

“We’ve defined our new strategy as work in the public good. That goes beyond the public service, where we are already having an impact.”

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 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,” he says.

After completing the intense Interaction Design Programme at CIID, John worked for CIID Consulting, adjacent to the school, as a design consultant before taking up an exciting opportunity in London with Connected Places 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.

John’s first project as an entrepreneur was assisting a recipe-sharing platform with more than 100 million users to bring a user-centred design approach to their product development.

“In the beginning, we were an export-first company as I worked to build a market for us at home. That has delivered to such an extent that 98 percent of our clients are now within Ireland,” he says.

John spent the early years having hundreds of cups of coffee with public servants while championing service design through a paper he published, Design in Government, which was shared with the Institute of Designers in Ireland and Creative Ireland.

He credits organisations including Creative Ireland, the Institute of Designers in Ireland, the Department of Public Expenditure, universities, and the Institute of Public Administration, with helping build momentum for service and strategic design in Ireland. And he also

credits public bodies such as the HSE, the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Education with actively trying to involve citizens and understand needs using a design approach.

John 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.”

Context Studio now has nine employees, and John is keen to get the team to continue to push the boundaries of what service design delivers in Ireland. “We’ve defined our new strategy as work in the public good. That goes beyond the public service, where we are already having an impact. We know that there’s huge potential in applying user-centred design methods in sectors such as banking, transport, health, insurance, and food, where better service experiences could improve everyday life,” he says.

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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