

OPTIMISE

IEDR helping Irish small businesses improve their online presence

The OPTIMISE Fund is designed to help Irish small businesses improve their online presence and increase their use of e-commerce. The Fund was developed based on key findings of research undertaken for the IE Domain Registry's (IEDR) Domain Name Industry Report 2010 which showed that Irish businesses were slow to harness the potential of the Internet as a sales channel for their business. In fact only 66% of Irish businesses had any kind of website by 2009, compared with 40% in 2000. Of those 66%, only 21% had e-commerce functionality on their website, a marginal increase of just 3% since 2000. Anecdotal evidence since then indicates that this situation has not improved for SMEs.

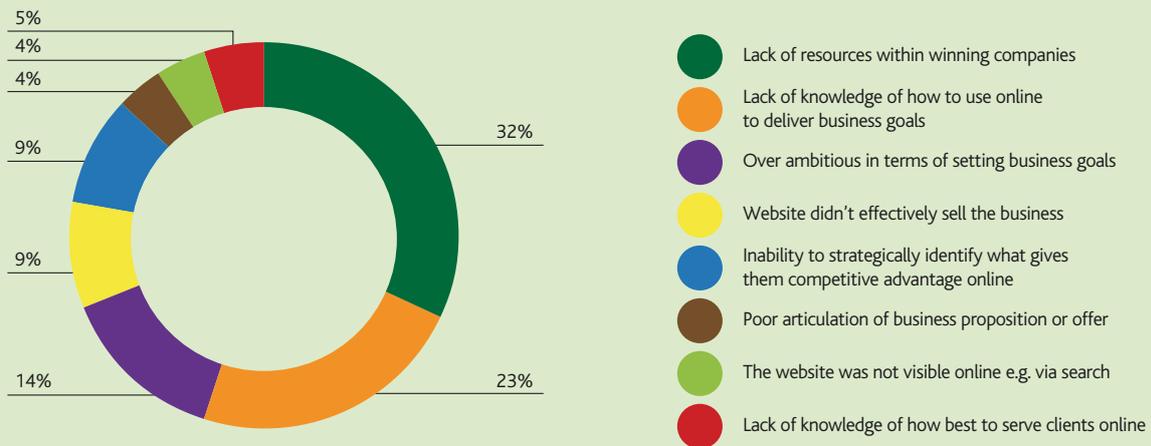
The IEDR decided to establish the OPTIMISE e-Commerce Website Development Fund for Irish SMEs and Micro-Enterprises. The goal of the Fund is to raise awareness of the fact that Irish companies could, and should, do more to make their websites work for them. The Internet offers Irish SMEs a 24-hour channel through which to increase sales, profitability and market reach.

The OPTIMISE Fund provides recipients with tangible e-tools and features, consultation, training and e-commerce development support services to "optimise" their existing online presence. These supports allow the winners to begin the process of transforming their existing online presence. The OPTIMISE Fund works to help drive the winning websites into fully featured, transactional offerings which are designed around their specific business needs and requirements.

In the four years since it was created the OPTIMISE Fund, via its service providers, has helped 60 companies by providing an upgrade to their websites in terms of e-commerce capability and functionality. Over 180 applicants submitted their pitch for the OPTIMISE Fund 2014. Each application was individually judged on a range of criteria including their current business model, the potential for growth and the perceived impact that the Fund would have on their business. The judging was carried out by an independent judging panel consisting of representatives from the Small Firms Association (SFA), Chambers Ireland and the Irish Internet Association (IIA).

Research undertaken by one of the service providers of the OPTIMISE Fund, Elucidate, highlighted some of the common barriers to online sales growth of the winning companies. These barriers are depicted in the chart below.

Common Barriers to Online Growth



Source: Research undertaken by Elucidate for the OPTIMISE Fund.

The OPTIMISE Fund seeks to remove these barriers wherever possible and allow the winners to successfully grow their business by exploiting the online markets that are available to them.

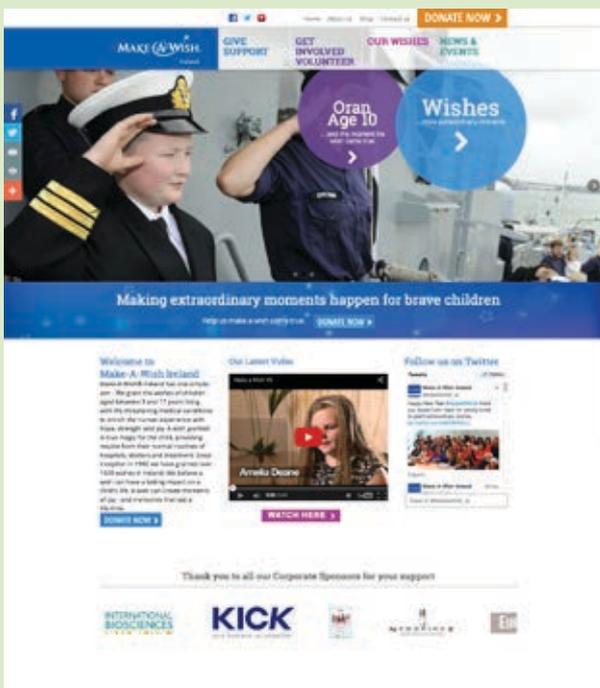
The following 15 Irish SMEs were selected as the winners of the IEDR OPTIMISE e-Commerce Website Development Fund 2014:



MakeAWish.ie

The Make-A-Wish Foundation grants wishes to children throughout Ireland between the ages of 3 and 17 years, who are battling life threatening medical conditions such as leukaemia, cystic fibrosis and medullablastoma. The wishes are designed to provide the children with respite from their normal routines of hospitals, doctors and treatments. Since its inception in 1992 the Foundation has granted over 1,600 wishes in Ireland.

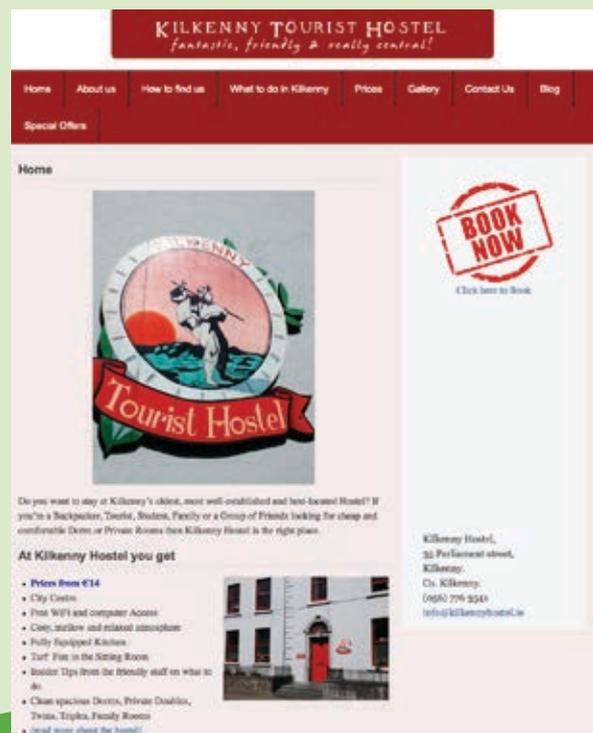
The Make-A-Wish Foundation used the OPTIMISE Fund to drive traffic to its website. Training was provided on how to use Google AdWords to achieve this goal and a comprehensive Adwords strategy was developed to target and inform potential donors. In addition to this, the Fund also conducted a comprehensive social media audit which focused on benchmarking best practice, developing a consistent tone of voice across all platforms and the creation of a content calendar for blog posts and a content style guide for all social media channels.



KilkennyHostel.ie

The Kilkenny Tourist Hostel provides budget accommodation for up to sixty guests in a Georgian townhouse located in the centre of the medieval city of Kilkenny. Offering a mix of dormitory and private rooms, the Hostel welcomes tourists, weekend visitors, backpackers, groups and families throughout the year. Fáilte Ireland approved and a member of the Independent Holiday Hostels of Ireland Group, the Hostel prides itself on its relaxed atmosphere, knowledgeable staff and the value for money it provides for guests.

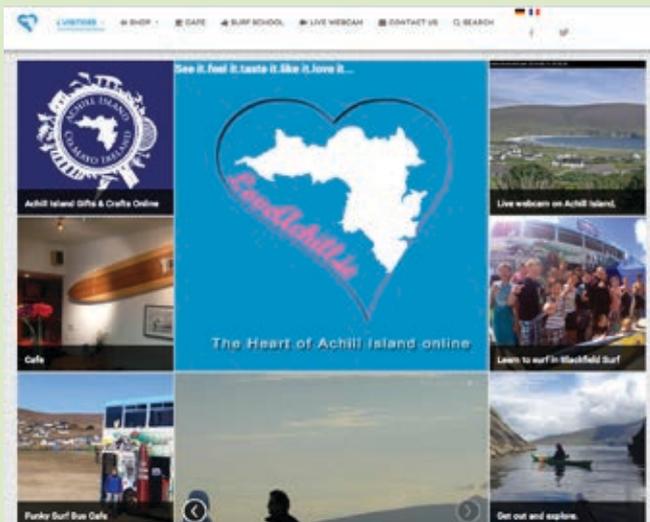
Kilkenny Hostel used the OPTIMISE Fund to redesign and redevelop its existing website to include an online event booking and payment solution. The Fund worked to create a visually appealing website using a new content management system which would allow the team at the Hostel to effectively manage its online content and online presence. An integrated booking system was also incorporated into the website which provided Kilkenny Tourist Hostel with the ability to accept and manage online bookings and payments.



LoveAchill.ie

Love Achill comprises a coffee shop, surf shop, surf school and a visitor information centre/gift shop located in purpose-built premises on Achill Island. Additionally the company runs a manufacturing business which uses laser technology to produce gift products for wholesale and retail customers. Their website is targeted at visitors to Achill Island, the inhabitants of the island and the Achill and Mayo diaspora worldwide.

Love Achill utilised the OPTIMISE Fund to improve their search engine rankings, increase the footfall to their shop and sell their custom-built gift range online. The Fund helped Love Achill by working on the SEO on their website to drive the site up the rankings. This SEO strategy incorporated recommendations for localised SEO which specifically targeted the French and German tourist markets. Additionally research was conducted into online sales solutions for their content management system and a Google Adwords campaign was created to drive traffic to the Love Achill Website.



JFSports.ie

Founded in 1999 and based in Carlow, JF Sports is a retail sports shop which specialises in running and football specific products. The focus on two individual areas allows JF Sports to offer a wider product range than other sport retailers with an emphasis on providing equipment suitable for competitive athletes. Their website serves as a nationwide sales channel while also allowing them to provide their expertise and services to an online audience.

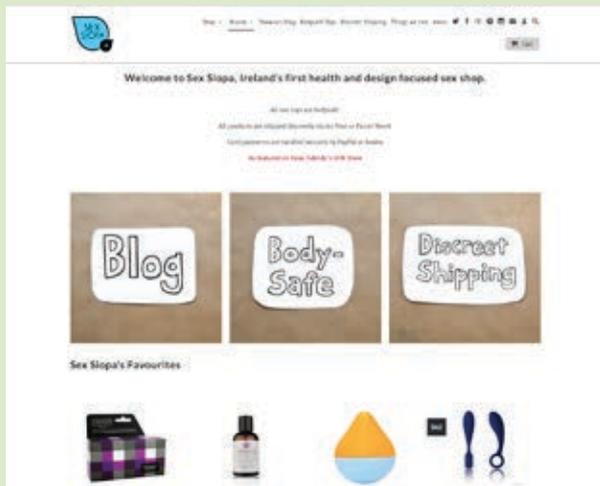
JF Sports used the OPTIMISE Fund to drive traffic to their website in order to increase their online sales. To do this the Fund provided them with a detailed Google Analytics review and training for the team which enabled them to interpret and leverage the results of their website analytics. Additionally the Fund worked to create a content strategy and plan for their blog which would help them to become an authoritative source of information for their industry. A full social media review was also conducted with competitive benchmarks and recommendations for future use provided.



SexSiopa.ie

Sex Siopa is an online adult retailer which offers safe, health focussed and well produced accessories. All products offered are made from bodysafe materials, meaning that they are known to be safe for use, a unique selling proposition given the current lack of industry regulation on production materials. As an e-commerce business the website is Sex Siopa's main route to market.

The OPTIMISE Fund was used to increase not only traffic to the website but also the existing conversion levels from visitors. The Fund worked to reduce the average Cost Per Click (CPC) that Sex Siopa was paying for Adwords through the recommendation of specific keywords and a review of their strategy. A social media plan was also created to improve traffic and conversions from channels such as Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The Fund also worked on the usability of the website for customers to streamline the ordering process.



DublinTaxiTransfers.ie

Dublin Taxi Transfers is an online pre-booking agency which allows customers to book a taxi from Dublin Airport to destinations around Ireland. The company provides a full meet and greet service with flight monitoring and optional additional services such as baby seats, golf transfers and eight seat cars.

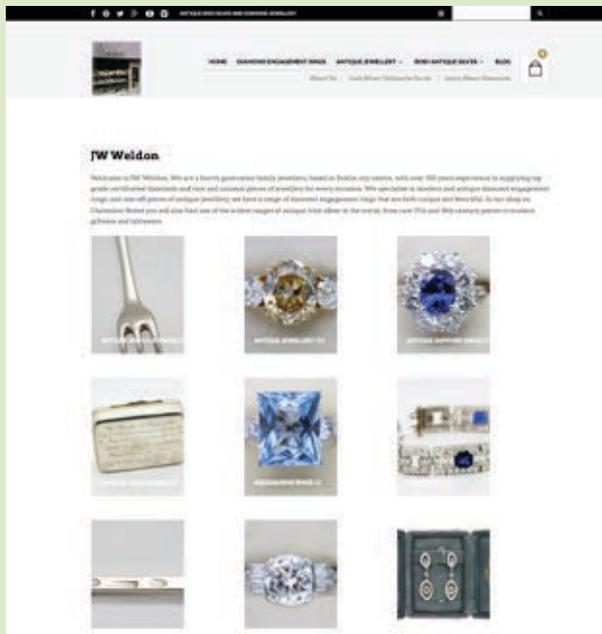
The OPTIMISE Fund worked on the Dublin Taxi Transfers website to deliver a new design using the WordPress content management system. Additionally the Fund provided them with an online booking engine allowing them to accept and manage bookings and payments directly from their website. Using the new content management system allowed staff at Dublin Taxi Transfers to manage and update all of their online content.



Weldons.ie

Established in 1890 J.W. Weldons is a fourth generation family jewellery business specialising in diamond engagement rings, antique jewellery and Irish silver. With a store located in Clarendon Street, Dublin, Weldons use the website to display their stock and publish a blog which provides industry information around business related topics such as hallmarks and diamond purchasing guides.

The OPTIMISE Fund worked with Weldons to deliver a bespoke website design that is reflective of their brand and business and responsive to mobile devices. Additionally an online shop was set up to allow customers to purchase products online. Training was provided which enabled staff to manage the website including uploading new products, images and videos.



PartyMad.ie

Located in Celbridge, Kildare, Party Mad is a family run business retailing fancy dress costumes, party supplies, and balloons to both businesses and individuals throughout Ireland. Established in 2006, Party Mad offer an extensive range of over 5,000 products including costumes, wigs, accessories, party supplies, party packages and balloon and event room décor.

The OPTIMISE Fund helped Party Mad to develop a website that would allow them to increase their online sales. Prior to the work of the Fund the website was simply a window into their physical shop. The OPTIMISE Fund provided Party Mad with a redeveloped website that is capable of processing online sales and is linked to their stock management system. Using the existing website platform the Fund worked to improve the online processes that were being used by Party Mad for content management, order fulfilment and product offerings.



Backstage.ie

Backstage Theatre is a purpose-built theatre and centre for the arts located just outside Longford town. Comprising a 212 seat auditorium, a gallery and separate studio performance space, Backstage opened in 1995 and was the first theatre to be established in the midlands region. Their mission is to promote the development of the arts regionally by presenting a high quality, diverse and innovative programme of arts activities which is valued by and engages the community they serve and which provides a platform and resource for artists and companies to present their work.

The OPTIMISE Fund worked with the Backstage team to improve their e-commerce platform, moving away from being an informational resource and towards a transactional one. A new content management system was implemented which allowed the theatre to have more control and flexibility in how they manage their online bookings. Customers now have the ability to book their tickets through an integrated, mobile responsive, e-commerce solution.



DonegalShop.ie

The Donegal Shop is a Dublin city centre based family business retailing Irish crafts, knitwear, wool and tweeds from Donegal and other parts of the country. The store stocks a range of knitwear, Aran sweaters and accessories for both women and men, all handcrafted using techniques passed down through generations of Donegal artists.

The OPTIMISE Fund worked to provide the Donegal Shop with technical supports to update their website and improve their online selling process. Barriers which prevented customers from reaching the online checkout were removed and the overall format of the website was simplified to allow for an improved e-commerce experience for customers. The website was updated to be mobile responsive to ensure that customers could purchase from their mobile devices. Advice and guidance on online stock management solutions was also provided by the Fund.



Extremelreland.ie

Extreme Ireland is a tour provider offering daily tours of Ireland's major attractions along with adventure tours and climbing and mountain skills courses. With a staff of almost 60 and a fleet of 17 coaches operating from two tourism centres which run six day tours to many of Ireland's main tourist attractions every week, Extreme Ireland pride themselves on delivering memorable holiday experiences.

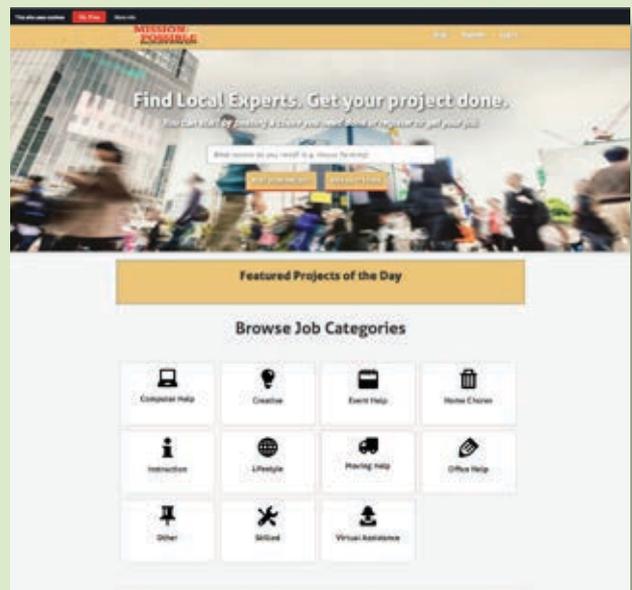
The OPTIMISE Fund worked with Extreme Ireland to develop an e-commerce strategy which would allow them to transfer their knowledge and expertise to their online marketplace. The Fund conducted a complete website usability review which provided recommendations for improvement. Research was undertaken into benchmarking of best practice and customer expectations while advice on how to specifically target the North American tourist market via online channels was also provided. An SEO plan was created along with a link building strategy designed to drive traffic to the website.



MissionPossible.ie

Mission Possible is a software as a service (SAAS) reward and recognition, cloud based platform which enables companies to buy credit for their staff to have personal tasks completed for them whilst they are working. The tasks offered include cleaning, errand running, sourcing trusted tradespeople, waiting-in for deliveries etc.

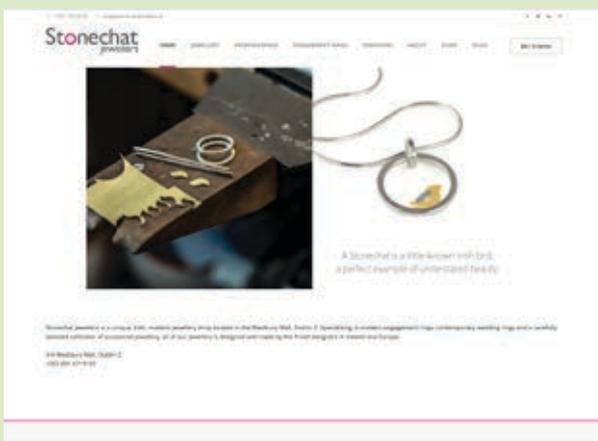
The OPTIMISE Fund worked with Mission Possible to rectify online payment issues that they had experienced by implementing fixes to improve the payment process for customers. Additionally, the design of their website was updated to be more visually impactful and conducive to e-commerce.



Stonechat.ie

Located in the Westbury Mall, Dublin, Stonechat Jewellers is a contemporary jewellery store specialising in hand-made Irish design. Offering a wide range of jewellery products - including wedding and engagement rings - 40% of their products are hand-crafted in an in-store workshop and the remaining 60% is sourced from a carefully selected group of designer goldsmiths. Founded by fine jewellery designer Ann Chapman, Stonechat offers individual and personalised service and hand crafted jewellery.

Support from the OPTIMISE Fund enabled Stonechat to cater for how high-end purchases are made online by providing an enhanced online customer experience using specific web tools. The Fund also worked to provide Stonechat with additional content to increase visitor engagement online and to leverage some of the unique customer experiences that the Stonechat team has already delivered. An online marketing plan was created to target specific international markets through an email campaign and the use of social media channels such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest.



Office.ie

Founded in 1990, Office.ie is a family run retail company offering products and services for offices throughout Ireland. The majority of their sales are generated in an organic fashion via a network of sales representatives. The Office.ie team wanted to use the OPTIMISE Fund to develop their website to allow customers to purchase online in a manner that would not compromise their key ethos of customer service provision.

The OPTIMISE Fund provided Office.ie with e-commerce focused design updates to their home page while also creating a product page template which would simplify the online ordering process. The Fund worked to integrate these design updates with the existing website back-end infrastructure to ensure an easy and straight forward purchasing process for customers that linked directly to their internal stock management system. A range of website banners were also created to enable the Office.ie team to run regular on-site promotions and direct users to certain product areas.



HouseofIreland.ie

Established in 1975, House of Ireland retail a large range of Irish crystal and china, clothing, jewellery, linen and crafts. House of Ireland showcases over 150 Irish designers and suppliers as well as many unique Scottish, English and European brands. House of Ireland's flagship 4,000 square foot store is located opposite Trinity College in the centre of Dublin. There are also three House of Ireland stores at Dublin Airport and one in Belfast City Airport.

The OPTIMISE Fund worked with House of Ireland by undertaking research in the area of email marketing for high value product lines to allow the Company to create an appropriate email marketing campaign. Traffic to the website was analysed to inform the creation of an SEO plan to improve their search engine ranking. A content marketing plan was also created which would guide House of Ireland's social media activities and promote its business to an online audience.



Our Service Providers

The IE Domain Registry (IEDR) works closely with two companies who operate, implement and provide the services of the OPTIMISE Fund on its behalf.



Elucidate is one of Ireland's leading online strategy development and implementation companies. They work with clients to help them utilise the web to support their business and organisational goals. This is done by researching, analysing and identifying how people use the web and, along with Elucidate's experience and the use of industry best practices, they develop an online strategy to drive the business forward and deliver on goals.

Elucidate work with public and private organisations throughout Ireland to help them maximise their online presence by providing a wide range of expertise and services including web strategy, research & analytics, e-marketing, communications, web design, web content and web optimisation.



Software Design provides world-class professional services spanning all aspects of the software development life cycle. The company comprises of a team of expert designers, developers and engineers. The company is dedicated to the provision of professional software design and development services. With a client base including RTÉ, Ernst & Young, Enterprise Ireland, Eirgrid, BT and many more, Software Design has a broad skill set and multi-faceted experience in providing comprehensive solutions for their clients' online needs.





Identifiably Irish
Ireland's Domain Registry

IE Domain Registry Limited
Harbour Square, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland

Tel +353 1 236 5400
Email registrations@iedr.ie

www.iedr.ie

For more information please visit: www.iedr.ie/optimise