

BOXING CLEVER – MA IN GLOBAL BUSINESS STUDENTS INHABIT AN INNOVATIVE SPACE



BACKGROUND

Wm. O'Brien is a name that has been synonymous with the Cork region for over seven decades and has developed an international presence through pioneering multi-disciplinary projects. In 2005 the company launched Wm. O'Brien Self Storage, an innovative solution to space utilisation. As Cork's leading self-storage provider, the company prides itself on customer service, offering long and short-term storage solutions to members of the public, tradespeople, and retail and wholesale businesses. Their modern, spacious and secure facility is located on the Bandon Road roundabout and offers convenient 24-hour access.

THE NEED

The dynamic nature of the trading environment challenges businesses to be proactive and continuously adapt and align themselves to developing market trends and customer needs. Such a fluid approach necessitates an innovative mindset, a willingness to embrace uncertainty and the desire to dismantle the status quo. MTU 'Innovation Theory and Practice' students partnered with Wm. O'Brien Self Storage to audit the company's innovativeness and to discover practical solutions to growing the business through innovative engagement.

THE SOLUTION

Arising from their consultancy with the company, students from the MA in Global Business Practice course undertook primary research on the company's current level of innovation awareness. Coupled with a strong theoretical grounding, the students benchmarked their findings against other successful international companies within diverse industries, thereby generating a holistic approach to innovation delivery.



BENEFITS OF THE ENGAGEMENT

The results of the students' research built upon the existing innovative framework within the company and were cognisant of the need to align with resource constraints and core competencies. The students proposed a formalised approach to innovation delivery, timetabling it as an operational necessity (five per cent rule) and embedding it within the company culture. Other suggestions ranged from the utilisation of customer relationship management tools to the use of 'pain points' to critically evaluate areas of customer improvement.

Dr Noel Kelly, lecturer on the MA programme explained, "This module forces students to step outside of the classroom environment and view innovation as a vital antecedent of competitiveness, rather than as an abstract academic construct. Exposure to a practical environment heightened the students' understanding of course content and the company benefited from their research acumen. A win-win scenario".

"Wm. O'Brien Self-Storage was delighted to be a part of a live case for MTU. A lot of hard work went into the presentations and reports that the students provided. Some of the recommendations that were presented have been brought on board and implemented already!"

- Shannon White, Marketing Manager at Wm. O'Brien.