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ALISON McMURTRIE

iDunn Consulting



After an international career spanning almost 20 years, Alison McMurtrie completed her MBA through Warwick Business School. The MBA validated the skills she had acquired during her career, and helped provide the last piece of the puzzle to leave her role in the oil and gas industry and set up her own business.

Holding positions in operations, asset management, global HR, technology and research in global oilfield services company Schlumberger, the native of Randalstown, Co. Antrim, had always been keen to seek out new challenges in Europe, North Africa, Australia and the Middle East.

Alison was becoming comfortable within the confines of her roles in the global organisation and, approaching the 20-year mark with a single employer, saw an opportunity to change direction.

“I didn’t know how useful my skills were in the outside world but, at the same time, the way I worked was always very entrepreneurial. I had a lot of autonomy and built a lot of resilience in tough times,” she says.

“During the downturn in oil and gas in 2014, we had to lay off 60 per cent of our

workforce. I found myself weighing the cost of coffee machines versus staff versus cranes and machinery – an intense level of granularity. It was only in retrospect, during my MBA, that I realised the skills I’d learned were really relevant to SMEs.”

After graduating with her degree from Warwick University in the UK, Alison left her role and set up her company, iDunn Consulting, in the summer of 2020. That the Covid-19 pandemic was only in its infancy was seen as an opportunity to break from the corporate life.

“It didn’t put me off. I saw it as an opportunity more than anything,” she adds.

“My thesis for the MBA had been based on the ecology around start-ups and I realised there was a niche for a consultant with a general manager perspective, who can look at the entire business – not just single elements like marketing or staffing – and develop a plan for making their companies better, leaner and with more scope for growth. That all-encompassing approach is key to my skillset and I could see the pandemic was creating a demand for that.”

Now a resident of Co. Longford, Alison hopes to expand her reach into her home jurisdiction of Northern Ireland within

the next 12 months, while recruiting at least one other full-time staff member to continue the growth in the Republic.

“We want to be working more all over the island of Ireland. Ideally I’d like to find someone with the same mindset and open thinking, who can take the frameworks and apply them to other businesses,” she says.

“Longer term, we want to be a think tank for SMEs in Ireland. We want to look in depth at how other countries support SMEs and present proposals for reforming Ireland’s approach. Fundamentally, we want to develop a stronger SME base with a lower rate of turnover for a stronger economy overall.”

Alison hails the Back for Business programme for linking her with a network of fellow entrepreneurs, connections which she would otherwise have struggled to foster after so many years living abroad.

“We have a very active chat in which we support and bounce ideas off each other. And the sessions were really helpful, whether that’s the legal content or setting KPIs from KPMG. When I moved back my problem was a lack of a network. I didn’t know anyone. Back for Business opened a lot of doors.”

idunn

POSITION

Founder and Director

WHAT WE DO

iDunn Consulting helps companies develop strategic plans to aid business growth.

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