



**BACK FOR  
BUSINESS**



**Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme**



**An Roinn Gnóthaí Éachtacha  
Department of Foreign Affairs**

**“Returning to Ireland with no professional network, you don’t know how to approach things. Back for Business gave me a network and opened my eyes to all the resources and supports that are available.”**

**RACHEL FORBES**

**House of EQ**



**R**achel Forbes’ journey from the cut-and-thrust world of international finance to founding the House of EQ, a start-up based on boosting self-awareness through sensorial stimulation, is not as unlikely as it may seem.

Her four-year stint in Shanghai working in mergers and acquisitions was preceded by a similar spell in Singapore. While the two cities were markedly different, a shared tradition of aroma design and artisan craft making fascinated Rachel, who had already seen first-hand how heightened emotional intelligence could help bypass the pitfalls of being a stranger in a strange land.

“Working in international business, deals are not always done in English so I found myself paying particular attention to sensory cues, body language and reading the room. That’s where my fascination with emotional intelligence, or emotional quotient (EQ), really began. In Asia, there’s a huge emphasis on aromatherapies. Seeing how scent is used not only for therapeutic purposes but also in marketing accelerated my interest, and I could see how to link it all together,” says Rachel.

After eight years in Asia, the lure of

returning to Ireland had been gathering strength when the outbreak of Covid-19 in China banished any lingering doubts.

“The pandemic was the push I needed to move back. I left my job in Shanghai in December 2019, returned to Ireland in February 2020, right before the first lockdown and then set up the business. The irony is that I got Covid shortly after I started trading so I temporarily lost my sense of smell and taste!”

House of EQ represents something of a first in the Irish market, selling a range of fragrance-themed experiential products and classes. The workshops have proven particularly popular with corporate clients looking for inventive ideas for team-building projects.

“Employee engagement activities are a major growth area for us. We’ve done workshops in candle crafts and scent mixology with major corporations like Microsoft and Meta, and we’ve worked with customers in Serbia, France and even Utah in the United States,” she says.

“People want to connect but they also want something different. Alcohol would have traditionally been a big feature of team bonding events, but this is more

inclusive. It’s also interesting that tech firms – where jobs demand that employees are engrossed in technology – want to engage in activities that will bring their employees back to their senses.”

Now splitting her time between the studio in Ballina in Co. Mayo and Dublin, Rachel recently hired her first employee and has engaged professional teams across Ireland as she bids to scale up operations. Disruptions to the supply chain as a result of the pandemic and war in Ukraine has seen her shift focus from many overseas suppliers in favour of indigenous Irish firms, a move which she credits the Back for Business programme with encouraging.

“I would recommend Back for Business, 100 per cent. I haven’t lived or worked in Ireland since university. Returning with no professional network here, and during the pandemic, you don’t know how to approach things. Back for Business gave me a network and opened my eyes to all the resources and supports that are available,” she says.

“When you’re away there’s a feeling that business in Ireland is a bit parochial. Back for Business made me understand the possibilities for global expansion for a company based in Ireland,” she adds.

**House of EQ**

**POSITION**

Founder and Director

**WHAT WE DO**

House of EQ offers products and workshops designed to boost self-awareness through sensorial stimulation.

**CONTACT US**

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