.

This project marks the first research output resulting from our Memorandum of Understanding with Fingal County Council.

I, and the research team within DCU Centre for Family Business, will continue our endeavour in delivering dedicated research and specialist support for the management and sustainability of Irish family business.

Dr Eric Clinton  
Director of DCU Centre for  
Family Business



# 1. Executive Summary

Fingal County Council commissioned this study which was completed by a research team within DCU Centre for Family Business. Following a year of research (May 2015-May 2016), twelve family businesses were profiled and key findings were drawn from the interviews conducted with family business representatives. These businesses are all multi-generational, family-owned and head-quartered in Fingal, a region of Dublin. The purpose of our report is to better understand the needs, challenges and strengths of family businesses in Fingal and of family businesses in general. This study extends some practical recommendations based on both our findings and globally recognised best practices for family business management. Two sets of recommendations were produced; the first was for the family business community in Fingal, and the second was targeted towards Fingal County Council and other state agencies regarding the supports needed for future development of family businesses. The key findings are briefly described below.

## 1.1 Key findings

### Resilience during Adversity

As the title of this report suggests, we find further evidence of family business' ability to persist during difficult financial times. Resilience was noted as the unyielding commitment, hard effort, cost cutting measures, and long-term financial view demonstrated by the family firms. Similar to companies nationwide, many of our participants noted the recent economic recession as the greatest challenge in their recent company history. Our family businesses persisted during this difficult time, and show signs of growth and future development as part of the nationwide recovery.

### Stewardship

Stewardship implies that as a leader, one is not guided by self-interest but by the genuine concern for serving others and ensuring the well-being of future generations. All of the firms interviewed demonstrated strong stewardship tendencies e.g., engagement in corporate social responsibility, promoting positive workforce relations and safeguarding family business reputation. These family leaders are not only stewards to the business, but also to the community they operate within. In conversation, numerous interviewees implied that their leadership is of a care-taking quality, and their responsibility for sustaining value and growth of the business is paramount until the next leader takes the reigns.

### Formalisation

Many of the firms in this study demonstrated some form of formalisation. Mainly, there were two types of formalisation observed: firstly, rules of engagement, whereby family members must prove their value to the organisation prior to involvement; and secondly, developing a functional structure, whereby managerial roles are clearly defined and non-family professionals are integrated. Implementing family governance structures (e.g., family constitution, family meetings) is recommended to ensure continued appropriate and effective management of family involvement.



## Succession

Succession can be a source of anxiety or uncertainty for some firms. Some of those with future intentions to exit the business had no documented plan to follow. While others viewed succession in distant future terms (either a potential next generation leader is too young or unavailable), any firm aiming to be multi-generational is encouraged to give due consideration to any future family involvement. It is never too premature to plan for potential next generation involvement, or protocol in the event of the leader's death or illness, etc.

## Greater Support and Recognition

There was a call from most businesses for greater awareness of available grants and financial support, more recognition for the services industry, and an increase in active business support from the state and local authorities. In line with this, we found a need for an interactive educational platform for discussion of family business related issues including succession, wealth transfer, family employment and family governance.

## Internationalisation

Within our sample study, there is evidence of significant geographical expansion, exports, and aspirations for internationalisation. Our own findings suggest reluctance among some to venture further beyond the UK and Irish markets. Exporting can be a viable avenue for growth and development, and we encourage the use of any supports and networks available to family businesses in this area.

These findings are explored in greater depth in Chapter 5.

## 1.2 Methodology

The sample of twelve family businesses met the following three criteria:

### 1. Definition of Family Business<sup>1</sup>

A business is considered a family business if members of one family, or a small number of related families, control the business:

- by holding more than 50% of voting shares, and/or
- by supplying a significant proportion of the senior management

AND

- the owners and/or senior managers perceive the business to be a family business.

2. The company head office is based in Fingal, North and North-West County Dublin.

3. The company must be Irish owned and multi-generational.

Beyond those three criteria, the research team (comprising members of DCU Centre for Family Business) were afforded discretion of the sample choice. The aim was to provide a snapshot of multi-generational family firms in Fingal so variety was an important factor. The breakdown in industries is the following: Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (8); Services (3); and Hospitality (1). The sample included two large companies (defined as having more than 250 employees and an annual turnover greater than €50m). Seven companies were identified as medium sized and three were recognised as small based on the EU definition of a SME (see below, EU Commission, 2003).

Company Category	Staff Headcount	Turnover
Medium-sized	<250	≤€50M
Small	<50	≤€10M

Further to this, we reviewed the Irish Times Top 1,000 Companies listing in which three companies were drawn for inclusion (subject to these companies meeting the above criteria).

<sup>1</sup>Central Statistics Office and DCU Centre for Family Business agreed definition.



### 1.3 Terms of reference

A Memorandum of Understanding between DCU Centre for Family Business (CFB) and Fingal County Council was drawn up in October 2013 (to coincide with the launch of the CFB by An Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D.) with the purpose of providing a range of dedicated research, specialist support services, seminars and case study information for Fingal's multi-generational family businesses operating in domestic and international markets. Fingal County Council commissioned the DCU CFB to conduct a pilot study of 12 family businesses headquartered in Fingal. In commissioning the work, Fingal County Council requested:

- a qualitative analysis of a sample of large, medium, and small-sized family businesses in Fingal.
- a study that raises the profile of family businesses in Fingal, their industries and their individual contribution both to economic and social development at a local, national and international level.
- a findings section that highlights the strengths, problem areas and opportunities of family businesses.
- recommendations for Fingal County Council and other state agencies regarding the supports needed for further success and development of family business in Fingal.

## 2. Introduction - Family business context

Family businesses are an age-old form of organisation found in all parts of the world. From micro-businesses in rural villages to globally recognised corporations, such as Wal-Mart and Samsung, family businesses are an omnipresent feature of society. Whether businesses pride themselves on their family lineage or downplay their familial roots, all have distinctive features that are shaped by the family from which they came. These firms have their own unique features, benefits, and challenges, some of which we will explore below.

### Unique make-up

Family businesses are a complex and highly resourceful business type. Knowledge, learnings, resources, values, and traditions pass across generations of a family; often, what is found are strategic resources and capabilities (termed as 'familiness') that can make a family firm distinctive and competitively advantaged (Habbershon, Williams and MacMillan, 2003). One aspect of 'Familiness' is a tried and tested method of operating, such as "a special technology or commercial know-how" (Cabrera-Suárez, De Saá-Pérez and García-Almeida, 2001, p.38) e.g., a family-known craft such as whiskey making. Or it can be the family identity which may be publically perceived as a unique and favourable feature of the business (Zellweger, Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2010).

Another indication of the complexity of these firms is the interaction between three sub-systems—business, family and ownership (i.e. the Three-Circle Model from Tagiuri and Davis, 1982). This involves a web of relationships between family shareholders, non-family shareholders, family management, non-family management, family employees and non-family employees, in addition to outside family members with a vested interest. These relationships must be carefully managed in concurrence with the running of the business; and it is here that the real challenges for family businesses emerge.



## Economic Contribution

In many world economies, family firms are recognised as the dominant form of organisation (Astrachan and Shanker, 2003; IFERA, 2003). Furthermore, about 35 per cent of S&P 500 companies and 37% of Fortune 500 companies are family firms (Anderson and Reeb, 2003; Villalonga and Amit, 2006). Family members are a notable source of business investment and 85% of all start-up companies are established using family money (European Family Businesses, 2012).

Family firms are a major component of the Irish economic landscape. Approximately 75% of all firms in Ireland are family-owned enterprises that together contribute an estimated 50% of private sector employment (Mandl, 2008). Taken collectively, our sample of twelve Fingal-based family firms employs approximately 4,000 people. Evidence shows that Irish family firms are growth oriented, with 86% of firms planning to grow over the next five years and almost 30% planning to further their internationalisation efforts (PwC, 2014).



***“For generations, the heartbeat of Ireland has been driven by family businesses”***

*An Taoiseach Enda Kenny*

## Resilience

Recent research has indicated that family firms are more resilient than their non-family counterparts in times of economic adversity. A US study (Kachaner, Stalk and Bloch, 2012) found that the average long-term financial performance for family firms was higher than for their non-family counterparts. As supported by these insights, family CEOs often make long-term decisions for the benefit of future generations and place more emphasis on resilience than performance (Kachaner, Stalk and Bloch, 2012).

In the UK, a joint report found that between 2007 and 2009, UK privately held family firms had lower insolvency rates than their non-family counterparts (NUBS and CMRC, 2010). During the recession, UK family firms had greater success at accessing finance; in 2010, 76% of SME family firms that applied for external funding were successful compared to 68% of non-family SME firms (Institute for Family Business, 2011). In 2012, in the wake of the recession, the number of family firms in the Irish services sector (49,000) was consistent with the numbers in 2006 and 2007 (pre-recession) and higher than the number of firms in 2004 and 2005 (DCU Centre for Family Business, 2016).

This begs the question as to why family firms are considered more resilient. It's argued that families have 'survivability capital', whereby the family shares and loans their pool of resources to ensure business survival. Family members are more inclined to provide loaned or free work, or extra investment to ensure business durability during a difficult financial period, an unsuccessful venture, etc. (Sirmon and Hitt, 2003). Furthermore, the emotional investment and commitment to the business by the family drives these added efforts.

## The problems

While family firms can be advantaged, there are still major challenges to business continuity. Passing the business to the next generation still remains the largest threat to business survival: research indicates that only approximately 30% survive beyond the first generation, about 12% survive to the third and an expected 4% survive to the fourth (Ward, 2010). So what causes business failure for approximately seven out of ten founding family firms? The prevailing reason is that no family member is willing or capable to take over the business. No plans for succession or handling family conflict are also major factors.

While 78% of Irish family firms have at least one procedure in place for resolving conflict, very few have adopted conflict prevention measures such as a family council or family constitution (PwC, 2014). Conflict can arise for many reasons, such as insufficient preparation for generational transitions; a fragmented or unclear business vision caused by disconnected or disgruntled family shareholders; and an increased number of family business members, leading to power struggles, office politics, and a neglected business (Kets de Vries, Carlock and Florent-Treacy, 2007).

## The aim

DCU Centre for Family Business has joined with Fingal County Council to showcase a sample of family firms in Fingal, highlight their economic and social contribution, and emphasize the supports, both family and business related, that can aid these firms' continued prosperity. So what lessons can be gleaned from successful multi-generational family firms in terms of resilience and success? This study looks at the strengths, challenges, and learnings of twelve family firms in Fingal to understand this and more.

# 3. Business community within Fingal

## 3.1 Profile of Fingal

- In terms of the economy, Fingal has a very diverse enterprise base, driven by the County's strategic location. The number of active businesses in Fingal actually increased by 4.5% from 2010–2014. There are about 5,876 businesses, which indicate that even during the more difficult years, the Fingal economy was still reasonably resilient and expanding (Fingal County Council 2014 rates database).

- The key sectors of business operating in the Fingal area include the ICT, Aviation, Transport, Agri-Food and Healthcare/Pharmaceutical sectors. The Food and Beverage/Agribusiness sector is a traditional and growing industry in Fingal and includes Keelings, Donnelly Fruit & Veg, Wrights, Country Crest, Sam Dennigan and Keogh's amongst other household names who are major (family business) employers. These represent significant clusters of activity, which use Fingal, because of its location and assets, as their headquarters/operating base.

- Agriculture is one of Fingal's most important sectors. The region's 600 farmers are estimated to produce 14.5% of national potato output, 47% of field vegetable output and 37% of protected fruits, vegetables and nursery plants (Fingal County Council, 2015a). Fingal's horticulture sector is believed to contribute in excess of €320m to national farm output (Fingal County Council, 2015a).



- Fingal County Council has a particular focus on three distinct groups of business: (1) the FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) sector, working in conjunction with IDA Ireland; (2) the indigenous sector, working with Enterprise Ireland and others such as Fingal LEADER partnership<sup>2</sup>; and (3) supporting micro and small businesses, entrepreneurs and rural businesses through the Fingal LEO (Local Enterprise Office)<sup>3</sup> and LEADER initiative.

- Approximately €500 million in revenue is generated by visitors to Fingal which supports an estimated total of 20,000 jobs (Fingal County Council, 2015b). Fingal's tourism is largely reliant on two groups: 1. Day trip visitors who mainly seek coastal locations and heritage attractions; 2. Stay-over visitors, placed mainly around Dublin Airport (Fingal County Council, 2015b). Fingal's tourism sector is comprised of a large cohort of SMEs with guest accommodation supporting an estimated 3,000 full-time job equivalents and the catering sector providing a further 2000 jobs (Fingal County Council, 2015b).

- Fingal county has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country and the highest labour force participation rate at 68.4% (CSO Census, 2011).

## Family Business in Fingal

Relatively little is known about family business in Fingal, be it their number, challenges or exact social and economic contribution. However, the family business sector is not invisible nor a minority; in fact, it features prominently across many sectors including agriculture, fisheries, services, hospitality and catering. There are many renowned family business names in Fingal with rich heritages and long associations in the county. In commissioning this report, Fingal County Council aim to uncover the reality of operating a family business in the Fingal region. In doing so, a comprehensive view of the firm should be adopted i.e., a review of both business operations and family relations. A summary of the twelve family business participants can be reviewed on the following page.

<sup>2</sup> The LEADER Initiative was established by the European Commission in 1991 and is a method of mobilising and delivering rural development in local rural communities. The LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 will provide €250 million in financial resources to address poverty reduction, social inclusion and economic development of rural areas over the 2014-2020 programme period (environ.ie, 2014).




<sup>3</sup> The Local Enterprise Office provides advice, information on and support in starting up or growing your business. With 31 dedicated teams across the Local Authority network in Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices offer you a wide range of experience, skills and services. The Local Enterprise Office is for people interested in starting up a new business or already in business including entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, start-ups and small business looking to expand.

### 3.2 Family Business Participants

Logo	Company name	Core activities	Controlling family	Gen #	Turnover	Employee numbers
	Keelings	Growing, sourcing, shipping, marketing and distributing fresh produce.	Keeling	3rd	100 M+	2,282
	Donnelly Fruit & Veg	Fresh food wholesaler/grower/importer; Prepared food producer; Crate wash and rental.	Donnelly	3rd	80-100 M	330
	Wrights of Howth	Fishing; fish processing; retail, wholesale and export of fish; food and beverage; hospitality.	Wright	4th	20-40 M	290
	Country Crest	Wash, grade, package and sale of vegetables.	Hoey	4th	40-80 M	235
	Rockabill Seafood	Fishing; Buying, exporting and processing of fish and shellfish	Price	2nd	20-40 M	220
	Grand Hotel Malahide	Hospitality; Food and beverage.	Ryan	2nd	10-20 M	180
	Stafford Lynch	Services (import, distribution, sales and marketing of fast moving consumer goods).	Lynch	2nd	40-80 M	100
	Dorans on the Pier	Fishing; Import and sale of fish; Food and beverage.	Doran	2nd	5-10 M	100
	Jenkinson Logistics	The provision of liner agency, freight forwarding, warehousing and ancillary services.	Jenkinson	2nd	20-40 M	76





Logo	Company name	Core activities	Controlling family	Gen #	Turnover	Employee numbers
	Keogh's	Farming, processing and wholesale of potatoes; Crisp manufacturer.	Keogh	3rd	5-15 M	62*
	Tully Nurseries	Horticulture; Supplier of plants.	Tully	2nd	1-5 M	50
	J.H. McLoughlin Balbriggan	Oil Distributer; Grocery and petrol retailing.	McLoughlin	3rd	1-5 M	36

\*Can vary depending on season

Source: DCU Centre for Family Business and Fingal County Council, 2016.

### 3.3 Map of headquarters within Fingal



Company	Location	Company	Location
Stafford Lynch	Blanchardstown.	Keogh's	Oldtown.
Country Crest	Lusk.	Tully Nurseries & Plant Centre	Ballyboughal.
Jenkinson Logistics	Cloghran.	Keelings	FoodCentral, St.Margaret's.
Grand Hotel	Malahide.	Donnelly Fruit & Veg	FoodCentral, St.Margaret's.
Rockabill Seafood	Balbriggan.	J.H. McLoughlin Oil	Balbriggan.
Wrights of Howth	The Pier, Howth.	Dorans on the Pier	The Pier, Howth.



## 4. Case Studies

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J.H. McLoughlin Balbriggan	37



CEO Keelings Retail,  
David Keeling

**“It’s very often run on the basis of what’s good for the business. That’s the key to success for the business as well as having a lot of very good people.”** -

DAVID KEELING

## Case study: Keelings

### Company Background

In 1926, the grandparents of the current Keeling siblings began growing rhubarb on their land in St. Margaret’s, Fingal, North County Dublin. Soon the family were producing apples, strawberries and tomatoes and exporting flower bulbs to the UK. Throughout the 1940’s, the business operated as a small farm producer, selling their products at the Dublin Fruit market. The second generation became involved and son, Joe Keeling, established Keelings wholesale in 1973.

From growing own produce, Keelings transitioned to buying from growers, both nationally and globally, and selling to independent retailers and the services and catering industries. In the 1980’s, the farm expanded and Keelings became a fresh food supplier for national supermarkets including Dunnes Stores and Quinnsworth. Supermarket retail gradually overtook the wholesale side and their product range expanded. Keelings is an exemplar of rapid expansion; from its humble beginnings the company now boasts five divisions, imports from 42 countries, and operates in European, Asian and African markets.

### Family Involvement

Despite the company’s expansion, the family remains largely involved in management and ownership. Joe Keeling remains in the business as Chairman. His daughter, Caroline is CEO and part of her overall management is developing Keelings Solutions, the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) facet of the business. Joe’s son, William, is property director and oversees the businesses in the UK. His other son, David leads the retail side from FoodCentral.

David had this to say on the sibling-manager dynamic: “I think it has worked very well that we’ve tended to have our own areas that we’ve worked in and developed.”

Family governance is an important feature of Keelings which has a family charter in place and holds shareholder meetings four times a year. The separation of family and business issues is clearly defined: “We’ve got a business that has over 2,000 staff so it’s very important that it’s run as a business and not as a family.”



<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Keeling family.
<b>Business size</b>	Large.
<b>Core activities</b>	Growing, sourcing, shipping, marketing and distributing fruit, vegetables, flowers.
<b>Divisions</b>	Keelings Retail, Keelings Market, Keelings Farm Fresh, Keelings International and Keelings Solutions.
<b>Address</b>	FoodCentral, St. Margaret's.
<b>Age</b>	42 years.
<b>Generation</b>	Third.
<b>Employee no</b>	2,282 (three family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€100M+ (group turnover).
<b>International bases</b>	UK, Netherlands.
<b>Export Markets</b>	Keelings Asia & Africa (fresh produce solutions)
<b>Main Brand</b>	"Love to Grow"
<b>Key Finding</b>	Process innovation.

## Keelings - Process Innovation in Family Business

The drive for innovation features across each of the three Keeling generations; from fruit growing and glasshouse production, to the wholesale business, to a large international portfolio company. "It's a combination of many people's ideas and hard work and then we probably make particularly quick decisions. We're relatively entrepreneurial", says David. Keelings lead the way in pioneering processes for fruit production in Ireland. "The drive for innovation comes from the pressure from consumers and retailers to continually get better every time".

In the 1980's, Joe Keeling requested daily data on company profits which led to the development of the Keelings ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system software. This incremental innovation was developed over 30 years and in 2011, Keelings Solutions was established and the software came on the market. This division sells industry-focused solutions in stock management, sales and procurement management, warehouse and production planning, quality assurance and food safety management. Their experience of food production formed a sound basis for their progression into system management: "We're not just selling our system; we're selling our expertise and how to run a produce business". Keelings has made strides in infrastructural innovation, opening Ireland's National Food Park, FoodCentral, in 2010. "We just looked at our site and could see there were a number of benefits in being located where we are". This 113 hectare food industry park is ideally located, in proximity to Dublin Airport, Port Tunnel and M50 motorway. One of the company's major developments was their state-of-the-art glasshouses that extend the growing season from March to December. Keelings provide a significant percentage of all Irish-grown peppers.

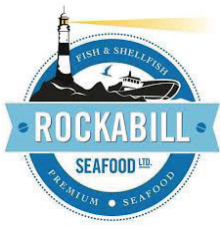
Year	Keelings Direct	Agency	Total	Total FTE
2011	1746	367	2113	2040
2012	1666	391	2057	1979
2013	1700	477	2177	2082
2014	1767	483*	2250	2105
2015	1845	437**	2282	2238

### Employment Numbers (2011-2015)

\* Higher % agency staff working 20 hours per week

\*\* Drop in agency as greater % working full-time hours





Bill and Alan Price, co-managers of the Rockabill Group

## Case study: Rockabill Seafood Ltd.

### Company Background

The Price family has been involved in the fishing industry for over 30 years. Bill Price became a fisherman, like his father, and bought a truck so he could purchase and sell fish. Later, he secured a boat: the first of fourteen trawlers owned by the company today. In 1983, Bill established Rockabill Seafood Ltd. and built the company's processing plant in Balbriggan in 1998. The plant processes shellfish from live to frozen for retail own brand and company brand, "Taste of the Sea". The founder's son, Alan, has driven internationalisation in the company which is now almost 100% exports. The Rockabill Group has nine operations including three processing plants nationwide and a crab factory in England. The group is an exemplar of internationalisation, exporting to 24 countries, and selling to 200 suppliers globally.

**"WE EAT, SLEEP, AND BREATHE IT. WE KNOW EVERY DECISION."**

- BILL PRICE

**Interview with Bill and Alan Price**  
*Father and son joint managing directors of Rockabill Seafood Ltd.*

### Family Involvement

The founder Bill, and his son Alan, co-manage the Rockabill Group. There are two other sons who work as employees in non-managerial roles. From a young age, Alan became involved in the business. He spent considerable time on the fishing vessels learning the skills and knowledge of the industry, just as Bill had from his father. Once Alan began working in the business full time, he introduced ideas for business growth and success.

"I wanted to grow and expand the business. I asked for a fridge van as my first vehicle so I could buy cockles for the company."

The founder's risk profile has changed with time. "I'm at the stage to be cautious. I was lucky to have him coming behind me. He was vigorous" — Bill. While Bill is lessening his involvement, Alan is driving forward new projects and business development, including diversification. "I still have strong opinions. We're both entrepreneurs" — Bill.

The fishing industry is difficult both in terms of physical labour and the unpredictability of raw supply. Clearly, both Bill and Alan are passionate about their work: "I love it, if I wasn't in this factory I'd be fishing on a boat" — Alan.

### Plant Expansion and Development

Alan and Bill have led the upgrade of production facilities for Rockabill. In 2015, the team completed a €3.5 million extension to their processing facilities in Balbriggan, making them the largest investors in Irish seafood processing for that year. The BRC accredited processing plant now has four cold stores.



Rockabill Processing Locations

## Rockabill Seafood - Internationalisation in Family Business

Horizontal integration through exports has been a major strategic feature of Rockabill Seafood Ltd. The company was named “Seafood Exporter of the Year” at the Export Industry Awards 2013. With 200 international suppliers against only ten Irish, Rockabill is almost completely export driven. The reason for this is due to Irish consumer tastes, says Alan: “Irish consumption of seafood per annum is 16 kilos per adult compared to 70 kilos on the continent”. In 2000, the company embarked on its first international venture by selling fish to Spain. Alan drove international growth, with the company now supplying to 24 countries globally. Later, BIM (Bord Iascaigh Mhara) approached the company to arrange a joint marketing venture in China with another Irish seafood company. In 2012, Rockabill and Atlanfish joined together to target Chinese exports and established a new brand, Atlantic Gold. Rockabill sells live product to their international markets, including €6m worth of live product into Hong Kong. “We’re developing the Dublin Bay prawns over there (China)” says Alan. Alan and Bill quickly learnt the nuances of the Chinese market, including consumer preferences and price setting, finding that when they first branched out there the “competition between companies was cut-throat”.

In another important international move, Alan and Bill bought a crab factory in Scarborough. The business was a family firm, left to a son after the sudden death of his father. “We’ve been with them a couple of months and already we’ve increased employees from 5 to 25. We’re bringing a full management structure to the business” — Alan. Undoubtedly, their combined experience operating a family firm was an important factor in this acquisition.

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Price family.
<b>Business size</b>	Medium.
<b>Core activities</b>	Buyer, processor and exporter of fish and shellfish.
<b>Businesses</b>	Nine businesses as part of the Rockabill Group (including Rockabill N.I Ltd.).
<b>Address</b>	Stephenstown Industrial Estate, Balbriggan.
<b>Age</b>	32 years.
<b>Generation</b>	Second (however, the Prices’ fishing lineage dates back over three generations).
<b>Employee no</b>	220 (four family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€20-40M (group turnover).
<b>Export markets</b>	24 (e.g., Spain, China, New Zealand, US).
<b>Main brand</b>	“Taste of the Sea”.
<b>Key finding</b>	Internationalisation strategy.



Head office in Balbriggan



*Managing Director,  
Gareth Jenkinson*

## **Case study:** *Jenkinson Logistics*

### **Company Background**

In 1975, Neville Jenkinson established a ship liner agency in Dublin, marking the start of Jenkinson Logistics. Prior to this he worked for a large shipping company in England and used this industry knowledge and expertise to serve shipping lines from Ireland. From representing some shipping lines, the company grew and so did the services provided. A container depot was established and following this a feeder service which carried short-haul ship freight from Dublin's small port to larger ports like Rotterdam. In 1999, the company acquired James P. Jones and Sons, a substantial air and road freight company; two areas that Jenkinson Logistics wanted to develop. Gareth Jenkinson, son of the founder, joined the business in the 1990s. The company has expanded both geographically and via its range of services, now facilitating air and road freight, freight management, and warehousing. The company serves a large customer base from small Irish companies to MNCs and is based in Dublin, Cork, Shannon, and Belfast.

## **Interview with Gareth Jenkinson** *CEO of Jenkinson Logistics*

### *Family Involvement*

The company is completely family owned by Gareth, his sister, and their parents. Gareth finds being family owned and indigenous makes the company distinguishable from its competitors which are mainly multi-national corporations. "It does make us different that we're family owned. Maybe we can do things differently internally. We don't have the same pressure, we don't have to report like some MNC." However, he does believe that with family's lengthy involvement, there is a danger that the business may stagnate or fall behind so the need for innovative ideas and attention to the market are paramount.

The founder, Neville, was an entrepreneurial leader who advocated delegation by recruiting people with the necessary skillset to implement company plans. "He would prefer when people took their own initiative and would go off and develop their individual business." Over the years, Neville became less involved in the day-to-day operations, increasingly so following the sale of a joint venture in 1996. By 2005, he was in effect a non-executive Chairman.

"When I did join, my father wasn't breathing down my neck, he was disengaging at that stage. There was a professional management team in place", he said. As CEO of Jenkinson Logistics, Gareth is currently the only other family member involved. Gareth describes his first months in the company as "a baptism of fire" given that he was sent to the company's cold store in Limerick to handle a turbulent situation. His responsibility grew and he was appointed to oversee a smaller operation, the company's warehouse in Cork.

"My father was happy enough to let me have that. He was always there to talk to."





## Acquisition and Development

In 1999, Jenkinson Logistics acquired a long established freight forwarder known as James P. Jones & Sons. The companies traded separately until 2010 when their activities became consolidated as part of the Jenkinson Logistics Group. This acquisition provided an opportunity to attain more resources and expertise in air and road freight, so the company could then develop these industries. In 2000, the Jenkinson staff moved into the James P. Jones & Sons office in Airways Industrial Estate beside Dublin Airport, an ideal location to conduct air, road and sea freight operations. Further to this, the company has looked at other potential acquisitions, both in the UK and Ireland. "We thought of acquiring smaller freight companies in Ireland, for example, if someone is retiring."

In terms of development, the company entered a joint venture with a partner in the Gulf States to develop chilled food exports to the Middle East. Jenkinson Logistics will buy and export Irish goods to the Middle East and their partner, with the relevant retail knowledge, will sell and market the products.

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Jenkinson family.
<b>Business size</b>	Medium.
<b>Core activities</b>	The provision of liner agency, freight forwarding, warehousing and ancillary services.
<b>Divisions</b>	Air freight; sea freight; road freight; project shipments; warehousing/logistics/freight management.
<b>Address</b>	36 Airways Industrial Estate, Cloghran.
<b>Age</b>	40 years old.
<b>Generation</b>	Second.
<b>Employee no</b>	76.
<b>Turnover range</b>	€20-40M (group turnover).
<b>Key finding</b>	Long term outlook.

## Jenkinson Logistics - Long Term Perspective in Family Business

After 40 years in business, Jenkinson Logistics has grown expansively via incremental developments. "Some of the things can take an awful long time to come to fruition" reflected Gareth. "Maybe we can take a longer term view at developing things that other companies may not." According to existing research, family firms often adopt a long term perspective, such as setting and meeting future goals and making long term investments. Jenkinson Logistics invests large immediate amounts for future reward. "We do own the warehouse in Cork whereas the MNCs would rent a place for ten years. It can give you a different long term perspective."

In Jenkinson Logistics, the founder led the company for thirty years followed by his son who is in his tenth year as CEO. Being far-sighted and less bureaucratic than other organisations has been important for company development. "It's a combination of patience and if you believe in something. Whereas an Irish branch of a MNC freight company would have to justify everything they spend and report every quarter. It's a different ethos". This long-term view extends to the management's relationship with its customers and staff. "We have customers we've had for a long time, we don't lose many. We find if we concentrate on the customer service and keep the pricing fair than they do tend to stick with us".





*Managing Director of Keogh's Crisps,  
Tom Keogh*

## **Case study: Keogh's**

### **Company Background**

Dating back to before 1832, generations of the Keogh's family have farmed the land in North County Dublin, producing crops, and selling them at the Dublin City markets. In the 1960s, the current generation's grandfather built glasshouses on the land and became known for tomato growing and producing. Second generation brothers, Peter and Anthony Keogh, began growing cauliflower, sprouts, broccoli and potatoes and established Peter Keogh & Sons in 1975. The following year they built one of the first Irish cold stores for potatoes, allowing them to provide all-year supply to the market. The third generation, led by Tom Keogh, diversified the core business, and established the largely successful Keogh's Crisps in 2011. The business grew from 12 employees and an entirely wholesale consumer base to suppliers of retail groups, Musgraves and BWG and exporter to 14 countries. Keogh's maintain the family business' tradition while adapting and innovating in line with market demand.

**“IT TOOK ABOUT FIVE YEARS TO GET THE BUSINESS OFF THE GROUND AND IT HAD TO DO WITH KNOWLEDGE. I NEEDED THE KNOWLEDGE TO MAKE A REALLY GOOD PRODUCT.”** - TOM KEOGH

### **Interview with Tom Keogh**

*Managing Director of Keogh's Crisps and General Manager of Peter Keogh & Sons.*

#### *Family Involvement*

Keogh's is 100% family owned and run. Brothers, Peter and Anthony, are still involved in the core business, Peter Keogh & Sons, but the main managerial responsibilities have been passed to the second generation. In the potato business, Tom is general manager, his brother, Ross oversees the factory, and his cousin, Derek is based mainly in farming operations. In the crisp business, Tom is the Managing Director and Derek and Ross are also directors. Keogh's grew through forward integration; instead of supplying their product to other crisp manufacturers, they established their own crisping business.

Potato is an essential ingredient of Keogh's crisp, so potato farming knowledge is vital to success: “That business would not be what it is today if we didn't have access to the best raw material in the country from our own farms. That relied heavily on expertise of my dad and uncle.” Tom would appear to be 'a jack of all trades' as he says: “I'm lucky in that I have a small foundation in almost everything”. Tom's interest in all business aspects, including finance, marketing and, of course, production, is accredited to his farming



upbringing and propensity for learning. "When you were young, if you broke something you fixed it. That led me to building a factory and there's a lot of machinery in there that we built ourselves." While Tom possesses a strong knowledge base, there were certain aspects that proved difficult when running the crisp business: "I had to learn so much from dealing with the retailers." Tom is building a management team of experts and appointed a full-time accountant in 2015.

### Diversification

Diversification has been key to Keogh's survival and growth. Introducing new brands such as the Selena potato (selenium enriched variety), Keogh's crisps (variations including gluten-free) and Keogh's Easy Cook potatoes (a world first innovation for Keogh's) has allowed the company to adapt in a market where potato consumption was steadily decreasing. However, while domestic sales for crisps haven't slowed down, Tom is conscious that this will likely change in the future. In preparation for this "there will be a lot of new product additions into the business".

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Keogh family.
<b>Business size</b>	Medium.
<b>Core activities</b>	Farming, processing, and wholesaling of potatoes. Crisping business.
<b>Businesses</b>	Peter Keogh & Sons Ltd., Keoghs Crisps Ltd.
<b>Address</b>	Westpalstown, Oldtown.
<b>Age</b>	41 years old (Peter Keogh & Sons Ltd.) 5 years old (Keogh's Crisps Ltd.)
<b>Generation</b>	Third.
<b>Employee no</b>	62 (27 working in the crisp side and 35 in the potato side, five family members involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€5-15m (group turnover).
<b>Export markets</b>	14 (e.g., UK, Germany, France, Saudi Arabia).
<b>Main brand</b>	"Keogh's-Grown with love in Ireland".
<b>Key finding</b>	Award-winning marketing initiatives.

## Keogh's -

### Marketing in Family Business

While Keoghs have always taken pride in their farming family lineage, it is only within recent years they've leveraged this important affiliation through their marketing strategy. In 2008, the business was newly re-branded with a simple yet effective tagline "Grown with love in Ireland". Through focus groups, the team determined that customers preferred the family branded product over its retail branded equal. According to Tom: "The reason they went for it is because they thought these people know about potatoes and if someone's going to develop a new and innovative product these guys are going to know how do it". Together with a branding agency, Keogh's developed a brand that was in keeping with the evolution of their farming family: "The family story is a great story to tell. Consumers can relate to it straight away". Keogh's now export to 14 countries, but Tom has yet to see if the family business image is culturally transferrable. Initially, Tom was nervous about international consumers' reaction to the name 'Keogh' but after some market research it was revealed that consumers found the name exotic. In fact, in China, the phonetic translation of Keogh is "a long journey to a distant farm"—both a fitting descriptor and effective marketing tool. Tom Keogh has been at the forefront of marketing efforts in Keogh's and in November 2015, he was named Marketer of the Year. "I have no qualification in marketing. When I began the marketing stuff I loved it and I had a bit of a flare for it." Seasonal crisp varieties, such as Roast Turkey and Stuffing for Christmas and Shamrock and Sour Cream for St. Patrick's Day, have allowed Keogh's to differentiate from other luxury crisp competitors.





Managing Director, Mark Wright

## Case Study: Wrights of Howth

### Company Background

In 1904, Michael Wright established the family's first fish and grocery shop in Malahide, Dublin, named M. Wright & Sons. Michael began smoking Irish salmon, a craft that has passed along the generations of Wrights. His son, Patrick Wright, continued this line of work when he opened a third M. Wright & Sons in Marino in 1930. This business was continued (now known as Wright's of Marino) by his son, John while his other son, Michael, established Wrights of Howth in 1965. Michael set up the first main smokehouse in Howth. His son, Mark, now the fourth generation, expanded the business by entering the food and beverage sector, which accounts for 65% of the existing business' operations. An entrepreneurial spirit runs in the family with Mark's brother Michael running a string of establishments such as Findlater, Café Bar Swords, and the Wright Venue under the Michael JF. Wright Hospitality Group. As managing director of Wrights of Howth group, Mark has led this diverse business portfolio that includes bars (e.g., The Galway Hooker), restaurants (e.g., The Seafood Bar), catering, retail (e.g., Wrights of Howth airport shop), wholesale and export of fish to approximately 50 international markets.

## Interview with Mark Wright

### Managing Director of Wrights of Howth

#### Family Involvement

There are three family members actively involved and in directorships in Wrights of Howth: Mark, his mother, Bernie and his sister, Aishling. There are also three non-family directors actively involved. There are no formal family governance structures in place but there is a family meeting held on an occasional basis. Mark joined the company in 1983 and has been Managing Director for 15 years. He entered the business straight from school and later studied a part-time marketing degree. "I always worked in the business over summers and holidays so it was a natural progression into the business" he said. In regards to next generation involvement, Mark's kids have worked in the business for years. If they were to join in a formal managerial capacity, Mark would insist that they "do something outside the business and then come back into the business, bringing value to it". As successor to the business, Mark would like to see the Wright's legacy continue but he is open to non-family management. He sees the Wright family as care-takers of the business: "We're minding it rather than it's ours."

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by the Wright family.
<b>Business size</b>	Medium.
<b>Core activities</b>	Fishing; fish processing; retail, wholesale and export of fish; food and beverage; hospitality.
<b>Address</b>	14 West Pier, Howth.
<b>Age</b>	50 years old.
<b>Generation</b>	Fourth.
<b>Employee no</b>	290 (three family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€20-40M (group turnover).
<b>Export markets</b>	50 (e.g., France, Germany, Hong Kong).
<b>Key finding</b>	Diversifying in the interest of the family.

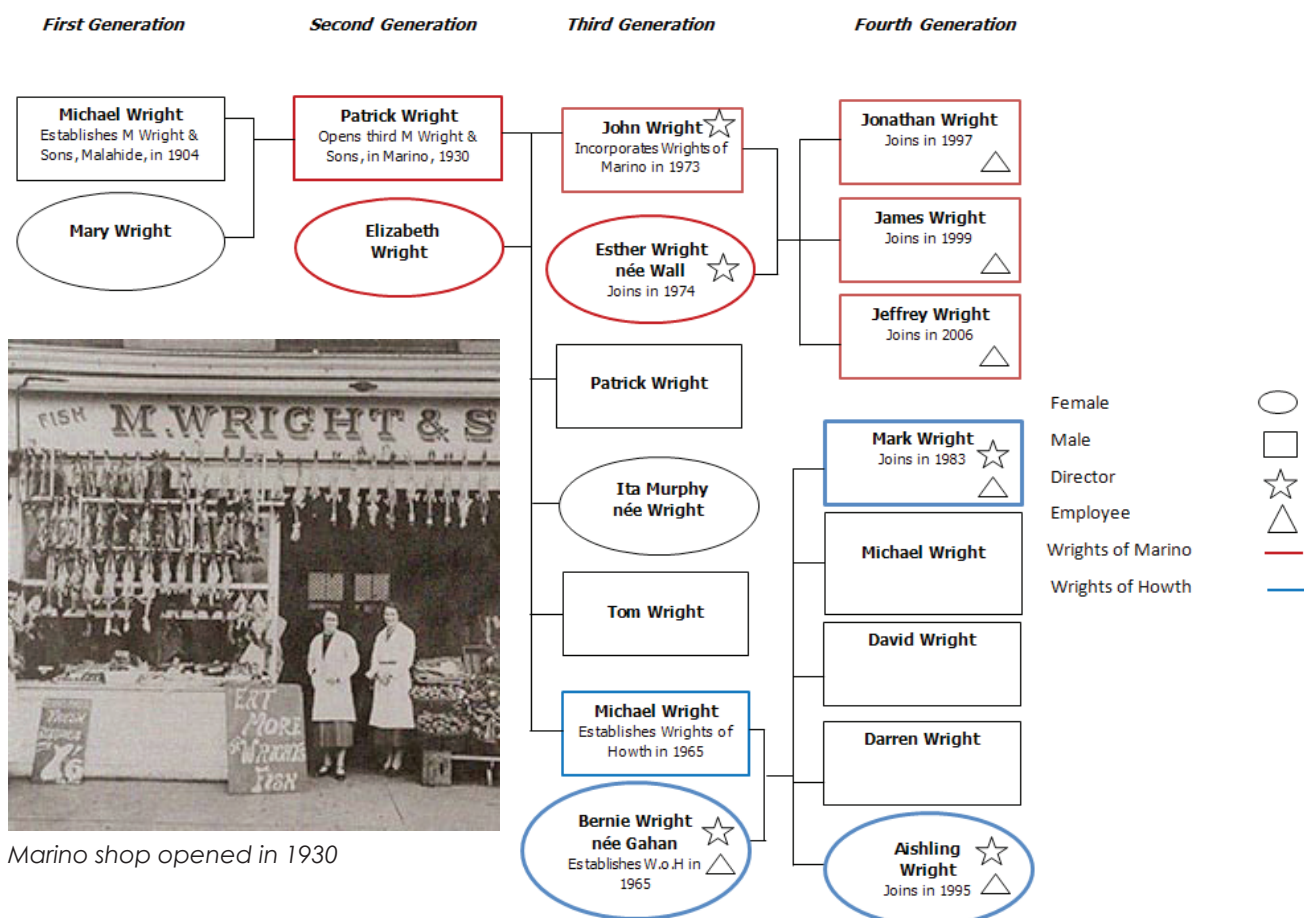


## Wrights of Howth - Diversification in Family Business

Diversifying away from the family business core activity may sometimes prove necessary in long established family firms with large family involvement. These portfolio businesses can facilitate multiple successions and career opportunities for the wider family. In the case of the Wright family, the third generation made the split from the original business, Wright's of Marino. "He (Michael Wright) had two younger brothers who wanted to come into the business but it wasn't big enough at the time to have them all in the business and draw a salary. So he moved out to Howth to form Wrights of Howth." The

two brothers and their families ran Wright's of Marino and of Howth with a focus on specialisation, the former in wholesale to restaurants and hotels, and the latter in exporting and fish smoking. In Wrights of Howth, Mark led diversification into the food and beverage sector. "I suppose it was a necessity in family business. There were almost too many family members for the size of the business at different stages so it was split into different groupings and different people would focus on various elements of the business." The family group acquired a number of bars, providing an opportunity for further development of the Wright family empire. "Michael moved out of the family business over 20 years ago...he went on to develop Wrights Anglers Rest, Wright's Café Bar and Findlater Howth, among others." Now, Michael runs Michael JF Wright Hospitality Group, Mark manages Wrights of Howth and their cousins Jonathan, James and Jeffrey oversee Wright's of Marino.

The four generations of Wrights in family business are presented in the abridged family tree





Director, Eimear Lynch

## Case Study: Stafford Lynch

### Company Background

Stafford Lynch Ltd. was established in 1974 by Matt Lynch and Ray Stafford, two former colleagues of a large Irish food company. The two men established a partnership that would become one of Ireland's leading privately owned, multi-channel sales, marketing and distribution services provider. The company imports global brands such as Schwartz, Kleenex, and Wilkinson Sword, and distributes these, in addition to Irish brands (e.g., Linwoods and Sudocrem), to Ireland's retail sector. The company's distribution fleet ensures nationwide delivery and UK and European access. In 1990, the Lynch family acquired Stafford shareholding but kept the shared name of Stafford Lynch Ltd. The company's main clientele are the retail and grocery sector which has undergone huge change in the last two decades. Following the recession and upheaval of this core industry, Stafford Lynch has remained competitive by continuously upgrading their business systems, identifying emerging consumer trends, and continually providing an efficient and cost-effective service to both their multinational and Irish brands

**“What is important to us is that the business as an entity in itself prospers.”** - Eimear Lynch

### Interview with Eimear Lynch

*Director at Stafford Lynch Ltd.*

#### *Family Involvement*

Stafford Lynch is 100% owned by the Lynch family. Chairman and founder, Matthew Lynch, is still involved in the operations of the company. His daughter, Eimear Lynch, joined the company as the Marketing Co-ordinator in 1992. This followed her degree in International Marketing with French and German from DCU and international work experience. Another daughter, Una, whose educational and professional experience relates to the catering industry, joined and set up the company's Food Services Division. Their brother, Garrett Lynch, first joined as a sales representative following a course in Marketing and is now the Food Services Director. A second brother, Kevin Lynch, is not actively involved in the business but is a board member. The family has a weekly meeting with the senior management team where they discuss both daily business and wider strategic issues. There is also a quarterly board meeting where all directors, both family and non-family, meet. In addition, an annual planning board meeting occurs where the long term plans and strategic vision for the company are discussed.





### Greater Efficiency and Innovation

In order to operate efficiently, the company has invested heavily in upgrading their technology. They created the role of Operations and I.T Manager to ensure this aspect of the company is continuously advanced. "We are very systems orientated. Stock systems, sales management systems, exchange information." They provide a multitude of support services to their customers such as inventory management and demand planning and forecasting. Another form of innovation is the types of products the company introduces to the Irish market. "When we started bringing in soy sauce 25 years ago people didn't really know what it was. We've been innovative in spotting emerging trends." Today, the company imports products worldwide from countries such as Singapore, Germany and the USA.

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Lynch family.
<b>Business size</b>	Medium.
<b>Core activities</b>	Importing, distribution, sales and marketing of fast moving consumer goods.
<b>Services</b>	Retail & Grocery; Food services; Pharmaceuticals; Services & IT; Warehousing.
<b>Address</b>	101 Northwest Business Park, Blanchardstown.
<b>Age</b>	41 years old.
<b>Generation</b>	Second.
<b>Employee no</b>	100 (four family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€40-80 M (group turnover).
<b>Export markets</b>	Northern Ireland.
<b>Import markets</b>	UK, USA, Singapore, Holland, Germany, Italy.
<b>Key finding</b>	Family and non-family work dynamic.

### Stafford Lynch -

## Family and Non-Family Work Dynamic in Family Business

Establishing an open, communicative and fair relationship between family and non-family is not only important for staff harmony and morale but, also, overall firm performance. In Stafford Lynch, there is a good working relationship between family and staff with very low staff turnover, according to Eimear. "We don't always agree but I have an absolute abhorrence of group think. I much prefer people to be the devil's advocate and question everything we do. It's a very respectful relationship." The intention is to retain family ownership and control through the board, while the senior management team (including mainly non-family professionals) runs the company, which Eimear describes as "a successful model for us". The closeness of non-family members to company decisions enables an autonomous work environment. "We are not a bureaucratic organisation.... For those who like challenges and like to make decisions and see them implemented, working in a small environment or a family business can be good." The company adopts a personal approach to individual staff members and their concerns. "We are a very understanding organisation. If people have difficulties, if somebody has a sick child, someone's parent is unwell, we don't go 'oh you took your 20 days so no more'." This is reflected by the low staff turnover in the organisation with some employees working within the business for 25-30 years.

Some of the premium brands Stafford Lynch distribute throughout Ireland





Managing Director, Michael Hoey

## Case Study: Country Crest

### Company Background

The Hoey family's farming heritage dates back to the 1850s in Lusk, North County Dublin. Fourth generation family members and brothers, Michael and Gabriel Hoey, established Country Crest in 1994. Their main operation was growing and packaging fresh potatoes for the retail sector. As potato consumption dropped the company diversified into onions, and invested €4 million in a state-of-the-art onion grading, packaging and primary storage facility in 2005. In answer to consumer needs, Country Crest began manufacturing and supplying vegetable accompaniments and prepared food and founded their company, Ballymaguire Foods, in 2008. The company is hands-on regarding sustainability and, in 2009, they procured an 80 metre on-site wind turbine that supplies the company with 70% of its energy needs. The Hoey's farm over 3,000 acres, while they oversee another 4,000 acres of crops for other farmers and run a bustling multi-division company that supplies to multiple retailers in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK (Musgraves, Booker Group PLC and

**“It’s all about long-term strategy....a company that doesn’t have a focus or goal is lost.”**

— Michael Hoey

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Hoey family.
<b>Business size</b>	Medium.
<b>Core activities</b>	Wash, grade, package and sale of vegetables.
<b>Divisions</b>	Fresh produce; farming; prepared meal solutions; farm shop.
<b>Address</b>	Rathmooney, Lusk.
<b>Age</b>	22 years old.
<b>Generation</b>	Fourth.
<b>Employee no</b>	235 (two family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€40-80M (group turnover).
<b>Export markets</b>	Northern Ireland and the UK.
<b>Main brands</b>	Ballymaguire Foods, Country Crest.
<b>Key finding</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility.

Food Services UK). Despite its expansive operations, the company ethos revolves around care-giving and environmental reciprocity; a powerful message that is supported by its owner-manager.



Co-founders, Gabriel and Michael Hoey

## Interview with Michael Hoey

### Managing Director of Country Crest

#### *Family Involvement*

Currently, both Gabriel and Michael run the company. However, in the future, Michael sees company management expanding beyond the family unit. "Our thinking probably would be that Country Crest is bigger than Gabriel and myself and we don't want to stifle the company as such. So there will probably be outside people coming in". Next generation involvement has not emerged yet but it's something Michael would like to address formally in the near future. "One thing that I would be very adamant is that they would go somewhere else for a few years and then make up their mind. I don't want to drag anyone in here from college". This is part of the formal family governance structures Michael hopes to establish. "We have a very strong board structure that would run the company and keep everything in order from a compliance side of things. So it should be relatively easy to put the family piece onto that then. The regimes and curtailments are in place as such".

#### *Building a brand of credibility and sustainability*

By supplying private label, Country Crest's brand was going under the radar. In order to build "a business-to-business name with credible credentials", the company opened a farm shop in Jones Garden Centre, Donabate, Dublin. "What we try to do is be accessible to our customer and supplier bases." Country Crest was one of the first participants in Bord Bia's sustainability programme, Origin Green. Country Crest became a verified Origin Green member, from setting out and meeting strategic objectives and targets for reducing wastage and ensuring energy efficiency. "It's one thing getting it but another thing keeping that accreditation. You have to eat, sleep and drink it every day to keep it in place." Further to this, Ballymaguire Foods announced the construction of a new food factory in Lusk that will create 100 new jobs following its proposed completion in late 2016.

## Country Crest – Corporate Social Responsibility in Family Business

Country Crest has a dedicated corporate social responsibility arm led by its co-founder. "I think we've been fortunate and some days you question that and thank God for what we have. It has to be about giving back I think." Country Crest's main charitable project is the Christine Valley Model Farm in Haiti. This idea emerged when Michael, one of a group of Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year finalists, visited Haiti in 2008 to determine a sustainable business approach for the impoverished country. A small developmental farm was set up and Country Crest afforded its expertise, equipment, and technology to local farmers in producing and selling food. The company is long term committed, and continues to send personnel to provide equipment training. There is also a company representative appointed to the Haiti project who visits the country frequently to oversee the project. "It's very important to them that we keep that up and working properly in association with the Soul of Haiti Foundation."

Another project is the Halalele High School in Lesotho, aimed at educating its 300 pupils about the benefits of nourishment, food security and production in a sustainable manner. Together in a partnership with Portmarnock Community School and Action Ireland Trust, Country Crest has developed a gardening training programme with a ten-acre field of potatoes maintained by the school and its pupils.

Furthermore in 2010, Country Crest undertook a 5-10 year project aimed at achieving self-sufficiency among a community of 2000 farmers in Lesotho. Country Crest strives to enable local villages in the Temo Moho area to grow and sell certified seed potatoes to other potato producers for ware production in the lowlands and for export.

At home, Country Crest supports multiple groups and projects including Senior Citizen organisations, and Crosscare, a homeless charity to which they provide a weekly donation of vegetables.





*Managing Director, Sean Doran*

## **Case Study:** *Dorans on the Pier*

### **Company Background**

In 1930's Wexford, Michael Doran bought a 30ft trawler called St. Mary, and so began the Doran family's fishing lineage. From one trawler, he grew his fleet to 12 and in the 1960s moved his fishing activities to one of Ireland's most renowned fishing ports - Howth. He established Lett Doran & Co. together with his uncle, Lawrence Lett, and later brought in a professional management team. In 1988, Michael passed away and with no succession plan or will in place, uncertainty arose regarding the future ownership and management of the company. The Doran family directed the company away from wholesale and towards the hospitality and retail sector, now supplying up to 70 restaurants. Lett Dorans was renamed Dorans on the Pier in 2003. The group employs approximately 100 people within their large portfolio of businesses: a fish shop, three restaurants, an online fresh fish delivery service, trawler consultancy, and ship chandlery. The company provides wholesale, retail and their own restaurants with fresh fish supplies caught by their own and other trawlers from Howth and across the country, as well as imports of exotic fish like swordfish, catfish and carp.

**“It’s more and more important that Doran’s brand is recognised for its high standard in the seafood business.”** - *Sean Doran*

### **Interview with Sean Doran**

*Managing Director of  
Dorans on the Pier*

#### *Family Involvement*

Sean and his brothers have fished from the age of 13 and all three are still involved in the business of fishing. Sean Doran is managing director and runs the multiple businesses under the Doran group umbrella. His brother, Padraig is skipper of the trawler, The Celtic Fisher, which supplies fish to their restaurant, The Oarhouse. “We actually go out and catch our fish which is a big selling point for us.” The eldest brother, Michael, manages Marine Suppliers, another part of the family business group. The six siblings of the Doran family are shareholders. While members of the next generation have worked in the business, there has yet been no expression of interest in managing it.

#### *Supporting Local Tourism*

The Dublin Bay Prawn Festival, one of Ireland's largest food festivals, is organised annually by local business people in Howth in conjunction with Howth Tourism, Fingal Country Council, Fingal Tourism and Fáilte Ireland. Since it was first established in 2010, this three day event has grown in popularity and in 2016 drew in excess of 10,000 visitors to Howth to taste the best prawn and seafood dishes the local restaurants can offer. As an example of Doran's commitment to promoting

Howth, a monthly meeting is held in the Oarhouse to plan for the following year's event. Accordingly, Sean says: "I'm a great advocate for Howth and Howth tourism. I don't just try to sell the Oarhouse and Doran's, I say come to Howth. If you decide to come to my fish shop and restaurant great, but if you don't just go to another one".

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by the Doran family.
<b>Business size</b>	Medium.
<b>Core activities</b>	Freshwater fishing, import and sale of fresh and frozen fish, food and beverage.
<b>Businesses</b>	Dorans on the Pier, Doran's at the Beachcomber, The Oarhouse (in partnership with John Aungier), Octopussy's Seafood Tapas Restaurant, seafood2go.ie, Doran's Skippers Mate, Marine Suppliers.
<b>Address</b>	7 West Pier, Howth.
<b>Age</b>	54 years old.
<b>Generation</b>	Second.
<b>Employee no</b>	100 (three family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€5-10 M (group turnover).
<b>Export markets</b>	UK.
<b>Main brands</b>	Dorans on the Pier.
<b>Key finding</b>	Growth through new venture creation.

## Dorans on the Pier - New Venture Creation in Family Business

Sean Doran's passion for the industry and talent for opportunity spotting makes him an avid entrepreneur. "We're always moving and changing" according to Sean. Sean looks for ways of adding value to the existing business, for example, the opening of the Oarhouse beside his fish shop in 2006. Rather than sell to supermarkets or export, they decided to rent the old building at the end of the pier and set up to supply their own restaurant with their fresh catch. Sean got this idea from visiting restaurants in fishing ports around Europe. "We used to go there and see how simple and good the food was. They were located right on the pier and didn't even have as good a view or location as us so it made sense to set up our own." The Oarhouse employs 35 full-time and 15 part-time staff.

Sean noticed an opportunity in fresh fish delivery to private consumers and in 2011, set up the online delivery service, seafood2go.ie. The company provides next day delivery of its wide ranging fish products to customers throughout Dublin. Sean believed it was a smart move as both access to supply and delivery capability were already in place. "Any customers we have at the moment are extremely happy with it." However, Sean would like to see the company grow and become a channel for marketing specialist products i.e., seaweed for other companies. The group's restaurants will be used for in-house marketing of seafood2go.ie.

Established in 2015, Doran's Skippers Mate is the latest venture of the family business group. It provides consultancy in regards to authority compliance for those operating fishing trawlers. Sean built up a wealth of knowledge regarding fishing industry regulations (e.g., Sea-fisheries Protection Authority, Health & Safety Executive) and safety compliances. Fishers are provided with administrative advice on creating a safety statement, risk assessment, new crew induction drills, HACCP plans and other adherences.





Founder, Martin Tully

## Case Study: Tully Nurseries

### Company Background

Established in 1979 by Martin and Joan Tully, Tully Nurseries & Plant Centre is one of Ireland's premier suppliers of plants. The founder, Martin Tully was a student of the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, and worked for Fingal County Council, Dublin, prior to setting up as a landscape contractor in 1973. Finding it difficult to source plants and trees all year round, Martin noticed an opportunity to set up a plant nursery. He began growing plants on a half-acre site for cash-and-carry wholesale. The lack of Irish demand for plants led Martin to export to the UK. Their customer base grew to include Landscape Contractors, Landscape Architects, Garden Designers, DIY chains, Garden Centres, Supermarkets and private homeowners. The business has expanded, with today's site now 25 acres and producing over 1 million plants per annum. Tully Nurseries import and export plants to and from the continent and beyond. Recently, the company embarked on a new product development programme, which led to successful plant varieties including the award-winning Hebe Rhubarb & Custard. As the founding generation releases control, a highly qualified management team is in place to ensure sustained business growth.

**“We would like to be respected in the industry as offering high quality, being on the ball, efficient and honourable. It would mean an awful lot to us.”** - Martin Tully

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Tully family.
<b>Business size</b>	Small.
<b>Core activities</b>	Horticulturists and suppliers of plants; landscaping.
<b>Businesses</b>	Tully Nurseries and Tully Landscapes.
<b>Products</b>	Seeds & bulbs; plants & trees; fruit & veg; gardening accessories.
<b>Address</b>	Richardstown, Ballyboughal.
<b>Age</b>	36 years old.
<b>Generation</b>	Second.
<b>Employee no</b>	50 (four family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€1-5M (group turnover).
<b>Export markets</b>	UK (approx. 100,000 plants are exported).
<b>Main brands</b>	“Bella Bloom” and “Winning Plants”.
<b>Key finding</b>	Formalising the family business.



Niamh, Martin and Padraig Tully present An Taoiseach Enda Kenny with Best New Plant for 2013, Hebe ‘Rhubarb and Custard’.





## Interview with Martin Tully

### Co-owner and founder of Tully Nurseries

#### Family Involvement

Martin's son and daughter are second generation managers of Tully Nurseries Ltd: Pdraig Tully as Managing Director and Niamh Tully as Marketing Manager. Tully Landscapes, the business that Martin founded now operates under his son Martin Jnr. and both businesses have become aligned: "it's very successful and fits in with the nursery business". Founders Martin and Joan are gradually passing the core business to the next generation. Martin has lessened his involvement in day-to-day operations, but still remains a key stakeholder in the long term strategic planning of the company.

#### Post-Recession Recovery

Like businesses nationwide, Tully Nurseries was left shaken by the economic downturn. From 2007 to today, the company turnover has halved, according to Martin. "Building stopped so there weren't landscapers buying plants." Furthermore, the company was hit with bad debts as some customers failed to meet payments. However, the market demand has picked up somewhat, and with that customer needs have changed. "A different type of product is being bought now. People want to brighten up their homes with containers and flowers more so than plants", found Martin. New product development, considered a hobby to Martin, is central to the business. In order to meet customers' demands for novel, high quality and different plants, they've developed new plant varieties with sports<sup>4</sup> and seedlings found in their nursery and garden centre. Some of their innovative plant varieties include Hebe Black Beauty and Hebe Raspberry Ripple. The company's Hebe Rhubarb and Custard won the Best New Plant out of 109 entries at the 2012 HTA National Plant Show in Coventry, England. It also won the best new plant for 2013 at Bord Bia Glas Irish trade show in Citywest, Dublin. Furthermore, the company continuously seeks ways to develop through new efficiencies and technologies. They are currently putting in place a new integrated system for customer payment which will greatly enhance business efficiency.

<sup>4</sup>A plant in which a single bud or offset suddenly assumes a new, and sometimes very different, character from that of the rest of the plant—Darwin, 1859.

## Tully Nurseries —

### Formalisation in Family Business

Martin Tully's role has transitioned from company leader to a mentor and advisor. "We're pulling back, there's no doubt about it. I wouldn't be as much involved in day-to-day management now as I used to be. There are people in place in the various sections that look after that." When the business started, there were two in management— Martin who led the landscaping side and his wife Joan who ran the finance and administration. Now a team of seven manage the company's finance, marketing, sales, and administration. Management meetings are held monthly and the board members, who are all family, attend bimonthly meetings. Martin possesses a wealth of horticulture and industry knowledge, while both Pdraig and Niamh have business and marketing qualifications. This mix gives the company a distinct competitive edge. "It's a good mix because you need a good balance in any business." While horticulture is a loved hobby of Martin's, his children see the industry more pragmatically. "I let my heart rule my head more than they would. They would look at it from a business point of view which is more important."

Niamh's marketing background made her an invaluable addition to the company. "My daughter Niamh is a huge influence in the business. She worked for a number of companies after college. She would be the driving force for a lot of the sales." Niamh suggested clever brand names, mainly famous horses and desserts, for their variety of Hebe plants. This branding technique meant customers were not alienated by botanical names and would seek further plants to add to their branded collection. Tully Nurseries' award winning plant, Rhubarb and Custard is a big seller in England (40,000 of these plants are currently exported to the UK) and licensed in Australia, New Zealand, among other countries.



Company Director, Al Ryan

## Case Study: Grand Hotel Malahide

### Company Background

Matthew and Maureen Ryan entered the hospitality trade in 1960 when they opened a large tavern in Kildare. In 1974, the couple made the decision to buy the Grand Hotel Malahide - a 180 year old hotel with a succession of prominent owners. The hotel had only 36 rooms and 12 staff and required significant managerial and infrastructural investment. In 1989, the business expanded when the family purchased Marine Hotel Sutton, located ten kilometres from the original hotel. Over two decades, the Ryan family has overseen the redevelopment of the Grand Hotel Malahide, which has undergone more than seven refurbishment projects and extensions costing an estimated €35m; such projects include a conference centre, 150 additional bedrooms, a new reception area, Ryan's Bar, a Business Meeting Centre and the Coast restaurant overlooking Malahide Marina. At the opening of the newly refurbished hotel in 2007, former-Taoiseach Bertie Ahern stated: "It is great to see a family-operated business such as this grow and prosper along with the surrounding area." The Ryan family have revived the building, transforming it into a four-star rated hotel with 203 bedrooms and 180 employees.

## Interview with Al Ryan

*Director of Grand Hotel Malahide and Marine Hotel Sutton*

### Family Involvement

The second generation of Ryans were involved in the business throughout, starting in small roles, such as lounge boys, during the summer months. In the late 1980s, the three Ryan siblings joined the business in formal positions. All three are company directors: Matthew Ryan Junior is Managing Director, Al Ryan is Finance Director while Jean Ryan manages assets, building projects and building maintenance. When considering family involvement, Al believes the following is important: "The key thing is that the person is passionate so if they care about it and have some knowledge of it that's really 90% of it." Al and his siblings have agreed that if anyone from the next generation enters the business it must be entirely voluntary commitment.

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Ryan family.
<b>Business size</b>	Medium.
<b>Core activities</b>	Hospitality, food and beverage.
<b>Businesses</b>	Grand Hotel Malahide, Marine Hotel Sutton.
<b>Address</b>	Grove Rd., Malahide.
<b>Age</b>	41 years old (starting with the Ryan family's involvement).
<b>Generation</b>	Second.
<b>Employee no</b>	180 (three family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€10-20 M.
<b>Key finding</b>	Inter-generational learning.



## Family Affiliation

Having existed prior to the Ryan family's involvement, the Grand Hotel Malahide is very much a standalone entity. The clientele has changed over time with less focus on leisure and more on corporate, which counts for about 70% of their custom during the week. Al believes the family's direct relationship with the public was greater when it was smaller and more food and beverage oriented. However, Al believes that continuous family involvement strengthens their association with the business. "If you're there forever then you're going to be identified with it."

## Grand Hotel Malahide — Inter-generational Learning in Family Business

Learning from the family and providing learning to the family are key features of multi-generational family firms. Learning can be generated from working in the business, being exposed to critical events in the firm, as well as adopting the lessons uncovered by previous generations. Equally important are the lessons received from non-family professionals and next generation members with the relevant training and experience.

In the Grand Hotel Malahide, the Ryans learnt about the business from a young age: "You came in and did your job well, you got a few quid in your pocket and went home and you thought that was a good night and you learnt to deal with people". When purchasing the

Marine Hotel Sutton, Al and his siblings were equipped with the necessary know-how to run a hotel, unlike their parents— who had to learn a lot first go. The founders' insights have been shared with the latest generation: "My father always said: 'go and see who are the best and learn from them. You can improve it'... we do it all the time".

However, not all learning emerged within the family, and in 1974 the Ryans brought in the original manager who assisted them and continued to work with the family hotel until retirement. Furthermore, the next generation can be a source of learning as evidenced when Al, Matt and Jean introduced innovative processes and efficiencies to the company. "We were bringing in computerisation and modern systems that really weren't of any interest to him (first generation) but we were advancing the business with those projects". Today, the hotel employs an experienced management team to run its multi-faceted operations including sales, marketing and HR.



Grand Hotel Malahide in the 1970's (left) and today's establishment (right).



# DONNELLY



*Director, Ciaran Donnelly*

## **Case Study:** *Donnelly Fruit & Veg*

### **Company Background**

Donnelly Fruit and Veg was founded in 1979 by Anthony Donnelly and his son, Brian. The father and son team began supplying a few vegetable lines to Superquinn, the country's largest supermarket at the time. Donnelly Fruit and Veg began a longstanding partnership with Superquinn, supplying their entire fruit and vegetable range. In 2001, Donnelly moved to FoodCentral in St. Margaret's, Fingal, and began supplying other nationwide retailers including Aldi and BWG (e.g., Spar, Eurospar, Mace, Londis) in addition to Musgrave's Supervalu. In this time, Anthony passed away and Brian became Managing Director of the company. He established Glan Aris, a crate wash and rental company for supply to both Donnelly Fruit and Veg and other food produce suppliers. In 2004, they established Wonderfoods, the food preparation division which supplies Donnelly branded fresh prepared vegetables, bag salads and roasting trays to retailers. In 2012, the company began farming crops, becoming both producer and supplier of Donnelly branded produce as well as private label goods. Now, the third-generation Donnelly brothers, Ciaran and Ronan, aim to direct this large business portfolio towards further growth

and success.

**“My attitude would very much be one of stewardship in that I never saw it as my own. It was something handed to me to look after and continue onto the next generation.”**

— *Ciaran Donnelly*

### **Interview with Ciaran Donnelly** *Director of Donnelly Fruit & Veg Group*

#### *Family Involvement*

There are three family members who are both shareholders and directors in the business: Ciaran, Ronan and their mother, Una. Ciaran joined the family business after completing a degree in Horticulture at UCD in 2003. His father, Brian, passed away in 2004. Ciaran became Managing Director of Donnelly Fruit & Veg and oversaw Wonderfoods and the farming development. Ronan entered the business around 2007 as a sales representative. Following this, he joined the trading department and, in recent time, has taken on an executive role. Now, there is a full management team in operation with each individual business run by a non-family managing director. The group has recently set up their board of directors and hold a bimonthly board meeting.





## Vertical Integration

As evidence of vertical integration<sup>5</sup>, Glan Aris was established in 2004 when the company moved to St.Margaret's. The thinking behind this was to reduce the wastage of cardboard boxes and to create green and black crates for the transportation of fruit and vegetables to supermarkets. The idea made financial sense, as Ciaran points out: "We were going to be one of the main users of the green crates and rather than getting an external company to whom we would pay rental for, we said 'look, we'll do this ourselves'". In 2008, the company built an operating unit for the returnable crate business and purchased an automated washing machine. In 2004, they established the prepared food company, Wonderfoods. Under Ciaran's direction, Donnelly Fruit & Veg began farming in 2012 as a means of further integration. "We've picked up a couple of crops ourselves to get into the growing side and that's proven good for us". The company grew from wholesale and retail delivery to also provide packaging, preparing and producing.

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by Donnelly family.
<b>Business size</b>	Large.
<b>Core activities</b>	Wholesaler, importer, producer of fruit and vegetables; prepared food producer; crate wash and rental.
<b>Businesses</b>	Glan Aris and Wonderfoods.
<b>Address</b>	FoodCentral, St.Margaret's, Fingal.
<b>Age</b>	36 years old.
<b>Generation</b>	Third.
<b>Employee no</b>	330 (two family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€80 - 100M (group turnover).
<b>Main Brand</b>	Donnelly.
<b>Key finding</b>	Becoming the family business leader.

<sup>5</sup>Vertical Integration means the combination in one firm of two or more stages of production normally operated by separate firms.

## Donnelly Fruit & Veg – Becoming the Family Business Leader

Following the passing of his father, Ciaran took on greater responsibility and became Managing Director of Donnelly Fruit & Veg. This was a difficult transition given the loss of both his father and business mentor: "We had to find our confidence again without him". Ciaran is thankful for the excellent core team, including the CEO of Donnelly Fruit & Veg that was in place during this tumultuous time. "I don't know what I would have done without the people that were there."

As business leader, Ciaran needed to be constantly attuned to happenings in the fruit and vegetable industry, an environment he describes as "a constant learning curve". Since his father's time, the industry has changed dramatically due to the arrival of global chain supermarkets. These large retailers contract multiple suppliers for their fruit and vegetable category, forcing companies like Donnelly to become specialist and more competitive. In an attempt at differentiation, the company branched into organic vegetables in 2003. With sales never reaching above 4% of the overall fruit and vegetable category, the venture failed. Not afraid to admit defeat, Ciaran looked back on the experience and developed a key insight: "That's one of the marketing lessons I learnt in growing organics. There wasn't enough value for the consumer."

Despite being part of the company's many advancements, including expansion into the prepared foods division and farming, Ciaran believes he can direct the company to further success: "I've yet to make my mark. We would certainly be searching for different things to invest and to move the company on into the future."





*Director, Bernadette McLoughlin*

## **Case Study:** *J.H. McLoughlin Balbriggan*

### **Company Background**

The McLoughlin family's venture into oil distribution began in 1937 when John H. McLoughlin set up operations in Newbridge, Co. Kildare. The business gradually expanded and in 1952 they purchased an oil depot in Drogheda followed by a forecourt and garage in Balbriggan in 1953. Following the founder's passing in 1954 the eldest son, Joe, became managing director of the business, with the assistance of his brothers Dessie and John. The family moved away from their agricultural roots and focused on the domestic heating market which has remained their core operation up to the present day. On Joe's passing in 1986, John and Dessie led the continued expansion and diversification of J.H. McLoughlin Ltd. The company was de-merged into two separate entities in 1995 with John continuing the Newbridge branch and Dessie overseeing J.H. McLoughlin Balbriggan Ltd. In the Newbridge branch, the family have diversified their core business of oil supply to include a range of household, car and pet products. Now in its third generation, the McLoughlin family use their rich experience and knowledge of the oil industry coupled with their committed workforce to ensure business survival.

## **Interview with Bernadette McLoughlin**

*Director of J.H. McLoughlin  
Balbriggan Ltd.*

### *Family Involvement*

In 1999, Dessie McLoughlin passed away and the business was transferred to his six children who are all shareholders. Managing Director, Denis, has led the company for the last 16 years. Anne-Marie is involved in finance, Joseph works in the supply and sale of oil and gas products, and Mary and Bernadette partake in operations at the Balbriggan petrol station and forecourt. An harmonious working relationship exists between all siblings says Bernadette. In answer to whether the family intends to keep the business multi-generational, Bernadette responds: "I would hope so, absolutely". Some members of the next generation are involved part-time through summer and weekend jobs.

### *Community Embeddedness*

Based in a small community such as Balbriggan, J.H. McLoughlins has established strong roots in the locality. Locally, they employ approximately 30 employees with over half in full-time employment. Their customer base is strongly farmer-led but they also deliver to private homeowners, factories and supply petrol at their garage and forecourt in Balbriggan. The company has a strong philanthropic ethos. "We run a golf classic for the Lions club. We sponsor the Bettystown races." In 2010, the company sponsored a fundraiser for Make A Wish Ireland held in memory of a local firefighter from Rush who lost his life. Additionally, they provide a retail unit as a space for a cancer support group in Balbriggan and sponsor local schools.

## J.H. McLoughlin Balbriggan – Resilience across Generations in Family Business

We can see this resilient mind-set across the generations of the McLoughlin family. In the founding generation, the company had to contend with a major global incident (World War II) which saw oil supplies rationed. Not deterred by the adverse conditions, John McLoughlin found other ways to generate finance for his family and started turf haulage and sales of kerosene and tractor oil. The next disruptive incident in the company was the death of the founder. With three premises to oversee, the company needed committed leaders at its various operations. Joe and John oversaw the expansion of the Newbridge branch while their brother, Dessie, aged 18, moved to set up both Balbriggan and Drogheda.

Further to this, the oil business is a difficult, dynamic environment and a relatively low margin industry. Since the start of the 21st century, oil prices have constantly fluctuated. "It's a tough business now, not like years ago when we were very strong. There's a lot of competitiveness in oil now." Competing against giant oil companies has proven challenging, but McLoughlin Oil remains relevant by keeping a close connection with its Balbriggan community and sustaining a loyal cohort of customers. "It's a small community here and we're here so long. We've built up a loyal customer base of mainly farmers, then home owners and road users." Retaining a hard-working, competent workforce is also important to business survival. "We have staff here a long time, some for 30 years."



J.H. McLoughlin Oil fleet delivers to a range of customers from private homeowners to factories and farms

<b>Ownership type</b>	Privately owned by McLoughlin family.
<b>Business size</b>	Small.
<b>Core activities</b>	Oil distribution; grocery and petrol retailing (two garages and a depot).
<b>Branches</b>	J.H. McLoughlin & Co Ltd. Newbridge and Balbriggan.
<b>Address</b>	84 Drogheda St., Balbriggan.
<b>Age</b>	21 years old (almost 80 years in industry).
<b>Generation</b>	Third.
<b>Employee no</b>	36 (five family members actively involved).
<b>Turnover range</b>	€1-5M.
<b>Key finding</b>	Resilience across generations.



Gary Tolan, Bernadette McLoughlin and Joe Coleman of J.H. McLoughlin Balbriggan

## 5. Key Findings

In review of our twelve family businesses, a number of observations become apparent. Some relate to external conditions such as industry regulations, infrastructure and changing markets, while other factors relate to the firms' internal environment, such as the resources (e.g., land, equipment, human knowledge and skills), culture, and dynamics. We examine the features that contribute to success, as well as the factors detrimental to survival. Most importantly, this study pinpoints areas where local authorities and family business advisors can direct future focus and resources towards, which will ultimately aid in promoting the sustainable management of family businesses in Fingal.

### 5.1 Internal Factors Resilience during Adversity

Family firms often make special efforts to endure by utilising what it is known as survivability capital. Survivability capital consists of such family efforts as loaning personal finance, providing free labour, or investing in extra shares; these measures can ensure business continuity through times of financial adversity (Sirmon and Hitt, 2003).

Resilience in family business, particularly during the global economic crisis, has been supported by studies from our neighbour, the UK. In particular, it was found that family firms were more successful in obtaining external funding than non-family firms in the fallout of the recession (NUBS and CMRC, 2010). In the current study, specific to an Irish regional context, examples of resilience, survivability capital and even growth can be observed in these family firms during recession and recovery.

*"When the recession hit in 2009 there were severe challenges in terms of price. So as a business we had to become more efficient relatively quickly, so there have been a lot of challenges on cost in the last number of years. Consumers have less money, retailers are under pressure, but in a lot of ways it has made our business better. If you're facing challenges it does make you get better and stronger."*

*"Through the recession it (staff employment) remained steady, we didn't have many people come and go."*

*"From where we were in 2007, we would be making half (the turnover) today....now it's picking up again."*

*"We thrived in the recession. We bought the estate, opened further facilities."*

*"We've actually completed inheritance transfer a few years ago when the recession hit. We said: 'well this is a disaster for everyone but good times for ourselves so what good can we do here?' We saw property values were down, so we did a total transfer of ownership at the time."*





Striving for continued business survival and growth can prevent those working in a family business from 'clocking off'.

*"When someone calls you at night you can't run away from it...You never know what you're going to get called about and you have to react because it's yours."*

Despite this, the family's loyalty and blood ties to the business can motivate the family to persist in times of uncertainty and adversity. This is what drives survivability capital in family firms.

## Commitment

Sustained commitment often forms the basis of family member's involvement in the business. Business survival is prioritised as family business members, often the assumed inheritors, make special efforts to ensure continuity.

Commitment can differ depending on the individual's motivation. Affective, normative, calculative and imperative are four types of commitment that the next generation can experience when following their parents into the family business (Sharma and Irving, 2005). **Affective** commitment relates to the family member's emotional attachment to the business; **normative** commitment stems from a feeling of obligation to the firm; **calculative** commitment results from "weighing up" the benefits of working in the family firm against the benefits gained working outside it, and concluding that the former is a more preferable option; and finally, **imperative** commitment is guided by one's own self-doubt in successfully pursuing a career elsewhere (Sharma and Irving, 2005). Examples of these commitment types were observed in our cases.

**Affective Commitment** *"I grew up with this (family business) but it was not just my summer job it was sitting around the dinner table and listening to all the problems. When we were smaller we grew up above the other premises that we had, so we were always involved."*

**Normative Commitment** *"I planned to go do a Masters but when Dad got sick he asked me to come in. I came in at that stage."*

**Normative Commitment** *"I probably would have liked to go to college at the time, but at that stage it was the 'done thing' to go straight into the business."*

**Calculative Commitment** *"I wasn't entirely clear on what I wanted to do. In those days, when I left college, most of my friends emigrated. I suppose in the back of mind I thought it was something I would do, but there was never any pressure from my father to go into the business."*

The above examples showcase the various types of commitment displayed by our case families. It highlights the motives behind family members' entry to the business, however, this reasoning may change throughout the course of their time within the firm i.e., a person who felt obliged to join the firm may later stay for emotional attachment or calculative reasons.

## Stewardship

Family business owners and managers often hold a deep attachment to their enterprise, an attachment that goes far beyond a mere financial relationship. Stewardship implies that as a leader, one is not guided by self-interest but by the genuine concern for serving others and ensuring the well-being of future generations. These leaders commit to the organisation and its objectives, safeguard the reputation of both business and family, and support positive relationships with stakeholders.

All of the firms interviewed demonstrated strong stewardship tendencies e.g., engagement in corporate social responsibility, promoting positive workforce relations. Many families were highly committed, viewing the enterprise as a continuing legacy in which the family's values, identities, and traditions are embodied. Ensuring the long-term viability of their businesses is a central concern for these families.

*"My attitude would very much have been one of stewardship in that I never saw it as 'my own'. It was something handed to me to look after and continue onto the next generation."*

These family leaders are not only stewards to the business, but also to the community they operate within. In conversation, numerous interviewees implied that their leadership is of a care-taking quality, and their responsibility for sustaining value and growth of the business is paramount until the next leader takes the reigns.

*"It's a combination of doing what's right for our business, what's right for the brand, doing good things for staff, doing good things for others."*

*"We've been doing reasonably well over the last few years so philanthropy and giving back to the community are somethings that I have a growing interest in."*

This stewardship attitude seeps downwards from the business vision to everyday interactions and business decisions.

*"About seven years ago, as part of our business plan, we decided to re-engage with the community and start a local tourism festival."*

Research supports the key role stewardship plays in family business continuity. Family businesses that engender stewardship behaviours can be expected to "outperform their peers in growth, returns and market valuations"; in other words, those firms that invest in people, capabilities, and long-term relationships can build a competitive advantage that allows them to enjoy greater business performance (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2009, p.1176).

## Long-term Outlook

Whether it's planning for future development or investing in longstanding projects, family businesses often display a long-term outlook. In family business theory, being "long-term oriented" involves three things: 1. **Futurity**, 2. **Continuity**, and 3. **Perseverance** (Lumpkin and Brigham, 2011). **Futurity** involves forecasting and making decisions based on the projected outcomes e.g., investment in machinery that will provide future pay-off and returns. **Continuity** places value on long-lasting ambitions and legacy e.g., leveraging family reputation in the marketing or branding of the product. While **Perseverance** is concerned with how current effort will create future value e.g., willing to invest large amounts of money and time into saving the business.

*"When we moved to our new premises we knew that when we bought it, it would affect our profitability figure. You know it's going to affect your bottom line when you have repayments on a building. We were able to say we know our profit numbers will be adversely affected by the fact we'll have interest repayments but we know that it's right for the business."*

*"It always has to be long-term thinking. Nothing happens in a hurry and if you rush something you'll definitely make a mess of it. It's all about planning."*

*"We always have a long-term outlook, you have to. Some of the things you decide to invest in are not going to give a return for so many years. So you have to think about not only spending today but how you're going to get that back."*

*"Some of the things can take an awful long time to come to fruition as well. Maybe we can take a longer term view at developing things that other companies may not."*

From the above examples, it is apparent that the general consensus among these firms is that you need to think long-term, but this long-term attitude must be applied to both the business and the family. This leads to our next finding, relating to formalisation.

## Formalisation

Formalisation is a largely broad concept that includes employment of non-family professionals, establishing formalised structures, appointing independent directors or non-family to the top management team, and implementing training and upskilling in the workplace. Many of the firms in this study demonstrated some form of formalisation, including two in particular:

### 1. Rules of engagement

It appears that traditional issues such as family business nepotism, which involves favouring family for work positions, is waning out as most of the respondents adopt a stringent approach to next generation involvement. Mainly, formal education and outside experience are deemed necessary conditions for possible recruitment.

*"We've looked at all our family members and none of us feel we could give the job the time and attention that would be required to do it properly. We prefer to appoint external management."*

*"I see a lot of parents hand over businesses to sons or daughters and then having to come in two or three years later to rescue those businesses because they run off the rails. I don't want to see that happening here."*

*"They would have to show an interest, they would have to show an aptitude and you don't get to be the boss because of where you were born."*

Family involvement remains a desire of all those family firms that aspire to become multi-generational. However, pursuing the interests of the business is priority and this involves ensuring a competent and capable workforce is in place.

### 2. Developing a functional structure

Another form of formalisation is developing a formalised structure with clearly defined managerial roles and responsibilities. Recruiting non-family managers with the skillsets to complement those of the controlling family is a clear sign of formalisation (Poza, 2010).

*"We made this decision, quite a long time ago, that we would use a senior management team to run the business which is overseen by family. We more or less leave the day-to-day running of the company to them."*

*"His (the founder's) philosophy was to always try and get someone in who can do the best job. For example, we never would have any involvement in finance."*

*"Even the people I'm bringing into it (second business), like the finance, sales and marketing people, are helping the first business as well. It's improving it."*

The above examples of formalisation highlight the effort made by these family firms to sustain the core family's involvement, while ensuring those best equipped manage the firm.



## Succession

Succession can be a source of anxiety and uncertainty for many family businesses. For most, succession doesn't occur often. The average CEO tenure in family firms is 24 years (Beckhard and Dyer, 1983) which is four times the average tenure of a non-family CEO (Hansen et al., 2009). There are many issues around succession that must be discussed and planned for to prevent conflict and uncertainty in the event of the leader's unexpected departure. However, research indicates that only one in ten Irish family businesses have a succession plan that is robust and documented (PwC, 2014).

*"We've had the conversation (about succession) but not collectively."*

*"You always have to think about it. But I suppose it's something we need to be addressing sooner rather than later."*

*"There's no succession plan in place."*

*"Well we've planned for that already back I'd say 15-18 years ago.... But I'd say where we've been weak is that we followed through on all the business side of it but the family meeting side, we haven't done that for years."*

*"Your question was 'are you thinking about the next generation?' I suppose, we're still under the illusion that we're next generation, but we're not."*

In some cases, any potential successors are too young, unavailable or unprepared. This is exemplified by one case where the incumbent leader's son is not interested in succeeding his father, and so the future management of the business remains uncertain:

*"We get on great it's just he doesn't want to work in the family business. Now that might change in ten years' time. So at the moment we don't have anybody who wants to run it."*

If the family business leader dies or falls ill, there may not be a suitable family replacement. In contrast, there may be a very willing and able next generation, but an exit strategy for the family leader is not in place to allow this transition of leadership. In family business, there are usually five main exit strategy types: Monarch, General, Ambassador, Governor and Inventor. Firstly, the **Monarch** avoids any discussion of retirement and only leaves upon the event of death or revolt; the **General** leaves the firm reluctantly but plans on returning to "save the day"; the **Ambassador** leaves the business gracefully, hands the reigns to next generation and encourages non-family involvement; the **Governor** sets a departure date, sticks to it and often maintains little ongoing contact afterwards; and finally, the **Inventor** is content with stepping down as leader but continues to contribute in an area of their expertise (Poza, 2010). We see examples of different intentions to exit in our interviews.

*"I don't want to be the person still holding onto the reigns and the business becomes antiquated because your thought process doesn't keep up with reality."*

*"In August 2016, he'll take over the business. That's when I've planned not to be the MD but I'll be there to assist him. This is his future."*

*"We're (co-founders) pulling back, there's no doubt about it. I wouldn't be as much involved in day-to-day management now as I used to be."*

The above examples show intentions for exiting the business. For intentions to become reality, a plan should be crafted, evaluated and followed.



## 5.2 External Factors

### Embedded in Fingal

Fingal businesses are strategically advantaged given their proximity to Dublin City Centre, Dublin Airport, the Port Tunnel, industrial centres, excellent road network as well as an abundance of land with picturesque seaside towns and villages with day visitor, sporting, heritage and cultural attractions. These strategic features are one of the main reasons why businesses set down roots in Fingal. It is frequently referred to as peri-urban in land character and the 'food basket of Ireland'.

Moreover, family businesses can possess a very strong emotional attachment to their original location. The firms in this study are solidly embedded in their locality; family involvement in the area stretches to two generations for most firms with four families dating back three generations or more. Of our case sample, the oldest family associations with Fingal date back to the 19th century. This rich familial connection with their surroundings often drives family businesses to promote their locality, support its prosperity, and ensure environmental sustainability.

*"Years ago there used to be a festival in Malahide and it was very successful so I decided: 'let's run a festival again'. People who come in for the day trip have nothing to do with us. We see it as part of developing Malahide. Anything that's good for Malahide, it rubs off."*

*"I'm on the board of management in the local primary school. There was a cottage that was idle across from the school and I got this idea that maybe we can turn it into an innovation centre for children. Try to create entrepreneurs in the community."*

*"Since we're also caretakers of the environment for a certain number of years it's important to leave it in the same way we found it."*

*"Location is very good and we tend to have very good relationships within Fingal be it the County Council or the airport authority. Because we've been here a long time, people are very familiar with us."*

As the findings suggest, these family businesses are deeply rooted in their community—most provide local employment, source neighbouring supply, and support community initiatives and development throughout Fingal.

## Greater Support and Recognition

Most businesses called for greater awareness of available grants and financial support, more recognition for the services industry, or an increase in active business support from the state and local authorities. Creating a gateway for family businesses to meet FCC representatives, potential customers, suppliers and sub-suppliers is one suggested solution.

*"The networking opportunities of the DCU Centre for Family Business, Plato (Small Business Support and Development Network)...I think those informal networking opportunities can be very useful. If there are more of those type of events that promote networking."*

The forms of financial and business development assistance vary depending on sector and size. Most family businesses mentioned receiving support and advice from either state agencies (e.g., Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc, Bord Bia, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and government departments) or organisations (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association and Irish Exporters Association).

The majority of these businesses draw assistance in a wide range of areas e.g., planning permission, building, research and development, and marketing. Many participants expressed plans for development, growth and local employment opportunities, however, some of these businesses feel hindered by the associated red-tape and restrictions.

## Internationalisation

Geographical expansion and exporting are ambitious routes for growing a business. While family businesses are predominantly domestic growth oriented, there has been increased interest among these businesses in finding opportunity beyond the home market. A quarter of Irish family businesses were exporting in 2014 with this expected to rise to 30% in the following five years (PwC, 2014). Within our sample study, there is some evidence of significant geographical expansion, exports, and aspirations for internationalisation.

*"To diversify outside of the Irish market is something strategically that we are looking at."*

*"We're going in not as the country's supplier but as a new market contender."*

*"Our markets were 90% export orientated and it got to a stage where it was cheaper to process in Spain than in Ireland."*

From an Irish perspective, the UK market is usually the first port of call for exports due to cultural similarities and proximity. Our own findings suggest reluctance among some to venture further beyond the UK and Irish markets. This may relate to a lack of resources and international contacts/experience and disinterest in internationalising on a much larger scale.



## Family Identification in the Marketplace

In an increasingly globalised marketplace, many firms must establish a market differentiator. Some businesses leverage their family identities so they can be recognisable or memorable to the consumer or give the impression of quality, long-lasting tradition and expertise. Leveraging the family identity is a notable marketing tool, as research suggests that family-based brand identity enables “the family business’ to attempt to persuade customers to make purchasing decisions based on the perceived attributes of the seller” (Craig, Dibrell and Davis, 2008).

Furthermore, in all global regions, except for Asia, family owned businesses and SMEs are awarded the highest trust (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2014). Less than half (48%) of global family firms express concern for public trust of their business compared to 58% of public company CEOs (PwC, 2016).

The value of the family connection is succinctly explained by the study participants:

*“The family story is a great story to tell. Consumers can relate to it straight away. MNCs (multi-national companies) will spend millions upon millions trying to get a link like that.”*

*“I think consumers like buying from family businesses. You’re putting your name to it so I think people tend to feel we’re trying our best to get it right as often as we can.”*

*“We’re unusual because we’re family owned and Irish. Most of our competition is MNCs. We feel there are plenty of Irish companies who can appreciate dealing with a smaller company.”*

In our study, nine participants share their family name with the company and eight explicitly refer to family on the company’s online about page. These subtle family references are there to influence customer perception and showcase the family’s allegiance to the company.

## 6. Recommendations

In light of these findings, we put forward some practical recommendations for the continued success and longevity of family businesses in the wider Fingal community. The twelve family firms are testament to the resilience and commitment inherent in family firms. Drawing on the positive behaviours and actions exhibited by these family firms, in line with widely-recognised best practice in family business, we extend the following recommendations for family businesses across Fingal. We also extend recommendations to Fingal County Council in aiding further success and development of family businesses in their area.

### 6.1 Recommendations for the Family Business Community

#### Ensuring Continuity of both Business and Family

Long-term thinking is a shared characteristic of these family firms. Many family businesses exhibit behaviours and attitudes that are motivated by long-term benefits and future value, rather than by short-term rewards. This may result from the pursuit of a long-standing family legacy (Ward, 2004) through family wealth preservation or future generational involvement. Continuity is a key aspect of long-term thinking (see long-term outlook, p.41). Ensuring the continuity of both the business and the family is necessary for long-lasting family ownership/management.

In other words, the future of family involvement should be afforded as much consideration as the future of the business. If you aspire to be multi-generational, what steps have been taken to secure this? What measures (e.g., family constitution, succession plan, and family meetings) have been implemented to ensure the safeguarding of family involvement in the business? Before these governance structures are even created, the conversation about family involvement has begun. During the many conversations, the individual and collective objectives of family members should become apparent, and these objectives aligned to organisational goals.

To ensure continuity, Poza (2010) advises that professional and competent people, be they family or non-family, be appointed to the top management team and as governors of the shareholding group, with the possible addition of board members and external advisors (p.110). These measures are a means of enabling the continued survival and growth of the business across generations.

### Best Practice in Governing the Family — Bush Brothers & Co.

Former CEO and Chairman of Bush Brothers & Co (the largest bean brand in the US and 5th generation family business), Mr Jim Ethier, is an advocate of family governance. The family group established a family senate (or council), instated a shareholders' agreement, and built guidelines for family employment, e.g. attendance at family business educational seminars, attain a college degree and outside experience. As a result of these proactive efforts the family was able to engage and involve the next generation and ensure the smooth transition of ownership and management between generations, thus, family control is retained.



### Adopting Family Governance Structures

The main governance structures that can be adopted in a family business are the family constitution (bound by moral obligation instead of legal, however, elements may also feature in the articles of incorporation), shareholders' agreement (contract/legally binding document), family meeting, and family council. The family constitution documents the principles that guide interactions between shareholders and between other family members and management (Poza, 2010). It details the family vision, values, ownership and employment policies, dividends and family benefits policy, next generation development etc. (Poza, 2010, p.281-282). The process of building a family constitution is as pertinent to family governance development as the final document itself.

The shareholders' agreement is a key document, especially for family owned businesses where the number of shareholders often increases over time i.e., cousin consortiums. The shareholders' agreement may detail such things as the voting rights, transferability and valuation of shares. Professional consultation should be sought when creating both family constitution and shareholders' agreement.

Family meetings foster education, communication and engagement of all family members in regards to the ownership and management of the business. These meetings are allotted time for resolving conflict, generating policy, and planning for future family involvement, while also informing non-active family business members about firm performance and strategy, among other discussions (Poza, 2010).

A family council is a governance committee for family related issues. "It is to the family what the board of directors is to the business" (Poza, 2010, p.278).

The family council deals with such things as family conflict resolution, estate planning, next generation education, the family philanthropy mission, in addition to developing policies that may guide management or shareholder decisions (Poza, 2010). While family councils promote a healthy synergy between business and family, if not properly managed, Poza (2010) warns that they can also afford family members (particularly non-active ones) an opportunity to interfere in management issues.

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### Succession: Following a plan and appointing the best leader

Relinquishing family business control can prove very difficult, particularly for founders who brought their business idea through to reality. "Learning to Let Go Our Business" is the latter stage of the family business life cycle and requires leaders to develop a defined timeline for retirement, create management development systems, and most importantly, stick to the plan (Moore and Barrett, 2005).

While some leaders intend to pursue an exit strategy, their intentions are likely to fall short without a succession plan to guide and ensure a smooth transition from incumbent to new generation. US business author, Michael Evans (2013) suggests a five-step process for





family business succession:

**1. Establish Goals & Objectives** — identify the goals of both next generation managers and retiring family owners; develop a unified business vision and objectives; and evaluate the succession plan in line with these objectives.

**2. Establish a Decision Making Process** — create a governance structure for family members' involvement in decision making; write the succession plan; and share with family and other stakeholders.

**3. Establish the Succession Plan** — determine potential successors, both managers and owners; catalogue the roles, both active and non-active, of family members; review the family supports needed by the successor.

**4. Create a Business and Owner Estate Plan** — Review tax implications for the business/owner resulting from transfer of ownership, sale, divorce, or death; evaluate owner estate planning; and build a fair buy/sell agreement based on business valuation.

**5. Create a Transition Plan** — Determine options for ownership exchange e.g. buy-out, and create a timeline for succession.

(Retrieved from forbes.com, 2013)

Appointing a next generation family member as successor needs to be an informed and responsible decision. Successful next-generation leaders have some of the following traits: they have significant knowledge of the business, they like or love the business, they have a drive to both lead and serve, they foster good organisational relations, they have sought and earned respect of the many business stakeholders, their skillset and abilities align with the business' strategic direction (Davis, 1998 adapted by Poza, 2010, p.89). If no suitable or available family successor exists, a non-family interim CEO can be instated. Appointing a bridging CEO (one in place for an interim period or for a generation) can have the dual benefit of retaining family control, and ensuring the business strategy is led by the most capable leader (Poza, 2010).

## Attracting and Retaining Non-family Talent

In an increasingly globalised marketplace, firms are searching for top talent in various areas such as I.T, marketing, sales, advertising, finance, etc. In a study from PwC (2016), 73% of CEOs of privately-held businesses expressed some variance of concern for the availability of key skills. Furthermore, nearly half (42%) of family business CEOs are looking to modify the pay and incentives their business offers (PwC, 2016).

When family members are experienced and qualified, fit their role, and are committed to the best interests of the firm, they can make exceptional employees. In the case where family members are given unsuitable or unearned roles, this can be to the firm's detriment.

In the search for talent, family firms face two missions:

**1.** attracting talent to the business, and **2.** retaining that talent for the future. These objectives are achievable if proper consideration is afforded to both family and non-family members, and steps towards a more professional

and merit-based work environment are taken. Poza (2010, p.239) puts forward some guidelines for creating a beneficial work environment for non-family management:

- Discuss candidly the career prospects of non-family managers and how succession may impact these opportunities.
- Allow non-family managers to participate in business and succession planning as this will make them feel more included and motivated.
- Hold regular meetings between non-family management and shareholders; this will help unify interests and create an environment of respect.
- Pay attention to the work climate and conduct employee satisfaction surveys periodically.
- Draw on performance measures (e.g., revenues, profit margins, market share) as a form of motivational feedback for management.
- Extend the same treatment to both family and non-family members, e.g., use professional names, ensure employment policies and rules are followed by family.

The advantage of appointing non-executive independent directors or advisors is twofold; firstly, these people can provide a fresh perspective, industry-wide contacts and outside experience; and secondly, their presence can reassure non-family members of the firm's professional and objective viewpoint (Poza, 2010). For firms that wish to retain family ownership, there are other non-equity based incentives for non-family managers,

such as profit-sharing schemes and cash bonuses.

### **Growth through Exports/Internationalisation**

When supported by appropriate consultation and market research, exporting can be a viable avenue of growth for family firms. Generally, family firms fall into the SME and micro-business category, which limits the resources and capabilities they have for growth and expansion. Others may have all the elements necessary for exporting in place, but lack the support to implement an export strategy; alternatively, their product/service/business mission does not fit with export growth/internationalisation. There are some indigenous family companies that are rapidly becoming, or already are, export-led.

For those family firms that wish to pursue export-led growth, there are a number of organisations to assist and advise. **Enterprise Ireland** has developed a comprehensive starter guide to exporting, in addition to holding trade fairs, trade missions, and knowledge events for those pursuing international markets. Additionally, the **Irish Exporters Association** provides practical exporting knowledge and advice and the opportunity to connect with both new markets and exporting companies in Ireland.

The UK is Ireland's largest export market with both



nations trading over €1 billion worth of goods and services weekly (Joint Committee on EU Affairs, 2015). For many Irish firms, entering the UK is their first export venture. The upcoming Brexit referendum (June 23rd) could result in the UK departing from the EU, which may raise concerns for the UK-Irish common travel area and EU customs union between Northern Ireland/UK and Ireland. For firms requiring information and advice on British exporting, the **British Irish Chamber of Commerce** is an interest group that helps develop two-way trade between Britain and Ireland.

This year, **Chambers Ireland** is renewing efforts to encourage and support Irish SMEs in pursuing international growth.

*“A concerted effort is required, at both national and European level, to encourage and support Irish SMEs to become more internationally focused and capable of exporting their products abroad.*

*Throughout 2016 we will be working to ensure that Irish SMEs are considered first and foremost as part of internationalisation strategies.”* (Chambers Ireland, 2016)

Firms can receive one-to-one support through their local chambers of commerce. Guidance and advice can also be sought from the **Local Enterprise Offices** (LEO).

## 6.2 Recommendations for the Local Authority

### Family Business Support

On reflection of our conversations with family businesses, we note the value and necessity of both educational and practical guidance around family business management issues. We found a number of key family business topics that warrant further discussion, namely, succession, exit strategy, family wealth transferal, next generation involvement, family communication, family and non-family employment, formalisation, and family corporate governance. The family aspect of family business cannot be ignored. Family conflict and tensions can arise and escalate which can negatively impact the business. This can be counteracted by family members' meaningful engagement in targeted educational and advisory events.

By building on the Memorandum of Understanding between DCU Centre for Family Business and Fingal County Council, dedicated support services, seminars and research can be continually provided to family businesses in the Fingal area. In safeguarding the health of family businesses, the County Council can remain supportive of and actively involved in such events and research initiatives. Through the CFB, Fingal families can receive best practice in family business management from established professionals and leading research in the field.

Another opportunity for family business support may arise from collaboration between the state (the relevant sponsoring departments), local enterprise agencies and academic institutions, e.g., Enterprise Ireland, Failte & Tourism Ireland, Bord Bia, BIM, the Local Authorities, Plato, LEO, Dublin Rural LEADER, DCU, and ITB (Institute of Technology Blanchardstown) and others. Availability of key skills is a priority of family businesses, and this is evident among this firm sample, some of whom actively seek new graduates. Regional career fairs and work placements (see the offering of DCU Intra and Career Development Services) can be of particular benefit to those businesses searching for talent. Additionally, there is next generation internship, where a daughter/ son works in another family business, gathers essential experience and sees how other families conduct operations. Local authorities can encourage membership of these work placement initiatives while third level institutions deliver suitable graduates.

## Greater Awareness and Engagement

Fingal County Council should continue its ongoing conversation with the local business community regarding their needs, and the supports (financial and otherwise) and opportunities available to grow their business. In conversing with some participants, it was implied that their relationship with the council is unidimensional i.e., they pay their commercial rates with limited returns for their business.

In enabling an ongoing feedback process between businesses and local authority, businesses' satisfaction surveys or focus groups could be utilised. This provides an opportunity for greater interaction and engagement between the council and its commercial customers. For the businesses embedded in the community, a space to communicate their concerns will not only result in more targeted and effective business support, but also in the advancement of the Fingal economy and its industries. Furthermore, the Fingal County Council website could provide a "commercial business" (those who pay rates) log-in which gives access to a listing of updates, reports and events. These targeted methods of communication should greatly increase the engagement and communication between Fingal County Council and its customers.







## Active Business Development

We recommend the continued delivery of Fingal's business development, mentoring and networking opportunities for the SME sector. The Fingal Local Enterprise Office is a one-stop shop for micro and small businesses aiming to develop skills and capabilities, foster new business partnerships, sub-supply opportunities, access to potential customers, etc. Those that fall into the medium and large sectors (such as our firm sample) may benefit from a consolidation of supports and services, such as those offered by the LEO. Potential benefits could exist in having a single point of contact for medium to large businesses within Fingal County Council. This targeted support could aid businesses further in their future development.

The existing events for business networking, promotion, growth, investment and innovation can greatly assist family business development however, in order to leverage these opportunities, involvement needs to be extended beyond participation. Through the feedback loop, mentioned above, businesses could have their say in the topics and content of these events and the opportunity to follow up with local authorities post-event. Further events on exporting in SMEs, in particular, family businesses, could be delivered.

Certain companies also expressed concern for infrastructure such as flooded and damaged roadways, limited accessibility to industrial estates, poor public transport linkages, and sub-optimal broadband connectivity. The broadband issue could be alleviated through further engagement with a range of operators and resellers including Eir, whose broadband network

comes into effect in certain parts of Fingal such as Naul, Ballyboughal, Oldtown, Balbriggan and Stephenstown. Broadband access is also part of the Dublin Rural Region's LEADER remit that has specific objectives set out in the Dublin Rural LEADER Draft Local Development Strategy (LDS). When launched in 2016, this broadband roll out should see a major improvement in the eligible LEADER areas in the short to medium term. Moreover, the National Broadband Strategy will address connectivity issues on a nationwide basis.

Testament to the existence of infrastructural issues, Fingal has outlined specific measures to tackle them (see Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023). Our family firms express intentions to grow and prosper in line with developing their area, however, certain infrastructural liabilities are hindering progress. FCC should continually assess and prioritise these issues throughout the delivery of its capital programmes. Our principal advice, which aligns to the first recommendation, is to advance communication regarding these issues. Similarly, the Government's wider plans for capital investment and infrastructure will be a major support to economic competitiveness across all areas, including Fingal.



## 7. Conclusion

In viewing this sample of family businesses, it becomes apparent that family firms have tremendous potential for growth, innovation and success. Regardless of size, industry or age, these family businesses share many features that contribute to their longevity and resilience such as long-term outlook, survivability capital, stewardship, and commitment.

For those aspiring to be multi-generational, succession planning and next-generation family involvement measures are paramount and the earlier these are implemented, the better. Succession can be an increasingly difficult process to negotiate as the number of family members involved grows. The key here is to plan well in advance and communicate regularly.

Family firms do not have to handle this potentially delicate and complex issue alone, as there are groups (for example, DCU Centre for Family Business) and advisors (such as PwC, William Fry and other specialists) there to assist family members in the process.

Significant commercial opportunities can lie untapped by family firms, such as internationalisation. While Irish family firms are generally domestic-growth orientated, there is interest in international growth as noted in previous research (e.g., PwC, 2014). With assistance and support from existing bodies, many more family firms can enter and occupy international markets.

Professionalising the firm, both in terms of governance and human resources, is becoming increasingly relevant. Talent management is an area in which family businesses can develop and grow into a more merit-based work environment. Family governance structures

can ensure the alignment of both family and business objectives, clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, and harmonious relations. Greater awareness of the importance of family and non-family talent management will further enable families to negotiate this complex process.

In terms of our knowledge of family businesses, there still remains a shortfall of definitive data regarding this important business model in Ireland, including the Dublin Fingal region. Published data on family businesses is largely limited. Family businesses are a cross-sectoral cohort, thus, the family aspect of the business is rarely acknowledged and when it is the family business is limited in scope (i.e., definitional restrictions). As a result family businesses can fall under the radar.

Without generalised knowledge of their frequency, their management and ownership structure, turnover, employment, and more, there is a risk that family businesses may not grow or receive adequate recognition. While there are studies that report data on Irish family businesses (e.g., PwC, 2016; DCU Centre for Family Business, 2016; CSO, 2005), we call for larger scale, cross-sectoral research to create a more holistic view of family businesses in Ireland.

There is no recipe for success in family business. Instead, there is best practice that if implemented and maintained can aid family business management and enhance cross-generational survival. Ultimately, it is the embedded knowledge, culture, traditions, and values that make family businesses distinct and competitively advantaged.

## 8. Acknowledgements

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## 9. Relevant Contacts

Bord Bia	Irish Food Board. Website: <a href="http://www.bordbia.ie">www.bordbia.ie</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@bordbia.ie">info@bordbia.ie</a> Phone: + 353 (0)1 668 5155.
British Irish Chamber of Commerce	Leading business group serving the interests of businesses seeking growth opportunities in Britain and Ireland. Website: <a href="http://britishirishchamber.com">britishirishchamber.com</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@britishirishchamber.com">info@britishirishchamber.com</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 400 4322
Chambers Ireland	The country's largest business organisation with a network of chambers of commerce in every major town and region nationwide. Website: <a href="http://chambers.ie">chambers.ie</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@chambers.ie">info@chambers.ie</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 400 4300.
DCU Centre for Family Business	First centre of excellence in the management and sustainability of Irish family businesses. Website: <a href="http://dcu.ie/centreforfamilybusiness">dcu.ie/centreforfamilybusiness</a> Email: <a href="mailto:familybusiness@dcu.ie">familybusiness@dcu.ie</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 700 6921.
Enterprise Ireland	State body responsible for the growth and development of Irish enterprises in world markets. Website: <a href="http://enterprise-ireland.com">enterprise-ireland.com</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 727 2000.
Fingal County Council	Local authority for the Fingal Region. Website: <a href="http://fingal.ie">fingal.ie</a> Email: <a href="mailto:customercareunit@fingal.ie">customercareunit@fingal.ie</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 890 5000.
Ibec	National business representative organisation. Website: <a href="http://ibec.ie">ibec.ie</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@ibec.ie">info@ibec.ie</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 605 1500.
Leadership and Talent Institute, DCU	First leadership and talent centre of excellence and learning in Ireland. Website: <a href="http://dcu.ie/leadership-talent">dcu.ie/leadership-talent</a> Email: <a href="mailto:liti@dcu.ie">liti@dcu.ie</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 700 6956.
Local Enterprise Office Fingal	The local authority's first stop shop for anyone seeking to open or grow their business in Ireland. Website: <a href="http://localenterprise.ie/Fingal">localenterprise.ie/Fingal</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@leo.fingal.ie">info@leo.fingal.ie</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 890 0800.





Irish Exporters Association	An independent representative body for all Irish exporters. Website: <a href="http://irishexporters.ie">irishexporters.ie</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 661 2182.
ISME, The Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association	An independent representative body for owners of small and medium businesses in Ireland. Website: <a href="http://isme.ie">isme.ie</a> Email: <a href="mailto:isme@isme.ie">isme@isme.ie</a> Phone: +353 (0)1 662 2755.
Plato Dublin	A not-for-profit business development programme for SMEs that is partially funded by the four Dublin Local Enterprise Offices. Website: <a href="http://platodublin.ie">platodublin.ie</a> Email: <a href="mailto:dublin@plato.ie">dublin@plato.ie</a> Phone: 086 8234309

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