

Limerick businesswomen lead the way

Some of the leading businesswomen in the Mid-West speak about the secret of their success - and what motivates them to achieve such high standards

Sandra Egan

Partner at Holmes O'Malley Sexton

HOW long have you been in business?

HOMS Solicitors has been in practice for almost 50 years and I joined in 2013. Prior to that I trained and practiced with Arthur Cox solicitors in Dublin for almost 10 years.

How did you get involved in this business?

I had always wanted to work at the cutting edge of the legal profession having trained and worked in Arthur Cox. I was delighted when a position opened up at HOMS Solicitors, the leading practice in the Mid-West, which is progressing and growing its national presence.

Tell us a little about your business and your clientele:

HOMS Solicitors is a top 20 Irish law firm with a multidisciplinary practice. We have four key practice areas: 1. Corporate, Commercial property and Banking, 2. Defence litigation, 3. Plaintiff Litigation and 4. Private clients.

We act for a broad range of corporate and institutional clients as well as private clients.

In terms of my own area of practice, I specialise in advising on all aspects of commercial property, banking, insolvency and restructuring. My extensive experience includes advising on acquisitions, disposals, financing, restructurings and property investment on behalf of state and semi-state companies, investment funds, corporate and individual clients, partnerships and various institutions. I regularly advise financial institutions and receivers in relation to enforcing security, restructuring and the sale and management of distressed property portfolios.

What differentiates your business from others in the sector?

There are a number of key differentiators which set HOMS apart from our competitors - (i) we are



Sandra Egan, partner Holmes O'Malley Sexton Solicitors, specialises in commercial property, banking, insolvency and restructuring for the firm



strategically located in both Limerick and Dublin, (ii) we have an experienced and knowledgeable senior team, (iii) we have a capacity to deliver, (iv) we have a strong track record of delivering quality service having been in business for almost 50 years and (v) we have competitive rates.

What would you like to tell us about any recent successes/projects/promotions?

In 2016 HOMS embarked on an organisational renewal project called 'HOMS 2020: Getting Ahead of the Curve'. Key initiatives relating to organisational renewal, business development and talent management were put in place to deliver the strategic objectives of this plan. Three key objectives of the plan are making HOMS Solicitors a great place to work, ensuring sustainable profit and

succession planning. As a result there were a number of promotions within the office including the appointment of three new partners in 2016. I was one of these appointments and I am the partner in charge of the commercial property department. Our objectives also include continued expansion of our Dublin business, which has more than doubled in size recently since being opened in 2009. It is the next step in the progression and growth of the firm which has strong foundations based on the values and culture instilled by the founding partners, Gordon Holmes, Jim Sexton and Michael O'Malley when they first opened the doors of the firm in 1970. I am delighted to be a part of it.

Do you get any spare time? What do you do with it?

Spending time with my husband and 14 month old twins Sarah and Billy although spare time is somewhat limited! I love to get out and about for a walk or visit my family in Kerry.

Louise Donlon

Director of the Lime Tree Theatre

HOW long have you been in business?

I have been working in the arts since 1989, so nearly thirty years. I worked at the Arts Council initially, and then moved to theatre. After three years at Island Theatre Company in Limerick, I worked as the General Manager of Druid in Galway, working extensively on touring, both national and international. While in Druid, I was responsible for the touring of Martin McDonagh's *Leenane Trilogy* to London, Sydney and New York, where the company won four Tony awards on Broadway. I have been managing venues since 1999.

How did you get involved in this business?

I have a degree in music and, while I initially considering teaching, my involvement in student societies highlighted a much greater interest and skill in arts administration.

Tell us a little about your business and your clientele:

The Lime Tree Theatre and Belltable are venues that aim to present the best possible performance to audiences in Limerick and the Mid-West. The programme is very varied and wide-ranging and needs to reflect both the best in Irish and international arts practice, but also the commercial and popular work that tours in Ireland. We aim to present every aspect of the performing arts - from the Abbey Theatre to local stage schools, from Handel's *Messiah* to Jack L. The Lime Tree takes the larger scale work, the Belltable concentrates on contemporary arts practice and providing opportunities for local and national theatre practitioners to showcase their work. The Belltable also screens cinema every Monday night, under the IFI umbrella.

What differentiates your business from others in the sector?



Sharon Kiely, Box Office Manager, Louise Donlon, Director, Lime Tree Theatre, Gillian Fenton, Marketing Manager and Marketa Dowling, Programme Manager of the Belltable



Our programme has a community aspect to it which is different to other venues - both in terms of local work, but also in providing employment and work development opportunities for locally based artists. Because we are publicly funded via the Arts Council and Limerick City and County Council, we can support artists in creating or touring new work, which like business start-ups and new tech companies, need investment to get up and running.

What would you like to tell us about any recent successes/projects/promotions?

We have had many successes since we opened, not least in the numbers of people who have come to see shows and film in our venues over the past five years - coming towards 280,000. Looking forward, our biggest show to date will be the world premiere production of

Angela's Ashes - The Musical, which will be in the Lime Tree in the first two weeks of July. A hugely significant booking for us, we expect it to make a significant mark, not only here in Limerick, but also when it moves on to Dublin and, hopefully, the West End in London.

How do you plan to develop your business?

By continuing to present the very best work available to audiences in Limerick. Keeping our name and brand to the forefront is crucial, but in terms of gaining audiences but also ensuring an ever widening range of promoters and performers who use the venues.

Where do you want to see yourself in five years?

Keeping the ball packed out!

Do you get any spare time? What do you do with it?

Spare time is precious, and family obviously takes precedence. I am a member of Seoda Chamber Choir which is a wonderful women's choir that allows me to stay in touch with my musical side.

Caroline Kelleher

Director of Policy at the Limerick Chamber

HOW long have you been in business?

I have been working in the Economics and Policy area for over ten years. I originally studied Commerce in UCC and subsequently went on to do my Masters in Economics there also. On graduation I moved to Australia and worked in Finance before returning to Ireland in 2007. Since then the majority of my time has been in the Consultancy Sector working with Goodbody Stockbrokers, AECOM and DKM Economic Consultants. I joined Limerick Chamber in 2016.

How did you get involved in this business?

Most of my career to date has been primarily focused in economic and commercial consultancy services. Working in consultancy allowed me to work with a wide variety of clients across a range of sectors such as Transport, Healthcare, Construction/Property and Energy for example. My move to the Chamber was a natural progression for me and is allowing me to use my experience for our wide ranging membership base.

Tell us a little about your business and your clientele:

Limerick Chamber is over 200 years old and celebrated its bicentenary in 2015. So it is fair to say we have been representing businesses in Limerick and the Mid-West for a long time. The Chamber is the largest business network in the Midwest with almost 500 members. Our membership base is split into four strands, Corporates, SME, Retail & Hospitality and Business Builder. We tailor our events and networking to suit specific sectors and membership groups thereby ensuring that we are meeting all members' needs.

What differentiates your business from others in the sector?

Limerick Chamber is the only chamber in the region with a



Caroline Kelleher, Limerick Chamber



Policy department which is important if we are to ensure that Government policy is optimal for the development of the region. Our policy priorities are informed by our members via our Policy Committee and we proactively lobby for change to ensure the best environment for business to flourish is delivered.

Tailoring Networking is also a fundamental function of the Limerick Chamber and as the biggest business representative organisation in the region, the network available to our members cannot be equalled. Our tailored B2B and B2C networking events, which run throughout the year, allow you to meet new customers and expand your business contacts.

What would you like to tell us about any recent successes/projects/promotions?

Our Regional Leaders Programme was recently launched in association with DellEMC and University of Limerick. The programme aims to build leadership capacity within the Mid-West region and beyond and is targeted at professionals who want to develop their leadership skills. The programme is run on a bi-monthly basis and involves a talk from senior, national and international, leaders, who will speak on a relevant leadership topic. In between the bi monthly lunch, participants are given a mentor who will be a

senior leader from the region who will work with them to hone their leadership skills. It is very positive that 40 per cent of participants in the course are female and our next speaker will be Anne Heraty from CPL, which I am very much looking forward to. The programme has been very successful and there is currently a waiting list for next year. The Chamber has also been very active in strengthening our focus on policy. We have recently established a Policy Committee comprised of members from across a variety of sectors. Some of our key policy priorities are the Revitalisation of the City Centre, the Northern Distributor Road, and the M20. We recently commissioned a report from Imdecon Economic Consultants and RedC Research to undertake an independent review of the need for the M20 which we will be presenting to Government with the intention of getting the project included in the forthcoming Capital Plan.

Where do you want to see yourself in five years?

In five years, I would like to be involved in the continued growth in the Mid-West so that the region continues to thrive and maximise its potential. I hope that as a Chamber, we will be building on policy changes that manifest themselves as Limerick and the region continues to grow and develop. I hope that in five years, significant progress is made in advancing the policy priorities that the Chamber is currently working on. I would love to see the proposed M20 motorway and the Northern Distributor Road to be at an advanced stage of development and that the revitalisation of the City Centre would be making significant progress.

Rachel Leahy

Marketing and Communications Manager at CUBE

HOW long have you been in business and how did you get involved in where you work now?

After spending four fantastic years in LIT studying Business with Event Management, I graduated in 2015 with a first class honours degree. The course incorporates a significant six month work placement in third year and I was blessed to secure my work placement with Limerick based charity Cliona's Foundation. This is where I caught the business bug! I was lucky enough to gain experience and develop my knowledge in various areas of the business world.

I quickly discovered that I particularly enjoyed the Marketing and PR side of things. With great mentors, I was given more responsibility in these areas, this gave me the opportunity to apply what I had learned in college. From there, I knew for certain marketing was the route I wanted to pursue after college.

On completing my degree in May 2015 I began working part-time with the charity. Balancing my time here with a second part-time job in Marketing and Communications with, then named, Cube Printing Ltd on the Ballysimon Road. When a full time position as Marketing and Communications Manager became available in March 2016 - I jumped at the opportunity to assume the role and have been happily employed here since.

Tell us a little about CUBE and your clientele:

We are design, print and packaging specialists. Our manufacturing plant and offices are located in Eastway Business Park, near the NCT centre, and we currently have 30 employees. Formally known as Cube Printing Ltd., my initial task back in March 2016 was to rebrand and reposition the company to correctly represent us as leaders in our field. Now trading as CUBE, the majority of our clients are in the



Rachel Leahy of CUBE



How do you plan to develop your business?

Rebranding the business was one of the first building blocks in our plan to develop and grow CUBE. Many people don't realise the size of our operation or our capabilities, I plan to change that. We have the foundations in place to grow a really strong brand in a traditionally 'old fashioned' industry that hasn't yet started to take advantage of the online tools available to raise awareness of their businesses and build relationships with potential customers. I see social media and networking events being a great aid in developing CUBE and telling our story. People are becoming more and more interested in the faces behind a company, they like hearing stories of employee achievements and seeing a personable side to the business. We don't sell B2B or B2C anymore, its H2H - Human to Human. Cold calling is dated now, it's time to get out and start meeting people face to face or online where mutual interests can be the conversation starter to start building those trusting relationships with clients/leads.

The pharma and medtech market in Ireland is thriving, as is the hospitality industry. We've invested heavily in new machinery, quality processes and employee upskilling and hiring over the past 4 years in order to prepare us to meet the needs of these particular markets. 2017 will be a busy year as we try to extend into these markets.

Where do you want to see yourself in five years?

I want to be an expert in my field.