OPTIMISE

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.

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.
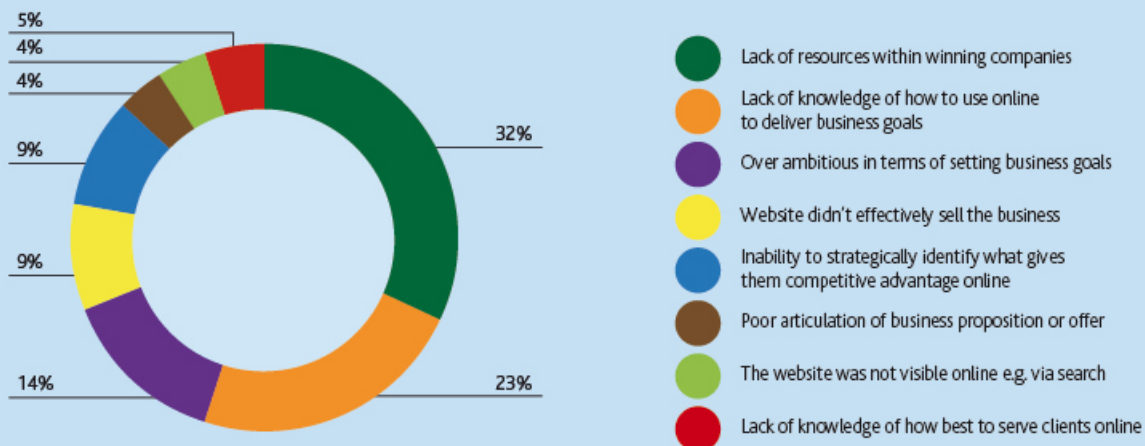
The OPTIMISE Fund provides recipients with tangible e-tools and features, consultation, training and e-commerce development support services to "optimise" their existing online presence. These supports allow the winners to begin the process of transforming their existing online presence. The OPTIMISE 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 three years since it was created the OPTIMISE Fund, via its service providers, has helped 45 companies by providing an upgrade to their websites in terms of e-commerce capability and functionality. Over 360 applications were received for the OPTIMISE Fund 2013. 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).

Optimise

IEDR Supporting eCommerce for SMEs

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

Common Barriers to Online Growth

5%
4%
4%
9%
9%
14%
23%
32%

- Lack of resources within winning companies
- Lack of knowledge of how to use online to deliver business goals
- Over ambitious in terms of setting business goals
- Website didn't effectively sell the business
- Inability to strategically identify what gives them competitive advantage online
- Poor articulation of business proposition or offer
- The website was not visible online e.g. via search
- Lack of knowledge of how best to serve clients online

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 20 Irish SMEs were selected as the winners of the IEDR OPTIMISE e-Commerce Website Development Fund 2013:

TheButlersPantry.ie

Established in 1987, the Butler's Pantry is an award winning producer and retailer of a wide range of artisan meals, breads and desserts. All their food is hand prepared in Bray each day and sold from 10 shops in Dublin and Wicklow. All dishes are made using only the freshest ingredients. There is no addition of any artificial additives, preservatives or stabilisers in any of their food. Their customer promise is simply "Hand-made delicious recipes from our kitchen to yours". The company also runs a catering and event management business from their Head Office in Bray.

The Butler's Pantry used the OPTIMISE Fund to develop their website from an informational offering to a fully functioning e-commerce platform. Working alongside The Butler's Pantry design team, the OPTIMISE Fund enabled the development of a comprehensive back-end for the company's new website. This incorporated a fully functioning online shop, something which will allow them to transact online and grow their sales beyond their physical retail locations.

Killowen.ie

Killowen Farm is an organic yogurt and milk producer in Wexford, with sales in Irish and International markets. The yogurt is produced using the milk from the Dunne Family farm in Wexford. The yogurt is handcrafted using traditional methods with no colours, preservatives or additives of any kind. The company is mainly focussed on the business-to-business market, but wanted to use online methods to build their brand and engage with consumers in order to drive loyalty and demand for their product.

The OPTIMISE Fund initially conducted an in-depth review of Killowen's existing website which resulted in the implementation of a number of design improvements such as adding social media links, share buttons and navigation options. The next step was to create a detailed social media plan which focussed on how to use platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+ and LinkedIn. Training was also provided to allow Killowen to get the best from online tools such as Google Analytics and WordPress. Finally the Fund created a video for Killowen to display on their website which offers visitors an insight into life at the farm.
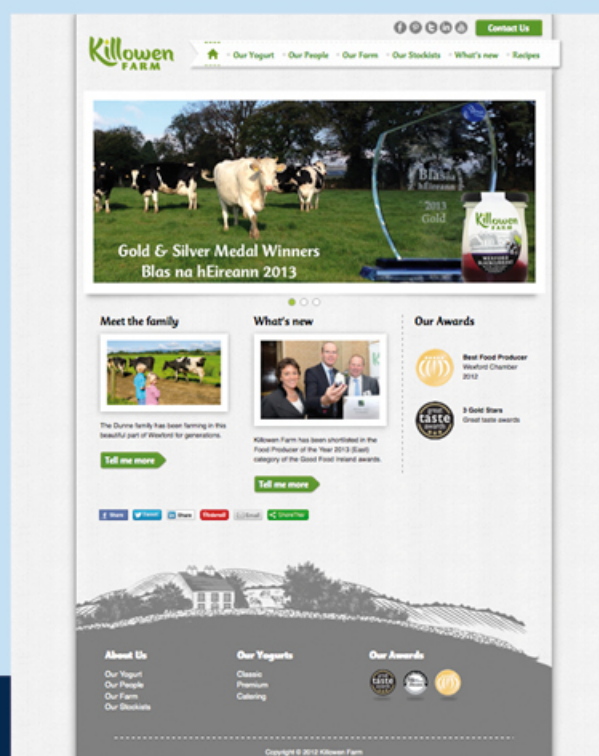
BusinessWorld.ie

Business World is an online news publisher specialising in business news and information. BusinessWorld.ie is part of MediaWorld.ie, which is a media monitoring agency. The website is targeted at SMEs, entrepreneurs, business owners and managers, students and the general public. The company applied for the OPTIMISE Fund as their website lacked functionality and they wanted a design revamp to incorporate the latest customer engagement tools.

Business World used the OPTIMISE Fund to investigate best practices within their industry in order to create a new website that would enable them to boost their visitor numbers and reach a wider audience. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) was central to this plan and the Fund provided a complete SEO overhaul for the website along with guidance, knowledge and training about how to optimise all future content. This has provided Business World with a solid platform from which they can explore new sources of additional revenue.

Press22.ie

Based in Limerick but with nationwide services, Press 22 is a photography agency offering services for architectural, construction, advertising, corporate, commercial, press, public relations and marketing support. The company used their website to display all the photographs that they take however they wanted to include the functionality to allow their corporate clients to log-in to a private area where they could purchase photographs online.

The OPTIMISE Fund provided Press 22 with a website that incorporated the functionality they needed to transact online. The company can now update their website easily and it serves as a viable sales channel for their customers where images can be purchased in a simple and straightforward manner. This has reduced the time that Press 22 previously had to spend on their administration procedures which will afford them greater time to focus on other key business areas.

JavaRepublic.ie

Java Republic supply Irish restaurants, offices, coffee houses and hotels with artisan, hand-roasted ethical coffees, specialty teas and hot chocolate. Founded by David McKernan in 1999 with the aim of taking advantage of a niche in the Irish premium coffee market sector the company has won multiple awards for flavour, quality and ethics. Java Republic employ 30 staff and operate their headquarters at a purpose built, carbon neutral roastery in North Dublin.

The website is currently used to sell and provide information on the range of products available to both trade and consumer customers. The OPTIMISE Fund assisted Java Republic in creating an effective e-commerce strategy which will allow the company to deliver greater results from their online offering. The goal of the strategy is to allow Java Republic to consolidate their position in the Irish market and focus on leveraging the potential of export markets over the coming months.

RockFarmSlane.ie

Rock Farm Slane is an ecotourism destination set on a 150 acre organic farm along the banks of the River Boyne and opposite Slane Castle. Launched in 2013 they provide their visitors with nomadic dwellings such as yurts and shepherd huts with all natural furnishings. Based in a fully functioning farm, and open from April to November, the destination offers guests the chance to explore the Boyne Valley and serves as a base to explore other local tourist attractions such as Newgrange and Slane Castle.

The OPTIMISE Fund allowed Rock Farm Slane to develop their online presence in order to grow sales of their products and services. Starting by defining their online target audience the Fund focussed on making it easier for potential new visitors to find the Farm online. A detailed website specification was created which would serve as the blueprint for the future development of a comprehensive new website. The OPTIMISE Fund also created a social media strategy to allow Rock Farm Slane to immediately begin reaching new customers.
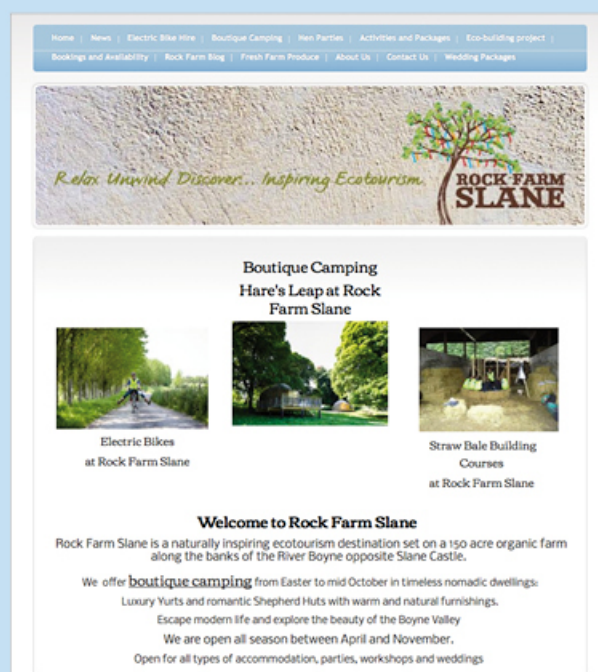
WholesaleDirectory.ie

Wholesale Directory is a Limerick based company providing an online directory service that allows retailers to find wholesalers based in Ireland. The main goal of the website is to promote and facilitate entrepreneurship in Ireland by connecting businesses with the suppliers they need to sustain their offerings. The website also acts as a knowledge repository for businesses by providing insight and tips on how to manage their purchasing process.

The OPTIMISE Fund was used to undertake a detailed analysis of the traffic to the Wholesale Directory website. This analysis uncovered some interesting findings which will allow the company to make decisions based on the requirements and behaviour of their customers. In addition to this the Fund worked to completely overhaul the SEO of the website and create a comprehensive linking strategy which will help to drive Wholesale Directory to a high ranking in all relevant search results.
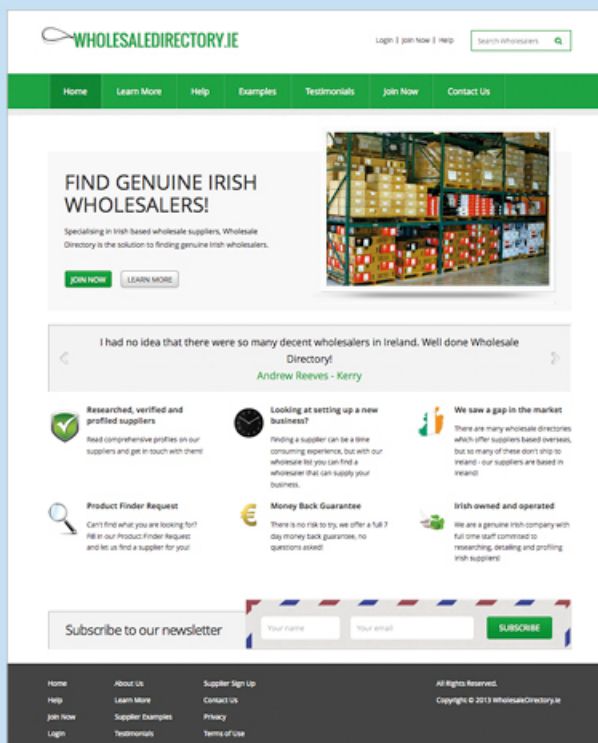
Seavite.ie

Seavite is a Galway based organic seaweed-based skincare brand. Founded by marine biologist Pat Mulrooney and his wife Kaye in 1993, the company was born out of Pat's efforts to develop a body wash suitable for use by his three children who all suffered from severe eczema. Over the past 20 years, the Seavite range has expanded from an original single body wash product to a range of 13 products for the face, body and hair.

The OPTIMISE Fund worked with the Seavite team to improve their e-commerce platform, moving away from being an informational resource and towards a transactional one. A new content management system (CMS) was implemented which allowed the company greater flexibility in how they list their products online. Customers now have the ability to shop by skin type, use a flexible shopping cart system, add personalised messages to products bought as gifts and visit specific informational product pages. The new CMS has provided the Seavite team with greater control over their website.
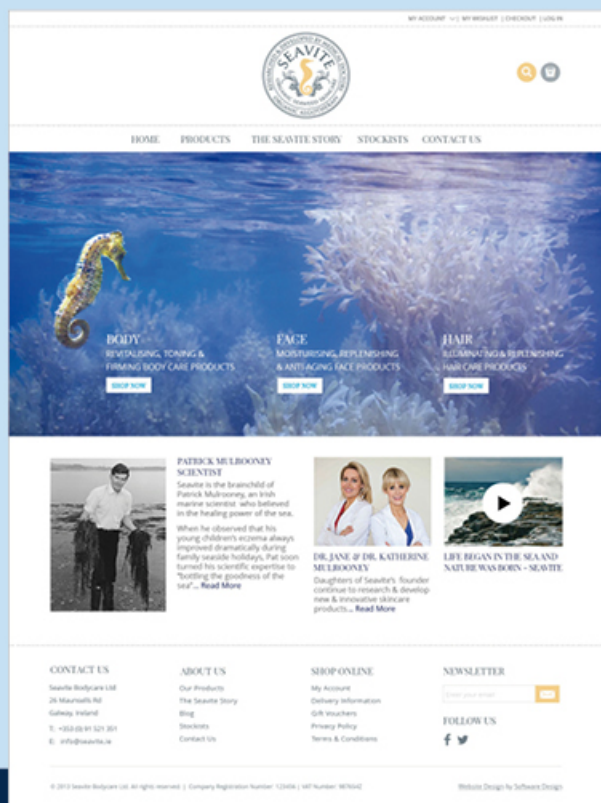
VikingMarine.ie

Viking Marine is a retail chandlery based in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. They specialise in chandlery, ropes, electronics, marine, outdoor and casual clothing and accessories. They also provide a wide range of marine parts for all types of boats. Viking Marine stock literally thousands of items in their physical store. Their website is used to promote their business online and develop both online and export sales.

The OPTIMISE Fund worked with Viking Marine to develop an e-commerce strategy which would allow them to transfer their knowledge and expertise to their online marketplace. Informational and instructional videos were created by the Fund to inform their customers about their product and service offerings. Furthermore the Fund provided Viking Marine with assistance in developing their database of customers, a communications and social media plan and SEO recommendations.
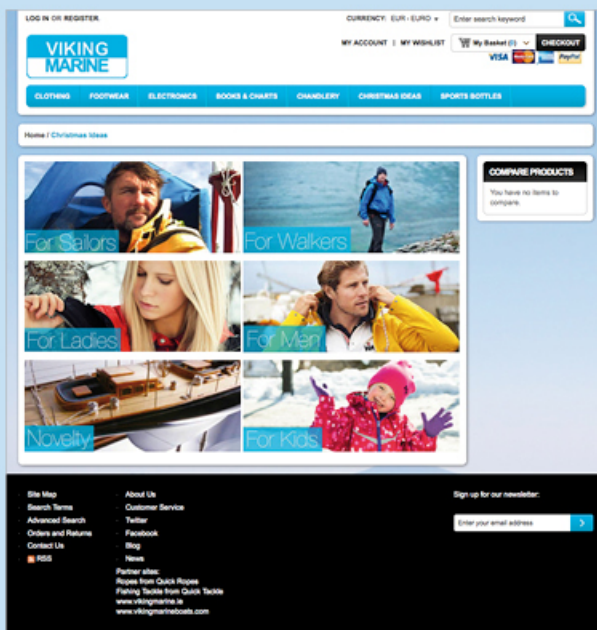
Colmac.ie

Founded in February 2013 by students Niall McCormick and Colmán Munnelly, Colmac Robotics Ltd. is an educational technology start up business focussed on robotics education. The company runs summer camps for children aged between eight and fourteen years old. The camps give children the opportunity to learn about and experiment with robotics at locations in Castlebar, Galway and Dublin. Robotics teaches children about subjects such as computer aided design, electronic engineering, mechanical engineering, physics, computer science, maths as well as a host of other practical skills such as teamwork and organisation.

Support from the OPTIMISE Fund enabled Colmac to create a new website where parents can book their children into summer camps online. The website has provided Colmac with a foundation to promote their business and engage with their students online and it has become a place where students can find information, watch videos, sign up for a camp, learn about robotics competitions taking place and browse interesting robotics articles.
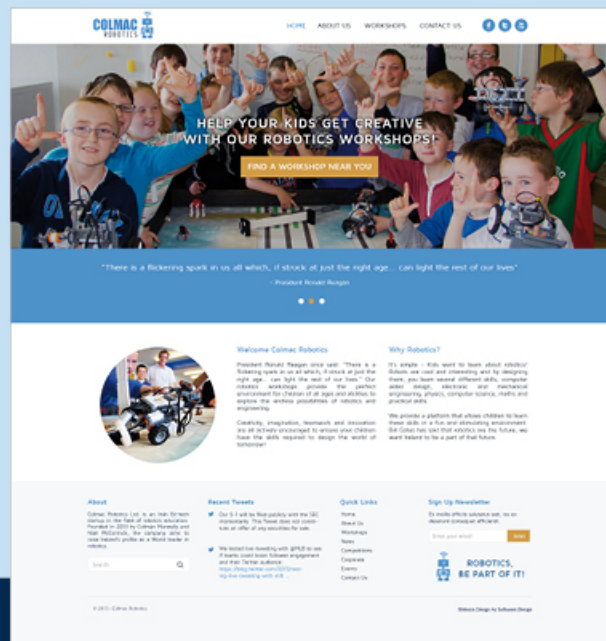
EuroCycles.ie

EuroCycles is a physical and online retail organisation specialising in the import and supply of bicycles and bicycle related products to the general public in Ireland and, more recently, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Their website was initially designed as a brochure site before e-commerce functionality was added to contribute a large portion of their annual turnover.

Despite this, the team at EuroCycles recognised that their existing website had reached its limits in terms of functionality and configuration issues. They needed a more robust e-commerce platform which would allow for greater integration of social media, customer behaviour analysis and customer service offerings. The OPTIMISE Fund worked with EuroCycles to determine exactly how their new website should look, act and serve their customers. A detailed website specification was created to allow the company to develop a website that would work for their business and allow the company to grow its online sales in Ireland and beyond.
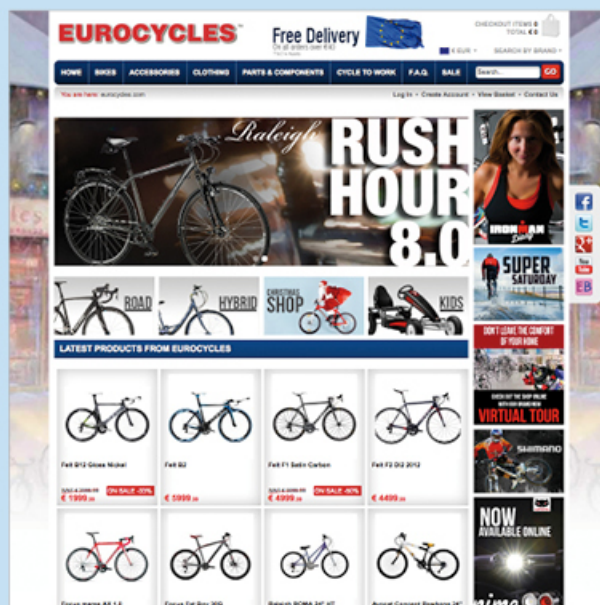
Courtlough.ie

Courtlough Shooting Grounds was established in 1996 by former Irish Olympian Richard Flynn and his son William. Courtlough is a clay pigeon shooting, trout fishing and outdoor activity facility in North County Dublin. Catering to sporting shooters and fishers the business also offers tailored packages for corporate, tour and stag groups. Courtlough have a retail shop onsite however their website served as a brochure site where visitors would only research their products rather than ordering them online.

The OPTIMISE Fund provided Courtlough with a complete e-commerce solution which will allow them to promote their business through a well conceived online strategy. Their wide range of products can now be added to their website automatically and instantly made available for sale and bookings for their various activities can be made and managed online.
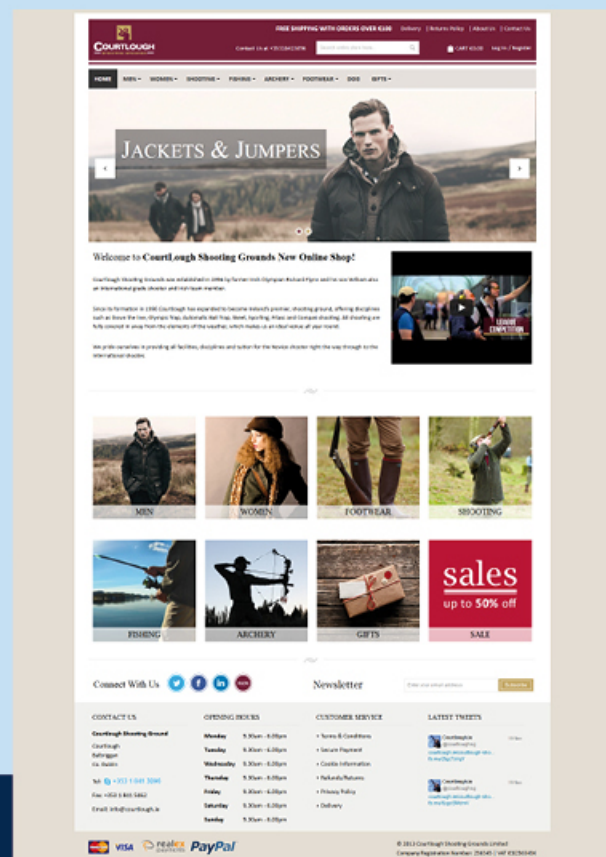
PuddleDucks.ie

PuddleDucks is a Cork based, family run, online retail business specialising in outdoor clothing for children. They offer a full range of clothing which is designed to allow children to play outdoors all year round while protected from all weathers. Their product range includes a wide selection of 100% waterproof clothing for children as well as a full range of wetsuits and beach and sun wear clothes.

The PuddleDucks team possessed both the knowledge and ability to make content changes to the website. They decided to use the OPTIMISE Fund to create a new design theme along with introducing better functionality for mobile accessibility and international orders. Their website now allows for visitors using mobile devices to easily navigate the product range and complete their purchases online. In addition to this the website now features multiple currency options to facilitate and allow for international sales.
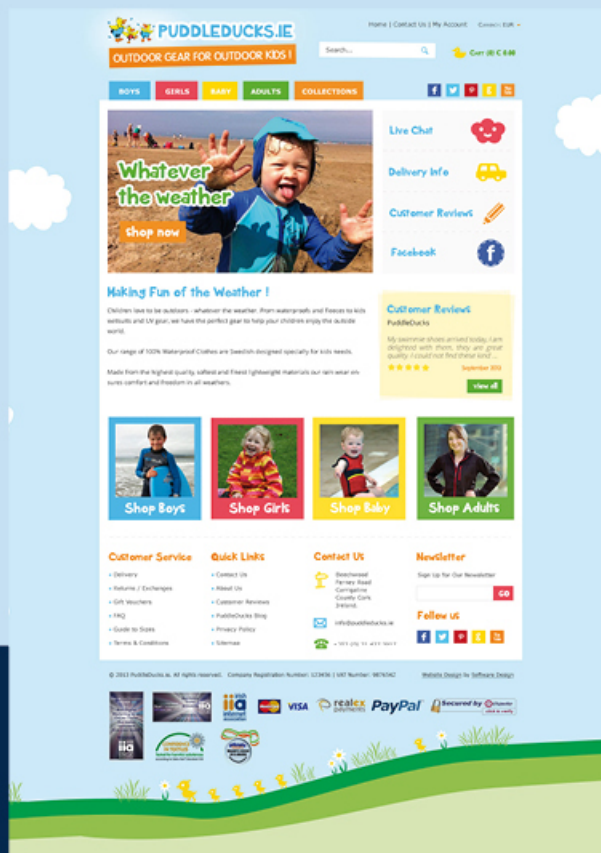
Motive.ie

Motive Television produces a mix of documentary, lifestyle programming, travel shows and live event coverage. In 2012 Motive were nominated for three IFTA awards for their documentary output and won Sports Programme of the Year for 'Man On A Mission'.

The OPTIMISE Fund has worked with Motive to deliver a website that reflects the quality of their television output. To do this a new CMS was introduced to allow the Motive team to have full control over the content of their website, including the ability to upload and display the video content they produce. Their website was redesigned to reflect these changes and allow Motive to appropriately display the content they create in a simple and straightforward manner.
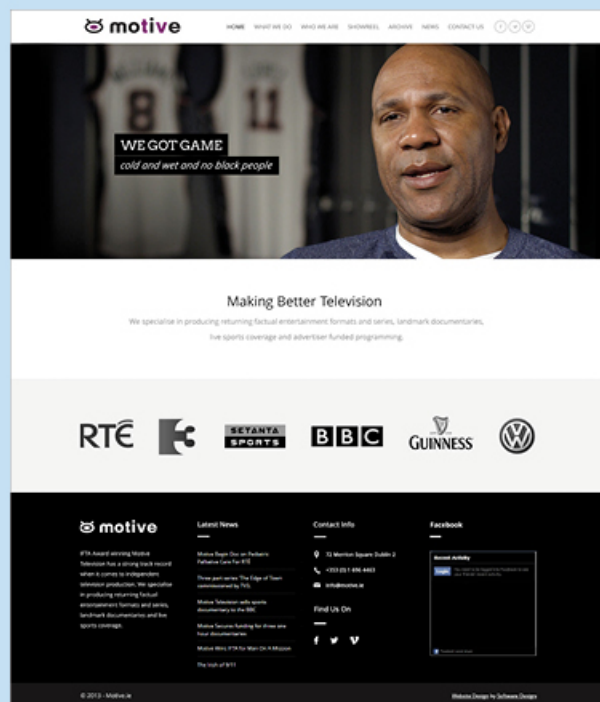
OrientTravel.ie

A travel agency specialising in Eastern Travel for both corporate and private consumers, Orient Travel enables customer to travel to the Middle East, the Gulf Region, as well as the rest of the Eastern hemisphere. Their website allows customers to book and pay for complete travel packages online.

The OPTIMISE Fund worked to provide Orient Travel with the online marketing skills and knowledge that they need to achieve their goal of having 80% of their business come from online bookings. Training was provided in blog writing, which included pointers about how to generate and collate contributions from staff based in their travel destinations. A Google AdWords account was set up and further training was provided in this area in order to get the most benefits from future campaigns. An email marketing plan was created to target Orient Travel's existing database of customers and interested parties.

AnchorSafety.ie

The core area of Anchor Safety's business is the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE), road safety products, water safety products and work wear, to a range of customers in the Irish market. The company also provides in-house embroidery services for promotional purposes. Their customers include, local authorities, fire services, water safety authorities, health boards, corporate companies, semi-state bodies, and educational institutes as well as other SMEs, sole traders and the general public.

The OPTIMISE Fund provided a full e-commerce upgrade to the Anchor Safety website. While their website could list the products available it offered no ability for their customers to purchase online. The Fund implemented a full e-commerce solution which listed all of the company's products in a clear and concise manner that allowed users to quickly find information on the products.
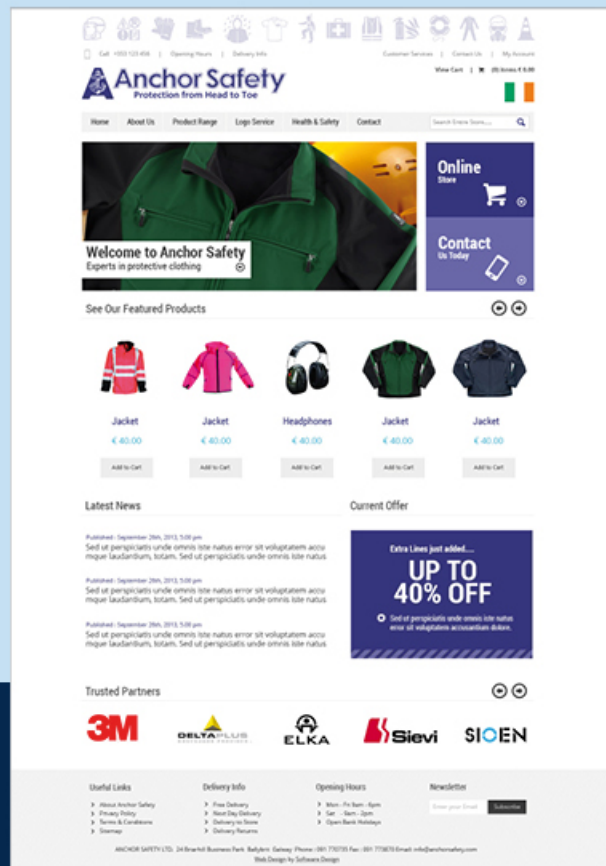
TyresDublin.ie

The Tyre and Service Superstore (trading as Square Fit Ltd.) is a Dublin based family garage business specialising in car servicing and repairs. Originally set up in 1980 and with three locations in Tallaght, Walkinstown and Finglas, Tyre and Service Superstore pride themselves on providing all of their customers with a positive motoring experience. With TyresDublin.ie they have created a strong online presence where customers can book their car in via their website or mobile app. Additionally quotes are provided online to ensure the transparency of their pricing.

The OPTIMISE Fund worked to identify a profile of the typical online customer for the Tyre and Service Superstore and establish the online target markets for the business. A customer database was created and developed to allow for timely communications to be automatically sent to customers when they are due for a service or new tyres. Training was also provided on Google Analytics and various social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

AirImpact.ie

Air Impact is a Tipperary based wholesaler and distributor of pneumatic tools and equipment. Their customer base spans many areas of industry in Ireland and the UK, including but not limited to construction, mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, petrochemical, automotive, marine, and agriculture. They applied for assistance from the OPTIMISE Fund because their website was not user friendly and lacked functionality.

The OPTIMISE Fund assisted Air Impact by providing them with a new e-commerce content management system which allowed the company greater flexibility for displaying their products. A new shopping cart system was introduced to enable users to see exactly what they were ordering at every stage of the process. An email marketing management system was introduced to the website to allow for greater customer targeting and interactions.

Datascope.ie

Datascope prints newspapers and magazines for small publishers throughout Ireland. It was founded in 1990 and operates from a print works in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. Offering individual customisation for each customer Datascope provide print solutions for publishers, design agencies, advertising agencies and college newspapers in Ireland and Europe.

The OPTIMISE Fund began by undertaking usability testing on the Datascope website. Additionally an SEO strategy was created to allow Datascope to target and reach the appropriate online markets. A Google Adwords campaign was also created and managed by the Fund and detailed analytics training was provided to equip Datascope with the skills to run similar future campaigns.
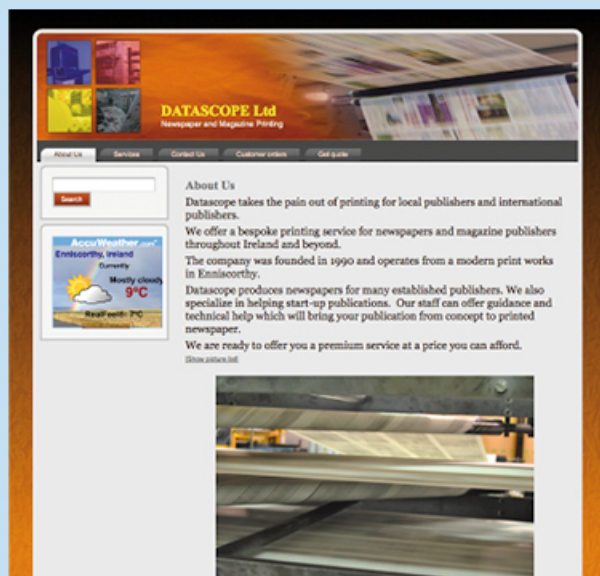
RKee.ie

Robert Kee runs a number of successful businesses in Lahey, Co. Donegal. Comprising a garden centre, petrol station, power equipment, supermarket, bike shop and fast food outlet the website is designed to showcase each of these businesses separately. This meant that there was a lot of information available and jostling for attention on their homepage so the first task of the OPTIMISE Fund was to redesign the homepage and key inner landing pages to aid user navigation. To do this a full review of the website traffic flow and analytics was undertaken in order to inform the design of the new homepage.

Furthermore the Fund worked to setup an online shop that would work for their business and would be flexible enough to accommodate the company's product range. A mobile version of the website was also created to allow users to access a working version of the website on their mobile phones and tablets.
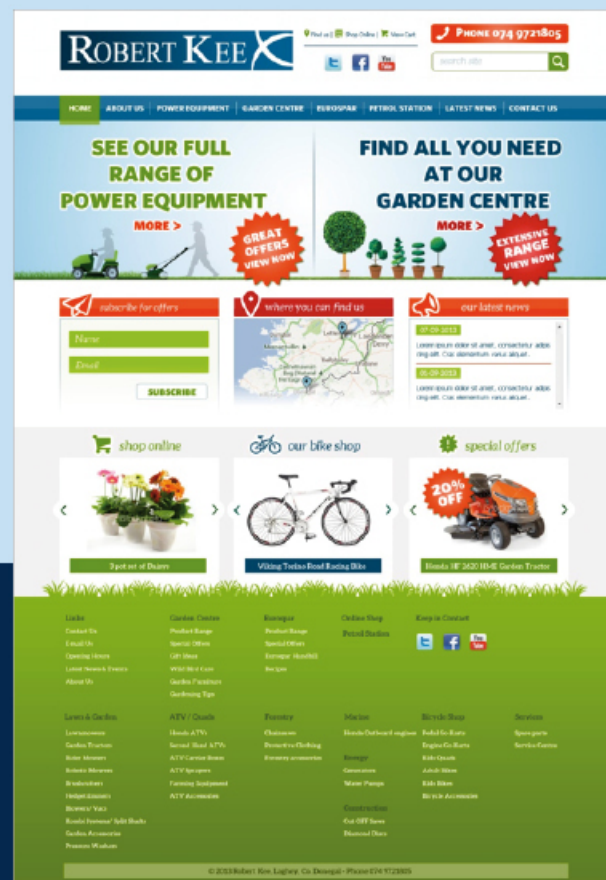
Our Providers

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

elucidate™

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 through a wide range of expertise and services including web strategy, research & analytics, e-marketing, communications, web design, web content and web optimisation.

softwaredesign

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 and 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.

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