

My story so far



Jane Lyons, country manager for PharmaLex Ireland: 'The diversity of roles and organisations I have worked in has led me to where I am today' Maxwells

‘Sweep the sheds: Never be too big to do the small things that need to be done’

Remaining grounded and having self-belief are key to personal and career development, says Jane Lyons of PharmaLex Ireland

When I started out in my career, I didn't have a very clear goal as to who and what I wanted to be. I thought that might hinder me, as many of my friends had very clear career paths marked out. But now I'm grateful that I wasn't one-dimensional in my approach to my career. The diversity of roles and organisations I have worked in has led me to where I am today, and has given me a very broad spectrum of experience to draw on in my current role.

I love diversity, and one of my career goals was to experience as much as I could in terms of business operations. I've worked in many different roles including administration, marketing, business development, business coaching and HR. That breadth of experience has helped me to look at things from many different angles, and to make more informed decisions.

My values are the same today as they have always been: respect, honesty and commitment to what I am doing. My priorities are to serve my team to enable them to be the best they can be.

Another career goal is to add value and give my best to whatever I am doing. This has served me well over the years and led to many promotions. I focus on the present and assess what needs to be done here and now, to deliver on my aspirations for the future.

In terms of those who have influenced my career, Pat Delaney, a former director of Ibec and the Small Firms Association, taught me that self-belief plays a key part in both personal and career development. I was lucky that the people around me saw something in me, but that was no good until I saw it in myself and stopped creating my own glass ceiling.

My sister Naomi taught me the importance of personal development and investing in yourself, whether it be academically or holistically.

If I was asked for advice on how to make a good impression at work, I would say it's important to believe in what you're saying and have confidence that you have the ability to find a way out of challenging situations.

I believe it is incredibly important to be helpful, not because you have something to loan from it but because you are genuinely interested in contributing to a team. Be open to taking on tasks and roles outside your comfort zone to broaden your experience, and to enable you to contribute more fully to the wider company goals.

What hasn't worked for me? Over-committing and procrastination. I have one request for my team, and that's "tell me early" – put your hand up if things aren't working out for you or if you are worried about something. What I know about, I can address; it is lack of knowledge that causes problems.

As leaders, when it comes to work-

place politics, I believe it is our duty to look at everyone individually and understand their modus operandi. Not everyone wants to be a top-level exec, yet they add tremendous value within an organisation.

By recognising these people as equal to those who have bigger ambitions, I believe I create an environment where everyone is rooting for each other, and this reduces the politics within the team.

My ideal work environment is apolitical. That may be perceived as somewhat naive, but having it as part of our culture sets the tone for the team and limits politics. When I become aware of political agendas creeping into the company, I address them immediately so they don't have time to fester.

My best ever job interview was for a role that I turned down. I was completely authentic; I wasn't looking to impress, or to over-exaggerate my achievements or my motivations. I was totally honest in the interview, and it felt great.

My worst interview was for a role in a financial advisory company. They wanted the successful candidate to have advanced skills in a certain software programme which was not my forte. I would have been in a constant state of panic if I had got that job, and would probably have lasted a very short time in it.

Understanding people's personal circumstances and working with them to find a balance that allows them to manage family priorities and their work is both personally and professionally extremely rewarding for everyone. Not taking that approach can be detrimental to the smooth running of a business.

I like to collaborate with the team and encourage their inputs on how we do

Jane Lyons is country manager for PharmaLex Ireland, part of an international business which provides specialised services to the life sciences industry worldwide. The company employs 2,400 staff in 53 offices globally, and currently operates in 27 countries

business. It's important to me that they feel empowered to be part of the growth of the company, and that can only happen if we all contribute.

Conflict can be corrosive in the workplace. Continual communication, not allowing matters to escalate, and providing a trust forum that allows issues to be aired and resolved to everyone's satisfaction, is critical.

Listen to the other person's point of view, and leave your assumptions behind. Sometimes it's okay to agree to disagree on smaller topics. No one is perfect, and we will never always hold the same opinions.

Over the years, networking gave me confidence and pushed me outside my comfort zone. I was one of the founding members of the Howth/Sutton/Baldoye Business Network International chapter, and was invited to be its first chair.

My advice for networking is to embrace diversity and authenticity, form connections with people on a human level, and have a mutual understanding of the benefit of promoting and supporting each other.

I'm a big admirer of how the management style of Wayne Smith and Graham Henry inspired New Zealand's All Blacks, and some of their strategies have really resonated with me. Good examples include "sweep the sheds" – never be too big to do the small things that need to be done.

Advice

Preparation is key to living your best life after work

It's never been a more timely moment to begin broadening the conversations we have about what retirement planning is



It's been a high-profile year for retirement planning in Ireland. The government's announcement on the anticipated retirement savings system continues to generate public debate, and the Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI) also published a stark report outlining a forecasted decline in home ownership in the years ahead and what this means for future retirees.

The pensions market has grappled with significant regulatory updates that, for some, have disrupted the financial route to retirement. More recently, planned reforms for the state pension have surfaced and left many asking when is a "good" age to retire, and at what cost.

Recent findings from our

retirement pulse, a nationally representative survey of adults across Ireland, shows that despite an increase in feelings of financial anxiety, more people are engaging with their pensions since the start of the year.

More than half (54 per cent) of adults say they're keeping up-to-date with their pension, a 6 per cent increase from February. More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of the adult population say they understand the value of having a pension as essential to their retirement plans.

Thinking about retirement more can only benefit adults in Ireland, given that over half (51 per cent) of those surveyed feel it is something they'll think about when "it" happens to them. But what if



By feeling financially prepared for when you finish working, you'll have greater freedom to consider other aspects of retirement that are equally as important

there's no longer one "it" for everyone? We're living longer and ageing "better" than previous generations, so age or termination of employment is no longer a marker for many.

Retirement shouldn't be something people dread; it's a time to open life up to new possibilities and people should consider the emotional aspects of retirement that are often overlooked. What gives your life a sense of purpose today and will that change in retirement? Will your partner, family or friends also be retiring when you retire? How will you spend your time?

Through our work we see time and again a strong correlation between happiness in retirement and participation in some form of structured work, be that voluntary or paid. Many recognise the sense of purpose and social cohesion that work provides, and don't want to lose that.

According to research we

recently conducted with retirees across Ireland, one in ten (11 per cent) wished they had given more thought to how they would spend their time and planned for a gradual transition out of full-time work.

This supports a clear trend amongst non-retired adults with almost four in ten (39 per cent) viewing retirement as a change of pace to traditional working hours, rather than a complete end to work.

Alan McCarthy is head of distribution at Standard Life, the life assurance, pensions and long-terms savings company

Insight



There is still high demand for skilled talent in Ireland

Businesses set to look more strategically at hiring plans



John Galvin

Irish employers have lower quarterly hiring intentions for quarter four of 2022, as confidence drops mainly due to inflationary and macro-economic concerns. Employers of all sizes plan to slow their hiring plans, according to the latest ManpowerGroup employment outlook survey.

According to the survey, the net employment outlook (NEO) is now at +28 per cent, a decline of 12 percentage points on the previous quarter, and a decrease of 6 percentage points year on year. These figures are still high by historic levels, but do indicate a slowdown from previous record high figures at the start of 2022.

The NEO is derived by taking the percentage of employers planning to increase headcount, and subtracting the percentage expecting to decrease headcount.

The IT, technology, telecoms and media sector is recording the sharpest fall in NEO in quarter four of 2022, at +17 per cent, a decline of 25 percentage points on last quarter and a decline of 44 percentage points year on year.

This decline is driven by a rise in lay-offs and slowing growth in the tech sector as companies restructure after the hiring boom of early 2022. Early post-pandemic recovery patterns, previous high-volume hiring campaigns, slowing sectorial growth and rising interest rates have all knocked confidence in the sector going into the fourth quarter.

In the same period last year, the IT and tech sector was Ireland's highest performing sector. It remained among the highest performing throughout 2022, but is now recording the second lowest employment outlook of all sectors recorded.

Some businesses that drove hiring confidence in the IT and tech sector over the last year are now having to slow their hiring ambitions and, in some cases, reduce worker numbers rather than taking on new staff for growth.

Lay-offs have become more prominent in the last quarter, a shift driven by large tech companies who may feel they have over-hired coming out of the pandemic and now find themselves with a surplus of employees.

This new reality may be forcing them to divest some previous hires, and even retract some job offers in certain circumstances. Despite this, overall hiring in the tech sector remains in double digits, and we are still seeing overall growth in the sector, just at a lower level.

Restructuring programmes have affected many well-known global companies with operations in Ireland, including Apple, PayPal, Microsoft, Spotify, Lets-getchecked, Wayfair Intercom and Twitter. Most tech companies are choosing to slow hiring as opposed to making redundancies, but there is certainly an element of caution appearing in the sector.

The impacts in the marketplace are being felt most strongly in Dublin, due to its prominence as a hub for tech companies. In previous quarters, the strong hiring optimism recorded by the tech sector was a key component in keeping Dublin's employment outlook buoyant.

However, it is worth noting there is still a significant talent shortage in the tech sector for key staff, with 76 per cent of employers reporting difficulty finding the talent they need. This has resulted in higher wage expectations among tech employees.

Hiring decision-makers in all regions in Ireland plan an increase in staffing levels in the fourth quarter of 2022. The most competitive region in Ireland is Leinster, with an NEO of +39 per cent, up 16 percentage points year-on-year.

The region with the largest increase since this time last year is Connacht, which reports a rise of 27 percentage points. Indeed, this quarter is the highest NEO recorded in Connacht since ManpowerGroup started tracking data in the first quarter of 2005, demonstrating the increasing strength of the west of Ireland's economy.

Hiring managers in companies of all sizes anticipate an increase in staffing levels in the final quarter of this year. Employers in organisations with fewer than ten staff are the most optimistic, with a NEO of +39. This is the highest NEO recorded in Irish organisations of that size since we started tracking data.

What does all this mean for companies in Ireland? They will be looking at their hiring plans more strategically going into Q4. There is still high demand for skilled talent and an ongoing talent shortage in the labour market, but hiring volume will decrease as employers tighten their belts. We will see this first in Dublin, and where Dublin leads, the other regions will follow.

Smaller companies will be hiring in greater strength than ever before, which highlights the increasing prominence of start-up companies in Ireland. The waters may be getting a bit choppy, but the sails are still firmly raised with recruitment remaining buoyant as the year closes out.

“ Lay-offs have become more prominent in the last quarter ”

John Galvin is managing director of ManpowerGroup Ireland