on the
GRAPEVINE
with JOE DERMODY

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Any other business...

Chris Chidley, managing director, Compass Group Ireland.

Client relations key to hospitality success

Client relationships are crucial to sustained success in the hospitality sector, says Chris Chidley, newly-appointed managing director of food service business Compass Group Ireland.

In Ireland, Compass Group serves over 100,000 meals a year, including workplaces such as Google, venues such as Páirc Uí Chaoimh and Aviva Stadium, and in universities such as RCSI UCD.

Chris Chidley said: "I am delighted to have been appointed MD of Compass Group Ireland. We will continue to make our clients' businesses better by continuing to maximise efficiencies for our customers, assessing growth opportunities through acquisitions that will strengthen our geographical position, and striving to be the employer of choice within the food service sector.

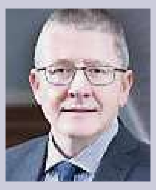
"Putting our clients first has made us the preferred food partner for a wide selection of industries in Ireland from banking, technology, professional services and universities to sports venues. I'm looking forward to continuing these client relationships and to introducing the Compass Group food experience to more organisations across Ireland."

Mr Chidley joins Compass from his previous role as MD of UK-based VSG Vision Security Group. VSG was a wholly owned subsidiary of Compass Group before its acquisition by Mitie in October 2018. He has also previously spent nine years with Compass Group in the UK, in roles across concept development, supply chain and business development.

O'Brien is the new CEO at St Lukes

Tony O'Brien has been appointed as CEO of St Luke's Charity & Home, the not-for-profit voluntary organisation which operates an elderly care residential facility in Mahon, Cork.

St Luke's is a 130-year-old charity. Its purpose-built residential facility is in the eastern suburb of Cork city. It includes an Alzheimer's unit, an integrated day care capability and a dedicated education centre on-site.



Tony O'Brien, CEO, St Luke's.

Mr O'Brien brings considerable healthcare experience, having spent 14 years as head of finance for Marymount University Hospital and Hospice, where he played a vital role in the development of their new facility in Curraheen, Cork.

Mr O' Brien's previous experience also includes over 13 years in the finance industry, notably as financial controller for a business & advisory practice in Cork. With over 20 years holding senior finance positions at an executive level, his knowledge extends to a wide range of general management responsibilities which include but are not limited to Information Technology and Data Management.

This wealth of experience, teamed with his passion, organisation and leadership skills and empathy, make Tony the perfect candidate to take the reins as CEO of St. Luke's Charity & Home.

Tony is a fellow in the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland and holds a Graduate Diploma in Information Technology from DCU and Professional Certificate in Data Protection from UCD.

ISME chief executive Neil McDonnell.

ISME seeks reversal of supplements VAT hike

ISME has called upon Revenue to reverse a decision to impose a 23% VAT rate on all food supplements from March 1.

The SME representative group warns that imposing it would have a detrimental effect on health food stores. It also says the tax contradicts the Healthy Ireland initiative.

ISME CEO, Neil McDonnell, said: "As there has never been VAT on these products, the impact on business will be catastrophic. Retail prices will unnecessarily rise, and small businesses will struggle to absorb or pass on the costs.

"The Minister needs to defer the decision until an impact study (which he called for in November) is completed or to legislate for a 0% rate of VAT."

Garrett McCabe, MD of Health Matters and a member of ISME, added: "Applying the 23% VAT rate will have a huge impact on the affordability of products that have significant health benefits. Furthermore, there could be job losses and closures for some stores, in turn leading to a loss of revenue for the Government."

Here in *Grapevine* last week, David Fitzsimons, Retail Excellence group CEO, highlighted his concerns for stores under threat from the VAT move. The issue has also been highlighted by the Irish Pharmacy Union.

Family bond underpins unique US-Irish business relationship

A STRONG capital city, regional growth and maintaining the Irish-American business relationship is key to ensure long-term growth in the Irish economy.

Denis Collins, CEO of Smarter Dynamix, and chair of the IDA Ireland Regional Development Committee and an IDA Ireland board member, said that there are huge challenges on the horizon for Ireland, as with many countries. But, he added, Ireland is better-placed than many to fend off these challenges and keep developing.

Steady job growth has been a constant in Ireland for a decade in terms of FDI. For a summary of IDA's key US-Irish business statistics, see today's *US Business In Ireland* supplement with today's *Irish Examiner*, produced in partnership with the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland.

Year on year growth

According to IDA Ireland, there has been year-on-year growth in FDI clients since 2009, and that is not showing signs of slowing down either.

Many of these are based in US companies and, as such, the protectionist economic policies from that side of the Atlantic are a cause for concern for some.

Mr Collins says that there really are plenty of reasons for optimism too.

"The American-Irish relationship is a long-term, strong, trustworthy relationship and one that remains very relevant still," he said. "It shouldn't be the only one that we have from an FDI standpoint but it needs to be one that we take care of."

Mr Collins pointed to a number of potential geopolitical factors that could undermine the relationship between Irish and American business, namely that of the protectionist economic policies of the current US administration and, of course, the spectre of Brexit.

"These factors could inhibit potential growth in the coming years — but the US dynamic remains a cornerstone of economic policies here," Mr Collins said.

"Let's be honest, though: the world is always in some sort of political turmoil. Yes, there seems to be more protectionist ideologies running things this time and that might challenge the economic relationship but I think we will continue to see FDI come into this country." Part of the reason for this thinking, Mr Collins said, is that the Irish-American relationship is not a one-way street. Often, the conversation relating to Ireland, the United States and FDI focuses on the presence of American companies in Ireland. With good reason: the numbers employed in North American companies in Ireland grew by 7% in 2018, according to the FDI, and US enterprises are a crucial employer in the south-west region, specifically. Of the 186 FDI companies in the south-west of Ireland, 114 are US multi-nationals. In total, they employ 32,203 people.

But, Mr Collins was quick to note that the relationship works both ways.

"Ireland Inc drives an incredible amount of exports that drives tremendous value for the United States," he said.

"Research and development, supply chain, export jobs — it goes beyond the pharmaceutical presence here. Per capita, Ireland is one of the top reciprocal jobs creators with the US. That is the benefit of a long-term relationship that is built on more than just trade: it is family, is a shared history. And, while there are some tough headwinds ahead, that will stand to us."

How does Ireland ensure that the international climate does not cause major issues in the years ahead? Mr Collins said that there is quite a bit that is needed.

"We need to have a strong Dublin," he said.

Denis Collins, CEO of Smarter Dynamix, says there is a deep shared history behind the unique US-Irish business relationship. For more on that relationship, see the 'US Business In Ireland' supplement with today's *Irish Examiner*, produced in partnership with the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland.

"We all know about the importance of regional development but there will still always be companies that want to be based in the capital for whatever reason so a strong Dublin is important.

"But, more and more, we are seeing the importance of complementary strategies and that means that Ireland, just like everyone else, needs to offer diverse value for the rest of the country to draw people out."

This has been a cornerstone of IDA Ireland policy in recent years. Almost 60% of all IDA-supported FDI jobs are now based outside Dublin, with many regions seeing particularly strong growth last year. The west of Ireland saw 8% growth in job creation, with the Midlands (14%), the mid-west (6%), the mid-east (7%) and the south-east (7%) all performing strongly too.

Mr Collins said that such growth is promising — and important.

"We need to keep building on what we have: up-sell and expand. That is as true for Ireland as any business," he said. He pointed to the need for collaborative clusters, including close ties between industry and regional authorities, as well as business development agencies.

"It is about understanding the value of place," he added.

"Bring industry, government and academia together with place and you can identify opportunities, gaps in skills and then drive towards a goal."

There was growth in almost all industries in Ireland last year. The IDA Ireland 2018 report showed a 9% growth in bio-pharmaceutical jobs, a 6% growth in tech, a 12% growth in international finance and a small boost in engineering and industry too. But that isn't where the opportunities end, Mr Collins said.

In fact, Ireland has the chance to grab the bull by the horns when it comes to several emerging industries he said.

"Advanced manufacturing presents an incredible opportunity for total market disruption," he said.

"We are talking robotics, supply chain: a huge number of jobs that could disrupt every single industry. If you can be seen to be a market leader here — and there is absolutely no reason that Ireland can't be — you can lay claim to a substantial number of jobs.

"And just the like pharmaceutical industry, these jobs are sticky. These companies will come along and make really big investments in operations and, therefore, will be there to stay." And it doesn't end there, he said.

"Media — we are talking animation like Cartoon Saloon and Brown Bag, but also virtual reality — is a huge opportunity, as is analytics," he said.

"There is already huge growth in analytics but the opportunity is there for more. Look at the cyber-security sector, where we already have the basis of a very strong cluster, and how that links into another growth area in data centres. All of these are huge drivers with potentially huge employment.

"Analytics, data and cyber-security are all linked and that can be what cloud computing was ten years ago. CIT launched the first cloud computing masters in the world — it made the *New York Times* — and people come from everywhere to do it. Companies all need a place to put their data and if that backdrop is here, they will come."

Mr Collins said it moves beyond simple data solutions and into areas like prescriptive analytics, an area of business management that not only stores and analyses data, but tells people what course of action to take from there.

He said that fintech (financial technology), agtech (agricultural technology) and proptech (property technology) are all hugely important, emerging industries that also present massive opportunities for Ireland when it comes to job growth.

"It is important, too, to tie these in with indigenous businesses: small, medium and large, and to create a diverse working pool that drives the creation of skills," he added.

It is far from a simple task. With so many plates to keep spinning, it will take huge buy-in from a large number of important players.

But, Mr Collins said, the rewards could be huge.

"We need to be focused on herding the cats," he said.

"For global FDI, for indigenous business and to be prepared for the headwinds of Brexit and protectionism.

"There is a lot to offer: long-term reciprocal relationships with the United States and others, a strong capital and complementary regions.

"We have to be focused on driving collaboration across horizontal groups. We need to look outward and to see exactly which groups need to work together."

VCs investing €5m in technology innovators

CorkBIC this week welcomed investors, VCs and seasoned entrepreneurs to its Demo Day in Port of Cork, to hear the six accelerator teams pitch for investment.

These teams, from global locations, are looking to employ up to 30 people over the next 12 months and are in the process of raising more than €5 million in investment.

This group is the second cohort of the CorkBIC International Security Accelerator, which began back in October.

Winner of CorkBIC's Most Investible Company, Conor Lyden of Trustap, said: "Winning the Most Investible Company is huge validation of the progress we have made over the past 13 weeks. Participating in the Accelerator has helped us with refining our business proposition, getting investor ready and ensuring that we have the right 'go to market' strategy".

Pictured at the second CorkBIC International Security Accelerator at Port of Cork: Pallav Singh, Kruzr; Surbhi Rathore, Rammer.ai; Heiko Baumgartner and Alex Babanin, NNOVA; Conor Lyden, Trustap; Laura Mellett, CorkBIC; Allan Beechinor, Daragh O'Brien, Noppera.

The programme invests in early stage deep tech, disruptive companies focused in the wider security industry across cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IOT), blockchain, health and bioinformatics, medtech, fintech, regtech and logistics.

The Accelerator is privately funded and supported by key partners Kernel Capital and Trend Micro. Following 13 weeks of intensive mentoring and in-depth workshops with a focus on the team, technology, business model, market opportunity and investor readiness, the six teams are currently seeking investment in their businesses.

The programme featured inputs from world class mentors: Julian Costley, investor and serial entrepreneur; Donagh Kiernan, Tenego Partnering; Joe O'Sullivan, Ophir; Paul Hands, of Open Innovaion Partners; Declan Fox, Magellan Partners; and Ronan Murphy, Smarttech.

The mentors challenged and advised the team members while also sharing their own experiences.

Partners for the International Security Accelerator are Kernel Capital, Bank of Ireland, Trend Micro, CorkBIC and Cork City Council.

Ger Goold, chief operating officer and partner at Kernel Capital, said: "Cork is developing a reputation for Ireland's growing Security Cluster. This Accelerator is a unique opportunity for startups to tap into the experience and resources of the strong network of Cork's multinationals, such as Trend Micro, helping these startups grow, succeed, and in turn contribute to the cluster."

HSBC key Asian role

HSBC Bank has boosted its capabilities in dealing with Chinese and ASEAN investment opportunities with the appointment of Chen Tian as a relationship director to its international subsidiary banking team.

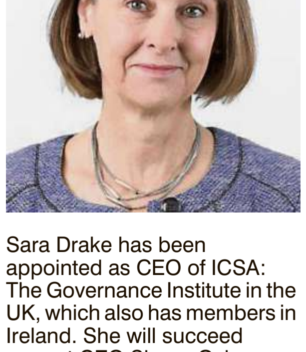
He will support the building of key relationships with clients operating between Ireland and China. Trade between the two nations in 2017 hit a record €15bn, while Chinese direct inward investment into Ireland totalled $3bn in 2016.

Chen joins HSBC after 15 years at Bank of Ireland where he worked across various teams. He was also senior VP in Bank of Ireland's inward investment team and he has been a long time Council member of the Ireland China Business Association.

Beccy Cameron has been appointed as director of HR with accountancy and business advisory firm Crowe. She will spearhead Crowe's HR initiativesto attract, retain, reward, and motivate top talent and top performance across the firm. Originally from Wales, she has 30 years' experience in HR in the UK, Ireland, Europe and the Nordics. Since relocating to Ireland 20 years ago, she has held senior HR roles in the private and public sectors, notably in telecomms and financial services. She is a Fellow of the CIPD, a member of the IITD and a qualified executive coach, mentor and certified trainer. She is also a former international marathon runner, representing Wales.

Iain Eddie has joined engineering solutions company Actavo in Dublin as COO for global industrial services and modular building services. He will be based in Wakefield, and will be responsible for services in Ireland and the UK. He brings 30 years' senior experience in global engineering and construction in the UK, Middle East, Africa, Australia and US, notably with Amec (20+years), Kentz (seven years) and SNC Lavalin. He has led engineering, construction, design and build, maintenance and asset support contracts in the Oil & Gas, Chemicals & Process, Energy, Nuclear and Defence sectors with annual budgets of $200m to $800m.

Julie Ennis has been appointed as MD of corporate services, Ireland and Northern Ireland, with food and facilities management firm Sodexo. She joins from Bank of Ireland, where she was head of its mobile sales force for three years; she held sales, product development, strategy and operations roles, she led the bank's employee wellbeing programme and was a committee member of its LGBT and gender balance networks. She is an MBA graduate of the UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School and a council member of the Executive Institute. Sodexo's clients include Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland, Bord Bia, Central Bank, PayPal, Dell and Microsoft.



Sara Drake has been appointed as CEO of ICSA: The Governance Institute in the UK, which also has members in Ireland. She will succeed current CEO Simon Osborne. She was previously CEO of the Association for Project Management and has also held MD roles at the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Homebuilders Federation. In her new role at ICSA, she will be responsible for members and students in the UK, Crown Dependencies, Republic of Ireland, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, the Caribbean and further afield. She join ICSA in early March as CEO designate before formally taking over as CEO in July.

Alan Jagoe has been elected as the new chairman of Agri Aware, the independent farming and agri-food educational body. He replaces outgoing chair Richard Moeran. Mr Jagoe He has been on the board of Agri Aware since 2013, most recently as vice-chair. He recently also finished his term on the Teagasc Authority. He was previously Macra na Feirme president from 2011-13. He has served as president and VP of CEJA, the European Council of Young farmers, which represents two million young farmers across the EU. He is a dairy and cereal farmer who farms in a family farm partnership with his father and brother in Nohoval, Co Cork.

Graeme McQueen has been appointed Dublin Chamber's head of communications. He was the Chamber's head of public affairs for the past two years, a role now taken up by Fergus Sharpe. Mr McQueen will oversee communications, media and marketing activity, reporting to Dublin Chamber CEO Mary Rose Burke. He will act as a key spokesperson. He joined the Chamber in 2014. A graduate of Napier University Edinburgh, he previously spent almost a decade working as a business journalist, including seven years as assistant editor of *Business Plus* magazine. He has also worked for the Scottish government. Dublin Chamber represents businesses in the Dublin region.