

# Enterprise Ireland Facilitates The Manufacturer-Rep Connection



*Contacts with MANA's local chapters have already resulted in early success, according to Sinead Lonergan (left), vice president, and Gearoid Hogan, marketing executive of Enterprise Ireland's New York City office.*

Irish manufacturers have a friend in the presence of Enterprise Ireland. And, by the very nature of the services that Enterprise Ireland provides, so too do U.S.-based manufacturers' representatives that have interest in partnering with Irish-based manufacturers.

By definition, Enterprise Ireland is the Trade and Technology Board of the Irish Government. It has established its mission to "accelerate the development of world-class Irish companies to achieve strong positions in global markets resulting in increased national and regional prosperity."

That's where United States manufacturers' reps come in, according to Sinead Lonergan, vice president of the organization's New York City office. "Our goal is to increase the export sales of Irish companies," she explains. "To achieve that goal we facilitate the coming together of an Irish manufacturer with a U.S. rep." Lonergan has already taken several steps in the "facilitation" process by:

- Initiating contact with MANA and placing ads in *Agency Sales* magazine.
- Speaking with MANA's local networking chapters.

- Providing space for Irish manufacturers to meet with prospective U.S. reps.

Lonergan explains that she first became aware of MANA when a business colleague showed her a copy of *Agency Sales*. That initial exposure was followed by attendance at a seminar conducted by MANA consultant Paul Pease. "Paul provided us with quite a bit of guidance when it came to approaching U.S. reps," she explains. "He even went so far as to prepare a presentation for Irish manufacturers on how to work effectively with reps. For several of our clients, that was their introduction to reps. All of this transpired about a year ago. We initially had five Irish manufacturers in the electronics and engineering field sign on with us. After 12 months, we had about a 50 percent success rate to show for our efforts. One company especially, Dunreidy Engineering, was a great success. They went through an entire process with Paul. Their efforts allowed them to gain a real feel for the market in addition to realizing the vast size of the U.S. market. Toward the end of his efforts, Paul advised us on how to make contact with the MANA chapters. That's something we've continued."

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### MANA Chapters

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One of the MANA chapters that Lonergan spoke to was the Upstate New York Chapter. Following her presentation to that group, Dave Memmel, David T. Memmel, Inc., Rochester, New York, reported that Lonergan's message to attendees was well received. "She let us know how

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hard Irish firms are working to improve their promotional efforts in order to establish better relationships with U.S. reps and their agencies. Overall, our meeting attendees were pleased with her presentation and they shared their company information in order for her to initiate some dialogue between reps and Irish companies looking to gain a foothold here."

From her perspective after meeting with several MANA members, Lonergan explains that one misconception she has to dispel concerning Ireland and its manufacturing base pertains to agriculture. Ireland's economy is no longer driven by agriculture as in years past. Rather, it has undergone quite a transformation in the last few years. "We boast a very sophisticated manufacturing base that no longer sells just on favorable labor costs. We are English speaking, are well-educated, have few cultural barriers that U.S. companies would have to overcome, and we serve as a gateway to Europe."

While there are still more misconceptions to dispel regarding Ireland, Lonergan and her staff have an equally important job on their hands to acquaint Irish companies with repping in the United States. "We emphasize the importance of avoiding mistakes in the beginning of the relationship. We stress the importance of having

written contracts and provide advice on commissions. In addition, if a manufacturer is a relatively new entrant to the U.S. market, we'll work closely with them for a few months to let them know what they have to do to assist their reps here."

At the same time Enterprise Ireland assists its Irish clients, "We also let reps know how much we've done to filter manufacturers for reps," says Gearoid Hogan, marketing executive for Enterprise Ireland. "From the rep's point of view, it's a positive that our efforts are supported by the Irish government. Plus, we let them know how much we've done to select manufacturers we feel would make a good match. We aren't going to provide a rep with 10 or 15 possibilities. Rather, we're going to give them the name of one or two companies that we feel would really work well with them. Then we walk manufacturers through the entire process and assist them in making connections. This is all to the benefit of reps."

Lonergan and Hogan note that Enterprise Ireland will continue in its efforts to network with MANA members, especially at the local chapter level.

Interested reps are invited to visit the organization's web site:  
[www.enterprise-ireland.com](http://www.enterprise-ireland.com)