

EPS

Cork based family business, EPS Group, provides a range of water and wastewater treatment and pumping products and solutions to domestic, commercial, industrial and water utility clients in Ireland and overseas. With almost five decades of industry experience, the group has grown organically and through numerous acquisitions across the Irish, UK and Middle-East markets.



The group is managed and owned by the Buckley family. Second generation family members involved in the business include Patrick Buckley (MD), Denis Buckley (Director) and Tadgh Buckley (Director of UK subsidiary company)—sons of founder, Gerald Buckley; Denis C. Buckley (Chairman)—son of founder, Paddy Buckley; and Tadgh Buckley Jr. (Director), Shane Buckley and Ciara Buckley—sons and daughter of shareholder, Tadgh Buckley. We spoke with MD, **Mr. Patrick Buckley**, who gave his insights on how the family influences this large dynamic organisation.

Q. Do you think family involvement in EPS is a source of competitive advantage? Why?

A. Yes, family involvement makes a big difference to EPS's success. Not only in terms of the family who has shareholding but also the many families, for example brothers and cousins, who are working here and support the development of the business for many years. The family ethos, flat structure and can-do attitude of our team make the difference and help to give us an advantage in addition to many other factors.

Q. As a second generation Buckley family member, is there a special onus on you to grow or sustain the business?

A. Yes, there is a special onus on all of us to step up and take responsibility, work hard and have no expectation of anything other than to be treated fairly and given a chance to prove ourselves and our capability. As the second generation, both family and non-family who currently work in, manage, or lead the business, we have a responsibility to the shareholders, our employees and their families, and our customers to sustain the business firstly but also to transform the business during our time at the helm.

We have been presented with a great opportunity to do something special with the company and to take it forward so that the next generation of management, both family and non-family, will get the business in a strong, stable and profitable position. The first generation achieved so much; it is now our time to achieve much more and the next generation to take it further again.



EPS' latest investment of €4.5M in a new design and manufacturing Centre of Excellence.

Q. Has EPS adopted a departure strategy for retiring family members?

A. All of the first generation retired from the business between 2009 and 2016, starting with the retirement of the founders, Gerald Buckley and Paddy Buckley, and other shareholders such as Tom Ruddy (non-Family), Betty O'Connor (Gen 1 sibling) and the latest, Tadgh Buckley, in 2016.

We currently have board representation for the retired shareholders. The three main shareholders Paddy, Gerald and Tadgh, are represented by second generation members, DC Buckley, me and Tadgh Buckley Jr., respectively. Betty O'Connor, whilst retired from the day-to-day, continues to represent herself.

Other non-family directors, senior management and shareholders have been replaced with internal people who have been with the business in excess of 15 to 20 years, working alongside and for first generation members.

Q. How would you describe the guiding values and vision of the founding generation and do they feature in the EPS of today?

A. The guiding values were based around hard work, effort and passion for the business. In addition to that, they hired excellent people to work in and manage the business units when required. They also developed great partnerships, built a strong and committed supply chain, provided a top class service to our customers and made tough strategic decisions when necessary. Today, in 2017, our values are no different as we still focus on being progressive, having excellent people that provide the expertise we need and our customers need, being supportive and collaborative, being reliable and customer focused. As the second generation leading the business, we also have had to make difficult decisions.

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Mr Patrick Buckley speaking at a recent CFB event.

Q. What future challenges do you foresee EPS facing and how might the family help manage these challenges?

A. Support and understanding from our shareholders will be essential when we hit the bumps along the way. There will always be challenges which will test people and it's important to hold your nerve. A move towards a digital economy (IoT etc.) is our first significant challenge. Brexit and other related factors is another definite challenge. Recruiting the right people with the relevant skills in my view is the single largest challenge for the company going forward and especially if we can manage to grow the company quickly and sustainably then we will continue to face the challenge of attracting and finding the people we need. In addition, we will be challenged by not having the people with the appropriate expertise in technological areas which we can only picture at the moment but where some skills have not been developed yet. Another challenge is ensuring that the family at all times focuses on the best interests of the business.