

Introduction



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This special edition of the *Irish Journal of Management* represents a selection of the best papers from the Eighth Annual Conference of the Irish Academy of Management which took place on 7–9 September, 2005, in the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. By all accounts it was a very successful conference, with close to 250 people attending and 200 papers presented in the two days. The conference builds on the success of earlier conferences that have established the IAM conference as the leading management conference in Ireland. I was delighted to be conference organiser, and to be the editor of this special edition of the *Irish Journal of Management*.

The theme of GMIT's conference was 'Creating, Managing, Practising Knowledge?' and it attracted a number of interesting papers in this area, as well as in the conference core areas, including marketing and HRM.

The best overall paper, on the knowledge economy, was by Séamas Kelly and Sinéad Murnane of UCD. Universities are the key to the knowledge economy; however they are coming under increased public scrutiny for reform and one such reform is performance evaluation. Their paper is a case study of the system used for Senior Lecturer positions in UCD. Not questioning the need for reform in the first place, they argue that the new performance evaluation system, 'ignores the extent to which the university is necessarily home to very heterogeneous forms of knowledge practices underpinned by a diversity of distinctive relationships

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with external groups'. They argue that new systems need to show 'greater sensitivity to the diversity, and perhaps the frailty, of academic practice'.

The best post-graduate paper in strategic management was judged to be **Conor O'Kane**, a PhD student at NUI, Galway. His paper centred on the area of leadership in turnaround situations. Beginning with the view that there is a dearth of empirical data in this area, he presents his longitudinal study of the Dairygold Co-operative, an agri-business firm in the south of Ireland. Among his findings was the importance of 'the timely appointment of an autocratic and task-oriented leader [who] initiated a turnaround effort which to date has focused on the creation of a nimble organisation'.

Marketing was the most popular track in the conference. As a result of this popularity two papers are presented in this journal. In the first **Aileen Kennedy**, **Carol Kelleher** and **Michael Quigley** present a case study of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) initiative within ESBI. This is the international wing of the state utility company ESB, which has been very successful in recent years in winning international contracts to provide and/or manage utility companies in a variety of countries. Drawing from detailed interviews with senior staff in the company, the authors argue that 'the key success factors for CRM implementation in ESBI include senior management commitment and leadership, clear strategic planning and a coordinated and targeted programme which successfully combines organisational and process changes with the application of new technology'. This is part of an ongoing research project which aims to interview middle-level managers, employees, consultants and customers in time.

Still in the field of marketing, **Tara Frawley** and **John Fahy**'s paper deals with the first-mover advantage. They argue that 'the aim of this theoretical paper is to illustrate future direction for the first-mover literature in which it takes a fresh look at the first-mover theory, adopting a resource-based perspective'. Drawing from the experience of the dotcom bust, they argue that the literature is inconsistent and contradictory and 'that the resource-based perspective of the firm with its broad theoretical base will contribute to the first-mover concept'.

Marketing is also the subject of **Adrian and Frances Devine's** paper in the tourism track, which was the winner of the Fáilte Ireland Award for Best Paper in Tourism. Adrian and Frances took a practical route in linking tourism with GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) games, such as Gaelic football and hurling. They argue 'sports tourism is a lucrative market but only if properly developed and promoted. Gaelic Games in Ireland are an example of a tourism product with latent potential'. But before this potential is unleashed, the GAA must learn to market their product more and target overseas visitors to Ireland. This was the first time that tourism studies featured in a separate track; it was enthusiastically supported by Fáilte Ireland.

Giving the dominance of state funding in education in Ireland, issues involving the public sector in Ireland always feature highly at the conference. **Claire Gubbins, Thomas N. Garavan, Carole Hogan and Margaret Woodlock's** paper focused on training and development in a healthcare organisation. Their concern was to analyse the degree to which a HRD strategy could be repositioned from a passive to a more strategic and integrated role in this organisation. Their argument is that commitment to the project and understanding of the process by both senior and line management is hugely important to the success of this repositioning strategy. Ultimately though the process is only beginning and more analysis and study is required.

Titled 'Technophobia Amongst Older Adults in Ireland', **Mairéad Hogan's** paper, submitted in the IT track, deals with issues such as the lack of confidence with computers that adults have. She hypothesises that both age and gender are correlated with computer anxiety, but that the level of technophobia will be lower for older adults who have computer experience than for those who have not. Drawing upon a study of 160 mature people, she concluded that higher overall levels of technophobia were indeed associated with females but that experience with computers negates computer anxiety. Hogan argues therefore for more 'interventions to treat technophobia, particularly in women'.

Work-life issues have been the subject of much discussion in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger. Hence **Jeanette N. Cleveland, Bryanne Cordeiro, Glenda Fisk and Rebecca Harris Mulvaney's**

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paper dealing with employee perceptions of conflict between the employee and the job was a timely addition to the conference. Similar to Hogan's findings, and drawing upon an analysis of 81 faculty members, the paper 'indicated that women report greater role conflict and work-family conflict than men'. They also argued that perceptions of increasing work intensity had a negative effect on employee well-being. Interestingly, they found no greater role conflict in employees whose spouses worked full-time than employees whose spouses worked part-time or not at all. They argue that 'evidence from this study suggests that organisational climate may be one of the most critical factors in shaping the family friendliness (or unfriendliness) of an organisation. Many organisations today operate as if men continue to be the sole breadwinner for the family with a full-time spouse at home. The belief that work and family are two separate domains or spheres continues to be deeply ingrained within our society'.

With a UK perspective, **Sharon C. Bolton** and **Daniel Muzio's** paper deals with the feminisation of professional work, in this case law and management. Arguing that these professions are hugely dependent on female participation, 'women and women's work continue to be marginalised, downgraded and exploited'. To support their argument they draw upon a quantitative analysis of labour force data supported by contextual data and literature research. They argue that 'feminisation has to be reframed in an economic context, whereby female participation has been linked to increased profitability, to the development of new capabilities and to a broadening customer base'. While presented in a win-win format, these 'dominant notions of professionalism are wedded to a masculine gender code which celebrates the male values of control, discipline and rationality, and which sustains a goal-oriented and target-driven approach to professional practice'. This is the paradox: 'marginalising women's experiences as professionals and yet enhancing their inclusion and wide scale deployment as strategic resources'. The end result is the increasing masculinisation of the legal and management professions.

Industrial relations remains an important track in the IAM conference. **Jackie Sinclair's** paper on multi-unionism is both timely and informative. Multi-unionism has long been a feature of

workplaces in the UK as much as Ireland. Her interest, forming part of her doctoral research, is to determine how inter-union practices affect workplace change. Drawing largely on a 1996–7 UCD survey of managers in single and multi-union environments, she seeks to determine whether unions influence change, positively or negatively. The commonly held view is that multi-unionism, and poor relations between unions, negatively impede on management ability to bring about change. This was not Sinclair's finding; rather there does not 'appear to be strong support for the "myth" of multi-union workplaces as highly conflictual. Similarly, the perception of workplaces with single union agreements as "harmonious" and strife-free is not borne out'.

Judith Y. Weisinger and **Janice A. Black's** paper, titled 'Strategic Resources and Social Capital', is a study of a large, national non-profit organisation. They argue in the first instance that 'developing and leveraging social capital is critical for leaders, staff and volunteers in non-profit organisations. While NPO leaders are responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation, staff and volunteers play a key role in strategy implementation, so their social capital is important as well'. They concluded that the latter used largely the bridging type of social capital to grow membership and achieve internal solidarity. Moreover they favour the latter over the former.

Finally, in the innovation field, **Kate Johnston**, **Colette Henry** and **Simon Gillespie's** paper deals with the Irish biotechnology sector and in particular the government's strategy of promoting investment in this sector. They draw on an analysis of the biotech sector in the UK, France and the USA; the authors argue the need for greater tax credits, particularly to support indigenous firms. They argue, 'the use of taxation incentives might well represent an effective mechanism for the Irish government to stimulate further growth and development. Furthermore, in view of the huge amount of funding invested in the sector to date, tax credits may offer a more economic means of providing ongoing support to indigenous biotech enterprises by actively encouraging and rewarding R&D'.

As in previous years the conference was centred on twelve tracks: the process of selecting papers involved in the first instance the selection by the track chair of the best paper in the track. Thereafter,

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once the author submitted a paper – which was not the case in all tracks – the paper was subject to further blind review.

I am very grateful to the many contributors to the journal. As noted, the conference has gone from strength to strength from its humble beginnings in UCC in 1996 and back again to UCC in 2007. Without the enthusiastic support of conference presenters the conference would not have achieved the status it has today.

The work of the conference organiser, and indeed editor of this special edition, was much favoured by the important role played by the track chairs. These included, in no particular order, the following: Dr. Mike Morley, Prof. Tom Baum, Dr. Damian Thomas, Dr. Colette Henry, Dr. Teresa O'Hara, Dr. Mairéad Brady, Prof. Tom Begley, Prof. Roy Green, John Casey, Dr. Louis Brennan, Dr. Denis Harrington and Chris Barry.

In addition to the track chairs, many others participated in the review process, including Dr. Stuart Jauncey, Dr. Mary Quinn, Dr. Paul McGrath, Dr. Melrona Kirrane, Dr. Aidan Kane, Dr. Paul Ryan, Dr. Sean De Burca, Dr. Tom Cooney, Dr. James Cunningham and Dr. Ann Torres.

Finally, the influence of Hewlett-Packard as the sponsors of the conference must be mentioned. Aside from their financial commitment, the company was instrumental in designing and producing all the conference material and suggested many improvements to the conference.

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