

CPD IN PRACTICE



Pictured during the Irish trade mission to Riyadh earlier this year are (l-r): Jim Mongey, Enterprise Ireland; Greg Hayden, director, TPE; John Pollock, director, TPE; An Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, TD; Shahbaz Tufai, technical operations manager, DAR Engineering; and Sultan Saleh Al Sudais, general manager, DAR Engineering.

PUNCH AND PARTNERS EXPLORE OVERSEAS MARKETS THROUGH CPD

At Michael Punch and Partners the economic downturn led to a realisation that an exclusive focus on the domestic market was not a sustainable approach. Ronan Stokes explains how the company set about exploring international opportunities using its CPD programme

As a medium-sized civil and structural engineering consultancy, Michael Punch and Partners has been providing services to public and private clients in the construction industry for over 36 years.

Based in Dublin, Limerick and Cork, the company has been associated with many prestigious developments around the country, including Cork City Hall, Kildare County Council Offices, Foynes Harbour and Beacon Hospital. Having worked successfully on overseas projects in the past (most recently a marine facility for loading iron ore in Uruguay with Sandwell), Michael Punch and Partners made a strategic decision to enter overseas markets in a planned way, with a view to generating long-term revenue streams from these markets.

High-risk

Entering a foreign market can be a high-risk strategy for any business and takes a lot of preparation. It requires knowledge of market conditions and business practices, not to mention making local contacts, learning local standards and codes of practice, and getting people 'on the ground'. It is a learning process and, while there is no substitute for experience, good preparation is the key to success. This is where CPD comes in. Michael Punch and Partners, MD John Pollock is taking part in the Enterprise Ireland Leadership 4 Growth (L4G) course. The L4G initiative has been designed to capitalise on the talent within the Irish construction industry. It is targeted at successful CEOs of Irish construction companies who want to lead their company to global success.

As John explains: "Over the last number of years the Irish construction industry has radically changed in terms of the scale and complexity of projects. Here in Michael Punch and Partners we have had to adapt, gear up, train and change work practices. We have many highly-skilled professionals in the company.

"To maintain these highly trained resources we recognised that we would need to find work abroad and develop the skills to internationalise our services. L4G provided the essential training and a useful forum for our senior team. In addition, one of our regional directors is engaged in the 'International Selling Programme' course."

'Turnkey' service

He continues: "After further research and visits to a number of countries we decided to focus in particular on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In an effort to provide a greater 'turnkey' service for clients, a joint venture company called TPE was formed with mechanical and electrical engineers J.V.Tierney and Ethos Engineering."

TPE has successfully won projects in Bahrain and Riyadh, and has formed alliances with major consultants and contractors. Healthcare, education and logistics are the main areas where TPE has found a strong demand for its services. It has a local partner in Riyadh, which provides the necessary licences and logistics to operate in Saudi Arabia. John Pollock acknowledges the tangible benefits of CPD in this process. "CPD provides a process for how we go about developing and updating our skills. I have no doubt that we would not have made the progress we have with our overseas business development without it."

Ronan Stokes, Chartered Engineer MIEI MIMStructE, is a director of Michael Punch and Partners. He is in charge of CPD in the company and led the company's successful CPD accreditation drive in 2006 and re-accreditation in 2009.

Next issue: Cork University Hospital's Biomedical Engineering Department innovates through CPD.