



Case Study: Stafford Lynch



Ownership type	Privately owned by Lynch family.
Business size	Medium.
Core activities	Importing, distribution, sales and marketing of fast moving consumer goods.
Services	Retail & Grocery; Food services; Pharmaceuticals; Services & IT; Warehousing.
Address	101 Northwest Business Park, Blanchardstown.
Age	41 years old.
Generation	Second.
Employee no	100 (four family members actively involved).
Turnover range	€40-80 M (group turnover).
Export Market	Northern Ireland.
Import Markets	UK, USA, Singapore, Holland, Germany, Italy.
Key Finding	Family and non-family work dynamic.

Company Background

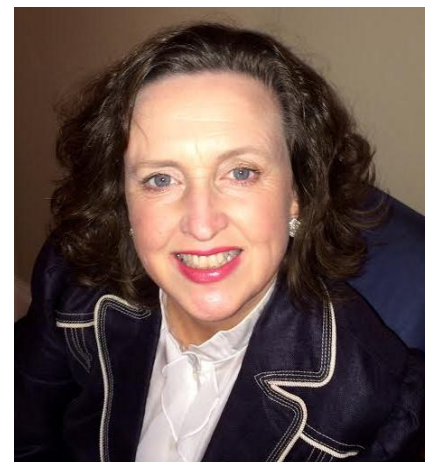
Stafford Lynch Ltd. was established in 1974 by Matt Lynch and Ray Stafford, two former colleagues of a large Irish food company. The two men established a partnership that would become one of Ireland's leading privately owned, multi-channel sales, marketing and distribution services provider. The company imports global brands such as Schwartz, Kleenex, and Wilkinson Sword, and distributes these, in addition to Irish brands (e.g., Linwoods and Sudocrem), to Ireland's retail sector. The company's distribution fleet ensures nationwide delivery and UK and European access. In 1990, the Lynch family acquired Stafford shareholding but kept the shared name of Stafford Lynch Ltd. The company's main clientele are the retail and grocery sector which has undergone huge change in the last two decades. Following the recession and upheaval of this core industry, Stafford Lynch has remained competitive by continuously upgrading their business systems, identifying emerging consumer trends, and continually providing an efficient and cost-effective service to both their multinational and Irish brands.

Interview with Eimear Lynch

Director at Stafford Lynch Ltd.

Family Involvement

Stafford Lynch is 100% owned by the Lynch family. Chairman and founder, Matthew Lynch, is still involved in the operations of the company. His daughter, Eimear Lynch, joined the company as the Marketing Co-ordinator in 1992. This followed her degree in International Marketing with French and German from DCU and international work experience. Another daughter, Una, whose educational and professional experience relates to the catering industry, joined and set up the company's Food Services Division. Their brother, Garrett Lynch, first joined as a sales representative following a course in Marketing and is now the Food Services Director. A second brother, Kevin Lynch, is not actively involved in the business but is a board member. The family has a weekly meeting with the senior management team where they discuss both daily business and wider strategic



Director, Eimear Lynch



issues. There is also a quarterly board meeting where all directors, both family and non-family, meet. In addition, an annual planning board meeting occurs where the long term plans and strategic vision for the company are discussed.

Greater Efficiency and Innovation

In order to operate efficiently, the company has invested heavily in upgrading their technology. They created the role of Operations and I.T Manager to ensure this aspect of the company is continuously advanced. *"We are very systems orientated. Stock systems, sales management systems, exchange information."* They provide a multitude of support services to their customers such as inventory management and demand planning and forecasting. Another form of innovation is the types of products the company introduces to the Irish market. *"When we started bringing in soy sauce 25 years ago people didn't really know what it was. We've been innovative in spotting emerging trends."* Today, the company imports products worldwide from countries such as Singapore, Germany and the USA.



"What is important to us is that the business as an entity in itself prospers."

— Eimear Lynch

Some of the premium brands Stafford Lynch distribute throughout Ireland

Stafford Lynch — Family and Non-Family Work Dynamic in Family Business

Establishing an open, communicative and fair relationship between family and non-family is not only important for staff harmony and morale but, also, overall firm performance. In Stafford Lynch, there is a good working relationship between family and staff with very low staff turnover, according to Eimear. *"We don't always agree but I have an absolute abhorrence of group think. I much prefer people to be the devil's advocate and question everything we do. It's a very respectful relationship."* The intention is to retain family ownership and control through the board, while the senior management team (including mainly non-family professionals) runs the company, which Eimear describes as *"a successful model for us"*. The closeness of non-family members to company decisions enables an autonomous work environment. *"We are not a bureaucratic organisation... For those who like challenges and like to make decisions and see them implemented, working in a small environment or a family business can be good."* The company adopts a personal approach to individual staff members and their concerns. *"We are a very understanding organisation. If people have difficulties, if somebody has a sick child, someone's parent is unwell, we don't go 'oh you took your 20 days so no more'."* This is reflected by the low staff turnover in the organisation with some employees working within the business for 25-30 years.