BACK FOR BUSINESS

Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs
GLOBAL IRISH

"There's huge opportunity to improve both publicly and privately provided services in Ireland."

JOHN LYNCH
Context Studio

Having worked as a software developer in the design sector for a number of years, John Lynch, a native of Blanchardstown in Dublin, left Ireland for Denmark in 2010 to study at the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID).

"I felt driven to learn how to be part of the decision-making as to what would be built as opposed to just the bricklayer of digital code. I wanted to upgrade my design skills so I could design for impact as opposed to entertainment," he says.

After completing the intense Interaction Design programme at CIID, John worked for the institute's associated consultancy as a design consultant before taking up an exciting opportunity in London with Future Cities Catapult, where he worked on people-centred product and service design for cities.

John had no intention of moving back to Dublin but on an extended visit home in early 2015 he felt a desire to return more permanently. He joined Fjord, a design studio at Accenture, in 2016. Then, in a three-week period in 2018, he bought a house, left his job at Accenture and set up his own business, Context Studio.

"The reason I set up Context Studio is I saw the impact that service design and people-centred design had had in Denmark and was having in the UK," he says. "There's huge opportunity to improve both publicly and privately provided services in Ireland."

John established Context Studio, based in Dublin 8, in December 2018. His first project was assisting a recipe-sharing platform with more than 100 million users to bring a user-centred design approach to their product development.

"It's often not the case but we were an export first company and have been building the market at home. The Irish service design market is behind the UK in terms of maturity, but people are starting to realise that design is a need to have not a nice to have," he says.

John quickly realised that his time abroad had left him without a network. "The most important point is how disconnected you feel when you come home. Your professional life has developed immensely while you have been away, but not with any connections at home. That wasn't really a problem until I started the company – at which point I realised I knew no one," he says.

He also found the process of setting up a business challenging. "It's very hard to find out if you are entitled to any supports. If you don't come from an entrepreneurial background you just don't have anyone to ask," he says.

He found that the Back for Business programme helped him to deal with a feeling of imposter syndrome he had about becoming an entrepreneur. "As far as I was concerned there's a typical type of Irish businessperson and I was not it. When I joined Back for Business I realised there isn't a typical type of Irish businessperson and actually a lot of them are quite similar to me," he says. "The programme built my confidence to do the things I needed to do to run a business."

John says the next year will be a critical phase as there is growing interest in service design in Ireland and a huge opportunity both to grow the company and expand it's impact – which is why it all began.

Context Studio
People centred service design. From Dublin.

POSITION
Director

WHAT WE DO
We encourage the adoption of service design and user-centred design for the betterment of Irish business and public services.

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