



Case Study: Dorans on the Pier



Ownership type	Privately owned by the Doran family.
Business size	Medium.
Core activities	Freshwater fishing, import and sale of fresh and frozen fish, food and beverage.
Businesses	Dorans on the Pier, Doran's at the Beachcomber, The Oarhouse (in partnership with John Aungier), Octopussy's Seafood Tapas Restaurant, seafood2go.ie, Doran's Skippers Mate, Marine Suppliers.
Address	7 West Pier, Howth.
Age	54 years old.
Generation	Second.
Employee no	100 (three family members actively involved).
Turnover range	€5-10 M (group turnover).
Export Market	UK.
Main Brand	Dorans on the Pier.
Key Finding	Growth through new venture creation.

Company Background

In 1930's Wexford, Michael Doran bought a 30ft trawler called St. Mary, and so began the Doran family's fishing lineage. From one trawler, he grew his fleet to 12 and in the 1960s moved his fishing activities to one of Ireland's most renowned fishing ports—Howth. He established Lett Doran & Co. together with his uncle, Lawrence Lett, and later brought in a professional management team. In 1988, Michael passed away and with no succession plan or will in place, uncertainty arose regarding the future ownership and management of the company. The Doran family directed the company away from wholesale and towards the hospitality and retail sector, now supplying up to 70 restaurants. Lett Dorans was renamed Dorans on the Pier in 2003. The group employs approximately 100 people within their large portfolio of businesses: a fish shop, three restaurants, an online fresh fish delivery service, trawler consultancy, and ship chandlery. The company provides wholesale, retail and their own restaurants with fresh fish supplies caught by their own and other trawlers from Howth and across the country, as well as imports of exotic fish like swordfish, catfish and carp.

Interview with Sean Doran

Managing Director of Dorans on the Pier

Family Involvement

Sean and his brothers have fished from the age of 13 and all three are still involved in the business of fishing. Sean Doran is managing director and runs the multiple businesses under the Doran group umbrella. His brother, Pdraig is skipper of the trawler, The Celtic Fisher, which supplies fish to their restaurant, The Oarhouse. "We actually go out and catch our fish which is a big selling point for us." The eldest brother, Michael, manages Marine Suppliers, another part of the family business group. The six siblings of the Doran family are shareholders. While members of the next generation have worked in the business, there has yet been no expression of interest in managing it.



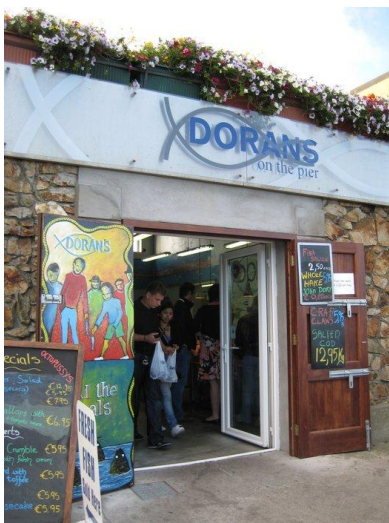
**Managing Director, Sean
Doran**



Supporting Local Tourism

The Dublin Bay Prawn Festival, one of Ireland's largest food festivals, is organised annually by local business people in Howth in conjunction with Howth Tourism, Fingal Country Council, Fingal Tourism and Fáilte Ireland. Since it was first established in 2010, this three day event has grown in popularity and in 2016 drew in excess of 10,000 visitors to Howth to taste the best prawn and seafood dishes the local restaurants can offer.

As an example of Doran's commitment to promoting Howth, a monthly meeting is held in the Oarhouse to plan for the following year's event. Accordingly, Sean says: *"I'm a great advocate for Howth and Howth tourism. I don't just try to sell the Oarhouse and Doran's, I say come to Howth. If you decide to come to my fish shop and restaurant great, but if you don't just go to another one"*.



Dorans on the Pier shop front

"It's more and more important that Doran's brand is recognised for its high standard in the seafood business."

— Sean Doran

Dorans on the Pier — New Venture Creation in Family Business

Sean Doran's passion for the industry and talent for opportunity spotting makes him an avid entrepreneur. *"We're always moving and changing"* according to Sean. Sean looks for ways of adding value to the existing business, for example, the opening of the Oarhouse beside his fish shop in 2006. Rather than sell to supermarkets or export, they decided to rent the old building at the end of the pier and set up to supply their own restaurant with their fresh catch. Sean got this idea from visiting restaurants in fishing ports around Europe. *"We used to go there and see how simple and good the food was. They were located right on the pier and didn't even have as good a view or location as us so it made sense to set up our own."* The Oarhouse employs 35 full-time and 15 part-time staff.

Sean noticed an opportunity in fresh fish delivery to private consumers and in 2011, set up the online delivery service, seafood2go.ie. The company provides next day delivery of its wide ranging fish products to customers throughout Dublin. Sean believed it was a smart move as both access to supply and delivery capability were already in place. *"Any customers we have at the moment are extremely happy with it."* However, Sean would like to see the company grow and become a channel for marketing specialist products i.e., seaweed for other companies. The group's restaurants will be used for in-house marketing of seafood2go.ie.

Established in 2015, Doran's Skippers Mate is the latest venture of the family business group. It provides consultancy in regards to authority compliance for those operating fishing trawlers. Sean built up a wealth of knowledge regarding fishing industry regulations (e.g., Sea-fisheries Protection Authority, Health & Safety Executive) and safety compliances. Fishers are provided with administrative advice on creating a safety statement, risk assessment, new crew induction drills, HACCP plans and other adherences.