

Accessing Digitalisation Supports for Irish Enterprises

Unlocking Knowledge Transfer Webinar Series

October 2021

In the October edition of our *Unlocking Knowledge Transfer* webinar series, the topic of accessing digitalisation supports for Irish enterprises of all sizes was explored. In particular the discussion considered the importance of digitalisation and advantages it can bring for companies, the types of supports available from the publicly funded research system and state supports as well as potential barriers to digitalisation.

An insightful discussion was moderated by Vincent Wall, Business Editor at Newstalk, between the featured panellists - John Durcan, Senior Digital Transformation Specialist at Enterprise Ireland (EI); Andrew Lynch, Chief Innovation Officer at Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR); Edward McDonnell, CEO at CeADAR and Paul Cummins, Managing Director at SeaChange Ltd.

John Durcan opened the webinar by emphasising the overall importance of digitalisation. Digitising operations enables companies to scale more rapidly and internationalise their markets in new ways. In addition, it positions companies to open up opportunities around lean processes and to optimise internal operations. As a result, a company can increase its revenue and profit margins through increased growth and export. However, digital transformation is more than simply incorporating more technology, noted John Durcan. Businesses also need to reflect internally and think about how to optimise and introduce new processes, new people and skills and this can be challenging.

According to Paul Cummins, SeaChange Ltd.'s revenue increased by 15% and export revenue by 12% after undergoing digital transformation. Two of the main financial supports that Sea Change Ltd. availed of on their digitalisation journey were Enterprise Ireland's *Technical Feasibility Grant* and the *RD&I Fund* that is co-funded by the European Union and Irish Government. SeaChange Ltd. underwent market research within the different sectors and how to develop a solution that would work. Paul Cummins explained how it had been beneficial to undergo such a feasibility study because it determined that the company should proceed with their clean-as-you-go (CAYGO) digital system. He noted that the CAYGO system was a major success as users of CAYGO were able to reduce the amount paid in insurance by more than €4m.

John Durcan also noted that barriers to digitalisation generally tend to be companies' lack of awareness of business opportunities, lack of in-house technical expertise and lack of financial resources. EI-IDA funded technology centres, such as CeADAR and IMR, can help assess SMEs' readiness for digitalisation, access new technical expertise and facilitate companies to find financial support. One of the supports available for SMEs from Enterprise Ireland is the newly launched digitalisation voucher with value of up to €9000 that is 100% state funded. More information on criteria and eligibility for this voucher can be found [here](#).

IMR is an EI-IDA funded technology centre and regional manufacturing digital innovation hub operating within the field of manufacturing. Andrew Lynch, Chief Innovation Officer, notes that IMR helps manufacturing SMEs access the *Machining 4.0 Digital Voucher* under the *European Regional Development Fund* by undergoing a *Smart Industry Readiness Index* (SIRI) assessment. Andrew Lynch notes that it can be difficult to ascertain the impact a company will make within their given market due to the many opportunities available. Stages of the SIRI assessment includes assessment of the company's roadmap, identifying the most suitable business opportunities and potential business

consequences. Download the national [RD&I Directory of Supports for Enterprise](#) on our website to find out more about the network of research performing organisations.

CeADAR is an EI-IDA funded technology centre for applied AI & data analytics and also a digital innovation hub (DIH) within the European Digital Innovation Hub Network. It offers two main supports for companies in relation to digital transformation - the *AI Digital Readiness Survey* and the *Test Before Invest* program. Edward McDonnell noted that companies can avail of the *AI Digital Readiness Survey* to open the conversation about digitalisation and its practical application. Benefits include the co-development of a roadmap and solutions to transform conventional products to digitalised ones, training and upskilling and help companies find funding from IDA and EI. Within the *Test Before Invest* program, CeADAR has publicly offered 70 practical solutions to actual problems that companies can avail of. Edward McDonnell explained that this program, in particular, allows companies to freely test out these solutions before making the decision to proceed with them.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Enterprise Ireland are also working to establish a number of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) under the Digital Europe Programme. These Hubs will come on stream in 2022. EDIHs will support businesses and organisations in their digital transformation by disseminating the latest advances in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI) and high-performance computing (HPC). The hubs will help companies (notably SMEs) and public sector organisations become more competitive in their business/production processes and products or services by providing access to research infrastructure, technical expertise and experimentation, so that organisations can 'test before they invest'.

KTI's next webinar in the *Unlocking Knowledge Transfer* series will take place on the 2nd of November to discuss the topic of harnessing R&D in the marine sector. Featured panellists will highlight some of the research infrastructure & supports available and look at ways such supports can be accessed by Irish companies. Panellists will also share their experiences on how engaging with the Irish research base can contribute towards growth within the marine sector. [Register now.](#)