

## CORK COMPANY OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2020

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In the second week of a four-part series looking at the finalists for the Cork Company of the Year Awards, Munster Business Hub editor **Alan Healy** casts an eye over the contenders in the SME category



Sinead Bleiel of AnaBio Technologies Ltd.

Picture: Brendan Lyon

## AnaBio well placed to be global leader in delivery systems

Founded in 2011, AnaBio Technologies is positioned to become a world leader in delivery systems for food, feed and pharmaceutical companies.

They use modern, patent-protected micro-encapsulation technologies to give key ingredients protection against heat, light, oxygen during processing and shelf-life.

Their air processing and dry coating ingredients against acid, digestive enzymes and bile salts to increase functionality at significantly lower dosage concentrations which means significant cost savings for customers.

Due to the instability of ingredients such as fish oils or probiotics, the shelf-life of many products is shortened.

This represents a disadvantage for the industry since retailers exercise pressure to deliver longer shelf-lives.

Through encapsulation, ingredients such as fatty acids can be stabilised against oxidation in order to prolong the life of the final product.

Hence, the quality and value of the product will be improved for global distribution purposes, posing less stressful conditions on the manufacturer.

AnaBio's encapsulation technology can also provide taste masking. There are many ingredients that have not succeeded in the market as a simple result of bad taste.

Another is a class of hydrophobic peptides, which can be easily masked using AnaBio encapsulation technology.

Founded and led by Sinead Bleiel

the company operates a purpose-built centre-of-excellence located in Carrigrohilly, Co Cork where it offers customers full research and development from initial concept, ingredient optimisation, formulation, flavour improvement and product testing and enhancements.

AnaBio's core assets is intellectual property relating to a portfolio of 13 patents combined with knowledge related to various production processes.

These patents are focused on encapsulation technologies originating from strong scientific evidence, facilitating the controlled-release of peptides, probiotics, nutraceuticals, nutrients, minerals, enzymes, bacteria, vaccines, cultures and the protection and taste masking of a wide range of sensitive food and sports ingredients.

Over the last two-and-a-half years, AnaBio has been granted full US and EU approval for eight of 13 patents in their portfolio along with company growth of more than 220% in sales.

The company is also involved in a feeding program for delivery of probiotic to developing countries of the world to ensure that all cultures have the chance to maintain a good nutritious diet.

Dr Bleiel said being named as a finalist for the Cork Company of the Year is an unbelievable feeling and an opportunity that is truly humbling.

"It is an honour to be included with such talented companies that are also shortlisted and to be able to improve people's health and well-being," she said.



Mark Hopkins managing director of Hopkins Communications which celebrated 30 years in business in 2020.

## International reach gives edge to Hopkins Communications

Hopkins Communications celebrates 30 years in business this year.

In that time, it has developed from a small Cork business to become one of the largest independent marketing communications agency in the region, with offices in Cork and Limerick and a presence in Dublin.

A member of the world-wide 3AW Network of communications agencies, it employs 20 full-time professionals and 60 part-time staff.

It is also a recognised Facebook Partner Agency and is the first Irish partner of the Global Digital Ad Exchange StackAdapt.

Owners Mark and Judy Hopkins and their teams have built a successful, and people-centred media business.

They work with diverse business categories in Ireland and internationally.

Their clients range from international, to national and regional entities, large corporations to SMEs, brands, festivals and events, state bodies and charities.

Key services include advertising, graphic design and print, public relations, event management, promotions, digital media and web development.

Instead of dealing with several service providers such as design, print houses, or web developers, clients appreciate that everything is centralised, ensuring their campaigns are on message.

Managing director Mark Hopkins said that the atmosphere within Hopkins Communications is high-octane environment and the

team takes huge pride in producing and executing quality, creative strategies and campaigns for its clients.

Highlights of 2019 include projects in Barcelona, San Diego, London, San Francisco and Las Vegas with plans for projects in Japan, Texas and London in 2020.

"Over the past three decades, my business partner and our dynamic founder Mary, our director Donogh and our experienced team have achieved great success and continued growth while still maintaining the values of a family-run enterprise," he said.

"Reaching the final of the Cork Chamber SME company of the year awards is a fantastic testament to the diligence and efforts of all our staff, past and present, since 1990," he said.

With sustainability in mind, Hopkins is currently devising a green team in an effort to make a difference to the wellness of the world aiming to become a more sustainable, eco-friendly and green office and organisation.

"We are acutely aware that collaborative customer relationships are critical to the survival of any business and we take great pride in the knowledge that we have a large number of high level, national and international, who have remained with us through both challenging and prosperous times."

"Without them, we wouldn't be here today, and we wouldn't have received this wonderful recognition," he said.



Keelvar was founded by Alan Holland in Cork in 2012 as a spinout from University College Cork's computer science department.

## Keelvar is helping the world's biggest firms to source goods

Keelvar was founded following seven years of research by Alan Holland, a former University College Cork (UCC) computer science lecturer.

The company helps some of the world's biggest firms to optimise the sourcing of goods and services by improving speed and spend.

Managing €60bn of the approximately €21n worldwide spend is software developed here in Cork by Mr Holland's team in Keelvar.

Customers today include Coca-Cola, Daimler, BMW, and Siemens spanning across industries, from electronics to automotive to food and beverages.

Keelvar's headquarters in Cork is growing significantly, with the office doubling in size in the past two years — it now has almost 40 staff.

Another Cork company its size and dynamic have a customer base that spans the magnitude of Keelvar's.

The company draws on the pool of high-quality computer science graduates in Cork and is steadily hiring locally.

Innovation is central to Keelvar's way of working.

More than 80% of its expenditure is on R&D and the company holds a belief that diligent investment in its product yields a flywheel effect, whereby the product quality sells itself and the company garners a faster and more efficient sales pipeline via customer and bidder referrals.

Keelvar has defined a new category of strategic sourcing software and is supplying this to global enterprises.

This new category is sourcing automation, a software framework that allows sourcing teams to automate their sourcing processes.

Sourcing automation uses sourcing bots to set up and run events, with the sourcing team simply answering questions from the bot and then approving the event before the event is executed and run by the bot.

The results are then provided to the sourcing team.

Sourcing automation uses an organisation's past events and historical data to learn and to identify patterns and best practice within the organisation.

This allows the sourcing bot to make intelligent recommendations to the team when setting up an event.

Despite its global reach, Keelvar is very proud of its Cork roots and heritage with both the company's UCC origin, Mr Campus location, and the initial paying customer being Cork City Council.

"The company plans to increase staff numbers to 65 by the end of 2021 and has identified a new office location in Cork."

"We're proud of our UCC research origins and firmly believe that advanced scientific breakthroughs can be key to building category-leading world-class companies," Mr Holland said.

"It also makes the work more exciting and challenging."

"Being a finalist in the highly-competitive Cork Chamber Awards is a huge honour and is a testament to the fact that consistent hard work can build international success."

## PR-driven election campaigns will not tackle the challenges that we face

Kyran Fitzgerald

Sixty years ago, John Fitzgerald Kennedy and his brother Bobby ran what is considered to be the most innovative Presidential campaign ever.

It is remembered for its slick and data-led campaigning with discrete groups of individuals targeted. We now have a strange mix of data analytics and the Bernum & Bailey style campaigning of Donald Trump.

The Trump effect suggests a backlash against slick campaigning. However, America's wealthy continue to influence political decision making through so-called 'super PACs', committees that may raise and spend unlimited sums.

In Ireland, the high point of business sponsorship of political parties was reached during the Noughties and the era of the Galway tent.

Some of the helicopter buzz has gone out of our elections since then. What replaced it was a semi-permanent oppositionist campaigning that peaked with the water charges protests which drained the coalition Govern-

ment and its propped up successor of much of their reformist intent.

Since 2015, we have been in the era of safety-first Government and a kind of stand-off between those keen to guard the public purse and those anxious to open the floodgates to the crises in housing and health which developed since the financial crash.

In a democracy, campaigns should be a time when people take stock of the major developments. Instead, what happens is that once off events distract while the public are judgements based on impressions. The choice is between steady as she goes and how the country may be transformed by climate change. How technology is impacting on our lives and what we can do about it.

How more people can be recon- nected with the fast-paced modern economy and brought in from the margins of the economy.

How the twin crises of health and housing — which are not unconnected — can be truly addressed.

How rural Ireland can address those of the huge changes coming down the track whether environmental, demographic or in food markets.

How the mishandling of the mental health crisis, the spread of drug use, rising demand on the medical services.

How the effectiveness of public administration, democratic or in food markets.

These are all issues which can be addressed on an ongoing basis, but once the noise and thunder of an election campaign abates and a new Government is formed, real



John F. Kennedy campaigning for President in 1960. His campaign theme was adopted by leaders such as Tony Blair and Barack Obama.

decision making on matters of vital importance is handed back to a small group of politicians and officials, many of whom suffer from deficits of time and expert- ise.

As we have discovered, there is much disfunction in British political life, but one part of their Government that works well is their system of parliamentary committees. Our committee system should be better resourced and the media should give more recognition to the important work carried out there.

But the making of decisions on key matters such as the proposed metro and quality bus corridors should be broadened out.

In the run-up to the referendum on abortion, citizen assemblies played an important part in ensuring that the debate during the referendum was conducted at a reasonably high level.

We need to involve more people with technical knowledge and expertise in the discussion of an early stage of plans. Strong chairpersons will be required so that discussions are not dominated by cranks. The crafting of good consultation mechanisms is a vital, but not an easy business.

A new national infrastructure body is badly needed, but it should itself be subject to close examination by a small group of elected politicians, operating to 24/7 agendas, dictated by the need to react to day to day crises.

Our democratic decision-making process needs to be one where discussion and analysis is ongoing and where decisions are crafted and sometimes amended in response to the popular will.

Five yearly PR driven campaigns of the sort presided over by a Kennedy or a Blair, never mind a Trump, simply will not longer suffice.

At times, it seems that decisions which could end up costing the country billions are being taken by people who are living deeply distracted lives, based on partial information supplied by parties with personal and sometimes financial agendas.

"This really is no way to run the national railroad."

## Automating the world's warehouses to reduce costs

Trish Dromey

Using an innovative automated warehousing system designed to increase storage capacity and reduce labour costs, Monaghan startup Moffett Automated Storage has just completed its first international project in Dubai.

Founder Sam Moffett said they are the first Irish company to design a warehouse automation solution and are now planning to develop global sales starting with the US, Benelux, and Scandinavia.

"The future for moving pallets in warehouses is in automation," said Mr Moffett, who hopes to use the technology to reduce warehouse labour costs.

Mr Moffett, who co-founded CombiLift, a Monaghan-based manufacturer of multidirectional forklifts, has now sold to 85 companies globally.

While working at CombiLift, Sam Moffett observed the rise of automation in warehousing where it is used to optimise the use of space and to reduce labour requirements.

"I saw a window of opportunity for a new company which could create an efficient automated warehousing system," he said.

Using family funding, he set up Moffett Automated Storage (MAS) in late 2017.

Taking on a design engineer and an automation engineer, the company set to work on developing a new system, building its first customer system for a Dublin logistics company in 2018.

"Used for food storage, this system holds 3,500 pallet spaces and provides a 60% storage density increase," said Mr Moffett, explaining that the MAS Automated Storage and Retrieval System uses four directional



Sam Moffett, managing director of Monaghan startup Moffett Automated Storage which can reduce warehouse labour costs.

shuttles for efficient pallet handling.

According to Mr Moffett, this system can significantly reduce warehouse labour costs.

"It can, for example, be used in a warehouse with a staff of 15 to reduce the staff number to just three," he said.

Setting out to compete against German and Italian automated storage solution companies in the international market, Mr Moffett says the MAS system has a competitive edge because of its flexibility and scalability, and the fact that it can be used to retrofit existing warehouses as well as to fit out new ones.

With the completion of this first successful project last year,

MAS began to target both third-party logistic companies operating distribution hubs, and also manufacturing companies with large-scale operations. It can be used for fast-moving consumer goods as well as food, said Mr Moffett.

MAS's first international project involved building a system for a three-storey 30m high building with a throughput of 85 pallets per hour.

"It had to be designed to withstand the extreme heat in Dubai, working in temperature above 50 degrees Celsius. Installation was challenging."

Mr Moffett says that there is a high level of automated storage in Ireland, but that these types of systems are now widely used in the US and Nordic countries by large logistics companies operating huge facilities.

It is a multi-billion euro industry in which he sees vast opportunities for MAS.

Currently employing a staff of 11 at its premises in Clontarf, Mr Moffett expects to hire an additional eight staff by the end of the year.

"We will also be working on creating brand awareness for the company, working through dealerships and advertising on social media."