Irish consumers currently spend around €3.7 billion per year online and it is expected to grow to €5.7 billion by 2016. Despite these impressive figures, only one quarter of current online sales goes to Irish businesses, and a mere 23 per cent of Irish SMEs are trading online. This is at a time when international research shows that SMEs which adopt online trading grow twice as fast and export twice as much as their offline competitors. Dublin Chamber of Commerce has responded to this, and is aiming to get 40 per cent of Dublin SMEs selling online by the end of 2013 as part of its ‘Activating Dublin’ initiative.

A series of activities have been undertaken by Dublin Chamber as part of this programme, including a pilot programme which provided twenty businesses mentorship from three of the world’s largest internet services firms – Google, Facebook, PayPal and eBay. “The pilot programme is part of a joint set of initiatives undertaken by Dublin Chamber of Commerce and Dublin City Council, entitled Activating Dublin, aimed at generating growth and employment in Dublin that will benefit Ireland,” said Patrick King, Policy & Communications Manager at Dublin Chamber. “The pilot involves working with central government to help develop a national programme. There is a major challenge for business and Government as Irish consumers currently spend €4bn online annually, but only €1bn of that goes to Irish businesses. The amount spent online is only going to grow, so retaining more spending in Ireland will be essential.”

DOVETAILING BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR SUCCESS

The world of eCommerce, in all its varied forms, presents outstanding opportunities for virtually every business. You can expand into new markets, realise remarkable efficiencies, improve customer service and attract new customers. Getting your business online may seem like a difficult challenge, but it need not be. You know your business and going online is simply a way of adding a new sales channel, or

Having an online presence is essential for the survival and growth of any firm. Three separate companies explain why and what to consider when making the move.
enabling a new relationship with a trading partner. The technicalities of banking, payment processing, design and implementation can be capably handled by a proficient, professional solutions provider.

You need an expert, proven partner who can tell you what is possible, what is realistic, and to spot opportunities for your business.

TRUSTED PARTNER

Dovetail is that trusted partner for many successful Irish businesses. We have have helped organisations of all sizes and sectors to develop online services. We work with large corporates like IKEA and Aramark; state bodies including Inland Fisheries Ireland and Dublin Bus; and many smaller firms - much of our work is done with SMEs and owner-operated businesses.

All these companies had a common requirement: to develop an online aspect to the business, whether that was creating an online sales channel, integrating with a partner, or seizing some other business opportunity. All of these also had unique challenges - particular to each organisation - and the same will be true for yours.

Dovetail, founded in 2002, has the following mission: to help you achieve profit or other success through highly effective technological advice and expertly crafted software systems. Your business knowledge and our technical expertise dovetail to provide exceptional online results.

For a no-fee conversation on your ambitions for your company, please call Martin on 01-4100774 or email info@dovetail.ie, and take the first step towards getting your business online.

As stated above, recent research by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce shows that only 23 per cent of small and medium enterprises in Ireland trade on the Internet. Irish consumers are currently spending up to €4 billion online so it is clear that Irish businesses need to make greater use of Internet technologies to build fully featured e-commerce websites in order to achieve greater competitive advantage online.

IE DOMAIN: ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES

Research shows that Irish firms remain slow to capitalise on the opportunities afforded to them by the internet and new technologies. Small firms need to take action, upgrade their websites and tap into the 24 hour sales and marketing channel that is the internet. To highlight the issue the IEDR, the company which is responsible for the management and administration of Ireland’s official internet address – .ie – launched the ‘OPTIMISE Fund’ in 2011. OPTIMISE is an e-Commerce Website Development Fund for Irish SMEs to develop or upgrade their web presence and the e-commerce functionality of their websites. The Fund has grown from ten winners in 2011 to fifteen in 2012 and increased to offer support to twenty Irish SMEs or micro businesses in 2013. These 45 companies have been assisted by the fund in very practical, tangible ways such as adding shopping carts, online catalogues, facilitating online bookings, implementing social media campaigns and much more. The main goal of the OPTIMISE Fund is to help Irish SMEs grow their business using online methods.

It also should be noted that Ireland has a terrific brand in the .ie domain name and it is imperative that Irish businesses use it to fulfil their potential online. A .ie web address offers consumers and businesses the benefits of a secure e-business platform. The .ie namespace provides a solid and trusted foundation to afford Irish businesses the freedom to build the strongest possible online presence for their own brands, products and services.

SECURE REGISTRY

The IEDR operates a managed registry which means that there are rules and procedures governing the registration of .ie domain names. New applications are reviewed to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of registration. For example, IEDR will verify an applicant’s company-registered number with the CRO, or its patent reference number with international databases. This contrasts with .com or .eu where there is no manual review, and the domain applied for will be automatically registered – once the name is available. This traceability provides consumers with the confidence to transact on a .ie website.
The IEDR also runs an online resource for Irish people who are looking to find out more about .ie domain names. The website www.why.ie serves as an informational resource which seeks to simplify the process of registering a .ie domain while also providing some tips and insights into developing a strong web presence for people that could be relatively unfamiliar with such an undertaking.

As an Irish SME, by choosing .ie for your business, you are guaranteeing that your website has a connection with Ireland, that you are who you say you are and that anybody who visits your site can do so safely and securely. Because the IEDR authenticates and verifies who is behind a .ie website, consumers are safer using .ie websites. This is because there is less cybersquatting, spam, identity theft and credit card fraud in the .ie namespace, compared to .com and others. This aspect has been independently verified, and .ie has been consistently ranked in the top five safest domains in the world, according to international security specialists McAfee.

**BYRNEMONICE: LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Any company wishing to establish or expand their online trading operations needs legal advice, irrespective of whether they will be selling goods or services. Darren Daly of ByrneWallace explains the legal issues surrounding the online expansion of businesses.

It is imperative that websites have appropriate legal disclaimers and documents to protect the business. Darren Daly is a partner in the Corporate Department at ByrneWallace, one of the largest full service law firms in the country, and known for having a strong reputation in the technology sector. Daly is a transactional technology lawyer who heads up the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) division. He advises clients on an array of issues such as software development, data protection, and online trading.

ByrneWallace offers bespoke packages to customers who approach the firm seeking a review of their online operations, advice on any potential problems, and how these issues can be remedied. “We focus on providing proactive and pragmatic solutions, because unlike other sectors, the technology industry is very fast-paced where deals are done quickly. We have a team of dedicated problem solvers,” explains Daly.

**A CLEAR DIRECTION**

The type of guidance and consultation offered is multifaceted and versatile. In certain cases, companies are simply looking to create an online presence while others also want to sell their goods and services via the website. “Companies allow us to come in and access the information on their website. We can then evaluate the principal documents the client has or needs, focusing on the terms of use, legal disclaimers, and basic terms and conditions of sale,” explains Daly. “Allied to that, there are also branding issues, because trademark protection in particular typically works on a country-to-country basis. If someone has been primarily operating in the domestic market, we need to ascertain whether they can use their brand abroad if they are looking to expand online.” Companies which face these international jurisdictions may be trading in unfamiliar territory. This is where ByrneWallace comes in. They can quickly help to identify if a company’s use of a brand internationally will be infringing any other brands that already operate in overseas markets. This helps to reduce the risk of disjointed advertising if a business has to change any part of their brand to avoid infringement issues with existing international brands.

**THE ONLINE MARKETPLACE**

ByrneWallace is seeing an upsurge in the number of companies seeking advice, particularly with clients looking to trade online. There are specific legal regulations that need to be addressed before a business can successfully begin trading on the internet. Daly elaborates: “They are above your normal legal considerations. We can adapt a company’s existing legal terms and conditions to be applicable to online trading, and also ensure that the online contract formation process is properly constructed on the website.” Daly also concerns himself with data protection and privacy policies which are extremely important if a company wants to begin collecting information about consumers. “Irish businesses need to comply with Irish data protection law. For example, new legislation was introduced recently which set out new requirements and procedures for seeking permission from individuals to enable computer cookies, which collect small pieces of information on users. Compliance with data protection laws is a massive part of what we do.”

Companies which have multiple websites face a more complex challenge. They often have multiple sets of terms, conditions and privacy policies to adhere to. “We have a process called standardisation,” says Daly. “We gather all of the data online and look to streamline and standardise policies to adhere to. “We have a process called standardisation,” says Daly. “We gather all of the data online and look to streamline and standardise it, so it is uniformly compliant to EU regulations. Additionally, we also develop specific template contracts that clients can use for contract formation that are again compliant with all regulations,” he concludes.