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Is your business affected by Brexit? Are you unsure? Well, InterTradeIreland has set up a Brexit Advisory Service, and will provide your business with up to €2,000 to cover professional fees (accountancy, legal, etc.) that you incur in planning your firm’s Brexit strategy. You’ll find the details on the service here.

Please note as well that InterTradeIreland are looking for more professional service providers to deliver their advisory services. If you are interested in working as a provider, you’ll find an application form here. We’ll have more details on this shortly.

Our latest Trends Survey, published recently, shows a decline in most of the confidence indicators that are included in our surveys. It is natural, as the Brexit negotiation process finally kicks off, for business owners to be apprehensive. We don’t want to be foolishly optimistic, but we do note a more realistic, temperate tone to British Government utterances of late, which suggest a more grown-up approach to the negotiation. Our advice to you is: hope for the best, but develop an in-depth plan to handle a worst-case scenario.

We are finishing our pre-budget submission for the Department of Finance, many thanks to those of you who have sent in material for inclusion in the submission.

Two issues that are rising to the top among those most frequently asked of us, are tightening in recruitment – especially among certain skillsets, and remuneration.

Stay in touch with our HR service with your issues as they arise.

We were disappointed with the decision of the Low Pay Commission to recommend a €0.30 per hour increase in the minimum wage. Despite the fact that the LPC is meant to apply evidential criteria to their decisions, there was no evidence in support of this increase. Our focus for business owners and employees, remains on reducing the costs of living and the cost of doing business.

You will see details of our 2017 Annual Conference soon. Given the high level of demand last year, we’ve decided to move it out to the Citywest Hotel, which will allow us a larger footprint for guests and exhibition space. We’ve also reviewed our pricing from a value-for-money perspective, following on from your feedback last November.

Aside from some really top-notch speakers, we will also have some real-world advice for you on how to market your business through story-telling. We’ll have some ISME member companies participating, who have volunteered to act as guinea-pigs! You will really find this very useful and practical. I look forward to seeing you there.

From all the staff in Kildare Street, I wish you the best.

Neil McDonnell, CEO
ISME Welcomes the Following New Members!

- Aesthetic Services Ltd.
- BKRM Chartered Accountants
- Branching Out Tree Care
- Candlezone
- Cavern Design Printing
- CGL Retail Solutions
- Coilog Eventing
- Corry Auto Engineering Ltd.
- Darlington Consulting
- Draper Erin
- E - Z Heating Solutions
- Europlan Group
- H.W. Fasteners Ltd.
- Immerse VR Education
- Jack Coughlan Architects Ltd.
- Kimble Business Solutions
- Larsen Water Management
- Leisure Domes
- Making The Complex Simple Ltd.
- Millbrook Foods
- Natcom Ireland Ltd.
- Packaging Components Ltd
- Packworks Ltd.
- Palmerstown Lodge
- Perrika Appliance Services Ltd.
- Resonate Acoustics
- SAS Security Services
- Secso
- Sheila Kearon
- Shorten’s Garage
- Silver Lining Coach Hire
- Sos Security
- T Kilmartin & Sons (I) Ltd.
- Tom Martin & Company Ltd.
- Vision Branding Solutions
- Walsh & Goodfellow Ltd.
- Webworks.ie
ISME Yearbook 2018

You may have recently received an email from the Ashville Media Group and we would like to clarify that the information in this email is incorrect.

We are publishing a ISME Yearbook 2018, except with a different publishing company - IFP Media. A member of the IFP Media team may be in touch with you about adverting opportunities in the publication, and when they contact you they will state that they are ringing on behalf of ISME.

SEAI Launch New Pilot Scheme

SEAI has recently launched a new pilot scheme to help small businesses save on lighting energy costs. SEAI want small businesses across Ireland to upgrade their lighting to energy efficient lightings. Companies who switch could see a saving of 50-90% on their energy bill. Find out more information here.

InterTradeIreland ‘Brexit’ Vouchers

InterTradeIreland are providing 100% funding to SMEs, up to €2,000 (incl VAT if applicable), towards the cost of expert advice on assessing potential Brexit related risks and opportunities. The application process is very straightforward and if approved InterTradeIreland will fund the cost of the expert directly. More info here.

Public Consultation on "Retail regulations in a multi-channel environment"

The European Commission are carrying out a public consultation to identify (i) the implications of e-commerce and changing consumer habits on the retail sector and its regulatory framework and (ii) opportunities and obstacles for the integration of the EU retail market. Click here to complete the questionnaire.

ISME Blogs

So, it never rains in Ireland
Casting a Hawkeye on GAA Tax Proposals
Can we handle the truth?
Dumb and Dumber
Playing the ball, not the man
View all ISME Blogs

ISME’s Latest News

Wage increase will undermine retail sector
Confidence in the SME Sector Wanes
Time for the three employer representatives on the LPC to resign
The case for a Perjury Act
Increase in Bank refusal rates disappointing
See all Latest News
Last month, the Low Pay Commission (LPC) made the recommendation to Government that National Minimum Wage (NMW) should increase from €9.25 to €9.55; representing a 3.24% increase from 1st January 2018.

The rational for this increase by the LPC was to ‘put more money bank into people’s pockets’, in order to give employees on the NMW a better standard of living. The recommendation was subsequently accepted by Government with great alacrity without any thought or consideration as to the impact it would have on small businesses and employees.

On average pay increases within the SME sector are between 2.0-2.5%. While a further 62% of businesses owners will not increase their earnings from the business.

In our press statement (see here) we outlined our concerns about the 3.24% increase, we also raised the issue of the blatant political exercise that is been carried out by Government. If the Government is serious about improving the living standards of its citizens, they must reduce the heavy burden of government controlled cost and invest heavily in skills-based training in this year’s budget. An extra 12€ a week will simply not achieve this.

Commenting on the LPCs recommendation, CEO Neil McDonnell said “The businesses which can afford pay increases are paying them. The businesses which cannot, will not. It is that simple. Low-skilled and no-skilled workers will not have their earnings increased by lifting the minimum wage. This can only happen through gains in productivity. If Government is earnest in improving the lot of the lower paid, it will invest heavily in skills-based training"

With no inflation on consumer goods and the growing concern of Brexit, there is no economic basis for a further increase to minimum wage. Continues increases will only add to business costs and this will ultimately lead to job losses.

In our pre-budget submission to Government, we will be outlining the need to reduce business cost and improve competitiveness.

For more information on our pay report see here.
SAVE THE DATE!

ISME's Annual Conference will take place on Friday, 3rd of November 2017 in the Citywest Hotel in Dublin.

More details to follow over the coming weeks.
Maternity Leave is an area of employment law that all employers will likely have to deal with at some stage. As such, we frequently receive questions from our members on this particular topic. The below article summarises some of the most popular questions that we get asked.

**How much maternity leave are employees entitled to?**
Employees are entitled to take 26 weeks ordinary maternity leave, and 16 weeks additional maternity leave. Maternity leave is open to all pregnant employees regardless of length of service, or employment status (e.g. part-time; full-time; fixed-term etc.)

**Who decides when the maternity leave should commence?**
Normally it is up to the employee to determine what their intended commencement date will be. However, for Health and Safety reasons at least 2 weeks must be taken prior to the expected due date, and at least 4 weeks after the birth.

**How much notice can I request my employee to give me of their intention to take maternity leave?**
Employees must give at least 4 weeks’ notice of their intention to take maternity leave.

**Do I need to pay my employees who take maternity leave?**
Not necessarily. Entitlement to maternity pay can be established at a company level, dependent on custom and practice and contractual obligations. If your contract states that employees are entitled to maternity pay, or you have paid employees in the past then you will be obliged to pay. Otherwise, the employee may be entitled to claim Maternity Benefit from the Department of Social Protection for the first 26 weeks of maternity leave, provided they have sufficient PRSI contributions.

**Can an employee resign during a period of maternity?**
Generally not. As maternity leave is a protected leave type, any attempted resignation that occurs during the period of maternity leave should be precluded from taking effect. There may be situations in which, after sufficient enquiries have been made, it might be possible to accept such a resignation, however, this should be applied with caution and only with prior advice from ISME.

**Is there anything I should do when an employee tells me they are pregnant?**
The first thing you should do is conduct a Risk Assessment on the workplace to determine if the employee is exposed to any particular risk that could put her, or her unborn child, at harm. If a risk is established then attempts should be made to reduce this risk to a safe level. If this is not possible, the employee must be placed on Health and Safety leave until commencement of their maternity leave.

Further information on maternity leave can be found on our website, or by contacting 01-6622755 or niamh@isme.ie
The term **Content Marketing** is bandied about a lot these days and I have referenced it in previous articles, but what does it really mean and how can an SME use it to promote its business?

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. For SMEs, this can be challenging because resources and budget can be limited. However, it can’t be ignored, as the content you provide can be instrumental in the success of your marketing activity.

One of the reasons content marketing for SMEs has become key to their marketing effort is cost – research has shown that it costs almost 62% less than traditional marketing and has nearly a 6% higher conversion rate. There are many delivery methods including blogs, eBooks, newsletters, reports, case studies, whitepapers, video, audio, presentation slides and infographics. Ideally a mix and match approach works well in order to keep content fresh and interesting. The vital ingredients are RELEVANCE, CONSISTENCY and QUALITY — you need to catch people’s attention and draw them in, with the ultimate goal of engagement or conversion.

Content marketing comprises of four different stages which are outlined below.

### 1. Defining Objectives & KPIs
Content marketing creates both a direct and indirect impact on a business. SMEs in particular, will be focused on lead generation from prospects who access their content. One benefit it provides is increased brand awareness, creating brand identity and web traffic generation by actual visits of customers or prospects to your site.

It can also help in getting access to quantifiable data which can provide insights on customers, potential prospects or target market. A content marketing plan can achieve much more than this however, it is important not to see it as an act of publishing few blogs, as one forgets that content sits in the middle of everything that a company does.

The objectives of a content marketing plan can be refreshed over a period of time however, it is important to put metrics to each of the objectives identified by the business.

### 2. Developing a Content Marketing Plan
This stage includes conducting a complete audit of your company and its competitors. Here a business can look at the kind of content it wants to publish and share in the industry, specific content ideas and themes. A business should develop specific content ideas and themes that form the basis of its content strategy.

You should analyse links coming through and social mentions, social media following, volume, and frequency of content that has been posted. It would be worthwhile to benchmark the results against competitors.

### 3. Building a Content Creation and Delivery Team
The reality is that great content alone is not enough, it also has to reach the targeted audience. Usually, SMEs confuse themselves between content idea and content format. An infographic or blog is a content format, but it may not be the best way to represent the content.
Content can take multiple forms like video, articles or reports, but if the idea behind it does not resonate with the prospect, then the opportunity to reach and engage a prospect is lost.

To get such strategy right, an SME should tap into a diverse set of skills and knowledge. SMEs should ensure that the content is well shared, liked and commented on by all the employees and existing network as a means of increasing the contents reach.

You may need to consider outsourcing the creative and delivery of content, if the skills and knowhow is not found within the business.

4. Measuring Success of your Content Marketing
It is important to gauge how and why a company’s audience enjoys sharing and viewing its pieces of content. A business should start calculating the true value of a website visitor in terms of the conversion rate, average online order value, customer lifetime value, etc.

Additionally, you can monitor other factors like social shares on content and online reach, brand awareness through branded search, new brand mentions and link acquisitions and web traffic content engagement. There are various tools available to measure these variables and can pull data from a variety of sources. Some examples include Google Analytics, Twitter Analytics, Hubspot and Social Mention.

Some useful tips:

Choosing a Topic
The best content is based on subjects your customers or prospects actually care about – that they’re actively searching for online. When you create something that your audience finds valuable and engaging, it ignites a dialogue. From there, you can skilfully turn this dialogue into business results. That’s why the best content topics are those that can produce the greatest business results, or the greatest ROI.

Generally, you can source the topics or ideas from within your own business, who better to know what’s of relevance, right? It is though, useful, to listen and look outside too, monitor what’s going in your industry, - what are your customers saying? and what are your competitors doing?

Attention-Grabbing Headlines
A good headline doesn’t have to be a tabloid-style scenario, it just needs to grab the attention of your target market. There are many theories to writing great headlines but here are a couple of tips:

- Use numbers
- Persuade readers with who, what, why, how or when
- Use an interesting adjective
- Use 'call to action' words

Take a title like “Increase your Sales Performance” and implement some of the above to “Discover 5 Savvy Tips to Maximise your Sales”.

Create a Content Calendar
Provide the most useful content at times when it will be most well received and sought-after. Schedule the content to piggyback on other marketing activity you may be doing.

Promote your Content
Central to your strategy should be your plans to promote your content, usually using social media, bookmarking and email marketing. Don’t forget to share your work in relevant places to encourage readers, or they may never find it.

Content marketing isn’t just an option for big businesses, it’s extremely viable for SMEs too. Remember, you are the expert in your field and sharing your knowledge allows you to attract and retain customers, and build your brand.

So, don’t forget!

- Be relevant, think quality
- Be creative
- Look within – your business, your team
- Keep your ear to the ground
- Access & digest – monitor & evaluate

Marketing for SMEs
Maeve Whooley, Chief Marketing Officer
5 Reasons to Join ISME

T: 01 6622755  WWW.ISME.IE  INFO@ISME.IE
CONFIDENCE IN THE SME SECTOR WANES

The results of the ISME Quarterly Business Trends Survey for the second quarter of 2017, were released (21st July) showed a decline in 7 of 12 confidence indicators: Business Expectations, Current Employment, Current Sales, Current Investment, Future Investment, and Export Expectations for the SME sector. However, there were improvements in Profitability Expectations, Sales Expectations and Current Exports. The Trends report also looks at pay in the SME sector. As expected, Brexit is the biggest concern for SMEs in 2017.

Commenting on the results, ISME CEO, Neil McDonnell said “The gains made in the previous quarter have reversed; with 7 out of 12 confidence indicators declining. Brexit, reduced orders and economic uncertainty are the biggest issues facing small businesses; this must be reflected in budget 2018.”

“Last month the Government accepted the recommendations from the Low Pay Commission for an increase in the statutory minimum wage, despite the lack of an evidential basis for doing so. This will have a negative impact on small businesses, particularly retailers. Our research shows business confidence and current sales within this sector have declined. 36% of businesses stated they will not increase pay this year.”

“This statutory increase will do nothing to improve the living standards of those on the minimum wage, if anything, it will undermine current employment and future employment.”

The top three concerns for SMEs in this quarter are Brexit, reduced orders and economic uncertainty; Brexit at 21% still remains the biggest concern for small and medium enterprises, followed by reduced orders 12%; and economic uncertainty at 11%. That Brexit is the biggest concern is unsurprising, given 55% of respondents stated Brexit will have a negative effect on their bottom line.

The result of this survey will be used as part of our pre-budget submission to the Government. For the full report and analyses please click here.
The purpose of the **Employer Disability Information** service is to provide employers with an expert peer source of advice and information on employing and retaining staff with disabilities.

**Support and Funding**
- Employer Schemes and Services
- Employee Supports
- Who to Contact

**Advice and Information**
- Inclusive Management and Recruitment
- Health & Safety
- Acquired Disability
- Reasonable Accommodation
- Employer Responsibilities and Accessibility

Have any questions we can answer?

**Contact Employer Disability Information by**

Calling 01 676 2014 or Emailing info@employerdisabilityinfo.ie

www.employerdisabilityinfo.ie

Visit our website for information on Inclusive Recruitment and Management, Acquired Disability, Reasonable Accommodation, Health & Safety and Rights & Responsibilities.

The service is managed by a consortium of employer organisations - Chambers Ireland, Ibec and ISME and is funded through the NDA.
IMPORTANT TAX DATES FOR AUGUST 2017

**August**

*Dividend Withholding Tax*

14th

Due date for payment and filing of returns of withholding tax on dividends paid by companies in July 2017.

**VAT**

14th


*Corporation Tax*

23rd

Company year end 30th September 2017: Preliminary tax due, minimum 90% of total liability for the year. Small companies can pay 100% of previous year’s liability (ROS filers).

Company year end 30th November 2016: Payment of balance of corporation tax and filing of corporation tax return (ROS filers).

*Income Tax*

23rd

Payment of PAYE/PRSI deductions for July 2017 (ROS filers).

*Company Secretarial*

28th


*Corporation Tax*

31st

Company year end 28th February 2016: Close companies with undistributed profits may have to make a distribution by this date to avoid surcharge.

Company year end 30th November 2016: Filing of ‘Return of third party information’ (Form 46G).

*Company Secretarial*

31st

Company year end 30th November 2016: Final date for holding Annual General Meeting and latest possible Annual Return date for 2017.
Tax Planning Considerations

6.25% Knowledge Development Box

The Knowledge Development Box regime enables companies carrying out research and development (R&D) activities to tax the profits arising from those activities at an effective rate of 6.25%.

The KDB is a welcome addition to Ireland’s suite of tax offerings. This comprises the 12.5% trading rate for companies, the 25% R&D tax credit system, which is cash refundable and tax depreciation for intangible assets. The addition of the KDB further reinforces Ireland’s offering to attract and incentivise innovation intensive sectors and businesses.

What is a Knowledge Development Box (KDB) Certificate?

A KDB Certificate is required for small companies which have assets in the form of intellectual property (IP) equivalent to a patentable invention.

Intellectual property for small companies is defined as:

“…. inventions that are certified by the Controller of Patents, Designs and Trade marks as being novel, non-obvious and useful”

The “Knowledge Development Box (Certification of Inventions) Act, 2017 (commenced on 19th May 2017) empowers the Controller of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks to provide the necessary certification. The Controller will issue a KDB certificate if he is satisfied that all requirements of Part 2 of the KDB Act are met. On receipt of a certificate, a company will be in a position to make a claim for tax relief to Revenue.

In order to apply for a KDB Certificate you should have the following information:

1. Have you completed a sworn statutory declaration that your company is a relevant company for the purposes of the KDB?
2. Does your company have a qualifying asset i.e. an invention which is the result of R&D which you consider to be patentable but have not patented?
3. Does your company have qualifying expenditure and qualifying profits arising from the invention?
4. Have you a full clear and accurate description of the invention?
5. Do you know the date the invention began to be used, produced or marketed?
6. Have you obtained an opinion from a patent agent attesting that the invention is novel, non-obvious and useful up to and on the date it began to be used, produced or marketed?
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