

Irish Examiner
Monday 11.03.2013

The Entrepreneur Experience from Mar 22-23 will provide access to some of Ireland's most successful business leaders. In advance of the conference, **John Daly** speaks to participants about how the experience helped them. This week it's **Jim Barry**

Attitude and positivity attract return visits

As one of the seasoned entrepreneurs in the Entrepreneur Experience, Jim Barry of the Barry Group has attended all three of the annual gatherings and has assisted in choosing the entrepreneurs to participate at the event.

"My involvement in the Entrepreneur Experience goes back to the beginning when Jim Breen of Cork BIC [Business Innovation Centre] asked a number of us to get involved and help out," he said.

"There was a great willingness from everyone involved to try to put something back, because we all got help along our own business paths at one point or another.

"Being involved in this benefits business people in ticking a different box not just in terms of sponsorship, but also by bringing us into contact with people involved in different businesses and industries to our own. That has the effect of keeping you alert, very awake and opens the mind to wider possibilities. All of us in business need to look outside the confines of our own sector on a regular basis."

The profusion of ideas and enthusiasm from emerging entrepreneurs mixed with the advice and guidance on offer from seasoned players contributes to an atmosphere of energy and positivity, he believes.

"It is not just welcoming of new entrepreneurs, but probably the most positive space in Munster over that 24 hours," said Mr Barry. "Such an atmosphere of excitement, can-do attitude and sheer positivity is very rare to find anywhere, and is certainly the reason why even those of us who are well established in business keep coming back year after year."

As managing director of Barry Group, established by his father in 1955, he has grown the company into one of Ireland's leading wholesale distribution groups, employing 240 people. He developed its first franchise, Quik Pick, in 1996, and has since expanded the business to include Costcutter, Carry Out, and BuyLo. The company services a large number of independent retailers and off licences. As well as operating in Ireland, Barry Group trades internationally in more than 15 countries.

Despite the downturn, Mr Barry sees 2013 as an opportune time for Irish entrepreneurs.

"For people with good ideas and who are prepared to work very hard, it is a

Entrepreneur experience

Trident Hotel, Kinsale, Co Cork
Friday 22 - Saturday 23,
March, 2013

MEDIA PARTNER
Irish Examiner

very good time," he said. "There is a very real demand out there now for good ideas and business solutions, whereas five years ago people were almost too busy to talk to you.

"Ideas around cost-savings and added value certainly get attention today because we have all had to look harder at our businesses, become more efficient and keep reinventing ourselves."

In 2010, Barry Group was named one of the Deloitte best managed companies, and Mr Barry was listed as a finalist in the Ernst & Young, Entrepreneur of the Year Awards. He believes success stems from a focus on core values — people, values, ethics and customers.

For any emerging entrepreneur, certain qualities are fundamental: "Hard work is obviously critical, as is having a good idea," he said. "But also I would add being honourable and ethical, these are qualities that are now expected and essential." Coping with inevitable setbacks is another hurdle where would-be entrepreneurs need to draw upon personal commitment and a belief in their abilities.

"We are all going to have failures along the way. You will undoubtedly fall from time to time, but it's how you get up that matters.

"Most people will know how to pitch their product or idea, but the ability to listen, really listen, to what the customer wants and how you can add value to his operation is just as important as trying to make the sale."



Jim Barry: Real demand out there for good ideas.