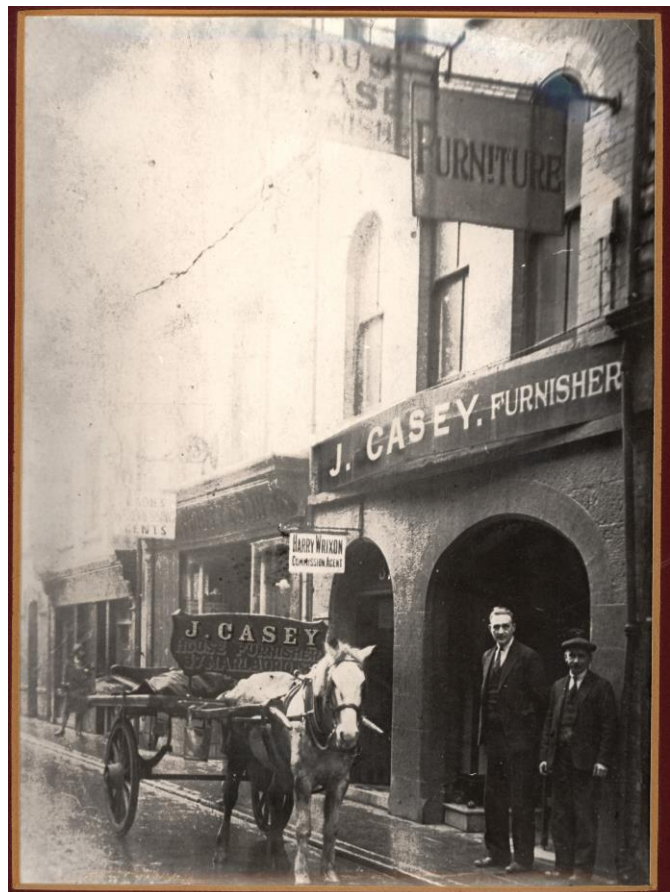


CASEYS FURNITURE

Casey's Furniture is a third generation family business, based on Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork. In 2011, Casey's celebrated 90 years in business, and in 2005 the business was awarded Irish Retail Store of the Year at the Retail Excellence Awards.

John Casey established Casey's Furniture in 1921, supplying furniture to the local residents in the aftermath of the burning of Cork, which decimated a large part of the city at the end of the previous year. Today, Peter and David Casey run the business, supplying a high quality furniture service to Cork and Ireland.

Peter Casey is the Director of Casey's Furniture. Speaking to DCU Centre for Family Business, he reflects on family tradition, and advice for future generations.



As the third generation of Casey's to run the family business, does family tradition play a strong role in the running of the business?

Yes, it has been very important. The business was always put first and minded and nurtured, and it is more a way of life rather than a job. We have always prided ourselves on been available and accessible to customers and staff at all times.

As well as the Casey family we are very lucky to have many other families who have a long history with the company. The O'Shea family have been involved with Con O'Shea having worked nearly 60 years (first of all driving a horse and cart). And then his sons Jimmy and Con joined the company, with Jimmy doing his time as a carpet fitter and learning his trade from his father. Jimmy has now been working with the company for nearly 50 years. When Jimmy first started working with Casey's there were manual time sheets, and Jimmy would simply fill his out by putting down "working with Dad".

And is innovation important?

Innovation is always important, and it is especially important to always be moving forward. At Casey's one thing we have embraced are the advantages of using a sophisticated ERP system to drive all aspects of the business.

The business has a history of brothers at the head of the business. The fact that you are 2 brothers running the business, has this ever presented any challenges?

There are always going to be issues working in any business, especially in a family business. I think it is very important to keep dividends and wages separate. Also, to keep personal family matters and business matters separate. We have been lucky, as we are the only two shareholders so if there are any issues we sort it out between ourselves.

Did either of you ever feel any pressure to join the family business, or were you left to decide on your own?

No, it was left up to ourselves.



The J. Casey store front was put in place in 1935. The same store front still exists today on Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork.

Would you like to see the business stay in the family and continue on to a fourth or fifth generation? Why?

Yes, I would. But it is very important that the incoming family members go out into the world and see what else it has to offer, and to learn skills which will be of use to them and the company. They can then join the company, having gained a broader experience, providing they are suitable and have something to offer the business in the form of appropriate skills. We would feel that, although it is a family business, that does not entitle you to anything. You have to add value to the business and that can be very challenging at times.

As a family run furniture business in Ireland, have there been any significant changes over the years in the way the business is run?

Yes, this business has changed hugely. The arrival of online trading has meant that your competition isn't now the shop down the road, and the customer isn't Mrs Murphy who lives up the road. The customer has also changed their requirements and they now want most things in stock and delivered quickly, whereas before they saved up and it was more of a long term purchase.

This has required us to invest heavily in IT, storage and delivery equipment. Last year we moved into a new 90,000 sq. ft. warehouse and distribution facility. We have a modern fleet of trucks and vans delivering weekly to almost every town in Ireland, so whilst we are retailers, we also have to run what is in effect a full blown transport company.



Casey's is well known in Cork for its decorated window displays at Christmas time. Do these displays reflect family tradition, or are they an opportunity for innovation?

Christmas is a family time and the home is a family place. At Casey's we celebrate this with an increased focus on our window display during the festive season. The first year we did it we were blown away by the amount of people who stopped to enjoy the display, especially the children. The feedback from the public generally was incredible and it felt great to be contributing to the festivities.

We would feel such traditions are an integral part of our interaction with our customers. They get to appreciate some of our wonderful product in a relaxed and familiar setting, and that assists with building our brand. If our brand continues to be successful, then sales will follow, so financially we see the Christmas window display as a great investment over the longer term. We have done the Christmas windows and raised money for the Simon community. We provided selfies with Santa; people could go into the window and get photos taken with Santa and the

company then topped up the amount raised by donating €5,000. We are currently looking at ways of moving the windows forward.

Is there a strong relationship between non-family members of the business and family members?

Yes, a lot of our staff have been here for years and we don't have huge turnover. When people join they seem to be happy to stay.

Finally, if there was one piece of advice that you would give to the next generation of family business owners in Ireland, what would it be?

I think it is very important to separate wages (a reward for your work/your professional endeavours) and dividends (a reward for your shareholding/investment). Also, to recruit the best person for all jobs within the company, whether they are family or not. If the better people run the business, it will perform better and the shareholders will benefit from dividends and the value of the business increasing.



Expanding as a business and innovating on tradition, in 2005 Casey's opened a new purpose-built store in Limerick.