

Innovation Day@DCU

The celebrated inventor of the Freeplay radio, Trevor Baylis, recently addressed the second Innovation Day at DCU. The importance of this now yearly event is stressed by Ron Immink of Invent – the innovative and enterprise centre of DCU.



Prof Ferdinand von Prondzynski, President DCU, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Micheál Martin TD and inventor Trevor Baylis.

Recent data from Forfás and Government would suggest that 99.9 per cent of the Irish small- and medium-sized companies (SMEs) are not innovating. If that is true, it would suggest a serious problem for the future. Most likely, Ireland will become more and dependent on the Irish indigenous industry and less on the multinationals. In that context innovation will be key.

Many issues, such as how innovation is measured and how systematic are SMEs in their innovation endeavours, were highlighted at the second Innovation Day that took place on 29 March at The Helix. The event set to illustrate the importance of continuous innovation, natural competitiveness and creativity and problem-solving skills to ensure that Ireland continues to flourish in an environment driven by globalisation. It is one of the joint initiatives developed between the Business and Innovation Theme Leader, Dr Ciarán Ó'hógartaigh, and Invent to put DCU on the innovation map and to highlight the importance of innovation as a key economic driver.

After the keynote address by Trevor Baylis, inventor of the Freeplay radio, the Innovation Day showcased several approaches to systematic innovation by global corporate innovators, such as Hewlett Packard and Intel, and leading thinkers on innovation,



Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Micheál Martin TD

such as Darrell Mann who explained the TRIZ concept. An insightful presentation about the strategic context of innovation was also given by Brian Leavy of DCU. (All presentations can be downloaded from www.innovationday.net/speakers.html.)

On a practical level Invent is placing an increasing emphasis on linking in with SMEs by setting up an Invent membership scheme and encouraging spin-ins, linking SME research and development (R&D) and innovation with the researchers within DCU in order to explore and develop commercial opportunities on a joint basis.

The business and innovation theme is working on a number of other initiatives in partnership with faculties and individuals throughout the university. These include a joint seminar on commercialisation with the University of Pittsburgh in May and strategic partnerships in commercialisation and entrepreneurship with, for example, Arizona State University and North Carolina State University.

A new undergraduate degree programme, the BSc in Marketing, Innovation and Technology (MinT), will have its first intake in the autumn of 2006. Jointly designed, under the leadership of Dr Michael Gannon, by DCU Business School, the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and the Faculty of Science and Health,

the programme aims to produce marketers with a core grounding in science and technology.

To date the Innovation Day has had quite an impact for DCU. Last year's keynote speaker, the renowned Edward de Bono, is now a visiting professor and a module in Creative Thinking has been introduced across DCU campus. Similarly, Trevor Baylis has expressed an interest in working with DCU and has

allowed the university to engage with top thinkers on innovation in Ireland and abroad.

Now that InnovationDay@DCU is firmly on the annual calendar in Ireland, the planning has already started for the third Innovation Day in March 2007. Any ideas for the next Innovation Day are most welcome.

Learning from the masters of innovation



Pictured at Mason Hayes+Curran offices were Ann Horan, Ryan Academy, Dr Tom Esselman and Declan Moylan, Mason Hayes+Curran.

Since its launch in October 2005, the DCU Ryan Academy for Entrepreneurship has hosted several events on creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. As part of its launch programme, the Academy held the first two of the Mason Hayes+Curran Visiting Professor Series recently.

The series got off to a very successful start on 16 February with a provocative presentation by Prof Liam Fahey of Babson College and the Leadership Forum. Prof Fahey argued that Ireland's future on the global economic stage is largely dependent on the country's ability to foster entrepreneurial thinking and behaviour.

"Where are the big ideas to get us there?" asked the invited audience, which packed the main lecture theatre at the Academy to capacity. The 'big idea', Prof Fahey explained, is sometimes just a small idea that turns out to have real long-lasting customer value. The 'idea' at the heart of entrepreneurial activity is always a product of insights, he believes, and getting from the 'idea' to something useful is what proves so illusive to business today.

The second of the series, featuring Dr Tom Esselman, Chief Technology Officer at Altran

Technologies and who also lectures on innovation at Harvard University, was held at the Academy on 30 March. Speaking to a full house of invited guests, Dr Esselman set out what he termed the '5 S's of Innovation'—select, specify, solve, sell (convince others your problem was worth solving, convince them your solution is best) and success. He argued that all of these are important, but the one more frequently not done well is 'select'. Effective and efficient innovation is dependent a variety of factors, he concluded, which can involve the utilisation of partnerships (particularly globally), an openness to ideas outside the company and the formation of cross-discipline, cross-business teams.

Sponsored by leading law firm Mason Hayes+Curran (MHC), the masterclass is proving very successful. MHC Managing Partner Declan Moylan commented:

"Mason Hayes+Curran, with the DCU Ryan Academy, is delighted that Prof Fahey and Dr Esselman can participate in the masterclass series. Entrepreneurship and innovation in business is vital and the calibre of international visiting professors in this series will provide a fascinating insight for the business community in Ireland. It is hoped that the visiting professors will inspire new thinking and new approaches to entrepreneurship and innovation."

The series continues with three further speakers: Prof Joe Lassiter of Harvard (in May), Dennis Shaughnessy of Northeastern University (in June) and Dan O'Neill of Arizona State University (in July). Further details are available from www.dcu.ie/ryanacademy/